

# Report: Educational gaps threatening U.S. stability

By Hazel Trice Edney

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WASHINGTON (NNPA)

The educational achievement gaps of African-American children and other children of color is increasingly becoming a threat to America's economic and social growth, states a report released this week.

"On an individual level, academic gaps represent a fundamental failure in the promise of our educational system to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential. Reverberating through the lives of millions of children, these gaps stifle economic growth and endanger our democracy," says the report, issued jointly by the Center for American Progress, a nonpartisan research and educational institute, and the Institute for America's Future, a group of more than 100 citizen activists and policy experts.

The joint report, "Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future," states:

"All too often, low-income children and children of color start pre-school and kindergarten behind their more advantaged peers. Disadvantaged children, from toddlers to teenagers, may also face challenges in their homes and communities."

The report continues, "Our Constitution united us explicitly 'in order to form a perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.'"

It further states, "By failing to expect excellence in education and not giving students the support they need to succeed, we risk the principles that have made our country great, and we jeopardize the future achievements of our citizens."

National statistics for Black students show serious deficiencies in education:

- African-American fourth-graders are 28 percentage points behind their White counterparts in reading, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

- While 74.9 percent of Whites who enter the 9th grade currently graduate with a regular diploma from high school, only 50.2 percent of Blacks do, according to a Harvard University Civil Rights Project Study titled

"Losing our Future."

- Between 1990 and 2000, the average percentage of White students at or above basic achievement levels in math was 72 percent; for Blacks, that number was 32 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

- Black students comprise 17 percent of public school enrollment but account for 33 percent of the suspensions, according to the Advancement Project.

According to the joint report, the danger to America's economic and social growth is not only because of the failures in education of American-born children, but the increasing numbers of immigrant children who live in low-income homes.

"The single role of public education is to prepare a citizenry capable of participating fully in the life and work of our democracy. In our increasingly complex, knowledge-driven and information-rich society, the skills and critical-thinking abilities necessary to serve on juries, choose our leaders and participate in civic life are as important as ever," the report states. "America's diversity has always been our greatest resource; we must have an education system that capitalizes on this strength."

The research for the report was done by A National Task Force on Public Education, assembled by the report's co-producers. According to the report, the task force was able to quantify the loss in economic and civic capital.

"For every \$1 invested in pre-kindergarten, for ex-

ample, we will see a 12 percent minimum return and a social return of at least \$7 and up to \$10," notes the report, quoting from the National Institute for Early Education Research. "And a 1 percent increase in high school graduation rates would produce savings of approximately \$1.4 billion annually associated with crime, or about \$2,100 for each male high school graduate," the report quotes the National Bureau of Economic Research.

The group gives a list of major recommendations to better prepare schools which includes: more and better use of learning time, including the extension of the school day, lengthening and/or reorganizing the school year and making better use of existing time in school; preparing all high school students for higher education and establishing programs to connect them to affordable post-secondary opportunities; programs to foster high expectations, voluntary national standards and accountability for all students learning, including pressing for equitable funding across states, increasing assistance to low-performance school districts and promoting school construction and modernization; and recruiting highly qualified teachers and strong, effective leaders by developing better teacher training and principal training and preparation, enhanced salaries, and equitable distribution of highly skilled teachers.

The group also recommends connecting schools (See Education, Page 7)



## SHAPING UP FOR SCHOOL

Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

Masterpiece Barbershop owner Marcus Allen shapes up a student who took advantage of the free haircuts donated during City Councilman Lawrence Weekly's and the City of Las Vegas' Sixth Annual Back to School Fair over the weekend. Allen and four other barbers gave out haircut vouchers, and more than 30 students got free cuts. Masterpiece Barbershop is located on West Lake Mead Boulevard, in Weekly's Ward 5.

## Research: Race big factor in high medical care costs

BOSTON (AP) - The health care gap between Blacks and Whites is closing on many simple, cheap medical treatments, but deeper disparities stubbornly persist for more complex and costly procedures, new research suggests.

The findings from three large federally funded studies indicate it's possible to equalize health care between races, but it won't happen quickly or easily.

"Things that are simpler and less expensive... are easier fixes," said Dr. Ashish Jha, of the Harvard School of Public Health. He said more progress probably won't happen "by small tinkering with the system."

He led one of the three studies published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine. The research offers some of the first evidence that racial disparities have narrowed, at least for some patients and treat-

ments.

Since the 1980s, many studies have documented racial gaps in the standard of health care. They are blamed on economic, cultural and even biological differences between races. Blacks have less access to better doctors, hospitals and health plans, studies indicate.

Research also shows that the medical system treats Whites and Blacks differently, even when they are the same in nearly every way. Examining only those two races, the new studies took into account differences like health plans, hospitals, regions and wealth.

The researchers mostly compared treatment of Whites and Blacks by assessing how often accepted professional standards were met for each group. In the study finding the most equality, Harvard researchers analyzed (See Medical, Page 13)

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