

Excerpts from NAACP Education Department

Call for Action in Education

<http://www.naacp.org/about/resources/publications/education_call_to_actn_2.pdf>

Introduction

The 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision embodied in our law the fundamental insight that separate is never equal - minority students, especially black and Latino students, are consistently resource-deprived in comparison to white students. The facts are clear: the persistent failure of schools to provide equality of opportunity for all students is having a devastating impact on communities of color and the future of our nation. The adverse impact of these inequalities is long-term and is reflected in racial disparities not only in education but in future employment, poverty, and incarceration rates.

NAACP Call for Action in Elementary and Secondary Education (Pre-K-12)

Section I: Increasing Resource Equity

- Adequate resources are an essential element in the educational process. Consequently, the failure to provide adequate resources is a denial of the opportunity to learn. These inequalities, however, are found at the district, state, and federal level. Many of the resource inequities above are severe and have resulted from persistent patterns of unequal resource distribution over many years, in ways that would have violated federal or state law had there been effective enforcement available. Furthermore, resource inequities often follow race and ‘class divisions’ between districts, and often follow patterns of neighborhood segregation within diverse school districts. Title I of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides an important supplemental resource for addressing the problems of socio-economically disadvantaged children.
- Sound educational policy warrants that schools with relatively higher populations of poor and minority students provide those students with sufficient educational opportunities to perform on par with white students and students in wealthier majority districts.

Section VII: High-Stakes Testing

- High-stakes testing used to retain in grade or to deny diplomas based on a single test (including retakes), exacerbates the disparate impact of resource inequality for children of color. A growing body of research and expert analysis reveals that punitive sanctions attached to a student’s performance on a single test are unfair, ineffective, and contrary to widely accepted standards of the assessment and psychometric professions, and potentially in violation of civil rights and the federal constitution. Specifically, penalizing students by testing them on information that they have never been taught raises pedagogical questions and constitutional questions of due process. Research indicates that placing high-stakes tests burdens on children under these circumstances is counterproductive because the burdens correlate with increases in grade retention and dropouts, and because the burdens affect minority students disproportionately.
- Evidence also suggests that heightened pressure to “teach to the test” often impoverishes the curriculum and most likely contributes to the acute shortage of highly qualified teachers and administrators. These policies continue to be adopted by state after state, district after district, in the name of “high standards” and accountability. Furthermore, test-driven sanctions imposed by many states against low performing schools create a perverse incentive for school officials to get rid of struggling students. Unless test accountability is balanced by graduation accountability (and by safeguards against inappropriate or discriminatory use of special education and alternative education), this phenomenon is almost certain to intensify.