How Well Are States Educating Our Neediest Children?

The Fordham Report 2006

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Welcome to the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation's first ever comprehensive analysis of education reform and results in the 50 states. For each of them, this report examines:

1. Student achievement, with a focus on poor and minority students;
2. Achievement trends since the early 1990s for these same students; and
3. Reform efforts centering on curriculum, standards, and school choice.

Student Achievement Circa 2005

The Foundation developed its student achievement grades based primarily on results from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading, mathematics, and science for low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students. But a quarter of each state's grade is based on minority high school graduation rates and statewide passing rates on Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The focus is on poor and minority students because historically they have been most likely to fall through school system cracks, and are the focus of nationwide gap-closing efforts. (Detailed information about our indicators and why we chose them is available in the body of the report.)

The achievement results are bleak. The average state grade is D; three states flunked, and none earned better than D+. But these low marks were not the result of an impossible grading scheme. Were the same scale applied to white students, the national average would be a B.

That, in a nutshell, is the achievement gap in the United States today. For example, only 7 percent of African-American eighth graders are at or above proficient in science and just 8 percent have reached that level in math. On the other hand, 38 percent of white eighth graders are at or above proficiency in science and 39 percent in math.

Still, some states do substantially better by their poor and minority students than others; the stronger—or at least less weak—performers include such large, diverse states as **Virginia, New Jersey,** and **Maryland**. In Virginia, for example, 26 percent of Hispanic fourth graders are at or above proficient in reading, and 22 percent of Hispanic eighth graders reach that level in science. (Of course, these are still desperately low numbers, hardly worth celebrating.)

While southern states dominate the bottom of the list, there are a few surprises there too. **Illinois, Nebraska, Nevada,** and **Rhode Island** all rank especially low in the academic performances of their disadvantaged students. In Illinois, for example, only 9 percent of black fourth graders are at or above proficient in reading, and just 10 percent of low-income eighth graders have reached that level in math. This means that most of the state's poor and minority children are ill-prepared for success in later life.

Achievement Trends

Amid the current woeful results, there is some good news: 31 states have made at least *minimal progress* over the past decade and a half. The Foundation examined whether the states made statistically significant progress in getting more poor, African-American, or Hispanic students over the "proficiency" bar on NAEP between the time it started participating in that assessment and 2005. (State-level math and reading testing commenced in 1992 and science in 1996, but participation was optional until 2003 and some states came on board later than others.)

Eight states—**California, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Washington**—showed the strongest gains over that period, making statistically significant progress in at least two subjects (reading, math, or science) and by at least two subgroups (African-American, Hispanic, or low-income students); or significant progress by all three subgroups and in at least two subjects. At the other end of the spectrum, thirteen states made no statistically significant progress with these populations at all. Five of them—**Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma,** and **Wisconsin**—also have some of the lowest achievement scores in the country, making their lack of progress all the more troubling.

Education Reform

Based on data for nine indicators in three categories (**curricular content**, **standards-based reform**, and **school choice**), Fordham's education reform grade provides a glimpse at each state's aggressiveness in improving its schools in recent years. (The Foundation would have examined state efforts at deregulating schools and educators as well, but there is so little movement on this front that reliable data are unavailable.)

Here, three states earn honor grades—**Arizona, California,** and **New Mexico**—while half receive D's or F's. The national average is a C-. The cellar is occupied by **Vermont**—once considered to be a forerunner in education reform due to its innovative assessments and standards.

In general, states' strongest performances came in the standards-based reform category, where the average grade is a C and ten states earned B's, undoubtedly the result of pressure brought by NCLB and close to two decades of state-level attention to this reform strategy. In many cases, however, the standards and curricular expectations underlying standards-based reform are themselves inadequate, as indicated by states' average grade of C- in curricular content. Most states received their worst marks (D+ on average) for school choice, with 31 earning D's or F's; unfortunately, options such as charter schools are still scarce in most places.

Interestingly, the top ten school reform states also made at least some progress—and in five cases, moderate progress—in boosting the achievement of their poor and minority students over the last decade or so. This is a welcome sign suggesting that setting clear, rigorous standards in the core subjects of the academic curriculum; holding schools accountable for helping all their students reach them; and giving parents meaningful choices appear to be a winning combination, especially for our most disadvantaged students. Which makes it all the more tragic that half the states in the nation are missing the bus on education reform.

TABLE 1: Student Achievement by Rank

RANK	STATES	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GPA	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE
1	Virginia	1.45	D+
2	Utah	1.44	D+
2	Wyoming	1.44	D+
4	Idaho	1.43	D+
5	Alaska	1.38	D+
6	Maryland	1.33	D+
6	New Jersey	1.33	D+
8	Colorado	1.17	D+
9	Kentucky	1.11	D
9	New York	1.11	D
11	Ohio	1.09	D
12	Massachusetts	1.08	D
12	North Carolina	1.08	D
12	Texas	1.08	D
15	Arizona	1.00	D
15	Arkansas	1.00	D
15	Connecticut	1.00	D
15	Delaware	1.00	D
15	Florida	1.00	D
15	Minnesota	1.00	D
15	Missouri	1.00	D
15	South Carolina	1.00	D
15	Washington	1.00	D
15	West Virginia	1.00	D
25	California	0.92	D
26	Hawaii	0.90	D
27	Kansas	0.89	D
27	Pennsylvania	0.89	D
29	Oklahoma	0.83	D
29	Oregon	0.83	D
29	Wisconsin	0.83	D
32	Illinois	0.75	D-
32	Indiana	0.75	D-
32	Michigan	0.75	D-
32	New Mexico	0.75	D-
36	Georgia	0.67	D-
36	Iowa	0.67	D-
38	Tennessee	0.63	D-
39	Rhode Island	0.58	D-
40	Nebraska	0.56	D-
41	Nevada	0.50	D-
42	Louisiana	0.44	F
43	Alabama	0.22	F
43	Mississippi	0.22	F
•	Maine	•	•
•	Montana	•	•
•	New Hampshire	•	•
•	North Dakota	•	•
•	South Dakota	•	•
•	Vermont	•	•
NATIONAL AVERAGE		0.93	D

** The letter grades for all state indicators were averaged to create this GPA. A=4.0, B=3.0, etc.*
• These states had insufficient data due to their small numbers of black and Hispanic students.

TABLE 2: Achievement Trends for Poor and Minority Students

MODERATE PROGRESS	
California	New Jersey
Delaware	New York
Florida	Texas
Massachusetts	Washington

LIMITED PROGRESS	
Alabama	Mississippi
Arizona	North Carolina
Arkansas	Ohio
Connecticut	Pennsylvania
Georgia	South Carolina
Indiana	Tennessee
Kentucky	Virginia
Louisiana	Wyoming
Maryland	

MINIMAL PROGRESS	
Michigan	Oregon
Nevada	Rhode Island
New Mexico	West Virginia

NO PROGRESS	
Alaska	Minnesota
Colorado	Missouri
Hawaii	Nebraska*
Idaho	Oklahoma
Illinois	Utah
Iowa	Wisconsin
Kansas	

INSUFFICIENT DATA**	
Maine	North Dakota
Montana	South Dakota
New Hampshire	Vermont

** Nebraska registered a slight decline for its low-income 4th graders in reading*
*** These states had too few minority students to measure reliably.*

TABLE 3: Education Reform Grades by Rank

RANK	STATES	EDUCATION REFORM GPA	EDUCATION REFORM GRADE
1	Arizona	2.75	B-
2	New Mexico	2.67	B-
3	California	2.50	B-
4	Texas	2.42	C+
5	Louisiana	2.27	C+
6	Delaware	2.25	C+
6	New York	2.25	C+
6	Ohio	2.25	C+
9	Massachusetts	2.18	C+
10	Georgia	2.17	C+
10	Michigan	2.17	C+
12	Indiana	2.09	C
12	Minnesota	2.09	C
14	Colorado	2.08	C
14	Florida	2.08	C
16	Maryland	2.00	C
16	South Carolina	2.00	C
16	Utah	2.00	C
19	North Carolina	1.92	C
20	Alabama	1.82	C-
20	Nevada	1.82	C-
22	New Jersey	1.75	C-
23	Pennsylvania	1.73	C-
24	Idaho	1.64	C-
25	Virginia	1.55	C-
26	Arkansas	1.45	D+
26	Mississippi	1.45	D+
28	Illinois	1.42	D+
29	Tennessee	1.40	D+
30	Missouri	1.25	D+
30	Wisconsin	1.25	D+
32	Oklahoma	1.18	D+
33	Alaska	1.09	D
33	Kentucky	1.09	D
33	Oregon	1.09	D
33	Rhode Island	1.09	D
37	Maine	1.00	D
37	Washington	1.00	D
39	Connecticut	0.91	D
39	Hawaii	0.91	D
39	Kansas	0.91	D
39	South Dakota	0.91	D
43	Iowa	0.67	D-
43	Wyoming	0.67	D-
45	Montana	0.64	D-
45	West Virginia	0.64	D-
47	North Dakota	0.56	D-
48	Nebraska	0.55	D-
49	New Hampshire	0.50	D-
50	Vermont	0.44	F
NATIONAL AVERAGE		**1.53**	**C-**

** The letter grades for all indicators were averaged to create this GPA. A=4.0, B=3.0, etc.*

TABLE 4: Overall State Grades for Student Achievement, Achievement Trends, and Education Reform

STATES	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	EDUCATION REFORM
Alabama	F	Limited Progress	C-
Alaska	D+	No Progress	D
Arizona	D	Limited Progress	B-
Arkansas	D	Limited Progress	D+
California	D	Moderate Progress	B-
Colorado	D+	No Progress	C
Connecticut	D	Limited Progress	D
Delaware	D	Moderate Progress	C+
Florida	D	Moderate Progress	C
Georgia	D-	Limited Progress	C+
Hawaii	D	No Progress	D
Idaho	D+	No Progress	C-
Illinois	D-	No Progress	D+
Indiana	D-	Limited Progress	C
Iowa	D-	No Progress	D-
Kansas	D	No Progress	D
Kentucky	D	Limited Progress	D
Louisiana	F	Limited Progress	C+
Maine	•	N/A	D
Maryland	D+	Limited Progress	C
Massachusetts	D	Moderate Progress	C+
Michigan	D-	Minimal Progress	C+
Minnesota	D	No Progress	C
Mississippi	F	Limited Progress	D+
Missouri	D	No Progress	D+
Montana	•	N/A	D-
Nebraska	D-	No Progress	D-
Nevada	D-	Minimal Progress	C-
New Hampshire	•	N/A	D-
New Jersey	D+	Moderate Progress	C-
New Mexico	D-	Minimal Progress	B-
New York	D	Moderate Progress	C+
North Carolina	D	Limited Progress	C
North Dakota	•	N/A	D-
Ohio	D	Limited Progress	C+
Oklahoma	D	No Progress	D+
Oregon	D	Minimal Progress	D
Pennsylvania	D	Limited Progress	C-
Rhode Island	D-	Minimal Progress	D
South Carolina	D	Limited Progress	C
South Dakota	•	N/A	D
Tennessee	D-	Limited Progress	D+
Texas	D	Moderate Progress	C+
Utah	D+	No Progress	C
Vermont	•	N/A	F
Virginia	D+	Limited Progress	C-
Washington	D	Moderate Progress	D
West Virginia	D	Minimal Progress	D-
Wisconsin	D	No Progress	D+
Wyoming	D+	Limited Progress	D-

• *This state had insufficient data.*

Reader's Guide

This report is deeply and unabashedly judgmental about what's important in education—what's working and what's not—in the 50 states. Readers will want to understand the values and policy preferences that underlie it. They may wish to start with Chester Finn's essay, "The Future of Education Reform," which explains Fordham's school reform principles. Next, one might turn to "Measuring Education Reform & Results," where we discuss the indicators used to generate the grades in this report. Here you will also find a snapshot of nationwide findings for student achievement, achievement trends, and education reform. Finally, in the individual state reports, you will find grades, detailed data, and brief essays about education reform and results for each jurisdiction.

Acknowledgments

Staff assistant Sarah Kim played a crucial role in this project. A recent Georgetown University graduate with an eye for detail and a knack for crunching numbers, she helped to develop the indicators, gathered and crunched the requisite data, and monitored data quality throughout. In addition, she oversaw interns Tal Kerem, Coby Loup, and Jennifer DeBoer as they collected, checked, and re-checked this information.

Fordham president Chester E. Finn, Jr. and vice president Michael J. Petrilli made final decisions regarding the inclusion of indicators, the grading scales, and the report's editorial positions.

To produce the state write-ups that accompany the data, the Foundation secured the services of several veteran journalists (among them: Jolee Barry, Michael Leaser, Andrew Mollison, Meghan Mullen, Kate Rix, Alexander Russo, and Adam Schaeffer) who applied their talents to the task of telling the stories behind the numbers. The difficult job of tracking down and interviewing education, political, and advocacy leaders was further complicated by the fact that most of the work was completed in the middle of summer. They got the job done, however, and their essays provide a closer look at the sometimes hopeful, sometimes frustrating, often ambiguous world of education reform at the state level.

Martin A. Davis, Jr., senior writer and editor at the Foundation, oversaw these writers and their work. His task was eased by freelance editor Peter Meyer and Foundation associate writer and editor Liam Julian, who edited the many drafts submitted by our writers. In addition, Liam handled much of the proofreading.

Finally, the design talents of Holli Rathman are evident throughout these pages. Her keen eye and commitment to producing readable pages on tight deadlines will be appreciated by all who spend time with this report.

The Future of Education Reform

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

In appraising states' progress in reforming their K-12 education systems, which we intend henceforth to do on a regular basis, one must begin by recounting why reform is needed and then explaining exactly what one means by that overused word.

The central problem facing American education today was diagnosed back in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in its seminal report, *A Nation at Risk*. Its ominous conclusions: our children aren't learning enough and our schools aren't effective enough.

Indeed, that problem has worsened since its publication. Student achievement in the U.S. remains essentially flat, even as the demands of a twenty-first century economy stiffen and the education systems of other lands outpace ours. Not only does this situation menace our national prosperity and security, it also jeopardizes our domestic tranquility due to persistent and wide gaps between the sectors of the population that are receiving a reasonably good education and those that are not.

The U.S. urgently needs to become a nation in which every child learns to his or her full potential between kindergarten and twelfth grade. That means nearly every young person must become proficient in the skills and knowledge contained in essential subjects and thus prepared for higher education, citizenship, and the modern workplace. We must become a society that is not split by intolerable achievement gaps. We must become a land of high-performing schools—and a country in which one can freely choose among such schools.

That we aren't there today—and haven't moved much closer since yesterday—is the key argument for education reform. But what exactly does that term mean?

The dictionary doesn't get us very far. Used as a verb, Webster's tells us, "reform" means "to amend or improve by change of form or removal of faults or abuses." Deployed as a noun, it means "amendment of what is defective, vicious, corrupt, or depraved."

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In education, alas, "reform" has come to mean everything from school uniforms to vouchers, from new computer software to draconian high school exit tests. Entire organizations build their very names around the word "reform" without ever really saying which of a thousand kinds they are promoting, or how exactly their favorite nostrums will lead America toward the twenty-first century education arrangements that it needs.

At Fordham, we're more specific. Our sailboat has a centerboard and our cosmos a pole star. For almost a quarter century, Fordham and its antecedent, the Educational Excellence Network, have espoused a clear reform credo. Its words have changed slightly over the years but its thrust has stayed the same. We cling to four core principles, all of them keys to getting the improved achievement results that we seek.

- *All parents should have the opportunity to select among a variety of high-quality schools for their children.* It's immoral to trap children in bad schools when there are better schools they could attend. Yet it's just as wrong to suppose that any school is good enough so long as parents choose it for their kids.

- *The path to increased student learning is to set ambitious standards, employ rigorous assessments, and hold students, teachers, and schools accountable for performance.* It is often and wisely noted that if you don't know where you're headed, any route will take you there. Fundamental to sound education is setting forth specific skills and knowledge that children need to acquire in various subjects and grade levels—and constructing both a reliable tracking system by which to know how well those things are being learned and an accountability system whereby palpable consequences befall those who don't, and who do—in order to achieve the desired results.

- *Every school should deliver a content-rich curriculum taught by knowledgeable teachers.* Too many education reformers devote themselves overmuch to structural arrangements (e.g., school choice, testing) or pedagogy (e.g., discovery learning, small-group instruction) and neglect the curriculum itself. Those who pay attention to curriculum too often settle for "basic skills" and limit themselves to reading and math. Yet selecting the right content across the full curriculum matters most for disadvantaged children who

are least apt to encounter it elsewhere, and ensuring that their teachers have mastered it is an essential precondition for students learning it.

- *Schools exist to meet the educational needs of children, not the interests of institutions or adults.* For too long, U.S. education policy has been shaped more by the concerns of the system's employees and the budgets, politics, and governance of its institutions than by what is in the best interest of its pupils. That has led to hyper-regulation and excessive rigidity, and to schools and educators unable to address children's real needs in ways that work best.

Each of those convictions is shared by some other reformers and organizations, but to our knowledge no other group takes *all* of them seriously. Some even contend that these precepts are in conflict, that, for example, choice-based reform cannot comfortably coexist with uniform standards, or that meeting children's needs and responding to parents' preferences clashes with a "content-rich curriculum" for all.

We concede that latent tensions among these beliefs demand careful balancing. But that's true of public policy in general, even life in general, where competing desiderata and values must inevitably be traded off and reconciled. (Consider the tension between economic growth and environmental protection, say, or between vouchsafing people as much quality healthcare as they need from doctors of their choice while minimizing the burden on taxpayers.)

Nobody said education reform was easy. But we're not kept awake by anxiety that our reform credo is internally inconsistent or that its elements cannot coexist. To the contrary. We've come to understand that they actually reinforce one another. For example:

Standards-based reform, particularly in its No Child Left Behind manifestation, turns out to be far more successful at identifying weak schools than at strengthening them. The upshot is millions of youngsters trapped in ineffective schools that stay that way, year after year. Interventions meant to fix those schools mostly fail. One remedy is to give these children other school options, i.e., to deploy the choice strategy as a practical solution to the greatest shortcoming of standards-based reform.

The buzzing school marketplace, by contrast, is full of hard-to-compare schools and ill-informed customers. It's a flawed market wherein novice parents, lacking objective information by which to make wise education choices for their kids, are easily beguiled by school claims or readily satisfied by verifiable aspects of a school (e.g., safety, location, or "caring teachers") that may have little to do with its educational effectiveness. The solution is obvious: clear, comparable data on school performance, data that come best from the workshop of standards-based reformers.

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Looking Toward Tomorrow

Taken together, the four pillars of our reform credo support a radically different approach to K-12 education than prevails today. Such a different future is what we at Fordham bend each day's effort to bring about and what prompts the choice of criteria and indicators by which we judge states' reform progress. Each indicator we have chosen for this report is directed in the long-run toward the strengthening of student learning. At day's end, that is what education is for.

The first three pillars line up with the three sets of criteria against which we have appraised states' education reform progress in this report. For the fourth pillar—meeting the educational needs of children—we tend increasingly to substitute a key set of operational freedoms without which schools have little prospect of meeting those needs and educators have scant opportunity to shape the means by which such needs can be addressed in the future. Because so little true deregulation has occurred in American public education, however, it's practically impossible to get reliable national data on the elements that we believe hold the greatest promise (e.g., empowerment of principals, or participation in true alternative-certification programs for teachers). Hence, in this first "report card," readers will find much discussion of deregulation in the fifty states—especially efforts at opening the teaching profession to individuals coming through alternate routes—but no actual grades or ratings. We hope to do better in later editions.

What sort of future do we envision? One in which no child is left behind and each is helped to learn as much as he or she is capable of in classrooms (or other settings) where the curriculum is rich and challenging; the lessons are stimulating; the young adults who emerge from K-12 schooling become contributing members of a prosperous and democratic society; history, geography, literature, languages, and the arts are treated as seriously as math, reading, and science; and schools differ in how they educate children but are all judged by high-quality assessments that in turn are aligned with challenging standards. Families have myriad choices among publicly financed schools—but all schools are evaluated and can be compared in relation to their pupils' performance vis-à-vis those standards, expressed both in absolute terms and in terms of the gains that youngsters make from one year to the next.

Within that framework of standards, accountability, and choice, educators have enormous autonomy and professional authority to run schools and conduct classrooms as they see fit. Educators are themselves well-educated, amply (but differentially) paid, and judged by their students' learning, which matters far more than paper credentials and rules. Bureaucratic controls of inputs, processes, and qualifications give

way to freedom *cum* accountability via demonstrated pupil achievement on the one hand and "marketplace" signals on the other. Principals decide who works in their schools—and deploy (and compensate) staff members as they think best. Teachers decide what kind of school (and principal) they want—and have wide freedom with respect to curriculum and pedagogy so long as they produce the necessary results.

Today's school systems give way to "portfolios" of diverse schools run by diverse entities, public, private and non-profit. Many such schools are still brick-and-mortar buildings, but more and more are "virtual," and a growing number are interesting hybrids.

Education funding varies with children's needs, and every penny follows them to the schools of their choice. Schools serving needy youngsters thus end up with larger budgets—and the wherewithal to employ more and better teachers.

Policy Levers

Some people, particularly along the Potomac, believe that the federal government bears primary responsibility for reforming American education. Others insist that "local control" is the only sound approach.

We beg to differ. Yes, local governance still matters and yes, Uncle Sam can help or hinder. But the lead responsibility for public education in this country rests with the fifty states, every one of which has constitutionally obligated itself to educate its citizens, every one of which has created a "system" for carrying out that obligation, every one of which sets most of the ground rules by which that system operates, and almost every one of which provides the lion's share of the funding for that system.

States are the policy epicenters of education reform, and if they don't get things right it's folly to think that Washington can do so or that more than a handful of local districts, left to their own devices, will do so. Uncle Sam can prod and incentivize, to be sure, and individual communities may go further if they are able. But state capitals are where the main education reform action is, and states are the proper units to monitor and judge.

That also places enormous pressure upon state policymakers from every imaginable interest group, advocacy organization, snake oil peddler, and voting bloc—pressure to change, pressure not to change, and pressure to change in certain (but not other) ways. Add up all those pressures and the usual result is stasis—a continuation of the status quo, most likely with more money and a few new bells and whistles. Bold reform is extremely difficult to enact, implement, and sustain. Even when it happens, it's usually piecemeal, set atop the traditional system rather than replacing that system.

Our goal in this report and its successors is to ignore those difficulties and hold states' feet to the policy fire with respect to their success in putting sound reform policies into operation.

Measuring Education Reform & Results

The mission of this report is to take the school reform principles described above and apply them to the performance to date of the 50 states. But at the end of the day, what matters most is whether students are learning. And even the latest snapshot of test scores leaves us wondering if a state is making gains, falling behind, or treading water. Thus, we also look at trends over time. So we came up with three grades for each state:

- Student Achievement
- Achievement Trends
- Education Reform

A crucial decision was to focus primarily on the performances of poor and minority students and on reforms that are most likely to boost their achievement. These are the students who have historically been most likely to fall through the cracks of our education system. Major reform efforts, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, are designed above all to boost their achievement. An examination of their progress over time is the best indicator, we think, of whether education reforms are getting results.

Of course that doesn't mean we're oblivious to the performances of white, Asian, or affluent students. Indeed, we opted not to measure "achievement gaps" because such benchmarks can create perverse incentives. After all, there are two ways to close a gap—by raising the achievement of students at the bottom or holding down the achievement of students at the top. The latter method is insidious and deserves no encouragement.

Some readers will dispute certain indicators. They'll also note that we are not the first group to give "report cards" to the states; *Education Week*'s respected annual *Quality Counts* series is probably the best known of this genre. Each of them, however, is driven by particular policy preferences and values. We believe that our method is superior for two reasons. First, because two-thirds of our assessment of each state is based on student learning results, the true coin of the education reform realm. Second, because the reforms we examine herein (and describe below) are those most apt to raise the achievement of the kids whose achievement most needs raising.

TABLE 5: Student Achievement: Indicators and National Results

INDICATOR	NATIONWIDE DATA
Black (Percentage of students at or above proficient)	
4th graders in **Reading** (2005 NAEP)	12
8th graders in **Math** (2005 NAEP)	8
8th graders in **Science** (2005 NAEP)	7
Hispanic (Percentage of students at or above proficient)	
4th graders in **Reading** (2005 NAEP)	15
8th graders in **Math** (2005 NAEP)	13
8th graders in **Science** (2005 NAEP)	10
Low-Income (Percentage of students at or above proficient)	
4th graders in **Reading** (2005 NAEP)	15
8th graders in **Math** (2005 NAEP)	13
8th graders in **Science** (2005 NAEP)	12
Percentage of **high school students** who have passed (with a score of 3 or above) at least one **AP exam** (College Board, 2006)	14.1
Percentage of **black** students who **graduate on time** from high school (*Diplomas Count*, 2006)	51.6
Percentage of **Hispanic** students who **graduate on time** from high school (*Diplomas Count*, 2006)	55.6

Student Achievement

Indicators and Calculations

Nine of our 12 student achievement indicators come from NAEP: the percentage of African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students who are proficient in fourth-grade reading, eighth-grade mathematics, and eighth-grade science. These are the three subjects for which state specific data exist. We chose fourth-grade reading because students who aren't reading by then are unlikely ever to catch up. We chose eighth-grade math and science because those are "gateway" subjects to success in high school and higher education. And we chose "at or above proficient" because that is the level which the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) believes all students should reach in order to be prepared for life in our economy and democracy. We understand that it's a high standard but, like President George W. Bush, we reject the "soft bigotry of low expectations."

We also included high school graduation rates as key student outcomes, again focusing on African-American and Hispanic children. Graduation data are notoriously unreliable; most states are struggling to develop a common approach. In the meantime, we chose

the best available method that yields data for most states: *Education Week*'s "Swanson" method, which examines graduation outcomes from ninth to twelfth grades, attempting to adjust for mobility and other factors.

Finally, we included an indicator about success in the Advanced Placement (AP) program, a measurable reflection of whether states are encouraging a broad swath of their student population to take rigorous coursework and preparing them to succeed in it. We measured the percentage of a state's high school students who had passed at least one AP exam by 2005. (We would have preferred to look at pass rates among poor and/or minority students, but the College Board does not provide these data in disaggregated form by state.)

For each indicator, we developed a grading scale to equate raw data to letter grades. These are shown in the appendix. We then averaged these marks (as with a student's grade-point average) to determine states' overall grades for student achievement (see appendix).

States that did not have data for a particular indicator were not penalized. However, in order for a state to be assigned a student achievement grade and included in the national rankings, it must have NAEP data for at least two out of the three subgroups (African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students) and for at least two out of the three subjects (reading, math, and science). This parameter excludes states with tiny minority populations (six in all). But the alternative would have been worse, as it would have presented an inaccurate picture. (Imagine this headline: "Maine leads nation in educating African-American and Hispanic students.")

▲

The grades for student achievement are dismal. The national average is a D; three states flunked, and none earned a grade higher than D+.

▲

It's also important to acknowledge that the focus on African-American and Hispanic students ignores other disadvantaged minority groups, which in some states comprise a significant proportion of the student population. For instance, several states have a sizeable Native American population. Unfortunately, they share the same disappointing NAEP scores as their black and Hispanic counterparts in more urbanized regions. (Only 13 percent of Montana's Native American fourth graders are at or above proficient in reading, for example.) However, in order to maintain a nationally comparable look across all states, we could not include these groups in the state grades, though we do highlight their performance in the state reports where appropriate.

Results

The grades for student achievement are dismal. The national average is a D; three states flunked, and none earned a grade higher than D+. Still, some states do better by their poor and minority students than others; top performers include such large, diverse states as Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland. In Virginia, for example, 26 percent of Hispanic fourth graders are at or above proficient in reading and 22 percent of Hispanic eighth graders are at or above proficient in science. Of course, these are still desperately low numbers, hardly worth celebrating.

While southern states dominate the bottom of the list, there are a few surprises there, too. Illinois, Nebraska, Nevada, and Rhode Island all rank among the lowest on the performance of their most disadvantaged students.

TABLE 6: National Performance on Student Achievement Indicators by Major Student Subgroups

INDICATOR	WHITE*	BLACK	HISPANIC	NON–LOW-INCOME*	LOW-INCOME
Percentage of **4th graders** at or above proficient in **reading** (2005 NAEP)	39	12	15	42	15
Percentage of **8th graders** at or above proficient in **math** (2005 NAEP)	37	8	13	39	13
Percentage of **8th graders** at or above proficient in **science** (2005 NAEP)	38	7	10	38	12
Percentage of **high school students** who have passed (at a 3 or above) at least one **AP exam** (College Board, 2006)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of students who graduate on time **from high school** (*Diplomas Count* 2006)	76.2	51.6	55.6	n/a	n/a

** The White and Non–Low-Income student subgroups are not used in state grades in this report, but are shown here for comparison purposes.*

In Illinois, for example, only 9 percent of black fourth graders are at or above proficient in reading and just 10 percent of low-income eighth graders have reached that level in math. This means that most of the state's poor and minority children are ill-prepared for success in later life.

Some state officials will surely argue that our grading scale is too difficult, especially when it comes to NAEP results. We concede that NAEP's proficient level is a high bar, though one that indicates readiness for college and the workplace. Would a state really deserve an A if less than half of its students failed to reach this level? As it is, a state can earn an honors grade with just one-third of its students reaching proficiency—if anything, we are being too generous.

Furthermore, were the same scale applied to white students, their national average would be a B. While such marks aren't stellar, they dramatize the real problem: inexcusably low achievement for poor and minority youngsters. The numbers are particularly bleak for African-American students in science, where only seven percent of eighth graders have reached proficiency. Barely half of all black students graduate from high school on time. In other words, the achievement gap is miles wide—and a national shame.

Achievement Trends

Indicators and Calculations

For this rating, we again turned to NAEP and analyzed trends for African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students at the proficient level or above in fourth-grade reading, eighth-grade math, and eighth-grade science.

Trends were examined using NCES's data explorer, which measures "statistically significant progress" between two comparison years. Statistically significant progress indicates that the observed changes in percentages are not likely to be the result of sampling or measurement errors, but arise from dependable population differences. (The National Center for Education Statistics is a useful resource for further information on this topic.)

In general, we looked at whether a state's black, Hispanic, and low-income students made significant progress from 1992 to 2005 in reading; 1992 to 2005 in math; and 1996 to 2005 in science. Some states did not start participating in NAEP until later, however (it was optional until 2003); for those, we set the starting date whenever their involvement commenced.

▲

...the nation as a whole has shown strong progress in math over the past decade or so, while reading and science achievement have been relatively flat.

▲

We then rated each state on the degree to which its student groups made significant progress in the three subjects.

Results

No state made "widespread" progress over the past decade and a half, but 31 states have made some progress and eight—**California, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas** and **Washington**—showed moderate gains during that time for poor and minority students. Their diversity is striking: big and small, urban and rural, red and blue, and geographically dispersed. Seventeen states made limited progress and another six states made minimal progress. However, thirteen states made *no* significant progress with these populations. Five of them—Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin—are also found in the bottom half of the achievement rankings, meaning that their lack of progress is all the more disappointing.

As shown in Table 7, more states made gains in math than in reading and science; twenty states demonstrated significant progress for African-American youngsters in math, ten for Hispanic students, and twenty-four for low-income students. This isn't too surprising; the nation as a whole has shown strong progress in math over the past decade or so, while reading and science achievement have been relatively flat.

Education Reform

Indicators and Calculations

In his essay, Finn explains the four broad policy objectives that Fordham believes are necessary to boost student achievement, especially for disadvantaged children:

1. Ensure that all children have access to a broad, **content-rich curriculum**;
2. Do **standards-based reform** right;
3. Do **school choice** right; and
4. **Deregulate** the education system and reform its governance.

Unfortunately, reformers have made so little progress on the deregulation front that we can't even find reliable data with which to track state policy. We must save that for a future report. For now, we have deployed nine Education Reform indicators grouped into the first three categories above: **curricular content**, **standards-based reform**, and **school choice**.

None of these indicators is perfect—in part because so many of these reforms are in their infancy or not broadly applied across the states. Hence, reliable data are hard to come by. These indicators are likely to change in future reports as stronger data become available. Still, they are reasonable gauges of bold school reform efforts—those that are plausibly linked to gains in student achievement. (See our analysis below.)

FIGURE 1: Definitions for "Trends in Student Achievement" Ratings

RATING	DEFINITION	NUMBER OF STATES WITH RATING
Widespread Progress	Significant progress in all three subjects (reading, math, and science) by all three subgroups (low-income, African-American,and Hispanic)	0
Moderate Progress	Significant progress in at least two subjects and by at least two subgroups; or significant progress by all three subgroups and in at least two subjects	8
Limited Progress	Significant progress in one subject by two subgroups or in two subjects by one subgroup	17
Minimal Progress	Significant progress in one subject by one subgroup	6
No Progress	No significant progress in any subject by any subgroup	13
Insufficient Data	Data were available in only one subject or for only one student subgroup or not at all	6
TOTAL		50

TABLE 7: Trends in Student Achievement: Indicators and National Results

INDICATOR	NUMBER OF STATES MAKING SIGNIFICANT GAINS AT THE "AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT" LEVEL	NUMBER OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black Students		
4th graders in **reading** *1992-2005**	7	39
8th graders in **math** *1992-2005**	20	32
8th graders in **science** *1996-2005**	2	29
Hispanic Students		
4th graders in **reading** *1992-2005**	9	26
8th graders in **math** *1992-2005**	10	21
8th graders in **science** *1996-2005**	1	19
Low-Income Students		
4th graders in **reading** *1998-2005**	6	50
8th graders in **math** *1996-2005**	24	50
8th graders in **science** *1996-2005**	6	41

** Some states did not participate in NAEP until later. Their start date corresponds with that later year.*

TABLE 8: Student Achievement Grades by State

STATES	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GPA	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RANK
Alabama	0.22	F	43
Alaska	1.38	D+	5
Arizona	1.00	D	15
Arkansas	1.00	D	15
California	0.92	D	25
Colorado	1.17	D+	8
Connecticut	1.00	D	15
Delaware	1.00	D	15
Florida	1.00	D	15
Georgia	0.67	D-	36
Hawaii	0.90	D	26
Idaho	1.43	D+	4
Illinois	0.75	D-	32
Indiana	0.75	D-	32
Iowa	0.67	D-	36
Kansas	0.89	D	27
Kentucky	1.11	D	9
Louisiana	0.44	F	42
Maine	•	•	•
Maryland	1.33	D+	6
Massachusetts	1.08	D	12
Michigan	0.75	D-	32
Minnesota	1.00	D	15
Mississippi	0.22	F	43
Missouri	1.00	D	15
Montana	•	•	•
Nebraska	0.56	D-	40
Nevada	0.50	D-	41
New Hampshire	•	•	•
New Jersey	1.33	D+	6
New Mexico	0.75	D-	32
New York	1.11	D	9
North Carolina	1.08	D	12
North Dakota	•	•	•
Ohio	1.09	D	11
Oklahoma	0.83	D	29
Oregon	0.83	D	29
Pennsylvania	0.89	D	27
Rhode Island	0.58	D-	39
South Carolina	1.00	D	15
South Dakota	•	•	•
Tennessee	0.63	D-	38
Texas	1.08	D	12
Utah	1.44	D+	2
Vermont	•	•	•
Virginia	1.45	D+	1
Washington	1.00	D	15
West Virginia	1.00	D	15
Wisconsin	0.83	D	29
Wyoming	1.44	D+	2
NATIONAL AVERAGE	**0.93**	**D**	•

• *This state had insufficient data.*

Calculating Education Reform Grades

We chose to weight three of the nine indicators (one per category) more than the others; these are noted below. Each is a particularly good measure of its respective education reform principle and its available data are especially reliable.

We equated data for each indicator into grades, and then averaged the grades and developed a Grade Point Average for each state, as a teacher would for students. (We used the same scale for the Student Achievement marks in the appendix.)

Curricular Content

Here we measure:

- The quality of state academic standards (this indicator is double-weighted)
- The curricular breadth of states' high school graduation tests (if any)
- The extent of states' embrace of content-rich school models (Core Knowledge and International Baccalaureate)

Together, these are reasonable indicators of whether a state is encouraging its schools to offer all children a broad education—full of rich, challenging academic content across a "liberal arts" curriculum.

State standards are the foundation of all systemic reform efforts; moreover, as aspirational statements of what states hope or expect their students to learn, they're a good clue to state leaders' views of what curriculum is important.

A **broad-based graduation test** signals to students and schools that all of the subjects of the curriculum are important, not just basic skills in reading and math. (Of course, half the states don't have any graduation test, sending no useful signals to students at all.) We count the number of the following subjects tested: English/language arts, mathematics, science, and history.

A high incidence of **Core Knowledge or International Baccalaureate** schools demonstrates a welcoming state policy environment for content-rich, rigorous curricula. (No state has an overwhelming number of these schools but some have more than others.)

Standards-Based Reform

Here we measure:

- The degree to which poor and minority students are included in determinations of "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) under NCLB (this indicator is double-weighted)

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...setting clear, rigorous standards across the academic curriculum; holding schools to account for helping all their students attain those standards; and giving families education options is a winning combination, especially for our most disadvantaged students.

▲

- The rigor of state definitions of "proficiency" in reading and math (compared to NAEP)
- The degree to which states have aligned their high school exit standards with college entrance requirements

In combination, these measures show whether states are serious about holding their schools to account for the achievement of all students—without playing games or lowering bars—and whether the state is focused on the most critical K-12 outcome: college readiness.

TABLE 9: Achievement Trends by State

STATE	TRENDS RATING
Alabama	Limited Progress
Alaska	No Progress
Arizona	Limited Progress
Arkansas	Limited Progress
California	Moderate Progress
Colorado	No Progress
Connecticut	Limited Progress
Delaware	Moderate Progress
Florida	Moderate Progress
Georgia	Limited Progress
Hawaii	No Progress
Idaho	No Progress
Illinois	No Progress
Indiana	Limited Progress
Iowa	No Progress
Kansas	No Progress
Kentucky	Limited Progress
Louisiana	Limited Progress
Maine	N/A
Maryland	Limited Progress
Massachusetts	Moderate Progress
Michigan	Minimal Progress
Minnesota	No Progress
Mississippi	Limited Progress
Missouri	No Progress
Montana	N/A
Nebraska*	No Progress
Nevada	Minimal Progress
New Hampshire	N/A
New Jersey	Moderate Progress
New Mexico	Minimal Progress
New York	Moderate Progress
North Carolina	Limited Progress
North Dakota	N/A
Ohio	Limited Progress
Oklahoma	No Progress
Oregon	Minimal Progress
Pennsylvania	Limited Progress
Rhode Island	Minimal Progress
South Carolina	Limited Progress
South Dakota	N/A
Tennessee	Limited Progress
Texas	Moderate Progress
Utah	No Progress
Vermont	N/A
Virginia	Limited Progress
Washington	Moderate Progress
West Virginia	Minimal Progress
Wisconsin	No Progress
Wyoming	Limited Progress

N/A These states had too few minority students to measure reliably.
** Nebraska registered a slight decline for their low-income 4th graders in reading from 2002-2005.*

TABLE 10: National Education Reform Results by Category

CATEGORY	NATIONAL AVERAGE (GPA)	NATIONAL AVERAGE GRADE	STATES EARNING HONORS GRADES (A'S OR B'S)	STATES EARNING D'S OR F'S
Curricular Content	1.51	C-	12	25
Standards-Based Reform	1.74	C	10	16
School Choice	1.36	D+	12	31

The **inclusion or exclusion of poor and minority students in AYP determinations** influences the incentives under which schools operate. Some states have learned that they can exclude many students from their accountability system by setting a high "minimum subgroup size" under NCLB. For example, some states set that number at 100, meaning that if a student subgroup (such as African-Americans) has fewer than 100 members in a particular school, that group's performance doesn't count separately toward a school's mark. If schools can make AYP while their poor or minority students perform poorly, they are less likely to focus energy and resources on boosting the achievement of those youngsters. States that are serious about closing the achievement gap also work hard to ensure that every child is counted.

A **rigorous definition of proficiency** sets a suitably high bar for students and schools, and indicates a state's honesty with its citizens and taxpayers. States that publish results purporting to show almost all students to be proficient create a culture of complacency—when in virtually all states, most students could and should be learning much more than they currently are.

The degree of **alignment of high school exit standards with college entrance requirements** demonstrates whether states have grounded their entire standards-based reform effort in the expectations of the real world—i.e., getting K-12 graduates ready for what comes next.

▲

These education reform indicators are reasonable gauges of bold school reform efforts—those that are plausibly linked to gains in student achievement.

▲

School Choice

Here we measure:

- The percentage of states' public school students who are enrolled in **charter schools** (this indicator is double-weighted)
- The degree to which **charter schools** receive **fair funding**
- The availability of **various forms of school choice** (vouchers, tax credits or deductions, inter-district choice, and dual enrollment)

Together, these reasonably gauge a state's aggressiveness in giving education options to families and spurring the creation of new, and better, schools.

Charter school market share is a rough indicator of the charter-friendliness of state policy. States with larger market share have given more parents choices and are thus doing more to spur competition within the public school sector.

Fair charter school funding is an important precondition for expanding access to charter schools and enabling their quality. If states really want these new options to succeed, they need to provide the wherewithal.

The **incidence of other school choice measures**—including private school vouchers, tax credits or deductions for private school expenses, public school choice programs that allow students to transfer between districts,

FIGURE 2: Curricular Content: Indicators and National Results

INDICATOR	GRADING SCALE	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Average grade issued by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation for the **quality of state standards** in English, mathematics, science, U.S. history, and world history (2006)	A = 3.5 – 4.0 B = 2.5 – 3.49 C = 1.5 – 2.49 D = .5 – 1.49 F = < .5	1.59
Number of **academic subjects** (among English/language arts, mathematics, science, and history) included in the state's high school **graduation exam** (via *Education Counts*)	A = 4 B = 3 C = 2 D = 1 F = 0	(Between 0 and 2)
Percentage of a state's schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **International Baccalaureate**	A = 5.0-6.5 B = 3.0-4.9 C = 1.0-2.9 D = 0.4-0.9 F = <0.3	1.13

Note: Detailed source information is available in the appendix.

and dual enrollment (high school and college) programs—demonstrates a state's commitment to giving parents a range of options and creating a competitive environment.

Results

In the category of Education Reform, three states earn honor grades—**Arizona, New Mexico**, and **California**—while half receive D's or F's. The national average is a C-. The cellar is occupied by Vermont—once considered an education reform "poster child."

In general, states' strongest performance came in the standards-based reform category, where the average grade is a C and ten states earned B's, undoubtedly showing the pressure of NCLB and close to two decades of state-level attention to this reform strategy. In many cases, however, the standards and curricular expectations underlying standards-based reform are themselves inadequate, as indicated by states' average grade of C- in curricular content. Most states received their worst marks (D+ on average) for school choice, with thirty-one earning D's or F's; unfortunately, options like charter schools are still scarce in most places.

Does Education Reform Lead to Gains in Achievement?

Perhaps this report's most interesting finding can be glimpsed in Table 11 (on page 21): the top ten education reform states all made at least some progress—and in five cases moderate progress—

▲

...the top ten education reform states all made at least some progress...in boosting the achievement of their poor and minority students over the last decade or so.

▲

in boosting the achievement of their poor and minority students over the last decade or so.

While this is not definitive scientific proof, it does suggest that setting clear, rigorous standards across the academic curriculum, holding schools to account for helping all their students attain those standards, and giving families education options is a winning combination, especially for our most disadvantaged students.

Yet half the states—including such big population centers as **Illinois** and **Wisconsin**—show few signs of life when it comes to these fundamental reforms. Are we to conclude that they're satisfied with their student achievement results? With single-digit (and low teen) percentages of minority students who are reading and doing math proficiently? Are their leaders unable or unwilling to overcome entrenched interests in order to install powerful engines of change? Or is a major push for education reform—and resulting progress in student achievement—just around the corner? Please turn to the state report section to find out.

FIGURE 3: Standards-Based Reform: Indicators and National Results

INDICATOR	GRADING SCALE	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Percentage of poor and minority students excluded from states' **"Adequate Yearly Progress"** determinations (Associated Press, 2005)	A = 0 – 5 B = 6-10 C = 11-20 D = 21-40 F = 41-100	10.9
Rigor of the state's **definition of "proficiency"** in reading and math, based on *Education Next* comparison of student results on state assessments and NAEP	N/A	C
Degree to which the state has aligned its high school exit standards with college and employer demands (Achieve's *Closing the Expectations Gap*, February 2006)	A = Has aligned C = Plans to align F = No plans to align	Between C and F

Note: Detailed source information is available in the appendix.

FIGURE 4: School Choice: Indicators and National Results

INDICATOR	GRADING SCALE	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Percent of public school students enrolled in charter schools (National Center for Education Statistics and Center for Education Reform 2006)	A = >4 B = 3-4 C = 2-3 D = 1-2 F = <1	2.14
Percentage gap between per-pupil funding of charter schools and district schools (according to The Thomas B. Fordham Institute analysis for 2002-2003 school year)	A = <5 B = 6-15 C = 16-25 D = 26-35 F = >35	20.8
Number of these choice options in place: publicly funded scholarships for private school attendance (i.e., vouchers); tax credits or deductions; inter-district public school choice; and dual high school/college enrollment (via the Heritage Foundation, 2005).	A = 4 B = 3 C = 2 D = 1 F = 0	2

Note: Detailed source information is available in the appendix.

TABLE 11: Does Education Reform Drive Gains in Student Achievement?

EDUCATION REFORM RANK	STATES	EDUCATION REFORM GRADE	ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS
1	Arizona	B-	↑↑
2	New Mexico	B-	↑
3	California	B-	↑↑↑
4	Texas	C+	↑↑↑
5	Louisiana	C+	↑↑
6	Delaware	C+	↑↑↑
6	New York	C+	↑↑↑
6	Ohio	C+	↑↑
9	Massachusetts	C+	↑↑↑
10	Georgia	C+	↑↑
10	Michigan	C+	↑
12	Indiana	C	↑↑
12	Minnesota	C	=
14	Colorado	C	=
14	Florida	C	↑↑↑
16	Maryland	C	↑↑
16	South Carolina	C	↑↑
16	Utah	C	=
19	North Carolina	C	↑↑
20	Alabama	C-	↑↑
20	Nevada	C-	↑
22	New Jersey	C-	↑↑↑
23	Pennsylvania	C-	↑↑
24	Idaho	C-	=
25	Virginia	C-	↑↑
26	Arkansas	D+	↑↑
26	Mississippi	D+	↑↑
28	Illinois	D+	=
29	Tennessee	D+	↑↑
30	Missouri	D+	=
30	Wisconsin	D+	=
32	Oklahoma	D+	=
33	Alaska	D	=
33	Kentucky	D	↑↑
33	Oregon	D	↑
33	Rhode Island	D	↑
37	Maine	D	N/A
37	Washington	D	↑↑↑
39	Connecticut	D	↑↑
39	Hawaii	D	=
39	Kansas	D	=
39	South Dakota	D	N/A
43	Iowa	D-	=
44	Montana	D-	N/A
44	West Virginia	D-	↑
46	North Dakota	D-	N/A
47	Nebraska	D-	=
47	Wyoming	D-	↑↑
49	New Hampshire	D-	N/A
50	Vermont	F	N/A

KEY

= : No Progress

↑ : Minimal

↑↑ : Limited

↑↑↑ : Moderate

↑↑↑↑ : Widespread

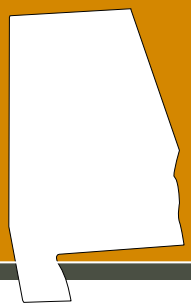
N/A : Insufficient Data

TABLE 12: Education Reform Grades for Each Indicator and State

STATE	CURRICULAR CONTENT			STANDARDS-BASED REFORM		
	QUALITY OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS	BREADTH OF EXIT EXAMS	CORE KNOWLEDGE/ IB	RIGOR OF "PROFICIENCY"	RIGOR OF AYP DEFINITION	K-16 ALIGNMENT
Alabama	B-	A	D	D-	B	C
Alaska	F	C	D	D+	D	F
Arizona	B	C	A	D+	B	C
Arkansas	D-	F	C	B-	C	A
California	A	C	C	B-	B	F
Colorado	C-	F	A	D	C	F
Connecticut	D-	F	D	C	C	F
Delaware	C-	F	C	C-	B	C
Florida	D-	C	C	C	C	F
Georgia	B+	A	C	D-	B	C
Hawaii	F	F	C	B+	F	F
Idaho	D	C	D	D	D	C
Illinois	C-	F	D	C	B	F
Indiana	A	C	C	C-	C	A
Iowa	•	F	F	D+	D	F
Kansas	C-	F	D	C-	D	F
Kentucky	D	F	D	C+	D	A
Louisiana	C	B	D	C	A	C
Maine	D-	F	F	A	F	C
Maryland	C	A	C	C	A	C
Massachusetts	A	C	C	A	D	F
Michigan	D-	F	D	C-	C	A
Minnesota	C+	C	C	•	D	C
Mississippi	D+	A	F	D	A	F
Missouri	D-	F	D	A	C	F
Montana	F	F	F	D-	C	F
Nebraska	D+	F	F	D-	D	F
Nevada	C-	C	D	C	A	F
New Hampshire	D-	F	F	•	D	F
New Jersey	C-	C	D	C	B	C
New Mexico	C-	A	C	C+	A	F
New York	B+	A	C	C	B	A
North Carolina	C-	B	C	F	C	C
North Dakota	D	F	F	C	•	F
Ohio	D+	A	D	C	C	C
Oklahoma	C	F	C	F	D	A
Oregon	D	F	C	C	D	F
Pennsylvania	D	F	D	C	B	F
Rhode Island	D+	F	F	B-	C	F
South Carolina	B-	C	B	A	B	F
South Dakota	C-	F	F	D+	F	A
Tennessee	C-	B	C	•	C	F
Texas	C-	A	C	D+	B	A
Utah	D+	C	C	D+	B	F
Vermont	D	F	F	•	F	•
Virginia	B+	A	C	D+	C	F
Washington	D-	C	D	C	D	F
West Virginia	C-	F	F	D-	F	F
Wisconsin	D-	F	D	C-	D	F
Wyoming	F	F	C	A	F	F

• *This state had insufficient data.*

STATE	SCHOOL CHOICE			OVERALL GRADE
	% STUDENTS IN CHARTER SCHOOLS	CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING	BREADTH OF SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS	
Alabama	F	•	F	C-
Alaska	B	•	F	D
Arizona	A	C	C	B-
	F	•	D	D+
California	B	D	C	B-
Colorado	A	C	C	C
Connecticut	F	•	D	D
Delaware	A	D	C	C+
Florida	A	B	A	C
Georgia	D	D	C	C+
Hawaii	C	•	D	D
Idaho	B	•	C	C-
Illinois	F	C	C	D+
Indiana	F	•	D	C
Iowa	F	•	B	D-
Kansas	F	•	D	D
Kentucky	F	•	D	D
Louisiana	C	•	D	C+
Maine	F	•	B	D
Maryland	F	•	F	C
Massachusetts	C	•	C	C+
Michigan	A	B	C	C+
Minnesota	C	A	B	C
Mississippi	F	•	D	D+
Missouri	D	D	D	D+
Montana	F	•	D	D-
Nebraska	F	•	D	D-
Nevada	D	•	D	C-
New Hampshire	F	•	D	D-
New Jersey	D	C	C	C-
New Mexico	B	A	C	B-
New York	F	C	D	C+
North Carolina	C	B	D	C
North Dakota	F	•	D	D-
Ohio	A	D	B	C+
Oklahoma	F	•	D	D+
Oregon	D	•	C	D
Pennsylvania	B	•	C	C-
Rhode Island	D	•	D	D
South Carolina	D	F	D	C
South Dakota	F	•	D	D
Tennessee	F	•	D	D+
Texas	C	B	D	C+
Utah	B	•	B	C
Vermont	F	•	C	F
Virginia	F	•	F	C-
Washington	F	•	C	D
West Virginia	F	•	C	D-
Wisconsin	B	D	B	D+
Wyoming	F	•	D	D-



ALABAMA

Rumbling, Bumbling, and Stumbling Toward the Goal Line

F STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Where is "Bear" Bryant when you need him? The legendary Alabama football coach would hear none of the claims that a poor state university couldn't win, and six national championships proved him right. The state's K–12 system needs a leader equal in vision and determination to Bryant.

With no more than 12 percent of its minority and poor students demonstrating proficiency or above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in any subject, the Heart of Dixie ranks dead last, along with Mississippi, in student achievement.

"Just hold on," says Joseph Morton, superintendent of the Alabama Department of Education, "because there is this wave [of higher-achieving students] coming. We're betting the farm that the scores are going to be improved and start to show up. It won't be the full picture, but we'll start to see some really exciting changes take place."

Some citizens don't share Morton's optimism. "If you talk to parents and local school boards," says Michael Ciamarra, vice president of the Alabama Policy Institute, "they are so tired of promises from the state Department of Education that 'things are going to get better. Just give us time, give us more money, things will always get better.'"

Thanks to a humming economy (auto manufacturing and health care especially) and a statute that requires surplus sales and income taxes to go to education, lawmakers finally have some money to spend on education programs. And spend they have.

"People are so tired of promises from the state Department of Education that 'things are going to get better. Just give us time, give us more money,' it says, and things will get better."

Some of their choices look good. The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) is an eight-year-old project that involves retraining every elementary teacher in concert with scientifically-based reading research. It seems to be having some positive effects on students.

Mark Dixon, education advisor to Republican Governor Bob Riley, cites gains in reading on two statewide tests between 2004 and 2005 as evidence the program is working. "We hope to begin expanding ARI into the higher grades, so that all Alabama students can have access to this proven methodology." The state has raised funding for ARI from $12 million per annum in 2002 to $78 million this year.

Spending is also on the rise for setting up a math and science initiative, expanding the number of Advanced Placement programs offered students, and rewarding schools that boost the achievement levels of minority subgroups. And there's more to come. Dixon says the governor will consider forthcoming recommendations from a commission that is exploring financial incentives for keeping good teachers in the classroom and for bringing top-quality teachers into poor school districts. Whether alternative certification routes into the classroom will play a role is not yet known.

Charter schools, however, aren't benefiting from the state's windfall. Alabama currently

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	2.60	B-	9	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.39%	D	38	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	7.52%	B	10	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D-	40	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	0	F	47	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.82**	**C-**	**20**	**50**

has no charters and probably won't anytime soon. That's because so many political and education leaders believe the state is on the cusp of turning student achievement around. James McLean, who's been involved in Alabama's education system for 25 years and serves as the dean of the education school at the flagship university, says, "Let's fix the schools—not scatter the students." It's a popular, if misguided, sentiment. Dixon feels that, with the momentum public schools have, the state should continue investing in existing schools and people.

This stance may explain why Alabama has no school choice other than the type mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act, which theoretically allows students in failing public schools to transfer to other public schools. But to where? A full 35 percent, an unusually large fraction, of Alabama's Title I schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress, for two consecutive years, according to according to 2005-06 data from the U.S. Department of Education.

Core Knowledge programs and the International Baccalaureate are also largely absent from Alabama with fewer than one percent of schools enrolled in either. For these reasons and more, the state earns a C- for school reform.

Alabama has improved its academic standards, which are now ninth best in the country, according to the Fordham Foundation. Were it not for a much-maligned disclaimer on science textbooks regarding Darwin and evolution, says Morton, the state would have done even better.

The state is also considering tying jobs to performance. In 1994, it did away with tenure for school principals and instead linked their contracts to school performance benchmarks. Some hope the same can be done for teachers.

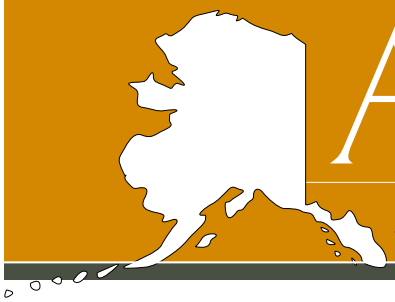
"I'm more optimistic now than I've been at any time in my career" about our state's education landscape, says McLean.

To be sure, the state has a long way to go. Two in five Alabama students, for example, don't graduate from high school. But the state's minority and low-income students have made some progress on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

In the game of school reform, Alabama is still early in the first quarter. Leaders should remind themselves of the goal—to educate every child to a high level—and remember something that Bear Bryant once said. "If you … never quit—you'll be a winner." TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	8	F	40	41
8th Graders in **Math**	3	F	38	40
8th Graders in **Science**	3	F	32	34
Black Graduation Rate	50	F	27	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	45	F	26	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	43	50
8th Graders in **Math**	5	F	50	50
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	38	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	5.3	D	47	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.22**	**F**	**43**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



ALASKA

Frozen in Time

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Alaska's education challenges are as daunting as its long, dark winters. The state's K–12 system must work as well in a tiny, isolated Inuit fishing village as it does in a fast-growing urban center.

The extremes are hard to fathom unless you've spent time there. That's what then-Secretary of Education Rod Paige learned while visiting the Lewis Angapak Memorial School on St. Lawrence Island, which sits in middle of the Bering Sea. Upon arrival (by plane—there's no other way from the mainland), he commented, "When you said 'rural' to me several days ago, it meant one thing." Now, he continued, it has a whole "different" meaning. Alaska has some 220 isolated communities that struggle perennially to keep good teachers in town for more than a year.

Yet challenges are also great in Anchorage, home to about half the state's population. Of its K–12 students, 43 percent are minorities who collectively speak more than 90 languages. Simply finding and funding enough translators is a major logistical undertaking and expense.

Such problems require bold answers. But rather than being aggressive and addressing these very real challenges with good policy-making, state leaders prefer to stand aside and allow locals to find their own way. "I don't see a whole lot of education policy making going on [on the state level] except to keep up with federal requirements," says Jeff Friedman, chairman of the Anchorage School Board.

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There isn't a lot of education policy going on at the state level except to keep up with federal requirements.

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State education department leaders, on the other hand, believe they've given locals the tools they need to tap into innovative solutions for their education needs. They point to the state's "embrace" of charter schools about five years ago, which they claim demonstrates how the political climate permits local experimentation to unfold with relative ease. This "relative ease" has hardly resulted in a charter school boom, however. The state now counts 22 charters; just five are in the metropolitan Anchorage area.

The state's laissez-faire approach certainly comes through in its academic standards. They are rated among the worst in the nation. While states such as Massachusetts and California have come to view standards as a practical tool for helping teachers find their way, Alaska sees them as one more bad big government idea. And that, they claim, won't fly. "This is very much a local control state," says Mary Francis of the Alaska Association of School Administrators. "You can't just impose from above, as NCLB [No Child Left Behind] did, and expect people to say, 'Great. We just love big government. We'll go right along with you.' That isn't the way it works up here."

Yet these libertarian attitudes don't extend to the state's teacher certification requirements. Though teacher shortages are rampant and talent from other professions and the military is plentiful, Alaska has done little to embrace alternate routes into the classroom. While alternative certification is available, candidates must still meet heavy education course requirements and spend considerable time in in-service programs.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.40	F	46	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.43%	D	36	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	35.79%	D	39	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.93%	B	8	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	0	F	47	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.09**	**D**	**33**	**50**

But the state's habit of erecting barriers to those who would like to teach but don't have education school degrees will most likely have to change soon—and quickly. More than 200 of its 495 schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB in 2004, and again in 2005. The question is whether or not anyone at the state level has the vision to step forward and take the lead.

Given the state's vast number of isolated communities, Alaska's embracing "cyber-schools" bodes well for the state's students. Currently, 7 percent of Alaska's 133,000 students take part in these schools, which are administered on the district level. Each student receives between $2,000 and $4,000 for equipment and has remote access to a certified teacher. The schools have existed for about eight years. Legislator Fred Dyson, a Republican who chairs the Senate Committee on Health, Education, and Social Services, believes they show a lot of potential, especially in rural areas. Some 68 percent of Alaskans, he notes, are online, and 99 percent of those can get high-speed access for a monthly fee.

Other solutions for educating the state's far-flung students include boarding schools. This is Republican Senator Gary Wilken's idea.

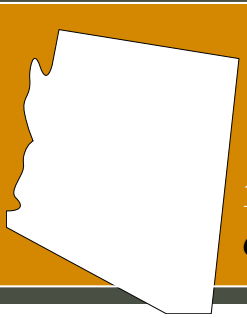
Many Alaska Natives, however, are wary of boarding schools. Memry Dahl, who has analyzed education indicators for a 2004 study from the Alaska Native Policy Center, a research arm of First Alaskans Institute, notes that in the 1970s, rural residents had no choice but to enter boarding schools—local schools didn't exist for them. Now that they've had a taste of having their own high schools, it'll be hard to go back. "Communities have felt a sense of pride in having their own high school," she says. "I think people still want to work with what we have."

With all its problems, why is the state so slow to embrace reform? Certainly, the feeling that locals want to retain control of their schools is part of the answer. But so, too, is the fact that the legislature is unwilling to spend dollars on reform ideas. It's not that money is in short supply. This year, the state, which has no income tax, has a significant budget surplus thanks to oil and natural gas resources. And while state spending on K–12 education has climbed by 33 percent over the past three years, including a $144 million boost this year, that's just keeping up with costs, Friedman says. The state isn't providing "juice for any great reform visions."

Yet great reform visions are exactly what are needed. Even in towns at the end of the earth, tomorrow's Alaskans are going to have to compete in a global economy. Which means that today's students need a much stronger education than they've received to date. There are few better causes on which Alaska's pioneer spirit could be put to work. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	24	C	1	41
8th Graders in **Math**	19	D	1	40
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	51	D	25	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	12	40
8th Graders in **Math**	21	C	1	37
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	34	50
8th Graders in **Math**	14	D	24	50
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	12.4	C	21	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	1.38	D+	5	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	NO PROGRESS	•	•



ARIZONA

Grand Challenges, Promising Results

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

B- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

If demographics were destiny, Arizona's schools should be scraping bottom. About one-fifth of its students live below the federal poverty line, and another fifth live in families whose incomes are low enough to qualify the children for free or reduced-price school meals.

Nevertheless, the Grand Canyon State is making progress—though limited—with its most vulnerable populations. The state's on-time graduation rates of 60 percent for Latinos—Arizona's largest minority group—and 66 percent for African-American students rate among the highest in the nation, though the quality of that education is suspect. Their achievement grades rate Ds and Fs.

Native Americans, who make up 5 percent of the state population and are the state's second largest minority group, look to be improving as well. The Arizona Department of Education reported this year that the traditionally dismal four-year graduation rate for this group rose by 13 percent from 2000 to 2004, reaching levels close to those of the state's other minority groups. (The scale differs slightly from the one employed for this report, which does not produce scores for Native Americans.)

In addition, black and Latino students have demonstrated statistically significant progress since the 1990s on NAEP's math assessments. Native Americans have also gained some ground. In 2003, just 6 percent of Native American fourth-graders were reading at or above proficient level, a number that went up three percentage points in 2005.

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Arizona ranks No. 1 in reform for its commitment to standards and school choice.

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These modest gains are hardly happenstance. The nation's second-fastest-growing state has a well-established system of standards-based reform, complete with solid academic standards and school-level rewards and interventions. Plus, Arizona encourages districts to offer performance-based pay for teachers and continues to expand its pioneering school choice programs with public charter schools and with tax credits to subsidize private school scholarships.

Charter schools have played a role in raising student achievement. Arizona first authorized charter schools in 1994 and was among the first states in the nation to do so. Today, the state has some 500 schools that serve more than 86,000 students, according to the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools.

Studies by Harvard economist Caroline M. Hoxby indicate that Arizona's charter elementary schools make greater gains in math and reading than their peers in district public schools. More striking is her finding that students in traditional public schools near charter schools make greater gains on state tests than students in schools not facing competition from charters.

The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools reported this summer that enrollment is expected to keep growing in 2006–07, though the number of charter schools is declining as underperforming schools are weeded out by charter authorizers. This level of commitment to standards and school choice earns the state a number one ranking in the nation on our reform gauge.

Still, there's no lack of work to be done. The influx of newcomers from other states and Mexico into bustling Maricopa County (Phoenix) and Pima County (Tucson), which together account for 77

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	3.00	B	7	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	4.94%	A	2	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	10.30%	B	13	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	10.03%	A	1	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.204	C	8	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.75**	**B-**	**1**	**50**

percent of the state's population, is placing enormous strains on Arizona schools. The most pressing is the challenge of hiring and retaining strong teachers and principals.

Currently, the state is placing teachers with either temporary or emergency credentials in the classroom (almost all states do some of this). How many is anyone's guess, because the state's data system for tracking these individuals is broken. Relying on information provided by districts, the education department estimates about 20 percent. According to Tom Horne, state superintendent of education, teacher shortages are most severe in special education, foreign languages, math, and English immersion throughout the state. And in Arizona's 15 rural counties, the problem is even more acute.

Creating alternative routes to teacher certification hasn't been high on the state's list of solutions. But that may be changing. Teach for America has been active in the state since 2003, placing roughly 150 teachers per year in Phoenix's inner city schools. The Arizona Department of Education is currently funding a pilot program in which mid-career professionals in 20 of the state's 500+ school districts can take an intensive summer course, become high school teachers with full salaries and benefits that fall, and complete their pedagogical studies over the next two years.

The supply of qualified principals has also not kept pace with the growing student population. "Arizona's pool of effective education leaders," writes the education department in a July 2006 report, "is not adequate for the job at hand."

Another headache looming for Arizona education leaders: one-third of the state's regular public schools and charter schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2005–06. It's the fourth straight year in which the state as a whole failed to meet the interim targets in its plan for reaching the federal act's goal of having 100 percent of all students proficient in state standards for reading and math by 2013–14.

Horne blames this year's especially poor showing on stringent enforcement of federal rules under NCLB. He noted that the state's own calculations show substantial progress by students in recent years. That's easy to understand when one considers that the state's methodology excludes the scores on state exams of English language learners (ELLs) for their first three years in the country (federal rules allow exclusion of these students for only one year) and of all students in grades 4, 6, and 7. Horne sued the U.S. Department of Education, claiming it has violated an oral agreement he had with unidentified federal education officials. A department spokesman dismissed that argument as "a complete sham."

The ELL issue has been a hot button at the state level, too. By law, these students must be educated in approved "structured English immersion" programs. The cost of doing so has been debated and litigated since 1992 when the Flores family sued the state for not adequately educating their daughter, an ELL student. A law passed this year increased slightly the amount to be spent on the state's 150,000-plus ELL students; a U.S. Court of Appeals panel will decide whether that law provides sufficient funding.

Fortunately, say reformers, much of the news from Phoenix is good. The state's system of tax credits for individuals and corporations that support scholarships for poor children to attend private schools was expanded this year. And Governor Napolitano signed a law that will fund free, voluntary, full-day kindergarten for all students. Some, however, are skeptical about the impact on achievement the latter measure will have.

Such problems don't dampen reformers' determination to press on. Two new state-subsidized task forces of citizens and experts were formed this year. One will look at linking public school education to the requirements of employers and higher education, and the other will examine ways to improve the education of ELLs.

Arizona is still far from Nirvana, but its leaders have taken the first critical steps on that long journey toward making high quality education a reality for all the state's students. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	20	41
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	2	40
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	13	34
Black Graduation Rate	66	C	2	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	34	40
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	18	37
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	30	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	60	C	4	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	43	50
8th Graders in **Math**	12	D	33	50
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	41	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	9.2	C	31	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

ARKANSAS

Tasked to Improve

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Perception isn't always reality, especially in Arkansas. A perennial cellar dweller in per-capita income, the state is also home to the single most successful business enterprise of the past 30 years—Wal-Mart. So before writing off the state's education reform efforts to date as a failure, it pays to dig beneath the surface.

Arkansas's achievement data certainly give one reason to believe that, as in personal income growth, the Natural State hasn't been very successful in educating its youngsters—especially those who are most vulnerable. Whether in reading, math, or science, the state's poor and minority students simply aren't making the grade.

But the picture improves—some—when achievement over time is examined. Arkansas is one of 17 states to make at least "limited" progress in boosting the achievement of its disadvantaged students—in its case, for statistically significant increases in its poor students' NAEP scores in reading and math. So, is Arkansas making progress or not?

Last year, Republican governor Michael Huckabee decided to find out. He invited the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education to evaluate the Arkansas school system and recommend ways to improve it. The task force, a team of education experts assembled by the Hoover Institution, including Fordham president Chester E. Finn, Jr., delivered 45 recommendations for reforming the state's education system.

For example, the task force suggested that Arkansas make alternate routes to teacher certification the primary pathway into its classrooms. After all, one of the state's great challenges is hiring and retaining effective teachers. With its rapidly growing population, Arkansas is not currently able to satisfy the demand for teachers; and while it does a decent job of bringing alternatively certified teachers into the classroom, that doesn't bridge the gap. Unfortunately, the state has not acted on this proposal.

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...fewer than 1 percent of students statewide attend charters. That number isn't likely to grow soon, as the state has capped the number of charter schools at 24.

▲

Another task force idea, teacher merit pay, seems to be catching on with some districts and schools. The Little Rock Board of Education adopted as a pilot the Achievement Challenge Program, which provides performance bonuses to teachers whose students' test scores on the SAT-10 improve. These scores have steadily improved, so the school board voted in August 2006 to expand the program. Teachers must still approve the decision, but according to Jay P. Greene, director of the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, performance pay is one of the reform measures that is gaining traction with education leaders and parents.

Charter schools have a less promising future. While the high-profile KIPP Academies have a single school in the Delta, fewer than 1 percent of students statewide attend charters. That number isn't likely to grow soon, as the state has capped the number of charter schools at 24. State Representative Joyce Elliott (D), education committee chairman of the Arkansas House of Representatives, says, "Charter schools don't have a stellar record in our state, and

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.60	D-	42	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.77%	C	10	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	14.52%	C	25	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	B-	7	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.75%	F	30	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.45**	**D+**	**26**	**50**

that has soured [people] on them." But Terri Hardy, an advisor to Huckabee, counters that only a few charters in Little Rock have received negative coverage for performance, and that these reports are coloring Elliott's understanding. Rural charters, she says, enjoy good track records.

One approach to reform that the state has aggressively embraced is consolidating districts. Moved to action by a court decision that ruled Arkansas education funding inequitable, the state acted to close 57 districts over the past couple of years. The Koret Task Force urged caution on this front, however, noting that closing small schools that are highly effective could be counterproductive to the state as a whole. Greene says that consolidation is probably unlikely because the public isn't behind the action.

The state's academic standards are also an area of continuing concern, scoring a D-. Fortunately, the state is required by law to review these every six years. Whether or not they'll improve remains to be seen.

Getting standards right is especially important now, as the state has adopted Smart Core, a mandatory college preparatory curriculum that requires high school students to complete four units of English; four units of math, including Algebra I, geometry, and Algebra II; three units of science with a lab; and three units of social studies. By 2007–08, the state is also hoping to require that every high school student be offered at least four Advanced Placement courses.

Arkansas is making some progress, to be sure. But don't be satisfied with that, says Elliott. "We have more to do." TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	4	F	34	40
8th Graders in **Science**	3	F	32	34
Black Graduation Rate	64	C	5	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	8	40
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	11	37
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	14	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	18	50
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	27	50
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	20	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	7.7	D	40	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	↑	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

CALIFORNIA

Let the Sun Shine In

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

B- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

The question could be a setup line in a Jay Leno monologue: "How frustrated with California's public school system are the state's parents?" The answer is long, full of political intrigue, and not particularly funny—at least not to Californians.

"The public's frustration with the state of education is palpable. They see lots of rhetoric but little progress," said Mark Baldassare, research director for the Public Policy Institute of California, a nonpartisan think tank. "There is serious discontent across the board."

The dismal performance by minority and low-income students (most of these groups are in the single digits in reading, math, or science on the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]; and black graduation rates are deplorable) is a big reason for their frustration. But if Californians adjust their sunglasses and look through the smog, they can see that the education cloud hanging over the Golden State may have a silver lining.

A close examination of test scores over time shows a somewhat encouraging trend: Hispanic students are making gains in reading and math, as are low-income students. That means California has made "moderate progress"—one of just eight states in this study to meet this standard. (There has been less progress among African-American students.)

"We've put strategies and accountability in place, and they are pushing the needle up every day," said Marlene Canter, president of the Los Angeles City Board of Education. "When you are making up for thirty years of neglect, the word 'progress' is important.... As we look forward," she continued, "I can predict we will not be ranked near the bottom in achievement for long."

California has made "moderate progress"—one of just six states in this study to meet this standard.

Canter confidently makes that prediction because the entire state is treading a path of substantive reform, earning California a B- grade in this area and the number three ranking in the country. That ranking reflects the upside of widespread discontent. When there is enough frustration, it can create an environment where serious reform ideas are given the opportunity to take hold and blossom.

In Los Angeles, departing Superintendent Roy Romer, former chairman of the Democratic National Committee and former governor of Colorado, met parental discontent with a concrete plan for action. Among the changes he brought to L.A. Unified include the following:

- A focus on scientifically-based reading programs for young children and a core curriculum in all grades
- A proposal to build more schools
- An emphasis on better teachers

The results? Gains on achievement tests that are among the best in the state. Romer said that if the district were a stock, he would buy it because "the lines are going in the right direction." It remains to be seen whether that trend will continue now that L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has gained partial control of the schools.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	4.00	A	1	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.08%	C	19	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	9.58%	B	12	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	B-	7	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.34%	B	10	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.315	D	18	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.50**	**B-**	**3**	**50**

Los Angeles is not alone in realizing significant changes. Oakland—among the state's poorest cities and a perpetual cellar-dweller in student achievement—has become a reform cauldron. Under the leadership of state-appointed Superintendent Randolph Ward, the district closed schools with low enrollments and poor academic scores, gave other schools more control over their own budgets, and allowed groups of teachers and parents to design programs—and some curricula—for failing schools that were closed and then reopened.

Today, Oakland stands as the most academically improved unified school district in California, having posted the most improved test scores of any urban district in the state over the past three years. Whether the city can maintain its progress remains to be seen, however. Ward recently left Oakland to head the school system in San Diego County.

These local reform efforts are supported by a reasonably healthy state policy environment, starting with California's highly-regarded academic standards.

The state-local balance issue in California will be important for reforming education. "I'm a conservative, and I normally like local control," said Lance Izumi, director of education studies for the Pacific Research Institute, a San Francisco think tank promoting free markets. "But the problem in California is education at the local level is controlled by union politics."

Izumi sees tremendous political pressure, led by the teacher unions, to "dumb down" and "water down" the curriculum, creating loopholes so large that even a pumped-up Arnold Schwarzenegger, the state's body-builder governor, could jump through them. But so far Schwarzenegger has resisted that pressure, and he promises to continue doing so. According to the "Governator," number one on his education agenda is to "safeguard the State Board of Education's adopted academic content standards as the foundation of California's K–12 educational system."

"We're seeing a commonsense viewpoint on our State Board of Education," said Izumi. "The question for us is if our state policymakers, particularly the legislature, will have the courage to continue with these very rigorous standards."

He might add the state's citizens to the list of those who will have to stand up and be counted. This past fall, they resoundingly defeated two ballot initiatives strongly backed by Governor Schwarzenegger that would have significantly weakened the power of the teacher unions in the state.

Fortunately, the state's strategy is not just top-down dictates; policy has also encouraged a measure of bottom-up innovation. California leads the nation in the number of charter schools in operation, and it is among the most aggressive in the nation in hiring alternatively-certified teachers. The alternative certification movement began in earnest in California in 1997, when then-governor Pete Wilson supported a law that created incentives for districts that placed second-career professionals into the classroom. Today, few states do a better job of hiring these teachers—or need them more, given both population growth and mandatory class-size reduction in California.

The state also took the bold step of eliminating bilingual education. Doom and gloom predictions abounded about the future of the state's large Hispanic population, but these students have risen to the occasion. Gregory McGinity, senior policy consultant for the state board, noted, "Bilingual education of the past has failed these kids miserably."

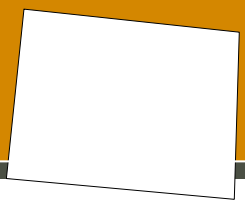
Factor in the politics, the test scores, and a growing culture of change, and it is clear that California education is getting better. If the no-nonsense reforms currently in place retain their stature in the state's education establishment, the state's school system could, in a few years, become a source of pride instead of the punch line for a bad joke. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	26	41
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	23	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	56	D	16	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	39	40
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	32	37
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	28	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	60	C	4	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	49	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	41	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	19.7	A	4	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	0.92	D	25	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	↑	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	MODERATE PROGRESS	•	•

COLORADO

Due for a Reform Makeover



D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Colorado is a study in contrasts, with its dusty Great Plains towns and its towering Rocky Mountains peaks, its big-city capital and its bucolic ski country. So it is too with its approach to school reform, where Colorado tends to be either a national leader or a laggard. However, this hot-and-cold approach is not getting the job done for the state's most disadvantaged students.

First the good news: when it comes to school choice, Colorado is a mile high. The state's strong charter laws—which encourage start-ups, permit virtual schools, and provide better funding than most states—have facilitated the establishment of more than 100 charters enrolling more than 5 percent of all kids in the state, among the country's largest ratios. In 2004, the law was further strengthened with the establishment of the Charter School Institute, which can authorize charter schools in reluctant districts. And, on the whole, Colorado's charter schools tend to be pretty effective, outperforming noncharters on state tests in fourth grade and eighth grade. Many of these excellent schools use the Core Knowledge curriculum—pushing Colorado's usage of this content-rich approach to the top of the pack.

The bad news: Colorado's implementation of standards-based reform is mediocre at best. Not much has changed since 1997, when Governor Roy Romer, a Democrat, initiated it. The state's academic standards, moreover, received a C- from Fordham Foundation reviewers for their disappointing content; and the system continues to lack real accountability measures. "Now we have standards and assessments with really weak consequences," says Phil Gonring of the Rose Community Foundation.

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Colorado's approach to school reform has been hot and cold.

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That charge is not entirely fair. After all, the Colorado legislature passed a law in 2000 that permits state lawmakers to reconstitute failing schools or turn them into charter schools. Under this provision, Denver's Cole Middle School was handed over to the acclaimed Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) in 2005, and only a year later was showing dramatic gains in reading and math proficiency.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act provided additional accountability, but the state chose to set its proficiency levels in reading and math at levels that are among the least rigorous in the country. This means it is relatively easy for schools to make adequate yearly progress under the law—with disastrous consequences for the achievement of poor and minority students.

Consider Colorado's performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The percentage of low-income, Hispanic, and African-American children reaching NAEP's definition of proficiency or above in reading, math, and science is almost always in the teens—or worse. Most disturbing, Colorado is one of thirteen states not to have made any statistically significant progress with these students over the past decade or so.

Meanwhile, Colorado's achievement gap between whites and Hispanics is growing in both reading and math; now that Hispanic students make up 25 percent of Colorado's public school population, these trends spell major trouble ahead for the state's economy.

Yes, some schools and districts have made individual efforts at reform. Two high schools in Denver, for instance, have decid-

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.60	C-	20	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	6.45%	A	1	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	12.74%	C	20	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D	38	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	5.79%	A	3	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.186	C	7	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.08**	**C**	**14**	**50**

ed to raise expectations of students and adults by requiring all seniors to apply to college before they graduate.

Another promising development is Denver's experiment to attract better teachers by paying them based on performance rather than seniority. The district tested the program for four years before it requested and passed a $25 million levy to make it permanent. The program incorporates bonuses and permanent pay increases based in part on student achievement, teacher knowledge and skills, hard-to-staff positions, and annual teacher evaluations.

Gonring believes that Denver has the most progressive pay system in America and that the city is able to compensate teachers far better than any other metro district. "With the right governor we have the chance to lead the nation in this area," he says. Perhaps, but other states such as Florida and Texas are quickly catching up. Houston may already be well ahead of Denver.

Douglas County, just south of Denver, is focusing on teacher quality and has requested waivers from the state board that would allow the district to license its own teachers. A spokesperson for Douglas County said there is a need for more flexible hiring practices, especially since the district wants to offer courses, such as Arabic, that have no state endorsement categories.

The district also wants to recruit mid-career professionals into the classroom. If a professional engineer, for example, wants to teach one course a year, there is no mechanism in the state's system to allow this. "A professional who wants to maintain his day job while teaching a class isn't going to jump through a bunch of hoops," says the spokesperson. A final answer to the request is not expected until later in 2006.

Despite these promising reforms, Colorado needs to do much more to address its growing achievement gap. Why is it so hesitant? Commissioner of Education William Moloney explains that his state is devoted to "local control" in education matters. And though a long line of governors and legislators have been active in education reform, the precarious political balance in the state has led to much gridlock, especially in recent years. Meanwhile, the task of developing education initiatives and driving change is in the hands of district superintendents.

Unfortunately, "the pool of great district administrators is not good," says Jim Griffin, who heads the Colorado League of Charter Schools. "These are tough jobs with unrealistic job descriptions. The system is set up to award seniority when really what many of these districts need are entrepreneurial go-getters. Incentives are not there to attract, create, and encourage boldness."

Moloney agrees: "Leadership is at a premium."

Indeed. Colorado is in need of leadership that welcomes rigorous standards and serious accountability, just as the state has embraced high-quality charter schools and innovations in teacher pay. Here is hoping the coming years will not be a dry season for that kind of reform. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	18	D	6	41
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	10	40
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	3	34
Black Graduation Rate	55	D	18	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	18	40
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	26	37
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	14	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	54	D	16	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	27	50
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	25	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	16.9	B	10	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.17**	**D+**	**8**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•

CONNECTICUT

A Whale of an Achievement Gap

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

When Republican Governor Jodi Rell delivered her 2006 state of the state address, she left no doubt about where she thinks Connecticut's school system ranks. "Our educational system is second to none," she said, and "our teachers are the best and brightest in the nation."

Perhaps that smug pride explains Connecticut's filing of a lawsuit, not yet resolved, against the federal government and its testing requirements under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. And it may explain the shocked reaction when U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings rebuked Connecticut's resistance.

"I think it's un-American, I would call it, for us to take the attitude that African-American children in Connecticut, living in inner cities, are not going to be able to compete," Spellings said in a 2005 appearance on PBS's *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. "That's the notion—'the soft bigotry of low expectations,' as the President calls it—that No Child Left Behind rejects."

The high-visibility flap made Connecticut a symbol in the national debate over NCLB, President George W. Bush's signature education initiative. The controversy also spotlighted an embarrassing fact: while Connecticut looks good overall on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), generally ranking among the top ten states in core subjects, the results for African-American, Hispanic, and poor children are pretty awful. For example, merely 6 percent of African-American eighth-graders are proficient in math—fewer than their peers in much of the Deep South. In fact, Connecticut has consistently had one of the biggest achievement gaps in the country, with minorities lagging far behind the state's relatively high performing white students.

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Amistad would love to grow, but can't.

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That achievement gap "is arguably the biggest social and economic problem of any kind facing Connecticut," according to the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCan), a nonprofit outreach, education, and research organization.

A ConnCan report on NAEP performance shows just how wide the achievement gap is. In the fourth grade, the difference in academic achievement between the state's poor and nonpoor students is 3.3 grade levels in reading, the largest of all fifty states, and the math gap is second only to Illinois's. In eighth grade, Connecticut had the widest gap between poor and nonpoor students in math (3.7 grade levels) and was tied with Pennsylvania for an ignominious lead in reading (2.9 grade levels).

Connecticut has made some statistically significant progress over the past decade or so in raising reading and math scores among Hispanics, but not among blacks and the poor.

That is not what one would expect from a state whose educational system is "second to none." In fact, complacency has been the biggest obstacle to reform—which may also explain the state's meager academic standards, which earn a D- from Fordham reviewers.

The state's woes are most acute in urban areas. In Hartford, the state's largest city, the educational outlook for the state's most vulnerable children is bordering on desperate.

In the latest results, Hartford was at or near the bottom of the list in reading, writing, and mathematics in every grade tested on the state exam—itself no model of rigor. (These results also do not capture the performance of slightly more than 18 percent

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.80	D-	37	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.53%	D	31	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	18.03%	C	28	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.53%	F	34	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.91**	**D**	**39**	**50**

of African-American and Hispanic students, who are excluded from adequate yearly progress determinations.) In reading, just 15 percent of Hartford's third-graders met the state goal, with an alarming 2 percent meeting the goal at one school, Milner. Statewide, the average was 54 percent.

In December 2005, Mayor Eddie Perez, a product of the city's school system and the city's first Latino mayor, appointed himself to the school board and was promptly named chairman. He has staked his reputation on reforming Hartford's schools.

"Rather than say, 'We'll throw these kids away because they come from a poor household and they don't know what education is,' we need a high-expectation program where every kid is pushed and where academics are second to none and where kids are thinking of doing big things," Perez told the *Hartford Courant*. He recently named Steven Adamowski, a well-respected reformer, to head the city's schools.

In other parts of Connecticut, a handful of individual schools are showing how education can be done, led by New Haven's Amistad Academy, a no-nonsense charter school whose students are 98 percent African-American or Latino.

At Amistad, most students enter the fifth grade scoring an average of two years below grade level. By the time they leave for high school, most are scoring as well as, if not better than, the average student in some of the state's wealthiest, whitest suburbs.

"Amistad has rewritten the book on closing the achievement gap," Mark Linabury, charter school program manager for Connecticut's department of education, told the *New York Sun*.

Ironically, Connecticut's restrictions on charter schools (such as limiting the number of students a charter can enroll) have made it almost impossible for Amistad to expand in the state and make it tough for some charters to even get started. Only half of one percent of students in the state's largest city, Bridgeport, attend charter schools.

Facing a chilly charter climate in Connecticut, Amistad has opened three new schools in New York City, with plans for two more. The city has offered unlimited enrollment growth within existing schools and free facilities, among other things.

"It's very frustrating. We would love to grow in Connecticut, but we can't be suicidal," Dacia Toll, Amistad's executive director, told the Associated Press.

Lewis M. Andrews, executive director of the Yankee Institute for Public Policy, a Connecticut think tank promoting conservative ideas, argues that the core issue for education in Connecticut is not charter schools or even money, but a reluctance of bureaucrats to embrace change.

"Could it be that the real problem with the testing provision of the NCLB law is that it promises to deliver what the current Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) have thus far failed to provide—a rigorous and prescriptive analysis of how individual school districts are really educating Connecticut's children?" Andrews asks in an editorial on his organization's website.

Still, as Andrews writes, "Imagine the panic that must have seized our state leaders when they first realized that, undiluted, the NCLB law would inevitably require them to carry out the kind of reforms that our state's public employee unions have been successfully resisting for more than two decades."

Connecticut could well have the nation's "best and brightest" teachers, but without schools prepared to work with all the Constitution State's children—African-American and white, rich and poor—many of those on the low end of the state's economic totem pole will likely never have the freedom to see just how far their minds can take them. It will take much stronger standards, rigorous accountability, and a dynamic charter school sector for the state to finally toss its achievement gap into the deep blue sea. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	20	41
8th Graders in **Math**	6	F	27	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	61	C	8	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	23	40
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	26	37
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	28	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	52	D	22	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	34	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	34	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	19.1	A	6	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

DELAWARE

Lasting Reforms in the First State

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

When Delaware's education leaders caucus, they don't require a huge conference center. With just 200 public schools and 119,000 students, a good size room will do the job.

The First State's small size (neighboring Maryland has almost seven times as many students) helps explain why it has been quicker than most to embrace bold, statewide education reforms. In 1992, a decade before the federal No Child Left Behind Act, Delaware implemented statewide academic standards, regular testing, and school accountability. The encouraging results have turned some heads, especially at the elementary level and in reading, and earned the state a rating of "moderate progress."

Most impressive has been the improvement among minority and low-income children. More African-American and low-income students are reaching the "proficient" level in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). These gains occurred even as the number of minority and English language learners was climbing. Not only did minority performance rise, but the racial achievement gap has narrowed—no small feat in a state where minorities make up more than 42 percent of the total student population.

But achievement gains are just part of the equation, and Paul A. Herdman, president and chief executive of the Rodel Foundation, is quick to make sure state leaders don't pat themselves on the back for long. But the accomplishments of the state shouldn't be ignored.

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"We want to benchmark ourselves against the best in the world because the U.S. is losing ground internationally."

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"We acknowledge that we've done some good work in terms of gains," Herdman said in an interview, "but the reality is our spending is seventh in the country per capita and our performance is" only 15th. We want to benchmark ourselves against the best in the world because the U.S. is losing ground internationally." To be 15th in a country, he continues, "that ranks below Latvia is not what we're shooting for."

If Herdman sounds blunt, he's only warming up. He notes that the high school graduation rate for public school students is a paltry 61.9 percent, and the state has a lackluster record of grooming students for college success.

"We start losing kids pretty dramatically in middle school and then precipitously in high school," he said. "If you follow a group of 10 minority ninth-grade youngsters, only one in 10 will complete a two- or four-year college degree. White ninth-grade kids do better, but it's only two out of 10, so that's nothing to write home about. Our middle schools and high schools are struggling. I wish I could tell you why."

"The issue is in middle and high school," Delaware Education Secretary Valerie Woodruff told the *News Journal* of Wilmington. "We're not there."

In short, Delaware's overall education system remains mediocre, despite its improvements.

Why so low when the state was an early adopter of standards and accountability testing? Because its standards are so poor. While Delaware has employed standards longer than most states, they merit only a C- on the Fordham grading scale, though brand-new standards are said to be much improved.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.60	C-	20	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.26%	C	15	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	10.86%	B	17	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C-	26	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	6.58%	A	2	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.30	D	15	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.25**	**C+**	**6**	**50**

Still, there's reason for optimism. With an education-minded state legislature that doesn't suffer from the partisan rancor afflicting many states, and public school leaders willing to acknowledge where attention needs to be focused, the state appears poised to address its shortcomings.

To correct the problem, Delaware is embracing an ambitious high school reform agenda with the help of a grant from the National Governors' Association. Plans include upgrading graduation requirements, giving each high school student an individual learning plan, and creating a data system to track students as they go on to college and begin a career.

Choice is part of this reform effort, too. Since 1996, when Delaware's first two charter schools opened, charters have been part of the state's education equation. The charter system is one of the strongest in the country. Today, the state has 17 charter schools, including four new ones that opened this fall. More than 5 percent of all First State public school students attend charter schools, among the highest rates in the nation.

A three-year study by Western Michigan University found that Delaware's charter schools are doing a better job of improving achievement in several areas than traditional public schools. The most dramatic results are in grade 10, where charter schools far outpace their traditional counterparts. Middle grade results also favor charter schools, particularly in reading. Students in the state's elementary charter schools perform similarly or slightly less well than demographically matched district students.

Like most states, Delaware has had problems attracting quality teachers, especially in high school math and science. The state's economy is driven by "the three Cs"—chemical companies, credit cards, and chicken (Perdue)—said Herdman, but there is "no pipeline from that expertise to the schools." For that reason, the Rodel Foundation is working to build that pipeline with its investments. "This is an area where we can do a lot better," said Herdman.

The state is also embracing the analysis of test scores to identify problems and solutions. One success story is Wilson Elementary in Pike Creek, which failed to make adequate progress in language arts for students who have English as a second language. To fix that, analysts got behind the numbers and concluded that a new bilingual program was needed. In the process, Wilson Elementary became a magnet school for non-English-speaking students in the district, who now constitute some 80 percent of the school's enrollment "They have their own classes with their own teacher," Principal Rolando Toccafondi told the *News Journal*. "We mainstream students as soon as we realize they are able to function in a regular classroom." The result? The school moved from a rating of "under improvement" to "superior" in 2006.

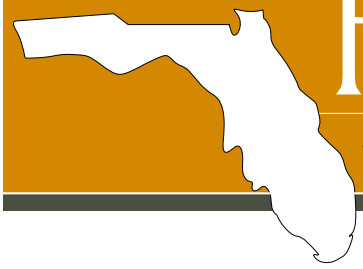
Vision 2015, led by a 28-member steering committee composed of education, business, and community leaders has set the ambitious goal to make Delaware "the first state in the country to develop a truly innovative, world-class education system for every student in every school—not just pockets of excellence here and there."

Vision 2015 was launched in November 2005, with support from the Rodel Foundation and the Los Angeles–based Broad Foundation. "Given its history of education innovation," says one of its issue briefs, "its diverse student population, the large proportion of funding that schools receive from state sources, and its small relative population and geographic size, Delaware is an ideal place to initiate bold advance in the public school system."

It's a giant task. But one that Delaware can accomplish. This is a state to watch. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	5	40
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	6	34
Black Graduation Rate	48	F	29	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	22	C	7	40
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	6	37
8th Graders in **Science**	15	D	7	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	43	F	28	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	18	D	22	50
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	27	50
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	25	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	12.9	C	19	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	↑	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•



FLORIDA

The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Florida faces its fair share of problems—water shortages, sprawl, hurricanes, wetlands destruction—but Governor Jeb Bush will leave office in 2007 having done his utmost to ensure that the state has the brainpower to overcome them.

Under Bush's tenure, Florida has become one of the most aggressive states in the nation for growing charter schools and expanding parental choice. And the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and its growth-model measurement system are in the vanguard of the accountability movement. This combination helps to explain why Florida is one of just three states whose African-American and Hispanic children made statistically significant progress in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress over the past decade.

This is not to say the state doesn't still have problems in its K–12 system. Improved test scores in the elementary grades haven't been followed by better performance at the high school level, and the state's graduation rate remains low, as does student performance on the SAT. But the sunshine Bush has shed on student achievement, and the measures he has taken to raise school performance, give people reason to believe the future will be bright.

Florida passed its charter school law in 1996 with a high cap on the number of charters permitted per district. Since then, growth has been rapid. The state is now home to more than 300 charter schools enrolling some 80,000 students. And a new state-level commission with the authority to authorize and sponsor charters which was created in June portends even greater growth.

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Thanks to A+, neglected students are receiving more attention

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"Charters in Florida, by and large, have become accepted in almost a nonpartisan way," says Dan Gelber, the incoming leader of state House Democrats and a frequent Bush critic. "In some places, they've become part of the battleground. Here, they really have not."

The schools aren't without challenges—limited funding chief among them. On average, charters receive 11.4 percent less funding than do district schools. Lack of funds, more than any other factor, has forced a number of these schools to close.

One challenge charters have avoided, however, is the intense fire that teacher unions and other critics normally train on these schools. Their attention is focused, instead, on private school vouchers—a cause Bush has championed even longer than charters. Opponents have had some success in restricting Bush's innovative voucher programs.

The most severe blow came earlier this year when the Florida supreme court ruled that Bush's Opportunity Scholarship program—vouchers for students whose neighborhood schools received a failing grade on the state report card for two of four years—was unconstitutional.

The number of students affected was small—only 733 at the time the program was struck down. But the implications of the court's ruling (a flimsy one based on a novel reading of the state constitution's mandate for "uniform" schools) has put the state's two other voucher programs on shaky ground. One offers disabled students

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.60	D-	42	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.66%	C	11	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	11.63%	C	18	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	4.43%	A	6	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.114	B	4	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	4	A	1	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.08**	**C**	**14**	**50**

a wider choice of schools, and the other gives tax credits to corporations that fund scholarships. Together these enroll some 30,000 students.

Setbacks aside, education reform in Florida is still going strong and citizens have the FCAT and Florida's A+ accountability system to thank. The A+ accomplishes several things that the No Child Left Behind Act does not. For one, it tracks individual student gains over time. Whereas NCLB relies on snapshot data (i.e., what percentage of each school's students reach proficiency in a given year), A+ looks at test scores of individual students from year-to-year and gauges their improvement. The A+ approach provides a more accurate picture of whether or not students are learning and what their weak points are.

The A+ also grades schools in an easy-to-understand letter format—A through F. But most significantly, schools that show improvement in student academic achievement receive additional funds, much of which goes toward teacher bonuses. The state hopes to extend this by making the A+ system a basis for teacher merit pay. In February the state board of education approved a plan that will pay a 5 percent bonus to the top 10 percent of teachers in each district based on learning gains made on FCAT. The program will pay the top 25 percent of teachers in subsequent years.

Test score results are also used to determine student promotion; since 2003, third-graders have been required to pass the FCAT at a minimally acceptable level before advancing to fourth grade. Other promotion options, such as creating a performance portfolio, are also available.

The state has hardly thrown students to the wolves, however. Bush notes that traditionally neglected students have received a lot more attention under A+. As a result, all of the state's achievement gaps have narrowed.

The future of the FCAT hinges in part on the outcome of the upcoming gubernatorial election. Republican candidate Charlie Crist touts himself on his Web site as a "Jeb Bush Republican" who will continue to press the FCAT and A+ accountability system. His opponent, Democrat Jim Davis, would keep the FCAT, but remove the punitive measures schools face for not meeting benchmarks.

A weak link in the state's system has been its academic standards. But newly appointed K–12 Chancellor Cheri Yecke is working to improve that situation, too. As Minnesota's education commissioner, she oversaw the revision, and improvement, of that state's science and history standards. She's working to do the same now in Florida. The state's history standards are currently undergoing revision, and the English standards update has been completed.

Still, critics remain. Gelber says the state's been "treading water," citing the declining graduation rate. But his pessimism isn't supported by the overall picture of what's happening in Florida. On the education front, at least, the Sunshine State deserves to enjoy a moderately sunny disposition. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	18	41
8th Graders in **Math**	8	F	20	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	42	F	38	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	25	C	5	40
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	6	37
8th Graders in **Science**	14	D	9	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	54	D	16	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	18	50
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	27	50
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	25	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	18.5	B	8	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	↑	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•

GEORGIA

Rising Again, Slowly

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Today's Georgia is a long way from that portrayed in James Dickey's classic novel *Deliverance*. From its gleaming jewel, Atlanta, to its exclusive barrier islands, Georgia is a state on the move. And this is certainly true in education.

The state's education system, unlike that of a number of other Southern states, was late to the accountability and standards party. But when the state decided to finally engage, it did so fully.

Consider its approach to writing curriculum standards. When State Superintendent Kathy Cox came to office in 2002, she quickly recognized that the state's academic standards were a mile wide and an inch deep. (A Phi Delta Kappa audit in 2002 found that those old standards would take 23 years to teach, not 12.) Rather than start from scratch, Cox borrowed from other states that had already developed solid standards documents. She called upon prominent experts, and to improve the math documents she looked overseas and borrowed from Japan.

The end result is a set of better focused standards that offer clear guidance as to what students should know and be able to do. The curriculum is specific and subject areas are connected throughout multiple grades—good enough to earn a B+ on average from Fordham's tough reviewers.

Of course, setting good standards is merely the first step toward education improvement—and Georgia still has many steps to take. For example, the percentage of

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Alternative education has been embraced in Georgia, but charters remain woefully under-resourced.

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Georgia's African-American eighth-graders who have reached proficiency in math or science according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is in the single digits.

While Georgia has posted limited gains on the math NAEP over the last decade or so, it's much too early to celebrate. After all, the state had nowhere to go but up. Consider graduation rates: Just 61 percent of Georgia's ninth-graders will graduate from high school on schedule. Only South Carolina does worse, according to the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.

Governor Sonny Perdue is the latest in a line of Georgia governors (notably, Zell Miller and Roy Barnes) focused on education. Perdue has made raising graduation rates a key issue for his office. In 2006, he launched a program that puts graduation coaches in high schools. In the first few months of the program, 336 coaches identified 40,000 students who were credit deficient and falling off the graduation track. The response has been to tailor graduation roadmaps for thousands of students and match many of them with mentors. Perdue will request funds to put similar coaches in all the state's middle schools in 2007.

The governor deserves kudos for working to raise the graduation rate, but pulling marginal students across the finish line at the end of the race won't produce students with the types of skills they need to excel in the future.

Thankfully, many local districts are thinking ahead, using the reams of data being gathered by the state's testing system to follow

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	3.20	B+	5	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	2.73%	C	6	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	6.51%	B	8	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D-	40	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.51%	D	23	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.308	D	16	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.17**	**C+**	**10**	**50**

each student throughout his or her tenure. The state test itself isn't much to brag about (it rates a D- for its lax definition of "proficiency" in reading and math), but the gaps it exposes are real.

In Gainesville, for example, the district has implemented an accountability system for each student, with benchmark testing every two to three months. One of its schools was cited by President Bush in his acceptance speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention for its impressive passing rate on standardized tests.

The state is also making use of virtual schools—high schools in particular—to give the state's rural population the chance to take Advanced Placement courses that may not be available at their local brick and mortar school. Georgia has also made free SAT prep available statewide via the Internet. That's a good thing, considering that Georgia finished 46th among states in average SAT scores in 2006.

But for all its willingness to raise standards and adopt innovative ways of educating its youngsters, Georgia remains largely resistant to charter schools. The state has just over 50 charters, most of them in the Atlanta metro area. There have been some success stories, such as the predominantly African-American Tech High School in Atlanta where scores are at or near the top citywide. The success of such charters may be partly due to the thorough screening process they have undergone; in Georgia, they must survive scrutiny at both the district and the state level to receive their charter. (This barrier also helps explain why there are so few schools.) If only the state were as conscientious about funding these schools as it is punctilious about licensing them. State law does not offer charter schools funding for facilities or other nonacademic essentials, such as transportation or nutrition programs. Some modest funding changes were enacted in 2005, but charters remain woefully under-resourced.

While Georgia is taking its time with nontraditional schools such as charters, it is moving faster to open nontraditional pathways into the teaching profession. The state now offers several alternate-route programs to encourage midcareer professionals to enter the education field. That includes aggressive use of the federal Troops to Teachers initiative, which takes advantage of the state's many military bases.

Nearly 20 percent of Georgia's new teachers of 2005 came through some form of alternative certification. Since the state also hired about a quarter of its teachers from out of state—meaning there are still plenty of jobs in fast-growing Georgia for graduates of traditional education programs—alternative certification has been generally accepted.

All in all, Georgia is dancing to the school reform beat. It ranks among the top 10 reform states nationwide and is now the leader in the Southeast. If it can stay on its toes, some big gains in student achievement could be right around the corner. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	20	41
8th Graders in **Math**	8	F	20	40
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	10	34
Black Graduation Rate	46	F	33	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	25	40
8th Graders in **Math**	12	D	21	37
8th Graders in **Science**	15	D	7	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	40	F	32	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	38	50
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	43	50
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	29	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	13.5	C	17	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.67**	**D-**	**36**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

HAWAII

Trouble in Paradise

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

The Aloha State is a vacationer's paradise—a locale that tempts tourists to quit their jobs, sell their possessions, and move to the land of sun, surf, and unrivaled natural beauty. But for many parents of school-age children who live on the islands, Hawaii's schools are a form of purgatory.

Consider the following: Despite the fact that Hawaii offers no vouchers or tax credits, a significant number of parents dig deep into their pockets each year to send their children to private school (and local foundations pay to send many less-advantaged students there too).

Boatloads of evidence on academic achievement suggest that these parents' concerns are well founded. Among native Hawaiians and those with some Hawaiian heritage (the largest demographic group in the Aloha State), student achievement ranks consistently lowest of all ethnic groups. African-American and Hispanic groups almost always rate Ds and Fs across the board for achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The picture is no better for the state's low-income children, who perform dismally on NAEP. No more than 12 percent of these students are working at a proficient level.

It is more difficult to gain a picture of how the state's other minority students are performing, because NAEP's broad demographic categories make it impossible to track the performance of Filipino (20.3 percent of the population), Japanese (10.2 percent), Samoan (3.5 percent), Chinese (3.2 percent), and Korean (1.4 percent) students, as well as youngsters from Micronesia, India, and other countries.

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A new law provides more money to charter schools, which have been shortchanged for years, says Gov. Lingle.

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Governor Linda Lingle has been working diligently to bring competition and reform to her state, which is well known for having the most top-down, stifling education bureaucracy in the nation. Despite the fact that Hawaiians live on multiple islands, the state constitutes a single school district that educates nearly 200,000 students. If school principals want to hold face-to-face meetings with school district leaders, often the principals are forced to travel to Honolulu, home to the state's education department.

Lingle has tried to break the state's school district into seven areas, but her efforts to date have been blocked in the legislature. She has been more successful in transferring control of most of the school operating budgets from the Hawaii Department of Education to individual school principals. Hawaii recently implemented a weak version of weighted student funding, whereby students who require more funding receive additional resources that travel with them to their school.

Although the legislature watered down Governor Lingle's budget proposals, Hawaii's principals today control roughly 70 percent of their operating funds; however, their influence over that money is curtailed by the fact that much of it is tied up in pay and benefits for teachers and support staff under statewide union contracts. Running for reelection this year, Lingle has called for raising to 90 percent the portion of Hawaii's school operating budgets con-

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.40	F	46	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.53%	C	13	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	69.97%	F	46	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	B+	6	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.97%	C	14	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.91**	**D**	**39**	**50**

trolled by principals, and for experimenting with the creation of several local school boards outside Oahu.

Hawaii has taken several other promising, if small, steps in the direction of education reform. The state has completed a laborious process of simplifying and focusing its unsatisfactory academic standards. New state tests, to be given for the first time next spring, are said to better match the topics specified in the standards and benchmarks.

The traditional public schools have made significant changes to their calendar this year. Classes began in July to avoid the academic regression common among disadvantaged students during a long summer break, and breaks are given throughout the year instead of over three months in summer. (In any case, it is always summer in Hawaii.)

The state's twenty-seven charter schools also show promise but continue to struggle under an unfair funding system. Legislative changes this year made it easier to convert failing public schools into charter schools and to bring per-pupil funding and services for charters closer to the level of regular public schools. "The bottom line," says Lingle, "is [the new law] provides more money to charter schools. They have been shortchanged since the beginning."

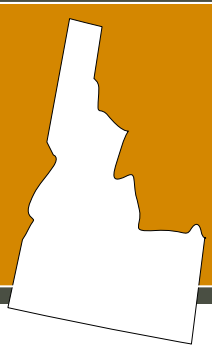
But many education problems remain. Hawaii has not devised a solution to its teacher-shortage problem. "Special education has a desperate shortage, and we also are very short on teachers in math, science, and industrial arts, as well as counselors and librarians," said Joan Lee Husted, executive director of the Hawaii State Teachers Association, which represents teachers in both regular and charter schools.

Further, in the summer of 2006, 66 percent of Hawaii's 282 public schools failed to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. That percentage was among the highest in any nation. (That percentage, however, does indicate that Hawaii has set the proficiency bar at a high level.)

There is trouble in paradise, to be sure. But in the parlance of locals, Governor Lingle is one wicked wahine. Whether she or her successor is able to continue real education reform in the Aloha State, however, remains to be seen. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	3	41
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	57	D	14	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	27	C	3	40
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	32	37
8th Graders in **Science**	11	D	18	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	55	D	12	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	43	50
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	46	50
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	41	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.2	D	37	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.90**	**D**	**26**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•



IDAHO

Help Needed for Hispanic Students

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

What it lacks in population, Idaho makes up for in potatoes. With just 16 people per square mile, the state produces 38 percent of the nation's starchy staple. If only its education efforts were planted on similarly fertile ground.

Idaho's state standards provide poor soil from which to grow student achievement. In four subject areas (math, science, U.S. history, world history), they are so skimpy they can hardly be called standards at all. In English, however, the state comes closer to getting things right. When the Fordham Foundation reviewed them in 2005, the state earned a B. But the reward came with a warning: the lack of specific references to examples of content makes it unlikely "these standards can lead to uniformly high expectations for all students in the state."

In fact, they don't. While the performance of Idaho's low-income students is among the best in the nation, the achievement of its surging Hispanic population is markedly worse. Hispanics accounted for 18 percent of the state's population growth between 1990 and 2003—and 31 percent of growth in rural communities. Today, Hispanics constitute 12 percent of all Idaho students and are the state's only large minority population. (African-American students account for just 1.5 percent of enrollment.)

Though slow out of the starting gate, the state is beginning to respond to the challenges its schools face in educating these students. The legislature recently appropriated a modest $750,000 for a competitive grant program to districts with significant Hispanic populations "in an effort to engage districts in their own solutions." Statewide, the education department requires that all Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students participate in individualized student assessments. Idaho is training non-LEP teachers on how to deal more effectively with English language learners in their classrooms.

The biggest reform challenge facing Idaho educators may be high schools. For years, the state's graduation standards were among the lowest in the United States.

In the realm of school choice, there are some encouraging signs. Charter schools are well established in Idaho, and their future looks bright. Currently, 3 percent of students attend one of the state's 28 charter schools, and there's reason to believe that number will grow. A 2004 amendment to Idaho's charter law empowers a new state-level charter school commission to authorize charters in addition to school districts. This mountainous state isn't just resting upon brick and mortar charters, either. Three virtual charter schools currently offer their programs through cyberspace, reaching about 1 percent of the state's 262,000 students.

The biggest reform challenge facing Idaho educators may be high schools. For years, the state's graduation standards were among the lowest in the United States. (The state still requires just two years of math and science and two-and-a-half years of history for high school graduates.)

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.00	D	32	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.70%	D	28	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	•	D	37	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	31.72%	D	39	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	•
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.22%	B	13	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.64**	**C-**	**24**	**50**

In 2005, the state board of education proposed a high school reform initiative that would raise the number of required math and science courses to four and three years, respectively. Moreover, seniors would have been required to complete a project and take one national test—the ACT, SAT, or Compass—as a prerequisite for graduation. The legislature, however, didn't approve funds for this overhaul.

For many people in Idaho, says state school board spokeswoman Luci Willits, the current number of credits required is "fine." Many citizens believe that "students… don't need math. That they will just work on the farm or in the mines. The state board doesn't agree with that."

While the board couldn't boost the number of courses required for graduation, it could and did raise the bar for the state's high school exit exam. It was raised from eighth-grade to tenth-grade level between 2004 and 2006.

Adding to the state's woes has been difficulty filling teacher vacancies with talented educators, especially in rural communities. During the 2005-2006 school year, districts received, on average, fewer than five applications for each of roughly 2,400 vacancies. And the vacancy rate has been rising steadily since 2001, when it stood at just over 1,400.

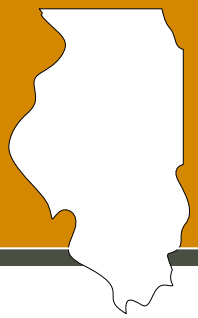
The state is starting to look to alternatively certified teachers to help ease the burden.

The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence's (ABCTE's) Passport to Teaching program is beginning to certify teachers in Idaho. Plus Idaho has a "fast track" program for placing teachers in the classroom, though just a handful of candidates have completed the program and been hired into jobs.

Reform still isn't a staple in the state's education diet. But Idaho's needs are forcing it to experiment in some interesting ways. The ground may well be fecund enough for planting reform across the state. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	34	40
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	22	37
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	21	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	8	50
8th Graders in **Math**	20	D	6	50
8th Graders in **Science**	24	C	7	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	9.6	C	30	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	1.43	D+	4	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	NO PROGRESS	•	•



ILLINOIS

Reform Is Blowing in the Wind

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

It isn't just because of Lake Michigan's cold gusts that Chicago is called the Windy City. It's also the hot air spewed by the City of the Big Shoulders's politicians as well as their Springfield counterparts. Consider Mayor Richard Daley, who in July made a highly visible visit to an elementary school on the city's rough and tumble (and mostly African-American and low-income) South Side to croon about double-digit increases in reading and math scores on state tests from the year before. "We're on our way to becoming the best urban school district in the nation," said Daley.

Not long after, education leaders downstate in Springfield did some puffing of their own, touting statewide test results for Illinois students who were, they announced, showing "good ongoing progress" in reading, science, and math in grades 3–8.

The blustery grandstanding was predictable. It comes with ownership. Daley took over Chicago's public school system, the nation's third largest, more than a decade ago. Two years ago, Governor Rod Blagojevich gained control over the state's school board, which is constitutionally independent of the state's chief executive. Eager for good news in the K–12 arena, both leaders leapt at the opportunity to show the state's citizens that they're on the job and delivering results.

The problem is that this sort of good news evaporates in the face of a reliable national benchmark. While the state test shows improvement, the National Assessment for Educational Progress shows that Illinois's low-income and minority students score worse than their counterparts in all but 12 states and have made no significant progress over the last decade. This record is among the worst in the nation.

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The National Assessment for Educational Progress shows that Illinois's low-income and minority students score worse than their counterparts in all but 12 states.

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How, then, to explain the rise in state test scores? It could be that the adults are getting smarter about manipulating test results. The most blatant example of this was the state's Testing Committee's decision to lower the cut score for passing the math section.

"The biggest change that this state seems to be making is adjusting how they do tests," says Mike Van Winkle, the spokesperson for the Heartland Institute, a Chicago-based think tank. "This appears to be the state's approach to reform."

Indeed, there's much confusion over state tests in Illinois. The state changed assessments in 2000 and then changed test vendors in 2005, leading to late delivery of testing packets to schools statewide and making comparison of scores across time nearly impossible. Such inconsistency means that Illinois achievement scores are a "moving target," according to Jim Broadway of the State School News Service.

Whatever the measures and targets, the Prairie State is not doing enough to improve student learning. While Chicago's leaders have demonstrated steadfastness in their decade-long effort to reform the city's schools, the rest of the state is treading water. Illinois has middling academic standards, no statewide high

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.80	C-	14	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F		50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.48%	D	34	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	10.80%	B	16	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.99%	F	27	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.23	C	10	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.42**	**D+**	**28**	**50**

school exit exam, and an archaic reliance on education schools as the only producers of teachers for public classrooms.

Charter schools scarcely fare better. While Chicago is home to some high-performing charter schools, the state's cramped charter law ensures these schools will pose little threat to the educational establishment. The number of charters is currently capped at 60 schools statewide (30 in Chicago, 15 in suburban communities, and 15 down-state). These 60 schools face enormous problems. They receive no direct funding from the state for facilities, and authorization can only be obtained by going through local school boards, which, outside of Chicago, are mostly not interested.

"They're doing absolutely nothing on choice," says Van Winkle. The state does offer a $500 tax credit for sending children to private schools, but this is helpful mostly to middle-class parents with children already in private schools. Meanwhile, scores of Chicago Catholic schools have closed in recent years. And with no statewide voucher program, the future doesn't look promising.

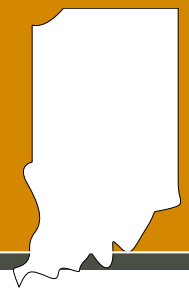
"It's like trying to set up a FedEx in the corner of the local post office," says Elizabeth Evans, executive director of the Illinois Network of Charter Schools, about the charter law's limitations.

Perhaps other issues, such as school finance, are sucking up all the school reform oxygen. With his state long recognized as among the most inequitable school-funding jurisdictions in the land, Blagojevich has put forth a plan to fix the system. But his "fix" mostly just reshuffles who's paying the bill. Rather than the state simply handing out money, it will determine how much it should cost to educate students in a particular community, determine what percentage of that cost local communities can afford to cover through property taxes, and then write a check for the difference. But this is not "Weighted Student Funding," a promising reform strategy whereby education dollars follow students to the school of their choice, with more money going to needier children. The new plan is "weighted," but not portable, so many of the same old inequities and inefficiencies will continue.

Illinois's education problems are real, but the state's patchy, belated approach to fixing them ensures only that the state will continue to lag behind the rest of the nation. Politicians may spew all the hot air they want, but it'll take a lot more than a warm wind to disperse the ominous student achievement cloud hanging over the Land of Lincoln. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	9	F	38	41
8th Graders in **Math**	6	F	27	40
8th Graders in **Science**	4	F	29	34
Black Graduation Rate	52	D	24	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	25	40
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	18	37
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	23	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	57	D	9	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	38	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	34	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	14.1	B	15	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.75**	**D-**	**32**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•



INDIANA

Crossroads of Reform

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Hoosier school reformers in Indiana have done some things right, including creating some of the best academic standards in the nation and working with the American Diploma Project (ADP) to align those standards to the demands of colleges and employers. But last spring they must have spent a few days hiding under the covers after a celebrity—Oprah, no less!—issued a wakeup call on national television.

As part of an April series about American schools in crisis, the doyenne of daytime TV talk shows zoomed in on poor Shelbyville, Indiana. The quiet little white-bread town (pop. 18,000) in the heart of the Hoosier State was singled out to show millions of viewers that the educational crisis affects even middle class America. If that wasn't bad enough, Oprah brought along *Time* magazine, which piled on that same week with a cover story ("Dropout Nation") that opened with, "It's lunchtime at Shelbyville High School…." The magazine pointed out that only a third of Shelbyville's high school students would graduate in four years, "dropping out in a slow, steady bleed that has left the town wondering how it could have let down so many of its kids."

"Oprah called us out on national TV," says Marcie Brown, Governor Mitch Daniels's policy director for education. "It wasn't much fun, but we're responding."

Some progress had been made already. In response to sagging national test scores and complaints from business leaders, the state committed to writing the best academic standards in the nation in the 1990s, and succeeded. It was also one of the first states

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"Oprah called us out on national TV," says Marcie Brown, Governor Mitch Daniels's policy director for education. "It wasn't much fun, but we're responding."

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to participate in ADP. Indiana's African-American students have made some progress in math. Otherwise, the state's disadvantaged students are faltering. Indiana's African-American and Hispanic graduation rates are among the worst in the nation. Statewide, the education department claims a graduation rate of 90 percent, a figure that one Indiana education official called "absurd," estimating that the real number is some 20 points below that.

National humiliation and disputed numbers aside, the state continues marching forward, even if with baby steps. Like more than half the states, Indiana now has a high school exit exam. Effective 2011, students will have to pass the test in order to receive a high school diploma—a diploma meant to finally signal that students have mastered an important body of knowledge and skills.

State lawmakers have also recently passed a high school retention package that raises the mandatory school attendance age to 18, and created an early college program to encourage high school students to get a jump on college credit-bearing courses. Those who would still drop out of school will face driver license restrictions as well as work permit limits.

The state is also making good progress completing its "curriculum alignment" in concert with ADP. This involves squaring high school curricula with the demands of post–high school employers and institutions of higher learning. According to Achieve, Inc., which administers ADP, Indiana is now

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	4.00	A	1	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.03%	C	21	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	15.12%	C	27	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C-	26	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.89%	F	28	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.09**	**C**	**12**	**50**

one of five states to have received the "validation [of the] business and higher education communities that the high school standards reflect their skill demands."

And finally, the state does a decent job in placing alternatively certified teachers in the classroom. The Transition to Teaching program is offered across the state to people with the requisite content knowledge, but not the pedagogical experience, to become classroom teachers.

Other reform initiatives, however, have vanished somewhere along Indianapolis's legislative backstreets. Bills to create voucher programs and tuition tax credits for early childhood education are not in play during the Fall 2006 session, even though legislation in both areas nearly passed last year. Governor Daniels isn't pushing either.

"It's not part of his agenda right now," says Brown, who explains that both Daniels and state school superintendent Suellen Reed are worried that pursuing vouchers would create lawsuits and divide Republicans, who control state government. But others are confident that the voucher issue isn't dead. "A lot of people don't realize how close we came to having one last year," says Jonathan Plucker, director of the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University, pointing to the presence of several foundations and other advocates for private school choice. "I can't imagine that they're not going to try it again."

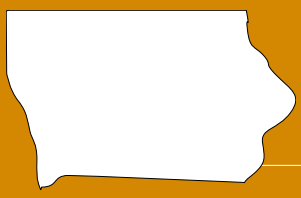
Charter schools are also struggling to take hold in the Hoosier State, but their future may be brighter. The cap that had been imposed on the number of charters permitted in the state has been lifted, and Bart Peterson, the mayor of Indianapolis, has been expanding the number of charters under his watch. Peterson is one of the few mayors in the country with the authority to charter schools and this year received the Innovations in Government Award from Harvard University for his efforts on this front.

Virtual charter schools also tried getting off the ground last year when Ball State University attempted to authorize the state's first. The effort was quickly shot down by the teacher unions, which complained that virtual charters violate the state's mandatory attendance policy and would cost taxpayers millions.

If leaders want to take Indiana to the next step, they need to stop capitulating to the interests of the status quo. A state known for its niceness might have to learn how to fight hard. Maybe Oprah's inspiration will help. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	20	41
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	15	40
8th Graders in **Science**	4	F	29	34
Black Graduation Rate	49	F	28	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	34	40
8th Graders in **Math**	14	D	15	37
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	21	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	52	D	22	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	18	50
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	19	50
8th Graders in **Science**	15	D	19	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.9	D	32	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	0.75	D-	32	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	LIMITED PROGRESS	•	•



IOWA

Land of Corn and Complacency

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

For decades in agrarian Iowa, corn and local school boards were kings, and the public was satisfied with both.

"I think everyone has felt good about the work our schools have been doing," Lana Oppenheim Schlapkohl, a spokeswoman for the Iowa State Education Association, said this year. "There's nothing wrong with the quality of education we've been providing. We just have to provide more of it."

Not so fast. Fifty-four percent of Iowans now say that public education in the state is on the wrong track, according to a *Des Moines Register* poll in January 2006. Changing demographics, concerns over the lack of state standards and low high school graduation requirements, and a dust up with the federal Education Department over testing teachers has suddenly made education a hot political topic.

Though Iowa remains predominantly white, minority students now make up nearly one-third of the enrollment in the state's eight urban school districts. And they're not faring well academically.

Low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students in Iowa have made no progress on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) over the past decade—terrible news, considering that the percentage of these students scoring at or above the "proficient" level in reading and math is mostly in the teens or single digits on the most recent NAEP. Informed of these trends and data, Leland Tack of the state Department of Education protested. "This doesn't reflect the entire education system in our state," says Tack, who has been with the department for 35 years. "We think attention needs to be paid to the minority subgroups and to low-income students in terms of achievement and growth in achievement, but we're making progress." This is true for the state exam. But the state's requirements for scoring at the "proficient" level on its own reading and math tests are among the lowest in the nation.

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...minority students now make up nearly one-third of the enrollment in the state's eight urban school districts. And they're not faring well academically.

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"The 'proficient' level is a pretty high level with NAEP," says Tack. "Unfortunately, the public thinks proficient is proficient. [They don't understand that] it's a definitional issue. This confuses people."

Such double-talk has worn thin both with government officials outside the Education Department and with nongovernment groups. "The old system has to go," says Marvin Pomerantz, a corporate CEO and co-chairman of the Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce, a nonprofit foundation created in 2005 by the Iowa legislature and led by respected Iowans in education and business. "[It] doesn't work anymore."

The institute issued a January 2006 report calling for significant changes in Iowa education. At the top of their list was a call for a rigorous statewide core curriculum.

"We're the only state in the country that doesn't have academic standards," Marc Ward, a Des Moines school board member, told the *Des Moines Register* earlier this year. "We're being arrogant in thinking we know something that the other 49 states don't know."

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	•	•	•	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.00%	F	49	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	39.09%	D	41	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.30%	F	36	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	3	B	2	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.67**	**D-**	**43**	**50**

Iowa did have its Core Content Standards and Benchmarks, but they were vague, and the state didn't require districts to follow them. In some Iowa high schools, a student could graduate with only two years each of math and science, leaving them ill-prepared to compete in the increasingly high-tech global economy.

The institute's recommendations, combined with rising anxiety from Iowans and lessons learned from a gubernatorial trade mission trip to education-obsessed India, convinced Governor Tom Vilsack, a Democrat, that reform was needed immediately. He told lawmakers at the start of their 2006 legislative session that they shouldn't plan on going home until they approved a comprehensive education plan.

"One of the things I learned in India," says Vilsack, "is they have a goal to produce 2.5 million engineers, which would dwarf the number of engineers in this country. They are excited about getting their kids educated. We have stiff competition, and we have got to strengthen our system. This is our year to do it."

The state legislature responded by passing a trio of education bills in May, including one ensuring that students graduate having completed four years of English and language arts training and three years each of math, science, and social studies.

But the momentum for reform hit a wall over the issue of merit pay for teachers. Both the Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce and the legislature agreed that teachers in the state are paid too little. The legislature agreed to a pay increase, but it wanted to establish an independent commission linking teachers' pay to classroom performance. Vilsack, under pressure from the teachers union, vetoed that aspect of the bill.

Unfortunately, the union is also preventing other promising reforms from catching on. For example, the state has one of the weakest charter laws in the country, and thus only a handful of charter schools. Nor does Iowa have much to offer mid-career professionals or liberal arts graduates who want to enter teaching through alternate routes.

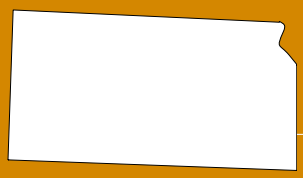
Still, the quality of the state's teachers has been a point of contention. Iowa was the only state to resist a No Child Left Behind Act requirement that new elementary school teachers pass a standardized test in math, reading, social studies, and science before entering the classroom.

Such intransigence rankled the U.S. Department of Education, which issued a stern warning in May 2006, threatening Iowa with loss of some federal funds. The two sides have since resolved their impasse.

International competition, federal pressure, and a yawning achievement gap appear to be rousing the Hawkeye State from its education slumber. It's about time. Whether the state will marshal its energies to put education back on the right track is still an open question. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	20	41
8th Graders in **Math**	8	F	20	40
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	47	F	31	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	23	40
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	32	37
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	58	D	7	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	17	D	14	50
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	6.7	D	41	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.67**	**D-**	**36**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•



KANSAS

Tug of War on the Range

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

The "intelligent design" controversy made the Kansas state school board the butt of many jokes and the target of a sarcastic Web-based church—The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

Outlandish board decisions and sarcasm aside, however, Kansas's lackluster efforts at school reform are no joke. Education leaders point the finger at money, money, and more money (or the lack thereof). Frustrated government officials and education watchers single out the state board of education, which has been grossly ineffective since the intelligent design debate. Others point to laws that greatly restrict charter school freedom and growth.

And then there's Bill Gagnon. A state board of education member, he contends that charters and other reform measures, such as graduation exit exams (which Kansas does not require), are extreme measures inappropriate for a state with Kansas's more mild challenges. "We in Kansas don't have any failed large urban school districts," he says. "We have no Chicagos and we have no Philadelphias. The highly prescriptive formulas Fordham makes don't apply to us."

The state may not have big, urban centers, but its African-American and Hispanic students still perform poorly on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Both in math and reading, none of these subgroups has more than 14 percent of students scoring at or above proficient level. And measured over time, these scores are flatlined.

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"Our science standards have a profound influence on children—and an unfortunate one."

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"NAEP says Kansas does well in a relative way compared to other states, but that's not acceptable," says State Education Commissioner Bob Corkins. "The student achievement gap, especially in minority groups, is actually widening."

The real battle over reform is shaping up over charter schools. Corkins, who was hired last year by the state board's conservative majority, supports an open environment for charter schools, but state law severely limits their freedom. School districts have the final say about whether a charter petition is accepted. And even if a charter clears this hurdle, it has no more curricular freedom than any other district school.

"Is that a true charter school? I say no," says Steve Abrams, chair of the state board. "Charters [in Kansas] are used as a place for at-risk kids, to get the troublemakers out of the classroom. I'm not sure that's what a charter school is supposed to do." The state had 26 charter schools in 25 districts last year—many of them will soon expire or be reabsorbed into their districts.

At a bare minimum, Corkins argues, the state board should at least be able to hear appeals on late petitions that are rejected at the local level.

But Corkins isn't waiting for the moderates on the board—or even a majority of Kansans—to say they want more education choices. He's already working to implement regulatory changes that make charter schools (as well as other alternative education models) easier to develop. His new Division of School Innovation,

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.60	C-	20	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.42%	D	37	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	25.83%	D	34	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C-	26	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.54%	F	33	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.91**	**D**	**39**	**50**

set up to get the latest research about best teaching practices into the hands of teachers and principals, will include a special coordinator for alternative schools to "advocate for charters, magnet, and virtual schools." He is also looking to use a newly received federal charter school grant of $10 million to stimulate the state's fledgling charter movement.

And that's a good thing, because the status quo is less than heartening. Kansas scores terribly in graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students, for instance. But the high school dropout rate has generated less debate than other issues. Wagnon and Abrams, usually on opposite sides of education issues, agree that a new program that integrates academic and vocational training could help keep struggling teens in school.

Their program is called Academic Vo-Tech. It's a route through high school that allows students grappling with the traditional academic program to choose a vocational interest—such as automotive repair, computer programming, medicine, or restaurant/hotel hospitality—and become immersed in the field. They essentially train for a career, while also fulfilling their academic requirements.

"This is not about destroying public education and the typical classroom," says Abrams. "We're trying to find a hook, so to speak. If students don't go into this, odds are high that they'll drop out of school, even if they just drop out mentally."

That so many minority students do drop out is particularly disconcerting when Kansas state standards are not well thought of to begin with. While not the worst in the nation, there are notable weak spots, such as science. Wagnon, a moderate, praised Fordham for flunking the state's science standards: "I think our science standards have a profound effect on kids and an unfortunate one."

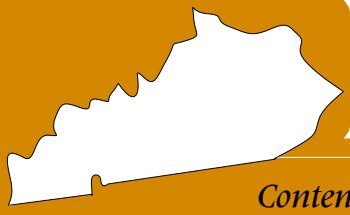
But those pushing for reform have a long struggle ahead. In addition to problems already noted, the Jayhawk State teaching corps is about as status quo as it comes. According to Abrams, the percentage of the state's teachers coming through traditional education colleges is "in the high 90s." And with no significant shortages, this isn't likely to change.

Kansas offers the choice to enter the classroom as a math or science teacher to those who've worked for a significant number of years in the industry. It's up to the school to hire them, but the teacher must still complete a traditional educational curriculum at night within three years of entering the classroom. The number of folks taking this option is very small, according to Abrams.

So even if Kansas gets its science standards right once again, the Flying Spaghetti Monster should be around for some time. After it tires of picking on the intelligent design issue, there's plenty more education foolishness to skewer. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	12	D	8	40
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	55	D	18	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	25	40
8th Graders in **Math**	14	D	15	37
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	41	F	30	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	19	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	6.5	D	42	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	0.89	D	27	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	NO PROGRESS	•	•



KENTUCKY

Content with a Trot instead of a Gallop

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Kentucky's education reform efforts were fast out of the starting gate but have begun to stumble. It is still early, but state leaders are going to have to find their stride if they hope to become pacesetters again.

Kentucky began the process of raising student achievement in 1989, when the state supreme court ruled the Bluegrass State's funding mechanism inequitable. In response, the legislature passed KERA—the Kentucky Education Reform Act. It was a radical change in how the state funded and assessed its schools.

Most education advocates say that KERA was a step in the right direction. It focused on outcomes and launched statewide testing with the Commonwealth Accountability and Testing System (CATS). But the assessment tool and the standards on which it was based were both flawed. And remain so.

"There's no question the KERA was innovative," says Steve Newman, a math professor at Northern Kentucky University and a critic of CATS. "They changed everything. But unfortunately, they got way out in front. They allowed all the crazy people from the college of education to try out all their crazy ideas. None of them worked."

Not everyone agrees. Jody Richards, speaker of the Kentucky House of Representatives, says CATS is an effective tool. He cites as proof the percentage of all fourth-graders who are at or above proficient in math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which doubled to 27 percent between 1992 and 2005. And Kentucky's low-income students made statistically significant progress in both math and science from 1996 to 2005, earning the state a rating of limited progress for this report.

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Kentucky got on early jump on reform, but lost steam down the stretch.

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"For the purpose of driving curriculum and having high standards, I think [CATS] is working," Richards said.

But all is not well in the Bluegrass State. The state's African-American students are performing at substandard levels. Their NAEP scores are in the teens and single digits, and just slightly more than half are graduating from high school. Moreover, the standards aligned with CATS leave plenty to be desired, rating a D from Fordham reviewers.

CATS has a challenger, however. This year, the Kentucky legislature overwhelmingly passed a bill that mandates use of ACT's "Explore, Plan and ACT" system of assessment tools, beginning in 2007–2008. Eighth-graders will use the Explore analysis, tenth-graders will be diagnosed with the Plan test, and all juniors will take the ACT. The bill includes remediation or acceleration programs for students who struggle or excel on the tests.

Unfortunately, there is not much reform activity beyond standards and testing. Kentucky is one of only ten states without even a glimmer of a charter school law, and education stakeholders say charter schools are not part of the current conversation about school reform. Other elements of school choice such as vouchers and tax credits are distant from the state's reform agenda.

The Bluegrass State does embrace alternative teacher certification, encouraging mid-career professionals to enter the classroom. Its federally funded Transition to Teaching Program requires only that participants have

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.00	D	31	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.89%	D	24	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	25.04%	D	32	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C+	10	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.09**	**D**	**33**	**50**

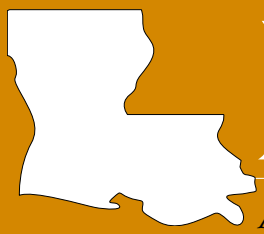
a bachelor's degree and be accepted to an alternative certification program at a partner university. In return, the state doles out a $5,000 stipend and tutoring for the PRAXIS exam. Still, candidates must jump through the standard university hoops to complete their certification—a sure turnoff to many potential teachers with solid academic qualifications in math and the sciences.

Alternative routes to the classroom help but are not enough to reform a system that is limping along. The fact is that too many in the state have grown complacent. Some leaders are content with simply touting soaring CAT scores. However, the state has not posted corresponding gains on NAEP for its African American students—a troubling sign.

CATS may have helped bring Kentucky light years from where it was twenty years ago, says one department of education insider, but it won't get the state across the finish line. Bluegrass State students deserve a better horse in the race to ensure that eac[TBF]hild learns to the peak of his or her ability.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	15	40
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	13	34
Black Graduation Rate	54	D	21	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	64	C	3	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	22	C	4	50
8th Graders in **Math**	14	D	24	50
8th Graders in **Science**	21	C	10	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.3	D	36	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.11**	**D**	**9**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



LOUISIANA

A Long Journey Back to Normal

F STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Educators in battered Louisiana are scrambling to ensure that the storms don't wash away the solid gains made by their students over the past decade on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Yet some are also pumped by the sweeping school reforms now taking root in overhauled systems, above all New Orleans, where resistance to such efforts once ran deep.

Louisiana's education system is struggling mightily one year after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita wrought havoc, especially on the state's poorest residents. More than half of New Orleans's 128 schools remained closed as the 2006–07 school year began. Thousands of teachers have left the state over the past year in search of stable lives or higher pay—and tens of thousands of students have also exited. State legislators have recognized the strain this places on New Orleans' schools and asked U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings for a one year suspension of the state's accountability system. The request was granted, but it expired this fall.

Yet reform-minded educators see a silver lining as Louisiana—and especially New Orleans—is getting a much needed educational makeover.

"I think we're changing the culture over there" in New Orleans, says Cecil Picard, superintendent of the Louisiana Department of Public Education. "I see this as an opportunity to establish a world-class, inner-city school system."

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"We started from an extremely low point, and we've got an awfully long way to go."

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Much hangs in the balance for Louisiana students. While there has been some improvement among African-American and low-income students, these students had no place to go but up. Before the storm, a mere 5 percent of the state's African-American eighth-graders had reached proficiency or above on the NAEP in math or science. Now the question is whether the state can continue its upward trajectory despite formidable long-term challenges and major league changes.

Success won't come easily. Daily life remains far from normal for children, teachers, and administrators. In one telling sign, Eva Jones, superintendent of the Plaquemines Parish Public Schools, continued to live this past summer behind the local school board office in a trailer from the Federal Emergency Management Administration. On the macro scale, unpredictable migration patterns mean New Orleans schools entered the current school year expecting some 30,000 students. That's an increase of more than 100 percent over 2005–06 enrollment numbers (about 12,000), but the numbers are still far below the pre-Katrina enrollment of 63,000.

Further complicating matters, education remains secondary to survival for many people. Some families "are working on homes, getting them repaired, trying to make sure that they're ready and have jobs and everything they need to have in place in order to come back" to New Orleans, says Robin Jarvis, superintendent of the Recovery School District, a state-run agency set up before the storm to take over the Big Easy's many failing schools. "In other cases, you have families who are kind of waiting to see what this hurricane season brings."

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	2.00	C	11	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	3	B	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.50%	D	33	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	1.40%	A	2	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.60%	C	16	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.27**	**C+**	**5**	**50**

To continue Louisiana's pre-Katrina progress in student achievement, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree that the return of the state's nine-year-old accountability system is a good thing. They point out that relatively rigorous performance requirements for middle schoolers account for the state's progress among low-income eighth-graders and black eight-graders in math. Still, the state isn't ready to re-introduce mandatory high-stakes testing, according to Senator Sharon Weston Broome, the Democratic vice chair of the Louisiana Senate Education Committee.

In the storms' aftermath, "what's going on is not normal," Broome says. "So for us to impose [testing] on them in a time when they're trying to regroup and rebuild their lives—parents, teachers, administrators, everybody—would be a tad bit much."

Local administrators don't share her pessimism. All but three parishes in the state went ahead with high-stakes testing during the 2005–06 year, even though they had the legislature's blessing to forego it. (Testing results weren't available at press time.) Districts around the state are pressing ahead, despite funding challenges, with two-year-old efforts to make pre-kindergarten programs a reality for all eligible children in the state. Over time, lawmakers say, these programs will address one of the state's weakest spots: reading performance among fourth-graders.

But accountability systems are only as good as the curriculum standards on which they're based. And here, Louisiana still has some work to do. Overall, the state rates a C for its standards—a respectable grade, but one that doesn't inspire teachers and students to greatness.

Also, the state could do a lot more to attract teachers to the schools' ranks. Alternative certification is available in the state through three programs, but all require the candidate to jump through innumerable hoops before entering the classroom. For professionals in math and science who might wish to bring their talents to the classroom, the litany of requirements is sure to make them think twice before committing.

But the most important key to Louisiana's educational future is the creation of an environment where new educational systems can thrive.

Consider, for instance, charter schools. Just 18 existed in the state pre-Katrina, largely because urban school systems fiercely resisted them, according to Jim Geiser, who served as executive director of the Louisiana Charter Schools Association until June 30. This fall, however, at least 36 charter schools will be up and running, most of them in New Orleans. Some of these are conversions of schools that were failing before the storm—and are overseen by the Recovery District—while others were converted from decent public schools that survived Katrina intact. Still others are new start-ups.

But these schools face challenges beyond those that charters must normally contend with (e.g., facilities and funding), Geiser says. Because they came on line under emergency circumstances, they may not have sufficient expertise in leadership or adequate buy-in from key constituencies to thrive over the long term.

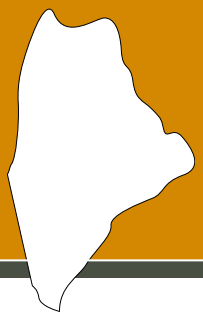
"The jury is still out as to whether these schools will retain their identity as charter schools," Geiser says. "A lot of those who are taking over these schools didn't know what a charter school was a year ago."

Now the race is on to fill positions with personnel who could well become tomorrow's education establishment. Statewide, some 40 principals and 500 teachers are being hired, Picard said. The question is: will all this new blood infuse vigor into a downtrodden system? It's a question Louisiana will surely need years to sort out.

"We started from an extremely low point" in terms of student performance, says state Senator Gerald J. Theunissen, a Republican member of the Senate Education Committee, "and we've got an awfully long way to go." TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	9	F	38	41
8th Graders in **Math**	5	F	31	40
8th Graders in **Science**	5	F	26	34
Black Graduation Rate	53	D	22	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	59	D	6	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	43	50
8th Graders in **Math**	8	F	45	50
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	29	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	2.5	F	50	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.44**	**F**	**42**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



MAINE

Stubbornly Straight-laced

N/A STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

N/A ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Maine's citizens aren't afraid of taking chances—when necessary. The state's lobster fishermen risk life and limb to snare their spiny crop when weather conspires against them. The founders of L.L. Bean, frustrated by their store's slow sales, bet everything that a catalog business could work. This spirit of measured risk taking carries over into the policy world. Of late, the state has wrestled with issues that federal officials would just as soon avoid: prescription drug pricing limits, universal health coverage, and public financing of political campaigns.

In the realm of education, however, Maine remains stubbornly straight-laced and old-fashioned. It has adopted no charter school law. Its school governance is still fiercely guarded by local communities. Consider the fact that although the state has 12,000 fewer students than the city of Philadelphia, Maine has some 280 more administrative units, or districts, to oversee its young charges than the City of Brotherly Love. "It's a conservative state," says Judith Jones of the Maine Association for Charter Schools, "in the sense that people tend to be very satisfied with the status quo."

For now, the state isn't feeling much pressure to change. Minority population numbers hardly register in Maine. The state exams look to be telling the truth to its citizens about student achievement. Maine's state test, the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) is ranked number 1 for rigor in defining "proficiency" on its reading and math components. (The standards to which the MEA is aligned rate only a dim D-, however.) While low-income students' academic performance could be much better, their scores look decent compared to other states.

▲

"It's a conservative state in the sense that people tend to be satisfied with the status quo."

▲

But nothing stays the same. The state's population of minority students is rising, most notably in the small city of Lewiston, which attracts a growing number of Somali families. Educating their children, however, is proving especially difficult. "They haven't been to school—they aren't literate in their own language," says James Carignan, chairman of the Maine State Board of Education.

Moreover, state leaders are beginning to challenge local control. As part of a compromise agreement in 1996, students take not only the MEA, but also the assessments that local districts develop. The practice has proven unpopular. So in 2006, Governor John Baldacci called for a year-long moratorium on these local assessments.

The state is also pushing to reduce local control in two other ways. First, the government wants to reduce the number of school districts from the current 282 to just 35. And second, the Pine Tree State would like to bring all teachers under one collective bargaining agreement.

Such changes will not come easily. Sue Gendron, the state education commissioner who has long been concerned about Maine's graduation rate, has pushed for changes to the high school core curriculum. She has also supported efforts to create a statewide high school exit exam. Both ideas have foundered on the shoals of local control.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.80	D-	37	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F		50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.14%	F	46	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	73.35%	F	47	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	A	1	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	3	B	2	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.00**	**D**	**37**	**50**

Charter advocates have also been swimming upstream. The State Board of Education has tried to pave the way for charters by asking the Department of Education to allow a 10-year pilot program for charters in a few select areas. Nothing happened. Another proposal to allow up to 20 charter schools to serve at-risk students was defeated in the state senate this year.

Again, many residents see no need for charters. Says Jones, "There's already this huge outlet for dissatisfied parents." That outlet is the state's "tuitioning" program, which dates from the mid-19th century.

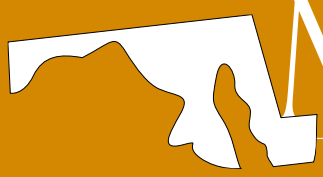
As in Vermont, towns that don't have a large enough population to support a public middle or high school must provide tuition for parents to send their children to the private school of their choice or to public schools in other towns. (The amount of tuition is capped.) Religious schools are not allowed to participate in the program, though that rule is currently under court review. Of the state's 205,000 students, some 17,000 are making use of the tuitioning program.

The one reform initiative that Maine's citizens have embraced is a statewide program for putting laptops into the hands of school children. It makes sense in a state with a significant rural population, and there's some evidence that it's effective.

Whether Maine will embrace education reform that raises standards, permits charters, and tightens high school course requirements remains to be seen, however. This is one public policy issue on which the state's citizens may find it beneficial to act before it becomes absolutely necessary to do so. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	22	C	4	50
8th Graders in **Math**	18	D	13	50
8th Graders in **Science**	25	C	6	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	14.4	B	14	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	•	•	•	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	N/A	•	•



MARYLAND

Education as Political Football

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

How do you spell education in Maryland? P-o-l-i-t-i-c-s. The same can be said of every state in the union, of course, but in the Old Line State there is no greater roadblock to reforming and improving the K–12 system.

Baltimore City Schools are Exhibit A. Since 1992, when the state began to identify its lowest performing schools, Charm City's schools have dominated the list. But when the most uncharming news broke in June 2005 that the city was home to 22 of the state's 24 schools that repeatedly failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the state had enough and stepped in. With the backing of State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, the state board of education voted to have a third party take over and operate four of the lowest performing middle schools.

The action was understandably unpopular with teachers and their unions. But the person who really hated it was the city's Democratic mayor, Martin O'Malley, who maintained that his administration had "improved test scores" during his tenure.

O'Malley is running for governor this year against Republican incumbent Robert Ehrlich, so more than a few eyebrows were raised when, in April 2006, the Democrat–led General Assembly voted to keep the Baltimore schools under local control, reversing the state board's effort and leaving O'Malley the victor. Republican leaders were furious.

"The fact that that man [O'Malley] convinced [the legislature] to stop the restructuring of those schools is criminal," said State Senator Janet Greenip, a Republican member of the state's education subcommittee.

▲

Like an unruly teenager, Maryland is not living up to its potential.

▲

Republicans see this as "business as usual," but, they've long blamed the state's union-friendly legislators and liberal Assembly for blocking reforms. But State Senator Paul Pinsky, a Democrat and chairman of the education policy subcommittee, denies that his party is stymieing reform. Instead, he says, the legislature "believes in public schools" and won't support untested reforms.

Republicans may enjoy blaming Democrats, but they, too, have failed to act to improve education at opportune times. The Steele Commission of late 2005 is just one example. Led by Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele (the state's Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate), the commission put forward 30 ambitious recommendations for overhauling Maryland's K–12 system. Outside of some experimental merit pay programs for teachers, little has come from the report.

Despite all these political problems, there are signs that education reform is taking hold in small ways in the state. One in five Maryland high school students has taken and passed an Advanced Placement exam; only New York does better. Seven in 10 Hispanic students in Maryland graduate from high school on time—the highest percentage in the country. And math scores for African-American eighth-graders are up significantly since 2002, the year President Bush signed NCLB into law.

Grasmick can claim some credit for these modest gains. She has served as chief state school officer for 15 years—under one Republican and two Democratic governors. She is among the longest-serving superintendents in the land and was there when

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	2.00	C	11	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	2.89%	C	4	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	0.47%	A	1	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.64%	F	32	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	0	F	47	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.00**	**C**	**16**	**50**

Maryland began its standards movement that launched a decade of testing programs.

But some gaps remain in the fabric of reform. Although an early adopter of standards-based reform, Maryland's standards are just above average in quality. And in the realm of charter schools, the state passed a cramped law two years ago. Twenty-two charters opened this fall, but it isn't easy under this state statute. Bill Reinhard, a spokesman for the Department of Education, said the law is a "cautious triumph."

The greatest challenge in Maryland, however, may well be middle schools. At Baltimore's Thurgood Marshall Middle School, for instance, math achievement scores on the Maryland State Assessment in 2006 were dismal—only three eighth-graders scored above failing. Scores were equally devastating at three other middle schools in the city, said Gary Heath, assistant state superintendent for accountability and assessment.

State Board of Education President Edward L. Root said the state is well aware of the middle school problem and that the board has launched a middle school task force that will look at the achievement gaps between white and minority subgroups. Root said the state is also concerned about the achievement gap between boys and girls at the middle school level.

Heath, who monitors student test scores regularly, said the problems for low-performing subgroups stem from an absence of qualified teachers at their schools. "I'm concerned for these children. They are more likely not to be getting the education they need. There is no consistency of leadership [at their schools], and there are significant issues with qualified teachers," he said.

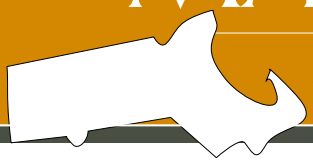
The shortage is no exaggeration. Each year there are about 8,000 openings for new teachers, yet the state graduates only about 2,700 teachers annually. The rest come from elsewhere. A trickle of new teachers arrives through alternative routes such as Troops to Teachers and Teach for America. Still, the state lacks openness and flexibility when it comes to allowing teachers to enter the profession from alternative routes.

Like an unruly teenager, Maryland is not living up to its potential. With a track record of reform and experienced, talented leaders, its education system could be achieving much more. Maybe someday politics will no longer get in the way. Maybe someday the education future of Maryland youngsters will be bright—once November 7th is history. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	20	41
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	10	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	62	C	7	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	8	40
8th Graders in **Math**	19	D	3	37
8th Graders in **Science**	14	D	9	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	69	C	1	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	47	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	38	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	21	A	2	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.33**	**D+**	**6**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

MASSACHUSETTS



An Education Revolution

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Massachusetts's place in American history is secure—forever linked to the American Revolution. Education watchers will link the state to a second uprising—the Standards and Accountability Revolution.

In the wake of an adequacy lawsuit, the state legislature in 1993 passed a sweeping law (the Education Reform Act) that increased state aid to local districts, required many local districts to spend more money per child, called for new accountability and test standards, and opened up the educational marketplace to charter schools.

In the thirteen years since, the state has enjoyed some notable successes with these reforms. The best known may well be its improved state curriculum standards, which are rated the very best in the nation. And the state exam, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, or MCAS, has weathered the storms of criticism to keep its position as the one test that every student (beginning with the class of 2003) in the state must pass in order to get through high school.

Initial concerns that massive numbers of students wouldn't clear the bar have been proven unfounded. Just 14 percent of Boston's class of '03 failed to muster a passing score. That's significant progress, when one considers that the passing rate for Boston students taking the tenth-grade math assessment tripled between 1998 and 2004, from 25 percent to 74 percent, while the passing rate for English rose from 43 percent to 77 percent. "There's been a lot of data coming out about Boston showing a steady increase in performance," says Patricia Haddad, who chairs the state legislature's Joint Committee on Education. "Still, it leaves a lot to be desired. 'Satisfied' is a very relative term."

> *"The debate about closing the achievement gap is as important and lively as ever."*

What's left to resolve is the poor showing by the state's low-income and minority students. The state is making "moderate progress" with them. But in terms of achievement on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress, too many of these students aren't hitting the mark.

The problem is particularly acute in Boston, not surprisingly, with its high concentration of poor and minority students. Though their scores on MCAS have been creeping up, they remain unacceptably low, while the dropout rates remain over 20 percent for all students in the city. Throughout the state, the gap in performance between white and Asian students, compared with African American and Hispanic students, meanwhile, is pronounced. "The debate about closing the achievement gap is as important and lively as ever," says Thomas Payzant, who stepped down in 2006 after 11 years as superintendent in Boston.

Efforts to close that gap have been stymied of late, however, a fact that's frustrating many in the state who care about education. Unions have so far blocked the Great Schools Campaign, backed by businesses and education and foundation leaders. The campaign seeks to address the commonwealth's 50 worst-performing schools, putting them in an administrative district under the aegis of the state department of educa-

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	4.00	A	1	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.93%	C	23	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	22.27%	D	31	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	A	1	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.20%	C	17	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.18**	**C+**	**9**	**50**

tion and offering them greater resources and more flexible rules.

Political opposition to the bill has been strengthened by tight budgetary conditions at the state and local levels. "The grand bargain in 1993 was that we bought reform with new money," says William Guenther, president of Mass Insight Education and a leader of the Great Schools Campaign. "In essence, we didn't buy any reform this year. In order to have reform, you almost have to have new funds. At the same time, you shouldn't offer new funds without attaching reform."

Charter schools are exerting some pressure on district schools. As is the case throughout the state, most charter schools in Boston outperform neighboring district schools on achievement tests. But in many districts, the number of charter schools that can operate is close to topping out. By law, no more than 9 percent of a district's spending each year can go to charters. Polls indicate that the public favors lifting the cap, and it has become an issue in the 2006 gubernatorial campaign.

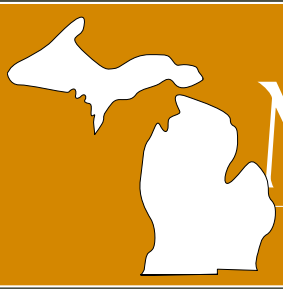
In general, Marc Kenen, executive director of the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association says the law governing the state's 61 charter schools is "excellent." Charter schools get 100 percent of what districts get in per-pupil funding, while the application process and achievement requirements are clear.

Kenen also applauds the state's alternative-certification program. Teachers who enter the field from other backgrounds have to pass the Massachusetts state teachers' test within a year of starting employment, but are not obligated to go through the traditional education and certification process. "We get a tremendous amount of mid-career professionals who come into the charter schools from other sectors," he says.

To be sure, the state is still struggling to educate its poor and minority students to high levels. But the potential for reaching this goal is there. The state's high-flying curriculum standards, its solid charter school laws (made even stronger if the cap is removed), and its willingness to work with alternative teachers are all indicators of a system on the verge of a breakthrough. The question is, can the state continue its momentum? TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	4	41
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	2	40
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	6	34
Black Graduation Rate	53	D	22	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	34	40
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	11	37
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	23	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	41	F	30	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	18	50
8th Graders in **Math**	22	C	2	50
8th Graders in **Science**	18	D	14	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	18.7	B	7	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.08**	**D**	**12**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•



MICHIGAN

What, Me Worry?

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MINIMAL PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

MAD magazine's most famous character, Alfred E. Newman, known best for his "What, me worry?" line, must have a lot of fans in Michigan. A spring 2005 statewide survey found, among other things, that only a quarter of parents in the Great Lakes State believe that getting a good education is "essential" to their children's long-term success.

Michigan parents may not fret overmuch about education, but state leaders do. For many, that survey was the final piece of evidence that they needed to get serious about student achievement. With the automobile industry shedding jobs like a cheap ragtop, the state can hardly do otherwise. The amount of work to be done is staggering. Michigan's student achievement numbers for minority students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress bear closer resemblances to states in the Deep South than to other industrial powerhouses like New York or New Jersey.

Not surprisingly, then, one-seventh of the state's public schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2005–06 under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. And the problems are "not just [with] Detroit," said William F. Coleman III, superintendent of the notoriously troubled Motor City public schools. Of the 544 schools statewide that didn't make AYP, 433 were in districts other than Coleman's.

As if this news weren't alarming enough, 70 percent of the schools that failed to make AYP were high schools. Achieve—a national group formed by governors and business leaders to support standards-based education reforms—recently confirmed the state's dismal performance levels and prodded Michigan's Democratic governor and Republican-controlled legislature into a truce that led to some significant policy changes for the state's broken high schools.

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"The people that you would expect to oppose these efforts, wanting to keep local control—all of a sudden these groups got together and said it's about time,"

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The policymakers mandated two major high school reforms:

1. Tighten graduation requirements. For years, districts had near-total control of their curricula. The state required only a single semester-long course in civics. That is beginning to change, starting with this year's eighth-graders, who must take four credits each in math and English and three in science, just for starters. Beginning with current third-graders, they will eventually also need to complete two credits of a foreign language.
2. Require all high school students to take the ACT. The changes took place amid heated debate about local control and flexibility, says Bill Mayes, executive director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, although in the end those misgivings were "set aside" for the greater good.

"The people that you would expect to oppose these efforts, wanting to keep local control—all of a sudden these groups got together and said it's about time," agreed Sharif Shakrani, co-director of the Education

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.80	D-	37	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.87%	D	25	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	13.42%	C	23	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C-	26	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	4.99%	A	4	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.127	B	5	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.17**	**C+**	**10**	**50**

Policy Center at Michigan State University. "They came on very strongly for stronger standards, and then Republican legislators and the Democratic governor came in support of this concept. It was very surprising."

Unfortunately, there were no significant policy breakthroughs concerning school choice. In a state where its largest district (Detroit) in 2003 turned down $200 million from a suburban businessman to create new charter schools, many officials remain leery of school choice, despite growing evidence that more parents want options for their children.

The state maintains a tight cap on the number of charter schools (known here as public school academies) despite overwhelming interest in them. There are more than 230 charters statewide, enrolling some 92,000 students. Dan Quisenberry, president of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA), expects the total to reach 100,000 students this year. Detroit Public Schools are hemorrhaging students to its 44 charters, and not just because parents are frustrated with Detroit teachers, who walked out on strike for 16 days this fall. By that time, according to MAPSA, most charter schools already had waiting lists.

But with more than 1.7 million students in public schools, it will take more than charters to deliver a high-quality education to all state students. It will take highly skilled teachers, as well. Because the state is an overproducer of new teachers, however, there's little interest in bringing talented professionals from other fields into the classroom.

Each year, Michigan's 32 state-approved teacher preparation programs crank out 7,500 new teachers. There are spot shortages, to be sure. The Great Lakes State has a difficult time finding folks qualified to teach reading, physics, economics, geography, and political science. Special education teachers are also in short supply. Still, the state does allow for some alternative routes to the classroom. Assuming one can find out about them, that is. The word "alternative" doesn't even appear in either the education department's 12-page "Facts About Teacher Certification in Michigan" booklet or its 7 pages of "Frequently Asked Questions for Michigan Certification" (39 of them).

A growing number of people are rightly worried about the future of education in Michigan. The question is are state education leaders worried enough? The demand for more charter schools is there, as is the need for alternatively certified teachers. The state's few steps toward reform are good ones, but it will take an innovator with the courage of Henry Ford to exorcise the spirit of Alfred E. Newman and take the state the rest of the way. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	6	F	27	40
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	10	34
Black Graduation Rate	32	F	41	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	18	D	16	40
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	6	37
8th Graders in **Science**	11	D	18	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	35	F	33	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	16	D	30	50
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	27	50
8th Graders in **Science**	19	D	12	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	11.6	C	23	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.75**	**D-**	**32**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MINIMAL PROGRESS**	•	•

MINNESOTA

Lake Wobegon Woes

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

In a state where the women are strong, the men good looking, and the children all above average, bad news is surely hard to take. But here it is: According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Minnesota's African-American and Hispanic children are performing poorly, and have made zero progress over the past 10 years. And Minnesota's current reform efforts don't appear to be up to the task of turning this situation around.

To be sure, there is some good news: Minnesota's low-income eighth-graders posted the second-highest scores in the nation in math on the 2005 NAEP, for instance. But African-American and Hispanic students perform abysmally, and dropout rates are cataclysmic. Fewer than half of the state's African-American students graduate from high school within four years—a figure that puts them in the lowest quartile among states nationwide.

Joe Nathan, director of the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota, said these results show that "Minnesota has a lot of work to do. There are certainly examples around the country where states are doing a better job educating African-American and Hispanic students, and we need to learn some lessons."

The state's standards aren't helping all that much. Although Minnesota was among the first to adopt state standards, the quality of those initial efforts was lackluster. Even with recent changes, the state's standards rate only a C+ according to Fordham's reviewers—a fair grade, according to State Representative Mindy Greiling.

Minnesota gave birth to charters, but complacency has replaced innovation.

Minnesota's early attempt, she notes, was "too broad" and too focused on process—things such as "working in a group," "service learning," and "mentorships." Senator Steve Kelley, chair of the state's education policy committee, agrees. The original state standards were "widely criticized" and "too general," he said.

The standards were repealed in 2002 around the time that Congress enacted the No Child Left Behind Act. By 2003, the state was deep into work on new standards in reading, math, and world history. Former Education Commissioner Cheri Yecke gave special attention to the history standards, which are now recognized as among the best in the nation. But this one improvement hasn't been enough. Says Kelley, "We have to think about what we have to do differently to make sure students are ready with the right requirements."

State leaders have some ideas for improving student achievement. A senior advisor to Governor Tim Pawlenty points out that the state now requires Algebra I to be taught to all students by eighth grade, and Algebra II—along with either chemistry or physics—will be required to graduate from high school. The new policy takes effect with students currently in third grade.

In 2005, the state legislature expanded the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate programs with $4.5 million in new funding. An additional $1 million was allotted to expand AP testing. This should help the state to raise its middling grade of C for the percentage of

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	2.20	C+	10	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.51%	C	14	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	21.06%	D	30	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	•	•	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.75%	C	15	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	0	A	1	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	3	B	2	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.09**	**C**	**12**	**50**

students passing at least one AP exam (currently 11.5 percent). But not only are Minnesota students taking college-level work in high school, some high-school students are actually attending college. "More than 7,000 students in the state are participating in post-secondary options," Nathan explained. Many students are taking "really challenging classes and passing them."

"Options" has long been a watchword in Minnesota education reform. Charter schools, for instance, are one of the state's bright spots. In 1991, Minnesota became the first state in the nation to adopt a charter school law. And it was a pretty good one. Charter schools are given special public funds for facilities, according to Eugene Piccolo, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools—freeing them to focus on academic achievement and not fundraising. Moreover, the state allows dollars to follow students who opt out of traditional public schools into charters. For these two reasons, the state garners an A grade for having the lowest funding discrepancy in the nation between charter and public schools.

With 132 charter schools in operation today, Minnesota can no longer lay claim to having the most of any state in the union. But charter advocates pride themselves on the "organic nature" of their schools, which are mainly located in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area and serve predominantly minority populations. Among these are the Hmong, refugees from Laos and Cambodia who came to the United States following the Vietnam War. They make up 40 percent of St. Paul's charter school population and present special educational challenges. Most notable is that the Hmong culture has no written language, making learning English an even greater struggle. The state also has a large Somali population that is served by charter schools in the state's urban core.

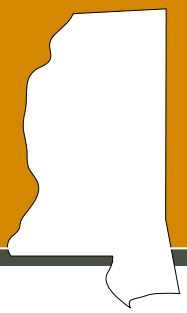
Post-secondary options and charter schools are not the only initiatives to expand choice. The state also provides tax credits and deductions for students attending private schools, though these come with heavy restrictions.

In the area of alternative teacher certification, there has also been movement, albeit modest. The state now offers a pathway into the classroom that's portfolio-based, according to program coordinator John Melick. Individuals with prior teaching experience in another state or at a private school, for example, may present the Department of Education with a portfolio proving they meet Minnesota's requirements. The portfolios, says Melick, must show that the candidate has the same knowledge and experience as a graduate of a school of education. While this is better than nothing, many other states are moving faster to encourage professionals from outside teaching to enter the classroom in a streamlined manner, boosting teacher quantity and quality.

Minnesota's greatest education problem might be complacency. With high average ACT scores and "Lake Wobegon" optimism, it's easy to understand. But averages can be deceiving and the data do not lie: If it wants to provide all of its students with an opportunity to succeed in 21st Century America, Minnesota can't afford to rest on its laurels any longer. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	15	40
8th Graders in **Science**	5	F	26	34
Black Graduation Rate	44	F	35	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	18	D	16	40
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	26	37
8th Graders in **Science**	14	D	9	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	22	C	4	50
8th Graders in **Math**	22	C	2	50
8th Graders in **Science**	20	D	11	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	11.5	C	24	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	**•**	**•**



MISSISSIPPI

Mastering the Art of Failure

F STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

When poet Elizabeth Bishop wrote that "the art of losing isn't hard to master," she could have been writing about Mississippi schools, whose long history of economic dysfunction and educational malaise is well known. Although the state has made a few gains in educational reforms over the recent past, the inertia of history is proving to be a formidable foe.

Student outcomes in this poorest of all states rank at or near the bottom in every category except African-American graduation rates. In certain critical areas, such as reading proficiency among fourth-grade African-Americans, the state finishes dead last.

With nowhere to go but up, the state has made progress in student achievement among low-income and African-American eighth-graders in math. Be that as it may, the prospect that the Magnolia State will make the kind of radical change necessary to create a first-rate educational system appears relatively bleak.

The state earns a D+ overall for its reform efforts. Despite certain steps forward, such as a new law that says administrators in low-performing districts must boost results or lose their jobs, resistance to reform appears well entrenched.

"It's Band-Aids that the state is putting on the problems," says Forest Thigpen, president of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy.

There is some credibility in Mississippi to the argument that money for education is tight. It's not that the state is stingy with its budget—Mississippi spends 63 percent of its state funds on K–12 and higher education—but that it has such a small pot to begin with. Despite raising per-pupil spending by 20 percent and teachers' salaries by 16 percent over three years, in both categories the state remains near the bottom nationally. Of course, the cost of living is relatively low as well.

▲

"It's Band-Aids that the state is putting on the problems."

▲

The financial picture darkened in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit. Although the storm largely spared the state's poorest region (the western Delta), it wrought havoc in other regions. Forty schools suffered either decimation or severe damage, and another 200 sustained lesser damage. Schools on the Gulf Coast were closed for about six weeks. The final school repair tab, for which the federal government is expected to pick up less than half, is expected to run between $700 million and $1 billion, according to state Superintendent of Education Hank Bounds.

An influx of federal funds for reconstruction and a post-Katrina loosening of casino gambling restrictions on the Gulf Coast are expected to help swell Mississippi's coffers in coming years. But concerns both financial and philosophical are blocking the way to reform.

For instance, the state has just one charter school, a former magnet school that, due to a restrictive state charter school law, lacks much of the flexibility that charters in other states enjoy. The legislature has charged a commission to craft a more flexible charter school bill before lawmakers reconvene in January 2007, but many in the House and Senate are already wary, forecasting its defeat.

"I don't know if [a charter school] is better" than a traditional public school for boosting achievement, says state Senate Education Committee Vice Chairman J.P. Wilemon, Jr., a Democrat from the mostly white northeast corner of the state. "And with the hard time we have funding education, can

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.20	D+	29	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.10%	F	48	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	4.10%	A	4	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D	40	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.08%	F	39	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.45**	**D+**	**26**	**50**

we afford right now to build new schools? I'm not sure we can."

Others, such as state Senator David Jordan (D), who represents a mostly African-American district in the Delta, raise a widely held concern that touches a particularly tender chord in Mississippi. He fears whites will use charter schools much as they used a spate of new private schools in the 1970s in the wake of federally required integration—as a scholastic haven for whites only.

"I don't think taxpayer dollars should be used to segregate the schools, and that's exactly what would happen," says Jordan, a member of the Senate Education Committee.

Given this political climate, Thigpen isn't optimistic that charters can gain ground this coming year. But he sees one hope for their future. As Louisiana relies on dozens of new charter schools to help rebuild New Orleans, he hopes African-Americans with firsthand experience of charter schools will convince fellow African-Americans in neighboring Mississippi to give them a try.

Charters aren't the only reform option being pushed in the state. Bounds, for instance, wants to restructure high schools into "workforce development centers." Every student, starting in ninth grade, would, with guidance, pursue one of seven career pathways.

The state Department of Education is also rolling out this fall new achievement standards in math, reading, language arts, and science. There's no doubt that stronger standards are needed in math and science—the Fordham Foundation scored the state's math standards a D and its science standards an F.

Still, as he seeks funding from an already strained state budget in the coming year, Bounds expects to wage an uphill battle in the legislature and beyond. "Education isn't valued in this state as highly as it needs to be," Bounds says.

Republican Governor Haley Barbour, however, predicts a bright future for reform. His approach is to give students more options by requiring that all have access to Advanced Placement courses, other college-level courses they can take for high school credit, and online courses in subject areas not otherwise offered at their schools.

Alternative certification also has backers in the state. Mississippi boasts three alternate routes to the classroom, including one that enables recent college graduates from around the country to serve two years in the Delta through Teach for America.

Even so, some in Mississippi education wonder whether the state has enough grit and wherewithal to require students to face high expectations. Currently, Mississippi's state tests are among the easiest in the nation. (Tougher statewide tests take effect this fall. According to Bounds, they are to be more closely aligned to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.) Moreover, though districts can implement higher standards if they so choose, few will do so in a state where more than half of district superintendents are elected to the position, according to Gerald Hasselman, associate professor of education at Mississippi College.

"If you're elected, you can't make too many hard decisions if you want to keep your job," Hasselman says. Yet people like having power to elect their superintendent, he adds, so that element of the status quo isn't likely to change.

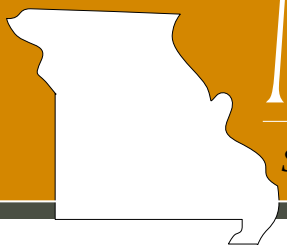
Federal pressure under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is now the driving force for higher academic standards in Mississippi, according to Representative Wanda Jennings (R), who says, "It's not up to the state anymore." But Mississippi has found ways to lower the bar for NCLB, too: in 2004–05, just 11 percent of the state's 1,055 schools ranked as "needing improvement" for failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress according to preliminary data. That's in spite of the state having some of the lowest national achievement scores in the nation.

In the meantime, Hasselman worries that too often, "we tell kids they're doing OK when they're not doing OK." And because few want to hear the hard truth, he expects conditions to stay largely the same.

"It's easy to tell the emperor that he's got nice clothes," Hasselman says. "In this state, the emperor is butt naked, but nobody wants to tell him that." TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	7	F	41	41
8th Graders in **Math**	4	F	34	40
8th Graders in **Science**	3	F	32	34
Black Graduation Rate	57	D	14	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	30	F	35	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	47	50
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	46	50
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	44	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	3.3	F	49	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.22**	**F**	**43**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



MISSOURI

Show Me an Achievement Gap

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

In the nineteenth century, St. Louis was known as the Gateway to the West. At least in the realm of education, today the city and its state retain a Wild West feel. Local authorities call the shots, and the best interests of those they're charged with protecting—students, especially needy students—are too often low on their list of priorities.

Jane Cunningham, chairwoman of the Missouri House education committee and a Republican, has consistently supported a variety of reform initiatives. When education leaders testify before her committee, she takes impish pride in putting this question to them: "How is what you're advocating best for children?" "You ought to see people dance around that question," she said.

They have reason to squirm. Achievement scores of Missouri's poor and minority students are devastatingly low (only 4 percent of African-American eighth-graders are proficient in math), and over the past decade or so they've made no gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The Show-Me State legalized charter schools in 1998, though just in Kansas City and St. Louis. Some 20 percent of Kansas City youngsters now attend charters; in St. Louis, it's 12 percent.

Despite poor support from district leaders and markedly less funding per student than traditional schools, the new schools are holding their own. According to Kirk Farmer, executive director of the Missouri Charter Public School Association, about half the charters surpass the median performance of St. Louis and Kansas City district schools and are improving at a faster rate.

> *"We don't have a free market in Missouri, we have a monopoly."*

Charters aren't the whole story. Stan Johnson, assistant commissioner for school improvement in the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, also points to a recent increase in graduation requirements. Starting with the freshman class of 2006-2007, students are required to take an additional class in each core content area to graduate. That makes four English courses and three each of math, science, and social studies.

This improvement in graduation requirements is a positive step, provided, of course, that material covered in these extra classes is content-rich and challenging. The state's academic standards, however, give little reason for confidence. They earn a grade of D- and rank a lowly 37th in the nation.

Worse, the state's exam, the Missouri Assessment Program, is being watered down. In this report, Missouri received an A for its rigorous definition of proficiency, a grade based on the work of Paul Peterson and Rick Hess for Education Next. Since the publication of that study, however, the state has reduced the difficulty of the exam to, in the words of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "...help cast. Missouri in a more favorable light under the federal No Child Left Behind Act."

The state is pushing to increase schools' emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by collaborating with professionals and businesses in STEM-oriented industries. That might prove difficult in the classroom, however, given the state's rigid teacher certification requirements. Under current guidelines, professionals can't become certified to teach in public schools without jumping

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.80	D-	37	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.47%	D	35	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	14.54%	C	25	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	A	1	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.07%	D	25	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.288	D	13	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.25**	**D+**	**30**	**50**

through a mind-numbing array of education courses on their own time.

That's more hassle than most experts want to go through to teach physics or math in the classroom. There is a chance that the state will welcome the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), which is centered on a rigorous assessments of teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical know-how, to help certify more teachers in these areas. But the idea hasn't yet attracted enough support among legislators to make it a reality.

Efforts to put parents more in charge of where they school their children have met similar fates. Recent efforts to enact tax credits for families whose children attend private schools have fallen by the political wayside. "My personal feeling is that we've never really reached where we can go until the consumers are in charge," Cunningham said. "We don't have a free market. It's a monopoly."

But reforms such as charters and alternative paths to the classroom will get nowhere if leadership in the state's two largest districts—St. Louis and Kansas City—doesn't settle down. In Kansas City, the leadership problem is profound. Cheri Shannon, who heads the city's most successful charter school, University Academy, notes that a "bandwagon" approach prevails in her city: too many plans promoted by a revolving door of ever-changing leaders. In one twenty-one-year stretch, she notes, there were nineteen superintendents.

Consequently, when it comes to embracing reform, "the teachers just wait it out," Shannon said. "They believe, 'Hang on long enough and this guy's gone, we really don't have to change.' There has been a real passive resistance to change."

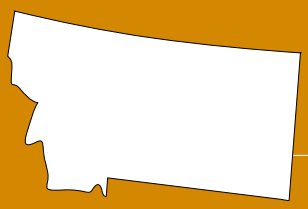
The situation is hardly better in St. Louis, where the district has just hired its fourth superintendent in three years. Diana Bourisaw took the reins following the school board's dismissal of reformed-minded superintendent Creg Williams.

The situation has gotten so bad that Missouri's commissioner of education, Kent King, has formed a special advisory committee to generate ideas for effective reform in St. Louis.

Governor Matt Blunt, meanwhile, has shown scant interest in reforming the public schools. Aside from his recent announcement that all Missouri public schools will receive emergency weather radios, all is quiet on his front. The state can hardly afford the silence. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	17	41
8th Graders in **Math**	4	F	34	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	55	D	18	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	8	40
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	23	C	2	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	27	50
8th Graders in **Science**	18	D	14	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	6	D	43	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•



MONTANA

Local Control at High Cost

N/A STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

N/A ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

In Montana, government tends to trust its citizens. That's why a few years back it didn't seem odd for the state to eschew specific speed limits in favor of asking people to drive at a "reasonable and prudent" rate. In tranquil, thinly-populated, big-sky Montana, liberty is a way of life.

The state's constitution follows suit by granting educational authority to locally elected school boards. "What we are doing works for Montana," says Linda McCulloch, superintendent of public instruction. "We reflect what Montanans want, which is what every good school system should do."

Dave Puyear, director of the Montana Rural Education Association, agrees. He says that over the past few years, more than 90 percent of local mill levies have passed. "That's a pretty good measure of what people think of their schools."

Perhaps, but another measure is how well low-income and minority students are learning. The state at first blush is fairing pretty well. Hispanic fourth-graders post the highest reading scores in the nation for that subgroup on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). And low-income students are holding their own compared to their peers nationwide. (Of course, in absolute terms, these students are still doing abysmally, with the vast majority scoring below "proficient" in reading, math, and science.)

But the state's biggest problem is the performance of its Native American students. Constituting 11.3 percent of Montana's pupil population (meanwhile, the level of Hispanic students in the state is about 2.3 percent and African-American students is 0.8 percent), Native Americans are a sizable presence and are performing abysmally. In fourth-grade reading, just 13 percent score at or above proficient, while in eighth-grade math and science, no more than 14 percent of Native Americans score at that level.

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"The poor performance of Native Americans on NAEP makes clear that local control isn't getting the job done."

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Not surprisingly, of the 58 schools that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress in 2005, 81 percent are on or near a reservation. Eric Feaver, director of the Montana teachers' union, says that American Indian achievement is "a state calamity." No one knows how to bridge this "extraordinary cultural, historical, and linguistic gap." Feaver does not think this is an issue confined to education: "This is an issue we have been struggling with for 400 years." And the reasons given by state officials for Native Americans not learning are at least as old: poverty, truancy, and bad home environments.

Local control hasn't improved Native American achievement, and some state officials are reluctantly conceding as much. State Representative Carol Juneau credits the No Child Left Behind Act with forcing the state to face up to its startling achievement gaps. She points to recent legislation that changes the state's funding formulas and now allows for "component funding" for at-risk and American Indian students.

No matter how much money the state throws at these schools, however, it won't erase the fact that Montana's academic standards are something of a joke. They rate an F according to reviewers for the Fordham

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.20	F	48	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.12%	F	47	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	14.54%	C	25	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.64**	**D-**	**45**	**50**

Foundation and yield little or no guidance to educators as to what to teach when.

As for charter schools and other school choice programs, forget it. Joe Lamson of the Office of Public Instruction believes the state has no need for such things. "There is such strong local control," he says, "that local school boards have all kinds of flexibility to implement reforms: magnet schools, special subject schools, Montessori, whatever their needs are. Through that local control, you achieve choice."

And if parents aren't happy with locally provided choices? Puyear points to the state's open-enrollment policy and touts it as perhaps the greatest school choice program in the nation. "If a parent doesn't like what is going on in one town, they can move their kids to a school in the next town, and the other school will meet them at the street corner and welcome them with a hug."

It can be a long, cold trip to the next town, however. Montana's vast distances make open enrollment impractical for most students and impossible for children on reservations. The legislature is looking to virtual learning to help those in the state's more remote corners. Currently, however, it's not helping many; just 300 students from 46 districts took advantage of virtual learning last year.

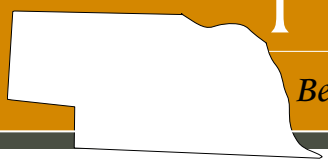
Teacher recruitment and retention are also problems in the Treasure State, although new funding formulas are supposed to give districts and schools the power to negotiate individual salaries, providing more money to really good teachers. And Montana's libertarian ethos has led to some flexibility around teacher hiring. A handful of alternative paths to the classroom are open to liberal arts graduates and professionals from other fields. Teachers who are National Board-certified to teach may enter the state's classrooms without much hassle, as can graduates of the Troops to Teachers affiliate programs.

Montanans may like to leave locals alone and let them handle their own business, but the poor performance of Native Americans on NAEP makes clear that local control isn't getting the job done, at least not for the state's most vulnerable—and sizable—minority population. If Montana doesn't want these students to be left behind, it had better put its foot on the accelerator of education reform. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	43	F	37	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	36	B	1	40
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	57	D	9	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	22	C	4	50
8th Graders in **Math**	21	C	4	50
8th Graders in **Science**	26	C	3	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	10	C	29	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	•	•	•	•

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1994-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1994-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1994-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	N/A	•	•

NEBRASKA



Being a Maverick Is Not Enough

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

When it comes to public education in Nebraska, the state education department is very much hands-off. That suits local school administrators just fine—but for minority and low-income students, it spells disaster.

Disadvantaged young Nebraskans with ambitions beyond the state's thriving cattle and agricultural industries have little reason to expect their K–12 system will prepare them well for life after high school—assuming they even graduate. African-American and Hispanic students have among the worst dropout rates in the nation. And their performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is truly abysmal—among the very worst in the nation.

Part of the problem arises from the state's shoddy academic standards, which score an unsatisfactory D+. But that fact matters less than this one: Nebraska mandates no curricular requirements, leaving it up to districts to decide what subjects are taught.

It is not that state leaders are unaware of their students' achievement problems. But fixing these problems, many contend, requires overhauling a system rooted in local control and led by people unwilling to relinquish their authority. "The state has been wrapped up in organizational issues for the past couple of years," says an official with the Unicameral (state legislature). "If you don't have a good underlying structure, it's hard to get to the reform. This is a huge distraction, and we're trying to work our way past it."

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If the state is determined to give students choice, why not permit charters?

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So instead of attacking achievement problems head-on by implementing better standards or introducing charter schools, the state has elected, instead, to deal with systems and structures first. The reforms have focused on two issues—Omaha Public Schools' highly segregated, low-performing K–12 district, and school consolidation.

With 46,000 students, Omaha Public Schools (OPS) is the state's largest district. It also educates 70 percent of young African-American Nebraskans and has long struggled to do this well. For years, the lack of integration was deemed the problem. So in 1989 the legislature passed the option enrollment program, granting every student in the state the right to apply to attend any school in Nebraska. Those who qualified for free lunch would receive transportation up to three miles across district lines. The hope was that African-American students in Omaha would move to the higher-performing schools in nearby suburbs. But this did not happen; nearly everyone opted to stay closer to their home schools.

The state's newest gambit to improve minority achievement in Omaha schools is also an administrative fix: OPS has been divided into three districts, called learning communities, largely along racial lines. Each is run by a coordinating council, which has the authority to oversee diversity and integration, and some authority to levy taxes to support the schools.

These learning communities are supposed to focus on achievement. For example, high-needs coordinators are being hired to evaluate the districts' resources and develop a plan for channeling more of them to students most at risk of academic failure. OPS also plans to bring three more-affluent suburban districts into the OPS district, giving OPS

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.20	D+	29	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.27%	F	41	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	25.65%	D	33	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D-	40	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.55**	**D-**	**47**	**50**

students more choices among schools. That plan, however, has angered suburban parents and split the state's Republican party.

One might well ask this question: If the state is so determined to provide students with choice, why not permit charter schools into the mix? Education leaders contend that option enrollment eliminates the need for charters. This explains why no charter legislation has been considered in seven years. But that could change as a result of recent state efforts to consolidate districts.

In a move aimed at reforming the state's archaic district system, with its unusually large number of districts (477 pre-consolidation, among the most per capita in the nation), the Unicameral in 2005 reduced the number of districts to 254, primarily at the expense of so-called Class I districts (which offer only K–8) and Class VI districts (which offer only high school).

The move has not been well received by rural communities, which are beginning to push for charters as a way to maintain authority over local schools. "It's been discussed quite a bit," said Mike Nolles, president of Class I's United, an advocacy group representing Class I districts. But state officials respond frostily to any mention of charters. "As best we know," says Betty Van De Venter, spokesperson for the State Department of Education, "the development of charter schools in Nebraska is not being discussed."

To date, however, the state's efforts have precious little to show in the way of better student achievement scores. Asked how Nebraska intends to correct this problem, state officials always point to the assessment system, known as the Student-Based Teacher-Led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS), which first reported results in 2000. Characteristically, this system permits each district to administer its own assessments, which may or may not be aligned with state standards. The results are then evaluated by the state according to six criteria: assessments reflect state or local standards; students have an opportunity to learn the content; tests are free from bias; the level is developmentally appropriate for students; there is consistency in scoring; and mastery levels are appropriate.

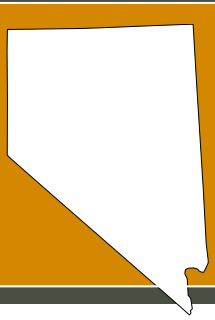
Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, of course, every state is supposed to implement a statewide test. But in 2003 State Superintendent Douglas D. Christensen rejected this requirement, insisting that the STARS system was all Nebraska needed. Washington rejected that petition, but has since agreed to accept the state's STARS system.

Student assessment, in fact, is not the only difference Nebraska has had with the U.S. Department of Education over NCLB. The state also initially refused to comply with the statutory requirement that new teachers pass a test of their knowledge and teaching skills. In May 2006, however, the federal agency announced that Nebraska was one of nine states facing the loss of federal aid due to noncompliance with this provision. Nebraska backed down, and this year new elementary school teachers will take the test.

"We couldn't fight the good fight any longer," said Marge Harouff, a state administrator for teacher education. "They're threatening to take away money." Local control may be cherished in Nebraska, but in education, as in most things, money talks. If only that money were paying off by boosting the achievement of the state's neediest children. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	2	F	40	40
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	39	F	39	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	32	40
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	26	37
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	45	F	26	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	16	D	4	50
8th Graders in **Math**	17	D	14	50
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	4.4	F	48	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.56**	**D-**	**40**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	↓	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•



NEVADA

Struggling for Improvement in the Silver State

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MINIMAL PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Nevada's economy, population, and reputation are dominated by the characteristics of its most famous—er, infamous—destination, Las Vegas. So it's natural that Sin City's insatiable growth and spiraling demands are driving the statewide school reform conversation.

According to test data, Nevada's education system is terrible. The state scores mostly F's in six indicators measuring the proportion of low-income or minority students at grade level in math and science. Moreover, curriculum standards are mediocre, unions suppress reform efforts, and the bureaucracy allows educators little autonomy. There are a few bright spots—the state gets an A for including most of its minority students in calculations of Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

So what's wrong with Nevada public education? Experts point to three unique situations:

- The state's population has been booming for decades, thanks to the rapidly growing gaming and service industries. During 2004–05, there were approximately 400,000 students enrolled in Nevada public schools, a 23 percent increase from five years before. In Las Vegas's Clark County School District, the growth has been particularly acute. For years, a new school has opened monthly to accommodate the influx of students.
- Service employees, who make up 47 percent of the state's employees, tend to be low income and highly transient. About 41 percent of students statewide qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. The student transience rate is 34 percent, and in some classrooms student turnover is 100 percent each year.
- Nevada's Hispanic and Asian populations have increased over the past five years by 64 and 61 percent, respectively. "We have kindergartens that are totally Hispanic with a non-Spanish-speaking teacher," said Lezlie Porter, president of the school board in Washoe County, home of Reno, the state's second largest district.

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Nevada public schools are routinely using long-term substitutes.

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Nevada educators point to many areas where reform is necessary, but improvements have been incremental at best until very recently. Clark County Superintendent Walt Rulffes has recently launched a school autonomy experiment. Schools receive more decisionmaking authority in exchange for increased accountability requirements, much like the Empowerment Zones in New York City. So far, the program includes only a few schools (although Rulffes is asking for an expansion) and costs extra dollars.

A drastic shortage of teachers is one of the biggest challenges facing Nevada. The Clark County School District, which serves 70 percent of the state's students, was short hundreds of teachers at the beginning of the 2006–07 school year.

Desperate to meet the shortfall, the district has imported teachers from the Philippines and is recruiting in Spain. Barbara Cegavske, vice chair of the Nevada State Senate's Human Resource and Education Committee, said she's "not thrilled" with bringing in international teachers. Often their English is poor, they need remediation, and their teaching methods are unfamiliar to Nevada's students, she said.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.80	C-	14	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.65%	D	29	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	3.52%	A	3	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.73%	D	20	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.82**	**C-**	**20**	**50**

In addition, Nevada public schools are routinely using long-term substitutes, who are required to have just 60 hours of college credit. There are hundreds of these unqualified substitutes, many teaching an entire year of math or science classes. Education experts are just beginning to track the situation, said Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, vice chairman of the Assembly Education Committee. She anticipates the findings will be shocking. Where students fail proficiency tests, "You're going to see long-term subs in those classrooms, I'm sure," she said.

One obvious way to address this teacher shortage without sacrificing quality is to recruit mid-career professionals and recent liberal arts graduates into teaching. In 2005, the state legislature passed a bill that created alternative routes to teacher licensure for professionals without credentials. NCLB encourages such talented individuals to join the teaching profession. But in Nevada, where beggars can't be choosers, the legislature made the qualifications for these professionals almost ridiculous.

It seems that in Nevada, it's better to be an undereducated long-term substitute or an undereducated foreign teacher than a professional applicant with a mere bachelor's degree in his or her subject area.

The state also struggles to close its achievement gaps. Disparities among ethnic groups in test scores and graduation rates are an obvious problem flagged in Nevada's "State Improvement Plan" for 2005, submitted to the federal government under NCLB. Porter said teachers do not have the training to work with non-English speakers. Moreover, programs for these students receive little funding.

Smith said English language learners pose a "huge challenge," but "in our legislature we haven't done a lot to address that in the past." The poorly performing low-income, minority, and non-English-speaking students seem to be the proverbial elephant in the room that everyone is ignoring.

School choice is ignored, too. Ricci Rodriguez-Elkins, executive director of the Center for Charter School Development, said Nevada fails to make it a priority. Voucher proposals have never made it out of committee and are not part of the conversation about reform. And Nevada's charter schools movement is stagnating and losing ground, said Rodriguez-Elkins. Three years ago, the state had 20 charter schools, but today that number is down to just 17. The schools have failed for numerous reasons—from inept and unethical leadership to lack of funding—and now several districts have withdrawn their support for the institutions, Rodriguez-Elkins said.

The state's requirements for obtaining a charter are onerous, which also has a chilling effect on growth. And Nevada charter schools are not granted key regulation waivers; for example, they must adhere to teacher salary schedules just like traditional public schools. The legislature made incremental changes in 2005, which Rodriguez-Elkins said provided some relief, but a significant expansion of charter schools is not predicted in the foreseeable future.

Nevada's education system is clearly struggling to keep up with the state's explosive population growth. But without integrating reforms like solid academic standards, high-quality charter schools, and streamlined routes into the classroom, the Silver State might win the battle to build enough classrooms only to lose the war against ignorance. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	23	40
8th Graders in **Science**	4	F	29	34
Black Graduation Rate	47	F	31	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	12	D	32	40
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	26	37
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	30	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	42	F	29	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	9	F	43	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	38	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	12	C	22	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.50**	**D-**	**41**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MINIMAL PROGRESS**	•	•

New Hampshire

Like a Rock

N/A STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

N/A ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Years of wind, rain, and snow recently felled the Old Man of the Mountain, a 200-million-year-old rock formation hanging over Profile Lake, which remains the state's symbol. The education establishment, however, is still holding on.

Of course, it hasn't faced the weathering influences that slowly chipped away at the free-hanging, naturally occurring stone structure. So few of the state's 207,000 students are minorities, for example, that their performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress isn't reported because the numbers are too small to be statistically significant. African-American and Hispanic students make up just 1 percent and 2 percent, respectively, of the state's K–12 population. So it's hard for residents to be agitated about achievement gaps. (The middling math achievement of its low-income students should be cause for concern, however.) Moreover, there are no big cities with decaying public schools, which often catalyze and focus education reform.

But the biggest reason the state hasn't embraced reform, says Susan Hollins, who heads the New Hampshire Center for School Reform, is that "we are one of those states where people don't like to change. Things have been done a certain way for the longest time." That, she and others will explain, is why the state is looking down only at Vermont when it comes to its grade for school reform.

But even entrenched bureaucracies face stresses, and while the state Department of Education isn't likely to collapse anytime soon, cracks are appearing in its hold over the public education system.

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...that rock and roll can be confused with reform says a lot about how far New Hampshire has to go on the school reform front.

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The most obvious fissures are seen in the arrival of charter schools. The state passed a charter law in 1995, but the first schools didn't open until 2004. Today, there are six charters in operation with five more due to come online this year and next. The board of education is authorized to approve up to 20 additional charters over the next 10 years.

The effort has been slow in developing because the state education department maintains that it is "testing" charter schools in a "careful and measured way." No one will accuse New Hampshire leaders of overpromising. And with roughly half the funds that traditional public schools receive, charters will be hard pressed to overdeliver.

Beyond charters, however, there are other areas in need of reform. According to Hollins, the most urgent is teacher licensing. Teachers don't necessarily receive licenses based on their competence and ability. The licensing practice can be expensive (upwards of $500 for those not coming from an education school, just for application and processing fees) and confusing. While the state does allow experts in critical needs areas to become teachers, the state blocks their path with onerous requirements and bureaucratic red tape.

Another factor preventing second-career candidates from entering the teaching ranks is salary. Union contracts require new teachers—whether fresh out of education school

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.80	D-	37	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.21%	F	44	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	35.79%	D	40	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	•	•	•
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.30%	F	35	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.50**	**D-**	**49**	**50**

or with 20 years of professional experience in a particular subject area—to start at the bottom of the teachers' pay scale.

Fred Bramante, who serves on the state Board of Education and was its chair from 2003 to 2005, isn't deterred. While Hollins and others talk about how slowly change comes, Bramante believes that the climate for reform in New Hampshire is "better than anywhere in the United States."

The reason for this confidence is that he led the charge in 2006 for the state Board of Education to successfully change the rules that guide every district: the Minimum Standards for Public School Approval. In essence, the state has mandated that schools be more flexible in how they bestow course credit.

Among the more interesting examples is that students can earn credits for "extended learning opportunities." This would include education through private instruction, independent study, or apprenticeships. In other words, you can earn credits and never go to school. A child who loves sports can get physical education credit for playing on the basketball team or studying karate, Bramante said. Students who take piano lessons or play in a rock and roll band can get music credit. Science lovers can earn credit at the local planetarium.

"It's like, Holy smokes, we've created the rules that will allow a new high school model to emerge," Bramante said. "It's going to be market driven. The kids will have much more say in their education than ever before."

Holy smokes? Simmer down, Mr. Bramante. Freeing up the system to be more innovative is necessary, but far from sufficient. Raising New Hampshire's mediocre academic standards is critical, too. And that rock and roll can be confused with reform says a lot about how far New Hampshire has to go on the school reform front. When it comes to the transformations needed in the state's education system, the band is just warming up. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	8	50
8th Graders in **Math**	17	D	14	50
8th Graders in **Science**	26	C	3	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	11.5	C	24	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	•	•	•	•

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2003-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	N/A	•	•

NEW JERSEY

Tending the Garden of Education Reform

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Not all the education news comes up roses in the Garden State, but the soil may be getting fertilized for the future.

Here is the bad news. The percentage of low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students scoring at or above the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is in the teens or lower in reading, math, and science. This means that more than 80 percent of these students are not where they need to be in order to thrive in today's global economy. And in high-poverty centers such as Camden, one of the poorest cities in America, student performance is through the floor on state tests.

The good news is that the state is making moderate progress with these populations. Scores for both African-Americans and for Hispanics in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are climbing. Moreover, a higher percentage of minority students is graduating from high school in New Jersey than almost anywhere else, though there is still plenty of room for improvement.

The state's willingness to hold its schools accountable for the achievement of all students is apparent in its implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. For instance, most poor and minority students are included in schools' "adequate yearly progress" determinations—a welcome contrast from states that have let schools off the hook for minority achievement.

▲

Newark Mayor Cory Booker is squarely on the side of school choice.

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The Garden State's testing-and-accountability system is mediocre, however, with middling academic standards and modest expectations for proficiency in reading and math. Fortunately, refinements continue. For example, New Jersey educators are working to align state tests with classroom curricula from kindergarten through high school. When this is accomplished, teachers can focus on covering the curriculum at hand and not waste class time prepping students for test questions that may or may not have been covered during the school year. New Jersey is also beginning to administer assessments more frequently and earlier in the year so they can be used as diagnostic tools.

The state has been particularly aggressive in funding its schools—for better and worse. On average, New Jersey taxpayers spend more than any other state on public schools, but students in wealthy suburbs used to get the lion's share of that cash. In a ruling that came on the heels of a 1997 judgment in the *Burke v. Abbott* case over funding equity, a judge in a separate case ruled that per-pupil spending in urban districts had to rise to the level enjoyed by students in wealthy suburban districts. As a result, some 31 so-called Abbott districts were designated by the state's commissioner of education and governor, and top policymakers granted them unlimited power to make funding adjustments in areas where student performance on state tests was lowest.

The state's governors and education commissioners since that time have not been bashful about exercising their authority. Consequently, class size in poor districts has been reduced below what Abbott requires, and preschool enrollments are up. Some

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.80	C-	14	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.32%	D	39	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	6.96%	B	9	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.10%	D	24	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.231	C	12	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.75**	**C-**	**22**	**50**

credit these policies—and the additional money—for the state's learning gains.

Charter schools are also part of the reform equation in New Jersey. The state currently has fifty-four operating charters serving approximately 16,500 students, the vast majority of whom come from low-income households in cities such as Newark. There is no cap on the number of charters, but Jessani Gordon, executive director of the New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association, said charter school growth has been limited by poor funding. On average, charter schools in New Jersey receive 23 percent less per pupil than the state's traditional public schools, according to a report by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. This could be reversed if charters were eligible for Abbott funds, but they are not.

According to Gordon, however, New Jersey's politicians are feeling more pressure to help charter schools. Whether those warm feelings lead to policy change remains to be seen. But Cory Booker, Newark's newly elected mayor, gives reformers reason to be confident that pressure will lead to action. Booker is squarely on the side of school choice, a position for which he was savaged by his opponent during the campaign.

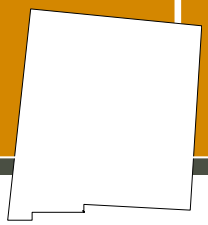
While charters struggle for equal treatment, teachers who are alternatively certified are doing well—as they should, since alternative certification got its start in the Garden State. New Jersey's program for liberal arts graduates and mid-career professionals interested in teaching is nothing if not impressive in breadth and depth. Richard Vespucci, a state education department spokesperson, says, "Half of all the instructional certificates we grant in New Jersey are alternate route," and 40 percent of teachers hired come through these nontraditional pathways—a higher percentage than in any other state.

Education in New Jersey is heading in the right direction. Despite its so-so academic standards and hamstrung charter school movement, it is starting to make progress for its most disadvantaged students (though for the money it spends, the state should be seeing better results). Still, embracing these reforms wholeheartedly could be like Miracle-Gro® for the state's educational garden. When it comes to its children's future, New Jersey should settle for nothing less. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	10	40
8th Graders in **Science**	11	D	4	34
Black Graduation Rate	66	C	2	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	12	40
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	11	37
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	14	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	69	C	1	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	47	50
8th Graders in **Math**	14	D	24	50
8th Graders in **Science**	11	D	28	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	16.5	B	11	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.33**	**D+**	**6**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2003-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•

New Mexico



Improving, But Not Picture Perfect

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

B- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MINIMAL PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Georgia O'Keefe found in New Mexico's deserts a landscape worthy of her canvas. Where others viewed only dry earth, O'Keefe saw striking shades of red, brown, and gold. Governor Bill Richardson has O'Keefe's eye for all things beautiful in the Land of Enchantment. But his sights are set not on the state's natural resources, but its people—notably its school-age children.

Elected governor in 2002, Richardson returned home to lead his state after serving as President Bill Clinton's energy secretary. He wasted little time turning the education establishment on its head. So today, New Mexico ranks second in the nation in school reform, trailing only neighboring Arizona. He pushed for, and won, a constitutional amendment to get rid of the state board of education and replace it with an education secretary who answers directly to him. It was a bold move that let the state's leaders and citizens know that education was a priority.

"The board was totally stripped of authorities," said Millie Pogna, a member of the board since 1978. "We have no say in anything. We're out of the loop. We have no policy-making powers." Richardson appointed Veronica Garcia as education secretary and tasked her with launching a reform agenda—quickly.

She hasn't wasted time. She immediately undertook revamping the state's academic content standards and aligning them to the state's assessment system, said Catherine Cross Maple, deputy secretary of education. The goal is to have the state standards on par with the highest national and international expectations for student learning. That's an ambitious objective, considering that New Mexico's old standards used to earn failing grades from the Fordham Foundation's reviewers. Recent reviews indicate that the state is moving in the right direction.

Despite early signs of academic success and parental satisfaction, some legislators still resist charters.

Still, the state is only in the middle of the pack nationally in terms of how much its students need to know and be able to do to be considered "proficient." And, as in most states, its low-income and Hispanic students are performing abysmally on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

To change this, the state is improving standards and embracing parental choice. Charter schools have blossomed since the law permitting them was signed in 1999. Today, there are 60 charters in the state, and 12 more applications were recently submitted, said Lisa Grover, executive director of New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools. That places New Mexico in the top third of all states nationwide in the percentage of students attending charters.

The interest in charters is driven partly by the many parents who home school their children, according to Maple. These parents, she comments, want control over their schools, and charters give them that.

Despite strong parental satisfaction and early signs of academic success, some legislators still push against charters. "If charter schools do well because they are small," says Representative Rick Miera, Democratic leader of the House Education Committee, "they should let regular schools be small, give them their due," he said. Fair enough—imitation is the greatest form of flattery—but this

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.80	C-	14	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	2.13%	C	9	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	4.42%	A	5	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C+	10	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.43%	B	9	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.048	A	2	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.67**	**B-**	**2**	**50**

is no reason not to support charters that provide educational settings that parents crave.

One explanation for the proliferation of New Mexico's charter schools is that they receive nearly as much money as district schools—a rarity nationwide. But as in many other states, charters receive no financial help with their facilities.

One of the education system's greatest challenges is serving its Native American population—among the largest in the nation. While achievement remains relatively flat, the Indian Education Act of 2003 created a channel for the state's 22 Native American nations to work together to resolve their problems.

One problem New Mexico doesn't have any more is a general shortage of teachers. Part of the reason is teacher pay. New Mexico recently increased its starting salaries and is experimenting with an incentive program that would allow high-performing teachers to accelerate up the pay scale.

Yet finding qualified math and science teachers for rural areas remains a challenge. "You don't know what rural really is until you've been to New Mexico," said Miera. For the most remote areas, towns rely on the Internet to deliver math and science instruction, but that isn't possible everywhere. Many Native American tribes, especially, live where it is difficult to get a phone line, let alone an Internet connection.

Alternative certification isn't much help in this area, either. Although the state allows people to come to the classroom through a few routes other than the traditional education schools, these routes tend to be just as onerous. As a result, few candidates apply.

New Mexico's vast landscape, which O'Keefe captured so beautifully and which draws the tourists who are a significant driver of the state's economy, creates great difficulties for the education system. But under Richardson, the state is beginning to make progress. Peter Winograd, a Richardson appointee who heads the state's accountability office, says, "We're not sitting around moaning." TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	24	C	1	41
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	5	40
8th Graders in **Science**	14	D	2	34
Black Graduation Rate	45	F	34	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	25	40
8th Graders in **Math**	8	F	36	37
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	23	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	53	D	18	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	38	50
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	46	50
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	29	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.5	D	35	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.75**	**D-**	**32**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MINIMAL PROGRESS**	•	•

New York

Set Reformers Free

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

If school reform can make it here, it can make it anywhere. Something certainly seems to be helping. Despite dismal proficiency and graduation rates for low-income and minority students, New York is one of only eight states to demonstrate "moderate" progress with these groups on the National Assessment of Educational Progress over the past decade or so. And it's the sixth-ranked state for school reform. For New Yorkers who grumble when they're not in first place, however, getting there is going to take hard work.

New York's current state academic standards are solid, and nearly one-quarter of high school students passed at least one Advanced Placement exam, leaving the Empire State second to none in this category. The state is also working diligently to grow the number of minorities taking Advanced Placement exams. Between 1992 and 2003, for example, the number of African-Americans and Hispanics taking the test doubled.

Charter school policy is not doing as well. Charter schools have proven wildly popular in New York since 1998, when Governor George Pataki's charter school proposal became law—when it turned out that legislators wanted a pay raise for themselves more than they wanted to follow the teachers union's bidding. Indeed, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's transformation of the New York City school system has made good use of charters. But at the insistence of the powerful union, the number of charters statewide was capped at a hundred, which was hit a few months ago. "The cap is now a real and concrete limitation … and the state must remove it," New York City schools Chancellor Joel Klein told the *New York Post*.

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For all its limitations, the Empire State's public education system still hovers near the top of the pack. Imagine where it could go if reform leaders were cut loose.

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Margarita Mayo, director of education and training for the Business Council of New York, has been particularly critical of the cap. She notes that the state has a rigorous authorization process through the State University of New York Board of Trustees and the New York State Board of Regents, and that New York's existing charter schools are generally working well. With that much oversight, she asks, why not allow the number of schools to grow?

Because of three letters: UFT, as in the United Federation of Teachers—one of the country's most powerful teachers unions, and its statewide affiliate, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). Its job is to protect teachers, says Amy Schwartz, director of the NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy. Student achievement, she continues, is not "first and foremost" in the union's mission. As soon as a proposal arises that would, in UFT's eyes, damage teachers unions, the organization snuffs out the idea before it can take hold.

For his part, Chancellor Klein has had little patience with the unions and in his dealings with them has relied on the top-down management style that he typically favors. Such firm methods can be a good thing, but Klein has also been inflexible at inopportune moments and in areas where he should have let the experts lead. One such area is pedagogy. Upon assuming his current position,

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	3.40	B+	4	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	5	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.93%	C	22	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	6.37%	B	6	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.87%	F	29	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.206	C	9	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.25**	**C+**	**6**	**50**

Klein imposed upon New York City's schools progressive reading and math curricula from which teachers could not deviate.

But Klein's authority has also allowed him to impose an accountability system that will hold schools to account for their results and allow them to share best practices through new data systems. He has also recently opted both to "empower" a third of the city's principals with considerable authority and to introduce a British-style "inspectorate" system meant to provide school-specific feedback on what is and isn't working.

Mayo, for one, cheers on Klein's authority and the ability it gives him to sweep aside stagnation.

"Our mission is to create an economic renaissance in New York," she says. "We strive to have an innovation economy. You need a highly educated workforce." It's difficult to be innovative when the unions tie your hands.

Another issue that requires attention is educators' classroom competency. Mayo wants the state to both assess teacher effectiveness and extend a welcome mat to individuals who wish to leave the private sector and bring their expertise into public schools. Alternate routes to becoming a teacher are available in New York, but Mayo calls them "highly complicated" and thinks the process should be streamlined.

Teachers who prove their excellence and those who teach high-demand subjects should receive better pay, Mayo says. Widespread pay incentives for teachers are not likely to happen anytime soon, thanks to the UFT. But some added benefits have recently come online. Math, science, and special education teachers, for example, are being given housing subsidies of some $14,000 to encourage them to stay in the New York City system.

But the unions aren't the only challenge facing New York's education system. Chuck Szuberla, director of facilities management for the state education department, argues that reforming the finance system is the most important step toward improving student achievement. "The kids with the greatest needs aren't getting the greatest resources," Szuberla says.

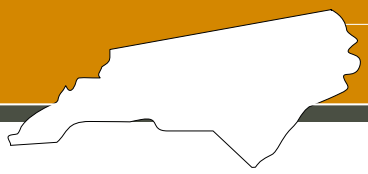
On this front, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity filed a lawsuit in 1993, arguing that the state was not upholding its constitutional mandate to provide every student a "sound basic education." The case has finally made it to the state's Court of Appeals; a decision is expected soon. Lower courts ordered the state to spend upwards of an extra five billion dollars on the Big Apple's schools; observers expect the new governor to forge a compromise."

Still, Szuberla is optimistic about reform in the Empire State. Expanding parental choice and educator autonomy has been part of the reform conversation at the highest levels of New York state policymaking, he notes. It's just that every time the reform debate moves to the foreground, someone seems to choke it off. For all its limitations, the Empire State's public education system still hovers near the top of the pack. Imagine where it could go if reform leaders were cut loose. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	7	41
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	10	40
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	37	F	40	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	18	40
8th Graders in **Math**	14	D	15	37
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	33	F	34	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	19	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	22.8	A	1	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.11**	**D**	**9**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	↑	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•

North Carolina



Tarred by the Progress of the Past?

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

It is said that during the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee gave a North Carolina regiment the nickname "Tar Heels" because they held their ground during a particularly vicious battle as if there were tar on their heels. North Carolinians are proud of their history of tenacity in difficult times, and the state's leaders have shown characteristic fortitude in sticking to North Carolina's brand of standards-based reform. But it might be time for a new approach.

The state was one of the first to get on board the accountability bandwagon in the 1990s, which led to impressive gains for the state's students as a whole on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and inspired other states—and the federal government—to follow suit. But disaggregate the data and the news is not as good; while limited progress has been made in math by African-American and low-income eighth-graders, none of the disadvantaged student subgroups tracked here has made any statistically significant progress in reading.

"There's been progress made—in fact, substantial progress," says Bill McNeal, executive director of the North Carolina Association of School Administrators. "But we're now at the plateau level."

To move the state's students forward, policymakers are raising the academic bar. Beginning with the class of 2010, students will have to demonstrate an increased level of proficiency on end-of-course assessments in five subject areas (algebra, U.S. history, civics and economics, biology, and English)

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It is time for a new era of education reform.

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in order to graduate. That is all to the good, but a lot of kids are not clearing today's lower bars. One reason may be the mediocre academic standards upon which those assessments are based. Currently, the standards rate only a modest C- grade from Fordham reviewers. Furthermore, the state's definition of proficiency for reading and math is among the least rigorous in the country; that bar needs raising, too.

While North Carolina's standards and passing levels are only so-so, its accountability system is considered one of the most sophisticated in the country. The state's "ABCs" system is a progress model that tracks the achievement of the same students over time; it was good enough to secure one of two spots in the U.S. Department of Education's growth model pilot under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Still, how to use this information to improve achievement—in addition to holding schools accountable—is only now being resolved, and the state is looking to experts such as Harvard economist Caroline M. Hoxby for advice.

One way the state is already using the data on student progress is to reward teachers who consistently improve student achievement. The state's merit pay plan is modest, with teachers receiving checks of some $1,500.

Regardless of these changes, however, many schools are still failing to measure up to even the most basic standards. The seriousness of that problem was underscored when Judge Howard Manning, Jr., who is presiding over a portion of the state's twelve-year-old finance-adequacy lawsuit, threatened in 2006 to close seventeen high schools where fewer than 55 percent of

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.60	C-	20	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	3	B	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	2.31%	C	8	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	11.76%	C	19	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	F	45	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.05%	C	18	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.055	B	3	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.92**	**C**	**19**	**50**

students had passed assessments for at least five years running. All but one of those schools complied with Manning's demands either to hire a new principal or present a comprehensive turnaround plan before August 2006. The judge demanded that the state take control of the one outlier.

The problem of low-achieving schools is particularly acute in eastern North Carolina, which has struggled economically for years as the state's tobacco industry has waned. According to John Dornan, executive director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina, a Raleigh-based think tank, it is a challenge not only to attract but also to retain well-qualified teachers in poor rural areas. "It's fair to say that the kids who need the best teachers are the least likely to get them," he says.

North Carolina colleges are producing at best a third of the new teachers that this fast-growing state needs. As a result, North Carolina is scrounging for teachers in other states and even internationally.

To its credit, the legislature is chipping away at bureaucratic rules that keep mid-career professionals with subject matter expertise (such as an engineer who wants to teach math) from receiving swift certification to enter the classroom. But it has been a slow process. Larry Bell, co-chairman of the state House Education Committee, calls the push for alternative certification "the number one movement that should take place in North Carolina." He recalls that in his hometown of Clinton, a doctor wanted to teach high school biology, but returned to his practice because he could not get licensed.

But one reform the state has not embraced with much enthusiasm is charter schooling. North Carolina has a statewide cap of 100 charter schools, which it reached several years ago. (Some of these schools have since closed, allowing seven new schools to open in 2007.) Such strict limits cannot be attributed to poor quality, as some of the best schools in the state are charters. Consider KIPP Gaston, housed in the eastern part of the state, which is now the highest achieving middle school in North Carolina, despite a student body that is overwhelmingly African-American and poor.

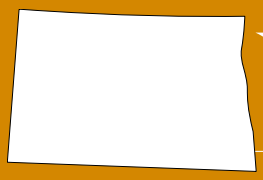
Moreover, thirteen charter schools that three years ago were struggling hardest are now off the state's priority watch list, thanks to help from instructional coaches. Further, North Carolina currently has more than two dozen charters where 97 percent or more of the students rate proficient on state exams. (Of course, as explained earlier, "proficient" is not a very rigorous standard in the Tar Heel State.)

Some officials see light at the end of the tunnel for charter schools. Jake Moyer, director of the state Office of Charter Schools, argues that pressure on the legislature is building, and the "cap is going to be lifted." Let us hope he is right.

North Carolina is right to be proud of the progress it made in the 1990s, especially under the leadership of long-serving and education-minded Governor Jim Hunt. But unless it wants its poor and minority kids stuck in the past, it is time for a new era of education reform. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	18	41
8th Graders in **Math**	12	D	8	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	58	D	12	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	18	40
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	6	37
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	12	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	53	D	18	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	34	50
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	21	50
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	29	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	17.1	B	9	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.08**	**D**	**12**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



North Dakota

Chilly on Reform

N/A STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

N/A ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

North Dakota is not a state for the faint of heart. Its winters are cold, its landscape barren, and its economy slow (although lately Bismarck has become something of a boom town). As for education, citizens like their local schools and maintaining control over them. Mention "school reform," "vouchers," or "charter schools," and you won't make many friends. The state's blind devotion to "local control," however, is undermining its entire K–12 system.

A declining student population and flaccid academic standards are the reality of North Dakota's K–12 schools. And unless there's a significant change in mindset, students' educational futures will continue to look bleak.

The most striking fact about this state's schools is that for a decade and a half they've been losing some 2,000 students every year. (The total statewide enrollment now stands at 100,513 in 2004–05.) But as the number of students has declined, the number of schools in operation has remained constant because none of the state's 200 independent districts are willing to consolidate.

Consequently, North Dakota is wasting huge amounts of money funding its overgrown infrastructure. For example, the state has 50 districts with just one school. Several schools have just two or three pupils. "Those children are getting a lot of one-on-one at the cost of others," said State Senator Layton W. Freborg, chair of the Senate Education Committee. "When a district loses a student, it begins to become wealthy because it keeps the same teachers and facilities," he said. "The dollars per student goes up. It's flawed."

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A declining student population, flaccid academic standards, and high school graduates ill-prepared for the rigors of academic life...are the reality of North Dakota's K–12 schools.

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Perverse education funding schemes aren't the state's only problem. North Dakota's academic standards earn a D from the Fordham Foundation's expert reviewers for their vagueness and lack of content. But Greg Gallagher, director of education improvement for the state, angrily disputes that assessment. Educators from around North Dakota and from every subject area came together to build the state standards, he says. What's more, the standards have been well received in the schools.

Despite low standards, North Dakota ranks second and sixth, respectively, for the number of low-income students in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math who score at or above the "proficient" level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). That's good in comparative terms, but still means that fewer than 30 percent of the state's low-income kids are attaining this level. (North Dakota has too few African-American and Hispanic children to yield significant data on their achievement. Native American achievement is discussed below.) The state does graduate most of its students—though its Hispanic graduation rate is abysmal. Not that it takes much to graduate from North Dakota schools—requirements are among the lowest in the nation.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.00	D	31	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.00%	F	49	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	•	•	•	•
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.56**	**D-**	**46**	**50**

Despite its success in graduating students from high school, it does no better than the rest of the country in getting them through college. Just 25 percent earn a four-year degree after six years of study, says Tom Decker, director of school finance and organization, a number that closely matches the national average.

Unlike its neighbor to the south, North Dakota can't blame poor student achievement on having too few teachers. In fact, the state exports surplus teachers to other places. This relative abundance of teachers means North Dakota is loath to throw open its doors to alternatively certified candidates—individuals with liberal arts degrees or experience in other professional fields. Perhaps it should reconsider, given that such people can make excellent classroom instructors.

While North Dakota vigorously defends its system, it can't defend this point: the state's Native American students (who make up between 5 percent and 8 percent of school-aged children) perform abysmally on NAEP. (This report did not grade Native American results.) In math, reading, and science, no more than 10 percent of Native American students are working at or above the proficient level.

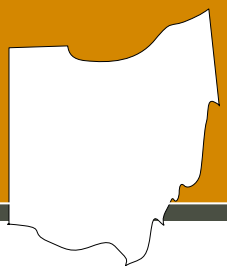
Not surprisingly, the majority of reservation schools have been identified as needing improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act. When asked what the state is doing to address the problem, Gallagher said the Native American schools "work together as a consortium" to address similar needs. The state also offers technical support to Native American schools and helps them deal with attendance problems and secure maximum federal funds.

What about more fundamental reforms, like creating new schools of choice for Native American youngsters? It's not in the cards, according to Wayne G. Sanstead, the state superintendent. When he suggested that charter schools might be one answer to poor achievement among Native Americans, the legislature made it clear that "no one was interested." "They wouldn't hear of it," he said. "There is a lot of confidence in our schools … and the sense of community that they bring."

So, it all comes back to local control. And on this front, there looks to be no imminent change. North Dakota needs a strong reform leader who can make the public more aware of the truth behind the state's seemingly rosy graduation rates and high test scores and the thousands of Native Americans stuck in schools that have been failing forever. Until that happens, it looks to be a long, hard winter for reform. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	28	F	35	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	23	C	2	50
8th Graders in **Math**	20	D	6	50
8th Graders in **Science**	27	C	1	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	6	D	43	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	•	•	•	•

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	N/A	•	•



OHIO

Not a National Champion Yet

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

If Buckeye State residents are confused about the quality of their schools, they can be forgiven, for they've been barraged by an onslaught of mixed signals.

Listen to state officials and you hear that schools are making dramatic progress. Based upon results from state tests in 2005–06, Ohio reports that just seven of its 600+ school districts (down from 21 the previous year) are under "academic watch," the second-lowest possible rating. And not one of its districts is in the bottom category any longer (academic emergency). Even Cleveland—which missed all 25 state benchmarks for test scores, attendance, and graduation rates—magically moved up from "emergency" status to "academic watch," because its students' scores edged closer to the benchmarks this year.

Yet 40 percent of Ohio schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2006—up from 29.4 percent in 2005. And data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are devastating: the percentage of African-American students scoring at or above "proficient" in reading, math, and science does not exceed ten—barely distinguishable from the numbers of such states as Mississippi and Alabama. (Yes, there have been gains in recent years, but far from enough.)

Technical differences between Ohio's current accountability system and NCLB's can explain some of the mixed message, but largely it comes down to different expectations. Like most states, Ohio sets the bar for "proficiency" in reading and math at a fairly low level. As scholars Paul Peterson and Frederick Hess explain, "If parents in these states read that students are making great strides on state proficiency tests, they would be advised to consider the message with a healthy dose of skepticism."

Despite their success in attracting students, or perhaps because of it, charter schools are under siege from many in the traditional education establishment.

Many parents who live in the most troubled districts are more than skeptical. They have had enough—and are immigrating to charter schools. These schools now enroll almost 72,000 of Ohio's 1.8 million public school students. In Dayton, more than one-quarter of all public school students attend charter schools.

Despite their success in attracting students, or perhaps because of it, charter schools are under siege from many in the traditional education establishment. Some of the attacks stem from the charters' oft-spotty academic performance, but charters have also faced a strong and well-coordinated attack in the General Assembly, the courts, and in the court of public opinion—much of which has been orchestrated and financed by the state's teachers unions and their allies.

In response to these attacks, charter school leaders and supporters in Ohio are forming a charter school alliance to "advocate for quality, principle-based growth both within and outside the charter school movement in Ohio," says Perry White, chair of the nascent Ohio Alliance for Public Charter

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.40	D+	26	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.62%	D	30	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	13.18%	C	21	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	C	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	4.87%	A	5	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.313	D	17	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	3	B	2	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.25**	**C+**	**6**	**50**

Schools' steering committee and executive director of the Citizen's Academy, a successful charter school in Cleveland.

Charter supporters are also seeking stronger accountability for the state's sponsoring organizations and a Draconian housecleaning of the state's most troubled charter schools, as well as elimination of the cap on future charter growth and more equitable funding for charter schools. (Today, Ohio charters operate with about 30 percent less funding than district schools and receive no funding for facilities.)

"In return for greater levels of accountability and school performance, charter schools should start to receive more equitable funding and access to facility dollars," says Terry Ryan, the Fordham Foundation's vice president for Ohio programs and policy in Dayton.

But charters aren't the only brand of school choice in Ohio. Advocates won a significant victory earlier this year when Republican legislators—and one or two Democrats—approved the EdChoice scholarship program. This statewide voucher program benefits children in the state's lowest performing schools. In its inaugural year, 14,000 vouchers were made available to 46,000 eligible students. The program provides $4,250 in tuition aid for elementary school students and $5,000 for high school students who switch to private schools.

Another success for reform-minded education leaders was the improvement of the state's testing program—linked to revised, clearer state standards. And in 2007–08 the state will unveil a "value-added" assessment model that can track individual student performance over time.

Finally, to meet the growing need for science and math teachers, the state is also teaming up with some of its universities to expedite training of mid-career professionals who can teach these all-important subjects. (Unfortunately, true "alternate routes" to teacher certification, which bypass education schools altogether, are hard to find in the Buckeye State, meaning that hugely successful programs such as Teach for America regard Ohio as hostile territory.)

Despite this progress, it remains uncertain whether the state legislature will agree to the tougher high school graduation requirements proposed by lame-duck Governor Bob Taft. Dubbed the Ohio Core, Taft's plan would have all high schools—district, charter, and private alike—require students to complete four years of math and English, three years of science and social studies, and two years of a foreign language.

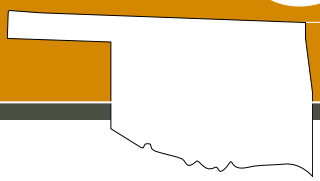
Between its plentiful charter schools, its aggressive voucher program, and its improving accountability system, Ohio deserves credit for a considerable amount of activity on the school reform front. To determine whether all of this will lead to high quality schools, the state will need to continue creating and implementing these strong reforms. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	23	40
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	13	34
Black Graduation Rate	51	D	25	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	24	C	6	40
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	22	37
8th Graders in **Science**	24	C	1	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	23	50
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	19	50
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	20	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	10.1	C	28	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.09**	**D**	**11**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2000-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

OKLAHOMA

Where Inefficiency and Inertia Reign



D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

John Steinbeck, who made Oklahoma and its people famous with *The Grapes of Wrath*, would have appreciated the warmth and tragedy behind the state's "Read, y'all" campaign of a few years past. So while the campaign appealed to people's sense of nostalgia, it didn't pull punches when describing the scope of the state's literacy problems—400,000 adult citizens were illiterate when the ad was launched. And the state's K–12 schools were in no small sense to blame for the tragedy.

Representative Olivia Dank (R), chairman of the state Common Education Committee, can barely contain her disgust when she discusses reports from colleges and employers on the large percentage of high school graduates in the state who cannot read at a high school level. "We need to restore the value of an Oklahoma high school diploma," she says.

It will take plenty of leadership to get schools back on track. Currently, the state Department of Education has been eschewing change, and reforms that focus on achievement and success have a hard time getting off the ground. And the legislature isn't much better. For example, Oklahoma's charter legislation allows charters only in school districts that have at least 5,000 students—there are 11 of these. But only Tulsa and Oklahoma City have been able to launch these schools.

Worse still for charters is the state's authorizer system, which puts the power over opening schools entirely in the hands of local school districts. Charters do have friends in the legislature, however. Dank, for example, would like to extend charter-authorizing power to the state board of education. State Superintendent Sandy Garrett also wants to liberalize charter school legislation. But Dank's efforts have so far failed in the legislature, partly because she receives no help from the executive branch. Democratic Governor Brad Henry, a product of Oklahoma's public school system, opposes charter schools and other forms of parental choice.

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The average man on the street would be surprised that NAEP scores are so bad.

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It won't come as a surprise, then, to learn that other choice initiatives, such as education tax credits for businesses that fund K–12 scholarships for low-income students, also have little traction in the state's halls of power.

Parents and students aren't the only sooners who are denied options. Potential teachers have little choice but to gain their credentials through traditional education schools. Although the state does offer an alternate route to certification, it's hardly attractive to career changers. Millard House, founder and principal of the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) school in Tulsa, completed the program and found it very discouraging, laden as it was with unnecessary course requirements and aggravating hoops and hurdles. Even as the state endures a shortage of good math and science teachers, it does nothing, says Brandon Dutcher of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, to bring "retired pharmacists who could teach chemistry and retired military personnel who could teach math" into the classroom.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	2.00	C	11	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.14%	C	18	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	40.76%	D	42	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	F	45	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.72%	F	31	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.18**	**D+**	**32**	**50**

But the state's education problems run deeper than resistance to innovation and choice. The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests misleadingly suggest that the vast majority of the state's students are performing at "proficiency." What citizens don't know is that just one other state defines "proficiency" less rigorously than Oklahoma. "The average man on the street," says Dutcher, "would be surprised that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores are so bad." Even worse, says Dutcher, is the bureaucracy that controls and perpetuates the myth of high standards, "from those who administer the tests to those who write press releases for the tests to a complacent press corps that is nowhere near being the watchdog it needs to be." And with more than 40 percent of the state's minority students being excluded from calculations of Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act (among the highest rates in the nation), the public and parents are left with the impression that many schools are successful that actually are not.

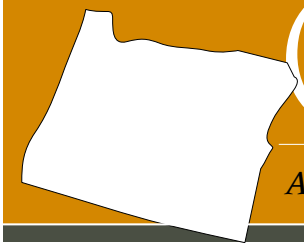
Not all the education news is horrible, however. The state boasts the nation's highest NAEP scores for Native Americans. Dutcher chalks the success up to Oklahoma having no reservations. This means Native American students are more closely connected to the wider community than they would be in other states. Still, no one's celebrating. "Even if we're the best" with Native Americans, says Dutcher, "we're not good enough."

The state legislature recently took steps to raise educational requirements for all students when it passed the Achieving Classroom Excellence Act. Starting with the class of 2012, all Oklahoma high school students must pass end-of-course tests in Algebra I and English II to receive their diplomas, as well as two other such tests of their choice from among: Algebra II, Biology I, English III, geometry, and U.S. history.

But considering the strong resistance even to this modest measure, along with the state's record of inflating its test scores, there is little reason to be optimistic about the near-term prospects for education reform in Oklahoma. "Everyone wants to pass the buck in Oklahoma," says Dutcher. Indeed, the operative word when discussing education in the Sooner State is "later." TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	4	F	34	40
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	13	34
Black Graduation Rate	56	D	16	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	18	40
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	22	37
8th Graders in **Science**	16	D	5	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	53	D	18	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	23	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	16	D	18	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.2	D	37	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	0.83	D	29	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	NO PROGRESS	•	•



OREGON

A Long Trail to Reform

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MINIMAL PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Their numbers are relatively few, but minority students who attend Oregon public schools are struggling mightily. Changes to the educational system that have the potential for improving that performance, however, are having a hard time staying on track.

Cynthia Guyer, executive director of the Portland Schools Foundation, an independent education reform organization, thinks her state is too slow to act on promising education reform ideas. "People are a little more hesitant in Oregon to really think differently," Guyer says. "They're maybe a little more complacent with expecting to be in the middle of the pack."

Unfortunately, even the "middle of the pack" would represent a long climb from where the state currently sits. Its Hispanic students register some of the lowest test scores in the country—with 10 percent or fewer at the "proficient" level or above in reading, math, or science. Overall, Oregon's minority and low-income students rate a D for achievement and have made only "minimal progress" over time. With such a small minority student population (14 percent Hispanic, 3 percent African-American), the low graduation rate (25 percent for black students) is particularly appalling.

Rather than meet these challenges head on, Rob Kremer, a co-founder of Arthur Academy charter schools in Portland and a vocal critic of Oregon's public education system, says state "educrats" spend too much time pandering to cultural sensitivities. "Cultural competency," not academic achievement, is all that one hears in Oregon, says Kremer. "Cultural competency" is indeed a philosophy of teaching that the Department of Education promotes, though it doesn't mandate this. It encourages teachers and institutions to "adapt to the diversity and cultural context of the students," according to the education department's website. That's fine, so long as in so doing schools don't compromise high learning standards, as Kremer charges they do.

> *"We can't do more patches and duct tape and chewing gum on the existing system."*

Still, Pat Burk, chief policy officer for the Oregon superintendent's office, says the state is successfully closing its achievement gap. He points to state tests that show 44 percent of African-American students reading at the proficient level in 1996, rising to 79 percent in 2005. "The gap between minority and majority is smaller," Burk says. "I think that is clearly the result of good standards-based work."

Unfortunately, that kind of progress doesn't show up on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests. Oregon's Hispanic students flatlined in math, reading, and science. The only target group showing improvement is low-income eighth-graders, whose math scores did climb between 1996 and 2005.

Burk attributes the differences to NAEP's reporting a statistically small sample of students, which he claims makes its results volatile. The state's test has a few flaws of its own, however. Notably, it sets a low bar for what it takes to achieve "proficiency" in reading and math. The state's slipshod academic standards, which rate a D according to Fordham Foundation reviewers, aren't doing much to help.

The good news is that the state education department is reviewing all its standards over

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.00	D	31	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.60%	C	12	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	30.23%	D	37	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.68%	D	21	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.09**	**D**	**33**	**50**

the next year. "We are looking at the entire process of setting standards and performance in our assessment system," Burk says. "It's the most thorough and detailed overhaul we've done since we started 10 years ago."

If Burk and company need additional motivation to ensure that their standards do improve, Kremer is there to provide it. He is currently lobbying the legislature to pass a bill that would require Oregon to adopt "a system of assessments that are objectively scored, can be readily compared to results in other states, and that meet technical standards for validity and reliability."

Kremer isn't fighting a one-man war. The Oregon Business Council is also hot on the trail of improving student achievement. Spurred on by a 2006 Roundtable report titled *A New Vision for Oregon Education*, the education department is now looking at ways to improve high school learning. Specifically, Burk says, it wants to raise graduation rates and establish a proficiency-based diploma. High school reform "has been the core issue before the [state] board all year," he says. Among recent changes for the class of 2010, candidates for a high school diploma must complete four years of English (not three) and three years of math (not two). The board is also considering adding a third year of science.

While happy that changes are being made, the Business Council is not resting. Jill Kirk, its vice president, says the education system must be rebuilt, as it was designed in the 1950s and has become outdated for 21st century needs. "We can't do more patches and duct tape and chewing gum on the existing system," Kirk says.

Among the more radical changes the Business Council would like the state to undertake are an integrated curriculum framework that covers students from kindergarten through college, a budget based on per-student costs, and a comprehensive data system to track student achievement.

Oregon does have some charter schools—65 of them to be exact. Kremer's Arthur Academy has 11 campuses in the greater Portland area and uses Direct Instruction and Core Knowledge as curricula. But Guyer notes that these schools haven't caught the greater public's attention—yet. "It's just the tip of the iceberg," she says. "We're just learning about why you'd want to do a charter."

Clearly still wrestling with fundamentals such as standards and assessments, Oregon has a long trail to walk before its education system improves. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	15	40
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	6	34
Black Graduation Rate	25	F	42	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	39	40
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	26	37
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	23	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	55	D	12	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	23	50
8th Graders in **Math**	20	D	6	50
8th Graders in **Science**	19	D	12	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	10.7	C	26	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	0.83	D	29	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	MINIMAL PROGRESS	•	•

PENNSYLVANIA

Becoming a Friend with School Reform

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Were Benjamin Franklin to take measure of education reform in his beloved Pennsylvania, he might draw upon his nautical background and say that a "perfect storm" is brewing. Currently, the Keystone State is not rocking anyone with its scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but a climate friendly to experimentation has brewed up a range of closely watched reforms that some believe are on the verge of blowing full force across the Commonwealth.

The state barely managed a C- for reform. But what sets Pennsylvania apart from other states is that, at least in its two major cities, many of its reform initiatives are customized solutions to local challenges rather than cookie-cutter mandates from state or national legislative assemblies. Philadelphia, for instance, has incorporated fifty charter schools and forty-three privately managed schools over the past four years, and Pittsburgh is overhauling its entire curriculum as part of a sweeping three-year reform effort.

The hope is that all Pennsylvanians will benefit from a flexible environment of innovation where the best ideas everywhere get tested and rewarded, according to Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak. Some are concerned, however, about state lawmakers' reluctance to challenge the status quo of decentralized school control.

"Pennsylvania is a very peculiar state," says Rep. James Roebuck, Jr., a Democrat and co-chairman of the House Education Committee. "We have 501 school districts, all of which tend to be local fiefdoms. There is a great reluctance [in the legislature] to require them to do anything. Therefore, when we've done reforms, we've not really required that districts adopt those reforms. We've [instead] offered them options."

▲

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are blazing their own reform trails.

▲

The legislature's habit of deferring to local districts has saddled the state with some unfortunate policies, such as the law that says children need not start school until age eight. But some districts are making good use of opportunities afforded by the Keystone State's relatively hands-off approach to education policy.

Still, at times the state can act more boldly. The best examples come from the big cities. In 2001, the state appointed a School Reform Commission that took control of Philadelphia's failing school system and in 2002 named former Chicago schools chief, Paul Vallas, as CEO. The commission then gave Vallas carte blanche to fix the city's schools. His plan to turn the district's worst-performing schools over to six private operators, such as Edison Schools and Temple University, and to create dozens of charter schools sparked protests so vehement that City Hall once had to shut down. Yet some deft politicking, including a decision to bring the powerful local teachers union into the negotiations, allowed Vallas's system to take root. And the system looks to be working.

Philadelphia's students are faring better on state exams (though the state is not the most rigorous for defining proficiency, rating a C from this assessment). The improvements are no small matter in a city where more than eight out of every ten children are poor. Vallas gives some of the credit for district-wide improvement to charter schools, which this year saw

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.00	D	31	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.53%	D	32	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	10.40%	B	14	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.03%	B	13	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.73**	**C-**	**23**	**50**

achievement scores on state exams in math and reading rise twice as fast as those in district-managed schools.

Across the state, Pittsburgh is blazing its own reform trail by linking school closures with low student achievement. Facing a projected $70 million budget deficit in 2007 and 14,500 empty classroom seats, local funders refused to rescue a system that they saw as a lost cause. Superintendent Mark Roosevelt then took the bold step of closing twenty-two of the district's eighty-eight schools. To get it done, he used a political carrot. Relocated children, he promised, would attend either a better-performing school or one of eight new "advanced learning academies" with longer school days and terms and principals whose contracts are tied to student performance on state exams. In short, Roosevelt made good on the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act's requirement that students in failing schools be given quality alternatives.

"By no means would I argue that [linking closures to achievement] assuaged all the anger or fear or resentment about closing twenty-two schools," Roosevelt said, "but it did make the process a fundamentally different" one. "And I think it did diminish opposition." Now the district has ambitious new benchmarks in place to increase proficiency scores and boost enrollment in International Baccalaureate as well as Advanced Placement courses by 2009.

Charter schools are a bright spot across the state. A total of 60,000 students attends them this year (the seventh-largest charter enrollment in the nation), and another 27,000 are on waiting lists. Cyber charter schools, which are educating more than 14,000 students from rural, urban, and suburban areas alike, are a way for the state to transcend district barriers by working directly with individual schools. But charters are delivering mixed results, according to Zahorchak. Further, after a protracted and painful campaign, teachers in training are now pursuing alternate routes to certification, including a state-run internship program and a self-directed preparatory course administered through the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence.

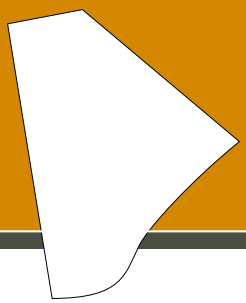
The state's poor academic standards (rated a D) are also due for an upgrade. Officials are mapping their strategy now to improve these critical documents, but the lack of details inspires little confidence in the potential for meaningful change. "It's not the crying issue" facing Pennsylvania schools, says John Chubb, chief education officer of Edison Schools, which runs twenty-four schools in the state. "The issue is that there are not enough consequences for schools that are doing poorly."

Zahorchak disagrees and says that struggling districts are not allowed to languish. Five districts have recently come under state control, he says. "We're one state," he continues, "that has not done anything to decrease our expectations in order to gain assessment results. To the contrary, we've begun to ratchet up and will continue to monitor that."

Here's hoping that the "ratcheting" will continue, as Pennsylvania's neediest students still have a long, long way to go. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	23	40
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	58	D	12	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	12	40
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	18	37
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	49	F	24	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	23	50
8th Graders in **Math**	12	D	33	50
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	10.5	C	27	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.89**	**D**	**27**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2003-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



RHODE ISLAND

In the Shadow of Greatness

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MINIMAL PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Poor Rhode Island is accustomed to being the butt of other New Englanders' jokes. Considering its most common nicknames—from the condescending "Little Rhody" to the crass "Armpit of New England"—it is little wonder if Rhode Island suffers from a major inferiority complex. Unfortunately, the latest news on the state's education system will do nothing to build its confidence. Recent findings show that low-income and minority students are performing worse in Rhode Island than anywhere east of the Mississippi and north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Meanwhile, its neighbor to the north is fast becoming a national model for aggressively raising standards and boosting the achievement of its disadvantaged students. The "Massachusetts Miracle" is so nearby, and yet so far away.

Only one state has a smaller percentage of low-income eighth-graders at or above proficient in math. But this isn't the only example. With just one exception, African-Americans' and Hispanics' progress in achievement is flat across the board.

School reform in Rhode Island has a faint pulse, despite the obvious need for it. The state earns a D in this realm. It has 11 charter schools that have proven popular with parents and have boosted their students' test scores, according to the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools. But thanks to a "stealth charter school moratorium bill," as the *Providence Journal* described it, Rhode Island froze choice in it tracks in 2004. (The state has no private school choice programs.) State Senate Finance Committee Chairman Stephen Alves said that the moratorium is a response to complaints from suburban communities, which feared that charters would take money away from their districts. "The last thing we wanted is for 30 charters to come in and decimate school budgets," he told the *Journal*. The moratorium was supposed to be for one year. It's now at two years, and counting.

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School reform in Rhode Island has a faint pulse, despite the obvious need for it.

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Lack of school choice is not the only lacuna in Rhode Island education reform. In 2005, the state adopted a "New Diploma System" for high school students. It claims to "require" high school students beginning in 2008 to show proficiency in six core subjects. But the proficiency measures are soft. Students must take the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP, created by a consortium that includes Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island) tests in English, math, and science; these tests will "count toward graduation," according to the New Diploma System website. However, NECAP test results will "never [be] enough to prevent a student from graduating. Students unsuccessful on the state assessments will have ample opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in all core subjects, using evidence-based proofs of proficiency, like course grades, projects, portfolios, and performances." So, unlike Massachusetts, Rhode Island blinked when it came to setting rigorous expectations for all of its high school students.

In a commendable effort to track student progress, the Providence School District (the state's largest) is administering quarterly tests to students in grades 2 through 9. Dr. Frances Gallo, deputy superintendent of

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.33	D+	28	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.28%	F	40	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	20.82%	C	29	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	B-	•	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.58%	D	22	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.09**	**D**	**33**	**50**

the district, said this will begin holding teachers accountable for what goes on in the classroom. The district would like to extend such tests to the high school level, but the teachers union is fighting back (as it opposed the lifting of the charter cap), claiming that such tests tie teachers' hands in class.

Asked to explain the state's poor scores for minority and low-income students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, Gallo offers the usual gamut of excuses: poverty, absenteeism, weak family backgrounds, etc. "Our kindergarteners have very low language skills, period," says Gallo. "In any language. Kids come into kindergarten in the suburbs with a thousand words in their vocabulary. We're lucky to have kids with a hundred words in their vocabulary."

But reform initiatives that could mitigate such socioeconomic handicaps can seemingly make no headway in Rhode Island. State Senator Daniel Issa, chairman of the Senate Education Committee and a Democrat, says that the unions are "a potent force" with the power to stop reform.

Consider teacher contracts, for example. For the past two years, the Education Partnership, a Providence nonprofit advocacy organization, has analyzed Rhode Island teacher contracts, and its findings make one wonder how anything is accomplished in the classroom. According to its president, Valerie Forti, the quality of Rhode Island teachers is "highly questionable," yet evaluations are spotty and seniority always trumps merit. Principals and districts are hamstrung by contract provisions that could be used as models of public finance lunacy, such as paying teachers by the hour for putting grades on report cards; giving teachers bonuses for unused sick days, while allowing them to bank these paid days to cash in during retirement; increasing pay by between 10 and 13 percent for each of their first 10 years of service; and providing health care "buy-back bonuses" of up to $8,000 annually for using a spouse's insurance policy.

"We want the teachers to have good salaries," Forti says. "But [their] entitlement goes beyond that. We're shutting down math programs, art programs, we don't have good schools, but we're giving teachers $8,000-a-year bonuses because they're getting health care elsewhere?" As Forti says, the teacher contracts suck funding from school district coffers faster than it can be replenished.

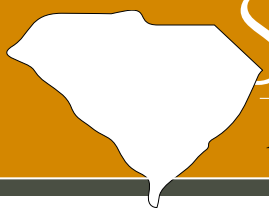
Unions aren't the only obstacle to reform, however. Equally debilitating is the absence of the kind of state leadership that is needed to turn a failing school system around. Despite appallingly low scores and gaping achievement gaps, neither Governor Donald Carcieri nor Providence Mayor David Cicilline has announced a serious and comprehensive reform plan.

Nor has the state's General Assembly shown much interest in academic standards. Current frameworks for English, math, and science aren't very useful, and legislators apparently didn't see the point of even drafting history standards.

The Ocean State is drowning and in desperate need of a plank of driftwood just to hold on to—but it is still a long, long way from land. If Little Rhody wants to be saved, it will have to do more than just wave its arms and hope for a miracle. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	5	F	31	40
8th Graders in **Science**	5	F	26	34
Black Graduation Rate	61	C	8	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	34	40
8th Graders in **Math**	4	F	37	37
8th Graders in **Science**	4	F	32	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	55	D	12	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	38	50
8th Graders in **Math**	7	F	46	50
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	34	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.1	D	39	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.58**	**D-**	**39**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MINIMAL PROGRESS**	•	•



SOUTH CAROLINA

Difficult Legacies and School Choice Civil War

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

It's no fluke that many of the nation's legendary education leaders hail from the South: Bill Clinton, Lamar Alexander, Jim Hunt, and, of course, Dick Riley. As long as two decades ago, these Southern governors came to understand the integral role that education would play in their states' futures.

Under Riley's leadership in the late 1970s and early '80s, South Carolina set out to transform and upgrade its education system—a process that is still very much underway. There are a few promising signs. The Palmetto State has made some gains in the achievement of its low-income and minority students, improving math scores for African-American and low-income eighth-graders. Its burgeoning Hispanic population performs better than the same population in most other states, and the performance of its disadvantaged students exceeds that of Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama.

Yet the state's achievement numbers remain sobering. Only 11 percent of African-American South Carolina fourth-graders score at proficient or above in reading. A paltry 10 percent of African-American eighth-graders score the same in math.

Some leaders have an explanation for these disappointing results: "It's the economy, stupid." The relatively high-paying manufacturing jobs South Carolina historically has depended upon are no longer present. Moreover, as outgoing State Superintendent of Education Inez M. Tenenbaum notes, "Low tax bases in high-poverty rural school districts make it extremely difficult to attract and retain teachers with the knowledge and skill needed to help students who have few learning opportunities before they attend school."

> *"South Carolina schools must overcome a legacy of inattention and neglect that has persisted here for generations."*

Combine a weak economic base with a crushing poverty rate (half of South Carolina schools have 70 percent or more of their students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch), and you don't have to be an economist to know that times are tough. As Tenenbaum says succinctly, "South Carolina schools must overcome a legacy of inattention and neglect that has persisted here for generations."

Dan Cassidy of South Carolinians for Responsible Government, a state-based organization that supports school choice, isn't impressed. The school system's problems go beyond a shortage of cash, he explains, and come down to a "failure to use available tools." Cassidy points out that although per-pupil spending is close to the national average, "corruption and mismanagement have resulted in serious infrastructure problems in rural districts," and federal funds for teacher quality initiatives "that could provide bonuses for teacher excellence and incentives to teach in high-need areas" are misspent elsewhere. The state has thousands of students who qualify for help because of their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress, Cassidy notes, "yet virtually no students have been permitted public school choice, and only around 3 percent receive the supplemental tutoring to which they are entitled."

The state hasn't been sitting idly by, watching education get worse, of course. It over-

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	2.80	B-	8	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	3.74%	B	3	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	6.49%	B	7	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	A	1	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	1.02%	D	26	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.395	F	19	19
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.00**	**C**	**16**	**50**

hauled its state learning standards in the 1990s, and these are routinely rated among the better ones in the nation. The Fordham Foundation gives them a B- overall. And although test scores remain low, the state has admirably held the line with a rigorous definition of student "proficiency" under the No Child Left Behind Act.

But trendy ideas abound that undercut these good efforts. Consider the recently passed Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA). It aims to increase the relevance of public education by allowing high school students to customize their coursework to match career interests. The hope is this will make staying in school more attractive to at-risk students. Representative Ronald P. Townsend, chairman of the state's House Committee on Education and Public Works, believes EEDA "will solve a lot of the other issues like the dropout and graduation rates" by fine-tuning the state's curriculum and increasing the incentives to succeed.

Governor Mark Sanford wants to see change happen sooner, so he is backing a comprehensive school choice solution through the "Put Parents in Charge Act." To date, there is little to show for this effort. This year, the state House rejected a version that would have given either a $4,500 voucher or $1,000 tax credit to parents of children attending schools rated below average or unsatisfactory, and allowed them to transfer to a private school. The battle will continue next year.

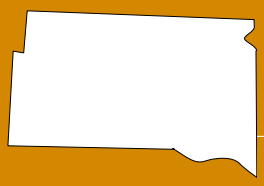
The Republican nominee for Tenenbaum's open seat is Karen Floyd, who supports broad-based school choice. She is facing off against Democratic nominee Jim Rex, and all of the school choice sparks are sure to fly once again. And sparks should fly: South Carolina's only significant forms of parental choice are charter schools, and so far they serve fewer than 1 percent of the state's students. Although the legislature recently created a statewide charter school district, thereby bypassing local boards that have resisted charter school expansion, Cassidy notes that, because charter schools "receive … only 39 percent of overall per-student spending in conventional schools," they are and will remain quite difficult to establish.

There is no debate about creating alternate routes for individuals to become teachers—and that's unfortunate. The state has a sanctioned course of study called PACE (Program of Alternative Certification for Teachers), but it limits participants to those who can teach in a "critical needs" area.

Of course, quick fixes aren't what South Carolina's children need. The Palmetto State enjoys a solid framework for reform, with its strong standards and rigorous expectations. If it could add true parental choice and greater autonomy for educators into the mix, it would have a comprehensive strategy worthy of the state's many challenges. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	26	41
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	14	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	29	C	2	40
8th Graders in **Math**	19	D	3	37
8th Graders in **Science**	16	D	5	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	38	50
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	21	50
8th Graders in **Science**	9	F	34	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	12.6	C	20	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•



South Dakota

Educational Badlands

N/A STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

N/A ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

South Dakota can look like the land that time forgot. The Badlands haven't changed all that much since explorers from the East Coast first headed west. Neither has the Wall Drug Store, which stands near the beginning of the Badlands and in the 19th century offered free water to those about to enter that rattlesnake-infested desert. Water's still free, and the rattlers are still around, too.

But the state is changing, both demographically and agriculturally, and these changes are deeply affecting its K–12 education system. Today, the Mount Rushmore State faces three serious education problems: it's losing teachers by the bucketful; its Native America students, who live mostly on reservations, lag far behind their peers; and its education establishment rejects school reform ideas such as charter schools.

Let's start with teachers. For decades, South Dakota relied on dedicated, local teachers—many born and raised there—to staff its schools, keep class sizes down, and educate children in remote locations. Over the past two years, however, large numbers of these seasoned local teachers have retired. New teachers have been brought in to fill the gaps, many from out of state, but they are leaving the state in droves. After getting a few years of experience, most of these teachers cross the border into Minnesota or Montana, where average starting salaries are considerably higher. Even in Wyoming, they can make up to $15,000 more than in South Dakota. The exodus is being felt most acutely in rural communities, where hiring special education and science teachers is next to impossible and finding good math, foreign language, and music teachers is just as difficult.

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Today, the Mount Rushmore State faces three serious education problems: it's losing teachers by the bucketful; its Native America students lag far behind their peers; and its education establishment rejects school reform ideas such as charter schools.

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Despite the worsening teacher shortage, however, the state hasn't created a vibrant alternative certification program to make it easier for liberal arts graduates or professionals from other fields to enter the classroom. In fact, the few state-sanctioned alternate routes that do exist require would-be teachers to jump through endless hoops to earn a job that does not reward them for the skills they bring to the classroom.

Keith Moore, American Indian specialist for the state Department of Education, would like to see that change. He's investigating ways to bring more teachers onto reservations through alternative routes. About 12 percent of the state's students live on reservations, and they score far below their non-Native American counterparts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Indeed, 14 percent of Native American fourth-graders are reading at or above "proficient" level—and it's downhill from there. Not surprisingly, the majority of schools on reservations have been labeled in need of improvement under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.60	C-	20	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.14%	F	45	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	42.83%	F	43	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.91**	**D**	**39**	**50**

Moore said recruiting and maintaining adequate teachers is crucial to improving the American Indian schools in the state.

"We are looking at what we can do to find alternative routes to teaching," he said. "We need more people from the community teaching. There are not enough Indian teachers, but many people on the reservation have alternative education, a different background, and we want to get them [into teaching]."

Statistics show that American Indian schools in South Dakota not only perform far below the rest of the state, but they also have high dropout rates. Other states have responded to such challenges by launching new, customized schools like charter schools. Not here.

"No one is interested in starting a charter school," said Kelly Duncan, the state board of education chair. "Our citizens are happy with the education their children receive."

Schools not on reservations are doing fairly well, relative to the rest of the nation; perhaps the state's academic standards—which are mediocre but among the best for Great Plains states—are helping. South Dakota ranks first in the nation on NAEP math and science scores for low-income children. (South Dakota did not receive a grade from this report for either "student achievement" or "trends in student achievement" because of the lack of reliable data for its miniscule African-American and Hispanic populations.) But even these scores are bound to suffer if the state can't stop hemorrhaging teachers.

Where have all the children gone? If current trends hold, the number of high school graduates will decline by 12.4 percent by 2014. South Dakotans are having smaller families because modern farm equipment allows for fewer people to tend to farms, says State Senator Ed Olson, the Republican chair of the Education Committee. But the loss of students isn't lowering overall school costs. The government has made an effort to consolidate rural schools to increase efficiency, but local towns have fought those efforts tooth and nail.

"There are too many small schools, but they are part of the fabric of our communities, which are fiercely independent," Olson said. "If we close the school, the whole town is dead."

But life in South Dakota has changed, he continues, and adults need to make decisions that are best for children, not "for adults and their community."

Olson is right. Reform ideas must be a part of the conversation if South Dakota's schools are to keep from becoming ghost towns. Higher standards, alternative paths to classrooms in the Native American communities, modern cyber-education distance-learning options, and charter schools could go a long way toward making South Dakota's schools a model of excellence. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	24	C	1	50
8th Graders in **Science**	27	C	1	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.8	D	34	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	•	•	•	•

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *2003-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *2003-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2003-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *2003-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *No data*	n/a	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	N/A	•	•

TENNESSEE

Vexing Gaps in the Volunteer State

D- STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

When it comes to education, it should come as no surprise that parents in the Volunteer State are quick to lend their support to new ideas that might make schools better. Unfortunately, the state's willingness to experiment hasn't always translated into better student performance.

Consider the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, or TVAAS. Developed by Bill Sanders and launched in 1992, it was the first "value-added" model for measuring student achievement in the United States. The assessment measures growth over time, thereby recognizing students and schools that make significant achievement gains over time and distinguishing between more and less effective teachers.

Though not used for accountability (it was merely an "informational" tool) when launched, the federal government has come to appreciate TVAAS's value as an accountability tool, and earlier this year the federal Department of Education allowed the state to use TVAAS for No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) reporting purposes.

That's the good news. Now, for the bad news. Tennessee isn't gaining much ground with its large population of low-income and minority children. Student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has improved only slightly over the years. African-American scores remain flat (and appallingly low in math and science) while math scores for low-income eighth-graders have bumped up, though in other subjects have been stagnant. Why hasn't the much-ballyhooed TVAAS done more for improving learning?

Tennessee isn't gaining much ground with its large population of low-income and minority children.

Besides the fact that no state-level accountability measures accompany the system, it may be because the test TVAAS is currently attached to, the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), is so poor. Since its launch in 2003, the state education department has steadily lowered its definition of "proficiency." Originally, for example, third-graders had to answer 55 percent of TCAP reading questions correctly to be considered proficient. That bar has since been lowered to 38 percent. And that low bar is pegged to mediocre academic standards, worthy of only a C-, according to Fordham Foundation reviewers.

So while NAEP scores flat-line for black and Hispanic students, TCAP scores soar. According to the state test, more than 80 percent of Tennessee's K–8 student population is proficient or better at reading, compared with just 28 percent of all eighth-graders on the 2005 NAEP. That disparity between NAEP results and state test results is the widest in the land.

Other steps for improving the state's education system have fared little better than TVAAS. Charter schools, for instance, are now allowed in Tennessee, but grudgingly, and today there are far too few to prod the public schools to improve. Despite charters performing better than their neighborhood schools, according to Steven M. Ross, who directs the Center for Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis, the state remains "a very conservative [one] for charter schools, with very restrictive application procedures."

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.60	C-	20	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	3	B	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.05%	C	20	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	13.32%	C	22	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	•	45	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.18%	F	38	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.40**	**D+**	**29**	**50**

Indeed. By law, the total number of charters is capped at 50 statewide, but in 2005–06, only a dozen were operating. "Charter schools get added as a trickle each year," Ross says. The principal reason for this slow growth may be that only students in schools that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB, or who did not test "proficient" the previous year on the state's easy test, are allowed to enroll. Because of Tennessee's low standards, few students qualify.

The state is also none too welcoming to mid-career professionals who would like to become teachers. "They're required to go through the same hoops, even if you take, say, an engineer at Oak Ridge National Laboratory who wants to teach science at the high schools," says Bill Ketron, a member of the state Senate Education Committee.

Governor Phil Bredesen, a former mayor of Nashville who poured significant sums of money into that district's system, is interested in changing that. In response to the state's shortage of math, science, and foreign language teachers, the governor created Teach Tennessee, which permits qualified professionals to become teachers. Program participants must have a bachelor's degree, 24 college credit hours in the relevant subject, and five years of experience in that field. It isn't proving particularly attractive so far, however, with fewer than 100 fellows having completed the program during its three years of existence.

That might be because career changers aren't rewarded with appropriate paychecks for the experience and expertise they bring to the classroom. In other words, a chemist with 20 years of experience would enter a high school chemistry class making the same as any first-year teacher fresh from college. Ketron wanted to change that, so he floated legislation in 2006 that would have offered higher salaries to those who teach math and science. The Tennessee Education Association didn't like that idea, and it was shelved. It is a tribute to the union's very considerable and long-enduring power in this state.

Yet some districts are bucking the union. Eighteen Tennessee districts currently offer forward-thinking initiatives, such as pay-for-performance, to bring skilled folks into the classroom. And in Memphis, the unions are allowing schools in danger of falling into restructuring to forego seniority rules in order to hire better-qualified teachers and replace ineffective ones.

The state's saggy graduation rate is also a grave concern to Bredesen. He would like to see the percentage of all students completing high school reach 90 percent by 2012. (Currently, that number is below 60 percent, according to Education Week.) "We have a great deal of work to do," concedes a Tennessee education department official who asked not to be named.

One Bredesen idea to stanch the dropout flow is a combined five-year high school and community college degree. The governor believes such a degree will boost retention, but the proposal, which Bredesen would try to create and implement if reelected this fall, has been met with tepid enthusiasm.

But the governor's major education initiative focuses on Tennessee's youngest students. Bredesen has more than quintupled the rate of spending on early childhood education since taking office.

This whirlwind of reform activity is commendable, but rests on a weak foundation of low state standards and a laughably easy state test. Since Lamar Alexander's time as governor in the 1980s, Tennessee has been viewed as an innovator in education reform. Let's hope that today's innovations will pay acceptable returns. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	11	D	26	41
8th Graders in **Math**	3	F	38	40
8th Graders in **Science**	7	F	13	34
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	13	D	31	40
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	34	50
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	43	50
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	20	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	8.9	D	32	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.63**	**D-**	**38**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

TEXAS

A Bronze Star for the Lone Star State

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

George W. Bush did not bring just his spurs and boots to the White House when he arrived in January 2001. He also brought along a plan for holding schools accountable for their students' achievement—a plan he put into action as governor of Texas that was more than two decades in the making by a bipartisan group of leaders and business people concerned about education.

It is not news that Texas's accountability system served as the model for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). A precursor to the ambitious and controversial federal law, the Texas system has been subjected to much analysis and critique. It is far from perfect. But it is no coincidence that Texas is one of only eight states to register "moderate progress" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) since the early 1990s—and is one of just three states to make statistically significant gains in reading and math for both African-American and Hispanic students. Texas's education reform efforts (ranked fourth in the nation overall) deserve much credit.

Yet for all this progress, Texas schools have a long way to go. Just 8 percent of African-American eighth-graders score proficient or above in science, for example; at 11 percent, the Hispanic numbers are not much better. And, as a recent (and much publicized) report demonstrated, Texas's minority dropout rates are abysmal.

If the state wants to continue moving ahead, it must raise the bar for its students—and help more of them to clear it. Part of the problem is that the state exam, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), is not that difficult. Couple that fact with the state's generally mushy learning standards (overall grade, C-), and you have an accountability system that does not push teachers or students hard enough.

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To continue moving ahead, Texas must raise the bar for students—and help more of them clear it.

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But to fix the system, the state can build off its good start, rather than start from scratch. "We may work like a turtle here in Texas, but we don't stop," said one Texas leader familiar with school reform issues in the state.

Texas is also wrestling with translating K–8 gains into improvements in high school. This year the legislature raised the academic bar for graduation by requiring students to complete four courses in each of four core subjects (math, English, history, and science). There is some flexibility in the law in that students may opt out of a track and choose a less-challenging one. But, says Jamie Story, an education policy analyst with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, "These course requirements are now the default curriculum."

Two other recent legislative changes should also help tighten the state's flabby accountability system and motivate teachers to do a better job educating all their students. A new law gives the state's education commissioner greater authority to restructure, take over, or close low-performing schools. Further, merit pay is now available for teachers who accelerate their students' learning.

Story says that merit pay is "a step in the right direction" but worries that the amounts

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.80	C-	14	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	4	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.26%	C	16	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	10.56%	B	15	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	A	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.01%	C	19	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.137	B	6	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.42**	**C+**	**4**	**50**

are too small. With $300 million set aside, it is unlikely that teachers will see more than a 3 percent or so raise in their salaries, should they earn the money, she comments.

But first steps are important. "The more we move in this direction," she says, "the higher caliber people we're going to have in this field."

Not everybody in Texas agrees that paying teachers bonuses for improved student performance is the answer. Houston's merit pay plan—which preceded the statewide program—has come under particular scrutiny. "The Houston plan is so complex statistically that no teacher has a clue whether they qualify, even after they get their students' [test] results," says Gayle Fallon, president of the Houston Federation of Teachers. "Teachers not teaching core or testable courses are eligible for half of what the other teachers get, and they are totally dependent on the work of the core subject teachers."

Charter schools have also been in the spotlight of late. Serving more than 80,000 students in some 240 schools, charters have become extremely popular with the state's poor and minority populations. No surprise, since Houston is home to the famous Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) schools, founded by Mike Feinberg and David Levin and now numbering more than fifty nationwide. These are among the most academically successful charter schools in the country.

But recent TAKS results showed that a greater percentage of charter schools than traditional public schools fell short of adequate yearly progress under NCLB. But Timothy Gronberg, an economist at Texas A&M University who has studied charters, is urging people not to push the panic button.

The children "coming in [to charters are] exiting from traditional publics…with low [TAKS] scores," he says. So a "snapshot of level performance isn't all that good." But when you examine improvement over time, he explains, charters are holding their own. Moreover, he concludes, the longer children stay in charters, the more steady their improvement becomes.

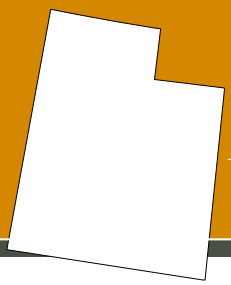
The biggest challenges that charters now face is the cap on the number of schools that can exist in the state, as well as significant underfunding of those that do exist. Texas has been on the edge of that cap for two years, but there has been no movement in the legislature to raise it. Charter advocates hope for some relief in the coming legislative session, when they will seek provisions that would force bad charter schools to close and provide fair funding for successful charters. KIPP cofounder Mike Feinberg stressed in an op-ed for the *Houston Chronicle* that only "those schools with a proven track record of success" would receive the funds, so the "legislation will not take money away from traditional public schools."

As evidenced by the large number of charter schools, state leaders are willing to cut through burdensome and needless regulations and allow innovation to flourish. Another example is the state's strong alternative certification program for would-be teachers, which allows liberal arts graduates and mid-career professionals to bypass education schools on their way to the classroom. At last count, according to the National Center for Education Information, nearly half of Texas's new teachers are coming through one of the state's 75 alternate routes to the classroom.

All in all, the "Texas miracle" is real, and state leaders have good reason to be proud. But plenty of challenges await. With upwards of four-fifths of Texas's poor and minority students failing to achieve reading or math proficiency, now is no time for retreat. Embracing higher standards and stronger charter schools would solidify Texas's role as an education reform exemplar for the nation. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	13	D	5	40
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	10	34
Black Graduation Rate	60	C	11	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	19	D	12	40
8th Graders in **Math**	19	D	3	37
8th Graders in **Science**	11	D	18	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	58	D	7	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	23	50
8th Graders in **Math**	17	D	14	50
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	29	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	13.7	C	16	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.08**	**D**	**12**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•



UTAH

Time to Get Busy in the Beehive State

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

There is a lot of buzzing over education in Utah, and almost all of it is about teachers. On this much, most everyone in the Beehive State can agree: There are too few teachers, and they are not adequately paid.

How to correct that problem has the state's leaders at odds with one another. And how they correct it will depend on whether the state continues to find creative solutions to its education woes, or succumbs to the "throw more money at the problem" trap.

The state's teacher shortage is being exacerbated by its booming population—most of which comes from Utah's Mormon sector, which makes up 62 percent of the population. Unlike Catholics in Chicago, or Protestant evangelicals in the Southeast, the Mormon church does not operate religious schools, and so public schools have absorbed the state's population boom. And what a boom it has been.

The nation's Baby Boom ended in 1964, but Utah's kept right on going—until 1982. After two decades of holding steady the Morman birthrate is again inching up.

Enter the state's teachers, or lack thereof. Average salaries are so low that many teachers routinely flee to neighboring Wyoming or Nevada, where the pay is better. One result is that Utah's classroom sizes are among the largest in the nation. Parents, frustrated in part by large class sizes, have begun turning to charter schools. Now numbering 52, these schools are gaining in popularity because their classrooms tend to be smaller and allow for more personal attention.

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"The innovators are going back to the basics—parents want more rigor."

▲

This is not the only reason, however, for charter schools' popularity. Dissatisfaction with the traditional public school curriculum is also feeding charter growth. Two years ago, parents in the Alpine district (among the state's wealthiest), unhappy with the math curriculum, pressured state legislators to lift the cap on the number of charters that could open in the state. (The math curriculum downplayed rote memorization of traditional algorithms, such as multiplication tables, in favor of "exploring math concepts.")

"In Utah, the innovators are going back to basics," says Stephen Kroes, executive director of the Utah Foundation, which provides policy analysis to the state. "Parents wanted more rigor, and it has been difficult to budge traditional public schools on math."

Concerned that parents would begin withdrawing their children en masse, the district responded by recommending that its schools balance the experimental math curriculum with traditional methods and consult parents about which approach they prefer. It is not a great solution, according to Mark Cluff, who represents Alpine on the state board of education. "In my mind this just shows a lack of leadership." But it is evidence that charters are impacting the traditional schools.

One obvious solution to the teacher shortage is to encourage alternate routes into the classroom for liberal arts graduates or mid-career professionals from other fields. The experience of other states has demonstrated that such programs can boost teacher quantity and quality. Utah has embraced some alternative paths to teaching, such as Troops to Teachers. But a more aggressive approach could further help the state.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.40	D+	26	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	2.61%	C	7	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	8.60%	B	11	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.29%	B	11	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	3	B	2	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**2.00**	**C**	**16**	**50**

A shortage of teachers is not the state's only problem, however. The achievement gap is also a major concern. Hispanic performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress has been abysmal, and it has not gotten any better with time. No more than 14 percent of these youngsters are reaching proficiency or above in reading, math, or science. This gap received nationwide attention after Utah threatened to withdraw from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

The state's academic standards offer little reason to believe that achievement will improve. Overall, they rate a D+ from the Fordham Foundation's reviewers. Clearly, "fuzzy math" is not the state's only problem. Furthermore, the state has set the bar for proficiency in reading and math at one of the lowest levels in the land.

Utah provides opportunities for high school students to take and pass advanced placement (AP) exams. More than 20 percent of the state's students have done so. But this being Utah, there is controversy over whether it is worth it to pay for AP courses at all.

"It used to be the case that people would brag about Utah," says Kroes. "We may have had low funding, but we had good test scores. That's not the case anymore. There is concern that we've fallen to mediocre instead of excellent and a lot more concern when it comes to [the] achievement gap."

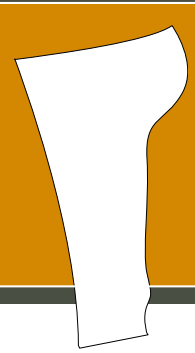
This brings us back to teachers—and the state's ability to get more and better qualified candidates to come, and stay, in the state. Governor Jon Huntsman feels this is central to turning the education system around, and signed into law this summer a bill that provides incentive pay to teachers who are able to improve student performance.

Huntsman also believes in school choice, however, which is why he signed into law a voucher program that pays parents of disabled children up to $5,700 per year to send their children to private schools. "This means a great deal to a whole lot of people in this state," he said during the signing ceremony.

But if the nation is ever to start buzzing about Utah as a leader in education, the state must do more than just spend money or stare down the federal government over NCLB. The path to educational improvement is paved with rigorous standards, real accountability, and meaningful choices for parents. Whether Utah will follow this path is still an open question. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	61	C	8	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	25	40
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	32	37
8th Graders in **Science**	12	D	14	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	56	D	11	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	50
8th Graders in **Math**	20	D	6	50
8th Graders in **Science**	22	C	8	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	20.5	A	3	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	1.44	D+	2	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	NO PROGRESS	•	•



VERMONT

The Cellar-Dweller in School Reform

N/A STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

F EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

N/A ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

A story is told in Vermont of a tourist who says to an old man, "I bet you've seen a lot of changes around here." The old man replies, "Ayup, and I've been against every one of them."

In this small state of less than 600,000 people, 97 percent of whom are white, the idea that schools must be "reformed" does not go down well with folks. Vermont's schools, many leaders will say, are already responsive to the needs of students and parents, and are doing an admirable job.

There is some truth to this. Consider the state's town-tuition system. Dating to the mid-nineteenth century, town tuition was developed to respond to the needs of small communities that can't afford to support a full public school system. The program allows children in these communities (currently numbering 90) to attend public or private (nonsectarian) schools in neighboring communities at state expense.

As for academic achievement, however, the state is hardly paying attention to the needs of its most vulnerable children. Vermont places among the top 10 states in all three categories of achievement for low-income students. But in absolute terms, low-income students are far behind their financially more secure peers. The gap between these groups is long-standing, and with no charter schools, no high-school exit exam, and state standards rated D overall, Vermont is poorly equipped to close this gap. Overall, its education reform efforts rank dead-last in the nation.

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Establishing charter schools might be called reform in some states, but not in Vermont

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Though charter schools have successfully raised achievement scores of low-income and minority children in many states, Vermont's leaders are steadfastly opposed to them. Legislators on both sides of the aisle interviewed for this story agree: Vermont doesn't need them because, they insist, the schools aren't failing and small-town dynamics ensure ongoing accountability.

"Establishing charter schools … within large urban school districts might be called reform" in some states, says Rep. George Cross, chair of the state's House Education Committee. But in Vermont, this isn't necessary. "Local control and democratically conducted elections [of school board members] on an annual basis," he contends, ensure accountability for each school's performance.

High school exit exams are no more popular with state education leaders or legislators for improving student performance than are charters. Richard Cate, Vermont's commissioner of education, doesn't like exit exams because they're based on "an assumption that each child should be prepared for a four-year, baccalaureate program." A better approach for Vermont, he says, is one that considers "multiple measures," such as technical competency for students on track to enter the trades.

Sen. William Doyle, the ranking Republican on the Senate Education Committee, thinks high stakes testing too often discourages classroom creativity. "You want to keep [education systems] open to the possibility that some non-traditional things can take place in the classroom," Doyle says. Too much emphasis on standardized testing, he fears, "will stamp out that kind of activity."

Fortunately, not all state leaders are resistant to new ways of improving achieve-

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.00	D	31	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.23%	F	43	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	100.00%	F	48	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	•	45	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	•	•	•
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.44**	**F**	**50**	**50**

ment for the state's poor children. For example, the board of education just this year sought to extend school choice from tuition town students to all state students. The proposal was squelched by lawmakers, who were influenced heavily by the state teachers union. "In this rural state, our schools are the hearts and souls of our communities," says Angelo Dorta, president of the Vermont chapter of the National Education Association. "If we were to have a full-throttle public school choice program, there [would be] strong concerns about what the impact would be on those communities for whom the school is their lifeblood."

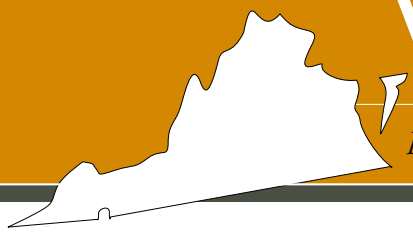
The state board of education also wanted to extend Vermont's 175-day school year by 17 percent. Financial worries were the primary reason legislators killed this proposal. The state education budget is being squeezed—per-pupil costs are up ($9,746 in 2002 to more than $11,000 in 2004), while the number of taxpayers footing the bill is dwindling. "The whole financing system," according to Senate Education Committee Chair Donald Collins, a Democrat, "is under assault."

The legislature isn't without ideas for closing the achievement gap. However, it is currently considering establishing a universal pre-school program for all 3- and 4-year-olds in the state. The move is supported by Dorta. A commission appointed by the state department of education has already said, however, that the program would do little to help the state's neediest. A decision is expected by legislators in January 2007.

Ayup. The outlook for substantial changes in education that will improve the lot of the state's poor children isn't good. But then, change doesn't come easily here. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	21	C	8	50
8th Graders in **Math**	21	C	4	50
8th Graders in **Science**	26	C	3	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	15.4	B	12	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	•	•	•	•

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *2002-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	N/A	•	•



VIRGINIA

Moving (Slowly) Along on the Road to Achievement

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

C- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Virginia is a deeply divided state. Northern Virginia is wealthy, educated, and congested. Travel south and west of Richmond, however, and one enters another world—one not just economically poorer, but one that reflects a more traditional Southern culture quite different from its neighbors to the north. (The roads are not nearly so crowded, either.)

The need to bridge these two worlds has driven Old Dominion education leaders to set high standards and rigorous assessments to ensure that whether a child grows up in NASCAR-crazy Martinsville, or horse-crazy Loudon County, he or she will have a solid foundation in reading, math, science, and the humanities.

The state's standards of learning are among the best in the nation, earning a grade of B+ from Fordham Foundation reviewers. Moreover, for requiring that students pass high-stakes exams in five subjects based on those standards in order to graduate high school, Virginia earned an A. The Commonwealth's commitment to a broad liberal arts education for all—a rarity nationally—appears to be getting results.

That is the good news. The bad news is that the state's minority students are still achieving at low levels and have made almost no gains over the past decade on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), except for African-American eighth-graders in math. (Poor students' scores are up in math and science, but they are hardly eye-popping.) When upwards of 80 to 90 percent of African-American and Hispanic students are failing to read and do math proficiently, standing pat is not enough.

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"The original charter bill was written to make sure there were no charters."

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"Virginia has proven adept at standard setting and data collection," says Lil Tuttle, education director at the Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute, a Herndon, Virginia, nonprofit promoting school choice. "But the state has yet to show that it can convert these worthwhile first steps into substantial student achievement gains, particularly for minority children."

Resources are not lacking. Tuttle notes that "between 1995 [the onset of current standards reforms] and 2008, state education funding will rise from $2.5 billion to $6 billion [a 137 percent increase]," with little to show for it.

Money is not the problem in Old Dominion; accountability is. Part of the problem is the lack of rigor in the state's tests (their defined level of proficiency in reading and math is among the lowest in the land). This is particularly disheartening because the state's curriculum standards are so good—the state ranks fifth in the nation for quality. But the poor tests undermine this accomplishment, essentially letting children, and schools, off the hook when they do not hit the high marks set by the curriculum standards.

Charter schools are not pushing the traditional system to do better, mainly because there are just five charters in the entire state. The state's charter bill is among the weakest in the nation. "The original charter bill was written specifically to make sure there were no charters," says John Taylor, president of the Virginia Institute

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	3.20	B+	5	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	5	A	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	2.82%	C	5	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	13.95%	C	24	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D+	31	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.05%	F	40	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	•	F	47	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.55**	**C-**	**25**	**50**

for Public Policy; and there seems to be little prospect for improvement.

An amendment was passed a couple of years ago to shore up the charter law by extending the life span of a school's charter to five years and eliminating caps on the number of charters that can open. But it did nothing directly to encourage school districts to charter new schools and has led to no increase in the number of charters. State law gives Virginia's 133 school districts almost complete control over the charter process, and so it is not surprising that none are favorably inclined toward charters.

Voucher and tax credit programs are even further behind the curve—they are nonexistent. Legislation has been introduced repeatedly over the years to create such programs, but to no avail.

The state's high-flying standards, lackluster accountability, and barely-breathing choice initiatives leave the Old Dominion with a middle-of-the-road grade of C- for school reform.

Instead of focusing laserlike on the shortcomings of the K–12 education system, state leaders now seem to be turning their attention to pre-kindergarten and post–high school. In 2005, the General Assembly expanded the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) to provide funding for 100 percent of at-risk children who otherwise would not have access to preschool. Governor Timothy M. Kaine has made the program a priority for his administration.

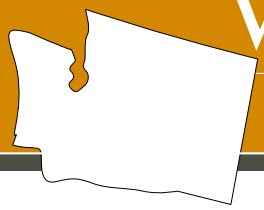
The biggest challenge facing the state, however, may well be its minority graduation rate. At least, better graduation data appear to be forthcoming (though better data have not helped education reform previously). Charles Pyle, director of communications for Virginia's superintendent of public instruction, says the state has already committed itself to a new education information management system that will allow it to "calculate graduation rates for every school and school division based on longitudinal, student-level data using a formula recommended by the National Governors Association." Armed with this information, Virginia hopes to better target its efforts and track improvements.

Its approach to the graduation-rate problem looks to be part of a pattern. Set high standards, collect good data, and then fail to ensure accountability. Will the state again repeat these mistakes? Just as you cannot win a NASCAR race without a great driver and a strong crew, you cannot win the race to educational improvement without the full package. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	9	F	15	40
8th Graders in **Science**	10	D	6	34
Black Graduation Rate	64	C	5	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	26	C	4	40
8th Graders in **Math**	20	D	2	37
8th Graders in **Science**	22	C	3	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	16	D	30	50
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	35	50
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	20	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	19.3	A	5	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	1.45	D+	1	44

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	↑	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	LIMITED PROGRESS	•	•

WASHINGTON



Lagging School Reform Does Not Compute

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MODERATE PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Microsoft's slogan, "Your Potential, Our Passion," would be a good one for Washington's public education system. After all, both the behemoth software company and the state's public schools are in the business of providing the tools necessary to bring skills and creativity to full bloom. But that is where the similarity ends. Microsoft knows how to translate passion into success—Washington's schools do not.

Minority achievement scores here are low, earning Ds and Fs across the board. Hispanic students fare particularly poorly; only 8 percent are proficient in science, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). But the state's failure to educate its most vulnerable students is especially apparent in its graduation rate. For African-Americans, just 48 percent manage to graduate from high school on time—among the lowest rates in the nation. At 53 percent, the state's Hispanic students fare little better.

On the positive side, achievement trends for these students are heading in the right direction. Black, Hispanic, and low-income eighth-grade math scores are up, as are reading scores for fourth-grade Hispanics.

Still, the state could be doing more. For example, Washington's abysmal academic standards rate a lowly D- from Fordham reviewers. A teacher or student looking to these standards for guidance in how to raise academic performance will be sorely dismayed. But teachers, parents, and students are also likely to be disappointed by the state's lack of focus in addressing its achievement gaps. Washington recently allocated just $28.5 million for remediation courses for tenth-grade students who fail to make the grade on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Although this is a supplemental fund, students do not have the option to choose how or where to use it. Furthermore, Washington obscures the full depths of its schools' achievement gaps, excluding the performance of more than a quarter of the state's African-American and Hispanic students when it determines whether schools make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

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"Your potential, our passion." Works for Microsoft, why not Washington schools?

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Nor are serious reformers impressed by Washington's effort to address student failure by reorganizing its bureaucracy. For example, the state education department is attacking foundering math scores by reorganizing the curriculum, instruction, and assessment teams into one cohesive unit called the Mathematics Initiative. Theoretically, instead of looking at math from a solely curricular or assessment perspective, teams work in concert, using their skills to fix the problem collaboratively. Big deal.

Paul Rosier, director of the Washington Association of School Administrators, thinks the state needs to take this a step further and narrow down the curriculum to two or three research-based instructional programs that the department can back with statewide professional development. "Trying to support sixty or so math programs isn't possible, and getting kids where they need to be is more important than who controls what," he says.

Washington is trying to increase the number of students taking Advanced Placement

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.60	D-	42	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	2	C	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.73%	D	26	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	26.74%	D	36	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C	12	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.00**	**D**	**37**	**50**

(AP) exams. According to the College Board's January 2006 report, Washington is one of the top three states in the proportion of students who succeed on AP exams. According to Kim Schmanke, communications director at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), "While we don't have 50 percent of our kids taking advanced placements exams—we are still in that infancy of low teens—we are increasing the number and diversity of students taking exams, and the success rate has not declined." However, the statewide AP numbers are not broken out by race or class, so it is impossible to know how many disadvantaged students are sharing in the success.

Rosier says districts are taking AP a step beyond testing, as they strive to enroll as many students as possible in AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, even to the extent of moving AP content into regular classrooms. Rosier points to the Bellevue school district as an exceptional example. There, the graduating class of 2005 saw 84 percent of its students complete at least one college-level course in high school, and almost 45 percent completed four or more. In turn, since 1996, the district has seen dropout rates decline to about 10 percent. Bellevue's superintendent, Mike Riley, likes to say that "AP begins in kindergarten." Too bad more districts do not follow Bellevue's lead—less than 1 percent of Washington schools give their students access to either an IB or Core Knowledge program.

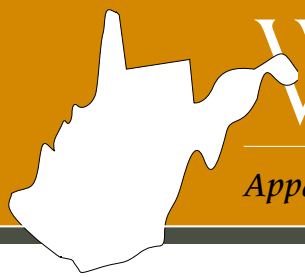
High-demand IB courses are not the only thing missing in Washington State schools—legislators have on three separate occasions over the past decade passed charter initiatives, only to have voter referendums overturn them. Jim Spady of the Washington Charter Schools Resource Center believes there is no prospect for passing a charter law anytime soon.

The state does offer open enrollment, a weak law that "strongly encourage[s] districts to honor the request of a parent for his or her child to attend a school in another district," according to the department of education website. And virtual schools are just now coming online. Hard to imagine that this technology has taken so long in the state that is home to the world's most successful software company.

Or maybe it is not hard to imagine. Though Washington's tech sector is innovative, the Washington Education Association is not. It killed the charter law, it fought tough-minded accountability, and it is not going to let virtual education replace "brick and mortar" teaching jobs anytime soon. Until Washington's politicans stand up to this particular powerhouse, the state's reform efforts will fail to live up to their full potential. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	4	41
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	2	40
8th Graders in **Science**	15	D	1	34
Black Graduation Rate	48	F	29	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	14	D	25	40
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	11	37
8th Graders in **Science**	8	F	27	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	53	D	18	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	23	C	2	50
8th Graders in **Math**	20	D	6	50
8th Graders in **Science**	18	D	14	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	13.2	C	18	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1994-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1994-2005*	↑	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *2000-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MODERATE PROGRESS**	•	•



West Virginia

Appalachian Blues

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

MINIMAL PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

For outdoorsmen and white water rafters, West Virginia's license plate slogan—Wild, Wonderful, West Virginia—sums up life in this mountainous state. But for children in the K–12 school system, the slogan is only half right. It's plenty wild, but hardly wonderful.

Despite mediocre African-American and low-income scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), the state has made "minimal progress" on this front in recent years. To their credit, education leaders don't deny these glum facts. Recent scores have "really hit us hard," says Liza Cordeiro, spokesperson for the West Virginia Department of Education.

Lots of ideas are floating around for improving scores, but the fact is that the state seems to be at a loss to explain why it's treading water in critical areas. With a high rate of poverty—more than 50 percent of the Mountain State's children qualify for subsidized school lunches—certain chronic challenges do exist. So, too, does the tendency to blame those challenges for low test scores.

"No matter how high quality our policies [are]," says State Senate Education Committee Chair Bob Plymale, "our educational progress would be held back to a significant degree due to the state's overall low socioeconomic status."

Overcoming this "soft bigotry of low expectations" is primarily the job of the state's teachers. Putting talented teachers in classrooms is never a bad idea, but it isn't easy in so sparsely populated a place. That's why West Virginia is investing heavily in telecommunications and distance learning.

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"No matter how high quality our policies [are]," says State Senate Education Committee Chair Bob Plymale, "our educational progress would be held back to a significant degree due to the state's overall low socioeconomic status."

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Counties across the state are purchasing videoconferencing equipment so teachers can receive ongoing training, refresher courses, and mentoring from subject experts at Marshall University in Huntington.

"It all comes down to professional development," says Hazel Palmer, president and CEO of the Educational Alliance, a nonprofit organization committed to "systemic change" in public education. Her group is pushing the state to improve teacher training programs. And the legislature sometimes listens. Last year, it opened the door for talented professionals from other fields to enter the classroom through alternative routes. The revamped system makes it easier for anyone considering teaching as a second career to make the leap, according to Cordeiro.

One reason the state is so confident that improving teachers is the key to raising achievement is recent experiences with math education. Eighth-grade NAEP math scores are the only ones that are up, and Plymale attributes that gain to legislative initiatives over the past five years that allowed teachers to gain more expertise in the material. (Of course, West Virginia's gains in math are a part of a larger nationwide trend.)

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	1.80	C-	14	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	0	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.25%	F	42	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	60.34%	F	45	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	D-	40	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	0.00%	F	41	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	2	C	8	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.64**	**D-**	**44**	**50**

The focus on teachers doesn't mean, however, that the state isn't looking for ways to motivate students, too. According to Cordeiro, bringing rigor to the classroom is essential to turning around student performance. To this end, the state has joined the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in a bid to make sure that all students master not just traditional subjects, but also such areas as entrepreneurialism, communication arts, and technology.

But before the state sinks too much money into such ventures, it should first consider getting its academic standards right. Though not the worst in the nation, West Virginia's average grade of C- suggests there's lots of work to be done in this area. If these documents aren't right, then the odds of getting accountability and testing right are much worse.

Some education reforms have proven to be nonstarters so far in West Virginia. Permitting families to choose their schools, for instance, is "a problem because it's a rural, mountainous state" where switching schools isn't often practical, says Stan Maynard, executive director of Marshall University's Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development. Charter schools haven't taken root partly because lawmakers believe a better use of state funds is to focus on teacher training. Hence, West Virginia is one of just 10 states still without a charter school law.

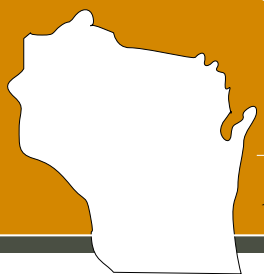
Today, West Virginia aims to prove again that professional training and more rigorous curricula will translate into higher student achievement, as officials claim it did with math scores. That approach has widespread buy-in from the state's education stakeholders, which certainly improves its chances of success. But even supporters of the overall strategy wonder whether it will be enough to produce winners among perennially disadvantaged children.

"We're putting these good training strategies into schools that are not effective, or that do not have teachers who are sharing responsibility in the decision-making process," Maynard says, "and my feeling is that until you get [all] of those things together at the same time, you'll not see any statewide, systemic rise in scores and achievement."

Unfortunately, Maynard is probably right. The state has a big mountain to climb before all its children are ready for life in 21st Century America. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	15	D	8	41
8th Graders in **Math**	6	F	27	40
8th Graders in **Science**	11	D	4	34
Black Graduation Rate	65	C	4	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Hispanic Graduation Rate	•	•	•	•
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	17	D	23	50
8th Graders in **Math**	10	D	36	50
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	20	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	5.8	D	45	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.00**	**D**	**15**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**MINIMAL PROGRESS**	•	•



WISCONSIN

A Tale of Two States

D STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D+ EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

NO PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Milwaukee is on the leading edge of school reform, but cheese heads outside this aging city on the banks of Lake Michigan could care less.

The reason is that Dairy State residents see Milwaukee as an anomaly. "Most people in the state, outside of Milwaukee, think their schools are doing pretty good," said Philip J. McDade, a former newspaper reporter who is now a school board member in Monona Grove, a suburb of Madison, the state capital. They point to their average ACT scores, among the best in the nation, and claim that things are fine.

"The worst inhibitor of reform is doing pretty good," said McDade, who is also the author of *A Tale of Two Wisconsins*, a 2006 study of the state's achievement gap, written for the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute.

That gap is more like a chasm. Achievement scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for African-American and low-income students are deplorable, with percentages in the single digits to 20 for those students reaching proficiency or better—percentages akin to those of states in the Deep South.

The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* examined 2005 NAEP scores and found that the gaps between white and African-American students in fourth-grade math and eighth-grade reading are the biggest of any state in the nation; the state's gap for eighth-grade math ties for second worst; the gap for fourth-grade reading ties for fifth worst; and the combined gap for all four scores puts Wisconsin in a tie with Minnesota for the worst achievement gap in the country.

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Reform requires either a strong leader or a crisis point.

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"It's tragic," says Howard Fuller, president of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Milwaukee's Marquette University. He is also a former superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, where nearly 60 percent of the city's 92,400 students are African-American and 20 percent are Hispanic. The achievement gap, he observes, has continued "for a long time, and we all have to ask ourselves why."

Fuller is doing more than asking questions. He founded the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and is a big reason that Milwaukee has forty-five charters and more than 15,000 children attending 125 private schools with state-funded vouchers. (Some 5,600 attend Milwaukee's Catholic schools with voucher assistance.) Started in 1990, it is the oldest and largest voucher program in the country.

This money for charters and vouchers, critics maintain, is money that could be going to traditional public schools, which still educate the majority of Milwaukee's minority and low-income students.

Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle, a Democrat, reluctantly signed a bill in March 2006 that raised the cap on Milwaukee voucher users from 15,000 to 22,500 for the 2006–2007 school year. The bill also established new accountability measures for the private schools in the program, requiring them to give more standardized tests and to obtain independent accreditation.

"While we have to continue working with those kids [in Milwaukee], we also have to find ways in which the larger system will change significantly; and we have not come up with that," says Fuller.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	0.60	D-	42	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	0.67%	D	28	50
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	60.34%	F	45	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	C-	26	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	3.96%	B	7	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	-0.295	D	14	18
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	3	B	2	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**1.25**	**D+**	**30**	**50**

Leaders at the state level do not appear to have any answers either. "We know that poverty levels are increasing among our students and are especially high for children of color," said State Schools Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster in a written statement. "The achievement gap is very apparent, and closing the gap requires diligent effort."

Such effort is missing in action; perhaps Burmaster and her fellow state leaders fear the wrath of the Wisconsin Education Association Council if they try to rock the boat. The state rates a D+ for school reform overall, despite the high-flying programs in Milwaukee. Says Fuller, "I sit here day after day and look at these kids and the only thing I can conclude, based on what's happening to them, is that this is not seen as a major enough problem in Wisconsin."

There are a few pockets of change outside Milwaukee. In Madison, for example, the local school district has made more progress than any other urban area in the country in shrinking its racial achievement gap, according to a study by two University of Wisconsin education experts. What is particularly laudable is this was done while the performance levels of all groups rose over the past decade. A key component has been an army of about 1,000 trained volunteer tutors working with 2,000 struggling Madison students on reading and math in grades K–8.

Meanwhile, state policymakers in Madison fiddle; partisan gridlock reins supreme. The state's decade-old academic standards are among the worst in the nation. And Wisconsin has set a very low bar for what it means to be proficient in reading and math under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In fact, according to a report by the Washington-based think tank Education Sector, Wisconsin has abused NCLB loopholes more than any other state.

Among other actions, reported Education Sector, Wisconsin has played games with its definition of "adequate yearly progress" under the law. As a result, more than 60 percent of African-American and Hispanic students were excluded from AYP determinations, giving schools little incentive to focus on their achievement.

Tony Evers, deputy state superintendent of schools, points out that everything Wisconsin has done has been approved by federal officials. "Obviously, we've never said we're an educational utopia," Evers said in a statement. "What we have said is most of our students do well. But we've also said in the same breath, every time we say that, that there is an undeniable and unacceptable achievement gap that we have to focus all our energy and resources toward closing."

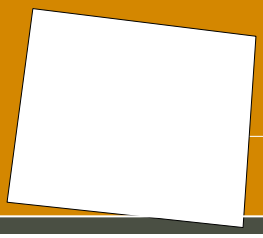
Nice sentiments, but the state's students are not helped by the gimmickry. Nor are they aided by the state's slow pace of change. "It's my experience, based on being a lone member of a school board for three years, that education changes glacially," says McDade. "It's an institution very resistant to change. I've found that most parents care about education but they'd rather have their kids educated the way they were, which won't work anymore."

As McDade and others know, at some point reformers, to be truly effective, must come in from the cold. "Whether it's charter schools or vouchers or whatever it might be," he says, "reform has to be internally driven by a strong leader, or there has to be a crisis point."

Wisconsin has both a strong leader (Fuller) and a crisis point (the achievement gap). The question may well be this: Can either get the state's residents to care? TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	10	D	29	41
8th Graders in **Math**	5	F	31	40
8th Graders in **Science**	6	F	18	34
Black Graduation Rate	44	F	35	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	20	D	11	40
8th Graders in **Math**	16	D	6	37
8th Graders in **Science**	13	D	12	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	49	F	24	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	16	D	30	50
8th Graders in **Math**	15	D	21	50
8th Graders in **Science**	18	D	14	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	14.5	B	13	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**0.83**	**D**	**29**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	=	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *19962005*	=	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**NO PROGRESS**	•	•



WYOMING

Waiting for Someone to Buck the System

D+ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRADE

D- EDUCATION REFORM GRADE

LIMITED PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS

Wyoming's frontier spirit is apparent in the state's hands-off approach to education. But while local control in education enjoys a long history here, it is time to ask whether this approach is producing good enough results for Wyoming's children.

Yes, the state looks pretty good in comparison to others, with its high average test scores. But dig below the surface and you quickly realize that this seemingly strong performance is mostly a matter of demographics: Wyoming is among the least diverse states in the country, and its tiny population of minority students is not faring well at all. The percentage of Hispanic students reaching proficiency or above in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) does not exceed the teens. And scores for Hispanic students have been mostly flatline through the years.

One explanation for Wyoming's lagging achievement might be the state's low academic standards—among the nation's worst. Cheryl Schroeder, assessment director at the Wyoming Department of Education, argues the reason is that legislation does not allow a state curriculum. Instead, Wyoming outlines standards that districts may meet in any way they see fit. Schroeder says the standards must be flexible in order to accommodate different instructional methods.

Flexible as the standards may be, they are not very useful to students or teachers. The state is in the process of strengthening its standards by developing assessments and rubrics for each of its nine content areas. How much better they will be than the current standards remains to be seen.

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Wyoming doesn't open its doors to different types of schools—charters or otherwise.

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Absent detailed standards, Wyoming's test has become the de facto standard. And here the state deserves kudos for setting the bar high. Its definition of proficiency in reading and math is among the most rigorous in the country, akin to NAEP's tough proficiency level.

But the state is not stopping there. It has just implemented the new online Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) test, first administered in April 2006. Scores are registered without delay so that teachers can determine immediately each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Teacher quality is another key issue for Wyoming. Hiring and retaining able professionals in this thinly populated state has never been easy, and to the state's credit, it is not standing idly by. Unfortunately, actions taken to date are not likely to improve schools' ability to recruit and keep good teachers. The state has raised its overall pay scales in order to attract teachers; but Wyoming retains its lockstep pay system, whereby great physics and math teachers make the same base salary as mediocre physical education and history teachers. The higher salaries have led to more applications for positions—but without a merit pay plan, it remains to be seen if the state can retain the best educators.

To its credit, the state is not averse to opening its doors to alternatively certified teachers who come to the classroom from other professions. An individual with a Bachelor's degree can receive a permit and work in a Wyoming school district for up to three years.

EDUCATION REFORM	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
CURRICULAR CONTENT				
1. Quality of **State Standards** (GPA across 5 subjects)	•	F	49	49
2. Number of **subjects** tested on high school exit **exam**	•	F	•	50
3. % Schools that are **Core Knowledge** or **IB**	1.13%	C	•	•
STANDARDS-BASED REFORM				
4. % Black & Hispanic Students **Excluded from AYP** Determinations	55.01%	F	44	48
5. Rigor of State's Definition of **Proficiency** in Reading & Math	•	A	1	46
6. Alignment of high school exit standards to college/work expectations	•	F	•	49
SCHOOL CHOICE				
7. Percentage public school students in **Charter Schools**	2.14%	F	37	50
8. **Funding Discrepancy** between **Charter** and Public schools	•	•	•	•
9. Elements of **School Choice** (Vouchers, Tax credits, etc.)	1	D	24	50
EDUCATION REFORM	**0.55**	**D-**	**47**	**50**

After that time, the teacher must either complete an approved college-level program, or provide a portfolio demonstrating his or her competency to continue in the classroom.

Wyoming may open its doors to alternatively certified teachers, but it does not welcome different types of schools—charters or otherwise. Though a charter school law has been on the books since 1995, it has a burdensome appeals process for charters rejected by the district and gives those that do win charters little freedom from state laws and policies. Not surprisingly, there are only three charter schools in the entire state. On the plus side: this year, the legislature passed a law meant to ensure that charter schools receive fair funding.

Wyoming education leaders do not feel they need charters because the state has open enrollment, which allows students to attend any public school they desire, with 100 percent of their funding following them to their new school. But in a state where the distances from one town to the next can be daunting, few take advantage of the option.

To help rural schools achieve choice, Wyoming has developed the Wyoming Equality Network System. According to Schroeder, this is "a robust, legislatively funded, synchronous video conferencing system that offers coursework to students."

A task force on distance learning was developed in the spring of 2006 to look at web-based learning possibilities within the state, but only one district, via a charter school, is actively using online coursework.

Wyoming is not afraid to try new approaches, as evidenced by its embracing several new initiatives. But these lack the Wild West flair that one expects from strong-willed, independent people. Where are the tough, rigorous standards? Where are meaningful choices for parents, break-the-mold charter schools, or virtual education that truly transforms learning in rural communities? The state could use a few educational mavericks, for its education system needs bucking. TBF

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	DATA	GRADE	RANK	OUT OF
Black *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Math**	•	•	•	•
8th Graders in **Science**	•	•	•	•
Black Graduation Rate	67	C	1	42
Hispanic *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	16	D	22	40
8th Graders in **Math**	11	D	22	37
8th Graders in **Science**	21	C	4	32
Hispanic Graduation Rate	55	D	12	36
Low-Income *(% of students at proficient)*				
4th Graders in **Reading**	27	C	1	50
8th Graders in **Math**	17	D	14	50
8th Graders in **Science**	22	C	8	44
% **High School Students Passing** at least one AP Exam	5.8	D	45	50
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	**1.44**	**D+**	**2**	**44**

ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	TRENDS	# OF STATES WITH GAINS	# OF STATES WITH SUFFICIENT DATA
Black *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	n/a	7	39
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	n/a	20	32
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	n/a	2	29
Hispanic *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005*	=	9	26
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005*	=	10	21
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	1	19
Low-Income *(Progress of students)*			
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005*	↑	6	50
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005*	↑	24	50
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005*	=	6	41
ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS	**LIMITED PROGRESS**	•	•

Appendix
Detailed Source Information

I. Student Achievement Indicators

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Black *(percentage of students at or above "proficient")*	
4th graders in **Reading**	NAEP Reading 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th graders in **Math**	NAEP Math 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th graders in **Science**	NAEP Science 2005 NCES Data Explorer
Hispanic *(percentage of students at or above "proficient")*	
4th graders in **Reading**	NAEP Reading 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th graders in **Math**	NAEP Math 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th graders in **Science**	NAEP Science 2005 NCES Data Explorer
Low-Income *(percentage of students at or above "proficient")*	
4th graders in **Reading**	NAEP Reading 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th graders in **Math**	NAEP Math 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th graders in **Science**	NAEP Science 2005 NCES Data Explorer
Black Graduation Rate	"Swanson Method," Education Week's *Diploma Counts* (2006)
Hispanic Graduation Rate	"Swanson Method," Education Week's *Diploma Counts* (2006)
Percentage of state's high school students who have taken and passed (at a 3 or above) at least one A.P. exam by the 2004-2005 school year.	College Board *AP Report to the Nation 2006*

II: Grading Scales for Student Achievement Indicators

GRADE	PERCENT AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT (NAEP INDICATORS)	PERCENT OF STUDENTS PASSING AT LEAST 1 AP *(AP Indicator)*	% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATING ON TIME *(Graduation Indicators)*
A	>50	>20	85-100
B	33-50	15-19	70-84
C	21-32	10-14	60-69
D	10-20	5-9	50-59
F	<10	<5	<50

III: Equating "Grade Point Averages" to Grades*

GRADE	GRADE POINT AVERAGE
A	3.83 – 4.00
A-	3.50 – 3.82
B+	3.16 – 3.49
B	2.83 – 3.15
B-	2.50 – 2.82
C+	2.16 – 2.49
C	1.83 – 2.15
C-	1.50 – 1.82
D+	1.16 – 1.49
D	0.83 – 1.15
D-	0.50 – 0.82
F	< .50

**For each indicator, states were awarded 4.0 for an A, 3.0 for a B, etc.*

IV. Achievement Trends Indicators

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Black Students *(statistically significant change at or above "proficient")*	
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005**	NAEP Reading 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005**	NAEP Math 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005**	NAEP Science 2005 NCES Data Explorer
Hispanic Students *(statistically significant change at or above "proficient")*	
4th Graders in **Reading** *1992-2005**	NAEP Reading 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th Graders in **Math** *1992-2005**	NAEP Math 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005**	NAEP Science 2005 NCES Data Explorer
Low-Income Students *(statistically significant change at or above "proficient")*	
4th Graders in **Reading** *1998-2005**	NAEP Reading 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th Graders in **Math** *1996-2005**	NAEP Math 2005 NCES Data Explorer
8th Graders in **Science** *1996-2005**	NAEP Science 2005 NCES Data Explorer

** Some states did not participate in NAEP until later. Their start date corresponds with that later year.*

V. Education Reform

A. Curricular Content

INDICATOR	SOURCE
State **grades** on Fordham reviews of **state standards** ("grade point average" across English, math, science, U.S. history and world history)	Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, *The State of State Standards 2006* URL: www.edexcellence.net
Number of **academic subjects** (among English/language arts, mathematics, science, and history) include in the state's high school **graduation exam** (via Education Counts)	Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, *Education Counts, School year: 2004-2005*. URL: http://www.edweek.org/rc/edcounts/
Percentage of a state's schools that are Core Knowledge* **or** International Baccalaureate. **Includes official Core Knowledge schools, visitation sites (sister schools), and those using a modified version of Core Knowledge curriculum.*	*Core Knowledge Schools List, 2005-06* URL: http://www.coreknowledge.org/CK/schools/schools_list.htm#Intr *IB Schools List, 2005-06* URL: http://www.ibo.org/school/search/index.cfm?programmes=DIPLOMA&country=US&region=&find_schools=Find *Public School Review:* Profiles: USA Public K-12 Schools URL: http://www.publicschoolreview.com/

B. Standards-Based Reform

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Percentage of poor and minority students excluded from states' "**Adequate Yearly Progress**" determinations for the 2004-2005 school year.	Associated Press, Frank Bass, 2006
Rigor of the state's **definition of "proficiency"** in reading and math, based on comparison of student results on state assessments and NAEP	*Education Next, 2006 No. 3*, "Keeping an Eye on State Standards," by Paul Peterson and Frederick M. Hess. URL: http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/3211601.html
The state's progress in **aligning high school graduation requirements** with entrance requirements for higher education and the workforce.	Achieve, *Closing the Expectations Gap*, February 2006 URL: http://www.achieve.org/node/546

C. School Choice

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Percent of public school students enrolled in **charter schools**	National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2005-2006. Center for Education Reform, Number of Charter Schools and Students: 2005-2006 School Year. URL: http://www.edreform.com/_upload/CER_charter_numbers.pdf
Percentage gap between **per-pupil funding** of **charter schools** and district schools, 2002-2003	*Charter School Funding: Inequity's Next Frontier,* Thomas B. Fordham Institute, August 2005 Aspire Consulting, New Jersey District and Revenue Analysis, published by the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools, February 2006 Aspire Consulting, Delaware District and Revenue Analysis, published by the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools, January 2006
Number of these **choice options** in place: publicly funded scholarships for private school attendance (i.e., vouchers); tax credits or deductions; inter-district public school choice; and dual high school/college enrollment (via the Heritage Foundation, 2005).	Krista Kafer, *Choices in Education: 2005 Progress Report*, Heritage Foundation 2005. URL: http://www.heartland.org/pdf/17245.pdf