



# Course, Counselor, and Teacher Gaps: *Addressing the College Readiness Challenge in High-Poverty High Schools*



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College degree attainment is widely seen as a key step to reduce poverty and move low-income families and individuals into the middle class. Unfortunately, a college education is more difficult to access for students who grow up in poverty, and far too many low-income students do not attend or complete college. An important question for policymakers and advocates to consider is: what holds low-income students back?

This paper presents a new analysis of education data on high schools in the 100 largest school districts that highlights the role of inadequate K-12 preparation as a barrier to postsecondary success for students who live in poverty. In particular, the analysis highlights stark differences in the quality of college preparation that high school students receive based on their schools' concentration of poverty. The paper compares characteristics of high-poverty high schools (more than 75 percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch) to mid-high poverty (50-75 percent eligible), mid-low poverty (25-50 percent eligible), and low-poverty high schools (fewer than 25 percent of students eligible). Key findings include:

- **Less-experienced and less-qualified teachers.** Roughly 1 in 7 teachers in high-poverty high schools are in their first or second year, compared to fewer than 1 in 10 in low-poverty high schools. In high-poverty high schools, 11.5 percent of teachers are not certified, compared to 3.5 percent in low-poverty high schools.
- **College prep courses less likely to be offered.** Algebra II is offered in 84 percent of high-poverty high schools, compared to 94 percent of low-poverty schools. Calculus is offered in 41 percent of high-poverty schools, compared to 86 percent of low-poverty schools. And physics is offered in 69 percent of high-poverty schools, compared to 90 percent in low-poverty schools.
- **More schools without counselors.** Students in high-poverty high schools have the strongest need for counselors because their families and community networks are less familiar with higher education opportunities. Yet more than 3 percent of students in high-poverty schools attend a high school with no counselor, compared to 1-2 percent of students in low-poverty and low-mid poverty schools. Among schools with counselors, the counselor to student ratio is slightly better in high-poverty schools (1 counselor per 297 students) than in low-poverty high schools (1 counselor per 353 students). However, both ratios are far higher than recommended.

As these data show, improving postsecondary enrollment and completion requires that we address resource disparities between affluent high schools and those in communities of concentrated poverty. Only then can we provide *all* students an equitable, high-quality education that prepares them for college and career success.

## What are high-poverty schools, and why do they matter?

High-poverty schools are those with large concentrations of poor and low-income students. The poverty level in a school is generally based on eligibility data from the National School Lunch Program, which provides students free or reduced-cost meals. Under this program, students with a family income of less than 130 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible for free breakfast and lunch; students whose family income falls below 185 percent are eligible for reduced-price breakfast and lunch<sup>i</sup>. This data is used to identify schools eligible for certain programs or resources, such as Title I resources under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as well as competitive grant programs targeting high-poverty schools or communities.

In this analysis, we have broken down schools into four categories:

Low-poverty schools: 0 to 25.0 percent of students in poverty

Mid-low poverty schools: 25.1 to 50.0 percent of students in poverty

Mid-high poverty schools: 50.1 to 75.0 percent of students in poverty

High-poverty schools: 75.1 percent or greater of students in poverty

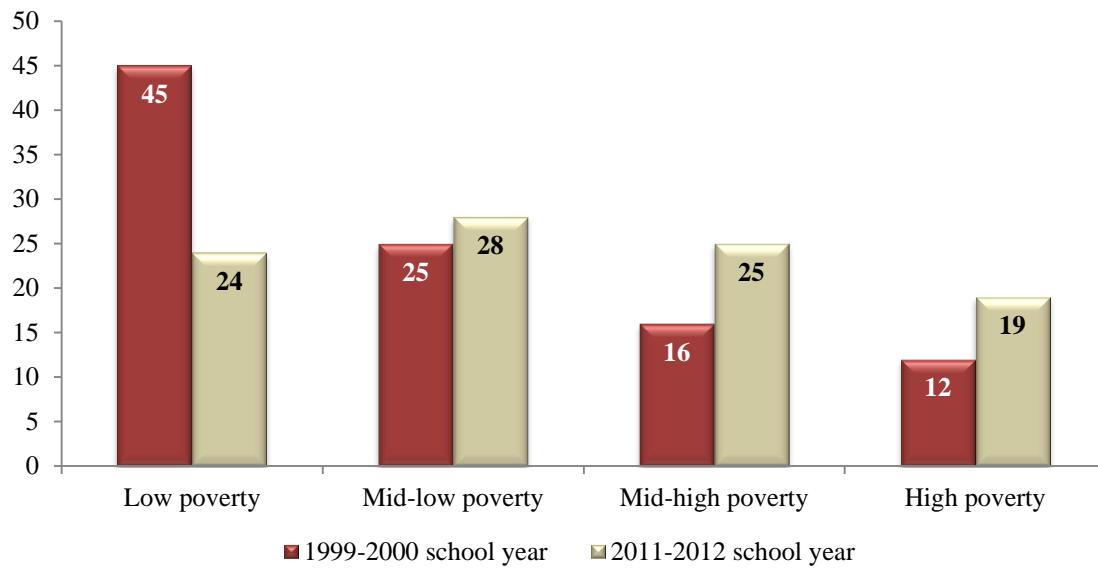
High-poverty schools struggle with lack of funding, crumbling infrastructure, community safety hazards, and teacher shortages. This severely affects their ability to provide high-quality education. Without effective K-12 education, students will flounder in postsecondary settings. While some high-poverty schools defy the odds by providing an education that prepares students for college, this is not the norm. In most cases, students who attend high-poverty schools are less likely to enroll in college. Of those who do matriculate into college, many find themselves in need of remedial courses that are costly and time-consuming. The disparity in college completion between low-income and higher-income students can be attributed, in part, to poor preparation in high-poverty K-12 schools.

### One in five public school students attends a high-poverty school—a 7.5 percent increase since 1999

Over the last two decades, there has been a large shift in the economic composition of schools in the United States. Currently, 51 percent of public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.<sup>ii</sup> As the number of poor children has increased, the number of students who attend schools of concentrated poverty has also risen (see Figure 1). As of 2011-2012, 9.3 million students (almost 1 in 5) attend a school where 75 percent or more of students are low income. Forty-four percent of students (21.7 million) attend a school where at least half of students are low income, up from 28 percent in 1999-2000. The majority of students in schools of concentrated poverty are in elementary school. Still, a sizeable number of high school students are impacted.

According to the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES), 1.5 million secondary school<sup>iii</sup> students attend high-poverty schools, while 5.1 million attend mid-high and high-poverty schools (see Table 1). Our sample of the 100 largest school districts includes high schools only (schools teaching 9th-12th grade) and represents a population of 2.8 million students, of which 1.4 million attend mid-high and high-poverty schools.<sup>iv</sup>

**Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Public School Students, by school poverty level (2011-12)**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, [www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_clb.pdf](http://www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_clb.pdf), 2012.

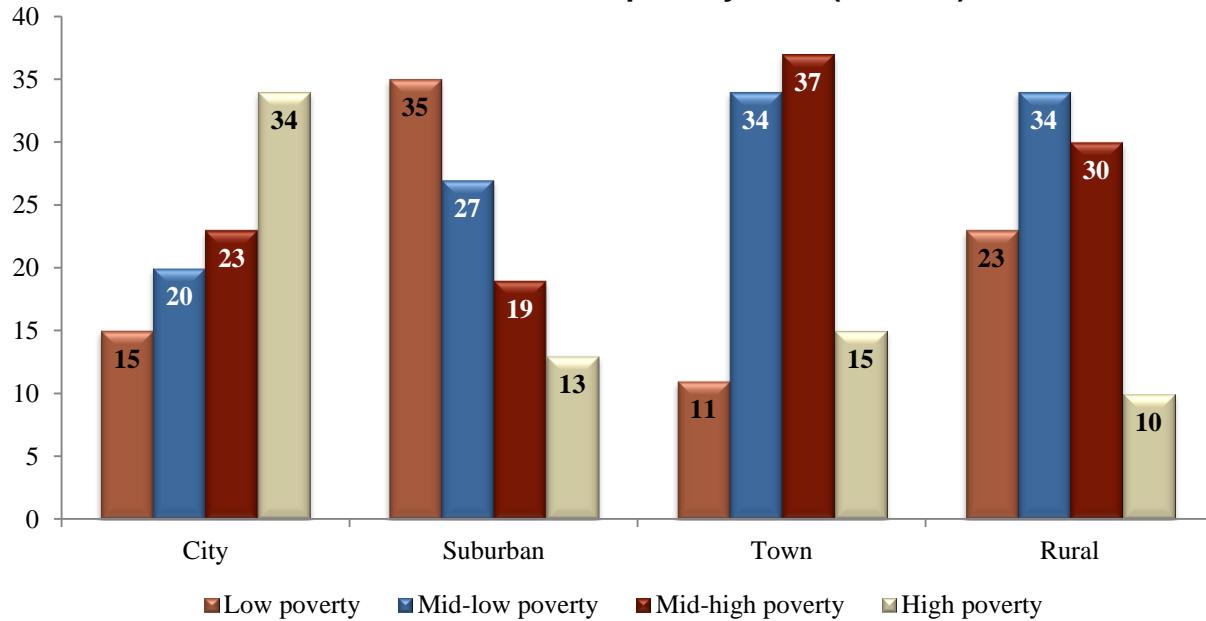
## High-Poverty schools largely serve students of color

Consistent with data on the locations of persistent and concentrated poverty, high-poverty schools are most likely to be located in cities, followed by towns (see Figure 2). Although suburban poverty is showing some increase, students in the suburbs are still far less likely to attend schools of concentrated poverty than those in urban or rural areas.

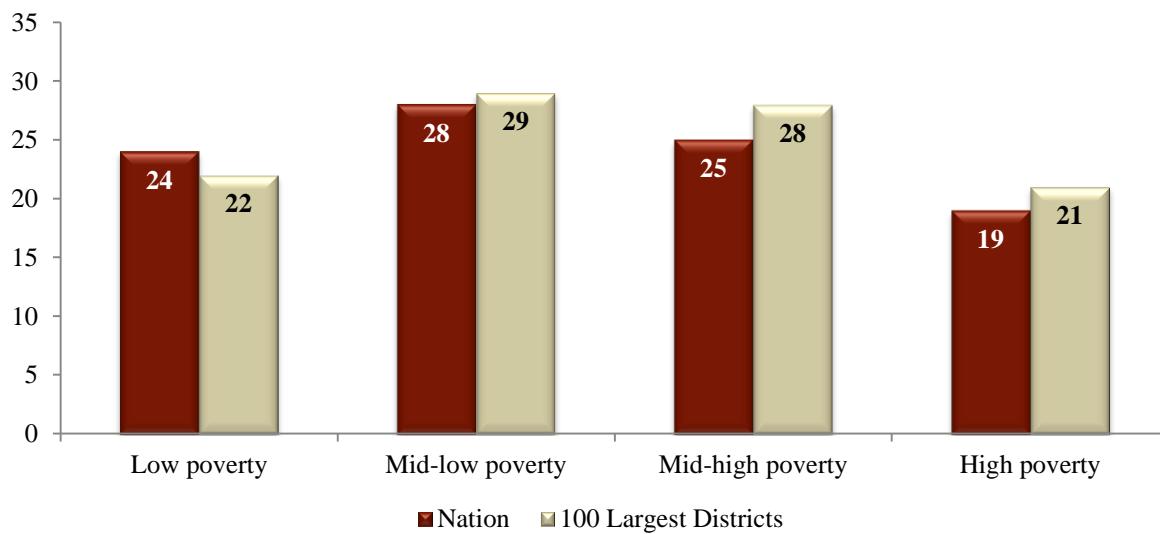
Students in these high-poverty schools are overwhelmingly students of color. Although many White children are poor (about 5.1 million nationwide), White children are far less likely to attend schools of concentrated poverty. In fact, White students are the least likely of all racial/ethnic groups to attend a high-poverty school. Black students are over six times more likely than Whites to attend a high-poverty school, while Hispanic and

Native American students are almost five times more likely. Asian and Pacific Islander students are twice and three times more likely, respectively, than Whites to attend a high-poverty school (see Appendix).

**Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Public School Students, by school locale and school poverty level (2011-12)**



**Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Public School Students, by school poverty level: Nation & 100 Largest Districts (2011-12)**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch," [www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_clb.pdf](http://www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_clb.pdf), 2012.

## Where high-poverty high schools fall short

Students need high-quality instruction and rigorous curricula to develop the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and secure good jobs. They also need support to navigate their transition from high school into college or training. As the data below demonstrate, high-poverty high schools are less equipped to prepare students.

### Defining college readiness

College readiness is the combination of core academic knowledge, skills, and habits that youth need to be successful in a postsecondary setting without remedial coursework or training.<sup>v</sup> College and career readiness is not solely determined by the courses one takes; students must also understand college culture, have strong study habits, and know how to access supports.<sup>vi</sup> The four elements of college readiness are cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness.<sup>vii</sup> **Cognitive strategies** are ways of thinking and processing information that are necessary for college-level work, such as intellectual openness, analytical skills, construction of well-reasoned arguments, and developing problem-solving strategies.<sup>viii</sup>

**Content knowledge** is the core knowledge in all subject areas that serves as the foundation for future learning. Mastery of basic concepts in English, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, and the arts provides students the context and basis for processing more rigorous material.<sup>ix</sup> **Academic behaviors** are those behaviors that reflect student self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-control.<sup>x</sup> **Contextual skills and awareness** refers to the specific understanding of how college operates as a system, the college culture, and expectations for interactions with professors and peers.<sup>xi</sup>

### Data Analysis on the 100 Largest School Districts

This paper analyzes the experiences of high school students enrolled in high schools in the nation's 100 largest school districts during the 2011-2012 school year. In the 100 largest school districts, there are 2,275 comprehensive high schools serving approximately 3 million students. This represents 20 percent of the total high school population in public schools nationwide. We have chosen to look at individual school-level data instead of district-level data because the aggregated data, particularly in larger school districts, masks some of the problems in high-poverty high schools. Only at the school level can we appreciate the magnitude of college preparation disparities both within and across districts. The 100 largest school districts are spread fairly widely across the nation, with 29 states having at least one of these districts. These districts are generally urban or represent large metropolitan areas. As such, students of color are overrepresented compared to the national student population (see Table 1). The distribution of students in schools of varying poverty levels in the sample is fairly consistent with percentages nationally (see Figure 3).

## Teachers

Teacher quality is the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement.<sup>xii</sup> There is overwhelming evidence that high-quality schools with strong teachers who understand the dynamics of poverty can overcome obstacles and help students achieve.<sup>xiii</sup> To properly prepare for college, students need teachers who foster positive relationships, provide high-level instruction in challenging courses, and have high expectations for their achievement.<sup>xiv</sup> To accomplish this, teachers must be equipped with knowledge of their subject matter, strong classroom management skills, an understanding of youth development, an understanding of the social and cultural realities of their students and the communities in which they live, and a clear belief that all students can and will learn.<sup>xv</sup>

It is very challenging for high-poverty schools to recruit and retain well-qualified, experienced teachers. High percentages of novice teachers limit opportunities for mentorship and growth. New teachers are still developing their classroom management skills and their ability to foster higher-order thinking among students. The high turnover rate in high-poverty schools robs students of stable adult relationships from year to year. Because the work environment in schools serving large numbers of low-income children is very challenging, it is difficult to attract and keep the most experienced, well-equipped teachers. Looming teacher accountability consequences lead many educators to seek more successful schools for employment.<sup>xvi</sup> In many states and districts, accountability policies and incentive programs exacerbate the problem of attracting and keeping strong teachers in low-income schools that have been deemed low performing.

In addition to expertise and experience, the relationships teachers forge with students are critical to success, particularly for students in poverty. Caring adults who are invested in the success of young people have tremendous influence on their life outcomes. Citing lack of training in dealing with low-income students, many teachers are overwhelmed by the non-academic factors that hinder students' achievement. Given that students of color are more likely to live in concentrated poverty, the populations of the highest-poverty schools are often poor and ethnic minorities. Research on African American and Hispanic students has found that teachers' belief (or lack thereof) in students' potential impacts teaching quality as well as student achievement.<sup>xvii</sup> This is further complicated by students' economic circumstances. It is very important to identify and address teachers' misperceptions and stereotypes; they must learn to see the assets and abilities of *all* students, regardless of race or socioeconomic status.

In the 100 largest school districts nationally, there are large gaps in teacher certification and teacher experience. Across all poverty-level schools, more than 88 percent are certified; however, there are stark differences between low-poverty schools, where just 3.5 percent are not certified, and high-poverty schools, where 11.5 percent are not certified (see Table 1). In addition, 15 percent of teachers in the highest-poverty high schools are

in their first or second year of teaching, compared to just 10 percent in the lowest-poverty high schools. As Table 2 shows, the higher a school's poverty level, the higher the percentage of novice teachers.

**Table 1: Teacher Certification in High Schools: 100 Largest Districts by School Poverty Level (2011-2012)**

	Number of Teachers	Number of Certified Teachers	Percent of Certified Teachers	Total Number of Students Served
All Schools (n=2155)	160,969	148,961	92.5%	2,807,904
Low-Poverty Schools (n=356)	33,027	31,883	96.5%	621,586
Mid-Low Poverty Schools	46,390	43,310	93.4%	826,204
Mid-High Poverty Schools	44,799	41,245	92.1%	778,648
High-Poverty Schools (n=710)	36,754	32,523	88.5%	581,466

Source: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

**Table 2: Teacher Experience Level in High Schools: 100 Largest Districts, by School Poverty Level (2011-2012)**

	Number of Teachers	Number of Novice Teachers (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	Percent of Novice Teachers	Total Number of Students Served
All Schools (n=2155)	160,969	20,252	13.6%	2,807,904
Low-Poverty Schools (n=356)	33,027	3,149	9.5%	621,586
Mid-Low Poverty Schools	46,390	5,334	11.5%	826,204
Mid-High Poverty Schools	44,799	6,423	14.3%	778,648
High-Poverty Schools (n=710)	36,754	5,346	14.5%	581,466

Source: CLASP analysis of U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

## Course Availability

Students who enroll in college are expected to arrive with a base level of content knowledge and higher-order thinking skills. These skills are developed during their K-12 years by successfully completing rigorous coursework taught by quality instructors. In particular, research shows strong correlations between mathematics, skill development, and college readiness.<sup>xviii</sup> The United States Department of Education defines a full complement of college readiness coursework as: Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, calculus, biology, chemistry, and physics.<sup>xix</sup> In this analysis, we have selected three subjects (Algebra II, calculus, and physics) to demonstrate the disparities in course offerings between schools of low and high poverty. Algebra I, geometry, and biology are at the earlier end of the college-readiness spectrum and are more likely to be offered and taken by low-income students and students of color. The largest gaps in course availability and enrollment occur in the higher-level courses.

Many high-poverty high schools do not offer the full range of courses, preventing students from acquiring the academic skills needed to matriculate and succeed in college. Analysis of over 2,100 high schools in the 100 largest school districts revealed large disparities between high-poverty and low-poverty high schools in course offerings (see Table 4). Only 6 percent of low-poverty high schools did not offer Algebra II to students, compared to 16 percent of high-poverty high schools. The gaps are even greater in higher-level mathematics and science courses. Fifteen percent of low-poverty high schools did not offer calculus as a part of the curriculum, while 59 percent of high-poverty schools failed to offer calculus. In physics, the numbers are 10 percent and 31 percent, respectively. Clearly, students attending schools of concentrated poverty are at a significant disadvantage; worse, they have no control over the situation.

**Table 3: Lack of College Preparatory Course Offerings: 100 Largest Districts (2011-12)**

Total number of High Schools = 2172	Number of High Schools Not Offering Course	Percent of High Schools Not Offering Course
Algebra II	185	9%
Calculus	747	35%
Physics	432	20%

Source: CLASP analysis of U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

**Table 4: Percent of Schools Not Offering College Preparatory Courses: 100 Largest Districts by Course and Poverty Status (2011-12)**

High Schools, by poverty level	Number of Schools	Percent not offering Algebra II	Percent not offering Calculus	Percent not offering Physics
<b>Low-Poverty High Schools</b>	331	5.7%	14.5%	10.3%
<b>Mid-Low Poverty High Schools</b>	533	4.7%	19.7%	10.5%
<b>Mid-High Poverty High Schools</b>	594	5.1%	29.3%	20.9%
<b>High-Poverty High Schools</b>	713	15.6%	58.9%	30.6%

Source: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

## Counselors

Guidance counselors are pivotal to the success of high school students. They assist students in cultivating their interests, as well as identifying academic strengths and areas for improvement. Further, guidance counselors help students explore and select postsecondary opportunities aligned with their interests and goals; this includes assessing their skills and readiness, as well as explaining their financial options. For low-income students, sufficient access to guidance counselors can be the difference between having a plan and being lost following high school graduation.<sup>xx</sup>

As with teachers, counselors must believe in students' potential in order to provide appropriate guidance. Any bias or negative perceptions regarding differences, such as financial status or race, will influence their work with students. To be effective, counselors must demonstrate sensitivity to the experiences, values, and norms of the students and families with whom they work. As advocates for the future success of their students, school counselors should work to address marginality, culture, and power relationships that currently limit the schools' effectiveness at supporting college preparedness.<sup>xxi</sup>

For youth who live in extreme or concentrated poverty, there is a high likelihood that their parents have had limited postsecondary training. They are also highly likely to live in communities with few industries and limited job opportunities. The idea of a career based on their interests may seem abstract to these students. Given parents' limited exposure to postsecondary options, school counselors must play a larger role in students' transition from high school to postsecondary training and careers. For example, while financially established

families may take their children on a regional tour of colleges over spring break, families who live in extreme poverty lack the financial resources to provide that experience. While some community youth services departments may offer these types of opportunities, they are limited in the number of students they serve and do not follow up to help with enrollment. School counselors are best suited for that role.

On average, the ratio of students to school counselors is almost double what it should be nationally. Given the many roles counselors play for students, the recommended ratio is 1 to 250;<sup>xxii</sup> however, the current average is 1 to 471.<sup>xxiii</sup> In the 100 largest school districts, the results on school counselors are mixed. Among high schools with counselors, the ratio of counselors to students is slightly better in higher-poverty schools than low-poverty schools (see Table 5). But this ratio is still far too high for counselors to effectively manage when large numbers of students live in poverty and need a high level of support. Additionally, the proportion of students without a high school counselor in the building is almost two times larger in the highest-poverty high schools than in the lowest-poverty schools (see Table 6). This is simply unacceptable given the supports needed for low-income students to successfully progress to postsecondary opportunities.

**Table 5: High School Counselor to Student Ratios: 100 Largest Districts by School Poverty Level (2011-2012)**

	Number of Counselors	Number of Students Served	Counselor: Student Ratio
<b>All Schools with Counselors (n=1989)</b>	8,096	2,719,428	1:336
<b>Low Poverty Schools (n=334)</b>	1,738	612,695	1:353
<b>Mid-Low Poverty Schools (n=471)</b>	2,209	784,061	1:355
<b>Mid-High Poverty Schools (n=540)</b>	2,293	772,423	1:337
<b>High Poverty Schools (n=644)</b>	1,856	550,249	1:297

Source: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

**Table 6: High Schools without Counselors: 100 Largest School Districts by School Poverty Level (2011-2012)**

	Total Number of students Served in Schools	Number of High Schools without Counselors	Percentage of High Schools without Counselors	Number of Students without Counselor Services	Percentage of Students Without Counselor Services
<b>All High Schools (n=2148)</b>	2,775,098	159	7.4%	54,229	2.0%
<b>Low Poverty High Schools (n=361)</b>	624,981	27	7.5%	10,845	1.7%
<b>Mid-Low Poverty High Schools (n=499)</b>	793,693	28	5.6%	9,632	1.2%
<b>Mid-High Poverty High Schools (n=585)</b>	788,633	45	7.7%	16,210	2.1%
<b>High Poverty High Schools (n=703)</b>	567,791	59	8.4%	17,542	3.1%

Source: CLASP Analysis of U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

## Action Steps

Education quality has a major impact on students' employment prospects, economic mobility, and other long-term outcomes following high school. In communities of concentrated poverty, access to a rigorous, high-quality K-12 education is essential for families to break the cycle of poverty. High-poverty schools can provide a higher-quality education by making specific, targeted improvements based on research in effective practice. However, it requires leadership, innovation, flexibility, and investment.

Below are key action steps for moving high-poverty schools in a more positive direction.

1. **Track access to the college preparation basics (skilled and experienced teachers, college prep courses, and counselors) on a school-by-school basis.** As this analysis illustrates, district-wide information is not sufficient to understand the experiences of young people in high-poverty schools. Advocates, parents, teachers, school district administrators, and education and youth policy stakeholders should track these basic access measures to determine whether young people who have the greatest needs are getting the most or, as this analysis indicates, *least* support. In addition to driving change in

district practices, this analysis can demonstrate to the broader public that external restraints, not personal choices, are limiting opportunities for the poorest young people.

2. **Improve access to rigorous coursework.** All along the K-12 pipeline, students need rich coursework. If the elementary and middle schools years are strengthened, high school students should be well equipped to master college preparatory courses, such as Algebra II, trigonometry, calculus, and physics. Schools should collaborate with higher education institutions in their state to understand entrance requirements and readiness skills and prepare all students accordingly. Many schools attempting to offer higher-level courses do not have enough students who are academically ready. To improve access to courses, schools and districts should consider promising, cost-effective innovations such as cross-school class offerings, dual enrollment, and teacher-supported online learning. These practices have long been used to accelerate learning for gifted students and, more recently, for re-engaging dropouts who want to complete high school. Over time, the goal should be to increase the number of students with capacity to succeed in higher-level courses, as well as encourage students to take the full complement of college preparatory courses to prepare for postsecondary education.
3. **Increase the number of school counselors in high-poverty schools.** All high-poverty high schools should have school counselors in the building. As districts make placement decisions, priority should be given to high-poverty high schools, where students are less likely to successfully navigate postsecondary options without school support. In addition, the caseloads of counselors in high-poverty schools must be small enough to allow time to effectively support students and parents.
4. **Improve the balance of experienced and new teachers in schools.** Many school, district, and teacher accountability policies and incentives have the unintended consequence of driving experienced, quality teachers out of high-poverty schools. States and districts should conduct an equity analysis of their accountability and incentive policies to ensure teachers are fairly distributed within and across districts. They should work collaboratively with mayors, city councils, county executives, and other systems or private entities to incentivize experienced, culturally competent teachers to work in high-poverty schools long term. Schools should solicit feedback from teachers on the supports they need to succeed and implement changes that reduce teacher turnover.
5. **Partner with institutions of higher education.** The transition from high school to college is difficult, especially for low-income and first-generation students. When developing and implementing K-12 reforms, it is important to partner with higher education institutions and community-based organizations to support persistence and completion. In particular, policies regarding remediation and its impact on student financial aid are critically important. Low-income students and first-generation students often need additional transition supports, including intentional and early outreach to families regarding

postsecondary options, college and career counseling, assistance with application processes, and early exposure to college campuses and postsecondary experiences.

6. **Reform financial formulas for school funding.** Schools should be financed in a manner that is equitable—though not necessarily equal—in order to provide high-quality education to every public school student. Recognizing that poor students come to school with greater needs than their affluent peers, it is important that higher-poverty schools have the resources necessary to support them. There are several examples of legal proceedings, state actions, and consent decrees that have documented educational disparities and used this research to drive school finance reform.<sup>xxiv</sup> States should increase investment, and wisely use these added resources, to close opportunity gaps and advance learning for low-income students.

## Conclusion

Disparities in education for students in high-poverty schools cannot continue. The U.S. must provide each child with a quality education that prepares them for college and careers. If we fail to do so, students and families will remain trapped in poverty, low-income communities will suffer, and the nation’s economy will be placed at severe risk.

There are many practical opportunities at the federal, state, and district levels to address this problem with systemic, sustainable policies. In today’s education reform climate, where the push is for high achievement and greater accountability, equity is more important than ever; we cannot hold all students to the same standards without also ensuring that every school provides the same quality of education. Similarly, teachers and principals cannot be held to a common standard without the resources necessary to meet their students’ needs at scale.

## Appendix

**Table A: Number and percentage distribution of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by school level, locale, and student race/ethnicity: 2011-12**

School level, locale, and student race/ethnicity	Number of students, by percent of students in school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch						Percentage distribution of students, by students in school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch					
	Total	0 to 25.0 percent	25.1 to 50.0 percent	50.1 to 75.0 percent	More than 75 percent	Missing/school does not participate	Total	0 to 25.0 percent	25.1 to 50.0 percent	50.1 to 75.0 percent	More than 75.0 percent	Missing/school does not participate
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,246,537</b>	<b>11,678,363</b>	<b>13,614,098</b>	<b>12,413,272</b>	<b>9,285,370</b>	<b>2,255,434</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<b>White</b>	25,464,162	7,804,648	8,968,907	6,317,536	1,695,747	677,324	100	30.6	35.2	24.8	6.7	2.7
<b>Black</b>	7,782,146	631,431	1,388,051	2,288,573	3,305,274	168,817	100	8.1	17.8	29.4	42.5	2.2
<b>Hispanic</b>	11,693,788	2,002,762	2,162,969	2,848,955	3,607,385	1,071,717	100	17.1	18.5	24.4	30.8	9.2
<b>Asian</b>	2,321,362	856,207	544,076	390,183	280,542	250,354	100	36.9	23.4	16.8	12.1	10.8
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	541,986	57,022	119,280	172,209	175,497	17,978	100	10.5	22	31.8	32.4	3.3
<b>Two or more races</b>	1,265,222	298,854	382,251	338,813	187,583	57,721	100	23.6	30.2	26.8	14.8	4.6
<b>School Level</b>												
<b>Elementary</b>	31,717,202	6,660,632	7,852,571	8,276,587	7,362,003	1,565,409	100	21	24.8	26.1	23.2	4.9
<b>White</b>	15,970,296	4,512,750	5,158,147	4,435,042	1,396,393	467,964	100	28.3	32.3	27.8	8.7	2.9
<b>Black</b>	5,004,691	322,713	738,813	1,337,712	2,498,820	106,633	100	6.4	14.8	26.7	49.9	2.1
<b>Hispanic</b>	7,912,171	1,089,716	1,292,413	1,854,924	2,918,862	756,256	100	13.8	16.3	23.4	36.9	9.6
<b>Asian</b>	1,486,189	508,973	327,774	249,749	228,824	170,869	100	34.2	22.1	16.8	15.4	11.5
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	113,788	14,053	27,055	36,954	27,753	7,973	100	12.4	23.8	32.5	24.4	7
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	337,592	26,465	61,999	107,791	129,683	11,654	100	7.8	18.4	31.9	38.4	3.5
<b>Two or more races</b>	892,475	185,982	246,370	254,415	161,668	44,060	100	20.8	27.6	28.5	18.1	4.9
<b>Secondary</b>	15,707,083	4,653,034	5,346,143	3,571,345	1,522,986	613,575	100	29.6	34	22.7	9.7	3.9
<b>White</b>	8,525,394	3,064,111	3,516,648	1,557,710	217,404	169,521	100	35.9	41.2	18.3	2.6	2
<b>Black</b>	2,397,330	275,224	609,573	831,892	627,422	53,219	100	11.5	25.4	34.7	26.2	2.2
<b>Hispanic</b>	3,436,091	843,483	815,041	904,255	577,383	295,929	100	24.5	23.7	26.3	16.8	8.6
<b>Asian</b>	785,828	330,292	204,696	130,925	45,007	74,908	100	42	26	16.7	5.7	9.5
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	56,882	11,998	20,177	17,837	3,553	3,317	100	21.1	35.5	31.4	6.2	5.8
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	171,468	26,338	53,341	53,681	32,673	5,435	100	15.4	31.1	31.3	19.1	3.2
<b>Two or more races</b>	334,090	101,588	126,667	75,045	19,544	11,246	100	30.4	37.9	22.5	5.8	3.4

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 216.60. Number and percentage distribution of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by school level, locale, and student race/ethnicity: 2011-12, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_216.60.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_216.60.asp).

**Table B: Distribution of Public School Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch, by student race/ethnicity – 100 Largest School Districts**

	Number of students, by percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch					Percentage distribution of students, by percent of students in school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch				
	Total	Low poverty	Mid-low poverty	Mid-high poverty	High poverty	Total	Low poverty	Mid-low poverty	Mid-high poverty	High poverty
<b>Total</b>	2,812,243	623,540	827,015	780,054	581,634	100	22.2	29.4	27.7	20.7
<b>White</b>	846,385	289,016	347,101	179,618	30,650	100	34.1	41.0	21.2	3.6
<b>Black</b>	753,585	58,593	177,906	242,870	274,216	100	7.8	23.6	32.2	36.4
<b>Hispanic</b>	876,354	138,668	215,451	281,064	241,171	100	15.8	24.6	32.1	27.5
<b>Asian</b>	222,255	59,711	72,941	64,623	24,980	100	26.9	32.8	29.1	11.2
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	32,067	4,632	14,194	10,618	2,623	100	14.4	44.3	33.1	8.2
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	16,806	2,595	5,707	5,500	3,004	100	15.4	34.0	32.7	17.9
<b>Two or more races</b>	64,791	18,401	25,859	15,541	4,990	100	28.4	39.9	24.0	7.7

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## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Income guidelines for free and reduced meals are derived by multiplying the current year's Federal income poverty guideline by 1.3 and 1.85, respectively. In 2015, a single parent with two children must earn less than \$26,117 to qualify for free meals and less than 37,167 to qualify for reduced meals.

<sup>ii</sup> Steve Suitts, *Research Bulletin, A New Majority Low Income Students Now a Majority In the Nation's Public Schools*, Southern Education Foundation, 2015, <http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/4ac62e27-5260-47a5-9d02-14896ec3a531/A-New-Majority-2015-Update-Low-Income-Students-Now.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> NCES defines secondary schools as schools having no grade lower than 7<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>iv</sup> Of the high schools within the 100 largest school districts, 2173 (96%) schools have data on participation in the federal free/reduced meal program.

<sup>v</sup> Allison Lombardi, Mary Seburn, David Conley, "Development and Initial Validation of a Measure of Academic Behaviors Associated With College and Career Readiness," *Journal of Career Assessment*, 2011.

<sup>vi</sup> ibid

<sup>vii</sup> David T. Conley, *College and Career Ready: Helping All Students Succeed Beyond High School*, 2010.

<sup>viii</sup> ibid

<sup>ix</sup> ibid

<sup>x</sup> ibid

<sup>xi</sup> ibid

<sup>xii</sup> Gail L. Thompson, Susan R. Warren, Tami Foy, Carol Dickerson, "What Makes a Teacher Outstanding?: A Contrast of Teachers' and African-American High School Students' Perspectives," *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*, 2008.

<sup>xiv</sup> Alfinio Flores, "Examining Disparities in Mathematics Education: Achievement Gap or Opportunity Gap?," *High School Journal*, 2007.

<sup>xv</sup> The data available for this analysis did not include direct measures of teacher knowledge or skills; however, it did include highly relevant measures, particularly teacher experience and teacher certification, both of which are presented in this paper. Teacher absenteeism and teacher salaries are also available in the original data, but those measures are not included in this paper's analysis.

<sup>xvi</sup> Charles T. Clotfelter, Hellen F. Ladd, Jacob L. Vigdor, "Who Teaches Whom? Race and the Distribution of Novice Teachers," *Economics of Education Review*, 2005.

<sup>xvii</sup> Flores, "Examining Disparities"

<sup>xviii</sup> Glenda D. Musoba, "Accountability Policies and Readiness for College for Diverse Students," *Educational Policy*, 2011.

<sup>xix</sup> United States Department of Education, *Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snapshot: College and Career Readiness*, United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-College-and-Career-Readiness-Snapshot.pdf>

<sup>xx</sup> Christopher Avery, Jessica S. Howell, Lindsay Page, *A Review of the Role of College Counseling, Coaching, and Mentoring on Students' Postsecondary Outcome*, The College Board, 2014, <http://research.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/2015/1/college-board-research-brief-role-college-counseling-coaching-mentoring-postsecondary-outcomes.pdf>.

<sup>xxi</sup> Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, "Involving Low-income Parents and Parents of Color in College Readiness Activities: An Exploratory Study," *Professional School Counseling*, 2010.

<sup>xxii</sup> Fred Bemak, Rita Chi-Ying, Linda A. Siroskey-Sabdo, "Empowerment Groups for Academic Success: An Innovative Approach to Prevent High School Failure for At-risk, Urban African American Girls," *Professional School Counseling*, 2005.

<sup>xxiii</sup> American School Counselor Association, Student-to-school-counselor ratio 2010-2011, American School Counselor Association, 2013, <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/ratios10-11.pdf>

<sup>xxiv</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future*, 2010.