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**Contacts:**

Colleen Wilber

202.657.0647

[colleenw@americaspromise.org](mailto:colleenw@americaspromise.org)

Mary Maushard

410.516.8810

[mmaushard@jhu.edu](mailto:mmaushard@jhu.edu)

Megan Walker

202.898.9387

[mhoot@civicenterprises.net](mailto:mhoot@civicenterprises.net)

Jason Amos

202.828.0828

[jamos@all4ed.org](mailto:jamos@all4ed.org)

**New Research Reveals for the First Time U.S. is on Track to Meet Goal of 90 Percent National High School Graduation Rate by 2020**

*Progress Has Accelerated since 2006 Driven by Large Gains in the South and Among African American and Hispanic Graduation Rates*

*One Million Fewer Students Attend “Dropout Factory” High Schools than a Decade Ago. Number of African American and Hispanic Students Attending These Schools Cut in Half*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (EMBARGOED UNTIL: February 25, 2013 @ 12:01 a.m. ET)**— The nation’s work to improve graduation rates took a significant leap forward according to a report released today by [Civic Enterprises](#), [the Everyone Graduates Center](#), [America’s Promise Alliance](#) and [the Alliance for Excellent Education](#). The most comprehensive graduation research report of late found that for the first time the U.S. is on track to meet the national Grad Nation goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the class of 2020. The national high school graduation rate increased 6.5 percentage points since 2001 with an average growth of 1.25 percentage points each year from 2006-2010 to 78.2. As a result of this acceleration more than 200,000 additional students received diplomas in 2010 than in 2006. In President George H.W. Bush’s 1990 State of the Union address, he set a 90 percent graduation goal by 2000; this goal was not achieved but reaffirmed by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

This growth was driven in large part by significant gains in Hispanic and African American graduation rates, with Hispanic rates achieving the greatest gains, jumping 10 percentage points from 61 percent in 2006 to 71.4 percent in 2010. Similarly, African American graduation rates rose from 59.2 percent in 2006 to 66.1 percent in 2010. The South also contributed to this accelerated pace, home to five of the top 10 states with the greatest improvements since 2006 but also the top seven states with the greatest decline in “dropout factory” high schools. A “dropout factory” is a high school in which twelfth grade enrollment is 60 percent or less of ninth grade enrollment three years earlier.

The number of “dropout factories” totaled 1,424 in 2011, down from 1,550 in 2010 and a high of 2,007 in 2002. The number declined by 583 or 29 percent between 2002 and 2011. As a result, nearly 1.1 million fewer students attended dropout factories in 2011 than in 2002. More significantly the report found the number of African American and Hispanic students attending these schools declined dramatically. In 2011, 25 percent of African American students attended a dropout factory compared to

46 percent in 2002 and 17 percent of Hispanic students down from a high of 39 percent in 2002. These numbers and additional analysis are detailed in the 2013 [\*Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic\*](#), the fourth 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 2013 report is sponsored by AT&T with additional support from State Farm®.

“It’s exciting to see that the nation’s collective efforts are working,” said Robert Balfanz, co-author of the Grad nation report and research scientist at Johns Hopkins University. “Because of this work, 200,000 more students graduated high school in 2010 than if the graduation rate had not improved since 2006. But for the country to reach its 2020 graduation goal, the states that aren’t on-pace need to get in the game.”

The report shows, while there is no one solution, the acceleration of graduation rate increases coincided with the onset of targeted education reform efforts in the mid 2000’s. During that time, active and sustained dropout prevention efforts in a few big cities began to spread more broadly while researchers, foundations, governors, policymakers, school districts, communities, businesses and others came together in an unprecedented mobilization around the dropout crisis. In addition, better data and its usage, combined with heightened awareness of the problem, its impact and solutions along with a renewed focus on high quality instruction, accountability, and alternative pathways to graduation became more main stream. A combination of all this resulted in increases in student and school achievement.

“This is no longer the Silent Epidemic that we wrote about six years ago,” says John Bridgeland, CEO of Civic Enterprises and co-author of the report. “For the first time, the nation is on pace to meet the 90 percent high school graduation rate goal. While this is a historic milestone, graduation gaps affecting our most disadvantaged students threaten our progress in reaching this goal and fulfilling the American dream for all.”

Other findings include:

- **The national graduation rate increased 5 percentage points since 2006 and 2.7 percentage points between 2009 and 2010.**
  - Only two states, Wisconsin and Vermont, already have a graduation rate of 90 percent.
  - 20 states saw an average gain of one percent or higher each year between 2006 and 2010. Tennessee led the pack with an average annual growth of 2.45 percentage points followed by Louisiana (+2.33), Vermont (+2.28), Alaska (+2.25) and California (+2.25).
  - Nearly half of the 20 states with the most accelerated progress since 2006 are in the South: Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, and Virginia.
  - Nine states stayed flat or saw declines in their graduation rates during this period: Montana (0.00), Utah (0.00), Hawaii (-0.02), Delaware (-0.20), Rhode Island (-0.35), South Dakota (-0.68), Nebraska (-0.80), Arkansas (-1.35) and Connecticut (-1.68).
  - With their current pace of increase, 18 states are on pace to meet the 2020 90 percent goal, while seven states have to accelerate their growth a bit and maintain more than a percentage point growth per year to meet the goal. Nearly half of all states (23) are off-pace and have to accelerate growth significantly and/or reverse declines of recent years to reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.

- **The number of “dropout factories” decreased by 583 between 2002 and 2011.**
  - Seven southern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas led the nation in “dropout factory” declines. These states saw a combined total decrease of 439 dropout factories since 2011, which equates to more than a half million (571,707) fewer students attending these schools in these states.
  - Four states saw a decline of more than 20 dropout factories: Mississippi (-26), Kentucky (-25), Louisiana (-24) and California (-23).
  - Massachusetts, Rhode Island, North Dakota and Montana saw no change in their dropout factory numbers and nine states increased the number of dropout factory schools. Ohio had the largest increase (+77) between 2002 and 2011.
  - Suburban areas and towns both decreased their number of dropout factories by 44 percent, rural areas by 27 percent and cities by 18 percent. Cities remain home to the most dropout factory high schools, with 745 in 2011, down from 905 in 2002.
  
- **While increases in African American and Hispanic graduation rates drove the accelerated pace, significant disparities remain. The nation’s ability to close these gaps will determine whether it meets and maintains a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020.**
  - 20 states still have graduation rates of 66 percent or below for African Americans and 16 states for Hispanics. Minnesota is home to the most significant graduation gap in the nation between White and African American students (-35 percentage points) and between White and Hispanic students (-33 percentage points). In total, 40 states have double digit gaps between White and African American students and 35 states between White and Hispanic students. Hawaii was home to the smallest gap for both groups.

The report used the best and most recent data available: the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) for 2010, Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for 2009-2011 and Promoting Power for 2011. The report provides a comprehensive comparison of all state graduation rates by AFGR and ACGR to examine trends and found that although most states have similar graduation rates between the two methodologies, nine states (Texas, Indiana, Connecticut, Arkansas, Minnesota, Colorado, Mississippi, Oregon and Georgia) showed inconsistencies (at least +/- 5 point difference) among the two rates. For the first time, nearly all states reported ACGR— 47 states and the District of Columbia—which is the newer and more accurate graduation rate calculation. ACGR data is not available for Idaho, Oklahoma and Kentucky.

In addition to the data, the report highlights innovative programs and efforts around the country involving schools, nonprofits, businesses, media, educational and governmental institutions, including case studies in: **Texas; Orlando, FL; the South; Shelbyville, IN and Portland, OR.**

“This groundbreaking series of Grad Nation reports has identified problems, proposed solutions, documented progress, measured success, and encouraged us all to persevere, said Charlene Lake, AT&T chief sustainability officer and senior Vice President for Public Affairs. “We're proud to be a sponsor of such quality and critical work.”

“The incremental progress demonstrated in this year's report is good, and we should be encouraged by it,” Lake added. “But we can't let ourselves be distracted by success. We must be energized by it. And we must agree together to double down on our efforts.”

The report's authors will discuss the complete findings of the report at the February 25 opening session of the 2013 [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 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.

"This report tells us that the nation is making real and important progress in high school graduation," said John Gomperts, president and CEO, America's Promise Alliance. "Today, one million fewer students are trapped in failing schools than was the case a decade ago. The task now is to learn from what has worked, and redouble the efforts to stay on track toward the goal of 90% graduation by 2020."

A full copy of the 2013 report and related state-level data indices are available by request or online February 25 at: [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org), [www.civicenterprises.net](http://www.civicenterprises.net) or [www.every1graduates.org](http://www.every1graduates.org).

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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](http://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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 the Five Promises—Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. For more information, visit [AmericasPromise.org](http://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.civicenterprises.net](http://www.civicenterprises.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](http://www.every1graduates.org).

### Dropout Factory High Schools, by Region and State, 2002 and 2011

Region	2002 Total Number of Schools	2011 Total Number of Schools	Change	Change in the Number of High School Students Attending a High School with a Promoting Power At or Below 60%
<b>NORTHEAST</b>				
New York	145	133	-12	-103,040
New Hampshire	5	2	-3	-467
New Jersey	24	15	-9	-18,688
Maine	4	0	-4	-2,796
Massachusetts	24	24	0	-10,820
Vermont	3	0	-3	-2,311
Connecticut	13	5	-8	-13,993
Rhode Island	7	7	0	331
Pennsylvania	48	43	-5	-24,260
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>-44</b>	<b>-176,044</b>
<b>MIDWEST</b>				
Indiana	30	16	-14	-22,788
Ohio	75	152	77	22,317
Illinois	63	57	-6	-15,177
Wisconsin	16	13	-3	-3,925
Missouri	25	23	-2	-4,572
Michigan	79	64	-15	-32,311
Iowa	4	3	-1	-3,317
South Dakota	3	2	-1	-963
Kansas	9	7	-2	-4,282
Minnesota	6	5	-1	-3,753
North Dakota	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	4	5	1	2,286
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>-66,485</b>
<b>SOUTH</b>				
Texas	240	108	-132	-172,792
Georgia	156	108	-48	-58,234
Alabama	71	22	-49	-34,390
Tennessee	58	23	-35	-33,940
South Carolina	101	62	-39	-34,599
Florida	162	69	-93	-185,652
Kentucky	39	14	-25	-18,936
Mississippi	52	26	-26	-25,339
Louisiana	64	40	-24	-27,417
West Virginia	6	4	-2	-1,605
Virginia	26	19	-7	-8,075
Oklahoma	15	14	-1	-4,039
Delaware	8	7	-1	-3,159
North Carolina	106	63	-43	-52,100
Arkansas	5	7	2	1,025
District of Columbia	2	13	11	6,283
Maryland	17	22	5	5,308
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1128</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>-507</b>	<b>-647,661</b>
<b>WEST</b>				
Washington	32	17	-15	-23,621
Arizona	37	21	-16	-26,726
Colorado	32	14	-18	-27,725
Alaska	9	3	-6	-5,719
Oregon	7	2	-5	-4,897
Montana	1	1	0	-232
New Mexico	27	21	-6	-9,602
Wyoming	1	0	-1	-1,011
Utah	1	5	4	4,487
Idaho	2	8	6	10,310
Hawaii	6	11	5	-2
California	129	106	-23	-140,572
Nevada	8	18	10	21,173
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>-65</b>	<b>-204,137</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>1424</b>	<b>-583</b>	<b>-1,094,327</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1998-2011). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

## Are States On Pace to Reach 90% Graduation Rate Goal by 2020?

State	Average Annual Growth in AFGR, 2006-2010 (% Point)	2010 AFGR (%)
<b>Nation</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>78.2</b>
Tennessee	2.45	80.4
Louisiana	2.33	68.8
Vermont	2.28	91.4
Alaska	2.25	75.5
California	2.25	78.2
New York	2.15	76.0
South Carolina *	2.03	68.2
Georgia	1.88	69.9
Florida	1.80	70.8
Kansas	1.73	84.5
Virginia	1.68	81.2
Maine	1.63	82.8
Texas	1.61	78.9
North Dakota	1.58	88.4
Alabama	1.41	71.8
New Hampshire	1.30	86.3
North Carolina	1.28	76.9
Colorado	1.08	79.8
Washington	1.08	77.2
Arizona	1.05	74.7
Indiana	0.97	77.2
Michigan	0.93	75.9
Wisconsin	0.91	91.1
Wyoming	0.90	80.3
Idaho	0.88	84.0
Oregon	0.82	76.3
Massachusetts	0.78	82.6
Kentucky	0.68	79.9
Missouri	0.68	83.7
New Jersey	0.60	87.2
Maryland	0.57	82.2
Illinois	0.55	81.9
Ohio	0.55	81.4
Minnesota	0.50	88.2
Nevada	0.50	57.8
Pennsylvania *	0.40	84.1
West Virginia	0.35	78.3
Iowa	0.25	87.9
Oklahoma	0.18	78.5
Mississippi	0.07	63.8
New Mexico	0.01	67.3
Montana	0.00	81.9
Utah	0.00	78.6
Hawaii	-0.02	75.4
Delaware	-0.20	75.5
Rhode Island	-0.35	76.4
South Dakota	-0.68	81.8
Nebraska	-0.80	83.8
Arkansas	-1.35	75.0
Connecticut	-1.68	75.1
AFGR is the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate.		
* No 2006 AFGR, used 2005 AFGR		
Source: Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. (2013). Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data) (NCES 2013-309). U.S. Department of Education.		