

# AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS:

Making Public School Excellence  
for *All* High School Students a  
Top Priority in Springfield, Illinois

By Sheila Stocks-Smith in collaboration with  
the African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group



A REPORT PREPARED BY  
The Office of Education Liaison, Office of the Mayor, City of Springfield, Illinois  
and The Springfield Urban League  
WITH SUPPORT FROM the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

# **AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS:**

## **Making Public School Excellence for *All* High School Students a Top Priority in Springfield, Illinois**

### **FULL REPORT**

By Sheila Stocks-Smith in collaboration with the African-American  
Student Achievement and Success Study Group

#### **A REPORT PREPARED BY**

The Office of Education Liaison, Office of the Mayor, City of Springfield, Illinois  
The Springfield Urban League

#### **WITH SUPPORT FROM**

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

September 2008

The **Office of Education Liaison** has greatly expanded the role, involvement and influence of the Mayor and the City of Springfield in education. Its vision is to see Springfield, Illinois recognized across the country as a model of educational excellence. The Office of Education Liaison strengthens the quality of education for Springfield area residents by building strong and lasting working relationships between city government and the educational community and strives to make educational excellence a top community-wide priority. The Office works with other city departments and community partners to leverage resources in support of schools and education stakeholders, foster broad community support and collaboration around educational issues, and develop and promote needed education initiatives. Major initiatives developed and directed by the Office of Education Liaison have addressed the following important educational policy topics: African-American Student Achievement and Success, High School Reform, College Access, Closing the Achievement Gap, Parent Engagement, Teen Literacy, Childhood Obesity, School Safety and School Recycling.

The mission of the **Springfield Urban League, Inc.** is to enable African-Americans, other minority groups, and the underprivileged to cultivate their potential and exercise their full human rights as American citizens. The Springfield Urban League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, civil rights and community-based movement that serves nearly 6,000 people annually, providing direct services, research and policy advocacy to assist individuals and communities in reaching their fullest potential. Primarily working with African-Americans, Hispanics, and other emerging ethnic communities, it is networked with over 100 professionally staffed affiliates in over 35 states across the nation. The Movement, spearheaded by the National Urban League, headquartered in New York, works to close equality gaps for people at all economic levels and stages of life, and gives citizens a chance to give back as volunteers. Since its founding in 1926, the Springfield Urban League has helped hundreds of thousands of Americans overcome countless challenges in civil and human rights. Today its efforts are focused in the following areas: Education and Youth; Economic Empowerment; Health and Quality of Life; Civic Engagement; and Civil Rights and Racial Injustice.

The **African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group** was formed to develop and publish a report that sheds new light on African-American students in Springfield and sets forth policy and program recommendations to help guide the educational and community institutions that interface with youth in Springfield. The report was to identify barriers to African-American student achievement and success and spur community action around common goals.

## African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group

### **Guiding Principles**

We Believe that...

- A viable and prosperous African-American community in Springfield is important to achieving the overall economic and social goals of the city.
- While the educational institutions within society bear the primary responsibility for the education of all children, good schools are the responsibility of many partners.
- The entire community must share in the task of maintaining quality education for all of Springfield's residents. We must support and highlight the successes of the educational system while at the same time hold it accountable for even higher standards and quality results for all children.
- In an effort to support and advance systemic improvement, it is crucial that the community fully understand and examine the complex internal and external factors affecting African-American student achievement and success in Springfield.
- This study group will help identify barriers to African-American student achievement and success and spur community action around common goals.

### **Coordinators**

City of Springfield, Sheila Stocks-Smith  
Springfield Urban League, Nina Harris

### **Members**

John Bailey

Mary Bennett

Erin Conley

Linda Dillon

Jim Forstall

Bob Gray

Nate Gibson

Sylvia Gillespie

Bobby Hall

Tom Kerins

Frank Kopecky

Jim Lewis

Elaine Meredith

Chris Miller

Al Pieper

Gary Plummer

Gail Simpson

Tammy Small

Gordon Smith

## **Acknowledgments**

We want to thank Mayor Timothy J. Davlin and Sheila Stocks-Smith, Director of the Office of Education Liaison, from the City of Springfield, the Board and Nina Harris, President and CEO of the Springfield Urban League, and all the members of the African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group for their extraordinary commitment to this effort.

Special recognition goes to Nzinga West who while serving as an Intern and Staff Assistant of the Office of Education Liaison directed the student/parent survey section of the project and gathered and formatted data and statistics for numerous sections of the report. Also, special thanks go to study group member, Tom Kerins, who wrote an early draft of the achievement section and provided continuous support and technical assistance.

The University of Illinois at Springfield's Chris Miller, former Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Administrative Services; Tony Halter, Director of the Center for State Policy and Leadership; David Racine, Director of the Institute for Legal, Legislative and Policy Studies (ILLAPS); Dave Gruenenfelder, Assistant Director, ILLAPS; and Graduate Assistant, Tracey Kreipe, all deserve special thanks for their expertise and support that went well beyond the scope of formal contracted duties.

Also, thank you to the staff of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for their professionalism and prompt and courteous response to our informational inquiries and to Charles Medley, SD186 Director of Student Support, who was particularly responsive to our inquiries.

**To download a copy of the full report, which includes all data, tables and figures, go to [www.springfield.il.us](http://www.springfield.il.us) or [www.springfieldul.org](http://www.springfieldul.org).**

For More Information, Contact:

Sheila Stocks-Smith, Director  
Office of Education Liaison  
Office of the Mayor  
City of Springfield  
374 Municipal Center East  
Springfield, Illinois 62701

217.789.2438

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
I. Executive Summary	1
II. Introduction	16
III. Methodology	17
IV. Demographic Characteristics of Springfield	19
V. Student Achievement	21
VI. School Completion	28
VII. Chronic Truancy	35
VIII. Internal Transfers	38
IX. Student Discipline	41
X. Equity and Teacher Quality	45
XI. Special Education	50
XII. Student/Parent Survey	55
XIII. Promising Practices in High School Reform	61
XIV. Sources by Section	67

## List of Tables

<b>Table Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.	Number of Children Living in Different Types of Springfield Households: Total Households and African-American Households	19
2.	Education Level of Springfield Residents 25 years of Age and Older: Total Households and African-American Households	20
3.	ACT Scores by Subject and School, 2002 and 2006	23
4.	LHS and SHS ACT Scores, by Subject and Race, 2001 and 2004	24
5.	WorkKeys Scores by Geography, Level and Race for 2006	26
6.	Percentage by Which Whites Exceed African-Americans in Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the ISAT Test, by Grade and Year, 2003-2006	27
7.	Graduation Rates in Springfield High Schools, Comparison of Fall Housing (FH) and School Report Card (SRC) Data by School, Race and Gender, 2006	29
8.	Graduation Rates in Springfield High Schools, Comparison of Fall Housing (FH) and School Report Card (SRC) Data by School, Race and Gender, 2004 -2006	30
9.	Promoting Power of Springfield High Schools, Comparison of School Report Card (SRC) and Fall Housing (FH) Data by School, Race and Gender, 2006	31
10.	Promoting Power of African-Americans, Comparison of School Report Card (SRC) and Fall Housing (FH) Data by School, 2004 - 2006	32
11.	SD186 High School Dropouts by Grade, Gender and Race, 2002 to 2006	32
12.	Monthly Enrollment by School, 2003-04	33
13.	Monthly Enrollment by School, Race and Gender, 2005-06	34
14.	Percent of Chronic Truants by School, 2004 -2006	35

15.	Number of Total Chronic Truant High School Aged Students (All Three Springfield High Schools and Douglas Alternative Center), by Race and Grade, 2004 - 2006	36
16.	Number of Chronic Truant High School Aged Students by School and Race, 2004 - 2006	36
17.	Number of Unexcused Days by Chronic Truants by School and Race, 2004 - 2006	37
18.	Internal Transfers (In and Out) by Race and School, 2003 - 2006	39
19.	Transfers (In and Out) by Gender and School, 2003 -2006	39
20.	Number and Percent of Suspensions in Springfield High Schools by Race and Gender, 2002 - 2006	41
21.	Number of Expulsions in Springfield High Schools by Race and Gender, 2002 - 2006	44
22.	Number of Expulsions in All Springfield Schools by Offense, Race and Gender, 2005	44
23.	Characteristics of 22 Springfield Elementary Schools, Comparing Percent and Rank of African-American and Low- Income students with Teacher Experience and Education Levels, 2007	46
24.	Characteristics of Five Springfield Middle Schools, Comparing African-American and Low-Income Percent and Rank with Teacher Experience and Education Levels, 2007	49
25.	Characteristics of Springfield High Schools, Comparing African-American and Low-Income Percent and Rank with Teacher Experience and Education Levels	49
26.	Number and Percent of Special Education Students by SD186, Illinois Unit Districts and State, 2003-2006	51
27.	Percent of SD186 Students With and Without Individual Education Plans by Race, 2003 - 2006	51
28.	Disability Type in SD186	51

29.	Number of Students Aged 14-20 in SD186 by Disability Type and Race, 2005-06	52
30.	Percent of SD186 Juniors Meeting or Exceeding PSAE Performance Levels by Presence of IEP and Subject, 2001 - 2006	52
31.	Percent of SD186 Students Meeting or Exceeding PSAE Performance Levels by Presence of IEP and Grade Level, 2006	52
32.	Percent of SD186 Special Education Students by Educational Environment and Race, 2003 – 2006	53
33.	Student Attitudes, Items with 80% or More Student Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree) Ranked from Highest to Lowest	56
34.	Student Attitudes, Items with 60% or Less Student Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree), Ranked from Lowest to Highest	56
35.	Parent Attitudes, Items with 85% or More Parent Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree), Ranked from Highest to Lowest	57
36.	Parent Attitudes, Items with 80% or Less Parent Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree), Ranked from Highest to Lowest	57
37.	Parent and Student Attitudes Compared, Percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements about Treating School Staff Respectfully and Being Treated with Respect by staff	58
38.	Parent and Student Attitudes Compared, Percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed by Question (Questions with 20% point or more difference between students and parents)	58
39.	Combined Student and Parent Attitudes, Percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed by School (Questions with 10% point or more difference between the three schools)	60

## List of Figures

Figure Number	Title	Page
1.	Percent of SD186 High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards by Race and Subject, 2002 and 2006	22
2.	Percent of Lanphier High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards Comparing Years 2002 and 2006 by Race and Subject	22
3.	Percent of Springfield High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards Comparing Years 2002 and 2006 by Race and Subject	22
4.	Percent of Springfield Southeast High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards by Race and Subject, 2002 and 2006	23
5.	Percent of SD186 High School Students Achieving ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race and Subject, 2006	24
6.	Number of Chronically Truant Students at SSHA by Race, 2004 - 2006	37
7.	Number of SD186 High School Student Suspensions by School, 2003-2004	42

**A Note to Readers about citations.** Sources are referenced in the text and identified by section beginning on page 67. Text references note the first and, when necessary, a second and third word from the corresponding source detail.

# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Some readers of this report may conclude from its findings that Springfield Public School District 186 (SD186) is in steady decline and its problems are insurmountable. Authors of the report, however, offer a completely opposite view. While deeply troubled by many of the report's findings, members of the African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group are optimistic about changes underway in SD186 and hope the report rallies the community around supporting quality public education for all children in Springfield. This report challenges the Springfield community to ask itself some serious questions: Do Springfield residents believe that excellent public education is critical to supporting a high quality of life for the entire community? Will Springfield expect more for its children or is it satisfied with mediocre, unequal results? Can all children learn? Is the Springfield community ready and willing to make the commitment necessary to reverse the trends illustrated throughout this report? Will Springfield demand better of itself?

This report is the culmination of a three-year, community-driven process evaluating indicators of success for African-American students in SD186. Primary emphasis was placed on success at the high school level. Study topics were determined by study group interest and relevance to current educational research and policy discussion. Most sections offer trend analysis and when possible compare data by race, gender and school. The report attempts a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced in SD186 but only touches on needed important next steps. Furthermore, many key social and eco-

nomics issues that affect student learning are outside its scope.

## CALL TO ACTION

Overall, this report finds SD186 in need of reform. Its results call for stronger and more attentive governance, increased leadership and staff accountability, and a major injection of active public engagement coupled with targeted and sustained community-wide support. Findings indicate pervasive problems that will demand courageous leadership, staff dedication, and serious family, community and student involvement to reverse. While external factors like the reduction of poverty, strengthened family structures and increased parent/community support are key ingredients to realizing lasting change and should be the focus of ardent community attention, **the study group hopes that the primary use of this report will be to assist with and inform the SD186 transformation recently begun.**

The balance of this Executive Summary provides findings by study section.

## Student Achievement

The very low levels of academic achievement for all SD186 students are of tremendous concern to the study group. While this report's data almost universally point to monumental academic achievement problems among African-American students, the indicators for White students leave little room for celebration. Perhaps most troubling is that little progress has been made over the years studied and, in fact, the trend slopes downward. Of major concern are the wide racial gaps in achievement and the consis-

tent disparities across the three district high school schools. Equally disturbing is that, in most cases, when achievement gaps were narrowed they occurred due to White student achievement decline rather than African-American student increase.

### ***PSAE***

Juniors in Illinois high schools take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). This exam includes, and is supplemented by, the ACT test.

- Comparing years 2002 and 2006, African-American students performed at levels that were 50 to 70 percent lower than the achievement of White students in reading and math and the racial gap was especially pronounced at Springfield High School (SHS). Further, trends for all students were downward since 2001.
- In 2006, overall 41% of White students failed to meet basic standards in reading – 50% in math; 16% scored in the exceeds category in reading and 6% did so in math.
- **In 2006, 77% of African-American students failed to meet basic standards in reading - 85% in math; African-American students were virtually absent among the highest tier of student learners in both reading and math.**
- At Lanphier High School (LHS), White students posted the lowest scores among the high schools and African-American students performed at levels that were a half to a third lower than White students; LHS had the fewest White students of the high schools in the exceeds category.
- Springfield High School (SHS) posted the highest White student scores for the three high schools but their math scores

declined from 2002 to 2006 and reading scores remained unchanged; African-American students performed well below half the level of White students; only 3% of African-American students scored in the exceeds category in reading in 2006 and none did so in math.

- White student performance at Springfield Southeast High School (SSHS) edged downward overall since 2002. African-American student scores, however, declined even more precipitously in both reading and math, and remained at levels markedly below the achievement of White students. No African-American students scored in the exceeds category in either subject in 2006.

### ***ACT***

The ACT is a standardized test used for admission to most colleges in Illinois and across the country. The test is designed to measure achievement in English, math, reading, science and writing. Results from the ACT test are reported on a scale from 1 to 36. In general, SD186 ACT average performance was stagnant since 2002.

- SHS and SSHS posted declines in composite scores from 2002 to 2006 but LHS saw gains in composite scores and across every subject area; SHS and SSHS saw slight gains in some subjects and losses in others.
- Average district composite scores in 2002 and 2006 did not exceed 21.
- SHS posted the highest composite and subject area scores in 2002 and 2006.
- **African-American scores by subject were at such low levels in 2004 (ranging from 14.0 to 15.9) authors wonder**

**whether these students could be accepted into any four-year college.**

### ***College Readiness***

A College Readiness Benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding credit-bearing college courses. Scores suggest far too many SD186 students were not college ready and the difference between the college readiness benchmark scores in 2006 of White and African-American students were stunning.

- **In reading, in 2006, 17% of White students and 2% of African-American students achieved college readiness benchmarks; math percentiles were 36% and 6%, respectively.**
- Students posted their highest scores in 2006 in English (68% for Whites and 30% for African-American).
- In 2006, 59.7% of SD186 graduates who attended Lincoln Land Community College needed some form of remediation and over the past five years this ranged from 48.7% to 67.5%.
- While White readiness scores were far from reassuring, White and African-American students in 2006 appeared to be on separate tracks in their preparation for the education that has become a virtual necessity in gaining decent jobs in the changing American economy.

### ***Work Readiness***

WorkKeys is a national assessment system created by American College Testing and taken by SD186 juniors to compare an individual student's skills to the skills required by jobs currently in the workplace.

- Far too many students lacked the skills needed to function in the workplace and all schools showed declines in overall WorkKeys scores from 2004 to 2006.
- Only about half of SD186 high school juniors performed at high school levels (5-7) on the WorkKeys assessments in math and reading; 23% of African-American students performed at high school levels in math, and 30% did so in reading.
- Overall, about 15% of high school juniors in 2006 had WorkKeys scores below a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level in math, and 13% in reading.
- **30% of African-American high school juniors posted WorkKeys scores below 2<sup>nd</sup> grade levels in math; 23% did so in reading.**
- In 2006, 34% of SD186 high school juniors did not exhibit the basic knowledge base in *Applied Math* to compete for Illinois jobs in growth industries; for African-American students this deficit rose to a startling 59%.
- 24% of SD186 high school juniors in 2006 did not exhibit the basic knowledge base in *Reading for Information*, to compete for Illinois jobs in growth industries; for African-American students the figure rose to 40%.

### ***Pre-PSAE Tests***

In SD186, the PLAN is administered in the fall of sophomore year and the EXPLORE test in the fall of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. PLAN is, in part, a predictor of success on the ACT and the EXPLORE test helps 8th and 9th graders explore a broad range of options for their future. PLAN and EXPLORE results were examined for this report because they are

important indicators of future success. In general, PLAN and EXPLORE results mirror PSAE results so SD186 officials should be well aware of which students require intense interventions.

### **ISAT**

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is the standardized test used to assess academic performance according to Illinois Learning Standards in elementary school. It measures performance according to the following descriptions: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Below Standards and Academic Warning. **Despite notable increases in scores in both math and reading for White and African-American students from 2003 to 2006, achievement gaps between the races appeared as early as third grade and remained steady until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade for each of the four years studied.**

### ***Recommendations***

The continued decline in academic performance of African-American students (and of students overall), and the gap in performance between African-American and White students, must be acknowledged by the Springfield Board of Education, the district administration, teachers, parents, students and the community at large.

A Pre-K to 12 comprehensive, system-wide *performance and accountability plan* for dramatically increasing the scores and overall performance of all students with special emphasis on African-American students must be enacted by the Board of Education. *This plan should include effective strategies with measurable goals, objectives and accountability mechanisms.*

All district departments and programs that impact academic performance should undergo performance audits.

Ambitious performance targets need to be established for African-American students for all district and state tests and expectations for increased performance over the next three years should be made public.

The Board of Education should report progress in the accomplishment of Board-developed goals annually to the public. Individual schools should report progress annually to its stakeholders.

Training for board members and community members on how to access and review student performance data by race, subject and grade over time should be offered regularly.

SD186 should monitor instructional methods used by teachers in all classrooms to ensure accountability to high standards.

### **School Completion**

The dropout crisis, as many have coined it, is a problem that significantly impacts national, state and local economies, global competitiveness, and overall social well-being. **Many researchers and advocacy organizations claim that official graduation rates in America are grossly inflated and some have developed new models for calculating graduations rates and counting dropouts.** In general, reports using these alternate models conclude that America's graduation rates hover around 70% overall and about 50% for African-American and Latino students – much lower than current national statistics that claim 90% graduation rates overall and an 80% rate for minorities. Evidence herein suggests SD186 graduation rates also may be lower than officially reported.

#### ***Alternate Calculation of Graduation Rates***

Graduation rates for 2006 graduates were recalculated using 9<sup>th</sup> grade Fall Housing

(FH) enrollment numbers which are often used for official ISBE year-end reports. State Report Card (SRC) 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers used by SD186 to calculate graduation rates were significantly lower than the official FH numbers for the same period.

- SD186 graduation rates across every category were much lower when recalculated using Fall Housing 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers.
- Overall SD186 graduation rates in 2006 by school calculated using Fall Housing 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers compared with School Report Card 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment data resulted in substantially lower graduation rates:

	FH	SRC
Lanphier	71%	83%
Springfield	85%	96%
Southeast	73%	85%
District	76%	88%

- Graduation rates for African-American students and African-American males in 2006 were significantly lower when using Fall Housing (FH) enrollment numbers compared with School Report Card (SRC) data:

	African American Total		African American Male	
	FH	SRC	FH	SRC
Lanphier	58%	71%	46%	58%
Springfield	77%	97%	76%	91%
Southeast	66%	81%	56%	75%
District	67%	83%	59%	75%

- Similar patterns emerged when looking at data over three years.

### Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)

In *Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis*, authors, Orfield, Losen and Wald compute Illinois' statewide graduation rate using the Cumulative Promotion Index or CPI. This indicator, developed by Christopher B. Swanson of the Urban Institute, "approximates the probability that a student entering the ninth grade will complete high school on time with a regular diploma". According to Swanson, "...for Blacks [in Illinois] the CPI graduation rate is 48%, for Latinos it is 58%, for Whites it is 83% and for Asians it is 89%." When computed by race and gender for Illinois, the CPI rate shows African-American males with a graduation rate of 40.8%.

- **Breakdowns for Springfield showed an overall CPI graduation rate of 63.4% - 66.4% for Whites and 53.2% for African-Americans (Orfield, et al).**
- A Graduation Project 2007 report also calculated SD186 2004 graduation rates using the CPI; **it reported a 64% overall graduation rate for Springfield.**

### Promoting Power

Balfanz and Legters developed a measure called "promoting power" which compares the number of freshman at a high school to the numbers of seniors four years later. While Balfanz & Legters make no claim that promoting power directly equates to dropout or graduation rates, they argue it "...provides a reliable indicator to which a high school is succeeding in its core mission of graduating students who enter its doors".

- Analyzing the promoting power of 2006 SD186 high school graduates by school, race and gender using both School Report Card and Fall Housing enrollment data...

- \* LHS had the weakest promoting power of the three high schools in every category except male which tied with SSHS at 50%.
- \* SHS consistently had the highest levels of promoting power across categories.
- \* All schools showed wide gaps between the levels of promoting power of White and African-American students.
- \* Over three years using either enrollment comparison, LHS had the weakest promoting power for African-Americans (40% in 2006 using FH data) with SSHS a close second.
- \* SSHS and SHS declined in the promoting power of African-Americans using either enrollment figure over the three years; LHS showed modest increases, but its rates were still below the other two schools.

### ***Official Dropout Data***

Despite concerns with potential undercounting, authors included SD186 officially reported dropout numbers over five years.

- Over five years, there were 610 officially reported high school dropouts.
- \* In total, White females dropped out in equal numbers to White males but African-American males dropped out in larger numbers than African-American females.
- \* Most dropouts occurred in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, yet White students dropped out more often in the later grades (11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) while African-

American students dropped out more often in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

- \* Data suggested a positive overall trend with a total of 148 African-American and White dropouts in 2002 and only 77 in 2006 - an almost 50% reduction (an unlikely result given the findings of this report).

### ***Transfer Data for Graduation Rate Calculation***

A comprehensive handling of this topic was beyond the scope of this report but state definitions of transfers and how they are determined in practice for graduation rate calculations are often cited by researchers, advocates and policymakers as masking dropouts. Given this and the troubling discrepancies outlined in this study section, SD186 could reasonably assume that problems associated with the identification and reporting of transfer numbers may exist and should examine their procedures accordingly.

### ***Student Attrition***

Conditions that result ultimately in the failure of students to graduate occur over time. Information provided shows high school student gains and losses by month for the 2003-04 school year and gains and losses by school, race and gender comparing October and May for 2006.

- Significant student losses began as early as October and continued steadily each month until the end of the school year. **In 2004, there were 710 fewer high school students in school at the end of the year than at the start.**
- In 2006, overall student loss for African-American females was higher than for African-American males; White female loss was nearly equal to White male loss.

- LHS saw roughly the same percent loss in student counts between African-American students and White students while the percent loss was much higher for African-Americans than for Whites at SHS and SSHS in 2006.
- SSHS saw the highest percent loss among African-American students of the three high schools while LHS had the highest percent loss among White students; SHS posted the lowest percent loss among the three high schools in every category in 2006.
- Comparing total 3-year losses by high school, total student count declines increased each year at both LHS and SSHS whereas SHS saw a sustained reduction in total student count decreases.

### ***Recommendations***

The Springfield Board of Education should carefully examine the policies, procedures and practices that determine graduation and dropout rates with the goal of determining accurate rate information.

SD186 should join forces with community leaders to lead a community-wide campaign to combat the dropout problem.

SD186 should explore and offer alternative pathways to graduation that address the individual needs of students and are integrated into the regular school structure.

## **Chronic Truancy**

Many research studies identify truancy as a major risk factor for other school and social problems including social isolation, educational failure associated with high rates of suspensions and expulsion, school dropout,

substance abuse, teen pregnancy and delinquency. Truancy reduction efforts have been touted in some areas for saving districts money, increasing graduation rates, and reducing neighborhood crime. In Illinois, chronic truancy is defined as “a child who is absent without valid cause from school for 10% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days” or 18 or more days.

- Truancy is a serious problem in Springfield; in just three years, 1,598 high school chronic truants missed 55,906 days of school.
- From 2004 to 2006, LHS had the most chronic truants of the high schools, followed by SSHS then SHS.
- Chronic truancy varied significantly by grade, and was most prominent in the freshman year.
- Chronic truants were disproportionately African-American accounting for about 33% of high school students but 55% of chronic truants from 2004 to 2006.
- At LHS, African-Americans accounted for about 29% of the student population and 42% of the chronic truancies between 2004 and 2006; at SHS, African-Americans represented about 26% of the students, but 60% of chronic truancies and at SSHS, African-Americans were 44% of the student body but accounted for 64% of chronic truancies.
- Total chronic truancies increased sharply from 2004 to 2006 at LHS and SSHS, for both races. SSHS saw a particularly acute rise in chronic truancies going from 70 to 125 for African-American students and from 29 to 85 for White students between 2004 and 2006. SHS saw decreases for both races.

- **From 2004 through 2006, each year 50% of the Douglas School enrollment were chronic truants.**
- In 2006, 609 chronic truants accounted for 21,883 unexcused days, an average of 36 days each - or about two months.
- With state aid estimated by SD186 officials to be worth around \$40 daily, these absences may result in a significant loss of revenues to SD186, close to \$900,000 for 2006.

### ***Recommendations***

The Board of Education should adopt measurable goals for truancy reduction.

Specific truancy reduction efforts that involve key community sectors must be developed and implemented district-wide as soon as possible.

Targeted efforts to reduce truancy at Douglas School should be a top priority.

## **Internal Transfers**

Mobility is often characterized as an issue caused by external factors that predominately affect at-risk, transient populations. This report's analysis looks at a lesser discussed type of mobility – internal transfers granted by the district. While drawing precise conclusions is difficult, data suggest that SD186 high school transfer policies and practices may actually be contributing to instability and inequity in our high schools.

- There was a clear and consistent pattern of in-migration of students, particularly White students, to SHS from LHS and SSHS.

- The number of internal transfers was large and the reasons why so many transferred were mostly undocumented.
- The total number of SD186 internal transfers increased each year from 2003 to 2006.
- Of the roughly 970 internal total transfers involving SHS, SSHS and LHS over four years, over 70% were White.
- **Of the nearly 700 total Whites who transferred from one school to another over four years, about 80% transferred into SHS from the other two schools.**
- More than 630 White students transferred out of LHS and SSHS over the four years. Of the 880 total student transfers out of LHS and SSHS combined, over 70% were White. An average of 81 White students at LHS and an average of 78 White students at SSHS transferred out each year.
- Of the transferring students over the study period, 57% were female; there was a marked increase in the number of female in-transfers at SHS from 2004 to 2006.
- Each year, at LHS, there were more females than males transferring out; at SSHS, more balance existed between male and female out-transfers, but in 2006, females exceeded males.
- SD186 data listing internal transfers by "reason" were also examined as a part of this study; surprisingly, only about 15% of transfers overall had a specific reason recorded with the remaining 85% coded into an "other" (or unknown) category.

### ***Recommendations***

The Springfield Board of Education should substantively review the district's internal transfer policies and practices and restrict internal transfers except in extraordinary situations.

Since anecdotal information from Springfield parents (and some research) suggest that families often learn about transfer opportunities through informal, word-of-mouth networks, SD186's transfer practices, if not changed, should at minimum provide all families with equal access to and information about transfer opportunities.

SD186 should maintain detailed information on internal transfers by school broken down by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) subgroups; this information should be easily attainable by the public and presented in a user-friendly fashion.

## **Student Discipline**

Few issues are as important in education today as school safety. Many teachers and students deal daily with inappropriate and sometimes dangerous student behavior. Trying to maintain safe and secure environments, schools often rely on suspensions and expulsions to punish or remove problem students. **Unfortunately, America's schools do not have a stellar record when it comes to the fair distribution of these disciplinary strategies.** Across the country, African-American students are being expelled and suspended at rates disproportionate to their numbers. In SD186, race disproportionality in student discipline also appears to be a problem.

### ***Suspensions***

- Over 5,000 total high school student suspensions occurred between 2002 and

2006; annual suspension totals increased 54% from 2002 to 2006.

- African-American students accounted for 55% of all suspensions over the study period despite representing only around 32% of the high school student body.
- African-American male suspensions increased 92% over the five-year period, while White male suspensions changed little.
- African-American female suspensions increased 95% over the five years, while White female suspensions increased 47%.
- Males accounted for 60% of total suspensions but females were increasingly more likely to be suspended showing a 74% increase over the study period.
- In 2006, students suspended more than once accounted for 55% of all suspensions; of these, 68% were African-American.
- Springfield's elementary and middle schools reported 7,700 student suspensions from 2002 to 2006; annual totals increased 10% from 2002 to 2006.
- African-American elementary and middle school students were suspended more often than their representation in the total student population (about 38% in 2007) accounting for 62% of all suspensions from 2002 to 2006.
- African-American male suspensions increased 20% over the five year period, while White male suspensions decreased 24%.

- African-American female suspensions increased 32%, while White female suspensions decreased by 25% from 2002 to 2006.
- In 2006, K-8 data revealed that 51% of all suspensions were given to multiple offenders; of those, 70% were African-American.
- In 2003, of the 5,018 total district suspensions, 2,630 or 52%, were categorized under “flagrant disrespect / insubordination / vulgarity” or “fighting”; in 2004 the percent rose to 56% .

### ***Expulsions***

- Almost three-fourths of all high school student expulsions from 2002 to 2006 went to African-American students, and the proportion of African-American expulsions steadily increased from year to year.
- Males accounted for a decreasing proportion of student expulsions, as female expulsions grew from 28% to 64% of the total.
- African-American females accounted for 77% of all female expulsions over the five year period.
- In 2006, African-American students were expelled five times more often than Whites; African-American males accounted for 68% of total male expulsions and African-American females for 89% of total female expulsions.
- The pattern was similar at the K-8 level. African-American expulsions increased from 69% to 90% of total expulsions from 2002 to 2006. Male expulsions declined from 85% to 55% of total expulsions

sions as female expulsions increased from 15% to 45% of total expulsions.

- Weapons and serious fighting infractions accounted for the majority of overall district expulsions in 2005; there were significant differences by race in the number of expulsions given for fighting/assault as well as in the number of total expulsions.

### ***Recommendations***

The Board of Education should authorize an evaluation of district suspension and expulsion policies and school suspension and expulsion practices to ensure fair and equal disciplinary actions.

SD186 should provide the student and school supports necessary to ensure both a safe and positive learning environment for students and staff and individual student success.

## **Equity and Teacher Quality**

A recent shift in the policy discussion around teacher quality has focused on the *distribution* of teacher quality. This study examined the assignment of teachers in SD186 schools, comparing experience and education levels of teachers (two aspects of teacher quality) and the schools’ percent of minority and low-income student population.

### ***Effect of Race on Elementary Schools***

Overall, the data suggest a tendency for schools that were disproportionately minority to have less experienced and less educated faculty.

- Feitshans had the highest African-American percentage of students of all schools at 89%.

- \* With 52% of the teaching workforce having 5 or fewer years teaching experience, it had the most inexperienced staff of all schools.
  - \* With only 6% having 16 or more years teaching experience, it ranked last on this dimension.
  - \* None of the teachers had Masters Degrees, ranking it 21<sup>st</sup> (tied for last with Lee).
- Looking at *teaching inexperience* (those with five or fewer years) it was clear that elementary schools with the most African-American students were more likely to have more teachers who were new to the field of teaching.
  - Looking at *teaching experience* (16+ years experience column), schools with the highest percentage of African-American students were less likely than other schools to have highly experienced teachers.
  - Looking at the *percent with M.A. degrees or higher*, on average, 24% of the teachers in high African-American schools had M.A. degree or higher, in contrast to 48% at the low African-American schools.
  - Although aggregate statistics suggested a pattern, there were exceptions.

***Effect of Low-Income Status on Elementary Schools***

High percent African-American schools were also more likely to include students from lower income families and conversely, there was considerable overlap between schools with smaller proportions of African-American students and higher income levels. Schools with high low-income percentages

were more likely to have teachers new to the field and without Master’s degrees than schools with low low-income percentages.

***Effect of Race and Low-Income on Middle Schools***

- Franklin and Lincoln, which ranked lowest in the percent of African-American and low-income students, ranked highest for having the most experienced and educated teachers.
- Jefferson was second highest in the percent of African-American and low-income students, but had the lowest percent of teachers with 16 or more years of experience and tied for lowest in the percent of teachers with advanced degrees.

***Effect of Race and Low-Income on High Schools***

- SSHS had the highest percent of African-American students, the highest percent of teachers with limited experience, and the lowest percent of teachers with advanced degrees.
- SHS, by contrast, had the lowest percent of African-American and low-income students, and the highest percent of the most experienced teachers and the most with advanced degrees.

***Recommendations***  
 The Board of Education should adopt a policy that recognizes the importance of pairing expert teachers with vulnerable students.

SD186 staff should study models from other districts that are moving in this direction and work closely with the Springfield Education Association to identify and implement the appropriate steps needed to comply with the new Board policy.

The Board of Education should adopt measures, such as financial incentives, that may encourage senior level teachers to voluntarily teach at schools with the most vulnerable students.

## Special Education

The question of whether minority children are disproportionately assigned to special education has been a national concern for many years. Special education expert Tom Hehir, at Harvard University, says disproportionality is an old problem: “There is over-placement of minority kids, particularly African-American males, in special education.” Data suggests that race disproportionality in special education in SD186 may also exist.

- SD186 served a higher percentage of special education students than the average Illinois school district and other unit districts (K-12 districts) every year from 2003 – 2006.
- In each of the four years examined, African-American students were over-represented in the group with IEP's; in 2005-06, for example, 37% of all students were African-American but 46% students with IEP's were African-American.
- The top seven disability categories for SD 186 students across all age groups (ages 1-22) were examined as of December 1, 2005...
  - \* Almost 20% of SD186 students were identified as receiving special education services; the highest concentration of students with IEPs were receiving services for Specific Learning Disabilities (36%) followed by

Speech and Language Impairment (29%) and Mental Retardation (13%).

- \* Students between the ages of 14-20 accounted for 27% of students receiving special education services; 52% of them received services for Specific Learning Disabilities and 22% for Mental Retardation.
- \* In 2006, 34% of SD186 high school students were African-American but of the 759 White and African-American 14-20 year old district students with IEPs, 396 or 52% were African-American. These African-American students were over-represented in every disability category with Mental Retardation being the highest at 63% of the total.

### *Academic Performance of SD186 Special Education Students*

SD186 data show a strong positive relationship between the presence of an IEP and poor performance on standardized tests. This relationship appeared strong across all grade levels and did not improve from 2001 to 2006.

- Sizeable performance gaps existed between students with IEPs and those without.
  - \* Averaging across 2001 to 2006, in reading, less than 9% of students with IEP's met or exceeded targets, while about 58% without IEP's did so.
  - \* In math, the gap was not as wide but absolute performance was even lower – 6% of those with IEP's met or exceeded performance levels and those without averaged 50%.

Examining grade levels 3, 5, 8 and 11...

- \* In reading, large gaps between the IEP and non-IEP groups remained relatively stable across the four grade levels, however, absolute performance was much lower at grade 11 than at the other grades.
- \* In math, the gaps increased steadily between grades *and* overall performance levels declined.
- \* The most pronounced change in math was between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades with scores for students with IEPs falling to remarkably low levels.

### ***Educational Environment***

Educational environment is evaluated by assessing the amount of time students spend outside the regular classroom or in a separate facility. Examining the type of service environment by race reveals that significantly more SD186 African-American students with disabilities received services in more restricted environments than did their White peers.

- In 2006, Whites were more likely than African-Americans to be taught in the least restrictive environment by a 67% to 50% margin.
- Other unit districts saw steady declines in their *most* restrictive environment category for mental retardation from 2002-2006 seemingly moving students into the *more* restrictive environment category. SD186, by contrast, saw relatively little movement with students receiving services for mental retardation most often (77% in 2006) in their *most* restrictive environment.

- SD186 better served students with Specific Learning Disabilities in the least restrictive environment when compared with other unit districts. Both SD186 and unit districts across the state served almost all their Speech and Language Impairment students in the least restrictive environments.

### ***Recommendations***

Annual SD186 Special Education Profiles, any state compliance reports, and/or self assessments, should be made public locally.

The Board of Education should call for a thorough examination of district special education services with particular attention paid to identification procedures and academic expectations.

The Board of Education needs to address the academic expectations of special education students and set performance goals and accountability mechanisms.

Strategies designed to ensure that all students are being accurately identified for special education services need to be presented to the Board of Education for adoption.

The Board of Education should impanel a special education advisory committee comprised of parents of children with special needs and expert community leaders to provide advice and counsel to the Board and the Special Education Department and monitor progress toward established goals.

### **Student/Parent Survey**

The study group thought it would aid in its overall understanding of African-American student achievement and success if African-American parents and students were ques-

tioned directly about their educational experience. To that end, a survey was developed and administered to parents and students in the community and findings are organized into four sections: student attitudes, parent attitudes, a comparison of student and parent attitudes, and a comparison of findings across the four high schools. The survey did not meet the highest standards of a scientifically sound survey and therefore the results should be considered with caution.

- Students and parents indicated they felt treated with less respect by teachers compared to school administrators, office staff and safety officers.
  - There was a large difference in how students and parents thought they treated teachers compared with how teachers treated them.
  - There seemed to be a significant disconnect between what parents feel and think about what is happening at schools and the perception of students, especially around expectations & rigor in the classrooms.
  - 100% of parent respondents indicated they encourage their children toward challenging classes and expected them to do well; students did not overwhelmingly agree, especially on being encouraged by parents to take challenging classes.
  - **Student results suggested they did not feel supported with high expectations from the system or the community, that they felt under-challenged in their instruction, that discipline was not meted out fairly, and that their personal needs were not recognized or supported.**
- Overall, SSSH students seemed most satisfied with their educational experience compared with student responses from the other two public high schools with two exceptions: feeling safe at school and feeling encouraged to read challenging literature.
  - LHS students were the least satisfied overall with their educational experience but indicated strongest agreement with feeling safe at school and being treated with respect by teachers. They were least likely to participate in extracurricular activities and enjoy school, think learning is relevant or say they do their best. LHS students also indicated strongest feelings of low expectations from the community and among their friends.
  - SHS students participated in extracurricular activities most often and seemed to feel the school had relatively high expectations of them with the exception of the expectation of going to college and having high expectations for all students. They felt least strongly among the three schools that teachers treated them with respect, had high expectations for them, challenged them to do their best, gave them independent attention or cared about them.
  - SHS students expressed the lowest affirmatives of all the schools (in the 30 percentile range) for three areas: whether students respected those who are different; whether the school offered help for personal problems; and whether the school treated all equally.

***Recommendations***

The Board of Education should require annual parent and student evaluation surveys to assess school and classroom performance and climate.

Data from annual evaluation surveys should be utilized in the school improvement process and impact staff and school accountability.

The Board of Education should require a strong and comprehensive student, family and community engagement component that defines and supports the key rights, roles and responsibilities of all partners at every school and utilizes these key stakeholders in meaningful ways in the school improvement process.

## II. INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, as a group, African-American students in America fall behind their White peers in academic achievement as well as with regard to numerous other factors that correlate with student success. This report attempts to take what is known from a vast body of knowledge and research regarding these factors and examine how well Springfield's African-American students, particularly its high school students, are doing educationally. By extension, the report also examines how well Springfield's public education system is doing educating African-American students.

At the onset, the African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group reviewed research on specific indicators of student success. This study was then built around those success indicators. While much of the data presented herein paint a disturbing picture, the group feels optimistic - *they know African-American students can learn and succeed.*

It is clear that many societal factors contribute to the problem: poverty; segregation; discrimination; changing family patterns;

generational and demographic shifts; globalization; lack of personal responsibility, motivation and/or confidence; and more. **Yet public education, once thought of as the "great equalizer" is failing to keep pace and accomplish its core mission - to provide a quality education to the students who enter its doors.**

Frequent acknowledgments regarding the limitations of the report's analysis and conclusions are made throughout. The report addresses some of the more salient external factors noted above but could not, within the time and resources available, deal with them exhaustively. However, since the goal was to assess *student* achievement and success, the report focuses most directly and comprehensively on the educational system. While the importance of family and community in the success of all students should never be underestimated, *it is equally important to expect better results and greater accountability from the public school system.*

### III. METHODOLOGY

In the spring of 2004, Sheila Stocks-Smith, Director of the Office of Education Liaison for the City of Springfield and Nina Harris, President and CEO of the Springfield Urban League, attended the *Midwest Conference On The Dropout Crisis* in Chicago. Each returned with the desire to localize the lessons learned and dig deeper into Springfield's dropout and graduation rate numbers. They formed a partnership and invited Springfield Public School District 186 to join. After several months of discussions, the effort floundered. Months later, Ms. Stocks-Smith and Ms. Harris decided to broaden the effort's scope and form a community-driven study group to examine African-American student achievement and success.

In June of 2005, The Office of Education Liaison and the Springfield Urban League launched the African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group initiative in Springfield. Approximately 40 community members were invited to participate and a core group of around 20 distinguished community representatives from a broad cross-section of disciplines began to meet monthly.

The goal of the initiative was to publish a report that sheds new light on African-American students in Springfield and sets forth policy and program recommendations to help guide the educational and community institutions that interface with youth in Springfield. The report was to identify barriers to African-American student achievement and success and spur community action around common goals. What follows is the culmination of that effort.

Early on, a set of guiding principles and a projected timeline was approved. For many

months the group met, reviewed existing research, heard from guest experts and ultimately selected the following areas of concerns to study: student achievement; school completion (graduation and dropout rates); truancy; discipline; student supports; special education; course selection, equity; student engagement; school improvement, school climate, parent/student satisfaction and race. As work progressed, the group narrowed the scope of the report to include 8 of the 12 original topic areas.

In the early summer of 2006, a select group of study group members met with the Superintendent of Springfield Public Schools to explain the goals of the project and elicit the District's support. Over the next few months, study group members outlined questions under topic areas and sent written requests for information to top administrators in the district.

The group continued to meet monthly for over a year to guide the data collection and small groups and individuals were assigned to specific topic areas. Sheila Stocks-Smith facilitated these groups and took the lead in project coordination, data collection and analysis and for the writing of the report. With the help of a group member, the Office of Education Liaison received a \$22,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The grant helped fund a stipend for Nzinga West who provided assistance in data collection and compilation. Ms. West also directed the development and dissemination of the student/parent survey and its collection and inputting of results. In November, 2007, the Office of Education Liaison contracted with the University of Illinois at Springfield to fact-check data, assist in data analysis and

report writing, and to format and print the final report.\*

---

\*The conclusions reached and recommendations made are solely those of the African-American Student Achievement and Success Study Group.

## IV. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SPRINGFIELD

Demographic data presented here have implications for this study and were compiled from profiles provided by the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission using 2000 U.S. census data.

### *Population, Employment and Income from Earnings*

There were 88,375 people in Springfield 16 years and older, and of those, 11,398 (about 13%) were African-American. Sixty-eight percent overall were employed and the employment rate for African-Americans was 63.3%, just below the overall average (Comparison, *Profile*).

Of the employed civilian population 16 years and older, 40% worked in management, professional or related occupations compared to only 27% of African-Americans in those occupations. Thus, employed African-Americans were more likely to work in less skilled and lower paying occupations. For example, nearly 16% of the total workforce was in service occupations, compared with 25% of African-Americans. And 8% of the total worked in the "arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services" industry, compared with 12.6 % of African-Americans (Comparison, *Profile*).

The median household income

was \$39,388 overall, but was \$24,258 for African-Americans. While 23% of African-Americans had incomes below \$10,000 per year, only 9% overall were at that level; and while 19% overall made between \$50,000 and \$75,000, only 9% of African-Americans were earning at that level (Comparison, *Profile*).

### *Household Composition*

Family financial stability, traditionally a function of income from the earnings of the head of household, is today greatly impacted by a second adult wage earner. In Springfield, 24% of African-American households were headed by females with no husband present. This compared to only 6% of households overall (Comparison, *Profile*). For adults aged 15-64, 44% overall lived in married couple households. That compared to only 26% for African-Americans (Comparison, *Household*).

Table 1 shows the comparison of African-American population to total population in Springfield by living arrangement of children. For children under age 6 who lived with their mothers, 30% overall lived in a single female headed household; 65% of African-American children lived in those households (Comparison, *Living*)

**Table 1. Number of Children Living in Different Types of Springfield Households**

	Total Households	African-American Households
Total children 17 & under	25,471	5,656
<b>Children under 6 years only</b>	8,218	1,641
Living with two parents	5,051	413
Living with mother	2,504	1,071
<b>Children aged 6-17 years</b>	17,253	4,015
Living with two parents	11,234	1,268
Living with mother	5,101	2,472

### **Education**

Table 2 shows the comparison of African-American population to total population by educational attainment levels. While 37% of all Springfield residents had some type of college degree, only 21% of African-Americans had college degrees (Comparison, *Educational*).

**Table 2. Education Level of Springfield Residents  
25 Years of Age and Older**

	Total Households	African-American Households
Total	75,366	8,939
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	2,883	508
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> , no diploma	6,577	1,624
HS grad (incl. GED)	21,865	3,001
Some college, no degree	16,047	2,007
Associate Degree	4,933	418
Bachelor's Degree	14,303	886
Grad. or Prof. Degree	8,758	495

### **Poverty**

When looking at all city households, only 8% were under the poverty level, but 30% of African-American households were below the poverty level. When households with related children under 18 were examined separately, 14% overall lived under the poverty level, but that figure nearly tripled to 39% for African-American households with children. Fully 44% of African-American households headed by females were under the poverty level, compared to 25% of female-headed households overall. For African-American children aged 5 and under, 52% were below the poverty level. For African-American children ages 6-17, the poverty rate was 64% (Comparison, *Profile*).

## V. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Federal education law commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) sets strict student performance standards for American schools and districts, most of which apply directly to student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. The overarching goals of NCLB are for *all* children to meet grade-level proficiency or higher in reading and math, close achievement gaps, ensure high teacher quality, and hold schools accountable for results by the year 2014. To achieve its overall goals, NCLB mandates that states meet annual academic performance targets or adequate yearly progress (AYP) with the goal of 100% proficiency by school year 2014. AYP targets must be met for all students and designated subgroups (economically disadvantaged, racial/ethnic, students with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency students) (ISBE, *NCLB Overview & Adequate*).

Illinois has established the following AYP goals for its schools and districts:

Year	AYP Goal	Year	AYP Goal
2003 & 2004	40.0%	2010	77.5%
2005 & 2006	47.5%	2011	85.0%
2007	55.0%	2012 & 2013	92.5%
2008	62.5%	2014	100%
2009	70.0%		

In Springfield, high school-age children are served primarily at the district's three high schools and at Douglas Alternative Center. Academic test scores for Douglas, however, are not reported separately but are instead reported by the student's home school (Douglas). **Every year since 2003, all three SD186 high schools have not made adequate yearly progress and all have been placed on the States' Academic Watch Status** (ISBE, *E Report*).

Data in this section make four comparisons.

- Does academic performance vary by race? **The gap between White and African-American students is large, starts at a young age, and is enduring.**
- Does academic performance vary by school? **There are substantial differences across schools.**
- Does academic performance vary by year? **Most measures show that performance is lower now than several years ago.**
- Does academic performance vary by subject? **Performance by race is most-consistent across all subject areas.**

The achievement data in this section cover multiple years in SD186 high schools and in some cases middle and elementary schools, with emphasis on the progress of African-American and White students on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). Also included are analysis of ACT, ACT Benchmark Readiness Scores, WorkKeys, and the PLAN and EXPLORE tests.

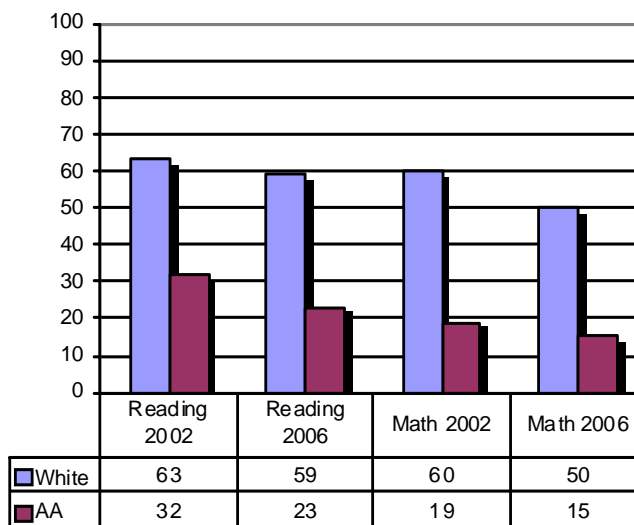
### *Prairie State Assessment Examination (PSAE)*

The PSAE is a standardized test given by the Illinois State Board of Education. It is a free, mandatory exam for all Illinois public high school students taken the second semester of their junior year. The PSAE includes three components: (1) the ACT Plus Writing, which includes the ACT battery of four multiple-choice tests (English, mathematics, reading, and science) and a 30-minute constructed-response writing test with a single prompt question; (2) a science assessment developed by the Illinois State Board of Education, and (3) two WorkKeys Assessments: Applied Mathematics and Reading for Information (ISBE, *Prairie*).

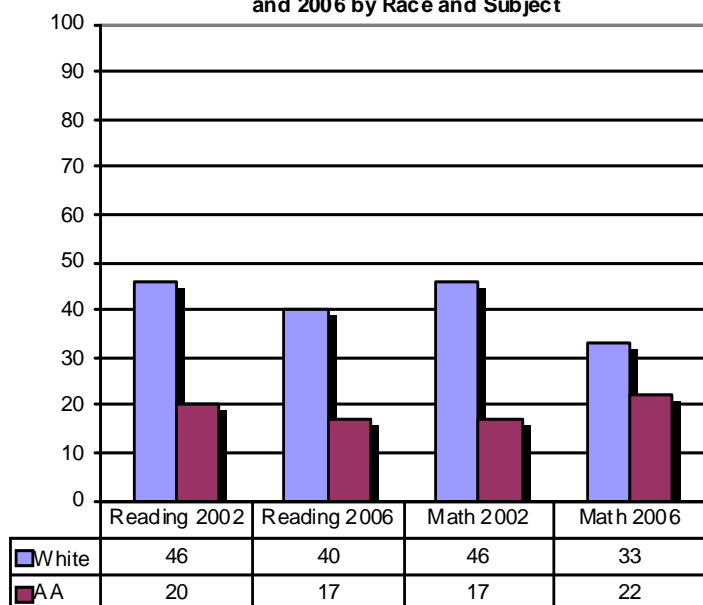
**Figure 1. Percent of SD186 High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards by Race and Subject, 2002 and 2006**

Figure 1 shows the percent of students who met or exceeded state learning standards on the PSAE for reading and math for all students and by racial breakdown for the 2002 and 2006 school years. The percent of students exceeding standards for 2006 was also examined in this study but are not shown here (IIRC, *Springfield, Grade 11*).

The gap between White and African-American students was marked and consistent across subjects in both 2002 and 2006. African-American students performed at levels that were 50 to 70 percent lower than the achievement of White students.



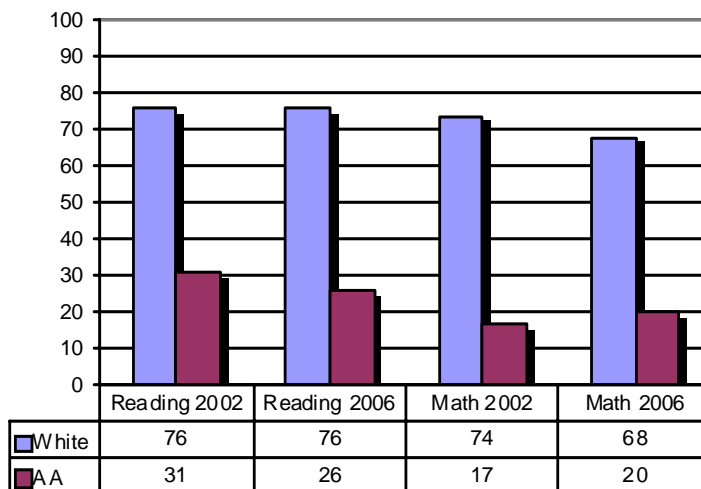
**Figure 2. Percent of Lanphier High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards Comparing Years 2002 and 2006 by Race and Subject**



the math improvement, African-American students performed at levels that were a half to a third lower than White students. Among the high schools, LHS had the fewest White students in the exceeds category.

At Springfield High School (SHS) (Figure 3), PSAE scores for White students were the highest in the district, but declined in math between 2002 and 2006. African-American

**Figure 3. Percent of Springfield High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards Comparing Years 2002 and 2006 by Race and Subject**



Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the achievement differential in reading and math between White and African-American students at each of the three high schools in 2002 and 2006 (IIRC, *Lanphier*). At Lanphier High School (LHS) (Figure 2), PSAE scores declined for White students in both subjects, declined for African-American students in reading but improved in math. Yet despite

Table 3. ACT Scores by Subject and School, 2002 and 2006										
	Composite		English		Math		Reading		Science	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
LHS	17.7	18.5	16.7	18.1	17.6	18.3	18	18.6	17.9	18.5
SHS	21	20.9	20.5	20.9	21.2	20.4	21.5	21.6	20.4	20.2
SSHS	18.7	18.4	17.9	18.2	18.6	17.8	19.3	18.5	18.4	18.7

No African-American students scored in the exceeds category in either subject in 2006.

student scores declined in reading but improved in math. The gap between African-American and White performance was the widest of the three high schools with African-American students having performed at levels well below half the achievement level of White students. Only 3% of African-American students scored in the exceeds category in reading and none did so in math in 2006.

### ACT

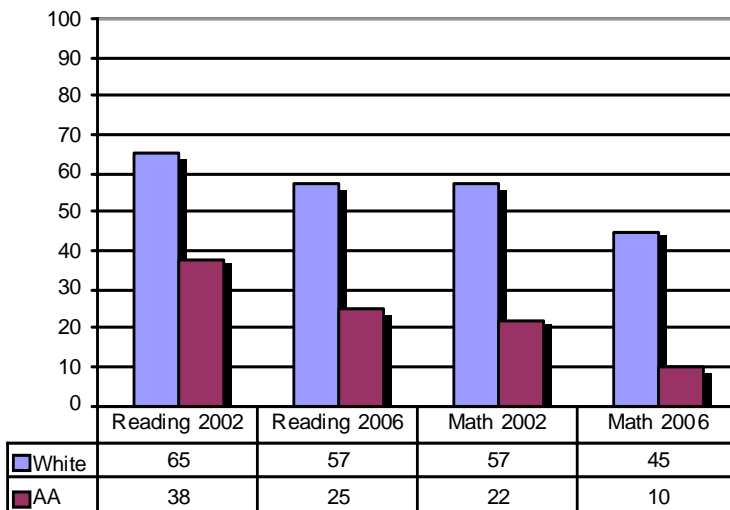
The ACT is a standardized test used for admission to most colleges in Illinois and across the country. The test is designed to measure achievement in English, math, reading, science, and writing. Results from the ACT test are reported on a scale from 1 to 36 (ACT).

This report does not fully profile this test due to the lack of test data in the data source by race from SSHS. However, the data that were available reveal patterns very similar to those evident in the PSAE data discussed above.

In general, average ACT performance was stagnant since 2002 (Table 3). Overall performance comparing 2002 and 2006 improved slightly at LHS, but declined slightly at SHS and SSHS. LHS scores improved in all subjects; SHS scores improved slightly in English and reading, but dropped in math, and science; scores for SSHS improved in English and science, but declined in math and reading (Springfield Public).

Table 4 shows ACT scores by subject and race for LHS and SHS (School Improvement Plans for Lanphier and Springfield). In general, White scores showed improvement from 2001 to 2004 at both schools but African-American scores remained relatively flat or declined except for slight gains in reading and English at LHS. Moreover, ACT scores for African-Americans were alarmingly low leading one to question whether many of these students could even qualify for higher education above the community college

Figure 4. Percent of Springfield Southeast High School Students Meeting/Exceeding PSAE Standards by Race and Subject, 2002 and 2006



Like the other two high schools, White student performance on the PSAE at Springfield Southeast High School (SSHS) (Figure 4) edged downward since 2002. African-American student scores, however, declined even more precipitously in both reading and math, and remained at levels markedly below the achievement of White students.

**Table 4. LHS and SHS ACT Scores by Subject and Race, 2001 and 2004**

	English		Math		Reading		Science	
	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004
<b>LHS</b>								
White	16.6	18.6	18	18.8	18.4	19.3	18.1	19.1
AA	13.3	14.3	15.7	15.7	14	16.3	15.2	15.8
<b>SHS</b>								
White	21	23.2	21.7	22.9	21.7	23.1	20.9	22.6
AA	15.5	14.0	16.3	15.8	16.2	15.8	15.3	15.9

In another sign of college readiness problems for SD186 students, in 2006, 60% of SD186 graduates who attended Lincoln Land Community College needed some form of remediation and over the past five years this ranged from 49% to 68%.

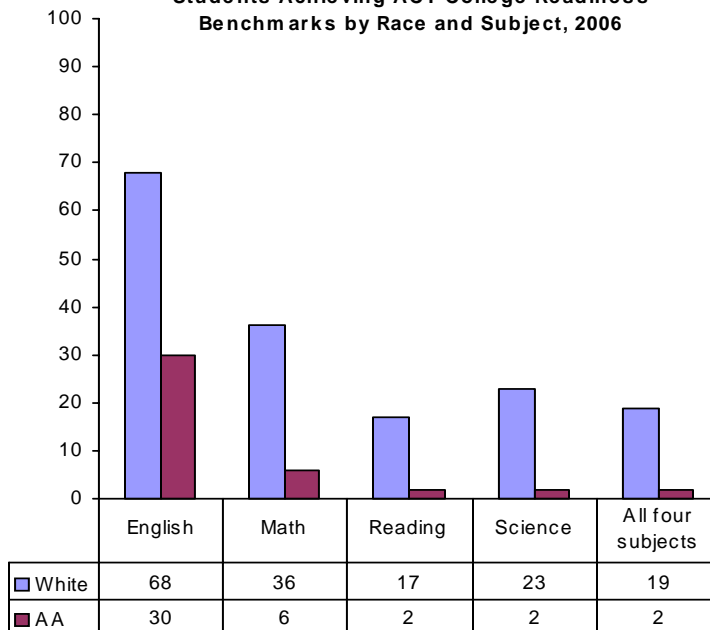
level; and if accepted there, whether they would need extensive remediation.

**College Readiness**

ACT’s College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum ACT test scores required for students to have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses taken by first-year college students. A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding credit-bearing college courses (ACT, 2005).

Figure 5 shows the percent of SD186 White and African-American high school students in 2006 achieving ACT Benchmark Readiness scores (Springfield Public). While White readiness scores were far from reassuring, African-American student readiness was so low as to be almost non-existent in every subject but English. In reading, in 2006, 17% of White students and 2% of African-American students achieved college readiness benchmarks; math percentiles were 36% and 6%, respectively. From this data, it appears that White and African-American students are on separate tracks in their preparation for the education that has become a virtual necessity in gaining decent jobs in the changing American economy.

**Figure 5. Percent of SD186 High School Students Achieving ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race and Subject, 2006**



**Work Readiness**

The same pattern is replicated in WorkKeys, a national assessment system created by American College Testing to compare an individual student's skills to the skills required by jobs currently in the workplace. Two of the total eight WorkKeys skill assessments, Reading for Information and Applied Mathematics, are key components of the PSAE (ACT Workkeys).

WorkKeys assessments are based on workplace tasks in a wide range of jobs.

Each skill assessment consists of items that can be divided into levels of increasing complexity corresponding to a scale for that skill. An individual can only reach a level or score of 5 by first achieving scores or levels of 3 and 4. Level 3 is the least complex and level 7 is the most complex. Scores below level 3 are considered to represent skills that are too low for employment (ACT WorkKeys).

According to US Department of Labor estimates, a WorkKeys score of 6 or 7 equates to Grades 11+; a 5 equates to grades 9-10.9; a four to grades 6-8.9; and a 3 to grades 2-5.9. A WorkKeys score lower than 3 equates to below a second grade level (Powered).

Table 5 reviews total WorkKeys scores (percent at level) for all students and for African-American students for Applied Math and Reading for Information for the 2006 school year by state, district, and high school (School Data). A careful examination of these tables revealed that only about half of district high school juniors performed at high school levels (5, 6 & 7) in math and reading. Some 15% of juniors demonstrated such low levels of math skill (below 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) that they would be deemed unemployable. A comparison of 2004 and 2006 WorkKeys scores (not reported here) showed a worsening situation, with increased representation at the lower performance levels. And while SHS had more students performing at grade level (6 & 7) in 2006, all the schools saw an overall drop in grade level performance since 2004.

Unfortunately, the situation was even worse for African-American 11<sup>th</sup> graders. **Approximately 75% performed below high school grade levels in reading and math based on their WorkKeys scores in 2006. Thirty percent performed below a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level in math and 23% did so in**

**reading.** Following the pattern for all students, the proportion of African-American juniors performing at lower levels increased since 2004. While White students were more likely to perform at grade level at SHS than at the other two schools, that advantage did not apply to African-American students where only 12% scored at grade level in math and 15% in reading in 2006 at SHS.

### ***WorkKeys and Illinois Jobs***

At our request, ACT assigned WorkKeys scores to the *Illinois Occupational Outlook In Brief*, a publication of the Illinois Department of Employment Security, which lists those occupations in Illinois expected to provide the most annual job openings each year. “Best Bet” Occupations are highlighted in the publication and are used for our analysis (data not shown). “Best Bet” occupations combine a high growth rate with a large number of annual openings and pay well for the level of training/education (ACT Assigned). Assigned WorkKeys scores represent the “abilities required to *do* the job - not get the job” (John Nelson, ACT).<sup>1</sup>

In 2006, 34% of SD186 juniors did not exhibit the basic knowledge base in *Applied Math* to compete for Illinois jobs in growth industries; for African-American students this deficit rose to a startling 59%.

Twenty-four percent of SD186 high school juniors did not exhibit the basic knowledge base in *Reading for Information* to compete in Illinois jobs in growth industries; for African-American students the figure rose to 40%.

---

<sup>1</sup> This work on behalf our study group served as a catalyst for ACT to conduct similar analysis for all the states (John Nelson ACT).

**Table 5. WorkKeys Scores by Geography, Level and Race for 2006 Applied Math**

WorkKeys Level	State		District		Lanphier		Springfield		Southeast	
	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA
7	9%	1%	6%	1%	3%	4%	10%	3%	5%	1%
6	22	7	17	5	8	4	28	9	12	4
5	29	22	26	17	29	20	24	15	24	16
4	16	21	17	18	21	18	11	13	20	20
3	15	29	19	29	24	30	17	34	19	24
Below 3	9	0	15	30	15	26	10	27	20	34
Reading for Information										
WorkKeys Level	State		District		Lanphier		Springfield		Southeast	
	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA	All	AA
7	7%	2%	8%	2%	4%	0%	14%	3%	6%	2%
6	21	10	17	10	10	4	24	12	16	12
5	33	30	26	18	25	20	29	22	25	15
4	25	34	24	31	32	35	16	25	25	32
3	8	13	11	17	14	18	8	13	13	19
Below 3	7	12	13	23	15	24	9	25	14	21

**Pre-PSAE Tests**

In SD186, the PLAN is administered in the fall of the sophomore year and the EXPLORE test in the fall of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. PLAN is, in part, a predictor of success on the ACT and the EXPLORE test helps 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders explore a broad range of options for their future. While not shown here, PLAN and EXPLORE results were examined for this report. In general, PLAN and EXPLORE results mirror PSAE results so SD186 officials should be well aware of the students requiring intense interventions (Springfield, EXPLORE, Springfield, PLAN, School Improvement Plans for Lanphier, Springfield).

**ISAT**

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is the standardized test used to assess academic performance according to Illinois Learning Standards in elementary school. It measures performance according to the following descriptions: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Below Standards and Academic Warning (ISBE, ISAT).

Despite notable increases in scores in both math and reading for Whites and African-Americans (AA) from 2003 to 2006, **achievement gaps between White and African-American students in SD186 appeared as early as third grade and remained steady until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade for the four years studied (IIRC, Springfield, Grades).** The percentage point gap is presented in table 6 (page 27).

**Recommendations**

The continued decline in academic performance of African-American students, and of students overall, and the gap in performance between African-American and White students, must be acknowledged by the Springfield Board of Education, the District administration, teachers, parents, students and the community at large.

The Board of Education should consider requiring performance audits for all district departments and programs.

A Pre K-12 comprehensive, system-wide *performance and accountability plan* must

**Table 6. Percentage by which Whites Exceed African-Americans in Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the ISAT Test by Grade and Year 2003-2006**

<b>Reading Scores</b>				
	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>
Grade 3	26	34	33	28
Grade 5	29	30	36	37
Grade 8	34	32	28	32
<b>Math Scores</b>				
Grade 3	28	24	27	22
Grade 5	25	28	28	30
Grade 8	33	38	29	29

be enacted by the Board of Education for dramatically increasing the scores and overall performance of all students, with special emphasis on African-American students. The plan should include effective strategies with measurable goals and objectives and accountability mechanisms.

Ambitious performance standards need to be established for African-American students for all district and state tests and expectations for increased performance over the next three years need to be made public. For example, the Board of Education could adopt the following goal: African-American student achievement on the PSAE will increase by 25% in reading and math by 2010; high school principals will be held accountable for results according to the SD186 High School Academic Performance Accountability Plan.

The Board of Education should annually report to the public progress in the accomplishment of board-developed goals.

This progress report as well as school specific progress reports should be presented to school stakeholders at topic-specific school assemblies.

Training for board members and community members on how to access and review student performance data by school, race, subject and grade over time should be offered regularly.

SD186 should monitor instructional methods used by teachers in all classrooms to ensure accountability to high standards.

## VI. SCHOOL COMPLETION

The dropout crisis, as many have coined it, is a significant problem that has major impact on national, state and local economies, global competitiveness, and overall social wellbeing. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, the financial cost to society for dropouts is staggering; **they estimate that dropouts in 2007 alone will cost the nation over \$329 billion dollars in lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetime** (Alliance, 2008).

In recent years, there has been active debate about the scope of the problem and many researchers and advocacy organizations claim, in part, that official graduation rates in American are grossly inflated. Some have developed their own models for counting drop outs and have applied them across the states (The Education Trust, 2003; Orfield et al, 2004; The Graduation Project, 2007; Balfanz, 2004). In general, reports using these alternate models conclude that America's graduation rates hover around 70% nationwide and about 50% for African-American and Latino students, despite official national statistics that claim 90% graduation rates overall and 80% rate for minorities (Alliance, 2008; Orfield et al, 2004; Balfanz, 2004; Swanson, Greene, 2002; The Education Trust, 2003).

The 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB), defines graduation rate as the percentage of students, measured from the beginning of high school, who graduated with a regular diploma in the standard number of years. In response, states proposed, and the U.S. Department of Education approved, a broad range of determination methods (Alliance). Illinois adopted the following definition and calculation formula:

“Graduation rate is the number of 2005-06 high school graduates divided by the first-time ninth grade 2002 fall enrollment less students transferred out plus students transferred in multiplied by 100”. This may be represented as:

$$\frac{\text{Number of graduates}}{9^{\text{th}} \text{ grade enrollment} - \text{transfers out} + \text{transfers in}}$$

In 2006, SD186 officially reported a 87.1% graduation rate for all students – 89.1% for White students and 81.7% for African-Americans (ISBE, *Illinois*). Using the above formula and others, we examined data on SD186 schools to assess whether graduation rates in SD186 are inflated.

**This review suggests that SD186 may be over-reporting graduation rates due, in part, to the use of low 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers.** Significant discrepancies existed between the 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers inserted by district officials into the graduation rate formula and official Fall Housing enrollment numbers (which are often used for official ISBE year-end reports) for the same years. In a lengthy string of email “conversations”, ISBE’s Data Analysis and Progress Reporting division said that while ISBE does not mandate that districts use Fall Housing numbers in the graduation rate calculations, it would be unusual for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers used to vary widely from those numbers.

### *Alternate Calculation of Graduation Rates*

#### Fall Housing vs. State Report Card

Graduation rates for 2006 graduates were recalculated below using the 9<sup>th</sup> grade Fall Housing (FH) enrollment numbers. These enrollment numbers were significantly higher than those used by SD186 to calculate

graduation rates for School Report Cards (SRC).

**Graduation rates across every category are much lower when recalculated using Fall Housing enrollment numbers.**

Table 7 illustrates the comparison for the rates overall and by African- American students (ISBE, *Report, ISBE, Enrollments*). On average, for African-American students, the School Report Card graduation rates were 16% higher than when using the Fall Housing numbers. The discrepancy was greatest at SHS where the SRC graduation rate was 97% while the FH rate was 77%. When looking only at African-American males, graduation rates were astonishingly low using Fall Housing enrollment comparisons.

**Table 7. Graduation Rates in Springfield High Schools, Comparison of Fall Housing (FH) and School Report Card (SRC) Data by School, Race and Gender, 2006**

	All Students		African-American Total		African-American Males	
	SRC Percent	FH Percent	SRC Percent	FH Percent	SRC Percent	FH Percent
Lanphier	83	71	71	58	58	46
Springfield	96	85	97	77	91	76
Southeast	85	73	81	66	75	56
District	88	76	83	67	75	59

Similar patterns emerged when looking at data over three years. Table 8 (page 30) shows graduation rate totals comparing 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers taken from School Report Cards with Fall Housing numbers for 2004, 2005 and 2006 graduates (ISBE, *Report; ISBE, School Enrollments*). The discrepancy between SRC and FH figures spans all three years and all student subgroups. Furthermore, if one accepts the recalculated rates using Fall Housing 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment numbers, the emerging graduation rates, particularly for African-Americans and most acutely for African-American males, are significantly lower than what has been previously reported. Yet as

will be illustrated in the two sub-sections below even these rates are higher than rates calculated using other formulas by outside research and advocacy groups.

Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)

Springfield is not unique among Illinois cities with respect to low graduation rates. In  *Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis*, authors, Orfield, Losen and Wald compute Illinois' statewide graduation rate using the Cumulative Promotion Index or CPI. This

**Breakdowns for Springfield show an overall CPI graduation rate of 63%: 66% for Whites and 53% for African-Americans.**

indicator, developed by Christopher B. Swanson of the Urban Institute, "approximates the probability that a student entering the ninth grade will complete high school on time with a regular diploma" (Swanson). "For Blacks [in Illinois] the CPI graduation rate is 47.8%, for Latinos it is 57.8%, for Whites it is 82.9% and for Asians it is 88.8%" (Orfield, 2004). When computed by race and gender for Illinois, the CPI rate shows African-American males with a graduation rate of 40.8%.

A *Graduation Project 2007* report prepared by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (EPERC) illustrates SD186 2004 graduation rates using the CPI. According to this report, Springfield's graduation rate for all students was 64%. This rate is much lower than 2004 data reported in Table 8. The EPERC analysis does not break down rates according to racial subgroups but does show interesting

**Table 8. Graduation Rates in Springfield High Schools,  
Comparison of Fall Housing (FH) and School Report Card (SRC) Data  
by School, Race & Gender, 2004 – 2006**

	Total		Males		Females		All Whites		White Males		All African Americans		AA Males	
	SRC	FH	SRC	FH	SRC	FH	SRC	FH	SRC	FH	SRC	FH	SRC	FH
<b>LHS</b>														
2004	83	69	81	63	85	76	85	72	n/a	n/a	76	54	n/a	n/a
2005	89	72	85	68	93	80	89	74	83	68	90	67	91	62
2006	83	71	82	67	84	75	87	76	89	74	71	58	58	46
<b>SHS</b>														
2004	93	92	92	88	95	90	95	91	n/a	n/a	87	81	n/a	n/a
2005	95	85	95	87	96	91	97	88	97	87	89	73	86	67
2006	96	85	95	86	96	83	96	87	96	89	97	77	91	76
<b>SSHS</b>														
2004	94	88	93	84	95	90	95	89	n/a	n/a	92	82	n/a	n/a
2005	90	78	85	79	95	83	95	88	94	87	82	64	72	58
2006	85	73	83	70	86	75	87	76	85	77	81	66	75	56

breakdowns by grade level. According to this report, nearly 50% of the lost students disappear at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 14% at 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 22% at 11<sup>th</sup> grade and 15% at 12<sup>th</sup> grade (The Graduation, 2007). As the Springfield community deliberates how to address this problem, focusing on this loss at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level may be appropriate.

#### Promoting Power

Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters developed another measure related to graduation called Promoting Power. Promoting Power “compares the number of freshman at a high school to the numbers of seniors four years later.” While Balfanz and Legters make no claim that Promoting Power directly equates to dropout or graduation rates, they argue it “provides a reliable indicator to which a high school is succeeding in its core mission of graduating students who enter its doors” (Balfanz, 2004).

According to the authors, an even more desirable measure would be to compare the number of actual graduates at individual

high schools with their earlier beginning enrollments but Common Core Data which they use for analysis does not provide graduation data. Because Illinois Report Cards *do* include actual numbers of graduates, Table 9 calculates Promoting Power using the authors' more desirable formula.

Unlike earlier measures, data in Table 9 (page 31) make no adjustments for transfers. Promoting Power is simply the number of graduates divided by the enrollment four years earlier. Separate columns calculate Promoting Power using Fall Housing and School Report Card 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment data. It is striking that all LHS and SSHS African-American students had in most cases less than a 50/50 chance of graduating on time or at all when using Fall Housing data; even when using School Report Card figures, the results were troubling. SHS had the highest Promoting Power for African-American students using either enrollment figure (ISBE, *School Enrollments*; ISBE, *Report*).

LHS had the weakest Promoting Power of the three high schools in every category except male which tied with SSHS at 50%. SHS consistently showed the highest levels of Promoting Power across categories, as noted earlier, but also had the largest differences between Fall Housing and School Report Card enrollment numbers. All schools displayed wide gaps - nearly 20% points - between White and African-American students using either FH or SRC 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment data. Looking at gender, females had higher rates of Promoting Power than males at SSHS and LHS, but males did better than females at SHS.

Table 10 illustrates the Promoting Power for African-American students by high school over three years. LHS had the weakest Promoting Power for African-Americans among the high schools with SSHS a close second. SSHS generally declined in Promoting Power using either enrollment figure over the three years. LHS showed modest increases, but its rates were still below SSHS. SHS showed a significant downward trend using either figure (ISBE, *School*; ISBE, *Report*).

### **Official Dropout Data**

Concerns about policies and practices that determine official school dropout rates are similar to those discussed above with graduation rates so this report does not review the issue at length. However, despite concerns with potential undercounting, authors included SD186 officially reported numbers of school dropouts over 5 years (Table 11).

These breakdowns allowed for dropout comparisons by race and high school grade

**Table 9. Promoting Power of Springfield High Schools, Comparison of School Report Card (SRC) and Fall Housing (FH) Data by School, Race and Gender, 2006**

	2006 Graduates (SRC)	2002-03 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Enrollment (SRC)	2002-03 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Enrollment (FH)	SRC Data %	FH Data %
<b>By School</b>					
LHS	231	386	434	60	53
SHS	336	389	436	87	77
SSHS	254	394	443	65	57
<b>Total African-American by School</b>					
LHS	51	113	129	46	40
SHS	68	93	111	74	61
SSHS	95	177	204	54	47
<b>Total White by School</b>					
LHS	178	269	300	67	59
SHS	251	274	302	92	83
SSHS	146	205	228	72	64
<b>Total Male by School</b>					
LHS	121	207	240	59	50
SHS	173	190	209	91	83
SSHS	109	194	218	57	50
<b>Total Female by School</b>					
LHS	110	179	194	62	57
SHS	163	199	227	82	72
SSHS	145	200	225	73	64

level. Interestingly, the data showed a positive overall trend. In 2002, a total of 148 dropouts were reported, but only 77 in 2006 - an almost 50% reduction<sup>2</sup>. Most dropouts occurred in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade yet White students dropped out more often in the later grades (11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) than African-American students, who dropped out more often in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

Over five years, there were 610 officially reported high school dropouts and White females dropped out in equal numbers to White males (ISBE, *Number*).

<sup>2</sup> Based on findings in this section and throughout this report a 50% dropout reduction seems unlikely.

**Table 10. Promoting Power of African-Americans, Comparison of School Report Card (SRC) and Fall Housing (FH) Data by School, 2004-2006**

	Graduates (SRC)	2002-03 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Enrollment (SRC)	2002-03 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Enrollment (FH)	SRC Data %	FH Data %
<b>LHS</b>					
2003-04	34	79	97	43	35
2004-05	53	96	117	55	45
2005-06	51	113	129	46	40
<b>SHS</b>					
2003-04	74	93	100	80	74
2004-05	70	84	101	83	69
2005-06	68	93	111	74	61
<b>SSHS</b>					
2003-04	111	180	195	62	57
2004-05	91	164	196	55	46
2005-06	95	177	204	54	47

**Table 11. SD186 High School Dropouts by Grade, Gender and Race, 2002 - 2006**

	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade		10 <sup>th</sup> Grade		11 <sup>th</sup> Grade		12 <sup>th</sup> Grade		Total	Males Total	Females Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
<b>2005-06</b>											
White	1	1	5	4	12	8	5	7	43	23	20
AA	3	2	4	2	9	5	5	4	34	21	13
<b>2004-05</b>											
White	5	2	8	18	3	6	5	6	53	21	32
AA	18	6	11	9	7	10	9	8	78	45	33
<b>2003-04</b>											
White	2	8	7	6	14	11	7	7	62	30	32
AA	12	4	8	3	11	5	2	2	47	33	14
<b>2002-03</b>											
White	11	13	10	11	10	14	14	13	96	45	51
AA	14	6	9	3	3	6	1	7	49	27	22
<b>2001-02</b>											
White	5	2	19	10	26	21	8	9	100	58	42
AA	2	2	8	6	6	14	6	4	48	22	26
<b>Totals</b>											
5 Yr Total	73	46	89	72	101	100	62	67	610	325	285
White	24	26	49	49	65	60	39	42	354	177	177
AA	49	20	40	23	36	40	23	25	256	148	108

**Transfer Data for Graduation Rate Calculation**

Transfer determinations are often cited as problematic when counting dropouts and are thought to mask the true numbers. The Illinois definition for the calculation of graduation rates says: “Transfers Out’ include students from the freshman class who transferred to another school or died prior to graduation. ‘Transfers In’ encompass 2005-06 graduates who were not counted in the first-time ninth grade 2002 fall enrollment; they may include students who transferred from another school, students with or without disabilities, and students who graduated in fewer than four years” (ISBE, *School Report*)

A comprehensive handling of this topic was beyond the scope of this report but given the troubling discrepancies outlined in this study section, SD186 could reasonably assume there may be problems associated with the identification and reporting of transfer numbers and should examine their procedures accordingly.

**Student Attrition**

Conditions that result ultimately in the failure of students to graduate occur over time. Table 12 recreated from information provided by SD186 shows high school student gains and losses by month for the 2003-04

school year (SD186, *High*).

Significant student declines began as early as October and continued steadily each month until the end of the school year. **In 2004, there were 710 fewer high school students in school at the end of the year**

Table 12. Monthly Enrollment by School, 2003-04				
	LHS	SSHS	SHS	Total
1 <sup>st</sup> Day 2003-04	1325	1444	1459	4228
6 <sup>th</sup> Day 2003-04	1341	1437	1438	4216
increase/decrease (+/-)	+16	-7	-21	
September, 2003	1348	1424	1440	4212
increase/decrease (+/-)	+7	-13	+2	
October, 2003	1270	1373	1438	4081
increase/decrease (+/-)	-78	-51	-2	
November, 2003	1232	1341	1427	4000
increase/decrease (+/-)	-38	-32	-9	
December, 2003	1212	1320	1413	3945
increase/decrease (+/-)	-20	-21	-14	
January, 2004	1180	1305	1406	3891
increase/decrease (+/-)	-32	-15	-7	
February, 2004	1137	1279	1369	3785
increase/decrease (+/-)	-43	-26	-37	
March, 2004	1113	1263	1326	3702
increase/decrease (+/-)	-24	-16	-43	
April, 2004	1095	1226	1306	3627
increase/decrease (+/-)	-18	-37	-20	
May, 2004	1069	1205	1291	3565
increase/decrease (+/-)	-26	-21	-15	
June, 2004	1047	1192	1279	3518
increase/decrease (+/-)	-22	-13	-12	
<b>Percent Reduction from School Year Start</b>	21%	17%	12%	16%
<b>Total Increase/Decrease</b>	-278	-252	-180	-710

**than at the beginning.** At LHS and SSHS, with some exceptions, there were larger declines earlier in the school year that, while still declining, tapered off as the months progress. SHS displayed a different pattern with declines greatly increasing in the early part of the second semester.

Table 13 shows October to May comparisons for a more recent school year (2005-06) and breaks out figures by racial groups and gender (SD186, *Student*). Surprisingly, student loss was higher for African-American females than for African-American males (except at SSHS). White female loss exceeded White male loss at both SHS and

SSHS. LHS saw roughly the same percentile loss between African-American students and White students.

At SHS and SSHS, however, African-American percentile loss was higher than Whites. SSHS saw the highest percent of African-American loss among the high schools while LHS had the highest percent loss among White students. SHS posted the lowest decreases among the three high schools in every category. Examining total three-year losses by high school, declines in total student counts increased each year at both LHS and SSHS whereas SHS saw a sustained reduction in total student count decreases (data not shown).

**Table 13. Monthly Enrollment by School, Race and Gender, 2005-06**

Month	African-American Total	African-American Males	African-American Females	White Total	White Males	White Females	Total
<b>LHS</b>							
October	408	218	190	857	438	419	1265
May	337	184	153	725	368	357	1062
Decrease	71	34	37	132	70	62	203
% Decrease	17	16	19	15	16	15	16
<b>SHS</b>							
October	373	167	206	959	474	485	1332
May	326	149	177	904	448	456	1230
Decrease	47	18	29	55	26	29	102
% Decrease	13	11	14	6	5	6	8
<b>SSHS</b>							
October	609	285	324	708	374	334	1317
May	493	227	266	615	329	286	1108
Decrease	116	58	58	93	45	48	209
% Decrease	19	20	18	13	12	14	16
<b>All Schools</b>							
October	1390	670	720	2524	1286	1238	3914
May	1156	560	596	2244	1145	1099	3400
Decrease	234	110	124	280	141	139	514
% Decrease	17	16	17	11	11	11	13

**Recommendations**

The Springfield Board of Education should authorize an external performance audit of the policies, procedures and practices that determine graduation and dropout rates with the goal of determining accurate rate information.

SD 186 should join forces with community leaders to lead a community-wide campaign to combat the drop out problem.

SD 186 should explore and offer alternative pathways to graduation that address the individual needs of students and are integrated into the regular high schools.

## VII. CHRONIC TRUANCY

According to the National Center for School Engagement, truancy is a major problem in communities across the nation but little national truancy data is collected (National, *Overview*). It is considered a major risk factor for other school and social problems including social isolation, educational failure associated with high rates of suspensions and expulsion, school dropout, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and delinquency. Truancy reduction efforts have been touted in some areas for saving districts money, increasing graduation rates, and reducing neighborhood crime (National, *Pieces*).

In Illinois, chronic truancy is defined as “a child who is absent without valid cause from school for 10% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days” (Lake). The following analysis looks at the numbers of chronic truants and their days absent for SD186 high school age students at Douglas Alternative Center and the three high schools. Comparisons are made by race, school and school year. Redacted raw data was reviewed and compiled into the tables below (Springfield).

Truancy is a serious problem in Springfield. In just three years, 1,598 high school age chronic truants missed 55,906 days of school (Table 15). LHS had the most chronic truants, followed by SSHS and then SHS (Table 16). Chronic truants were disproportionately African-American accounting for about 33% of high school students between 2004 and 2006, but 55% of chronic truants (Table 15). Over half of the Douglas School students were chronic truants.

Table 14 provides data on chronic truants as a percent of the total student body. Chronic

truancy increased significantly as a percent of enrollment in three years at LHS and SSHS, while it declined some at SHS. The chronic truancy rate at Douglas was staggering.

**Table 14. Percent of Chronic Truants\* by School, 2004-2006**

	LHS	SHS	SSHS	Douglas
2004	7	10	7	49
2005	17	8	10	49
2006	18	7	15	56
Average	14	8	11	51

\*Number of chronic truants divided by total enrollment.

Table 15 provides additional detail and shows how truancy varied between the freshman and senior years by race. Total chronic truancy was about the same in 2004 and 2005, but it increased considerably in 2006. Chronic truancy varied significantly by grade, and was most prominent in the freshman year. Generally the numbers declined as students aged, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade three year totals were the lowest of the grade levels. Chronic truancy declines from the freshman to sophomore years were less marked in the 2005-06 school year than in the previous years, however. In total, African-American students, who represented about 33% of the total high school student body between 2004 and 2006, accounted for 55% of chronic truancies over three years. For African-Americans, chronic truancy was most frequent in grade 9 and steadily declined thereafter. White chronic truancy, while also more heavily concentrated among ninth graders, declined less steadily.

**Table 15. Number of Total Chronic Truant High School Aged Students  
(All Three Springfield High Schools and Douglas Alternative Center)  
by Race and Grade, 2004 - 2006**

			Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
2003-04	Ethnicity	AA	133	28	50	51	262
		White	89	30	46	55	220
	Total		222	58	96	106	482
2004-05	Ethnicity	AA	132	75	33	50	290
		White	72	57	30	58	217
	Total		204	132	63	108	507
2005-06	Ethnicity	AA	132	100	59	38	329
		White	73	90	70	47	280
	Total		205	190	129	85	609
All Years	Ethnicity	AA	397	203	142	139	881
		White	234	177	146	160	717
	Total		631	380	288	299	1598

Analysis of grade-level data by school (not shown) shows ninth grade chronic truancy between 2004 and 2006 decreased at LHS and SHS particularly for White students, but not at SSHS which saw 9<sup>th</sup> grade increases each year for both races. The LHS decrease could be due to the school's freshman house program; however, these gains were offset by significant increases in chronic truancy in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

have a substantial effect: African-Americans at LHS accounted for about 29% of the student population and 42% of the chronic truanancies and at SSHS for 44% of the student body and 64% of chronic truanancies over the three-year period. There was an even more marked effect seen at SHS where African- Americans represented about 26% of the student population over the three years but 60% of the chronic truanancies.

**Table 16. Number of Chronic Truant High School Aged Students  
by School and Race, 2004 - 2006**

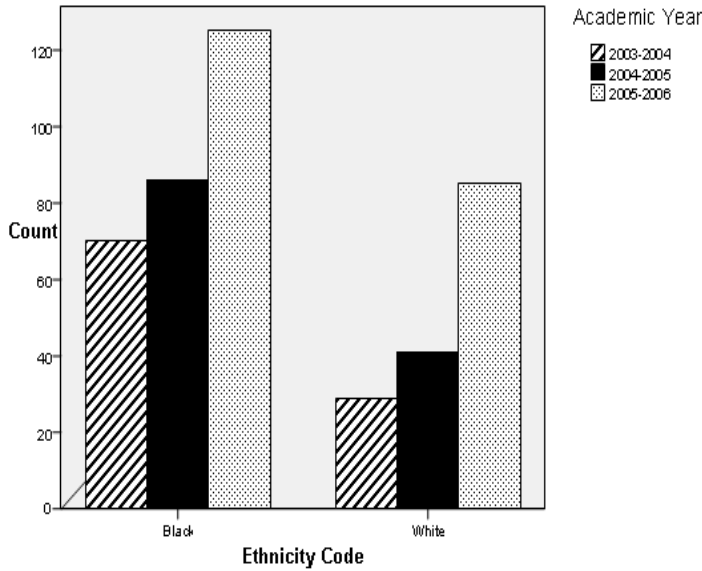
School Code	Ethnicity	Academic Year			Total
		2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2003 - 2006
LHS	Black	74	98	99	271
	White	118	121	138	377
	Total	192	219	237	648
SHS	Black	80	67	60	207
	White	58	38	43	139
	Total	138	105	103	346
SSHs	Black	70	86	125	281
	White	29	41	85	155
	Total	99	127	210	436
Douglas	Black	38	39	45	122
	White	15	17	14	46
	Total	53	56	59	168

Table 16 provides detail on total chronic truancy by school and race from 2004 to 2006. At LHS and SSHS, race seemed to

Total chronic truanancies increased from year to year at LHS and SSHS, for both races. The increase was particularly acute at SSHS,

as illustrated in Figure 6. SHS saw decreases for both races over the study period.

**Figure 6. Number of Chronically Truant Students at SSSHS by Race, 2004 - 2006**



The number of unexcused days by chronic truants underscores the problem and Table 17 provides these data comparing schools and race from 2004-2006. There was a steady increase in the number of days missed by chronic truants over the three-year period. The increases from year to year for Whites and African-Americans were marked at SSSHS and LHS but there were decreases at SHS, and Douglas was basically level. LHS saw much higher numbers of days missed by chronic truants compared with the other two high schools. Comparing races, African-Americans in total accounted for 56% of unexcused days. **In 2006, 609 chronic high school truants accounted for 21,883 unexcused days, an average of 36 days each -- or about two months out of the school year.** With state aid estimated by SD186 officials to be worth around \$40 daily, these absences may result in a significant loss of revenues to SD186 - close to \$900,000 in 2006.

**Table 17. Number of Unexcused Days by Chronic Truants by School and Race, 2004-2006**

		2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	Total
<b>LHS</b>	<i>Black</i>	2,836	3,297	4,302	10,435
	<i>White</i>	3,795	4,155	5,160	13,110
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6,631</b>	<b>7,452</b>	<b>9,462</b>	<b>23,545</b>
<b>SHS</b>	<i>Black</i>	2,790	2,240	1,734	6,764
	<i>White</i>	1,713	1,128	1,324	4,165
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,503</b>	<b>3,368</b>	<b>3,058</b>	<b>10,929</b>
<b>SSHS</b>	<i>Black</i>	2,029	2,797	3,976	8,802
	<i>White</i>	748	1,437	2,729	4,914
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,777</b>	<b>4,234</b>	<b>6,705</b>	<b>13,716</b>
<b>Douglas</b>	<i>Black</i>	1,947	1,590	2,005	5,542
	<i>White</i>	727	794	653	2,174
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,674</b>	<b>2,384</b>	<b>2,658</b>	<b>7,716</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,585</b>	<b>17,438</b>	<b>21,883</b>	<b>55,906</b>	

**Recommendations**

The Board of Education should adopt measurable goals for truancy reduction.

Specific truancy reduction efforts that involve key community sectors must be developed and implemented district-wide as soon as possible.

Targeted efforts to reduce truancy at Douglas School should be a top priority.

## VIII. INTERNAL TRANSFERS

Student mobility – “students moving from one school to another for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level” – is often cited as a key contributing factor to poor academic performance in schools (Rumberger, 2004). A vast body of research exists that examines the impact of mobility on student learning and the external factors that contribute to mobility like employment changes, income instability, family dysfunction and lack of affordable housing, for instance. Most often “mobility becomes a background condition to which schools must adjust rather than a policy concern that may need to be addressed directly either at the school or district level” (Kerbow, 1998). **Some mobility, though, is thought to result from conscious choices made by parents and students who are either dissatisfied with their current school or have concluded that another school will provide better opportunities** (Kerbow, 1998, Rumberger, 2004).

Less research exists about whether lax transfer policies or those applied unevenly actually encourage students to leave their neighborhood’s school due to their perception of inadequacy of the home school. In SD186, the transfer policy reads: “*Attendance areas of each school building are established by the Board of Education. Students are required to attend the building serving their area unless they have been issued a district transfer or are placed in another school by the District*” (District Information and Discipline Handbook). Therefore, internal transfers between schools should be relatively rare and awarded based upon individual and family need.

In Springfield, mobility is often characterized as an issue caused by external factors

that predominately affect at-risk, transient populations. This report’s analysis does not address that classic type of mobility but looks at a lesser discussed type of mobility - internal transfers granted by the district.

**While drawing precise conclusions is difficult, data suggest that the current high school transfer policies and practices may actually be a cause of instability and inequity in our high schools.** There was a clear and consistent pattern of in-migration of students, particularly of White students, to SHS from LHS and SSHS. The number of such transfers was large and the reasons why so many transfers were occurring was mostly unknown.

### *Internal Transfers and Race*

The data in Table 18 (page 39) review the racial distribution of internal transfers of students in Springfield’s three public high schools over a 4 year period (SD186, *Internal*). The total number of SD186 internal transfers increased each year.

**Of the nearly 700 total Whites who transferred from one school to another, about 80% transferred into SHS from the other two schools.**

Of the roughly 970 total internal transfers involving LHS, SHS, and SSHS over four years, over 70% were White. Only about 20% were transfers into LHS and SSHS combined. More than 630 White students transferred out of LHS and SSHS. Out the nearly 880 total student transfers out of LHS and SSHS combined, over 70% were White. **An average of 81 White students at LHS and an average of 78 White students at SSHS transferred out each year.**

While most internal transfers were by White students, African-American students were

Table 18. Internal Transfers (In and Out) by Race and School, <sup>3</sup> 2003 - 2006										
	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05		2005-06		4 Year Total	
	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
<b>White</b>										
LHS	10	84	11	85	21	73	19	81	61	323
SHS	133	15	143	16	138	12	153	12	567	55
SSHS	21	60	18	71	13	87	13	92	65	310
Total	164	159	172	172	172	172	185	185	693	688
<b>African-American</b>										
LHS	6	33	11	33	15	46	11	47	43	159
SHS	31	5	34	7	55	12	67	9	187	33
SSHS	10	21	13	18	15	27	11	33	49	87
Total	47	59	58	58	85	85	89	89	279	279
<b>Grand Total</b>	211	218	230	230	257	257	274	274	972	967

also moving in relatively large numbers. For African-American students, at both LHS and SSHS, there was a sizeable increase in “out” transfers in the past two years (and a corresponding “in” transfer of African-Americans at SHS).

### Internal Transfers and Gender

Table 19 reviews the internal transfers of students in Springfield’s three public high schools by gender over four years (SD186, *Internal*). Of the transferring students over the study period, 57% were female. In the two most recent school years, there was a marked increase in the number of female in-transfers at SHS. Each year, at LHS, there were more females than males transferring out. At SSHS, more balance existed between male and female out-transfers, but in 2006, females exceeded males.

<sup>3</sup> The reader should note that there is slight error in the figures taken from the data source and reported in the 2002-2003 column, in both this table and Table 19. For purposes of this report, we were unable to determine the source of error. The error is small enough to not markedly impact conclusions.

### Reasons for Transfers

SD186 data listing internal transfer by “reason” were also examined as a part of this study (SD186, *Internal*) (data not shown). Surprisingly, only about 15% of transfers overall had a specific reason recorded, and about 85% were coded into an “other” (or

Table 19. Transfers (In and Out) by School and Gender, 2003 - 2006										
	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		4 Year Total	
	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
<b>Male</b>										
LHS	10	46	10	51	20	51	17	53	57	201
SHS	75	11	85	7	85	9	94	9	339	36
SSHS	10	35	10	47	15	60	13	62	48	204
Total	95	92	105	105	120	120	124	124	444	441
<b>Female</b>										
LHS	9	77	13	75	17	74	14	82	53	308
SHS	98	10	106	17	122	17	142	13	467	57
SSHS	22	40	21	48	15	63	12	73	70	224
Total	129	127	140	140	154	154	168	168	591	589
<b>Grand Total</b>	224	219	245	245	274	274	292	292	1035	1030

unknown) category. For those where transfer reasons were recorded, the range of reasons was as follows: to take Latin, to attend a theme school, to be with a transferred sibling, to be closer to parent's work, to be closer to home, and to take ESL class. **The data were simply too incomplete to draw any conclusions about why so many student transfers were granted but it appears they were liberally granted absent any detailed documentation.**

***Recommendations***

The Springfield Board of Education should substantively review the district's internal transfer policies and practices and restrict internal transfers except in extraordinary situations.

Since anecdotal information from Springfield parents (and some research) suggest that families often learn about transfer opportunities through informal, word-of-mouth networks, SD186's transfer practices, if not changed, should at minimum provide all families with equal access to and information about transfer opportunities.

SD186 should maintain detailed information on internal transfers by school broken down by NCLB subgroups. This information should be easily attainable by the public and presented in a user-friendly fashion.

## IX. STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Few issues are as important in education today as school safety. Many teachers and students deal daily with inappropriate and sometimes dangerous student behavior. Trying to maintain safe and secure environments, schools often rely on suspensions and expulsions to punish or remove problem students. Unfortunately, America's schools do not have a stellar record when it comes to the fair distribution of these disciplinary strategies (Skiba, 2000).

Across the country, African-American students are being expelled and suspended at rates disproportionate to their numbers. A 2007 Chicago Tribune analysis of 2004-05 U.S. Department of Education suspension and expulsion data found that

*....in every state but Idaho, black students are being suspended in numbers greater than would be expected from their proportion of the student body. In 21 states – Illinois among them - that disproportionality is so pronounced that the percentage of black suspensions is more than double their percentage of the student body. And on average across the nation, black students are suspended and expelled at nearly three times the rate of white students (Witt, 2007).*

An extensive body of research spanning 25 years illuminates this issue. One leading researcher, Russell Skiba, Professor of Edu-

cational Psychology at Indiana University, examined two common explanations for racial disproportionality in student discipline: the belief that 1) a relationship to socioeconomic status exists and 2) African-American students are more disruptive than their white peers. **He concludes that race does seem to contribute to the disproportionate application of discipline apart from whether or not students come from low-income families. Furthermore, he finds that evidence fails to show that African-American students misbehave at higher rates than their White peers and “if anything, African-American students appear to receive more serious school punishments for less severe behaviors (Skiba).”** In SD186, race disproportionality in student discipline also appears to be a problem as illustrated by the numbers and findings below.

**Between 2002 and 2006, SD186 schools, K-12, administered about 12,800 student suspensions, averaging about 14 per school day.**

### *Suspensions: High School*

Table 20 shows suspension data in the three SD186 high schools between 2002 and 2006 (ISBE, Data, *Suspensions*). Over 5,000 total suspensions occurred during those years - averaging 1000 per year and annual totals increased 54% from 2002 to 2006. On

**Table 20. Number and Percent of Suspensions in Springfield High Schools by Race and Gender,\* 2002 - 2006**

School Year	White				African-American				African American and White Males		African American and White Females		9-12 District Total**
	Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
2005-06	260	170	430	38	398	285	683	60	658	58	455	40	1134
2004-05	296	180	476	40	385	301	686	58	681	58	481	41	1177
2003-04	298	171	469	43	357	244	601	56	655	61	415	38	1081
2002-03	291	174	465	50	255	183	438	48	546	59	357	39	921
2001-02	262	116	378	51	207	146	353	48	469	64	262	36	738
Totals	1407	811	2218	44	1602	1159	2761	55	3009	60	1970	39	5051

\*Table 20 includes both those suspended only once and multiple offenders

\*\*The "Total" column in Table 20 and Table 21 does not add up precisely across columns as it includes ethnic backgrounds other than Whites and African-American; computed percents are based on those total figures.

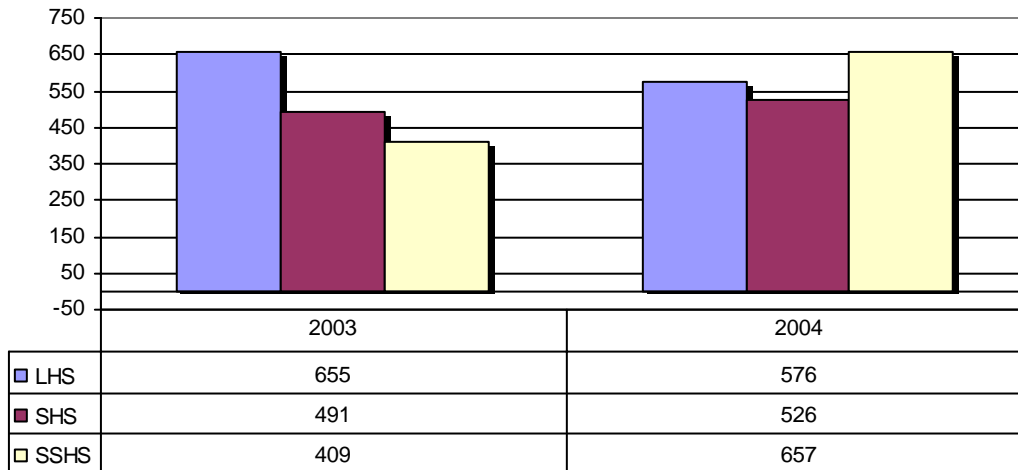
average, six students were suspended every school day. While African-Americans accounted for roughly 32% of all high school students over the period, they represented 55% of all suspensions. African-American male suspensions increased 92% over the five-year period, while White male suspensions changed little. African-American female suspensions increased 95% over the five years, while White female suspensions increased at about half that rate, or 47%. Males accounted for 60% of total suspen-

sions but females were increasingly more likely to be suspended showing a 74% increase over the study period.

In 2006, students suspended more than once accounted for 55% of all suspensions (data not shown). Of these, 68% were African-American students.

Figure 7 shows how suspensions were distributed across the high schools in 2003 and 2004 (SD186, *Suspensions-2002*). Interestingly, while LHS (the high school with the most suspensions in 2003) significantly reduced suspensions in 2004, the gains were offset by increases at the other schools particularly at SSHS.

**Figure 7. Number of SD186 High School Student Suspensions by School, 2003 - 2004**



### ***Suspensions: Elementary and Middle Schools***

High levels of suspensions were not reserved for high school students. In fact, Springfield's elementary and middle schools reported 7,700 student suspensions over the study period (ISBE, Data, *Suspensions*) (data not shown). Annual totals increased 10% from 2002 to 2006. As was the case at the high school level, African-American elementary and middle school students were suspended more often than their representation in the total student population (about 38% in 2007) accounting for 62% of all suspensions. African-American male suspensions increased 20% over the five year period, while White male suspensions decreased 24%. African-American female suspensions increased 32%, while White female suspensions decreased by 25%. In 2006, K-8 student data revealed that 51% of all suspensions were given to multiple offenders – 70% of which were African-American students.

### ***Reasons for Suspension***

ISBE data reported above does not specify reasons for suspensions. However, SD186 provided supplemental data from which we learned that the majority of student suspensions were for fighting and disrespectful behavior (SD186, *Suspensions-Level*) (data not shown). For instance, in 2003, of the 5,018 total district suspensions, 2,630 or 52%, were categorized under “flagrant disrespect / insubordination / vulgarity” or “fighting”<sup>4</sup>; in 2004, the percent rose to 56%.

### ***Expulsions***

Expulsions are given for more serious infractions than suspensions. Table 21 shows high school expulsion data (ISBE, Data, *Expulsions*). Almost 75% of all high school

student expulsions from 2002 to 2006 were given to African-American students, and the proportion of African-American expulsions steadily increased from year to year. Overall, males accounted for a decreasing proportion of student expulsions, as female expulsions grew from 28% to 64% of the total. African-American females accounted for 77% of all female expulsions over the five-year period. In 2006, African-American students were expelled 5 times more often than Whites. African-American males accounted for 73% of total male expulsions and African-American females for 89% of total female expulsions.

The pattern was similar at the K-8 level (ISBE, Data, *Expulsions*)(data not shown). African-American expulsions increased from 69% to 90% of the total from 2002 to 2006. Male expulsions decreased from 85% to 55% of total expulsions, and female expulsions increased from 15% to 45% of the total during the same period.

### ***Reasons for Expulsions***

Internal data from SD186 on reasons for expulsions for all students in 2005 are provided in Table 22 (SD186, *Expulsion Breakdown; Expulsion Counts*). Weapons and serious fighting infractions accounted for the majority of overall district expulsions that year. There were significant differences by race particularly in the number of expulsions given for fighting/assault as well as in the number of total expulsions.

---

<sup>4</sup> Suspension totals reported in this data source here are much larger than what is reported in Table 20 which uses official ISBE data.

**Table 21. Number of Expulsions in Springfield High Schools by Race and Gender, 2002 - 2006**

School	White				African-American				African American and White Males		African American and White Females		9-12 District Total
	Male	Fem-ale	Total	%	Male	Fem-ale	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
2005-06	4	3	7	17	11	24	35	83	15	36	27	64	42
2004-05	5	6	11	21	25	17	42	79	30	57	23	43	53
2003-04	2	5	7	23	15	7	22	73	17	59	12	40	29
2002-03	9	3	12	41	10	7	17	59	19	66	10	34	29
2001-02	13	2	15	47	10	7	17	53	23	72	9	28	32
Total	33	19	52	28	71	62	133	72	104	56	81	44	185

**Table 22. Number of Expulsions in All Springfield Schools by Offense, Race and Gender, 2005**

	Whites	African-Americans	White Males	African-American Males	White Females	African-American Females
Weapons	16	19	10	11	6	8
Drugs	0	9	0	9	0	0
Fighting / Assault	1	19	0	7	1	12
Fire Alarm	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	17	48	10	27	7	21

***Recommendations***

The Board of Education should authorize an evaluation of district suspension and expulsion policies and school suspension and expulsion practices to ensure fair and equal disciplinary actions.

SD186 should provide the student and school supports necessary to ensure both a safe and positive learning environment and individual student success.

## X. EQUITY AND TEACHER QUALITY

The issue of teacher quality has received extensive study over many years and is often reported to be the single most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. It is also closely examined because “teacher compensation represents a significant public investment: **in 2002 alone, the United States invested \$192 billion in teacher pay and benefits.**” (Rice, 2003).

Most researchers and policy advocates agree that multiple factors must be considered when determining teacher quality, including personal characteristics which often are excluded due to difficulty of measurement. The National Center for Education Statistics underscores the complexity of creating a profile for quality teachers but says “there are, however, two broad elements that most observers agree characterize teacher quality: teacher preparation and qualifications; and teaching practices”. The Economic Policy Institute includes five broad categories for review in a recent study: teacher experience, teacher preparation programs and degrees, teacher certification, teacher coursework and teacher’s own test scores (EPI). For NCLB, highly qualified teachers must have a bachelor’s degree; full state certification or licensure; and prove that they know each subject they teach (U.S. Dept. of Education, NCLB).

A recent shift in the policy discussion around teacher quality has focused on the *distribution* of teacher quality. Just this year states were required to submit “equity plans” that would address not only the technical aspects of the NCLB provision but the widespread “...practice of disproportionately assigning inexperienced, unqualified and out-of-field teachers to poor and minority children.”(Pesko and Haycock, 2008)

**The Education Trust believes that rather than pairing children who lag furthest behind with the least expert teachers, the American education system should be doing exactly the opposite.**

This report examined one part of the equity issue – the assignment of teachers in SD186 schools, comparing experience and education levels of teachers and the schools’ percent of minority and low-income student population. The report’s authors accept that education and experience levels alone do not make great teachers and acknowledge the limitations of our review. However, they consider it a serious concern when schools with the highest African-American and low-income populations are routinely more likely to have teachers with lower levels of education and experience.

### *Elementary Schools*

Table 23 ranks Springfield public elementary schools from highest to lowest according to the following characteristics:

- the percent of African-American students;
- the percent of low-income students;
- the percent of teachers with five or fewer years experience;
- the percent of teachers with 16+ years experience; and
- the percent of teachers with a Master’s or higher level of education.

Information was obtained from 2006 – 07 school improvement reports available on the SD186 website. Ball Charter and Wilcox schools did not include teacher experience and education data in that source and were removed from the rankings.

**Table 23. Characteristics of 22 Springfield Elementary Schools, Comparing Percent and Rank of African-American and Low-Income Students with Teacher Experience & Education Levels, 2007**

School Name	African American Rank	%	Low Income Rank	%	Five or Fewer Years Exper. Rank	%	16+ Years Exper. Rank	%	M.A. or Higher Educ. Level Rank	%
Feitshans	1	89	1	97	1	52	22	6	21	0
Matheny	2	65	2	96	14	23	10	37	12	32
Laketown	3	50	12	69	17	21	16	27	10	27
Hazel Dell	4	46	15	66	12	25	13	35	13	40
McClernand	4	46	3	92	6	38	20	19	19	19
Harvard Park	6	43	5	87	8	30	18	21	14	27
Graham	7	41	9	81	20	16	7	43	8	47
Lee	8	39	15	66	2	49	15	31	21	0
Blackhawk	9	36	8	82	3	48	9	38	16	24
Enos	9	36	6	85	5	44	17	22	20	13
Butler	11	35	18	62	9	29	4	52	18	20
Dubois	12	34	15	66	9	29	11	36	3	55
P. Hill	13	33	3	92	12	25	6	46	11	38
Fairview	14	31	13	67	11	28	8	40	15	25
Sandburg	15	27	19	45	21	15	1	77	1	72
Adams	16	26	10	79	16	22	3	57	9	44
Lindsay	17	25	21	39	22	9	5	50	4	53
Ridgely	18	24	10	79	14	23	12	34	7	48
Marsh	18	24	20	40	18	19	14	32	6	50
So. View	20	23	13	67	4	46	20	19	2	64
Wanless	20	23	7	83	7	35	21	18	17	22
Iles	22	20	22	30	18	19	2	62	4	53

To read Table 23, look across the columns. For example, Feitshans had the highest African-American percentage of students of all schools (89%) and the highest low-income percent (97%). With 52% of the teaching workforce at Feitshans having 5 or fewer years teaching experience, it had the most inexperienced staff of all schools; and with only 6% having 16 or more years teaching experience, it ranked last on this dimension. None of the Feitshans teachers had Masters Degrees, ranking it 21<sup>st</sup> (tied for last with Lee). Other schools can be examined the same way, by reading figures across rows, and then viewing comparative column data. From this table it is clear that Springfield elementary schools varied greatly in terms of race and income levels and in terms of teacher education and experience.

#### Effect of Race

To discover whether there was any systematic difference between schools that had high and low percent African-American student bodies, the schools in Table 23 were divided into two groups: schools with a high percentage of African-American students (operationally defined as the top six schools), and schools with a low percentage of African-American students (the bottom six). When evaluating the *teaching inexperience* dimension (five or fewer years experience rank column), though the difference was not large, **elementary schools with the highest percent of African-American students were clearly more likely to have more teachers with the least experience.**<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> To analyze this, *teaching inexperience* is defined as ranking between 1 and 11 in the "Five or Fewer Years Experience Rank" column of Table 23. Ranks

This difference is similar when we look at the *teaching experience* dimension (16+ years experience column). The study found that schools with the highest proportion of African-American students were less likely than other schools to have highly experienced teachers.<sup>6</sup> On average, 24% of the teachers in schools with a high percentage of African-American students had 16 or more years of experience, compared to 36% for the schools with the smallest African-American student populations.<sup>7</sup>

**In general, the data suggested a tendency for schools that were disproportionately minority to have less experienced and less educated teachers.**

When examining educational levels of *Master's degrees or higher* in Table 23, the difference was even more marked. **On aver-**

---

1 to 11 are judged to be "more inexperienced", and ranks 12 to 22 are judged to be "more experienced". Since three of six schools (Feitshans, McClernand and Harvard Park) were ranked between 1 and 11, the probability of a school with a high percentage of African-American students also having a disproportionate share of teachers with five or few years of experience is 50% (3 divided by 6). By comparison, for a school with a low percentage of African-American students – the bottom six -- the probability was only 33% (2 divided by 6, where the 2 schools were So. View and Wanless).

<sup>6</sup> Where *teaching experience* is defined as ranking between 1 and 11 in the "16+ Years Exper. Rank" column of Table 23. The probability of a school with a high percentage of African-American students also having a high percentage of teachers with 16 or more years of teaching experience was 17% (1 divided by 6, where the one school was Matheny, ranked 10th). For the bottom six schools with a low percentage of African-American students, the probability nearly doubled at 33% (Lindsay and Iles were ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively, and 2 divided by 6 is 33%).

<sup>7</sup> This is computed by averaging the scores for the top 6 AA schools in the "% 16+ Years Exper" column of Table 23 (24%), and the bottom 6 AA schools (36%).

**age, 24% of the teachers in high African-American schools had M.A. degrees or higher, in contrast to 48% at the low African-American schools.**

Schools serving a high percentage of African-American students were much less likely to have teachers with masters degrees or higher.<sup>8</sup>

Although these aggregate statistics suggest a pattern, there were exceptions. For Matheny, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked school in terms of percent African-American, the picture differed from Feitshans, for example. Matheny's teaching workforce had more experience than typical for schools with high levels of African-American students, with 32% having Master's degrees or higher. Laketown was third in terms of African-American students, but ranked in the middle for more highly educated teachers.

#### Effect of Low-income Status

The effect of low-income status on education and experience levels of teachers was also examined for this study (data not shown).

Of the six elementary schools with the *highest* percentage of low-income students (Feitshans, Matheny, McClernand, Pleasant Hill, Harvard Park and Enos):

- 4 were among the top 10 schools with

---

<sup>8</sup> Where *Percent with M.A. or higher degrees* is defined as ranking between 1 and 11 in the "M.A. or higher educ level rank" column of Table 23. Since only Laketown was so ranked (at 10<sup>th</sup>), the probability for high AA schools to have a high percentage of teachers with Master's or higher level degree was 17% (1 divided by 6). For a school with a low percentage of African-American students, this probability was almost five times greater -- 83%. Of these bottom six schools, only Wanless with a rank of 17 – was not ranked in the top 11 schools. Thus, 5 of 6 schools were in the top 11, and 5 divided by 6 is 83%.

the highest percent of inexperienced teachers (0-5 year)

- 4 were among the top 10 schools with the lowest percent of veteran teachers (16+ years)
- 4 were among the top 10 schools with the lowest percent of teachers with advanced degrees (MA+)

Of the 5 elementary schools with the lowest percentages of low-income students (Butler, Sandburg, Marsh, Lindsay, and Iles):

- 1 was among the top 10 schools with the highest levels of inexperienced teachers;
- 1 was among the top 10 schools in terms of the fewest veteran teachers;
- 1 was among the top 10 schools with the fewest teachers with advanced degrees

### ***Middle Schools***

#### Effect of Race and Low-income Status

Table 24 (page 49) presents an overview of the five middle schools in Springfield. Franklin and Lincoln, which ranked lowest in the percent of African-American and low-income students, ranked highest for having the most experienced and educated teachers. Jefferson was second highest in the percent of African-American and low-income students, but had the lowest percent of teachers with 16 or more years of experience and tied for lowest in the percent of teachers with advanced degrees.

### ***High Schools***

#### Effect of Race and Low-income Status

Table 25 (page 49) presents an overview of the three Springfield high schools. Southeast High School had the highest percent of African-American students, the highest percent of teachers with limited experience, and the lowest percent of teachers with advanced degrees. Springfield High School, by contrast, had the lowest percent of African-

American and low-income students, and had the highest percent of the most experienced teachers and the most with advanced degrees.

#### ***Recommendations***

The Board of Education should adopt a policy that recognizes the importance of pairing its expert teachers with vulnerable students.

SD186 staff should study models from other districts that are moving in this direction.

SD186 staff should work closely with the Springfield Education Association to identify and implement the appropriate steps needed to comply with the new Board policy.

The Board of Education should adopt measures that may encourage senior level teachers to voluntarily teach at schools with the most vulnerable students, such as financial incentives, etc.

**Table 24. Characteristics of Five Springfield Middle Schools, Comparing African-American and Low-Income Percent and Rank with Teacher Experience and Education Levels, 2007**

School	African Amer. rank	%	Low-income rank	%	0-5 Years Experience rank	%	16+ Years experience rank	%	M.A. Degree or more education level rank	%
Washing.	1	47	1	85	3	24	3	35	3	40
Jefferson	2	44	2	77	1	41	5	26	4	26
Grant	3	40	3	65	2	34	4	30	4	26
Franklin	4	33	4	46	4	12	1	64	1	58
Lincoln	5	26	5	37	5	5	2	48	2	57

**Table 25. Characteristics of Springfield High Schools, Comparing African-American and Low-Income Percent and Rank with Teacher Experience & Education Levels**

School	African-Amer. rank	%	Low-income rank	%	0-5 Years experience rank	%	16+ Years experience rank	%	M.A. Degree or more education level rank	%
Southeast	1.	46	2	53	1	29	3	26	3	26
Lanphier	2.	35	1	62	2	24	1	41	2	35
Springfield	3.	25	3	32	3	16	2	40	1	54

## XI. SPECIAL EDUCATION

### *Racial Disproportionality*

The question of whether minority children are disproportionately assigned to special education has been a national concern for many years (Office) and many experts agree that this is a key policy issue. An Associated Press article reported in the New York Times in May, 2007, quotes Tom Hehir, a special education expert at Harvard University, saying disproportionality is an old problem: "There is over-placement of minority kids, particularly African-American males, in special education" (Associated, 2007).

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) defines disproportionality in special education services as follows: "...students in a particular racial/ethnic group (i.e. Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian or White) being at a significantly greater risk of being identified as eligible for special education and related services". Federal regulations that monitor disproportionality require states to determine if there is *significant* disproportionality *that is the result of inappropriate identification* (ISBE, *Determining*). A complex set of calculations and other factors determine if this level of disproportionality exists.

To address this problem, in part, new federal rules change the way schools determine whether a child has a learning disability and encourage early intervention in the hope of reducing the numbers of children identified as learning disabled. In districts where a disproportionate number of minorities receive special education services, educators must use 15% of their special education funds on intensive early intervention services in the early grades (Assoc. Press).

In this report, it is impossible for us to determine SD186's official disproportionality compliance status because ISBE does not release that data to the public. However, officials there say this will soon change as a result of new federal reporting rules. For now, this report reviews what data are publicly accessible and draws conclusions based on it (ISBE official).

### *Statewide Trends*

The Illinois State Board of Education issues an annual report to assess performance of the State's Special Education Services. Some key observations from that report on the status of Illinois Special Education services are listed below:

- The number of Illinois children ages 3-5 receiving special education services continues to increase annually as more children are identified with disabilities each year;
- Among those children, the identification of children with autism and developmental delay is increasing faster than for other disabilities;
- The percent of Illinois students ages 6-21 receiving special education services has increased each year since 2003 and continues to be higher than the national percentage; and
- **For the third consecutive year, both white and black students are slightly overrepresented among students receiving services, while Hispanic and Asian students are underrepresented** (60.2 % of whites receiving special education services compared with 57.1% of total whites in the system; 24% of African-Americans receiving services compared with 20.5% of total African-Americans in the school system) (ISBE, 2004).

**Special Education Services in Springfield SD186**

SD186 served a higher percentage of special education students (those with Individual Education Plans or IEPs) than the average Illinois school district and other unit districts (K-12 districts) every year from 2003 – 2006. Data are presented in Table 26 (ISBE, 2003).

	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05		2005-06	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
SD186	2,870	19	2,837	19	2,883	19	2,933	19
All Unit Districts	NA	NA	138,063	16	140,999	16	143,733	16
State	310,260	15	317,129	15	321,586	15	322,541	15

Additional data presented in this section focus on the overrepresentation of SD186 African-American students in special education along with the overall academic performance of special education students. Racial disproportionality data from the Illinois Special Education Profiles are presented in Table 27.

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
<b>SD186</b>				
<b>All students</b>				
White	61	59	57	56
African-Amer.	36	38	37	37
<b>Students w/ IEP's</b>				
White	56	54	53	53
African-Amer.	43	44	45	46

Comparing the percent of African-American students with IEP's and their proportionate representation within the entire student body over four years, African-American students were overrepresented in the percent receiving special education services. In 2005-06, for example, while 37% of students overall

were African-American, 46% of students with IEP's were African-American.

Disability Type

The top 7 disability categories for SD186 students across all age groups (ages 1-22) were examined. For coding purposes the state actually identifies 14 disability categories but of the 2,933 students identified in SD186, a total of 2,847 or 97% fall within

the following seven categories: Mental Retardation (MR); Specific Learning Disability (SLD); Speech or language Impairment (S/L); Other Health Impairment (OHI); Developmental Delay (DD) (ages 3-5 only); Autism (AUT); and Emotional Disturbance (ED) (ISBE, *Guide*).

Table 26 shows that almost 20% of SD186 students in 2005 - 06 (as of December 1, 2005) were identified as receiving special education services (ISBE, 2003). Table 28 shows the distribution of those disabilities across the various disability categories. The highest concentration of SD186 students with IEPs were receiving services for Specific Learning Disabilities (36%) followed by Speech and Language Impairment (29%) and Mental Retardation (13%) (ISBE, *Student*).

Students between the ages of 14-20 accounted for 27% of students receiving special education services in the district. Fifty-two percent of them received services for Specific Learning Disabilities and 22% for Mental

MR	SLD	S/L	ED	OHI	DD	AUT	Total
368	1011	812	214	208	144	90	2,847

Retardation (data not shown) (ISBE, *Student*).

In 2006, 34% of SD186 high school students were African-American (IIRC, *Student Dem*). Of the 759 White & African-American 14-20 year old district students with IEPs,

**Table 29. Number of Students Aged 14-20 in SD186 by Disability Type and Race, 2005-06**

Race	Disability Type						Total
	MR	SLD	S/L	ED	OHI	AUT	
White	63	199	22	36	33	11	363
AA	105	193	15	51	21	11	396
AA%	63	50	41	59	39	50	52

**Table 30. Percent of SD186 Juniors Meeting or Exceeding PSAE Performance Level by Presence of IEP and Subject, 2001 - 2006**

	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP
Reading	12%	59%	15%	62%	6%	57%	3%	58%	13%	57%	7%	56%
Math	11%	53%	11%	55%	3%	50%	3%	50%	3%	47%	4%	47%

396 or 52% were African-American (Table 29). **These African-American students were overrepresented in every disability category with Mental Retardation being the highest at 63% of the total.**

#### Academic Performance

Six years of academic performance data from 2001 to 2006 were examined by subject area for reading and math comparing students with IEP's and those without at grades 3, 5, 8 and 11 for SD186 (IIRC, *Grade 11*). Table 30 displays results on the percent of SD186 juniors who met and exceeded performance levels comparing those with IEPs and those without. **Data show a strong positive relationship between the presence of an IEP and poor performance on standardized tests. The relationship appears strong across all grade levels and has not changed from 2001 to 2006.**

Sizeable performance gaps existed between students with IEPs and those without. Averaging across the six years shown in Table 30, in reading, less than 9% with IEP's met or exceeded targets, while about 58% without IEP's did so. In math, while the gap was not quite as wide, absolute performance was

even lower; 6% with IEP's met or exceeded performance levels and those without averaged 50%.

2006 Data in Table 31 show how academic performance for special education students varied by grade level, from elementary school through high school (ISBE, 2003). In reading, large gaps between the IEP and non-IEP group remained relatively stable across the four grade levels. However, absolute performance was much lower at grade 11 than at the other grades. In math, the gaps increased steadily between grades *and*

**Table 31. Percent of SD186 Students Meeting or Exceeding PSAE Performance Levels by Presence of IEP and Grade Level, 2006**

	Reading		Math	
	IEP	Non-IEP	IEP	Non-IEP
Grade 3	24	70	55	87
Grade 5	16	67	40	77
Grade 8	27	77	25	71
Grade 11	7	56	4	47

overall performance levels declined. The most pronounced change in math was between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades with scores for students with IEPs falling to remarkably low levels.

Educational Environment

Educational environment is examined by assessing the amount of time students spend outside the regular classroom or in a separate facility. Educational environment in special education refers to "...the extent to which students with disabilities receive special education and related services in classes or schools with their non-disabled peers. Research has shown that students with disabilities who are educated in the *least restricted environment* show increased motivation, higher self-esteem, improved communication and socialization skills and greater academic achievement than those students in a more restrictive, or segregated environment" (ISBE, 2003).

**Data revealed that significantly more SD186 African-American students with disabilities received services in the most restricted environment than did their White counterparts every year.**

shown), other unit districts saw steady declines in their *most* restrictive environment category for MR from 2002-2006 seemingly moving students into the *more* restrictive environment category. SD186, by contrast, saw relatively little movement over

the four years with students receiving services for MR most often (77% in 2006) in their *most* restrictive environment. SD186 did much better serving SLD students in the least restrictive environment as compared with other unit districts with over 60% of these students being served outside the classroom <21% of the time. Both SD186 and unit districts across the state serviced almost all their S/L students in the least restrictive environments (ISBE, 2003).

In Table 32, the type of educational environment is examined by race over four years. In this analysis, the category "Outside the regular classroom <21% of time" is considered the least restrictive environment (meaning that the student is normally in a classroom setting with other non-special education students) and is thus a desired outcome, while "Outside the regular classroom >60% of time" is the most restrictive environment and is an undesirable outcome. In 2006, Whites were more likely than African-Americans to be taught in the least restrictive environment by a 67% to 50% margin.

**Table 32. Percent of SD186 Special Education Students by Educational Environment and Race, 2003 - 2006**

	Least Restrictive Environment: Outside Regular Classroom <21% of time	More Restrictive Environment: Outside Regular Classroom 21-60% of time	Most Restrictive Environment: Outside Regular Classroom >60% of time	Separate Facility
<b>2002-03</b>				
White	58	12	<b>27</b>	3
AA	42	12	<b>42</b>	3
<b>2003-04</b>				
White	58	11	<b>28</b>	2
AA	43	12	<b>43</b>	2
<b>2004-05</b>				
White	65	10	<b>23</b>	2
AA	47	13	<b>38</b>	2
<b>2005-06</b>				
White	67	8	<b>24</b>	2
AA	50	13	<b>35</b>	3

According to additional data examined on students with Mental Retardation (MR), Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Speech/Language Impairment (S/L) in the Illinois Special Education Profiles (not

**Recommendations**  
Annual SD186 Special Education Profiles, any state compliance reports, and/or self assessments, need to be made public by the District.

The Board of Education should call for a thorough examination of SD186 special education services paying particular attention to identification procedures and academic expectations.

The Board of Education needs to address the academic expectations of special education students setting ambitious performance goals and accountability mechanisms in its performance and accountability plan.

Strategies designed to ensure that all students are being accurately identified for special education services need to be presented to the Board of Education.

The Board of Education should impanel a Special Education Advisory Committee comprised of parents of children with special needs and expert community leaders to provide advice and counsel to the Board and the Special Education Department and monitor progress toward established goals.

## XII. STUDENT/PARENT SURVEY

Public opinion polling, often used in politics, is also commonplace among many disciplines to help organizations and groups understand "...what people think or feel" (Gallup). The Study Group decided that it would aid in its overall understanding of African-American student achievement and success if African-American parents and students were questioned directly about their educational experiences. To that end, a survey was developed and administered to parents and students in the community (Bernhardt, Illinois). African-American students and parents representing middle and high school were the target of the survey sample, however, the survey sample was not tightly controlled and some Whites and parents and students of elementary grades also responded. Those surveys were not excluded from findings. Below are some highlights:

- A total of 204 surveys were returned - 35 from parents, 139 from students and 30 unknown;
- Middle and high school parents accounted for 86% of the 35 parent surveys;
- 86% of the student respondents were attending one of the three district high schools;
- 156 or 77% of the total 204 responses came from parents and students at the three main district high schools - 25% of those were from SHS, 46% from SSHS and 30% from LHS;
- 31% of the students and parents surveyed represented children ages 12-15;
- 67% of the students and parents surveyed represented children ages 16-19
- Age 17 was the most common age with 69 respondents in that age category;
- Thirty-six or 18% of the respondents described themselves as White;

- The respondents were almost evenly divided by gender; and
- The vast majority of respondents resided in the following zip codes: 62702 (59); 62703 (87) and 62704 (37).

### *Methodology*

Survey questions were developed by Sheila Stocks-Smith and Nzinga West (an intern then staff assistant) in consultation with the Study Group. They covered a range of topics but focused on several broad topic areas: school academics (rigor and expectations), school climate (safety and respect), student engagement, discipline, student support, race, and parent/community involvement and expectations. The survey was disseminated through social service groups, churches and at the mall.

To be considered scientifically valid and reliable, public opinion surveys must incorporate a number of features including random sampling. This survey does not meet the highest standards of a scientifically sound survey and therefore the results should be considered with caution. However, the sample characteristics that were obtained generally met the target population and the results are interesting and instructive.

### *Survey Findings*

Findings are organized into four sections: student attitudes; parent attitudes; a comparison of student and parent attitudes; and a comparison of findings across the four high schools.

#### Student Attitudes

A total of 139 students responded. Table 33 shows items with which students highly agreed. In general, students rated their own performance and behavior highly; they felt that they treated school staff well, were

doing their best in school, and were prepared for post-secondary education. Further, 85% indicated that their parents expected them to

**not recognized or supported.** Less than 40% said students respect other students “...who are different than they are”. Only

**Table 33. Student Attitudes, Items with 80% or More Student Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree) Ranked from Highest to Lowest  
N=139**

Item	Percent
#6 I am respectful to school office staff	86
#44 My parents expect me to do well in school	85
#2 I am respectful to school administrators	83
#4 I am respectful to safety officers	83
#17 I am doing my best in school	83
#8 I am respectful to teachers	82
#15 I am prepared to go to college or a vocational/trade school after graduation	81
#5 I enjoy learning	80

**Table 34. Student Attitudes, Items with 60% or Less Student Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree) Ranked from Lowest to Highest  
N=139**

Item	Percent
#34 I think students at this school respect other students who are different than they are	39
#45 I think personal problems keep me from doing well in school	41
#30 I think this school disciplines all students fairly	45
#36 I think this school offers help for students with personal problems	45
#25 I think the graduation requirements at this school are challenging	46
#29 I think my teacher understands when students have personal problems	48
#19 I am encouraged to take challenging science classes at school	49
#7 I am using computers in class on a regular basis	51
#26 I think this school encourages me to take high-level classes	51
#11 I am encouraged to take challenging math classes at school	53
#32 I think my community expects me to do well in school	53
#33 I think this school handles disruptive students appropriately	53
#35 I think my teachers know me well	53
#42 I think this school treats all students the same regardless of their race	54
#40 I think disruptive students interfere with my ability to learn	54
#14 I am encouraged to take challenging classes senior year	55
#37 I find what I learn in school to be relevant to real life	56
#41 I think my teachers give me independent attention when I need it	59

do well in school.

Table 34 includes items where students were in agreement at a much lower rate (60% or less). **These results suggest that students did not feel supported with high expectations from the system or the community, that they felt under-challenged in their instruction, that discipline was problematic, and that their personal needs were**

54% said their school treats everyone the same regardless of race, and the same percent say disruptive students interfere with their ability to learn.

## Parent Attitudes

A total of 35 parents responded and select results are in Table 35. Parents agreed most strongly on questions regarding schools and

sponded least positively to questions about being treated fairly regardless of race, fair and appropriate disciplinary practices, and about teachers treating students with respect.

**Table 35. Parent Attitudes, Items with 85% or More Parent Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree), Ranked from Highest to Lowest**  
N=35

Item	Percent
#43 I encourage my child to take challenging classes	100
#44 I expect my child to do well in school	100
# 6 My child is respectful to school office staff	94
#8 My child is respectful to teachers	92
#37 I find what my child learns in school to be relevant to real life	89
#5 My child enjoys learning	89
#11 My child is encouraged to take challenging math classes at school	89
#20 My child is treated with respect by school administrators	89
#1 My child is safe at school	87
#3 My child is a regular participant in extra-curricular activities	87
#4 My child is respectful to safety officers	87
#22 My child's teachers expect high standards for achievement in their classes	86
#19 My child is encouraged to take challenging science classes in school	86
#38 Extra-curricular activities help my child to do better in school	86

**Table 36. Parent Attitudes, Items with 80% or Less Parent Agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree) Ranked from Highest to Lowest**  
N=35

Item	Percent
#15 My child is prepared to go to college or a vocational/trade school after graduation	77
#34 Students respect other students who are different than they are	77
#35 My child's teachers know my child well	77
#25 My child's teachers care about my child	77
#18 My child is comfortable asking for help at school	74
#21 This school expects all students to be prepared for college/career	74
#23 All students are encouraged to take the core curriculum (college prep)	74
#25 The graduation requirements at this school are challenging	74
#28 This school has high academic expectations for all students	74
#41 My child's teachers give independent attention when my child needs it	74
#14 My child is encouraged to take challenging classes senior year	71
#29 My child's teachers understand when students have personal problems	71
#39 This school helps my child make college or post-high school career plans	71
#42 This school treats all students equally regardless of their race	69
#30 The school disciplines all students fairly	69
#9 My child is treated with respect by teachers	69
#33 This school handles disruptive students appropriately	66
#45 Personal problems keep my child from doing well in school	66

parents placing high expectations on the students, and that their children were generally well-behaved in school.

Table 36 includes results where parents were in agreement at a lower rate. Parents re-

Comparison of Parent and Student Attitudes

Table 37 records the percent of parents and students that agree with questions about whether they treated school officials with respect compared with the responses to the question of whether school officials treated them with respect. Students felt less "respected" than parents indicated. As to treating others with respect, parents gave higher ratings to students than do the students themselves with the exception of school administrators, where parents and students

**Table 37. Parent and Student Attitudes Compared, Percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements about Treating School Staff Respectfully and Being Treated with Respect by School Staff Parent (N=35) and Student (N=139)**

<b>I am or (my child) is treated with respect:</b>				
	By Teachers	By Safety Officers	By Office Staff	By School Administrators
Parents	69	80	80	89
Students	68	71	77	77
<b>I am or (my child) is respectful:</b>				
	To Teachers	To Safety Officers	To Office Staff	To School Administrators
Parents	92	87	94	81
Students	82	83	86	83

**Table 38. Parent and Student Attitudes Compared, Percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed by Question (Questions with 20% or more difference between students and parents) Bold = Questions with highest percentage point differences Parent (N=35) and Student (N=139)**

	% Parents Who Agree or Strongly Agree	% Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree	% Difference Between Parents and Students
<b>I am or (my child) is ...</b>			
#7. Using computers in class on a regular basis	80	51	29
#10. Receiving writing instruction at school	83	63	20
<b>#11. Encouraged to take challenging math at school</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>#19 Encouraged to take challenging science classes at school</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>I think ...</b>			
#25 The graduation requirements at this school are challenging	74	46	28
#26 This school encourages me to take high-level classes	83	51	32
#29 My (child's) teacher understands when students have personal problems	71	48	23
#30 This school disciplines all students fairly	69	45	24
#31 My (child's) friends expect me (him/her) to do well in school	80	60	20
#32 My community expects me (my child) to do well in school	83	53	30
<b>#34 Students at this school respect other students who are different than they are</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>
#35 My (child's) teacher knows me (my child) well	77	53	24
<b>#36 This school offers help for students with personal problems</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>
#37 I find what I learn in school to be relevant to real life	89	56	33
#38 Extra-curricular activities help me to do better in school	86	60	26
#40 Disruptive students interfere with my (my child's) ability to learn	80	54	26
<b>#43 My parents (I) encourage me (my child) to take challenging classes</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>37</b>
#45 Personal problems keep my child from doing well in school	66	41	25

responded about the same (81% and 83%). Students and parents indicated they felt

treated with less respect by teachers compared to school administrators, office staff

and safety officers. There was a large disconnect between students' and parents' perceptions on how they treat teachers as compared with how teachers, and to a lesser degree office staff, treat them.

Table 38 (page 58) highlights those questions where more than a 20% difference occurred between parents and students who "agreed" or strongly agreed". Of all items in Table 38, those with the largest percent student-parent differences are in bold.

Students and parents clearly disagreed on a wide variety of items including whether students perceived that they were expected to perform at high levels as evidenced by responses to questions 11, 19, 26 and 32. Also, students were less likely than parents to believe that students generally were respectful towards other students who were "...different from them", that their school provided help to students with personal problems, and that what they learned in school was useful in everyday life. One hundred percent of parent respondents indicated they encouraged their children toward challenging classes and expected them to do well; students did not overwhelmingly agree, especially on being encouraged by parents to take challenging classes.

#### Findings by School

A total of 156 surveys included information on which school the child attended: 46 were from LHS, 39 were from SHS and 71 were from SSHS. Of the LHS respondents, 57% were African-American and 35% were White; for SHS respondents, 54% were African-American and 33% were White (13% race was unknown); for SSHS respondents, 85% were African-American and 9%

were White.

Summarizing results from Table 39, SSHS students seem to be the most satisfied with their educational experience. The average percent agreement to the questions was 67% at SSHS, 61% at SHS and 58% at LHS. However, SSHS students were less likely to feel safe at school and to feel encouraged to read challenging literature.

LHS students were the least satisfied overall with their educational experience but indicated strongest agreement with feeling safe at school and being treated with respect by teachers. They were least likely to participate in extracurricular activities and enjoy school, think learning is relevant or say they do their best. LHS students also indicated strong feelings of low expectations from the community and among their friends.

SHS students participated in extra-curricular activity most often and seemed to feel the school had relatively high expectations of them (though SSHS ranked higher for expecting students to go to college and setting high standards for achievement). SHS felt least strongly among the three schools that teachers treated them with respect. However, they indicated teachers had high expectations of students, challenged students to do their best, and gave them independent attention when needed.

SHS students expressed the lowest affirmatives of all the schools (in the 30 percentile) for three areas: whether students respected those who are different; whether the school offered help for personal problems; and whether the school treats all equally.

**Table 39. Combined Parent and Student Attitudes, Percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed by School  
(Questions with 10% or more difference between the three schools)  
(Bold = highest of the three) (Underlined = lowest of the three)**

Question Number	Question	LHS	SSHS	SHS
1	I am (my child is) safe at school	<b>83</b>	70	74
3	I am (my child is) a regular participant in extra-curricular activities	<u>54</u>	55	<b>71</b>
5	I am (my child) enjoys learning	<u>65</u>	<b>83</b>	82
6	I am (my child is) respectful to school office staff	<u>78</u>	89	<b>95</b>
7	I (my child) use computers regularly in class	41	<b>60</b>	59
9	I am (my child is) treated w/respect by teachers	<b>74</b>	63	<u>57</u>
10	I am (my child is) receiving writing instruction at school	<u>59</u>	62	<b>70</b>
11	I am (my child is) encouraged to take challenging math	<u>46</u>	<b>63</b>	59
12	I am (my child is) treated with respect by safety officers	<u>65</u>	<b>76</b>	70
13	I am (my child is) expected to read challenging literature at school	63	<u>62</u>	<b>72</b>
14	I am (my child is) encouraged to challenging classes Senior year	<u>50</u>	62	<b>67</b>
15	I am (my child is) prepared to go to college or a vocational/trade school after graduations	<u>76</u>	79	<b>90</b>
17	I am (my child is) doing my (his/her) best	<u>74</u>	<b>90</b>	85
19	I am (my child is) encouraged to take challenging science classes in school	<u>41</u>	48	<b>57</b>
20	I am (my child is) treated with respect by school administrators	<u>70</u>	<b>83</b>	80
21	This school expects students to be prepared for college/career	70	<b>83</b>	<u>57</u>
22	My (child's) teachers set high standards for achievement in their classes	72	<b>75</b>	<u>62</u>
24	My (child's) teachers care about me (my child)	57	<b>72</b>	<u>51</u>
25	The graduation requirements at this school are challenging	<u>41</u>	<b>59</b>	46
27	My (child's) teachers challenge me (my child) to do my (his/her) best	59	<b>75</b>	<u>46</u>
28	This school has high expectations for all students	50	<b>76</b>	<u>49</u>
31	My (child's) friends expect me (him/her) to do well in school	<u>54</u>	<b>69</b>	59
32	My community expects me (my child) to do well in school	<u>48</u>	<b>61</b>	57
33	This school handles disruptive students appropriately	50	<b>58</b>	<u>41</u>
34	Students at this school respect other students who are different than they are	37	<b>48</b>	<u>36</u>
36	This school offers help for students with personal problems	46	<b>52</b>	<u>39</u>
37	I (my child) find what I (he/she) learn in school to be relevant to real life	<u>48</u>	<b>66</b>	57
38	Extracurricular activities help me (my child) to do better in school	<u>50</u>	63	<b>64</b>
39	This school helps me (my child) make college or post-high school career plans	70	<b>75</b>	<u>57</u>
40	Disruptive students interfere with my (child's) ability to learn	<u>50</u>	54	<b>67</b>
41	My (child's) teachers give me (him/her) independent attention when needed	54	<b>72</b>	<u>44</u>
42	This school treats all students equally regardless of their race	48	<b>56</b>	<u>36</u>

**Recommendations**

The Board of Education should require annual parent and student evaluation surveys to assess school and classroom performance and climate.

Data from annual evaluation surveys should be utilized in the school improvement process and impact staff and school accountability.

The Board of Education should require a strong and comprehensive student, family

and community engagement component that defines and supports the key rights, roles and responsibilities of all partners at every school and utilizes these key stakeholders in meaningful ways in the school improvement process.

### XIII. PROMISING PRACTICES IN HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

High school reform has become a major focus area for educational reform efforts in the United States. Researchers, policymakers, advocates, funders, practitioners, government, business and community leaders are engaged in vigorous debate about how to improve the learning experience for today's high school student. Hundreds perhaps thousands of reports, policy briefs and papers over the past decade cover various aspects of this topic making a complete literature review impossible. Numerous studies and reports were, however, reviewed for this report and this section.

Most of this report underscores the challenges faced by SD186 African-American high school students in an attempt to fuel continued discussion and study before embarking upon solutions. **The larger goal, however, is to move beyond problem identification and analysis to the implementation of solutions that lead to lasting results.** This section on promising practices provides a snapshot into this vast, evolving topic.

While no single strategy for high school reform has been universally embraced, many common themes, ideas and promising practices continue to appear throughout much of the recent, mainstream literature. This review summarizes (in the author's or reports' words) salient points from recent reports and papers on high school reform and related issues. First, several particularly relevant strategies from the more detailed section below are highlighted:

- There are results that matter for high school graduates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and these results are *different* from and go beyond traditional metrics.
- [There must be] willingness to make organizational changes for the benefit of students.
- A new role for the school board [is needed] whereby a new board majority (or other governing unit) focuses on policy level decisions that support improved student achievement rather than on the day-to-day operations of the district.
- Leader actions: analyze and problem-solve; drive for results; influence inside and outside; measure and report.
- Avoid the disconnected program approach: flexibility and tailored programs for a few students should not substitute for critical evaluations of school's instructional programming, and all programs should be developed to align coherently with the general instructional plan of the school.
- There is a high school dropout epidemic in America and the public is almost entirely unaware of its severity due to inaccurate dropout data.
- The main reasons students drop out include a lack of connection to the school environment, a perception that school is boring, feeling unmotivated, academic challenges and the weight of real world events.
- Attendance matters most.
- [There is] a scarcity of guidance and counseling personnel, and related staff to work one-on-one with students at risk of dropping out and their families.
- Teacher quality is a problem: students need effective teaching; there is an inequitable distribution of effective teachers; race plays role; experience matters.
- Establish high academic standards and provide *all* students with challenging

coursework and the support they need to reach high standards.

- [Authors] believe that preparation for college, rather than just high school graduation, should become the measure of high schools' performance.
- [To achieve change, reforms] must link together efforts to improve instruction, increase students' engagement and performance and provide better guidance for college search, planning and application.

***Education Commission of the States Research Studies Database summaries of the following four reports:***

*What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools and On Track Indicator as a Predictor of High School Graduation* by Elaine Allensworth and John Easton at the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago

- Course failure matters; attendance matters most.
- What else matters: student effort, relationships, gender and race, and the engagement factor.
- Avoid the disconnected program approach: flexibility and tailored programs for a few students should not substitute for critical evaluations of school's instructional programming, and all programs should be developed to align coherently with the general instructional plan of the school.
- Use data to strategically target; develop on-track indicators, e.g. student has accumulated five full course credits freshman year; student has no more than one semester F in a core subject, etc.
- Intervene early; look at the individual.

*School Turnarounds: A review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organiza-*

*tional Improvement* by Bryan Hassel, Emily Hassel, Julie Kowal and Lauren Morando Rhim with the Center for Innovation & Improvement and Public Impact

- Leaders from successful turnaround schools use speedy, focused results as a major lever to change the organization's culture; early, tangible wins can serve as a catalyst for additional positive change.
- Leader actions: analyze and problem-solve; drive for results; influence inside and outside; measure and report.

*Roles of Districts in Fostering Instructional Improvement* by Heather Barney, et al. at RAND

- Districts benefited from focusing on a small number of initiatives.
- Lessons for instructional improvement: instituting local accountability policies that create incentives for meaningful change can promote implementation; aligning and developing a comprehensive set of strategies can reinforce overarching instructional improvement goals.
- Free up leaders for instructional leadership.

***Foundations For Success, Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement, MDRC***

- While there has been much research on what makes an effective school, there is relatively little on what makes an effective district.
- Key Findings: need to establish pre-conditions for reform.
  - \* A new role for the school board whereby a new board majority (or other governing unit) focuses on policy level decisions that support improved student achievement ra-

ther than on the day-to-day operations of the district.

- \* A shared vision between the chief executive of the school district and the school board regarding the goals and the strategies for reform.
- \* A capacity to diagnose instructional problems that the school could solve.
- \* An ability to flesh out the leadership's vision for reform and sell it to the city and district stakeholders.
- \* A focus on revamping district operations to serve and support the schools.
- \* A matching of new resources to support the vision for reform.
- Building Foundations for Reform
  - \* The nature of the local political and public discourse about schools is important and can be changed. But first, school board, community leaders and superintendents must agree that improved student achievement is their top priority.
  - \* Developing instructional coherence.
  - \* Data driven decision-making.

***An Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools, 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools sponsored by Achieve, Inc., and National Governor's Association in partnership with Business Roundtable, the Education Commission of the States and the Hunt Institute***

- America's high schools are failing to prepare too many of our students for work and higher education.
- Lack of preparedness is costly to U.S. taxpayers, businesses, colleges and students: each year taxpayers pay an estimated \$1 billion to \$2 billion to provide remedial education to students at public universities and community colleges.

- Deficits in basic skills cost businesses, colleges and under-prepared high school graduates as much as \$16 billion annually in lost productivity and remedial costs.

Employers in Michigan spend about \$40 million a year just to teach workers how to read, write and perform basic math operations.
---

***Closing the Aspirations-Attainment Gap: Implications for High School Reform, A Commentary from Chicago, written by Melissa Roderick of the School of Social Service Administration and The Consortium on Consortium on Chicago School Research, The University of Chicago***

- The national consensus is that public high schools, especially in urban areas, are broken institutions plagued by high rates of dropout, persistently low performance, and disengaged students who are seldom challenged or held to high standards.
- Believes that preparation for college, rather than just high school graduation, should become the measure of high schools' performance.
- Challenges urban high schools first to reduce dropout rates by focusing on student's transition to high school and their success in ninth grade.
- Make sure students are college-ready and receive the support and guidance they need to get into college and graduate.
- Suggests promising results from Talent Development High School model.
- Posits that low-levels of college readiness are seriously constraining [student] access to and performance in college.
- To change, must link together efforts to improve instruction, increase student engagement and performance and provide better guidance for college search, planning and application.

***The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives of High School Dropouts, written by John M. Bridgeland, John J. Diluilio, Jr. and Karen Burke Morison of the Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates***

- There is a high school dropout epidemic in America and the public is almost entirely unaware of its severity due to inaccurate dropout data.
- Main reasons students drop out include a lack of connection to the school environment, a perception that school is boring, feeling unmotivated, academic challenges and the weight of real world events.
  - \* 47% reported major reason for dropping out was that classes were not interesting.
  - \* 69% said they were not motivated or inspired to work.
  - \* 35% cited failing in school.
  - \* 45% said they started high school unprepared.

62% said their school needed to do more to help students with problems outside of class; 70% favored more parental involvement.

Improve instruction and access to supports for struggling students; 81% wanted better teachers; 75% wanted smaller classes with individualized instruction.

- Some ideas for solutions: offer options for students like experiential learning, smaller learning communities, alternative schools; set higher expectations; incorporate parent engagement strategies; individualized graduation plans; [develop] early warning systems for students at risk of failing; additional supports and adult advocates; enhance coordination

with community-based institutions and government agencies.

***One-Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities, written by Paul E. Barton of the Policy Information Center at the Educational Testing Service***

- The high school completion rate has not been accurately reported and has been falling nationally.
- Ways to increase retention: alternative schools, the Talent Development (TD) High School, Communities in Schools, Maryland's Tomorrow, The Quantum Opportunities Program.
- A scarcity of guidance and counseling personnel, and related staff to work one-on-one with students at risk of dropping out and their families.
- Opportunities for second-chance programs are declining; some existing ones that are determined to be effective include The Jobs Corp, Youthbuild, the Center for Employment Training, Youth Corp and community colleges..

***Closing the Achievement Gap Issue Briefs by the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices***

- College access and completion is a problem: need high educational aspirations, strong academic preparation, financial support.
- Teacher quality is a problem: students need effective teaching; there is an inequitable distribution of effective teachers; race plays role; experience matters.
- Measurable teacher qualifications are important: certification, licensure, experience, subject-matter knowledge, and pedagogical preparation.
- Direct relationship found between teacher's verbal and math abilities and student achievement.

- Positive relationship between teacher test scores and student achievement gains.

***High School Reform and Systemic Districtwide Reform in Boston, Massachusetts, An American Youth Policy Forum Trip Report sponsored by the American Youth Policy Forum, American Association for Higher Education and Jobs For the Future***

- Thomas Payzant, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, admits high schools are the “toughest nut to crack” in instituting reform because of problems of pedagogy, organization and structure of these schools.

**Payzant notes that the notion of engaging students through different learning strategies, embraced in the early grades, has not penetrated the secondary level. As a result, the high school experience has not served many students well.**

***Preparing Students for their Future and Successful Schools: From Research to Action Plans by Willard R. Daggett of the International Center for Leadership in Education***

- U.S Dept of Education summary of key high school reform strategies from 300 comprehensive school reform studies: commitment to high academic expectations, small learning communities, structure learning around career/student interest, professional development focused on instructions, tie out-of-school learning to classroom learning, career and higher education counseling, flexible, relevant segments of instruction, assess on what students can do, partnership with higher education, support alliances with parents and students.
- High poverty/high success schools – five models studied: 90-90-90 Schools, No Excuses Schools, Benchmark School

Study, the Hope for Urban Education study and Beating the Odds Study.

- Commitment to a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students, implementations of a testing program that evaluated both student’s conceptual knowledge and their ability to apply knowledge, focused and sustained staff development program, commitment to addressing the issue of student behavior, willingness to make organizational changes for the benefit of students.

***Results that Matter, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and High School Reform by the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills***

- There are results that matter for high school graduates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – and these results are *different* from and go beyond traditional metrics.
- Improving high schools requires the nation to redefine “rigor” to encompass not just mastery of core academic subjects, but also mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and content including learning and thinking skills, information and communications technology literacy skills, and life skills.
- The success of high school reform depends upon the collective leadership of numerous entities, from government to education institutions to advocacy organizations.
- States adopting this framework: North Carolina, West Virginia.

***Improving Low-Performing High Schools,  
Ideas & Promising Programs for High  
Schools, American Federation of Teachers***

- Conduct a self study (audit) to identify the school's most pressing needs.
- Consider a research-based reform program.
- Establish entry-level standards for what first-year students need to know and be able to do – especially in reading.
- Establish an intensive intervention system for students who are struggling to meet standards.
- Establish a safe and orderly learning environment.
- Establish high academic standards and provide *all* students with challenging coursework and the support they need to reach high standards.
- Work to ensure that teachers are fully certified in the subjects they teach.
- Organize schools into personal communities.
- Create incentives for students to study and achieve.
- Additional practices: block scheduling, year-round schools, late-start days, interdisciplinary instruction.

## XIV. SOURCES BY SECTION

### ***Demographic Characteristics***

Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (2000) *Educational Attainment, 25 Years & Older by Sex*. Comparison of Black Population to Total Population. Springfield, IL.

Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (2000) *Household Type by Presence of Children for Householders age 15 to 64*. Comparison of Black Population to Total Population. Springfield, IL.

Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (2000) *Living Arrangement of Children by Parents' Labor Force Status*. Comparison of Black Population to Total Population. Springfield, IL.

Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (2000) *Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics*. Comparison of Black Population to Total Population. Springfield, IL.

### ***Student Achievement***

ACT. Online. Internet. <http://www.act.org/aap/>

ACT (2005) *Issues in College Readiness. What Are ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks?* Online. Internet. [www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/benchmarks.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/benchmarks.pdf)

ACT Assigned WorkKeys scores to the Illinois Occupational Outlook In Brief, Illinois Department of Employment Security. Available at Mayor's Office of Education Liaison, City of Springfield. Springfield, IL.

ACT WorkKeys. Online. Internet. [www.act.org/workkeys](http://www.act.org/workkeys)

Douglas School. Telephone conversation with principal, 2/03/08.

Illinois State Board of Education. *E Report Card Public Site*. Online. Internet. <http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/geprofilesearchcriteria.aspx>

Illinois State Board of Education. *ISAT*. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.net/](http://www.isbe.net/)

Illinois State Board of Education. *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress*. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.net/ayp/](http://www.isbe.net/ayp/)

Illinois State Board of Education. *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Overview*. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.net/nclb/](http://www.isbe.net/nclb/)

Illinois State Board of Education. *Prairie State Achievement Exam*. Online. Internet. <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm>

Interactive Illinois Report Card. *Lanphier, Springfield and Springfield Southeast High School Springfield SD186 - Grade 11 - PSEA-All, Reading & Math by All and Ethnicity, 2001 to 2006*. Online. Internet. <http://iirc.niu.edu>

Interactive Illinois Report Card. *Springfield SD186 – Grades 3, 5 & 8 by Reading & Math, Year and Ethnicity, 2003 to 2006*. Online. Internet. <http://iirc.niu.edu>

Interactive Illinois Report Card. *Springfield SD 186, Grade 11-PSAE Performance By All Students, Reading & Math Performance by Ethnicity, 2002 to 2006*. Online. Internet. <http://iirc.niu.edu>

Powered by ACT. *Power Point Presentation by John Nelson*. Validated by WorkKeys. [JohnNelson@act.org](mailto:JohnNelson@act.org)

School Data 4 All. *WorkKeys Scores for Lanphier, Springfield and Springfield Southeast High Schools*. Online. Internet. [www.schooldata4all.org/work\\_keys/wkey\\_print.php](http://www.schooldata4all.org/work_keys/wkey_print.php)

School Improvement Plans for Lanphier and Springfield High School (2005-2007) *ACT – Ethnic, 2001-2004*. Springfield School District 186. Online. Internet. [www.springfieldk12.il.us](http://www.springfieldk12.il.us)

School Improvement Plans for Lanphier, Springfield and Southeast High School (2005-2007) *PLAN by Year, Subject and Ethnicity*. Springfield School District 186. Online. Internet. [www.springfieldk12.il.us](http://www.springfieldk12.il.us)

Springfield School District 186 – *EXPLORE Test scores by Year, School and Ethnicity, 2003 to 2006*. Data Provided During Meeting with AA sub-group members and SD186 Central Office Staff. Available at Mayor’s Office of Education Liaison, City of Springfield. Springfield, IL.

Springfield School District 186 – *PLAN Test scores by Year, School and Ethnicity, 2003 to 2006*. Data Provided During Meeting with AA sub-group members and SD186 Central Office Staff. Available at Mayor’s Office of Education Liaison, City of Springfield. Springfield, IL

Springfield Public School District 186 (August, 2006) *ACT Report, High School Graduating Class of 2006*. Springfield, IL.

### **School Completion**

Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) *Every Student Count: The Case for Graduation Rate Accountability*. Policy Brief. Washington D.C.

Balfanz, Robert & Legter, N. (2004) *Locating The Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation’s Dropouts? Where are They Located? Who Attends Them?* Baltimore, MA: Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

Greene, Jay P. (2002) *High School Graduation Rates in the United States*. New York: Manhattan Institute, Center for Civic Innovation.

Illinois State Board of Education. *Illinois District Report*. Data Analysis & Progress Reporting. E Report Card. Online. Internet. Web-

[prod.ISBE.net/ereportcard/publicsite/searchbyschool.aspx](http://prod.ISBE.net/ereportcard/publicsite/searchbyschool.aspx)

Illinois State Board of Education. *Number of High School Dropouts by Grade, Gender and Race/Ethnicity 2002, 03, 04, 05, 06*. Data Analysis & Progress Reporting. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/eoy\\_report.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/eoy_report.htm)

Illinois State Board of Education. *Report Card Data Collection Form for Lanphier, Springfield and Southeast High School for 04, 05 & 06 Graduates*. School Report Card. Contact ISBE for access to information.

Illinois State Board of Education. *School Enrollments by Grade/Gender/Ethnicity for Lanphier, Springfield and Southeast for 2000-01, 2001 – 02, 2002 – 03*. Data Analysis & Progress Reporting. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.net/research/htmls/fall\\_housing.htm](http://www.isbe.net/research/htmls/fall_housing.htm)

Illinois State Board of Education. *School Report Card Instructions for Data Collection Form, 2005-2006 School Year*. Data Analysis & Progress Reporting. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report\\_card.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report_card.htm)

Orfield, Gary, Losen, D., Wald, J, and Swanson, C. (2004) *Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and the Urban Institute.

Springfield School District 186, *High School Enrollment Comparison, 2003-2004*. Available through SD 186. Springfield, IL or through Mayor’s Office of Education Liaison, City of Springfield. Springfield, IL.

Springfield School District 186. *Student Count Report for 2004, 05 & 06 for Lanphier, Springfield and Southeast High School and Douglas Alternative Center*. Student Ethnic Report. Available through SD186 website or through Mayor’s Office of Education Liaison, City of Springfield. Springfield, IL.

Swanson, Christopher B. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

The Education Trust (2003) *Telling the Whole Truth (or Not) About High School Graduation: New State Data*. Washington D.C.

The Graduation Project (2007) *Special Report: Springfield School District 186 Illinois*. Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.

### **Truancy**

Lake County Illinois Regional Office of Education. Online. Internet. [www.lake.k12.il.us/pass\\_trulaw/index.htm](http://www.lake.k12.il.us/pass_trulaw/index.htm)

National Center for School Engagement, *Overview of Truancy*. Denver, CO: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children.

National Center for School Engagement (2007) *Pieces of the Truancy Jigsaw: A Literature Review*. Denver, CO: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children.

Springfield School District 186 Intranet, *Truancy Report for Lanphier, Springfield, Southeast & Douglas by Ethnicity for 2004, 05, & 06*. Available only by request to SD 186.

### **Internal Transfers**

Kerbow, David (1998) *Student Mobility and Local Improvement*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

Rumberger, Russell W. (2004) *Student Mobility and Academic Achievement*. Eric Digest. Online. Internet. [www.ericdigests.org/2003-2/mobility.html](http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-2/mobility.html)

Springfield School District 186. Informational and Discipline Handbook for Students & Parents, 2006-2007. Available through SD186. Springfield, IL.

Springfield School District 186, Internal Transfer Reports by School, Gender, Race and Reason for 2003-04,05, & 06. Available through SD 186. Springfield, IL or through Mayor's Office of Education Liaison, City of Springfield. Springfield, IL.

### **Discipline**

Illinois State Board of Education, Data Analysis & Progress Reporting, *Expulsions By Gender, Grade Cluster and Race/Ethnicity*, 2002, 03, 04, 05, 06. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/eoy\\_report.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/eoy_report.htm)

Illinois State Board of Education, Data Analysis & Progress Reporting, *Suspensions By Gender, Grade Cluster and Race/Ethnicity*, 2002, 03, 04, 05, 06. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/eoy\\_report.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/eoy_report.htm)

Skiba, Russell J., Michael, R., Nardo, A., and Peterson, R., (2000) *The Color of Discipline*. Indiana Education Policy Center at Indiana University and Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Witt, Howard (Sept. 2007) *School discipline tougher on African-Americans*. Online. Internet. [www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chicago-070924discipline,0,2827689,print.st...](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chicago-070924discipline,0,2827689,print.st...)

Springfield District 186, *Expulsion Breakdown 2004-2005*. Springfield, IL.

Springfield District 186, *Expulsion Counts By Year*. Springfield, IL.

Springfield District 186, *Suspensions – 2002-2003 & 2003-04*. Springfield, IL.

Springfield District 186, *Suspensions –Level Description Totals 2002-2003 & Suspensions – Level Description Report 2003-2004 through 4/30/2004*. Springfield, IL.

## **Equity**

ED.gov. (March 2004) *New No Child Left Behind Flexibility: Highly Qualified Teachers (Fact Sheet)*. Online. Internet. [www.ed.gov/print/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html](http://www.ed.gov/print/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html)

Illinois State Board of Education, Data Analysis & Progress Reporting, School Report Card District Summary, *School and Student Information*, 2006-2007 School Year. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report\\_card.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report_card.htm)

National Center for Education Statistics. *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualification of Public School Teacher (Executive Summary)*. Online. Internet. [www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/1999080/](http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/1999080/)

Rice, Jennifer, K., (2003) *Teacher Quality, Understanding the Effectiveness of Teacher Attributes (Executive Summary)*. Economic Policy Institute. Online. Internet. [www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books\\_teacher\\_quality\\_execsum\\_intro](http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_teacher_quality_execsum_intro)

Peske, Heather, G., Haycock, K. (2006) *Teaching Inequality, How Poor and Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality*. Washington D.C.: The Education Trust.

Springfield District 186. 2006-07 School Improvement Plans for Elementary Schools. *Section III: Data and Analysis*. Online. Internet. [www.springfieldk12.il.us](http://www.springfieldk12.il.us)

## **Special Education**

Associated Press (May, 2007). *Government Eyes Special Ed Requirements*. New York Times. Online. Internet. [www.nytimes.com/aponline/us/AP-Identifying-Disabilities.html?\\_r=1&oref=slo](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/us/AP-Identifying-Disabilities.html?_r=1&oref=slo)

Illinois State Board of Education. 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 *Illinois Special Education Profile for Springfield SD 186*. Springfield, IL.

Illinois State Board of Education. 2004-2005 *Annual State Report on Special Education performance*. Springfield, IL.

Illinois State Board of Education. *Determining Significant Disproportionality in Special Education Power Point Presentation*. Online. Internet. [www.isbe.state.il.us/SPEC-ED/ppt/Disproportionality.ppt](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/SPEC-ED/ppt/Disproportionality.ppt)

Illinois State Board of Education. *A Guide to Understanding 2005 District Special Education Profiles*. Springfield, IL.

Illinois State Board of Education. *Student Age and Exceptional Characteristics by Distribution Code – State Reimbursement/IDEA Count – December 1, 2005*. Springfield, IL.

Interactive Illinois Report Card. *Grade 11-PSEA Performance by IEP – Reading & Math for Lanphier, Springfield & Southeast 2002-2006*.

Interactive Illinois Report Card. *Student Demographics & Characteristics – Race/Ethnicity for Lanphier, Springfield and Southeast 1999 – 2007*. Online. Internet. [www.iirc.niu.edu/School.aspx?source=cat2&source2=subCat1&schoolID=510841860250](http://www.iirc.niu.edu/School.aspx?source=cat2&source2=subCat1&schoolID=510841860250)

Office of Special Education Programs/Westat. *Methods For Assessing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: A Technical Assistance Guide*. Online. Internet. [www.ideadata.org/docs/disproportionality%20technical%20assistance%20guide.pdf](http://www.ideadata.org/docs/disproportionality%20technical%20assistance%20guide.pdf)

## **Student/Parent Survey**

Bernhardt, Victoria taken from Data Analysis for Comprehensive School wide Improvement published by Eye of Education. *School Climate Surveys*. WINSS. Online. Internet. [www.goal.learningpt.org/winss/scs/sampques.asp?survey=HS](http://www.goal.learningpt.org/winss/scs/sampques.asp?survey=HS)

Gallup (2008). *About Gallup*. Online. Internet. [www.gallup.com/poll/101905/Gallup-Poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/poll/101905/Gallup-Poll.aspx)

Illinois Vocational Technical Centers. *Senior Exit Survey Class of 2005*. Clarkston, WA: LifeTrack Services.

### ***Promising Practices***

Achieve, Inc. National Governors Association (2005). *An Action Agenda for Improving America's Public Schools*, National Education Summit on High Schools.

Allensworth, Elaine., Easton, J., (2005) *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

Allensworth, Elaine., Easton, J., (2007) *On Track Indicator as a Predictor of High School Graduation*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

American Federation of Teachers (1999) *Improving Low-Performing High Schools, Ideas & Promising Programs for High Schools*. Washington D.C.

Barney, Heather, et al. (2005) *Roles of Districts in Fostering Instructional Improvement*. RAND.

Barton, Paul E. (2005) *One-Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities*. Princeton, NJ: The Policy Information Center at the Educational Testing Service.

Bridgeland, John M., Diluilio, Jr. John J. Morrison, Karen B. (2006) *The Silent Epidemic*,

*Perspectives of High School Dropouts*. Washington D.C.: Civic Enterprises.

*Closing the Achievement Gap Issue Briefs*. National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices. Online. Internet.

[www.subnet.nga.org/educlear/achievement/college/college\\_problem.html](http://www.subnet.nga.org/educlear/achievement/college/college_problem.html)

Daggett, Willard R. *Preparing Students for their Future and Successful Schools: From Research to Action Plans*. Presented at 2005 Model School Conference. Rexford, New York: International Center for Leadership in Education.

Hassel, Bryan, Hassel E., Kowal, J. and Rhim, L. (2007) *School Turnarounds: A review of the CrossSector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement*. Center for Innovation & Improvement and Public Impact.

MDRC (2002) *Foundations For Success, Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*. Executive Summary.

Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2006) *Results that Matter, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and High School Reform*. Online. Internet. [www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)

Payzant, Thomas. *High School Reform and Systemic Districtwide Reform in Boston, Massachusetts*. An American Youth Policy Forum Trip Report (1997). Washington D.C.: American Youth Policy Forum.

Roderick, Melissa (2006). *Closing the Aspirations-Attainment Gap: Implications for High School Reform, A Commentary from Chicago*. The Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago. New York City: MDRC.