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Association for Supervision  
and Curriculum Development

# The Whole Child In a Fractured World

by

*Harold "Bud" Hodgkinson*



THE **WHOLE**  
**CHILD**

*for the Commission on the Whole Child  
convened by the  
Association for Supervision  
and Curriculum Development*

## About the Commission on the Whole Child

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The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) commissioned *The Whole Child in a Fractured World*, by Harold “Bud” Hodgkinson, as a resource document for the Commission on the Whole Child, which held its inaugural meeting January 11–13, 2006, in Washington, D.C. The Commission, convened by ASCD, is composed of a group of leading thinkers, researchers, and practitioners from a wide variety of sectors to recast the current focus of schools.

Why has ASCD convened the Commission on the Whole Child? Parents, teachers, and the community believe schools should focus on developing students who are academically proficient **and** physically and emotionally healthy **and** respectful, responsible, and caring. They want graduates who contribute to the community and the world and are productive at work, at home, and at leisure. The public believes schools should develop the entire child, not just the academic child. And they want this for each child, not just for already-advantaged children.

If stakeholders believe schools are responsible for developing the whole child, what needs to change? If decisions about programs started with “What works for the child?” how would resources—time, space, and human—be arrayed to ensure each child’s success? What would happen if community resources were arrayed in support of children reaching their potential as whole young adults? If the student were truly at the center of the system, what could be achieved?

The paper is designed to help the Commission address these questions and others by providing a compelling overview of the complexity and challenges of U.S. education. ASCD will provide additional information about the Commission on the Whole Child and its work during the coming months.

Gene R. Carter  
Executive Director  
ASCD

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harold “Bud” Hodgkinson is director of the Center for Demographic Policy, Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, D.C.

# The Whole Child in a Fractured World



*Harold “Bud” Hodgkinson*

## Introduction

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This paper is intended to serve as a background and reference tool for the ASCD Commission on the Whole Child. Most of the graphics are reproduced as an Appendix, full size, to show the wide range of differences within a data set, particularly between states. All other data are taken from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2004–2005*, published by the U.S. Census Bureau and issued in October 2004, unless otherwise indicated. It is hoped that a Commissioner seeking a number could “bypass” the paper and go directly to the Appendix.

There are some assumptions behind this paper. We could easily spend our few pages on an esoteric analysis of the use of the “whole child” concept, from the historical development of Greek and Roman times to the present day, but that would not be crucial to the Commission’s work. For our purposes, we can consider that children are born with certain physical, cognitive, social, and emotional potential. They are *also* born into an environment that will act like a filter, allowing some attributes to be developed and others hidden. They will move through many environments in their lives, some encouraging development, others preventing it. (For an excellent summary of current issues regarding the whole child, see ASCD’s *Educational Leadership’s* issue “The Whole Child,” September 2005.) In this paper, we will be focusing on the passage through the educational system, from birth (yes, education really does begin then!) until the transition years around age 18, when college and/or work decisions become important. Even this transition is getting blurred, because a majority of the 16 million college students are working while attending college.

Before continuing, it might be useful to outline all the functions schools perform in addition to teaching the curriculum: before- and after-school programs; breakfast,

lunch, and dinner, plus snacks; teaching kids a wide variety of things, from sex education to driving; programs for infants and toddlers; vaccinations; curbing problems, from AIDS to drugs to child obesity; and many things that in the past were reserved for families. (Some think that *schools* are raising children!) This seems to be what the public wants of schools; recent polls by Public Agenda and Gallup indicate that academic achievement ranks near the bottom among public concerns, while lack of parent involvement, student drug use, problems with student discipline and gangs, and now inadequate funding are leading the Gallup list. This is in spite of the major media coverage of declining test scores, especially in comparisons with other nations, while the U.S. public ranks test scores 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, or not at all. The Commissioners might consider that many out-of-class activities may enhance the emotional, social, and physical development of young people, such as Boy/Girl Scouts, Y's, Boys and Girls Clubs, chess clubs, and bands and choruses. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program, begun by the Clinton administration, has increased federal funding from \$1 million in 1997 to \$1 *billion* in 2004. There are also 3,000–5,000 “community resource centers” or “community schools,” plus the Schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, begun by Ed Zigler of Yale University, who was also a major force in the creation of Head Start. All of these are providing a variety of services to children, youth, and families. (The information in this paragraph is from Noel Epstein and Education Commission of the States, both listed in the Bibliography.)

### **Education by the Numbers**

U.S. education is very complex! It consists of more than 15,000 school districts and more than 80,000 individual schools, of which 19,000 are in big cities, 22,000 in suburbs, and 39,000 in *small towns and rural areas*. (The small-town schools never make the news.) There are 54,000 elementary and 18,000 secondary schools, attended by 49 million students (another 6.1 million students are in private/independent schools and about 1 million are being home-schooled), with 2.8 million public school teachers and about 70,000 principals. Thirty-eight percent of public school students are “minority,” and 10 percent of secondary teachers, 14 percent of K–6 teachers, 16 percent of principals, and 4 percent of superintendents are minority. Minority principals are found in larger schools with over 20 percent minority students. One-half of all schools have no minority

teachers, and 13 percent have over 30 percent minority teachers. There are also 4,100 colleges and universities enrolling 15 million students.

The governing structure of the U.S. education system consists of 15,000 local school boards; 50 chief state school officers; 50 state boards of education; 50 governors and state legislatures; 6 regional accrediting agencies; 1 U.S. Department of Education; 50 coordinating boards for higher education; 4,100 individual governing boards of higher education; 1 U.S. Congress; 1 U.S. President; and 1 Supreme Court. In France, there is one education governing structure—the Ministry of Education. Although the complexity of American educational organization may be baffling at first, there are some benefits, as states will become even more unlike each other. “If it works in Maine, it probably won’t work in New Mexico” is usually right. The next section of this paper will develop several demographic profiles of students by age.

## **Birth to Age 5: The Preschool Years**

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The standard demographic motto is, “If you weren’t born, you don’t count.” So who gets born? Every year in the United States, there are 6 million pregnancies, resulting in 4 million births. The other 2 million consist of 1 million abortions and 1 million miscarriages. (The religious issues surrounding abortion are well known, but the religious issues surrounding the equally large group of pregnancies interrupted by a miscarriage have yet to be developed.) There are 2 million deaths a year to match the 4 million births, giving us a youth population in the future with the capacity to at least replace itself. Add our 1 million immigrants a year, many of whom have young children, and it is clear that the United States, alone among the developed nations, can maintain our current percentage of youth over the next 20 years, after which almost all of the 70 million Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will have turned 65. Basically, the 4 million births each year constitute a “class” for that year. You can reduce their numbers, but you cannot be born 8 years of age at birth! Everyone ages at the exact rate of 10 years per decade, which is why demographics can be so accurate.

To arrive at our “class” for each year, we need only look at who is actually giving birth to get a clear picture. (These numbers are all contained in the author’s *Leaving Too Many Children Behind*, in the Bibliography.) The clearest way to

present these numbers is to use a common format—the number of births per 1,000 females of child-bearing age (CBA), usually considered 18 to 36. To start with race, 1,000 *white* CBA women will produce only 60.8 births a year, barely enough to maintain the white population. One thousand *black* CBA women will produce 62.9 births, enough to maintain the population and allow for very small gains. One thousand *Hispanic* CBA women will produce 84 births, enough to create major gains in this population through time, with 60 percent of U.S. population gains in the next 20 years being Hispanic. (Asians will also show population growth percentages, but the actual numbers will be smaller.)

State profiles are even more striking. One thousand Utah CBA females will produce the highest number, 93 births a year, with religion being a major factor, while CBA women in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont will produce only 50 births each, making the future of New England difficult—too many women have aged out of the CBA without young families moving in to replace them.

Income presents us with a difficulty. One thousand CBA women with household incomes below \$10,000 (usually high school dropouts, working several part-time minimum wage jobs with no benefits) will produce 73 births a year, while CBA women with household incomes over \$75,000 a year (well educated and wealthy enough to provide their children with many benefits) will produce only 50 births. Thus, the women most likely to be attentive to the “whole child”—from reading to them, making sure that they meet other children, and having books and ideas in the house to taking them on trips, to plays and museums, and so on—are having very few babies, while women who are not well educated, just getting by financially, and working jobs with menial rewards are producing far more members of our “class,” making the job of education even more difficult, yet more important as well.

In addition, 33 percent of U.S. births are to unmarried parents—26 percent of white births, 68 percent of black births, 42 percent of Hispanic births, 58 percent of Native American births, and only 5 percent of Asian births. Although 33 percent may seem high, France’s rate is 36 percent, and the rate in all the Scandinavian nations is over 50 percent. These countries have very solid families, even though the parents are not married. We assume that only marriage will secure a family, but marriage is basically a religious sacrament. (In Finland, widely

acclaimed as having the best educational system in the world, 70 percent of the children are raised by unmarried parents in very stable households—they just aren't very religious. Also, because so few get married, the divorce rate is virtually nonexistent!)

What is unusual for a developed nation like the United States is to have 12 percent of its children born to teenage mothers, which gives a virtual guarantee that the children will be raised in poverty without much attention to the whole child. (The percentage is declining rapidly, particularly for teen mothers having a second child.) One reason for the high rate: contraception information—freely available, even taught, in schools in Europe—is specifically denied to most U.S. school teens on religious grounds. While abstinence is a fine idea, most young men in the United States are biologically capable of being fathers by their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, and girls can become mothers even earlier. Given that men marry at about age 25, the supporters of abstinence are asking for 12 years of male celibacy, during which the hormones are roaring around, and even a longer spell for young ladies, which may be asking a bit much.

Now that we know who created our “class” (and where), we can ask who takes care of them in these first important years of life. Basically, 30 percent are cared for by one or both parents alone, 25 percent by relatives (2 million children are in the sole custody of their grandparents) and 45 percent by some kind of “center-based program” external to the home, including day care centers, Head Start programs, preschool and nursery school programs, and so on. These add up to about 105,000 *licensed* child care providers and 304,000 family child care providers. Compared to other nations, our programs for young children resemble a buzzing, blooming confusion, almost totally without standards or even definitions of quality. We have known for decades that these first five years of life are the most crucial for brain development, social and emotional development, and physical coordination. It has also been assumed by many that parents are solely responsible for their child's development until “real school” begins at first grade. (Kindergarten is still not universally available in the United States, although it is in most developed nations.) This value runs headlong into a reality: more than 60 percent of women are now in the work force outside the home in the United States and all OECD member countries. The extra salary has been essential

for middle class homes to simply maintain their standard of living, much less increase it. It *also* means that the United States needs *high-quality* day care wherever mothers are raising small children, especially single and working mothers. (Also, more than 20 percent of gay and lesbian couples are raising children, and we need to know more about how education can assist in the full development of these children as well.)

So if you have preschool-age children and you would like them to participate in a “world class” preschool, what should you do? (Your best bet would be to move to France, but that’s not likely.) In most neighborhoods there is a “rumor mill” about which are the best. Generally, the well-to-do have no trouble getting their kids into the “best” preschools. Indeed, those kids who could benefit the most from being in high-quality preschool programs are *the least likely to get in*, especially those with low-income parents who have not had the benefit of education themselves. (Just as there are tests to get into the best private schools in order to get into the best colleges, there is a widespread assumption that you need to get into the best preschools to get into the best schools to get into the best colleges!)

Do such programs make a difference, especially for poor kids? Absolutely. There is no debate with the long-term assessments of the impact of these programs through time. If you look at the impact of Head Start and similar programs taken at age 4, when those people reach age 27 (compared to carefully selected control groups) the results show changed *lives* for the preschool participants, not in terms of test scores but income, home ownership, staying out of jail, going to college, and so on. In addition, they have saved the taxpayer thousands of dollars for social programs they didn’t need, like jails and drug detox centers. (See graph A.) Yet even with these positive assessments, Head Start has never been fully funded by the federal government in the life of the program—less than half of all eligible children have been enrolled in Head Start and similar programs. There are encouraging signs: more than 40 states are now funding preK programs; every state now requires kindergarten teachers to have a BA degree; and some pioneering efforts at developing standards for preschool programs have been developed (Kagan and Cohen, *Not by Chance*, see Bibliography). The organization is the National Association for the Education of Young Children—NAEYC.

If one wanted a general rule about changing the educational system, the best advice would be: *start earlier*. (Starting a teen prevention program with 18-year-olds is not useful. When *should* you start?) This author has studied the education system from top to bottom for 45 years, and the most permanent factor holding young people back is clearly poverty. When does poverty make its presence felt? At birth. (This is when educated, middle class moms are exposing their babies to words, colors, textures, music, and people, helping the “whole child” to develop, giving them a big advantage over others.) The best evidence of the power of the first five years of life is to look at the pre-reading and pre-math tests used at the beginning of kindergarten, showing poor children with significantly lower scores in reading and math, *even before they have started kindergarten!* (See graph B.) It isn’t just that *intellectual* skills are heavily developed in the years before school; emotional, social, aesthetic, and physical aspects are as well. One of the real deficits of the No Child Left Behind strategy is that these crucial years from birth to age five are ignored.

## The School Years: The Numbers

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In 2002, there were 3 million children enrolled in public kindergarten, compared with 2.8 million in 1970. (PreK public enrollments were only 300,000 in 1970 but went up to 2.2 million in 2002, the biggest increase of any age segment.) Elementary public enrollments were 29.7 million in 2002 and 30 million in 1970, and high school enrollments went from 13.5 million in 1970 to 15.1 million in 2002. Projections to 2012 indicate very small changes in any level. However, the number who are Hispanic (remember that Hispanics are not a race) increased from 2 million in 1980 to 5 million in 2002, while black enrollments increased from 3.6 million in 1980 to 4.8 million in 2002 and white enrollments went up from 20 million in 1980 to 22 million in 2002 (all ages 7 to 13 years). The white percentage of this age group dropped from 80.9 percent in 1980 to 76 percent in 2002. Secondary school enrollments went from 12 million in 1980 to 15 million in 2002, with the percentage of white students going from 82 percent to 78 percent in 2002. A majority of the nation’s public school students will be white for the next 20 years, although the number of states with a white *minority* will grow very rapidly. Again, states will differ: in the Northeast in 2003, 64.8 percent of K–12 enrollments were white, 74.4 percent in the Midwest, 53.6 percent in the South, and 45.9 percent (*already!*) in the West.

## Passages Through the Educational System(s)

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The most universal transition is from preschool or family care to first grade. Kindergarten, now experienced by more than 3 million of our annual “class” of 4 million, was originally intended to be a bridge between a comparatively permissive home and the more structured environment of elementary school. Today, due in part to the “high stakes” nature of the whole enterprise, the “children’s garden” is not a garden at all but the first round of testing, reading and math, learning numbers and letters as well as a little music, plus learning not to hit the other children. For many observers, “childhood” has all but disappeared, although kindergarten teachers probably pay more attention to social, emotional, and physical development than other teachers in elementary school. Informal play activities are of great importance to emotional, social, and physical development as well as intellectual growth, yet “play” has often become the equivalent of “wasting time” in many preschools and kindergartens, as well as the early grades of elementary schools.

A second transition point was not needed in 1900, when only about 7 percent of Americans had a high school diploma and about 75 percent lived on farms. (Today, it’s 3 percent on farms and more than 75 percent with diplomas.) As the century proceeded, it became clear that more education would be needed in the future, and leaders began to envision a time when six years of education, followed by high school graduation, would become universal, although this argument usually applied to men. After achieving the goal of six years of education for all, the need for a “bridge” to universal high school education produced the junior high school, just as the aspiration today of a bachelor’s degree for all has produced the “junior college,” at least in part.

Today, states have as many different combinations of 12 years of school as a football play—the 6-6, the 6-2-4, the 6-3-3, and so on. There seems to be little rationale for whatever system is selected, and there are few studies of the pros and cons of each. The idea of the junior high school was to give young people a transitional environment between the elementary school, with few electives and lots of time spent in supervised and supportive environments, to the more independent patterns of high school, with lots of course selection and extracurricular activities. It is not at all clear how well this “buffer zone”

junior high school works. In order to avoid these complexities, federal statistics use only two categories, elementary (grades K–8) and high schools (grades 9–12).

The most visible transition is the “afterlife,” when one leaves the public school system and moves to postsecondary education (if one has graduated from secondary school) or the “world of work,” which attracts both those who didn’t graduate from secondary school and many of those who did. For getting through this transition, there are school counselors who can assist with both job and college alternatives, organizations like the College Board, testing organizations like ETS and ACT, and many private organizations that help youth prepare for examinations, arrange work internships and job placements, and help with college applications. The community college, now enrolling a little less than half of undergraduates, is an important transitional force, with excellent contacts with local businesses, community agencies, and four-year colleges in the area. Community colleges offer “open admission” to anyone with a high school diploma or a GED, stress very pragmatic (even remedial) courses and programs, and cost much less (about half) than four-year institutions. Flexible schedules allow students to work to pay bills and save for a bachelor’s degree program, and the colleges are close enough that students can live at home and pay off college expenses even faster. (The average four-year college student, public and private combined, will graduate with a minimum debt of \$18,000—enough to put a down payment on a “starter” house. In 2005, the average tuition in private four-year colleges was \$21,000; in public four-year colleges it was “only” \$5,491; and in community colleges it was about \$3,500.)

In higher education, you take 124 credit hours of courses, a bell rings, you are declared “educated,” and you receive your degree. What this leaves out is the vital notion of *lifelong learning*, a concept which needs to be worked on from preschool to graduate school. It should not be applied to intellectual development only, as we should continue our social, emotional, and physical development as “whole adults.” Unfortunately, lifelong learning is usually a slogan, not a vital organizing principle for all components of our educational system. The Commissioners might consider what our educational system might look like if lifelong learning were built into each segment, for every student.

## How Good *Is* Our Educational System? (Or Better, How Good *Are* Our Educational Systems?)

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This turns out to be an extremely difficult question. For one reason, our educational systems seldom talk to one another. (See the author's *All One System: A Second Look*, in the Bibliography.) Another reason is that almost 40 million Americans move each year, and about 7 million of these are of school age. (Most moves are within the state, but 8–10 million people of all ages move to a different state each year, including about 2 million school-age kids.) We have no tracking system to follow a student who moves from state to state, and only one state can follow a student who moves from one district to any other within the state. (If you live in Cleveland but are stopped for speeding in Denver, the Denver cop will have your complete driving record from Ohio in about 25 seconds. If you *move* from Cleveland to Denver and request the Cleveland school authorities to forward your children's records to the Denver public schools, you are asking for a miracle!) In higher education, 57 percent of the class of 1992 attended more than one college, and 22 percent attended more than two. The time to complete a four-year program averaged five years. Twenty percent of high school seniors attended college in a different state from their high school's state. We *do* move around!

Transience is a major factor in the quality of educational data. One frequently hears teachers comment that they started school with 24 students in September, still had 24 students the following May, *but 22 of the 24 were different students than the ones they started with*. Those teachers each taught at least 46 students, not 24! It is less likely to find such teachers in Pennsylvania (almost 90 percent of people living there were born there) than in Florida (25 percent of the people living there were born there). Dropout studies usually count the number of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who graduate from high school four years later. But such studies are distorted by the number of youth who move from one school or state to another. Even the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) and NCLB (No Child Left Behind) tests of 4<sup>th</sup> graders assume that if you return four years later and test 8<sup>th</sup> graders, you'll be testing the same kids. The error can be 15 percent in *states*, and up to 50 percent in individual *schools*, the primary testing unit for NCLB. Also, this author has done several studies in which students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade simply disappear and are not tracked. Many of them are “rehearsing to be

dropouts”; that is, they miss Monday (nothing happens), so they miss Monday *and* Tuesday (nothing happens), and they just keep on missing more days until they have vanished—one more form of transience. Transience is directly linked to crime (knowing one’s neighbors is the best deterrent to crime there is!) as well as education: the more transience, the harder the educational and criminal justice systems have to work.

Probably the safest answer to the “success” question is the percentage of people who have achieved a high school diploma or a college degree. In 1960, 41 percent of adults over 25 had a diploma; by 2003 the figure had doubled to 84.6 percent. In 1960, 7.7 percent of adults over 25 had a bachelor’s degree; by 2003 the figure had reached 27 percent. (However, in both levels, progress was halted from 1995 to 2003.) By race, in 2003, 85 percent of whites had a high school diploma, blacks moved up to 80 percent, but Asians led with 88 percent. Hispanics were at 57 percent, Cubans at 70.8 percent, and those of Mexican origin at 51 percent.

At the college level in 2003, 27.6 percent of whites and 17 percent of blacks were college graduates, but Asians led with a phenomenal *50 percent*. Hispanics were at 11 percent, Cubans at 22 percent, and Mexicans at 8 percent. There are few cases in which “Hispanic” is a useful descriptor in education, particularly given the differences between Cuban and Mexican origin. And how do Asians do so well in education, home ownership, and household income?

Although the numbers suggest major improvement since 1960, the fact is that educational improvement has been put “on ice” since 1995, using this definition. Two recent publications from the ETS (Educational Testing Service) Policy Information Center, *The Closing of the Education Frontier?* and *One-Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities* (both listed in the Bibliography), make this opposite case. (See graph C.) About a third of today’s students do not graduate from high school after four years. Since the 1960s, we have developed a number of “second chance” programs: Job Corps, YouthBuild USA, Youth Corps, Youth Opportunity Grants, community college remedial programs, and most important, the General Education Development (GED) test (often incorrectly referred to as “high school equivalence” even though it is simply an exam, with no instruction). Many of the job training programs on the

list above are linked to the GED. Although the number of high school diplomas has declined, the number of GED awards has increased, from 227,000 in 1971 to 500,000 today. Originally, a rule limited GED takers to age 20 and above; that rule has been rescinded. Today, substantial numbers of GEDs are being earned by 16- to 17-year-olds.

If a public school refers a student to a GED program, that student is not counted as a dropout and does not reduce the school's graduation rates. (Such students generally would reduce student scores on "high stakes" tests, providing a possible reward for allowing such students to "disappear.") Parallel to this trend is the fact that more dropouts are 16 to 17 years old, while in the 1980s the vast majority of dropouts were 18 to 19 years old. It may also be that under the pressure of the testing programs required by No Child Left Behind, more students are dropping out at earlier ages, although this has not yet been demonstrated. At least since the 1960s, we have made some provision for access to jobs for those who did not finish high school. The community college has clearly become a vital link between education and the world of work for millions of young people. And there is an amazingly consistent relationship between the amount of education a person has completed and that person's lifetime earnings. (See graph D.)

In terms of national comparisons, the United States now ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in percentage of youth who graduate from high school, although we were first about 30 years ago. In addition, the United States and other OECD nations have seen a general decline in males graduating from secondary school and also graduating from college. Graph E shows both the U.S. rank and the fact that every nation (except Hungary) is seeing a considerable increase in females graduating over males.

The most important single factor is clearly the percentage of youth who have *both* completed high school *and* been admitted to a college. Community colleges don't count here, because they offer open admission for anyone with a diploma or GED. There is a *very* large variation among the states on this most important comparison. (See graph F.) It is clear that household income of each state is not much of a predictor. (See graph G.) Of course, it would be nice to know how many graduated from college as well, but given the large number of college students who graduate from a different institution (and state) than they started in, the numbers would not reflect the realities of each state. Although more young

people are going to college, graduation numbers overall have not increased; indeed, they have declined for men of every race. (See graph H.) Do college seniors know more than college freshmen? Yes, but non-college 22-year-olds know more than non-college 18-year-olds as well. (And higher education's "dirty little secret" was discovered by University of Chicago's Director of Examining, Ralph Tyler, some 30 years ago in an unpublished study showing that entering freshmen in some four-year colleges knew more *at entry* than graduating seniors from others, although they all got the bachelor's degree! Is it still true today? It would be impossible to get such a study funded today, but at meetings of provosts and deans, you can get informal consensus after one glass of chardonnay, in support of Tyler's study.)

It is possible in the future that the same kind of "high stakes" testing that is required by No Child Left Behind, as well as state-initiated tests which must be passed before the high school diploma can be awarded, will be applied to higher education as well. (At the moment, there are about 70,000 California high school seniors who have not passed the state's "graduation test" even after several tries. The state has no coherent strategy as to what to do now. About half of the states now have some provision for passing an exit test for a high school diploma.) Such a test in higher education would certainly show huge differences among a state's colleges and universities in the percentage of seniors who pass the test and get the bachelor's degree. And again, what to do with those who do not pass the exam, even though they have passed all the courses? Given that our higher education system (especially our research universities) is held in much respect in the rest of the world, while our schools seem to be universally frowned upon, it may be that such a moment will never come.

There is one area in which American schools seem to dominate—access to computers in schools and classrooms. We seem to be ahead of all other OECD nations in this regard and have made huge investments, even after the equipment donations, to equip every school with computers. This has gone on for over a decade. The major problem is that the only large study of the availability and use of computers for student learning, done by the distinguished researcher Larry Cuban, has found little relationship between access to computers and increased learning. One issue is that the computers often arrive at the school with no software designed for the subject being taught, only the instruction manual for

Windows. It may take another decade for good subject matter software to be available to all teachers, plus training in its use for both faculty and students.

Another way of defining success is to consider how racial and economic barriers have been reduced through education. It is clear that, thanks to federal leadership decades ago, racially segregated schools are difficult to find in the United States today. However, if Hispanics were defined as a *race* by the Census Bureau and the Office of Civil Rights, we would be almost back to the Montgomery bus boycotts. For the first time, the largest minority group in the nation is *not* a race. Although we have many schools in which 80–90 percent of the students are Hispanic (as was true with black children in the 1950s), there are few, if any, discussions of whether or not these Hispanic kids are having their civil rights violated. At the national level, there have been few, if any, important meetings between NAACP and the National Council of La Raza. This area of the civil rights of Hispanic children remains before us. Schools have done a good job in enforcing the laws against black school segregation. But if you go to Topeka, Kansas, the home of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and follow the kids home from their (desegregated) schools, you find the same level of *economic* segregation (almost all poor kids in Topeka are still black). The original idea was that *racially* desegregated schools would soon produce *economically* desegregated neighborhoods. This is turning out to be quite difficult. When one admires a racially desegregated neighborhood like Shaker Heights, Ohio, one would have to look hard to find a household in poverty in Shaker Heights.

Today, many school districts are trying to tackle this most difficult of social issues. In Wake County, North Carolina, the system has, for the last five years, attempted to limit the percentage of low-income students in any one school to 40 percent. (Poverty is generally defined as being eligible for federally subsidized lunch programs.) Placing magnet schools in the city draws in many suburban children, while year-round schools draw Raleigh city students to the suburban areas. All but a handful of the 133 schools in Wake County have been “economically desegregated,” resulting in the county’s being the highest-performing large district in the state.

While there is little national data on the success of this strategy, there is abundant data on its reverse. Extreme poverty *concentration* reduces student achievement,

increases crime, makes it difficult to involve parents, and makes it extremely hard to attract and retain quality teachers. The city with the highest poverty *concentration* (poor people living next to poor people) is Fresno, California, with more than 43 percent of its poor living in concentrated poverty-stricken neighborhoods, even though it ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in total poverty. Still an agricultural economy, Fresno has many illegal immigrants and a constantly changing, low-income workforce. However, after a decade of effort, unemployment is down from 15 percent to 7 percent (the lowest rate in 20 years), crime has dropped, and large investments have been made in the infrastructure of poor neighborhoods downtown and in South Fresno. Sadly, the developers wanted to build expensive, upper-income housing when what was obviously needed was good housing and infrastructure for *working families near the poverty line*. If you are working full-time in Fresno and are paid the minimum wage, you will need some help with housing, but kicking such people out to attract more middle-income people is no solution. Finally, more young people are staying in school, but all the other things had to be done first.

Other areas with high poverty concentrations include pre-Katrina New Orleans, Louisville, Miami, and Atlanta. All are involved in their own way with this extremely difficult issue of desegregation by income. (Putting magnet schools downtown instead of the suburbs seems to have a good success rate, as does selective spreading of low-income city children across a number of suburban schools.)

Strategies to reduce poverty have been implemented. The graduated income tax, LBJ's war on poverty (which was actually a big success in reducing poverty rates except for President Reagan's famous comment that "we had a war on poverty and poverty won"), and minimum wage legislation are three of the most visible, but they are hard to keep going. (Congress, for example, has raised its own salary seven times without increasing the minimum wage.) However, programs that reduce the *effects* of poverty—such as Head Start, Pell Grants for low-income students to go to college, college work-study programs, state scholarship programs, etc.—have an impact. But even here, it is very clear that one's chances of going to (and completing) college will be based far less on ability and more on ability to pay. The "enrollment management" fad suggests that every admitted student should be (1) smart and (2) rich. Admitting only *one* student

who is smart and *poor* will ruin everything. Every year, the financial effort needed to send a student from a low-income home to a state college increases to over 60 percent of the household's income in some states, while households over \$85,000 would hardly notice it. The relationship between income and going to college is very strong. (See graph I.) However, among education leaders at all levels, there is a perception that most of the new jobs produced in the United States are for “knowledge workers,” who will, of course, be college graduates. When we look at the actual jobs added to the U.S. economy, we find that “knowledge worker” jobs added only 800,000 new jobs, while minimum-wage jobs (e.g., retail sales, janitors and cleaners, waiters and waitresses, maids, security guards) added 2.5 *million*. Most of these low-end jobs required only a couple of hours of on-the-job training. In addition, large numbers of college graduates are working in jobs that do not require college-graduate skills.

To summarize this section, every state has its own “pipeline,” with students falling off at various places from 9<sup>th</sup> grade on (and as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for a few students). In *All One System: A Second Look*, this author looked at the transition places where students fell out of the pipeline. Graph J, *Cracks in the Education Pipeline* (Committee for Economic Development, May 2005), shows by state (1) what percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders don't graduate from high school, (2) what percentage graduate but don't go to college, (3) what percentage go to college but don't graduate, and (4) what percentage attain the bachelor's degree. The state differences in each of these four categories are truly striking. To return to the beginning of this paper, our “class” begins with 4 million births and ends with 6 percent of Alaska's 9<sup>th</sup> grade “class” getting a bachelor's degree while 28 percent of Iowa's and Massachusetts' classes get that far.

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## Summary and Commission Recommendations

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We have described a nation that has a very convoluted local, state, and federal governance system, with very diverse populations by race/ethnicity, wealth, religion, age, and density. The three levels of governance (local, state, and federal) operate in splendid isolation, as we saw most tragically, and still do see, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. On any dimension of our educational systems there will be very large differences by states, yet No Child Left Behind seems to assume that all states are *identical*. One mystery is how, after many

decades of a subservient federal role in education, we suddenly have an almost dictatorial federal education department, even in a Republican administration, contributing only about 10 percent of the total spending on education and issuing 90 percent of the commands. No serious push-backs from local or state leaders emerged for three years after NCLB was passed, and very little has been written as to how this revolution happened. (See Mike Usdan’s excellent piece, “The Surprise Architects of an Intrusive Federal Role,” *The School Administrator*, October 2005.) There is some minimal collaboration today between the public schools and higher education, but it is confined to metro areas and some states. One example is “co-registration,” allowing high school seniors who are uncertain as to whether or not they can handle college work to take a college course and get credit for both the high school diploma and college admission. For the most part, educational institutions act alone. (For that matter, the Boy/Girl Scouts seldom collaborate with YMCAs or Boys and Girls Clubs of America, not to mention 4H and Future Farmers of America!)

Because standards are usually determined at the state level, the same 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading score that would make you “proficient” in Colorado might not be “proficient” in Ohio. If the Commission recommends “higher standards,” it will be in trouble. In addition, there are no “silver bullets” in education—everything is related to everything else. This makes the Commission’s work very difficult in terms of making recommendations. However, there are some points of leverage—the new awareness of the importance of the first years of life; the renewed focus on poverty, transience, and race and their interrelationships; the “closing of the educational frontier” position; the decline of men among high school and college graduates; the focus on the linkage points between systems as areas of opportunity; and the fact that today’s high schoolers know more people from different races, nations, sexual orientations, and religions and have traveled and volunteered more than students in any previous era. All these may mean that in terms of becoming “whole” people, there is an abundance of ways in which education can provide the “teachable moments” that will create lifelong learners out of this new generation.

We have raised a ton of issues in this paper. One key decision for the Commission will be to decide whether they wish to “order a la carte” (one issue from column A, one from column B) or develop a common theme from which all the

recommendations will flow. For this author, there are several themes we have raised that might be useful to the Commission:

- **Equity.** Who gets access to which educational services, and who doesn't? (We've discussed race, class, age, location, parent educational level, and transience. Remember that these are not disembodied numbers; they *appear in the lives of every individual.*) Head Start increases equity; tax breaks for millionaires decrease equity. Should we get into *economic* desegregation, like Wake County, North Carolina, and Fresno, California?
- **Coordination.** We have literally 18,000 educational decision-making organizations. Should there be one national (or federal) standard for what constitutes "reading proficiency" at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, or should there be 50? Or 15,000—one for each school district? Who should have the authority to convene these groups, or should collaboration be voluntary? What would be better than our current organized chaos? (This author once wrote a piece on governance with the title "The Amazing Thing Is That It Works at All.") The real issue is *who decides who decides?*
- **Knowledge Integration.** We know an enormous amount about kids, parents, schools, finance, curriculum, and so on, but every piece is written in a specialized vocabulary for each discipline, designed to be incomprehensible to non-specialists. (Look at the report cards we send to parents. In education, we are all lawyers under the skin.) How could we develop a common vocabulary for education discourse?
- **Sequence.** There is little understanding of what should happen to people at what moment in their lives, students and teachers especially. What should people learn first in order to learn other things best? When should teachers plan the year's work, knowing (in Florida especially) that half the students won't finish the year? When should teachers receive tenure, if ever? When should students leave high school or college?
- **Wholeness.** Given the Commission's charge, there might be some discussion regarding how (and why) people knit together the various segments of their lives, especially around intellectual, physical, social, and emotional elements. It would seem that when you find a person who is "all of a piece," living the total life, it happened *in spite of* the educational system, not because of it. Could the schools, working collaboratively with health, social, and commu-

nity organizations, assist their students (and teachers and administrators) to maximize their potential in all these areas?

These categories may be helpful to the Commission as they proceed with their very important work. They will need our best wishes, which are offered here.

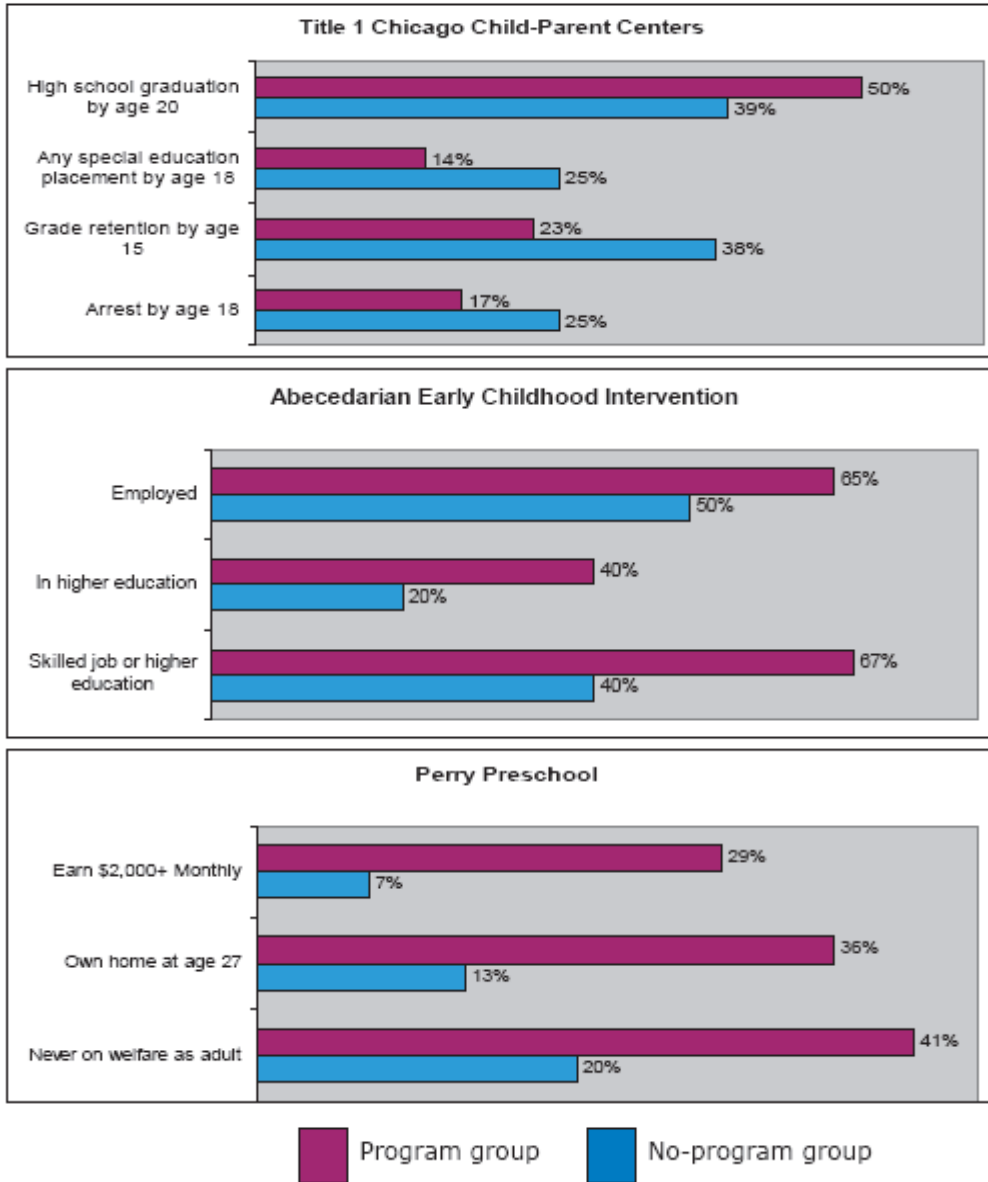
## APPENDIX

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- Graph A: The Effects, Costs, and Benefits of Three Preschool Programs
- Graph B: Math and Reading Achievement at the Beginning of Kindergarten
- Graph C: Change in High School Completion Rates, 1990 to 2000, by State
- Graph D: Lifetime Income by Level of Educational Attainment for Workers Ages 18 and Over
- Graph E: Upper-Secondary (High School) Graduation Rates by Gender in OECD Countries, 2000
- Graph F: Chance for College by Age 19 by State, 2000
- Graph G: Per Capita Personal Income by State, 2001
- Graph H: Share of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Males by Race/Ethnicity, 1977 to 2002
- Graph I: Who in 4 Family-Income Brackets Went to College in 1994
- Graph J: Percent of 9th Grade Students Lost Along the Education Pipeline, and Percent That Attain Bachelor's Degrees, 2000

### Graph A

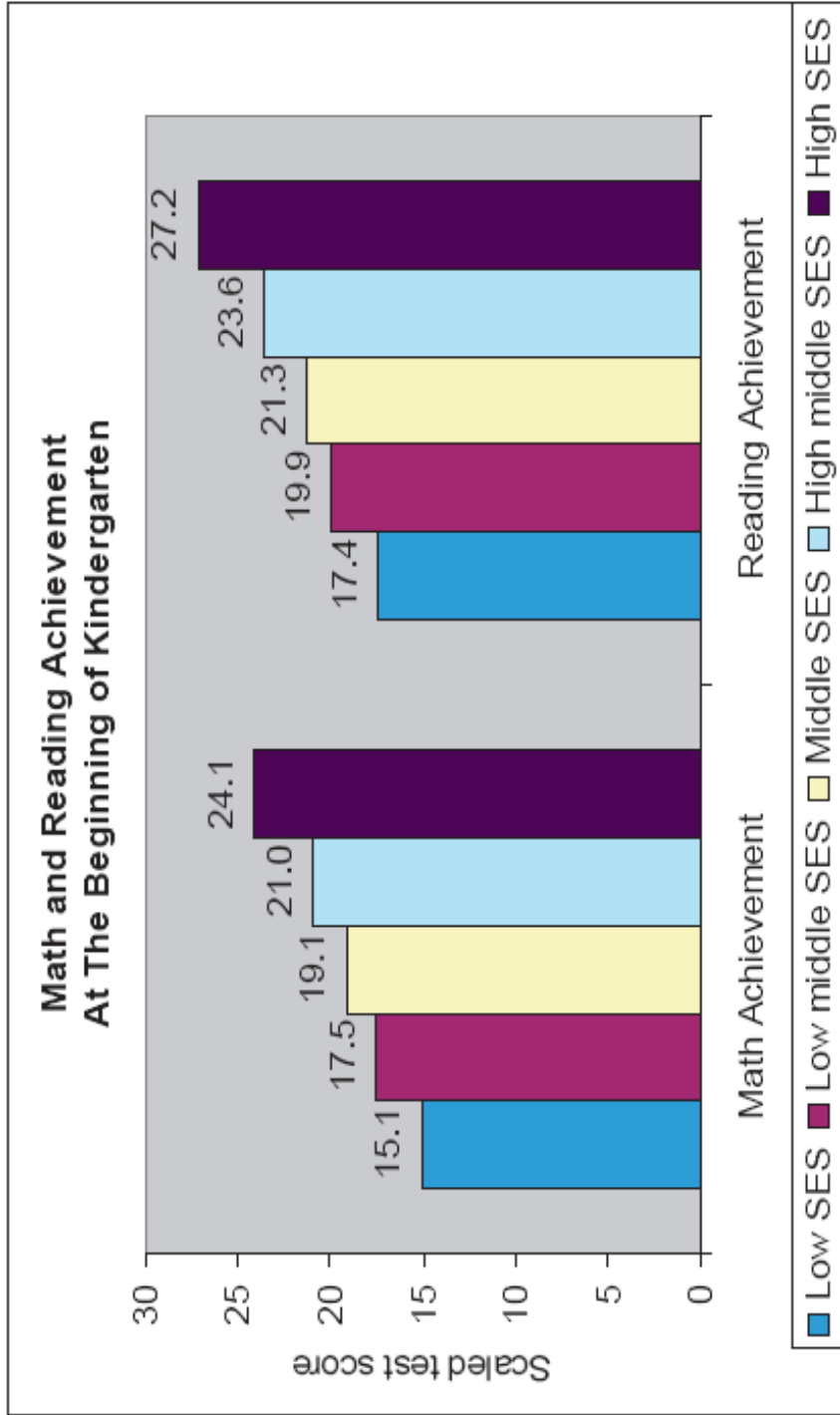
Figure 1: The Effects, Costs, and Benefits of Three Preschool Programs



	Cost	Benefit
Title 1 Chicago Child-Parent Centers	\$7,000	\$48,000
Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention	\$33,000	\$123,000
Perry Preschool	\$12,000	\$108,000

Bracey, G. "Investing in Preschool," *American School Board Journal*, January 2003, pp. 32-35.

Graph B

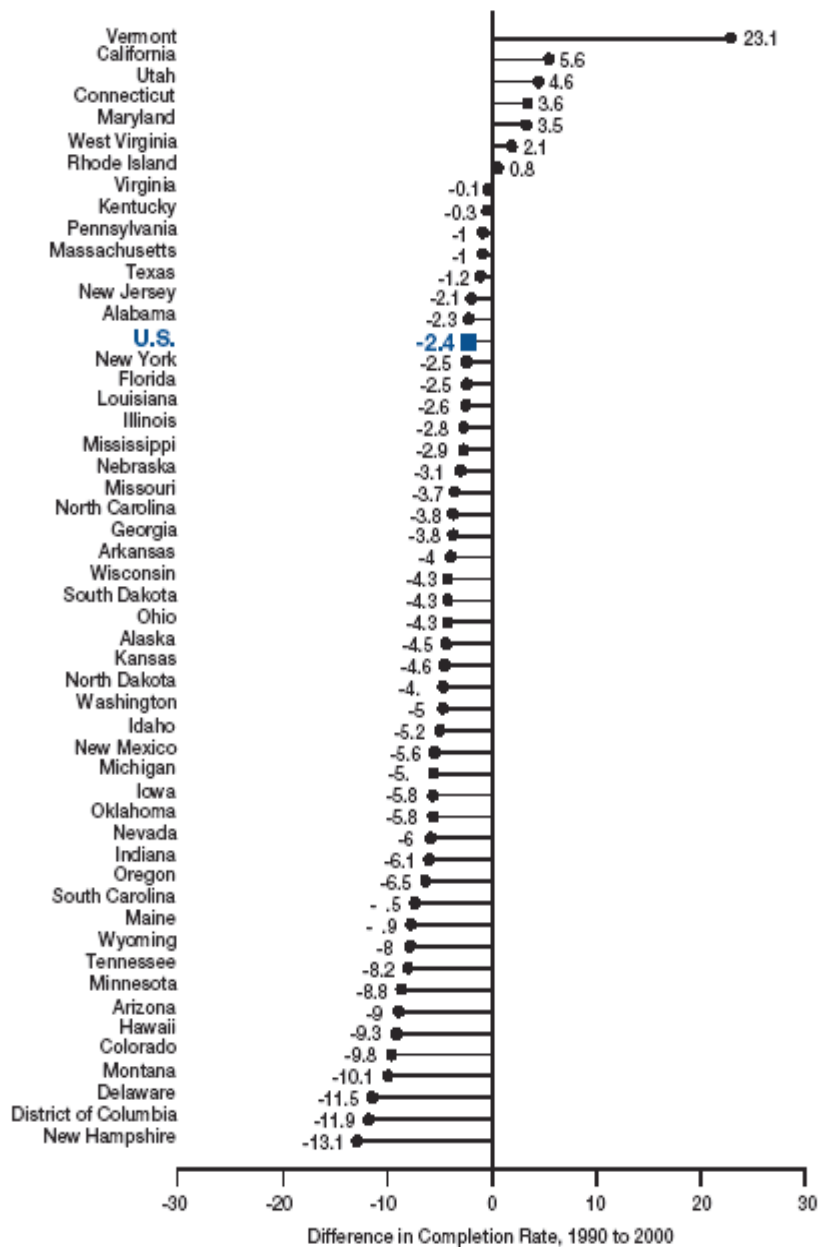


SES = Socioeconomic Status

Lee, Valerie and Burkam, David. Inequality at the Starting Gate. Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2002.

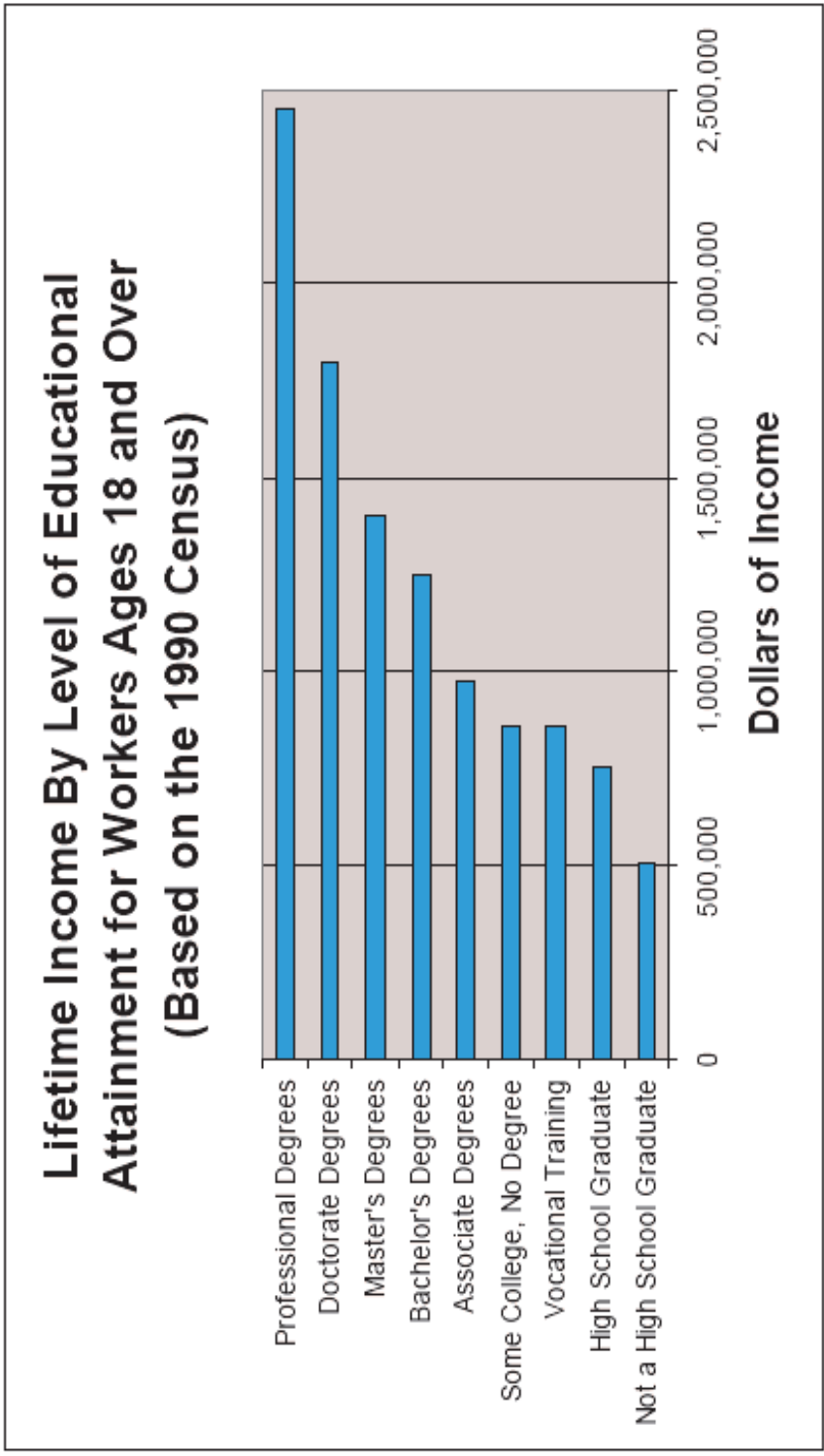
### Graph C

**Figure 7:**  
**Change in High School Completion Rates, 1990 to 2000, by State\***



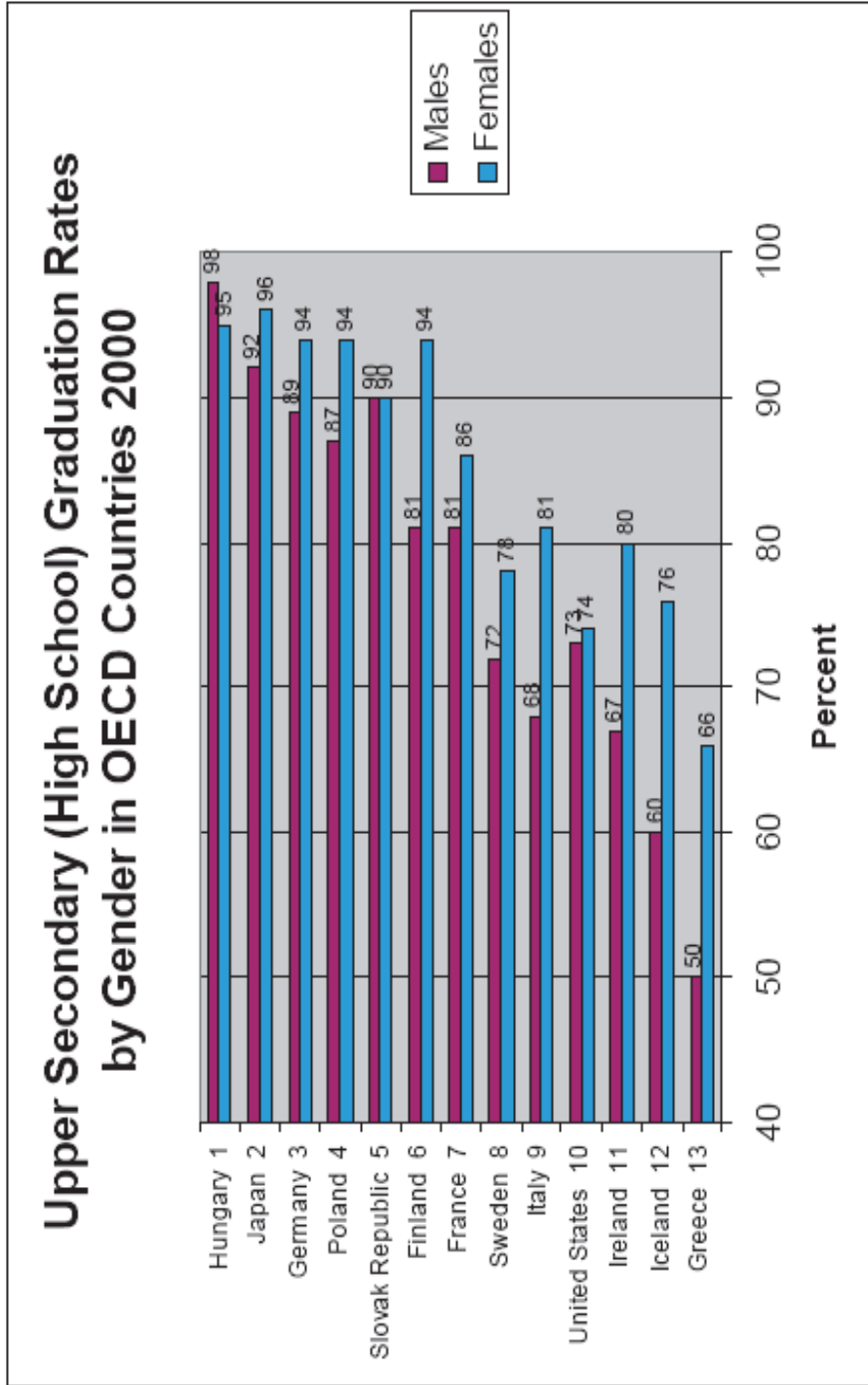
\*Source: See description of Barton method, page 48.

Graph D



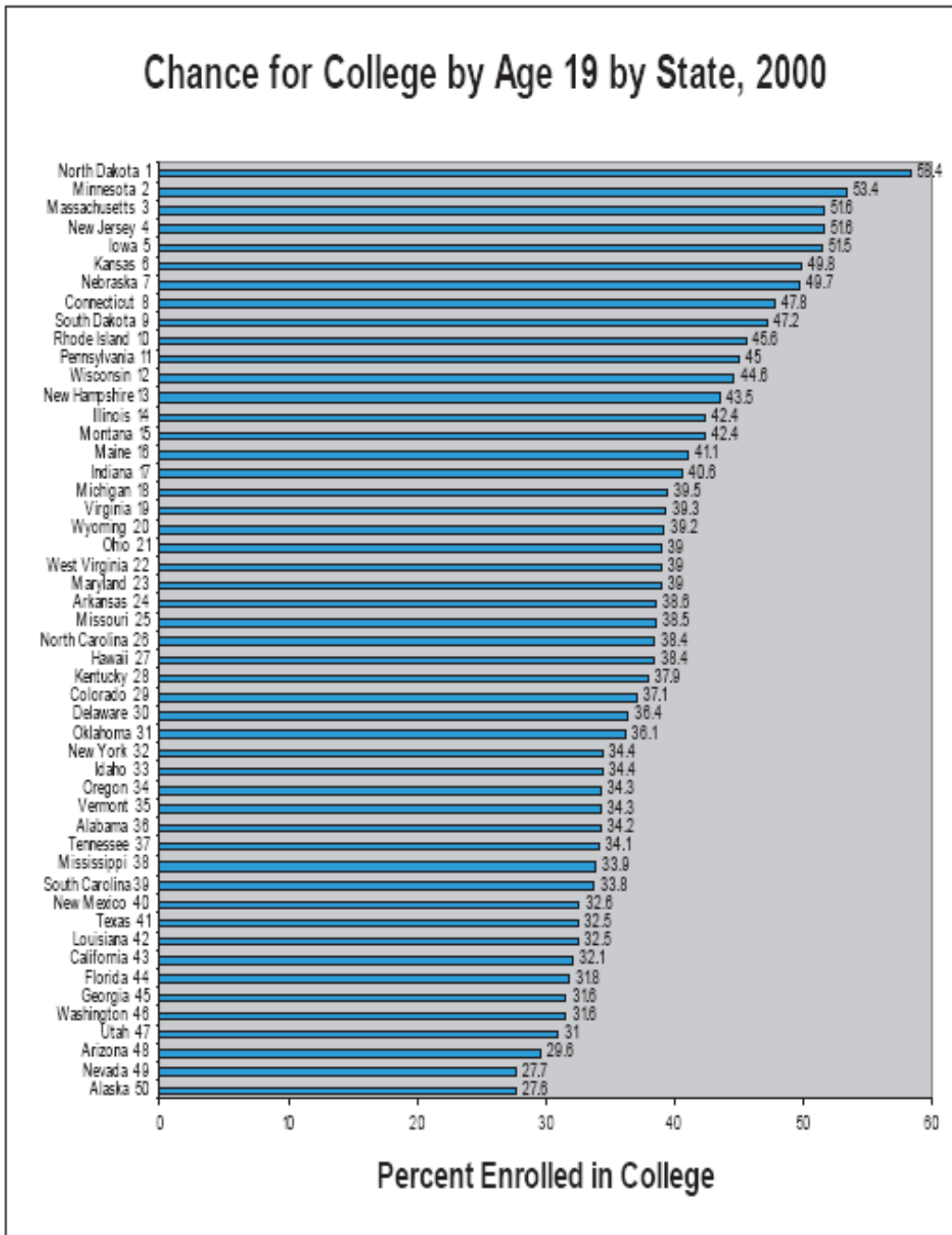
Reprinted with permission. Mortenson, Thomas G. *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*. Iowa City, September 1993, p. 8.

Graph E



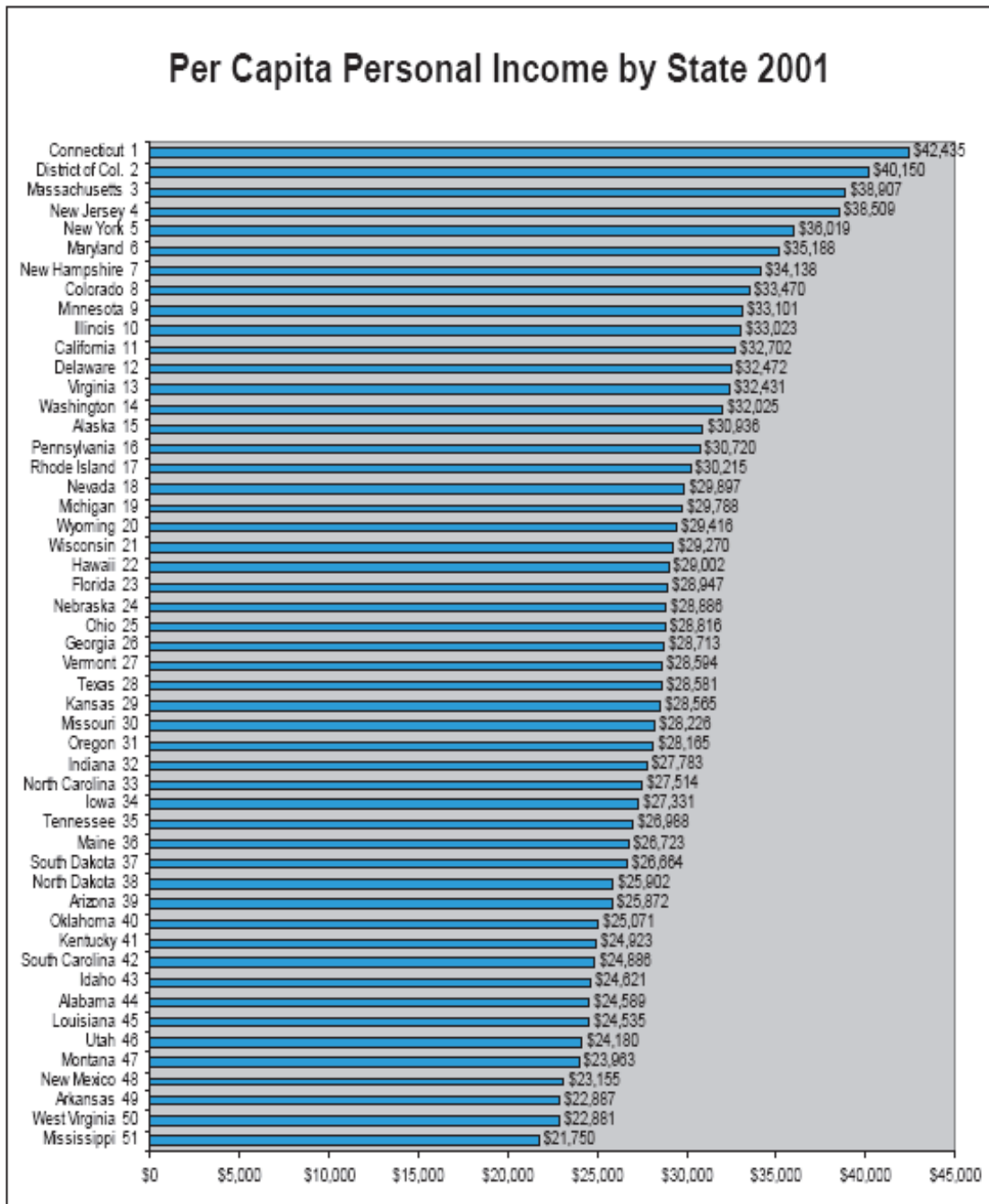
Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2002 Edition, © OECD 2002

Graph F



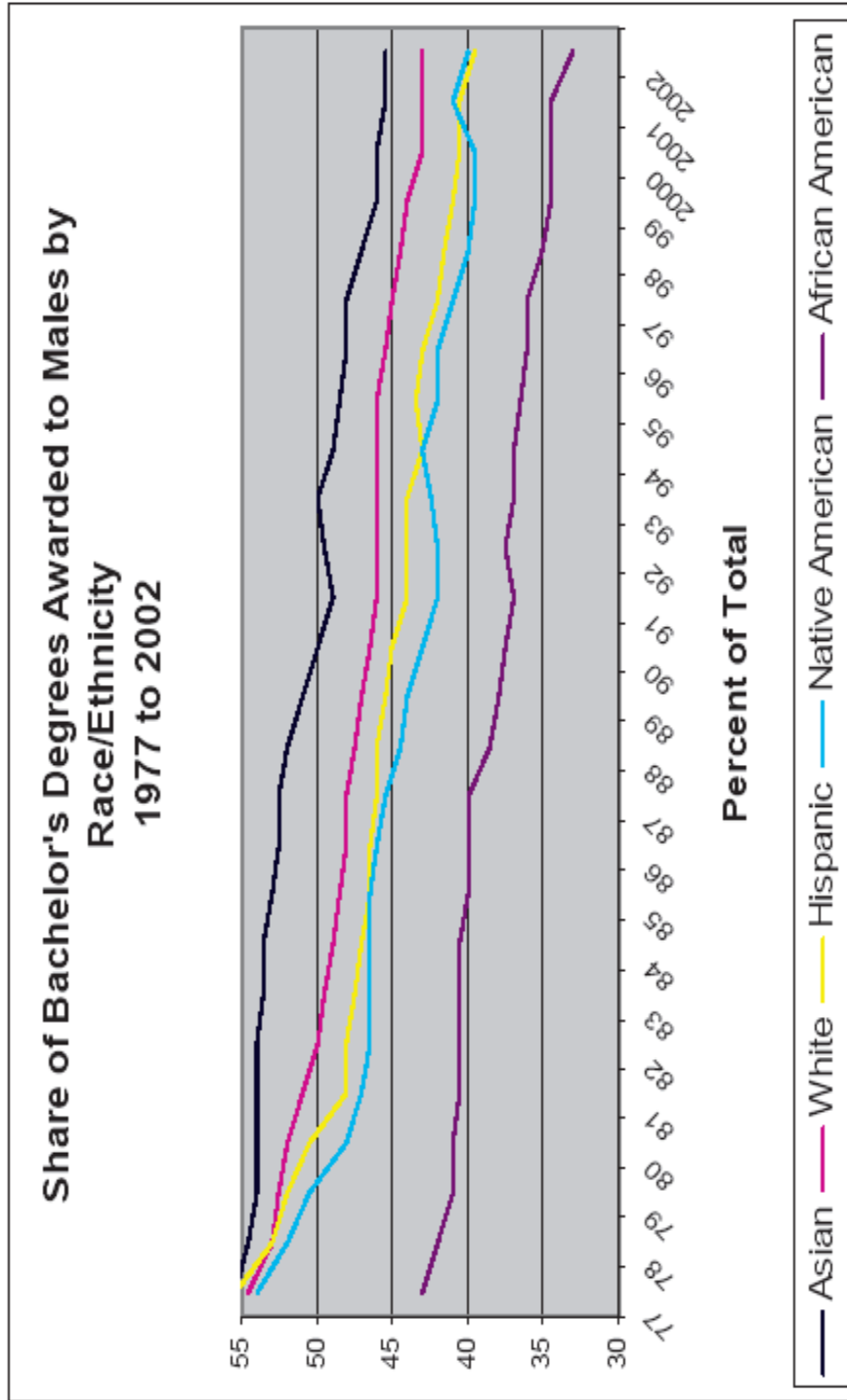
Reprinted with permission. Mortenson, Thomas G. *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*. April 2002, p. 6.

**Graph G**



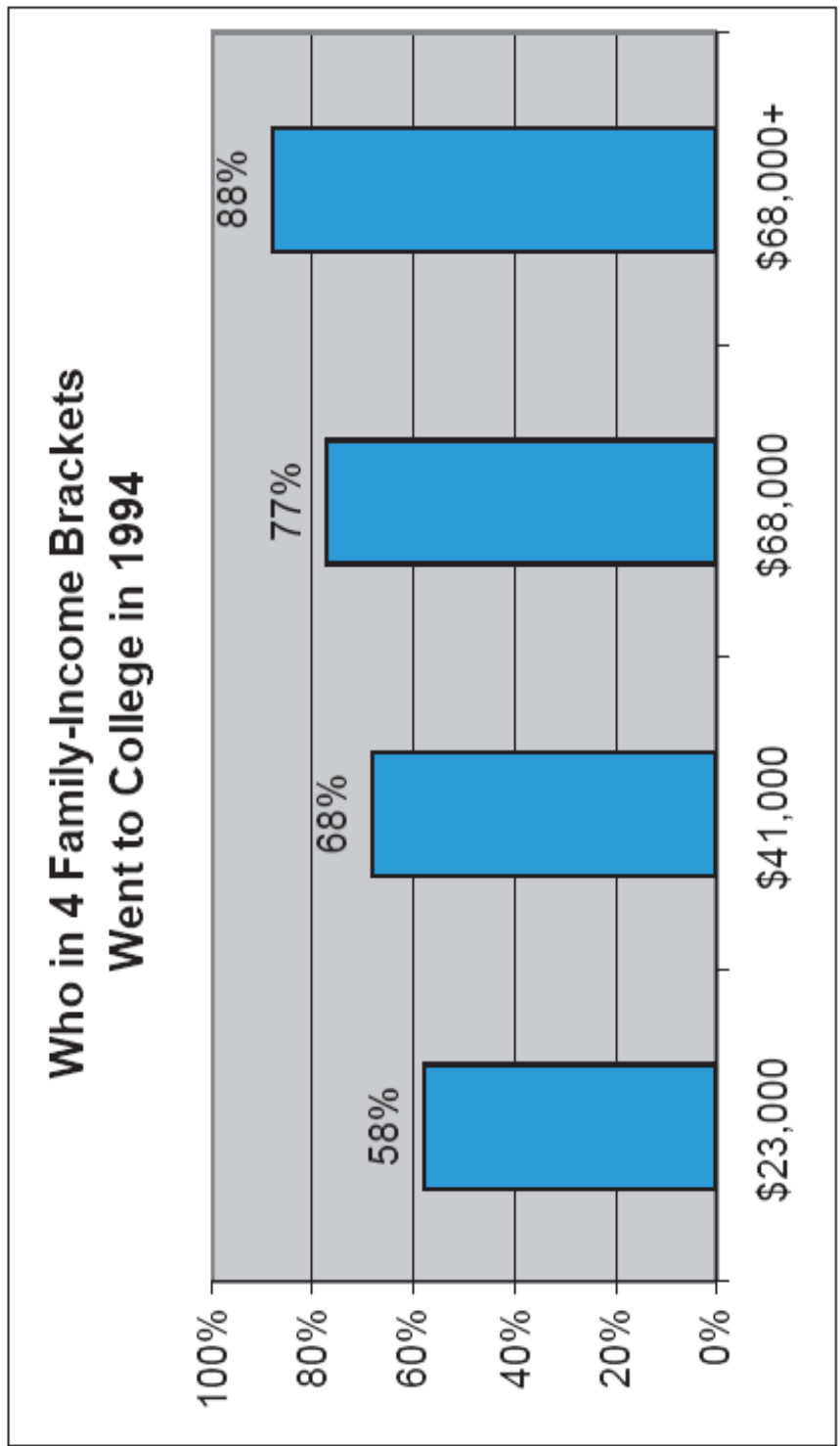
Reprinted with permission. Mortenson, Thomas G. *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, June 2003, p. 3.

**Graph H**



Based on information by the National Center for Education Statistics, as found at <http://nces.ed.gov/index.asp>.

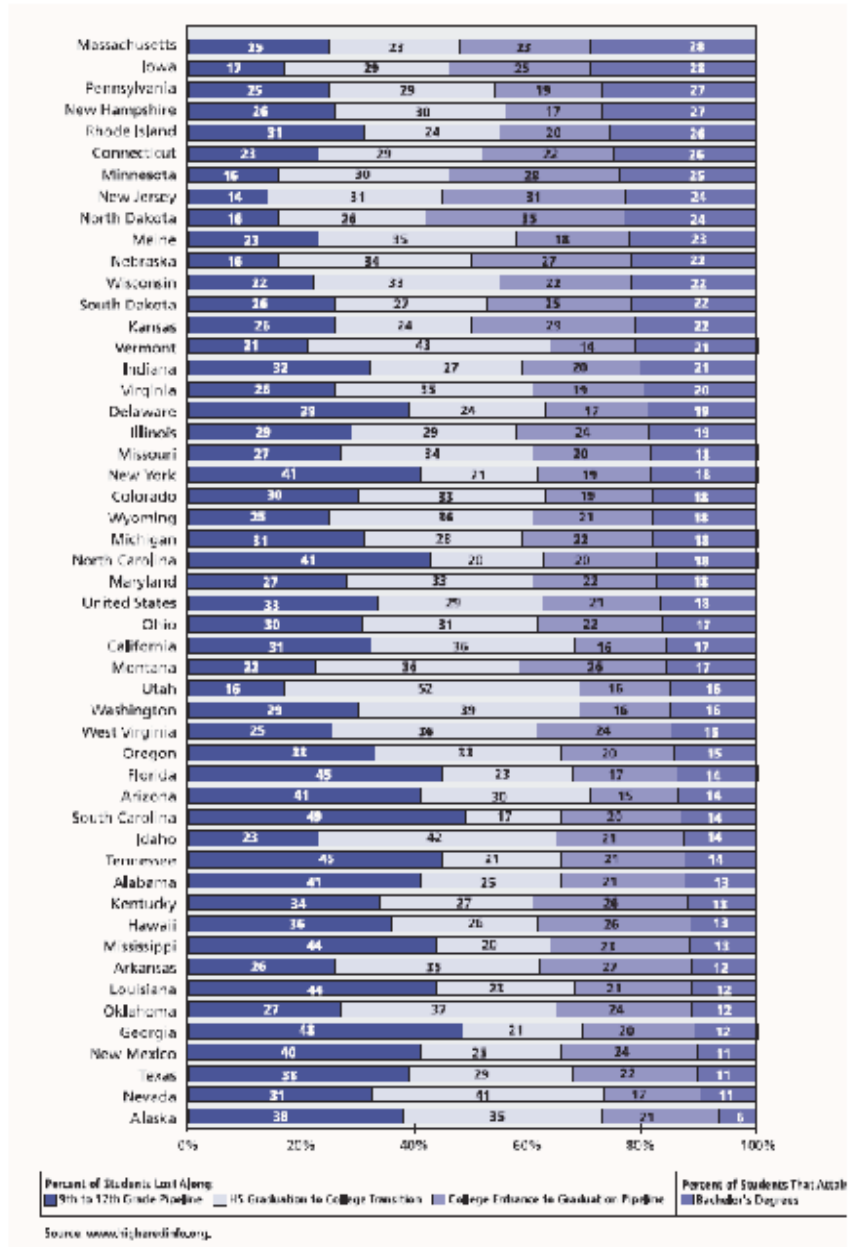
Graph I



Mortenson, Thomas. *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, May 1998, p. 4.

### Graph J

**Figure 1: Percent of 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Lost Along the Education Pipeline, and Percent that Attain College Degrees, 2000**



Referenced in: Cracks in the Pipeline: A Business Leader’s Guide to Higher Education Reform. Washington, DC: Committee for Economic Development, May 2005. As found in [www.higheredinfo.org](http://www.higheredinfo.org). © The National Center for High Education.

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We are education’s largest leadership organization:

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- Many of the nation’s top teachers are members.

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Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development  
1703 North Beauregard Street  
Alexandria, Virginia USA 22311-1714  
Phone: 1-800-933-ASCD (2723) or 1-703-578-9600  
Fax: 1-703-575-5400  
[www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)

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