

Commissioner's Statement

INTRODUCTION

Reliable, accurate, and timely data are necessary to monitor the progress of U.S. education and respond to its opportunities and challenges. To ensure such data are available, Congress has mandated that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) produce an annual report, *The Condition of Education*. This year's report presents indicators of important developments and trends in U.S. education. These indicators focus on participation and persistence in education, student performance and other measures of achievement, the environment for learning, and resources for education. In addition, this year's volume contains a special analysis that examines changes in student coursetaking in high school using national transcript data from 1982 to 2005. While the analysis focuses on the credit accrual of high school graduates, it also takes a special look at the coursework of high school dropouts and courses taken for college credit.

This statement summarizes the main findings of the special analysis and the 48 indicators that appear in the five following sections. Each indicator discussed is referenced by its number (e.g., *indicator 10*) in the volume.

SPECIAL ANALYSIS ON HIGH SCHOOL COURSE-TAKING

To explore the coursetaking patterns and trends of high school students, the special analysis uses national data from two surveys sponsored by NCES: the high school longitudinal transcript studies, which provide information on high school graduates in 1982, 1992, and 2004, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) High School Transcript Studies, which cover the experiences of high school graduates in selected years from 1987 to 2005. Drawing from these sources and others, the analysis reveals that:

- Most states have enacted minimum requirements for graduation focusing on the numbers and types of courses that students take in high school, such as the *New Basics* coursetaking recommendations. A growing number of states also require the passing of "exit exams" that test proficiency or competency in specific subjects.
- Between 1982 and 2004, the average number of course credits accrued by high school graduates increased 19 percent, from 21.7 to 25.8 credits. Graduates in 2004, compared with those in 1982, earned an average of 4.3 versus 4.0 credits in English, 3.6 versus 2.7 credits in mathematics, and 3.2 versus 2.2 credits in science.
- In 2004, more high school graduates had completed advanced courses in mathematics and science than in 1982—in particular, in calculus, chemistry I, and physics I. For example, the average number of credits that graduates earned in algebra and more advanced mathematics courses increased from 1.9 to 3.1; in chemistry, from 0.4 to 0.7; and in physics, from 0.2 to 0.4. Graduates also earned more credits in English and foreign languages during this period.
- The percentage of students who took Advanced Placement (AP) examinations increased between 1997 and 2005, with the total number of students taking these examinations doubling. Although the average scores in AP examinations have remained relatively stable, there has been a decrease (from 65 to 59 percent) in the percentage of examinations resulting in a qualifying score of 3.0 or more.
- Differences in advanced coursetaking by sex and race/ethnicity are evident

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in mathematics, science, English, and foreign language study. Since 1998, female graduates have been more likely than male graduates to complete some advanced science coursework, though no measurable differences by sex were detected in the proportions of graduates who took the highest levels of science or mathematics coursework. In addition, Asian graduates were more likely than graduates from other racial/ethnic groups to complete advanced courses in mathematics, science, English, and foreign language study in 2004.

PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

As the U.S. population increases in size, so does its enrollment at all levels of public and private education. At the elementary and secondary levels, growth is due largely to the increase in the size of the school-age population. At the postsecondary level, both population growth and increasing enrollment rates help account for rising enrollments in undergraduate, graduate, and first-professional programs. The cohorts of learners have become more diverse, with students who are members of racial/ethnic minorities or who speak a language other than English at home making up an increasing proportion of the school-age population over time.

- Between 1970 and 2005, enrollment rates increased for children ages 5–6, who are typically in kindergarten or 1st grade, and for adults ages 18–34, who are typically in postsecondary education. Youth ages 18–19 experienced the largest overall increase in enrollment during this period, from 48 to 68 percent. The overall enrollment rate for 2005 was up from 61 percent of students in this age group in 2000 (*indicator 1*).
- The percentage of children ages 3–5 who attended center-based early childhood

care and education programs—including day care centers, Head Start programs, preschool, nursery school, prekindergarten, and other early childhood programs—increased from 53 percent in 1991 to 60 percent in 1999 and then decreased to 57 percent in 2005. A greater percentage of nonpoor children ages 3–5 participated in center-based programs than poor children (*indicator 2*).

- In 2007, public school enrollment in the United States is expected to approach about 50 million students: 34.6 million in prekindergarten through 8th grade and 15.0 million in grades 9 through 12. Total public school enrollment is projected to set new records each year from 2007 through 2016, at which time it is expected to reach 53.3 million. The South is projected to experience the largest increase in enrollments of all regions in the country (*indicator 3*).
- The percentage of all children enrolled in private schools in kindergarten through grade 12 remained near 10 percent between 1989–90 and 2003–04. Roman Catholic schools continued to have the largest percentage of total private school enrollment during this period, but there was a shift in the distribution of students from Roman Catholic to other religious and nonsectarian private schools at both the elementary and secondary levels (*indicator 4*).
- Between 1972 and 2005, the percentage of racial/ethnic minority students enrolled in the nation's public schools increased from 22 to 42 percent, primarily due to growth in Hispanic enrollments. In 2005, Hispanic students represented 20 percent of public school enrollment, up from 6 percent in 1972. The distribution of minority students in public schools

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differed across regions of the country, with minority public school enrollment (54 percent) in 2005 exceeding White enrollment (46 percent) in the West (*indicator 5*).

- The number of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home more than doubled between 1979 and 2005. Among school-age children who spoke a non-English language at home, the total number who spoke English with difficulty increased from 3 to 6 percent of all 5- to 17-year-olds between 1979 and 2000 and did not measurably change after that. In 2005, the majority of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home spoke Spanish. Higher percentages of poor and near-poor children spoke a non-English language at home than nonpoor children (*indicator 6*).
- Since the inception of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the mid-1970s, youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services have increased nearly every year. In 1976–77, some 3.7 million youth were served under IDEA (8 percent of total public school enrollment), and by 2005–06, some 6.7 million youth received these services (14 percent of total public school enrollment). Specific learning disabilities were the most prevalent of all disabilities among youth ages 3–21 and experienced the largest increase in the percentage of the population served (*indicator 7*).
- Over the past three and a half decades, total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions has generally increased and is projected to continue to do so through 2016. From 2006 to 2016, women's undergraduate enrollment is expected to continue growing faster than men's, and women are projected to make up 60 percent of enrollment in 2016. In addition, full-time undergraduate enrollment is expected to increase more rapidly than part-time enrollment, and enrollment at 4-year institutions is expected to grow faster than at 2-year institutions (*indicator 8*).
- Graduate and first-professional enrollments in degree-granting institutions increased between 1976 and 2005, with female enrollment increasing by a larger percentage than male enrollment for both types of programs. During this period, minority enrollment increased 269 percent in graduate programs, and 331 percent in first-professional programs. According to projections, women exceeded 50 percent of total first-professional enrollment for the first time in 2006. Among minorities, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander enrollments have experienced the greatest growth (*indicator 9*).
- The percentage of the population age 16 or older participating in adult education—including basic skills training, apprenticeships, work-related courses, personal interest courses, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and part-time college or university degree programs—increased between 1995 and 2001 and then declined in 2005. The most popular forms of adult education in 2005 were work-related courses and personal interest courses (*indicator 10*).

LEARNER OUTCOMES

How well does the American educational system—and its students—perform? Data from national and international assessments of students' academic achievement can help address this question, as can data on adults' educational and work experiences, literacy

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levels, and earnings. In some areas, such as mathematics and science, the performance of elementary and secondary students has shown some improvement over the past decade, but not in all grades assessed and not equally for all groups of students. The association between education and the earnings and employment of adults helps underscore the importance of education for individuals and society and the outcomes of different levels of educational attainment.

- National reading scores of 4th- and 8th-graders assessed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have varied little over time, though both were higher in 2005 than in 1992. The reading scores of 12th-graders, however, decreased 6 points during this period. The percentage of 4th-graders performing at or above *Proficient* (indicating solid academic achievement) increased between 1992 and 2005 (from 29 to 31 percent) and has remained steady since then. The percentage of 8th-graders performing at or above *Proficient* did not change measurably during the 10-year period, but the percentage of 12th-graders performing at this level decreased from 40 to 35 percent (*indicator 11*).
- The average mathematics score of 12th-graders on the 2005 NAEP mathematics assessment was set at 150 (on a scale of 0–300). Some 23 percent of 12th-graders performed at or above *Proficient* (indicating solid academic performance), whereas 39 percent performed below *Basic* (indicating performance below partial mastery of fundamental skills) (*indicator 12*).
- In 2005, the average NAEP science score of students was higher than in previous assessment years at grade 4, was not measurably different at grade 8, and was lower at grade 12 than in 1996. The percentages of 4th- and 8th-graders who performed at or above *Proficient* (29 percent in 2005) were not measurably different from the percentages who did so from 1996 to 2005, while the percentage of 12th-graders performing at this achievement level was lower in 2005 than in 1996 (*indicator 13*).
- Results from NAEP indicate that the differences between White and Black and Hispanic scores in reading and mathematics fluctuated at the 4th and 8th grades between 1990 and 2005. Recently, between 2003 and 2005, these gaps narrowed for most groups. Looking at the reading performance of 4th-graders in 2005, Blacks scored, on average, 29 points lower than Whites (on a 0–500 scale), and Hispanics scored 26 points lower than Whites. Similar patterns were seen in the mathematics performance of 8th-graders (*indicator 14*).
- NAEP long-term trend results indicate that the reading and mathematics achievement of 9- and 13-year-olds improved between the early 1970s and 2004. In reading, 9-year-olds scored higher in 2004 than in previous assessments, with an increase of 7 points between 1999 and 2004. In mathematics, the achievement of 9- and 13-year-olds in 2004 was the highest of any assessment year. Though the performance of 17-year-olds on both NAEP assessments was not measurably different from that in prior years, scores for Black and Hispanic students have improved since the early 1970s (*indicator 15*).
- According to data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K), 5th-grade children who lived in households below the poverty

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threshold for all five rounds of the survey (fall 1998, spring 1999, spring 2000, spring 2002, and spring 2004) were less likely to demonstrate proficiency in specific reading and mathematics knowledge and skills than their counterparts who lived in households at or above the poverty threshold. Generally, students whose mothers had higher levels of education were more likely to master each reading and mathematics skill than students whose mothers had less education (*indicator 16*).

- The 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessed students' mathematics performance in 25 countries at grade 4 and 46 countries at grade 8. Results from TIMSS showed that U.S. 4th- and 8th-graders performed above the international averages in three mathematics cognitive domains: *knowing* facts, procedures, and concepts needed to solve mathematical problems; *applying* knowledge of facts, skills, and procedures to create representations and solve routine problems; and *reasoning* to solve more complex problems through logical thinking (*indicator 17*).
- Results from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), which assessed adults age 16 or older in three types of literacy (prose, document, and quantitative), showed that while the average prose and document literacy scores of U.S. adults were not measurably different in 2003 from 1992, the average quantitative literacy score increased 8 points. In each type of literacy, 13 percent of adults scored at or above the *Proficient* level in 2003 (*indicator 18*).
- About 8 percent of youth ages 16–19 were neither enrolled in school nor working in 2006. In each year from 1986 through 2006, higher percentages

of Black and Hispanic youth than White youth were neither enrolled in school nor working. Youth from poor and near-poor families were more likely than youth from nonpoor families to be neither in school nor working in each year observed (*indicator 19*).

- Young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time, full year and held at least a bachelor's degree had higher median earnings than their peers with less education between 1980 and 2005. This pattern generally held for male, female, White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian subgroups. Moreover, for the entire young adult population and generally for each subgroup, the gap in earnings by educational attainment grew during this period. For example, males with a bachelor's or higher degree earned 19 percent more than male high school completers in 1980, and 64 percent more in 2005 (*indicator 20*).

STUDENT EFFORT AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

Many factors are associated with school success, persistence, and progress toward a high school diploma or a college or advanced degree. These include students' motivation and effort, learning experiences, and expectations for further education, as well as various family characteristics, such as parents' educational attainment and family income. Monitoring these factors and tracking educational attainment provide key indicators for describing the progress of students and schooling in the United States.

- In 1980 and 2002, high school sophomores were asked how much time they spent on homework per week. The percentage who reported spending more than 10 hours per week on homework increased from 7 to 37 percent between the two survey years. The general increase in the percentage

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of students who reported spending this amount of time on homework was observed for both males and females (from 6 to 33 percent for males and from 8 to 41 percent for females) (*indicator 21*).

- When students were asked how often they came to school without books; without paper, pen, or pencil; and without their homework—all of which can be used as measures of student preparedness for school—the percentage of students who reported being chronically unprepared for school (i.e., “usually” or “often”) was larger in 2002 than in 1980 or 1990. The percentage who reported coming to school “usually” or “often” without their homework in 2002 was 26 percent, up from 22 percent in 1980 and 18 percent in 1990 (*indicator 22*).
- The *status dropout rate* represents the percentage of an age group that is not enrolled in school and has not earned a high school credential (i.e., diploma or equivalent, such as a General Educational Development [GED] certificate). Status dropout rates for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics ages 16–24 have each generally declined since 1972. Rates remained lowest for Whites and highest for Hispanics (*indicator 23*).
- Among public high school students in the class of 2003–04, about three-fourths of them graduated on time, as estimated by the percentage of an incoming freshman class that graduates 4 years later. The *averaged freshman graduation rate* in 2003–04 ranged from a low of 57.4 percent in Nevada to a high of 87.6 in Nebraska (*indicator 24*).
- Between 1972 and 2005, the rate at which high school completers enrolled in college in the fall immediately after high school increased from 49 to 69 percent. After widening between the late 1970s and early 1980s, the gap in the immediate college enrollment rate between Blacks and Whites narrowed between 1999 and 2001, but has widened again since then. The gap between Hispanics and Whites widened between 1979 and 1998 and then again between 2002 and 2005. Since 1972, the immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers has increased faster for females than for males (*indicator 25*).
- Minority students accounted for roughly half of the growth in the number of associate’s and bachelor’s degrees earned between 1976–77 and 2004–05, and for 73 percent of the increase in the number of first-professional degrees earned. Among minority students, Asians/Pacific Islanders experienced the greatest rates of growth in the number of degrees earned (*indicator 26*).
- Some 86 percent of 25- to 29-year-olds had a high school diploma or equivalency certificate in 2006. This rate has remained between 85 and 88 percent over the last 30 years. The rate at which students in this age group completed at least some college education increased from 34 to 58 percent between 1971 and 2006, though increases were not consistent throughout the period. In most years, the rate for completing a bachelor’s degree or higher was roughly half that for completing at least some college. Racial/ethnic differences in levels of educational attainment remain (*indicator 27*).
- Women have earned a larger percentage of bachelor’s degrees than men since the early 1980s overall, but the percentage they have earned in various fields has varied. For example, though women

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earned 87 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded in health professions in 2004–05, they earned less than a quarter of the bachelor's degrees awarded in computer and information sciences and engineering. Women have also made gains at the graduate level: in 2004–05, they earned 59 percent of master's degrees (up from 49 percent in 1979–80), and they earned just under half of doctoral degrees (up from 30 percent) (*indicator 28*).

CONTEXTS OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The school environment is described by a number of features, including learning opportunities, student/teacher ratios, the backgrounds and qualifications of teachers, and the climate for learning. Monitoring these and other factors provides a fuller picture of the conditions in schools that can influence education. Society also influences and provides support for education, including learning activities that take place outside school, as well as financial support for education.

- Among all kindergarten through 8th-grade students in 2005, some 43 percent participated in at least one afterschool activity. A larger percentage of female than male students were involved in arts, clubs, community service, religious activities, and scouts after school, but the pattern of participation was reversed for sports. In addition, a greater percentage of students from nonpoor families participated in at least one afterschool activity than students from poor and near-poor families (*indicator 29*).
- The ratio of students to teachers, which is frequently used as a proxy measure for class size, declined between 1990 and 2004 from 17.6 to 16.3 students per teacher for all regular public elementary, secondary, and combined schools. In every year during this period, the student/teacher ratios tended to be higher in public schools with larger enrollments than in public schools with smaller enrollments. For example, in 2004, regular public elementary schools with enrollments over 1,500 had 6.8 more students per teacher, on average, than elementary schools with enrollments under 300 (*indicator 30*).
- Approximately half of all students with disabilities in 2004–05 spent 80 percent or more of their day in a regular classroom, an increase from 45 percent in 1994–95. The percentage of time students spent in a general classroom varied by their race/ethnicity. Compared with students with disabilities of any other race/ethnicity, a higher percentage of Black students with disabilities spent less than 40 percent of their day in a general classroom; a higher percentage also attended a separate school facility for students with disabilities (*indicator 31*).
- In the 2004–05 school year, there were 3,294 charter schools in the jurisdictions that allowed them, making up 4 percent of all public schools in the United States. Charter schools enrolled larger percentages of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students and lower percentages of White and Asian/Pacific Islander students than conventional public schools. A larger percentage of charter schools than conventional public schools had less than 15 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (*indicator 32*).
- The number of full-time teachers in the United States rose from 2.6 to 3.3 million between 1993–94 and 2003–04. During this period, the percentage of full-time teachers who were under age 30 increased (from 12 to 18 percent), as

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did the percentage who were ages 50–59 (from 21 to 29 percent). There was no measurable change, however, in the percentage of full-time teachers who were age 60 and over (*indicator 33*).

- The percentage of public school principals who were female increased from 41 to 56 percent in elementary schools and from 14 to 26 percent in secondary schools between the 1993–94 and 2003–04 school years. In private schools, the percentage of female principals remained around 68 percent in elementary schools and about 34 percent in secondary schools. The percentage of principals who were age 55 or older also increased during this period, from 20 to 31 percent. This increase was particularly pronounced at the secondary level, where the percentage of principals in this age group increased from 17 to 30 percent in public schools and from 22 to 46 percent in private schools (*indicator 34*).
- Most schools employ staff who provide various support services directly to students. These student support staff, who include licensed or certified professionals (e.g., school counselors, social workers, nurses, and speech therapists) and teacher aides (e.g., special education, regular Title I, and library aides), made up 27 percent of all public school staff in the 2003–04 school year. Nearly all elementary and secondary schools reported having student support staff, with a larger number employed full time than part time (*indicator 35*).
- Between 1992 and 2004, the rate at which students ages 12–18 were victims of nonfatal crime—including theft, violent crime, and serious violent crime—at school declined 62 percent (from 144 to 55 crimes per 1,000 students). During the same period, the rate of crimes against students at school declined 65 percent for theft (from 95 to 33 crimes per 1,000 students) and 54 percent for violent crimes (from 48 to 22 crimes per 1,000 students). In each year observed, the rates for serious violent crime—including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault—were lower when students were at school than away from school (*indicator 36*).
- Total elementary and secondary public school revenues increased 51 percent in constant dollars from 1989–90 to 2003–04. Federal and state revenues increased at a faster rate than all local revenues (both property tax revenue and other local revenue). The proportion of total revenue for public education from local sources declined, while the proportion of total revenue flowing to public schools from federal sources increased and the proportion from state sources stayed the same (*indicator 37*).
- Between 1989–90 and 2003–04, total expenditures per student in public elementary and secondary schools rose 27 percent in constant 2003–04 dollars, from \$7,692 to \$9,762. Among the five major categories of expenditures (instruction, administration, operation and maintenance, capital outlay and interest, and other), expenditures on capital outlay and interest increased the most (68 percent), followed by spending on instruction, operations and maintenance, and administration. In 2003–04, some 52 percent of the total amount spent went toward instructional expenditures. Total expenditures per student were highest in the Northeast, followed by the Midwest, West, and South (*indicator 38*).

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- Differences between states accounted for a greater proportion of the variation in instruction expenditures per student among unified public school districts than did differences within states from 1989–90 to 2003–04. The between-state differences have increased since 1997–98, while the within-state differences have remained largely unchanged. The between-state variation accounted for 74 percent of the total variation in 1997–98, and 78 percent in 2003–04 (*indicator 39*).
- Total expenditures per student in public elementary and secondary schools in 2003–04 were highest in low-poverty school districts (\$10,857), next highest in high-poverty school districts (\$10,377), and lowest in middle- and middle-high poverty districts (\$9,042 and \$9,045, respectively). Between 1995–96 and 2003–04, total expenditures per student increased the most for the high-poverty districts (28 percent) and the least for the low-poverty districts (21 percent). Current expenditures per student, which include instructional, administrative, and operation and maintenance expenditures, followed a similar pattern (*indicator 40*).
- In 2003, elementary and secondary expenditures per student for the United States averaged \$8,935—which was higher than the average of \$6,278 for the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reporting data. At the postsecondary level, U.S. expenditures per student were \$24,074, higher than the OECD average of \$11,254. Wealthy countries such as the United States spent more per student and a larger share of their gross domestic product (GDP) per capita on education than less wealthy countries (*indicator 41*).

CONTEXTS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The postsecondary education system encompasses various types of institutions under public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit control and can be described according to a number of contextual factors. Important indicators of this context include student coursetaking and fields of study; the price of attending college; the availability of financial aid; the instructional responsibilities of faculty and staff; and the ways in which colleges and universities attract and compensate faculty.

- In 2004–05, business degrees made up 16 percent of all degrees awarded at the associate's degree level, 22 percent of degrees at the bachelor's degree level, and 25 percent of degrees at the master's degree level. Between 1997–98 and 2004–05, the field of computer and information sciences grew by nearly 100 percent at the associate's level and by 57 percent at the master's level. At the doctoral level, the field of health professions and related clinical sciences grew by nearly 200 percent (*indicator 42*).
- Compared with students in most of the other OECD countries that report data, students in the United States were more likely to complete postsecondary degrees in arts and humanities and in business, social sciences, law, and "other" fields in 2004. U.S. students were less likely, however, than their peers in most of the other OECD countries reporting data to complete postsecondary degrees in engineering and health (*indicator 43*).
- Average inflation-adjusted salaries for full-time instructional faculty have increased by 18 percent overall during the past 25 years, and average salaries rose for faculty in all academic ranks. However, after

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increasing during the 1980s and 1990s, average salaries for faculty decreased 0.3 percent between 1999–2000 and 2005–06. When combining salary with benefits, full-time instructional faculty across all types of institutions received a total compensation package in 2005–06 that was about 26 percent more than they had received in 1979–80. Faculty at private 4-year doctoral universities had higher salaries and more benefits than their colleagues at other types of institutions (*indicator 44*).

- The percentage of full-time college students ages 16–24 who were employed increased from 34 to 49 percent between 1970 and 2005, and there were also increases in the number of hours they worked per week. There was no measurable change in the percentage of part-time college students in this age group who were employed during this period. In 2005, approximately 85 percent of part-time college students were employed, but these students worked fewer hours in 2005 than they did in 1970 (*indicator 45*).
- Between 1992–93 and 1999–2000, the percentage of full-time, full-year undergraduates with federal loans increased from 31 to 44 percent, while the percentage receiving federal grants, available to those who qualify by income, remained near 30 percent. By 2003–04, both the percentages of undergraduates who had taken out loans and who had received grants had increased to 48 and 34 percent, respectively (*indicator 46*).
- For full-time dependent undergraduates attending postsecondary institutions in the 1990s, larger grants and loans generally compensated for increases in the total price of attending (including tuition and fees,

books and materials, and an allowance for living expenses). However, since 1999–2000, the *net access price* (the total price of attendance minus grants and loans) of attending a public 4-year institution has increased, particularly among middle-income students. At private not-for-profit 4-year institutions, the net price of attending has increased only among low-income students (*indicator 47*).

- The average total price for 1 year of full-time graduate education ranged from \$21,900 for a master's degree program at a public institution to \$41,900 for a first-professional degree program at a private not-for-profit institution in 2003–04. Students attending full time typically received some type of financial aid to help cover their expenses, such as grants and assistantships awarded on a discretionary basis, subsidized, unsubsidized, or private loans, or grant aid from their employers. Compared with doctoral and first-professional degree students, few master's degree students enrolled full time. Students differed in the types and amounts of financial aid they received by the level of their degree program (*indicator 48*).

CONCLUSION

The current state of U.S. education shows both promises and challenges. In the long-term, since the early 1970s, there has been improvement in the scores of 9- and 13-year-olds on national reading and mathematics assessments, but the scores of 17-year-olds have remained flat. However, in the short-term, since the early 1990s, progress on national assessments in reading and science achievement has been uneven or static, though mathematics performance has improved among 4th- and 8th-graders.

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Other measures of progress indicate that high school graduates are taking more courses and completing more advanced courses than they did in the early 1980s, status dropouts have declined since the 1970s, and rates of crime and violence in schools have declined since 1992. At the same time, the number of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home more than doubled between 1979 and 2005. In addition, differences between states in the amount spent on instruction per student by unified public school districts have increased since 1997–98.

The U.S. education system also shows signs of continued growth for years to come. In elementary and secondary education, enrollments have followed population shifts and are projected to increase each year through 2016 to an all-time high of 53 million, with the South expected to experience the largest increase in enrollments. Rates of enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels have increased and are projected to continue to do so throughout the next 10 years.

NCES produces an array of reports each year that present findings about the U.S. education system. *The Condition of Education 2007* is the culmination of a yearlong project. It includes data that were available by early April 2007. In the coming months, a number of other reports and surveys informing us about education will be released, including new results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and from international student assessments, as well as follow-ups to NCES longitudinal studies. Along with the indicators in this volume, NCES intends these surveys and reports to help inform policymakers and the American public about trends and conditions in U.S. education.



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