

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Education Crisis Among Boys Draws Attention

This week's *Newsweek* cover story, *Boy Crisis: At Every Level of Education They're Falling Behind What to Do?*, focuses on the growing issue of poor academic performance of boys. In an article, "The Trouble With Boys," summarizes the issue and the reason for concern:

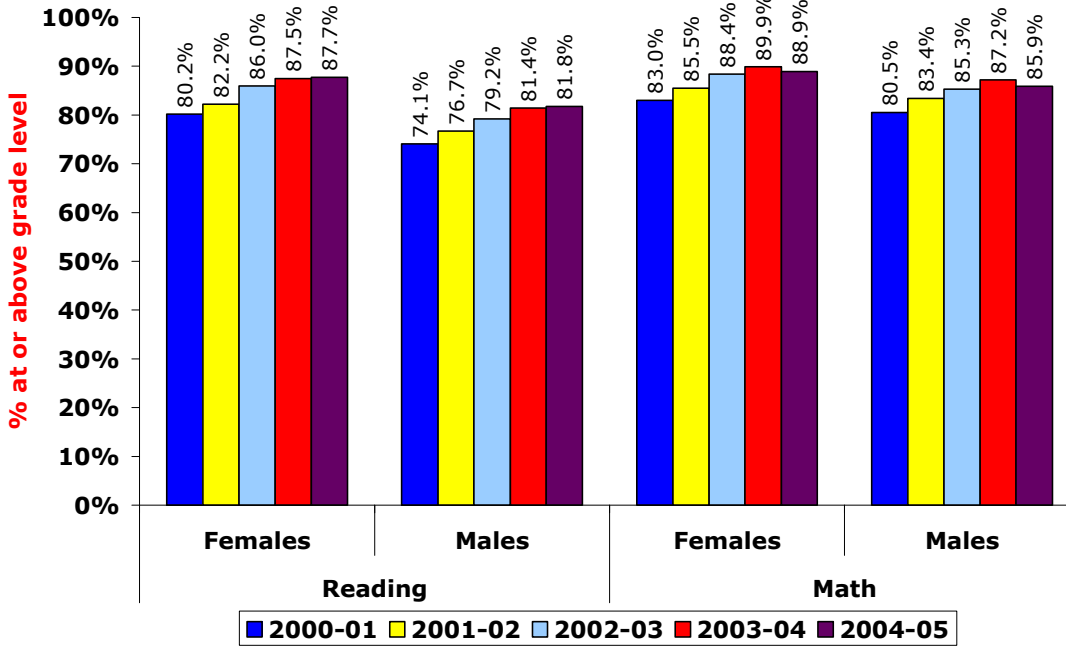
By almost every benchmark, boys across the nation and in every demographic group are falling behind. In elementary school, boys are two times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with learning disabilities and twice as likely to be placed in special-education classes. High-school boys are losing ground to girls on standardized writing tests. The number of boys who said they didn't like school rose 71 percent between 1980 and 2001, according to a University of Michigan study. Nowhere is the shift more evident than on college campuses. Thirty years ago men represented 58 percent of the undergraduate student body. Now they're a minority at 44 percent. This widening achievement gap, says Margaret Spellings, U.S. secretary of Education, "has profound implications for the economy, society, families and democracy."

The articles focuses on some explanations for this phenomenon, ranging from extra resources and attention focused on females because of Title IX to physiological differences between boys and girls, to changes in how schools are structured to a decline in role models for boys. "One of the most reliable predictors of whether a boy will succeed or fail in high school rests on a single question: does he have a man in his life to look up to? Too often, the answer is no. High rates of divorce and single motherhood have created a generation of fatherless boys," *Newsweek* observes.

North Carolina does not escape this phenomenon either. An analysis of end-of-grade test results disaggregated by genders shows females outperforming males in reading and math, with the percentage of females scoring at or above grade level in reading is 6 percentage points higher and almost 3 percentage points higher in math (see chart below).

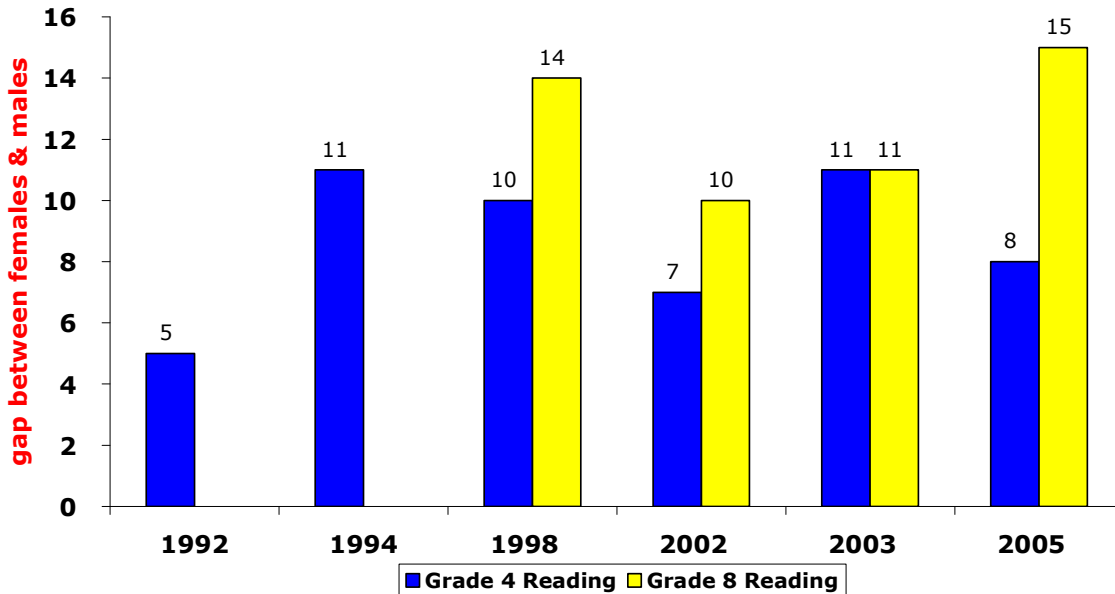
An analysis of NAEP results shows similar trends in reading, with females scoring an average of a full grade level higher on the grade 4 and grade 8 reading assessment, but males score as well or, in some cases better, than females on the math assessment (see reading chart below). *Newsweek* quotes Ange Peterson, president-elect of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, saying that "primary and secondary schools are going to have to make some major changes to restore the gender balance. There's a whole group of men we're losing in education completely."

Females Outperform Males on End-of-Grade Tests



Source: Public School Forum based upon DPI, Accountability Services end-of-grades test results for grades 3-8

Females Outperform Males on NAEP Reading Results



Note: Grade 8 reading was not assessed in 1992 or 1994
 Source: NCES, Nations Report Card

State News . . .

Drive-In Symposium on Impact of Domestic Violence on Student Performance

Registration: 8:00 am to 9:00 am Symposium: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Greenville Hilton, Greenville, NC
Thursday, February 9, 2006

Registration Fee of \$25.
Fee waived for past and present Progress Energy Leadership Institute Participants.
To register, contact Melissa Churchwell at mchurchwell@ncforum.org
Seating capacity is limited. Acceptance is on “first come, first served” basis.

Co-Sponsored by
The Public School Forum’s
Progress Energy Leadership Institute
& East Carolina University College of Education

Endorsed by
NC Association of School Administrators
& NC Schools Boards Association

Presenters include Rep. Marian McLawhorn; ECU Dean Marilyn Sheerer; Attorney Peter Romary, Certified Mediator & Arbitrator; Will Polk, Attorney General’s Office; Allison Schafer, NCSBA Attorney; Tracey Turner & Tony Troop, NC Assoc. of County Directors of Social Services and others. Closing Speaker:, NC Secretary of Administration, Gwynn T. Swinson.

Name of Person Submitting
Registration/s _____

Name of School System _____

Persons Wishing to Participate	
Name	Position

Return By FAX to Melissa Churchwell at 919-781-6527 or
By E-MAIL to mchurchwell@ncforum.org.
Please make check payable to Public School Forum.
Write PE Symposium on the “For” line and
Send to the Attention of Melissa Churchwell
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Income Inequality Widens; North Carolina Ranks 10

In their report, *Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends*, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has found that in North Carolina during “the early 2000s, the income gap between the *richest* 20 percent of families and the *poorest* 20 percent was 10th largest in the nation. The income gap between the richest 20 percent of families and the *middle* 20 percent was 8th largest in the nation” [emphasis included]. The CBPP examines Census income data, which has been adjusted to take into account inflation, the impact of federal taxes and capital gains, and the value of food stamps, the free-and reduced-price lunch program, and housing vouchers, from the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and the early 2000s. North Carolina was one of four states represented in the top 10 in five of six inequality measures (Tennessee appeared in all six).

Category	NC's Rank
Greatest Income Inequality B/T the Top & Bottom, Early 2000s	10
Greatest Income Inequality B/T the Top & Middle, Early 2000s	8
Greatest Increases in Income Inequality B/T the Top & Bottom, Early 1980s to Early 2000s	12
Greatest Increases in Income Inequality B/T the Top & Middle, Early 1980s to Early 2000s	8
Greatest Increases in Income Inequality B/T the Top & Bottom, Early 1990s to Early 2000s	4
Greatest Increases in Income Inequality B/T the Top & Middle, Early 1990s to Early 2000s	3

Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, *Pulling Apart*

The five states with the largest gaps between the top and bottom quintiles are New York, Texas, Tennessee, Arizona, and Florida, and the states with the largest gaps between the top and middle quintiles are Texas, Kentucky, Florida, Arizona, and Tennessee. “The recession’s impact on poor and middle-income families has lingered for longer than is usual. Unemployment has not fallen far enough to generate the income gains among low- and middle income families that were seen in the late 1990s. In addition, federal tax cuts targeted primarily to high earners served to widen the gap between the incomes of the wealthiest families and those with low and moderate incomes. As result, income inequality has begun to increase again,” according to a new report from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).

Pulling Apart concludes that “the increase in income inequality has resulted from a number of factors, including both economic trends and government policy. Both federal and state policies have contributed to the increasing gap in income, and both federal and state policies can be used to help mitigate or even reverse this trend in the future.”

For a copy of the report, go to www.cbpp.org

New Study Says NC Charter Cap Hinders Students

A national study recently released shows state-mandated limits on charter school growth are preventing hundreds of students in North Carolina and nine other states from attending the independent public schools. The report from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools urges policy-makers to focus on stronger oversight and application processes for charter schools instead of artificial limits on everything from school size to numbers of schools.

"The demand for charter schools is growing," said Nelson Smith, president of the national alliance. "If we are to continue to close the achievement gap in this country and create real opportunity for children, caps on charter schools must be lifted now."

A total of 25 states have some type of cap on charter schools. In North Carolina, state law caps the number of charters at 100. Local advocates and legislators have pushed unsuccessfully for years to raise the cap. Some state leaders decided to place limits on the numbers of charter schools or the numbers of students when charter school laws were first enacted, about 15 years ago. Lawmakers worried about the pace of charter school growth, its effect on existing school districts and whether the schools would be successful

"Everyone agrees that charter growth must be connected to quality," explained Smith. "But legislated caps are not the answer—and they do nothing to improve educational results. In fact, caps prevent successful schools from expanding and replicating. Legislatures must remember that the goal is to create more high performing schools, not protect those that chronically fail."

The Alliance suggests state leaders look more closely at the factors directly impacting the quality of charter schools, such as authorizers, those responsible for charter school oversight. According to the Alliance, the ideal situation is a state without caps on charter growth. To move in that direction, the Alliance recommends the following:

1. Never cap quality schools and authorizers.
2. Include sunset provisions.
3. Make new charter laws free of limits.
4. Make funding from the Federal Charter Schools Program contingent upon a cap-free state law.

For a full copy of the report go to <http://www.charterschoolleadershipcouncil.org/>

Update from Louisiana

Editor's note: One of our colleagues from Baton Rouge sent us this update of some of her recent travels around the state.

My most recent adventure can be best described as: a 5-person "delegation" to a coastal zone parish wearing rubber boots to slog through 500 completely demolished homes and businesses, in a community where there are no schools now. And just before that little jaunt, I accompanied a group to visit some of the "satellite classrooms" for nearly 5,000 traumatized displaced children from New Orleans now in another district (yes, this district absorbed them all at once). We "discovered" that we were right about the pathetic education they were receiving in New Orleans since many of the children at the "2nd and 3rd grade" levels have trouble writing their alphabet.

In fact, I have had many opportunities for fact-finding missions as we have over 100,000 displaced kids, hundreds of destroyed schools, 81,000 closed businesses, and about 40% of our state's economy wiped out in one year....not to mention the 300,000 folks still without homes and 25,000 in trailers. Education experts come down to help but the Powerpoints and jargon just don't seem to match our super-accelerated pace of change: be that the continued death of various things, hanging on to the good things, planning & rebuilding to better things that need to be so.

Texas Teachers Association Sues State Over Training

The Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) filed a lawsuit earlier this month against Texas Commissioner of Education Shirley Neeley claiming teachers are overburdened with new training requirements that could jeopardize their certification, reports the *San Antonio Express News*. The TSTA is suing because, in some districts, teachers were forced to train on their own time with no compensation. The lawsuit also challenges the authority of the commissioner to make any rule that impacts a teacher's certificate.

The lawsuit was set in motion by a requirement that districts retrain teachers who assess the progress of children learning to speak English in Texas public schools. School districts were under pressure last fall to complete the training by a mid-December deadline, an expense they didn't budget or plan for.

State education leaders said the training was necessary to ensure teachers are accurately gauging the development of Texas' more than 600,000 English language learners. Under federal law, districts must assess the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills of English language learners to qualify for Title III funds — money set aside for students learning English. This year's Title III grant for the state totaled more than \$82 million.

Texas (cont'd)

Neeley said the state education agency convened a committee of teachers from around Texas to help decide how to deal with the federal requirement. She said the decision to hold training early in the year came from teachers. "It was their choice to try to have the training completed before midterm because after we come back from winter break so much of the focus is on assessment and second semester," Neeley said. "So actually we thought we were doing two things: being in compliance with federal requirements as well as meeting the wishes of the teachers that served on the committee."

Those already certified to teach English language learners will have to take an online test during a six-week period beginning Jan. 30 to be eligible to assess their students. "If they fail the test, they're no longer certified to assess these kids, regardless of the years they've taught or the degrees and certification they hold," said Kevin Lungwitz, general counsel for the TSTA. "This is something we've got to challenge." TSTA will ask a judge at a Jan. 30 hearing to suspend the requirement for the online test until the case can be heard.

WA Governor Includes Afterschool in Budget

As part of an effort to improve academic performance and decrease high school dropout rates, Washington Governor Christine Gregoire will propose nearly \$40 million in her 2006 supplemental budget to help struggling students. If approved later this month, funds would be distributed to Washington school districts to support afterschool and summer school programs, seminars, and tutoring sessions.

Washington schools have struggled to effectively address the large number of students failing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). This year, sophomores need to pass the WASL order to earn a high school diploma. Last spring, fewer than half of sophomores met WASL standards, and the high school dropout rate in Washington is 30 percent, according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

In addition to allocated funding, the governor's education budget proposal also includes new accountability requirements. School districts would have to document types of assistance used, the number of students who take part in each option, and the results students achieved. Unique programs that are shown to help students succeed will be rewarded with additional funding. "Education can lift individuals out of poverty and into rewarding careers," says Gregoire. "It exposes young people to a broader world, a world full of opportunity and hope."

In Vancouver, Washington, Mountain View High School has already taken steps to actively assist students needing help in math, writing, reading, and science. In addition to providing afterschool tutoring sessions for all students, the school runs a two-week long program in August for incoming freshmen to familiarize them with the school, teach study skills, and introduce math and literacy courses for the year.

[Editor's Note: The article is reprinted from the NCCAP Observer](#)

Seeking Jay Robinson Award Nominations

The Jay Robinson Leadership Award was established by the Public School Forum Board of Directors in recognition of outstanding leaders in the field of public education. The award may be given to anyone who has displayed innovative, creative, effective leadership for the public schools of North Carolina. Past winners include Laura Bilbro-Berry, the first Teaching Fellow to be named North Carolina Teacher of the Year; Tom McNeel, superintendent of Caldwell County schools; Jim Causby, two-time state Superintendent of the Year and executive director of the NC Association of School Administrators, Robert Bridges, former superintendent of Wake County Schools and former chair of the state's Raising Achievement and Closing Gap Commission, Superior Court Judge Howard E. Manning, Jr., the trial court judge in the *Leandro* school finance case. The nominations must be postmarked by March 1, 2006. Nominations postmarked after that date will not be accepted. The award ceremony will be held on June 5, 2006, at the Raleigh Crabtree Marriott Hotel. Admission will be by invitation only. The honor includes a \$5,000 award sponsored by Progress Energy.

To obtain an application, contact Kyrin Perez (kperez@ncforum.org) at 919-781-6833 or you can download a copy at www.ncforum.org.

The *Friday Report* is published weekly by the Public School Forum of NC and is distributed to Forum Board members, legislators active in education policy, the press, and Forum subscribers. Archived editions can be found at www.ncforum.org/doclib