

COPIES OF REPORT AVAILABLE BY REQUEST

LIVE WEB CAST: Report authors to discuss findings—March 19, 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. (ET) at:
www.americaspromise.org/summit



Contacts:

Colleen Wilber
202.657.0647 or colleenw@americaspromise.org

Jason Amos
202.828.0828 or jamos@all4ed.org

Mary Maushard
410.516.8810 or mmaushard@jhu.edu

Megan Hoot
202.898.9387 or mhoot@civicerprises.net

New Research Reveals More than Half of States Increased Graduation Rates and Number of “Dropout Factory” Schools Declined by 23% Since 2002

Graduation Rate Topped 75% in 2009 with Tennessee and New York Leading the Progress

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EMBAROGED UNTIL: March 19, 2012 @ 12:01 a.m. ET)– The nation continues to make progress to end the dropout crisis, according to a report released today by [Civic Enterprises](#), [the Everyone Graduates Center](#), [America’s Promise Alliance](#) and [the Alliance for Excellent Education](#). The report found that 24 states increased their high school graduation rates by modest to large gains, while the number of high schools graduating 60 percent or fewer students on time—often referred to as “dropout factories”— decreased by 457 between 2002 and 2010, with the rate of decline accelerating since 2008.

The number of “dropout factories” totaled 1,550 in 2010, down from 1,634 in 2009 and a high of 2,007 in 2002. The number declined by 84 between 2009 and 2010. As a result, 790,000 fewer students attended dropout factories in 2010 than 2002. These numbers and additional analysis are detailed in the 2012 [Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic](#), an annual report authored by John Bridgeland and Mary Bruce of Civic Enterprises and Robert Balfanz and Joanna Fox at the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University. The report is sponsored by AT&T with additional support from the Pearson Foundation.

“The good news is that some states have made improvements in their graduation rates, showing it can be done. But the data also indicate that if we are to meet our national goals by 2020, we will have to accelerate our rate of progress, particularly in the states that have shown little progress,” said Robert Balfanz, director of Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University, and co-author of the Building a Grad Nation report.

Other findings include:

- **The national graduation rate increased by 3.5 percentage points between 2001 and 2009 from 72 percent to 75.5 percent in 2009.**
 - 20 states made the most significant gains in graduation rates (+3 to +17 percentage points). Tennessee (+17.8) and New York (+13) saw double-digit gains.
 - 12 states were responsible for the majority of progress during the past decade: New York, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, South Carolina, Missouri, Alabama, Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Kentucky. Combined, these states added nearly 109,000 additional graduates in 2009.
 - Nine of these 12 states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas) were also among the top 15 states with the biggest declines in students attending “dropout factories.”
 - The following states actually saw declines in their graduation rates during this period: Nevada (-15.6), Connecticut (-4.3), New Mexico (-2.6), Arizona (-2.2), California (-1.7), Utah (-1.1), Nebraska (-1.0), Arkansas (-0.8), New Jersey (-0.5) and Rhode Island (-0.4).
 - Only one state, Wisconsin, has a graduation rate of 90 percent.
 - The following 13 states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington have to graduate the largest number of students and be most aggressive in accelerating their graduation rate to reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.

- **The South and the suburbs saw the largest declines in the number of “dropout factory” schools with 410 and 171, respectively, between 2002 and 2009.**
 - The number of “dropout factory” high schools declined by 98 in cities in 2009-2010 while suburbs saw a decrease of 41.
 - Between 2002 and 2010, the Northeast had the second largest decline of 43 while the West decreased by 35.
 - The Midwest increased their number of “dropout factory” schools by 33 during 2002-10.

- **Contrary to 2008-09, progress in towns and rural areas stalled in 2009-2010.**
 - School districts in towns and rural areas **saw an increase** in the number of “dropout factory” schools between 2009 and 2010. Towns increased the number of these schools by 42 and rural areas by 33 schools.
 - This slight increase does not diminish progress between 2002 and 2010 where towns decreased their dropout factory schools by 33 percent, slightly behind their suburban counterparts at 36 percent.

- **The following states saw the greatest change, decreasing the number of “dropout factory” schools by more than 50 between 2002 and 2010: Texas (-122); Florida (-62); and Georgia (-54). These states increased graduation rates during this period as well.**

- **If each state had a graduation rate of 90 percent, 580,000 additional students would have graduated in the class of 2011, increasing the GDP by \$6.6 billion and generating \$1.8 billion in additional revenue as a result of increased economic activity.**

The report used the best and most recent data available: the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Promoting Power for 2010. Although all states were expected to use the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate starting in the 2010-11 school year, not all states are reporting these data at this time.

The report also includes updates on progress on the 10 [Civic Marshall Plan](#) benchmarks, such as grade-level reading, chronic absenteeism, early warning systems, and **state compulsory school age requirements**. As highlighted by President Obama in his 2012 State of the Union Address, state laws dictate the minimum and maximum age that all youth must attend school. While the majority of states have a compulsory school age of 17 or 18, a total of 18 states still permit students to drop out before age 18 or the age students drop out.

“In large part the battle will be won or lost in the 13 states that have the largest number of students to get back on track to graduate and need to accelerate their progress two to three-fold in order to reach 90% high school graduation rates by 2020,” said John Bridgeland, CEO of Civic Enterprises and co-author of the Building a Grad Nation report.

The report also features states and school districts that are making significant gains, serving as a challenge that others can too. It also shares promising practices from nonprofits, businesses, media, educational and governmental institutions across the country, and five case studies in: **Dothan, AL, the State of Georgia; Henry Grady High School in Atlanta, GA; Houston, TX; and Washington County Public Schools in Maryland.**

“In order to accelerate the progress highlighted in this report, it is critical that we identify the initiatives that are most effective in reducing the dropout rate,” said Charlene Lake, Senior Vice President-Public Affairs and Chief Sustainability Officer for AT&T. “Working together to scale these evidenced-based strategies will be vital to helping our students succeed and meeting our national objectives.”

Two of the report’s authors will discuss the complete findings of the report at the March 19 opening session of the 2012 [Building a Grad Nation Summit](#). The summit is the annual premier event of the Grad Nation campaign, a large and growing movement of dedicated individuals, organizations and communities working together to end the dropout crisis. The goal of Grad Nation is to raise the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020, with no school graduating fewer than 80 percent of its students on time.

A full copy of the 2012 report and more details on state level data are available by request or online March 19 at: www.americaspromise.org, www.civicerprises.net or www.every1graduates.org.

###

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC-based national policy and advocacy organization that works to improve national and federal policy so that all students can achieve at high academic levels and graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship in the twenty-first century. It focuses on America’s six million most at-risk secondary school students—those in the lowest achievement quartile—who are most likely to leave school without a diploma or to graduate unprepared for a productive future.

www.all4ed.org.

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations representing nonprofit groups, businesses, communities, educators and policymakers. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, America's Promise believes the success of young people is grounded in Five Promises: caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others.

www.americaspromise.org.

Civic Enterprises is a public policy firm that helps corporations, nonprofits, foundations, universities and governments develop and spearhead innovative public policies to strengthen our communities and country. Created to enlist the private, public and nonprofit sectors to help address our Nation's toughest problems, Civic Enterprises fashions new initiatives and strategies that achieve measurable results in the fields of education, civic engagement, economic mobility, and many other domestic policy issues. www.civicerprises.net.

The **Everyone Graduates Center**, part of the Center for Social Organization of Schools at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, seeks to identify the barriers to high school graduation, develop strategic solutions to overcoming these barriers and build local capacity to implement and sustain the solutions so that all students graduate prepared for adult success. www.every1graduates.org.

Region	Number of Low-Grad Rate High Schools in 2002	Number of Low-Grad Rate High Schools in 2010	Change in Number of Low-Grad Rate High Schools 2002-2010	Change in Number of Students Attending Low-Grad Rate High Schools
Northeast				
New York	145	130	-15	-64,777
Pennsylvania	48	47	-1	-19,832
Connecticut	13	4	-9	-14,928
Massachusetts	24	18	-6	-10,917
New Jersey	24	22	-2	-6,797
Maine	4	1	-3	-2,437
Vermont	3	0	-3	-2,311
Rhode Island	7	5	-2	-1,690
New Hampshire	5	3	-2	1,784
Subtotal	273	230	-43	-121,905
Midwest				
Indiana	30	15	-15	-19,070
Michigan	79	82	3	-14,229
Wisconsin	16	9	-7	-7,893
Iowa	4	1	-3	-4,669
Minnesota	6	5	-1	-4,082
Kansas	9	8	-1	-3,074
South Dakota	3	1	-2	2,864
Illinois	63	61	-2	-2,338
North Dakota	0	0	0	0
Missouri	25	25	0	1,604
Nebraska	4	5	1	2,015
Ohio	75	135	60	12,488
Subtotal	314	347	33	-42,112
South				
Texas	240	118	-122	-151,488
Florida	162	100	-62	-130,586
Georgia	156	102	-54	-55,302
South Carolina	101	58	-43	-44,221
Tennessee	58	19	-39	-39,506
Alabama	71	35	-36	-27,260
North Carolina	106	78	-28	-26,096
Kentucky	39	18	-21	-17,863
Mississippi	52	35	-17	-17,260
Louisiana	64	60	-4	-10,692
Delaware	8	7	-1	3,533
West Virginia	6	3	-3	-2,824
Oklahoma	15	17	2	67
Virginia	26	26	0	3,144
Arkansas	5	12	7	4,964
Maryland	17	28	11	18,310
Subtotal	1,126	716	-410	-500,146
West				
California	129	126	-3	-102,611
Arizona	37	22	-15	-21,945
Washington	32	15	-17	-21,442
Colorado	32	15	-17	-18,449
Oregon	7	0	-7	-5,945
Alaska	9	6	-3	-4,808
New Mexico	27	22	-5	-4,157
Montana	1	1	0	-216
Wyoming	1	2	1	135
Utah	1	2	1	1,914
Hawaii	6	13	7	5,732
Idaho	2	6	4	6,553
Nevada	8	27	19	39,790
Subtotal	292	257	-35	-125,449
TOTAL	2,005*	1,550	-455	-789,612

* The District of Columbia is not included because it is not a state. When DC is included in the national total, the number becomes 2,007.

State	2002 Grad Rate	2009 Grad Rate	Progress or Challenge
Alabama	62.1	69.9	Progress
Alaska	65.9	72.6	Progress
Arizona	74.7	72.5	Challenge
Arkansas	74.8	74.0	Challenge
California	72.7	71.0	Challenge
Colorado	74.7	77.6	Progress
Connecticut	79.7	75.4	Challenge
Delaware	69.5	73.7	Progress
District of Columbia	68.4	62.4	Challenge
Florida	63.4	68.9	Progress
Georgia	61.1	67.8	Progress
Hawaii	72.1	75.3	Progress
Idaho	79.3	80.6	Challenge
Illinois	77.1	77.7	Challenge
Indiana	73.1	75.2	Challenge
Iowa	84.1	85.7	Challenge
Kansas	77.1	70.2	Progress
Kentucky	69.8	77.6	Progress
Louisiana	64.4	67.3	Progress
Maine	75.6	79.9	Progress
Maryland	79.7	80.1	Challenge
Massachusetts	77.6	83.3	Progress
Michigan	72.9	75.3	Challenge
Minnesota	83.9	87.4	Progress
Mississippi	61.2	62.0	Challenge
Missouri	76.8	83.1	Progress
Montana	79.8	82.0	Challenge
Nebraska	83.9	82.9	Challenge
Nevada	71.9	56.3	Challenge
New Hampshire	77.8	84.3	Progress
New Jersey	85.8	85.3	Challenge
New York	60.5	73.5	Progress
North Carolina	68.2	75.1	Progress
North Dakota	85.0	87.4	Challenge
Ohio	77.5	79.6	Challenge
Oklahoma	76.0	77.3	Challenge
Oregon	71.0	76.5	Progress
Pennsylvania	80.2	80.5	Challenge
Rhode Island	75.7	75.3	Challenge
South Carolina	57.9	66.0	Progress
South Dakota	79.0	81.7	Progress
Tennessee	59.6	77.4	Progress
Texas	73.5	75.4	Challenge
Utah	80.5	79.4	Challenge
Vermont	82.0	89.6	Progress
Virginia	76.7	78.4	Challenge
Washington	72.2	73.7	Challenge
West Virginia	74.2	77.0	Progress
Wisconsin	84.8	90.7	Progress
Wyoming	74.4	75.2	Challenge
Nation	72.6	75.5	Progress

** Source: Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate, Common Core of Data, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.*