



## Summary of Major Findings

The Center on Education Policy is releasing a series of reports that look at the performance of Latino, African American and Asian American students on state reading and math tests. The reports also examine the policy implications of CEP's findings about achievement for each ethnic/racial subgroup. **Below are key findings from all three reports:**

### ***A Call to Action to Raise Achievement for African American Students***

- Since 2002, African American students have made gains in the percentage of students reaching proficiency benchmarks on state tests and have narrowed achievement gaps with white students in most states. But progress has been uneven, and many African American students are not achieving at the levels needed for future success.
- As a group, African American students were often the lowest-performing racial/ethnic subgroup in 2008 on state reading and math tests at grades 4, 8, and the high school tested. This was the case in the majority of the states with sufficient data, as well as in the nine states with the highest numbers of African American test-takers.
- States in which African Americans were the lowest-performing subgroup at *all* tested grades tended to have a relatively large share of students attending schools with African American enrollments of 90% or more.
- State test results for African American students point to a vital need for local, state, and federal policymakers, educators, and others to address in-school and out-of-school factors affecting achievement for this group. Possible policy actions include improving course offerings and instruction in schools with high concentrations of African American students, distributing effective teachers more equitably to these schools, and reducing *de facto* racial and economic segregation in the educational system. Since a majority of African American students come from economically disadvantaged families, policy steps must also focus on helping families address the challenges of poverty.

### ***Improving Achievement for the Growing Latino Population is Critical to the Nation's Future***

- Since 2002, the percentage of Latino students reaching proficiency benchmarks on state tests has increased in most states in both reading and math across grades 4, 8, and the high school grade tested. Achievement gaps between Latino and white students have narrowed.

- The Latino subgroup was among the lower-performing racial/ethnic subgroups on state tests, with median achievement that was notably below Asian and white students, and somewhat above or roughly close to that of African American and Native American students, depending on the subject and grade level. Because Latino students are the largest ethnic minority group in many states and are the fastest-growing nationally, it is crucial to improve achievement for these students.
- In California, the state with the largest Latino enrollment, Latino students were the lowest-performing subgroup in reading.
- The majority of Latino students are from economically disadvantaged families, and more than one-third are English language learners. Policy actions to improve achievement for this subgroup must include improvements in instruction for ELLs and steps to address the challenges of poverty. Other possible actions include improving instruction and interventions in schools with high concentrations of Latino students.

### ***Policy Implications of Trends for Asian American Students***

- As a group, Asian American students often outperformed other racial/ethnic subgroups in reading and math at grades 4, 8, and the high school grade tested. In high school reading, however, white students did better than Asian American students in most states with sufficient data and sufficiently large Asian subgroups.
- The Asian subgroup is extremely diverse and includes a wide variety of nationality, language, and socioeconomic groups. The high performance for the Asian American subgroup as a whole tends to mask the academic needs of Asian American students who are struggling, are immigrants or refugees, have limited English proficiency, or come from Asian nationality or ethnic groups with higher poverty and lower educational rates.
- Local, state, and national attention is needed for Asian American students who are not high achievers and those who are English language learners. On the positive side, policymakers could look at the Asian American experience to consider the impact of such factors as student motivation, effort, and parental expectations.

**To request copies of these reports**, please contact Chloe Louvouezo at (202) 955-9450, ext. 314 or [clouvouezo@communicationworks.com](mailto:clouvouezo@communicationworks.com). Other related research is available on CEP's Web site, [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).