

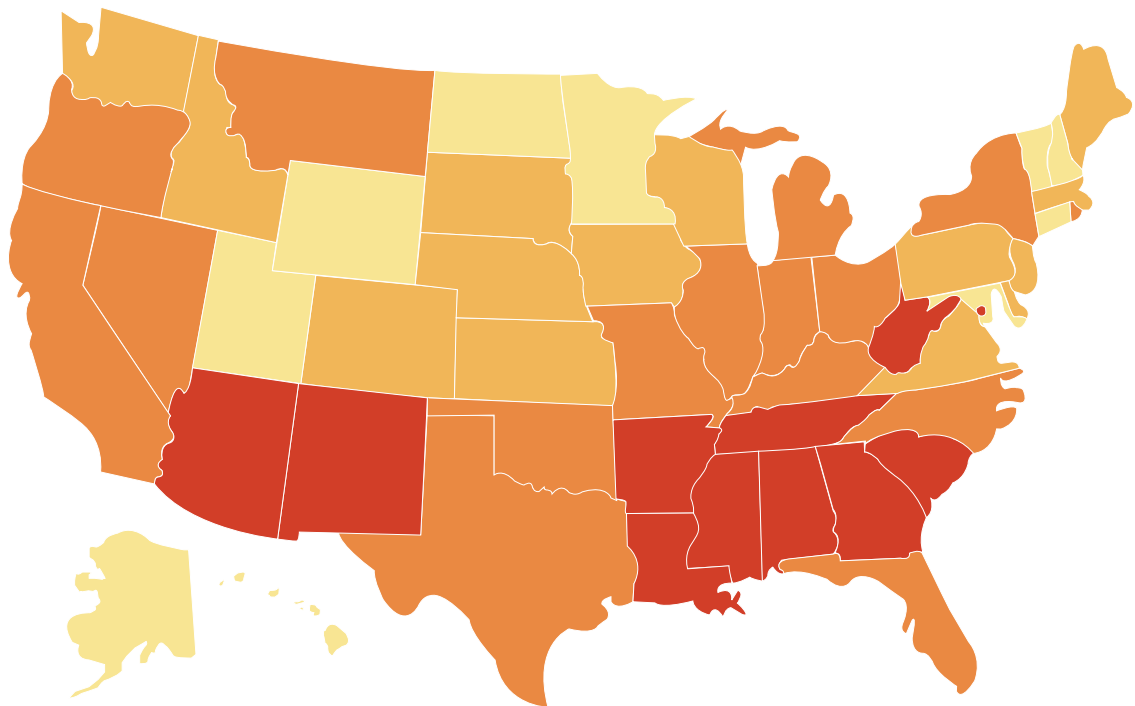
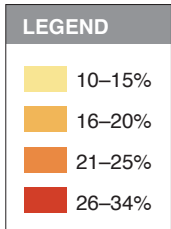


POVERTY AND EDUCATION

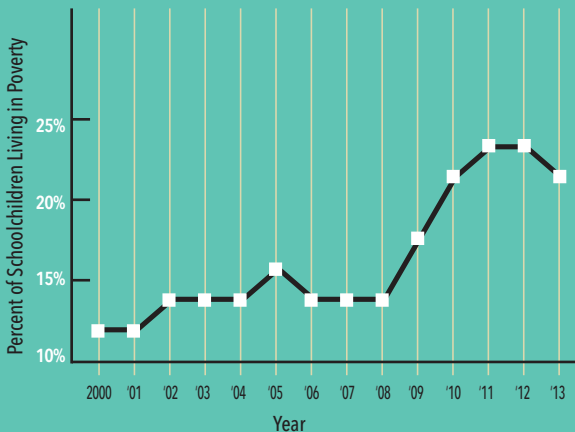
For the first time in recent history, the majority of children attending U.S. public schools come from low-income families.¹ Among these students, 16 million² live in poverty—meaning an annual income below \$23,624 for a family of four²—which can touch almost every aspect of a child’s life. Living in poverty can sap physical and mental health, suppress energy and engagement, and hinder access to learning opportunities. This issue of *Policy Points* highlights what poverty means for America’s schoolchildren, how it affects education, and what we can do to mitigate its effects on student success.

CHILD POVERTY BY STATE

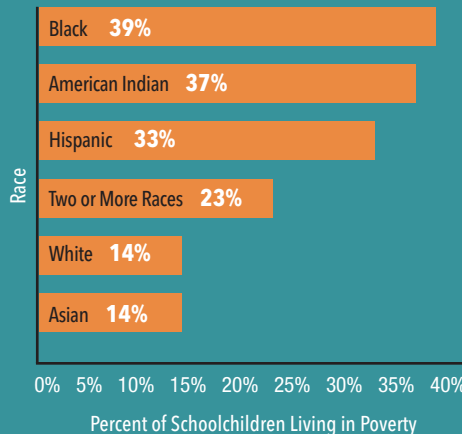
The percentage of children under age 18 who live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level



CHILD POVERTY ACROSS THE YEARS²



CHILD POVERTY BY RACE²



WHAT POVERTY MEANS FOR CHILDREN²

- More than **1.6 million** children experience homelessness in America each year, living on the street, in homeless shelters or motels, or doubled up with other families.³
- More than **one in five** U.S. children live in households that are food-insecure—having limited or uncertain access to adequate food—at some point during the year.⁴
- **Fewer than half** of children living in poverty are school ready at age 5, meaning they lack early math and reading skills, exhibit learning and behavior problems, and have poor overall physical health.⁵

THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

The teacher turnover rate is **50 percent higher** in high-poverty schools than in more affluent ones.⁶

POOR school districts



AFFLUENT school districts



Schools with at least **75 percent** of the student population living in poverty offer **one-third** the number of Advanced Placement courses that wealthier schools offer.⁷



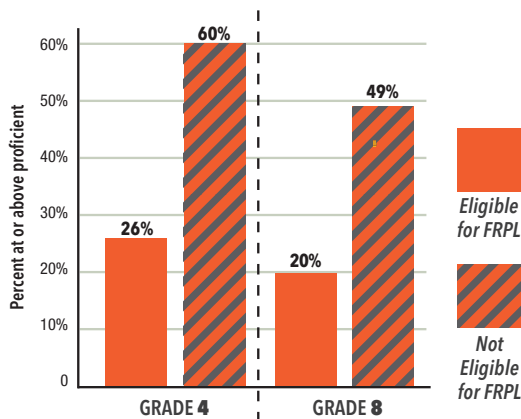
In **23 states**, state and local governments are together spending less per pupil in the poorest school districts than they are in the most affluent school districts.⁸



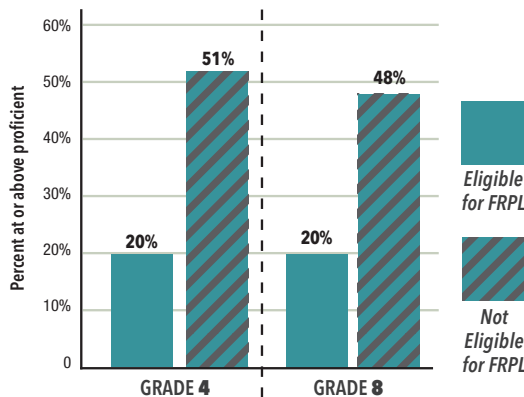
THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Children from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty line are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch (FRPL). These children are less likely to reach proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than their wealthier peers.

NAEP MATHEMATICS PROFICIENCY



NAEP READING PROFICIENCY



22 percent of children who have ever lived in poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to **6 percent** of those who have never been poor. Nearly **1 of every 3** students who spend more than half their childhood in poverty do not receive a diploma.¹¹

CLOSING THE GAP

POVERTY—with its widespread effects on learning and well-being—is a multifaceted problem without a simple solution. Although each community may have its own strategies for addressing poverty, all communities must recognize that any attempt to ameliorate the effects of poverty in the classroom must address the whole child. Below are a few ways that educators can ensure that all of their students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

HEALTHY

- Children in poverty have more untreated ear infections and hearing loss issues, experience a higher incidence of asthma, and are exposed to food with lower nutritional value than children from wealthier families.¹² **Many high-poverty, high-performing schools provide students with on-site access to social workers, physicians, dentists, vision and hearing specialists, and mental health and family counselors.**¹³

SAFE

- High-poverty schools are more likely to struggle with school climate issues such as absenteeism and truancy¹⁴, bullying¹³, and other discipline issues.¹⁴ **Schools can improve school climate by administering student and staff surveys and implementing policies aligned with survey results.**

ENGAGED

- Children in poverty experience greater chronic stress than their more affluent peers, which makes school engagement more challenging.¹² **Schools can enhance student trust and engagement by providing opportunities for meaningful involvement through advisory periods, small learning environments, and the use of culturally relevant curricula.**¹³

SUPPORTED

- Students in poverty are less likely to have informal relationships with adults—including those across the school community such as nurses, counselors, and coaches—which are crucial to creating a support network; navigating the college application process; and helping students find volunteer, internship, and work opportunities.⁷ **High-performing, high-poverty schools cultivate these relationships by creating and operating mentorship programs with local staff and volunteers.**¹³

CHALLENGED

- Students in high-poverty schools have less access to rigorous courses in a variety of subjects, including the arts, than their more affluent peers. **High-performing schools provide relevant and challenging coursework through multiple pathways (e.g., Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual-enrollment programs) to all interested students and couple these programs with needed supports.**¹⁵