

**Since the 1970s**, educators and policymakers have relied on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to help improve education systems and opportunities nationwide. There are many factors that spur policy changes and action in our schools, and NCES research plays an important part in that effort. NCES longitudinal studies offer insight into the ever-evolving education landscape and provide the research basis to support federal, state, and local policy and practice. *By participating, you contribute to the greater good and can inform change that will help all students succeed.*

Findings below come from three NCES secondary studies: National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), and High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09).

## Equity NELS:88 & ELS:2002

**FINDING<sup>1</sup>** Data from NELS:88 and ELS:2002 showed that certain groups of secondary school students, particularly African American males, were suspended at disproportional rates.

**ACTION<sup>2</sup>** In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education issued detailed guidance on how to identify and stop discriminatory discipline. Over 50 of the largest school districts instituted discipline reform, and more than half the states revised their laws to try to reduce suspensions and expulsions.

The Every Student Succeeds Act, reauthorized in 2015, requires states and districts to develop strategies to reduce the use of harmful discipline practices.

Approximately  
**664**  
thousand fewer

students were suspended

**IMPACT<sup>3</sup>** Suspension rates for all students have declined, including for African American males.

Nationally, the secondary school suspension rate fell from 9.6% in 2011-12 to 7.4% in 2017-18. States reported similar patterns. Reform efforts to address these disparities continue, and practices have shifted to focus more on addressing students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs.

## Dropout Prevention ELS:2002

**FINDING<sup>4</sup>** Researchers used ELS:2002 data to examine why students dropped out of high school. Reasons included missing too many days of school, failing too many classes, and not being able to keep up with schoolwork.

**ACTION<sup>5</sup>** ELS:2002 data and other dropout research have led many states and districts to implement early-warning systems to flag for assistance those students at risk of dropping out. In addition, the California State Senate used these findings to address their state's dropout problem with three new laws.

Approximately

**1.3**  
million

fewer students dropped out

**IMPACT<sup>6</sup>** The overall national high school dropout rate decreased from 8.3% in 2010 to 5.1% in 2019. California's dropout rate decreased from 16.6% in 2010 to 9.6% in 2017-18.

## College and Career Readiness HSL:09 & ELS:2002

**FINDING<sup>7</sup>** Data from HSL:09 and ELS 2002 showed that students who concentrated on career and technical education (CTE) courses in high school (took two or more courses in the same area) had higher median annual earnings 8 years after high school than students who did not concentrate on CTE. Dual enrollment programs were found to boost college access and support degree attainment.

**ACTION<sup>8</sup>** Data from these studies informed U.S. Department of Education budget requests for dual enrollment programs more aligned with career pathways to better target local workforce needs. This became part of the 2018 Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century (Perkins V), which increased funding and supports to states and local education agencies for CTE programs of study.

Greater  
access  
to CTE programs

**IMPACT<sup>9</sup>** States, districts, and schools across the country are now working to see that students have greater access to CTE programs and multiple pathways that prepare them with academic, technical, and employability skills for success in the workplace and in further education.

## Policy Programming

HSLs:09

**FINDING<sup>10</sup>** Data from HSLs:09 showed that completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is associated with postsecondary enrollment. Among students in the bottom 20 percent on a measure of family socioeconomic status, those who completed FAFSA were 127% more likely to be enrolled in the fall after high school than those who did not.

**ACTION** The U.S. Department of Education improved its resources and support services to help students and families complete FAFSA. States and districts are beginning to require that all high school seniors complete FAFSA to graduate.

61%

of high school graduates completed FAFSA in 2019-20



**IMPACT<sup>11</sup>** The percentage of high school graduates completing FAFSA increased from 57% in 2016 to 61% in 2020.

## Academic Achievement

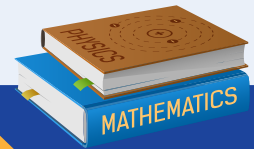
HSLs:09

**FINDING<sup>12</sup>** White, Asian, Black, and Hispanic student groups with comparably high math scores on HSLs:09 math assessment entering 9th grade all improved their scores by 11th grade. But increases were not the same across groups, and so wide gaps in their scores appeared.

**ACTION<sup>12</sup>** Researchers and policymakers are calling for districts and schools to ensure more equitable placement of students into advanced courses.

## Equitable placement

in advanced courses



**IMPACT<sup>13</sup>** Researchers and policymakers are calling for schools and districts to ensure equitable placement of students into advanced courses and provide support networks, mentoring, and academic help to minority students. Resources are becoming more widely available to support these efforts.

**FINDING<sup>14</sup>** In an analysis of HSLs:09 data, male students were more likely than female students to report confidence in their math and science abilities. The same analysis showed that students who report these traits are far more likely to pursue a STEM major in college. Less confidence in math and science for high school females may lead to females being underrepresented in STEM postsecondary majors and careers. Other studies showed that having female STEM teachers moderated differences in STEM confidence.

**ACTION<sup>15</sup>** The National Science Board's *Vision 2030* highlights that female underrepresentation in STEM is a continuing problem and one that can be traced back to K-12 STEM education and experiences.

## More women in STEM

**IMPACT<sup>16</sup>** The National Science Foundation and other government agencies are developing and funding programs to build K-12 female students' confidence and interest in STEM.



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