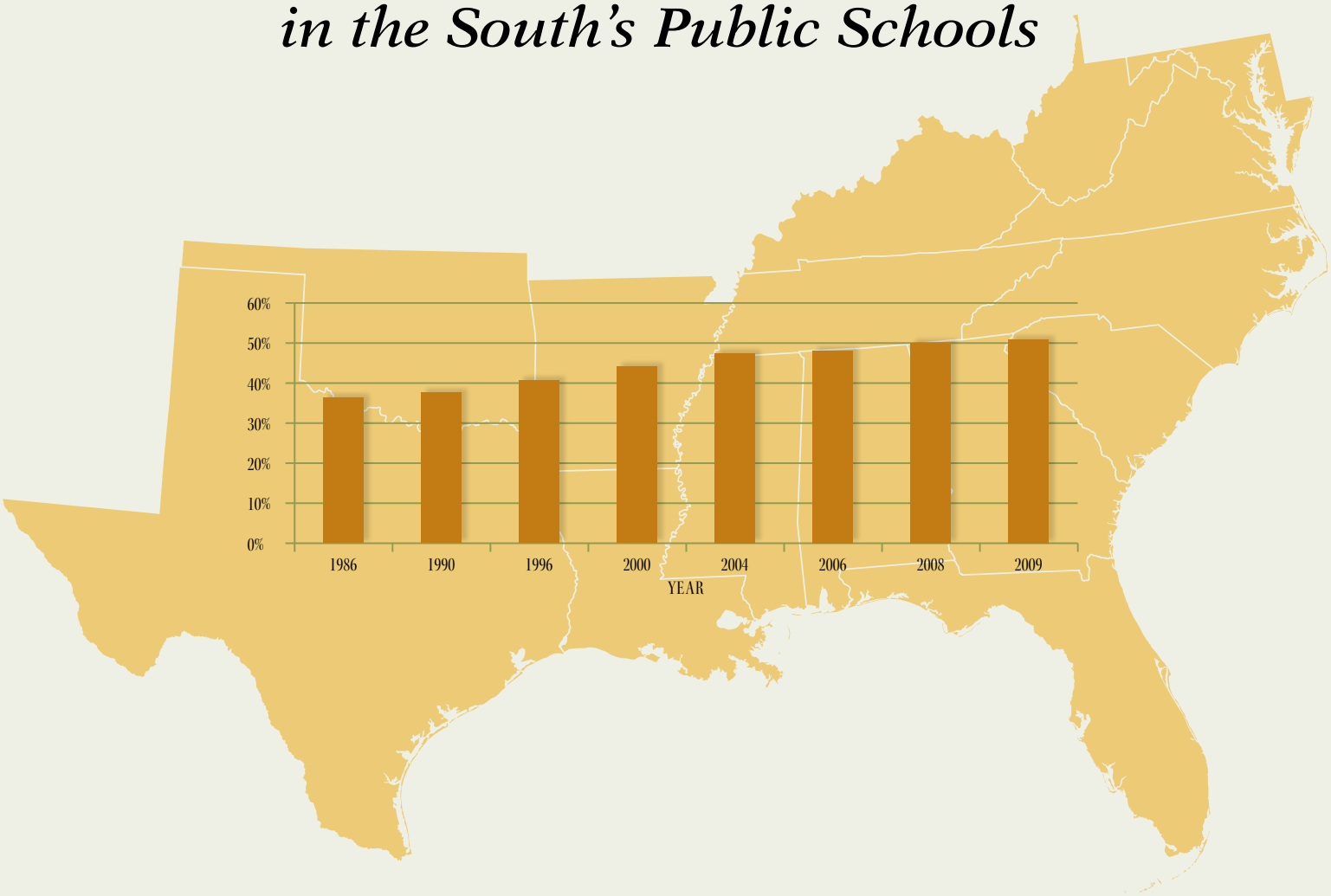
SEF Research Report

A New Diverse Majority

Students of Color in the South's Public Schools



SEF
SINCE 1867
THE SOUTHERN EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Southern Education Foundation

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) is a nonprofit organization comprised of diverse women and men who work together to improve the quality of life for all of the South's people through better and more accessible education. SEF advances creative solutions to ensure fairness and excellence in education for low income students from preschool through higher education.

SEF develops and implements programs of its own design, serves as an intermediary for donors who want a high-quality partner with whom to work on education issues in the South, and participates as a public charity in the world of philanthropy. SEF depends upon contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals to support its efforts.

SEF's Vision

We seek a South and a nation with a skilled workforce that sustains an expanding economy, where civic life embodies diversity and democratic values and practice, and where an excellent education system provides all students with fair chances to develop their talents and contribute to the common good. We will be known for our commitment to combating poverty and inequality through education.

SEF's Timeless Mission

SEF develops, promotes, and implements policies, practices, and creative solutions that ensure educational excellence, fairness, and high levels of achievement for all students. SEF began in 1867 as the Peabody Education Fund.

Credits

A New Diverse Majority: Students of Color in the South's Public Schools, as well as other SEF reports and publications, may be found at www.southerneducation.org.

This report was prepared and written by Steve Suitts, SEF Vice President, with the research assistance of Vanessa Elkan, SEF Program and Research Fellow, and Dorian Woolaston, SEF Program Assistant. Lauren Veasey, SEF Program Officer, and Katherine Dunn, SEF Program and Research Fellow, aided with fact-checking, design, and proofing. Mary Sommers of Typographic Solutions designed the report.

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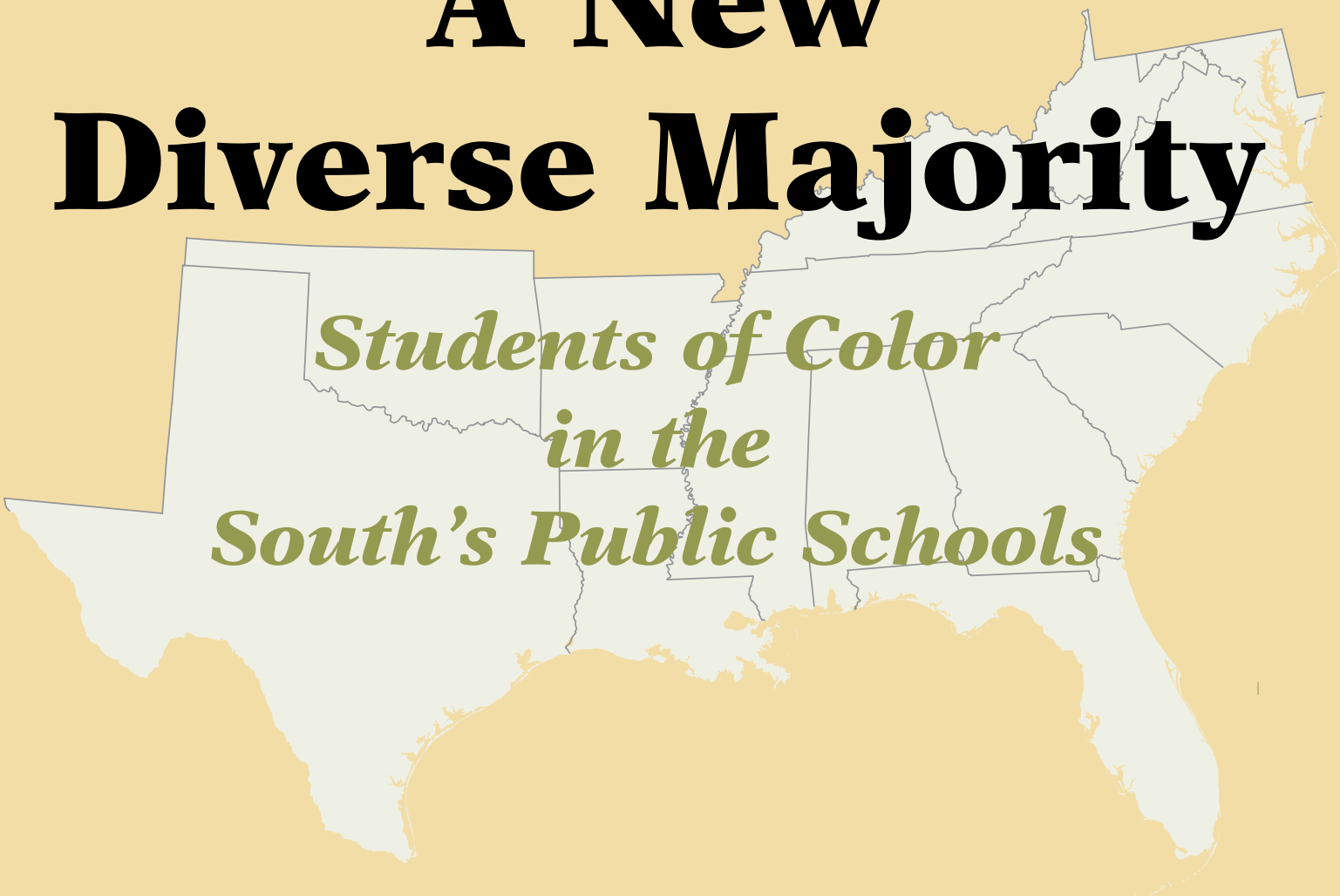

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Foreword

For the first time in the nation's history, children "of color" constitute a new diverse majority of those enrolled in the South's public schools. This shift is largely due to a dramatic increase of Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders, and other population groups in the region. Most students in this new majority are also low income.

Long the region with the most egregious record of depriving African Americans of access to equal, high-quality public education, the South now faces a problem of education inequality and underdevelopment of its human capital of unparalleled dimension. If the South and the nation fail to come to terms with the educational needs of the new majority of diverse public school students described in this report, the impact on the region's and nation's economy, global competitiveness, quality of life, and democratic institutions, will be catastrophic. This is not hyperbole.

Already the South is home to 40 percent of the nation's low income people and has among the lowest educational achievement and attainment levels in the nation. Class and race are more often than not accurate indicators of the quality of public education afforded to students.

As a group, African Americans are still largely receiving an inferior public education in racially identifiable Southern schools, despite the promise of integration and equality mandated by the US Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education.* Compared to Whites, African Americans are still, as they have been since the era of slavery and legally enforced racial segregation, disproportionately represented among those living in concentrated poverty. They remain subject in record numbers to the associated ills of poor health, substandard housing, economic marginalization, homelessness, and despair-borne problems such as drug abuse and high rates of incarceration.

Newcomer groups have now joined the throng of the underserved. If urgent measures are not taken to enhance public education inputs and outcomes, the South and the nation will have an underclass the likes of which it has not yet seen.

The challenge to the South's people to come to terms with the living legacy of racism, classism, discrimination, and indifference to the needs and claims of non-White groups is urgent and real. The numbers speak for themselves. As documented in this report, both African Americans and Latinos have higher birth rates than Whites and are, as groups, younger than their White counterparts. The growth in these groups promises to be exponential. Indeed, there is evidence that in-migration into the South of people of color, especially Latinos, has not yet peaked. In recent years, the growth rate of the nation's Latino population has been highest in Southern states.

These dramatic demographic shifts are occurring at a time when the demands of the global economy for more highly educated and skilled workers for high-end jobs in technology, information management, and the sciences are expanding. Competition for investment, development, and industry is fierce among and between states, regions, and the world community of nations. Thus the South, the region of the nation with the worst history of expanding and extending equal opportunity to all of its people, irrespective of class or color, faces the greatest challenge to do just that now and in the future.

In its 142 years of continuous service and leadership in Southern education, SEF, the region's oldest and only public charity working to advance equity and excellence in education for all of the region's students from pre-school through higher education, has been guided by a clear vision of the South it hopes to help make a reality:

> *We seek a South and a nation with a skilled workforce that sustains an expanding economy, where civic life embodies diversity and democratic values and practice, and where an excellent education system provides all students with fair chances to develop their talents and contribute to the common good. We will be known for our commitment to combating poverty and inequality through education.*

Neither the South nor our great nation will achieve this lofty vision without a new ethos that focuses on community good, rather than on individual benefit; that is willing to set aside narrow, short-term, individual gains for long-term returns for all; and that embraces the bedrock values set forth in the United States Constitution. Anyone who reads this report must surely know that it is time for decisive action to advance equity and excellence in Southern education. We must act before it is too late.

Lest people residing in other parts of the nation view this report as a cautionary tale for Southerners only, think again. As documented in this report, Southern trends are portents of the future that other parts of the nation will also have to face. America itself will soon be a "majority minority" country. No one in America should receive a "second class" or inferior public education. No one. That is "un-American."

The words of Langston Hughes's poem *I, Too, Sing America* seem a fitting coda to this foreword and a relevant introduction to this report.

I am the darker brother,
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When the company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

Lynn Huntley
President
Southern Education Foundation

January 2010

Executive Summary

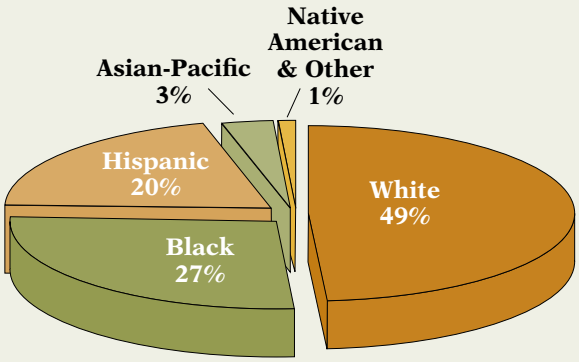
For the first time in history, public schools in the American South no longer enroll a majority of White students. African American, Latino, Asian-Pacific Islander, American Indian, and multi-racial children now constitute slightly more than half of all students attending public schools in the 15 states of the South. The Southern states have become the nation's second region, following the West in 2003, where non-White students—students of color—now make up a majority of public schoolchildren.[1]

The South's transformation, underway for decades, establishes an important landmark in American diversity. It also represents a historic milestone for the only section of the United States where racial slavery, White supremacy, and racial segregation of schools were enforced though law and social custom for more than two-thirds of the nation's history.

This unprecedented development is converging with another profound change in the South. In 2007, the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) announced in its report, *A New Majority,* that low income students—children eligible for free or reduced lunch—had become a majority in the South's public schools for the first time in more than half a century.[2] Since then, the trend has accelerated. In 2008, a majority of students in 12 of the 15 states in the South were low income. Outside the South, California and New Mexico were the only other states where low income children comprised 50 percent or more of public school students (see Appendix 4).

These transformations establish the South as the first and only region in the nation ever to have both a majority of low income students and a majority of students of color enrolled in public schools. Four Southern states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Georgia) now have a majority of both low income students and students of color.

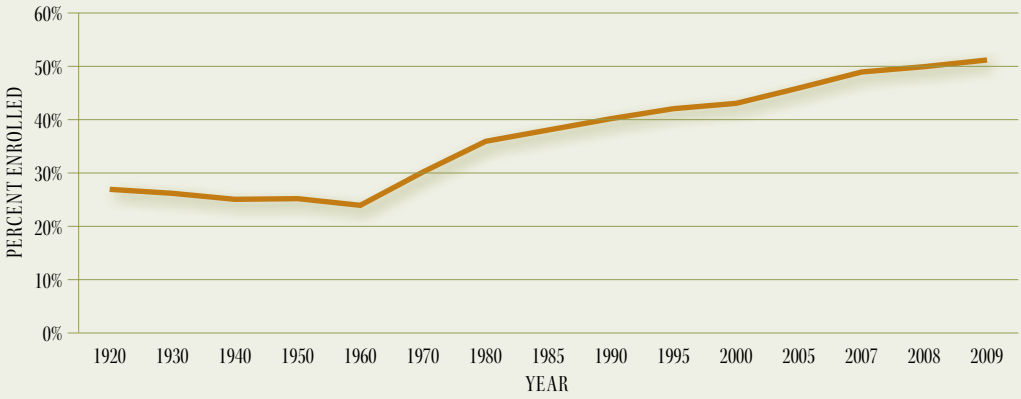
Southern States' Public School Racial and Ethnic Composition
2009



Two Southern states (Florida and Maryland) have a majority of students of color and a large percentage of low income students, though not a majority.

Four other Southern states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Oklahoma) have a majority of low income students and a large percentage of students of color, though not a majority. Four additional states in the South (Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia) have a majority of public school students who are low income but less than 40 percent who are students of color. In the South, only Virginia does not have a majority of students of color, a majority of low income students, or both.

Students of Color in Southern Public Schools
1920 to 2009



Adjusted for TX and FL Hispanics

These changes in Southern education are reshaping the imperatives for education and the economy in the 21st century and will require a fundamental transformation in how the South finances public education for all children and how it helps the new, diverse majority of Southern public schoolchildren to realize their full potential.

Research Findings

Based on enrollment data from the state departments of education for the school year ending in the spring of 2009, 51 percent of the South's public schoolchildren are students of color. White students remain the largest single racial or ethnic group in Southern public schools, representing 49 percent of the region's student population. African American students, the second largest student group, comprise one-fourth of all students, and Latino students now represent one in five of the South's public school population. Asian-Pacific, Native American, and other students who self-identify with another ethnicity or race, including multi-racial children, make up the remaining five percent of the South's public school population (see Appendix 1).

Six individual Southern states now have a majority of students of color enrolled in public schools: Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. In Texas, almost two-thirds of all public schoolchildren are students of color, including 48 percent Hispanics and 14 percent African Americans. In Florida, Hispanics (25 percent) and African Americans (23 percent) along with multi-racial students (4 percent) and Asian-Pacific students (3 percent) constitute 55 percent of the state's public schoolchildren, the second largest percentage of non-White students in the South.

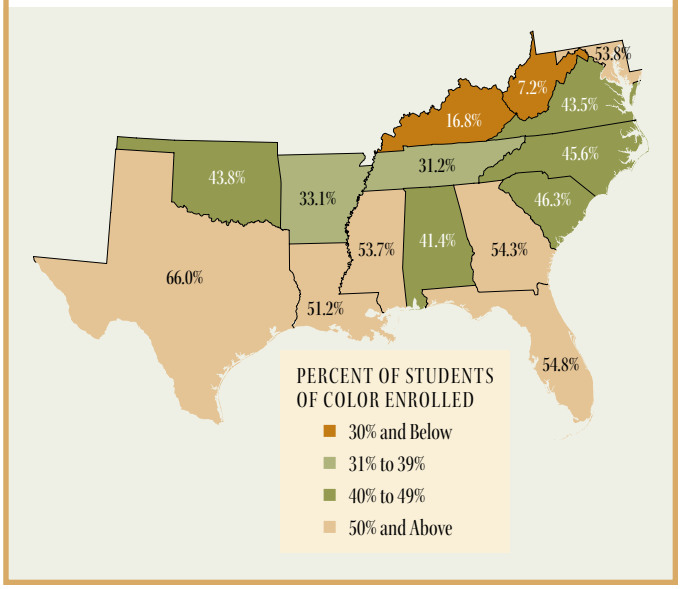
In five other Southern states, students of color represent more than 40 percent of the public school population. Kentucky and West Virginia are the only states in the South where students of color number less than 30 percent of the total students in public schools. Except in Florida and Texas, African Americans remain, as they were 140 years ago, the largest non-White racial or ethnic group of students in each Southern state.

The South's new diverse majority is shifting the demography of public education within the region. Today the percentage of students of color in public schools in Georgia (54 percent) equals the percentage in Mississippi (54 percent). According to 2009 enrollment data, Maryland also matches Mississippi's non-White enrollment, and both Georgia and Maryland surpass the percentage in Louisiana (51 percent). Students of color represent 46 percent of North Carolina's public school enrollment, virtually matching non-White enrollment in South Carolina, the state which had the nation's largest percentage of non-Whites after the Civil War. The percentage of students of color in both North Carolina and Virginia (44 percent) also exceeds the percentage in Alabama public schools (41 percent).

Fifty-three percent of the public schoolchildren in the 11 Southern states that banded together as the Confederacy during the Civil War are now people of color. In the Deep South (states that historically have had America's largest non-White populations), White students continue to comprise half of the public schoolchildren.

Nationally, students of color constituted a majority in the public schools in 11 states in 2008. Six of these states were in the South and five, including Hawaii, were in the West. Nine of the ten states in the continental US were at or near the nation's

Students of Color in the South's Public Schools
2009



Defining the South's Geography

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) includes 15 states in its definition of the South (see a listing of states in the "South" and other US regions in Appendix 2). Another oft-used definition includes only the 11 states that formed the Confederacy during the Civil War. The US Census Bureau reports data for a 16-state South that includes Delaware. Past and present scholars have used definitions of the South that generally include from 9 to 15 states. Despite these differences regarding exact geography, eight states are consistently considered part of any definition of the South: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

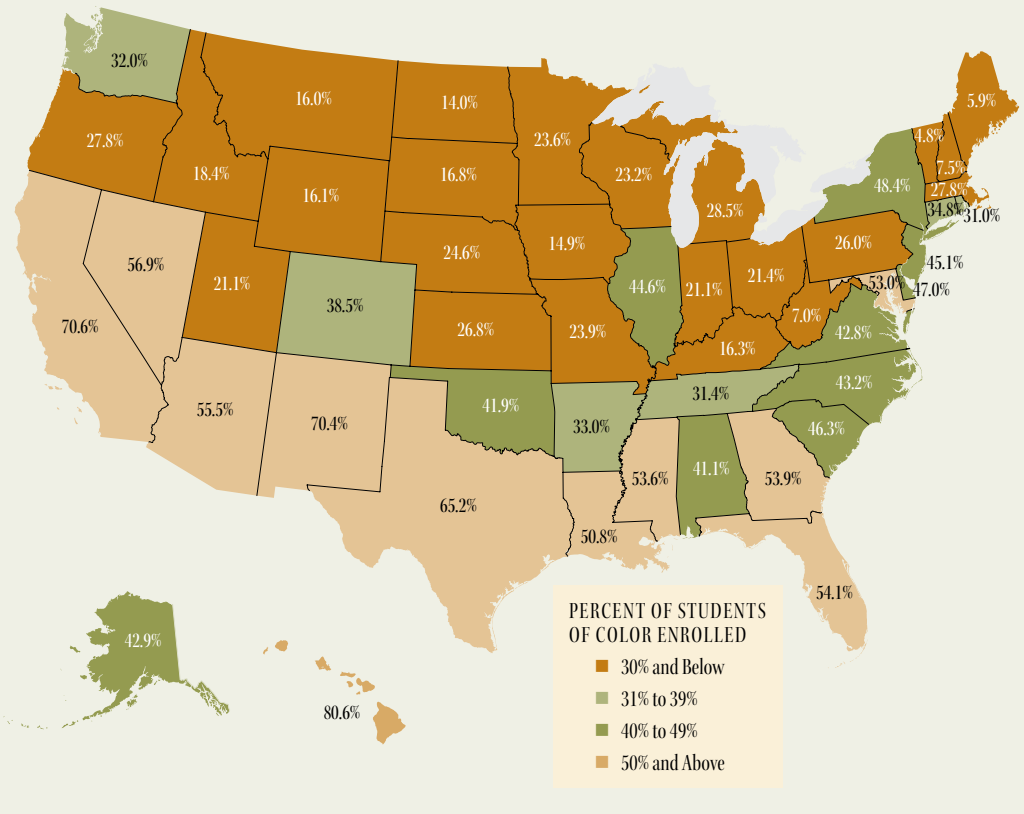
There is also a "Deep South" region that has historically referred to the states where slavery was most prevalent in the 1800s and where massive resistance to desegregation lingered longest after 1954, when the US Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in public schools. The Deep South usually includes five states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

southern border. Latinos represented almost nine out of every 10 non-White students in the West, where there was also a higher percentage of Asian-Pacific students (9 percent) than African American students (6 percent). African Americans were not the largest non-White student group in any of the Western states.

Outside the South and the West, there were only four states in which students of color made up as much as 40 percent of public schools in 2008: New York (48 percent), New Jersey (45 percent), Delaware (47 percent), and Illinois (45 percent).

The South today holds the nation's most diverse population of public schoolchildren. Students of color constitute 40 percent or more of public school enrollment in 11 of the 15 Southern states. In Oklahoma, one in five students is Native American—the third highest percentage among the states. Maryland has one of the nation's largest proportions of Asian-Pacific students—six percent. Texas has the nation's second highest percentage of Latino students, and Mississippi continues to rank as the state with the nation's highest percentage of African American students (51 percent).

Students of Color in US Public Schools
2008



Trends Shaping the Emergence of a New Diverse Majority

A new diverse majority has emerged in the South's public schools because of a combination of historical, political, judicial, and demographic changes that began more than 140 years ago. These trends explain how and why this phenomenon has emerged. They also provide a context for understanding the implications and challenges that this fundamental change in Southern education brings to the region and the nation.

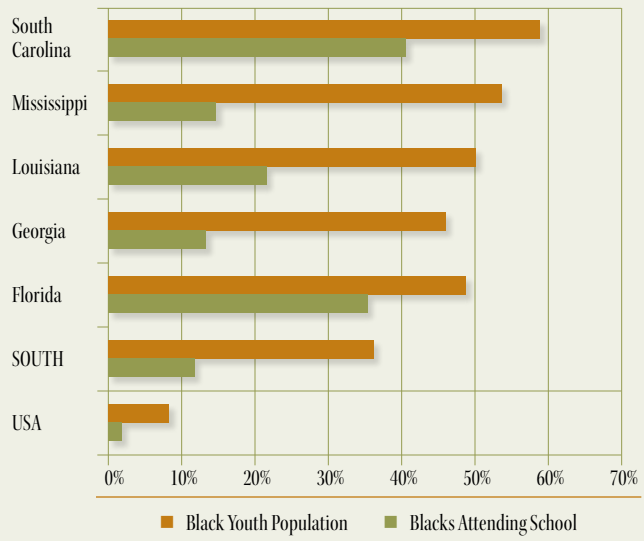
Historically (1870-1980), efforts to increase Black access to public schools and concomitant White flight from public schools shaped enrollment patterns in the South. The in-migration from 1978 to 2008 of Latino and African American populations to the South, coupled with high birth rates among Hispanics and African Americans, explain the recent growth of Latinos and African Americans in the South's schools.

Historical Trends: Black Access and White Flight 1870-1980

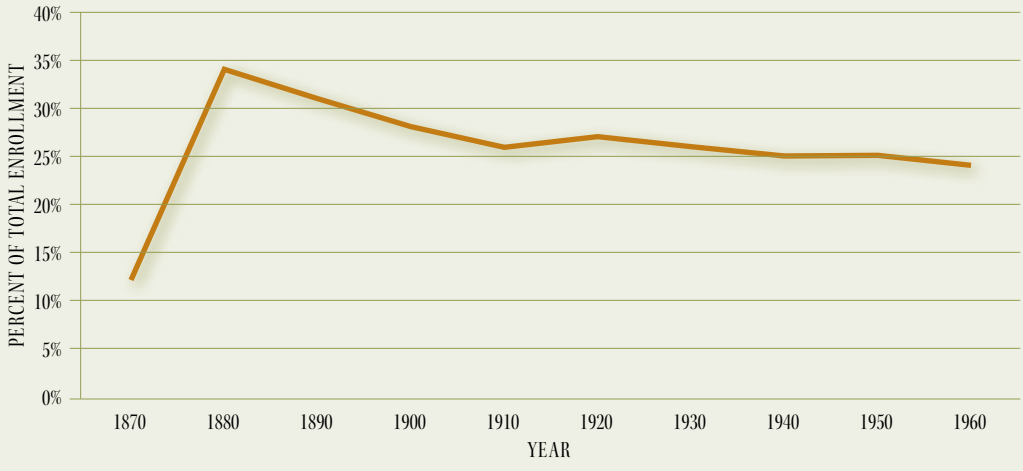
The 1870 US Census, the first after the Civil War, reported that 82 percent of the nation's African Americans lived in the 15-state South, where they made up 36 percent of the region's total population. Only three Southern states had an African American majority population: South Carolina (59 percent), Mississippi (54 percent), and Louisiana (50.1 percent). African Americans in Florida comprised 49 percent of the state's population, the next highest percentage of non-White residents in the nation.

The 1870 Census provided numbers for White and "Colored" students who were in school.[3] It showed that only 12 percent of Black children attended school in the South. Mississippi, Texas, and Georgia were the Southern states where the gaps—the difference between the percentage of African Americans in the estimated school-age population and the percentage of African Americans attending school—were largest. The gaps were smallest in Florida and in two states with relatively small Black populations, West Virginia and Kentucky.[4]

Estimated Black Youth Population and Blacks Attending School
1870



Black Students in the South's Public Schools
1870 to 1960



Education for the South's African American Students: 1870–1940

Most Southern states did not establish a system of public schools until the Reconstruction period of the 1870s. After Southern states adopted constitutions guaranteeing an education to all children, the South's children—Black and White—flocked to public schools.

From the start, there was enormous, widespread White opposition to African American children attending Southern schools, particularly schools in areas where White students were enrolled. After Reconstruction, very few, if any, public funds were spent on Black segregated schools and school supplies in many parts of the South. The number of days Black children attended schools was always less than that for nearby White schools. Black teachers were paid significantly less than White teachers for doing the same or more work, and rarely, if ever, did White-controlled legislatures and school boards provide transportation for Black children.

These conditions usually worsened over time as the "Jim Crow South" of racial segregation became established. In 1890, for example, African American children attending schools were enrolled on average in schools where there were 55 students for every teacher. White schools had one teacher for every 44 students. By 1920, Black schools had one teacher for every 56 students, while White schools in the segregated South had one teacher for every 37 students.

African Americans were the only substantial body of non-White students in the public schools of the South for almost 100 years. Some public schools on both the East and West Coasts enrolled a substantial number of immigrant children in the decades after the Civil War, but most of these immigrants were from countries and ethnic groups that identified themselves in America as White.

By 1880, an estimated 34 percent of the South's students were African American. Ten years later, in 1890, the percentage attending Southern schools declined slightly to 31 percent, and by 1900 this number dropped to approximately 27 percent. In 1910, the US Census reported that African Americans comprised only 26 percent of school-age children attending school in the 15-state South.

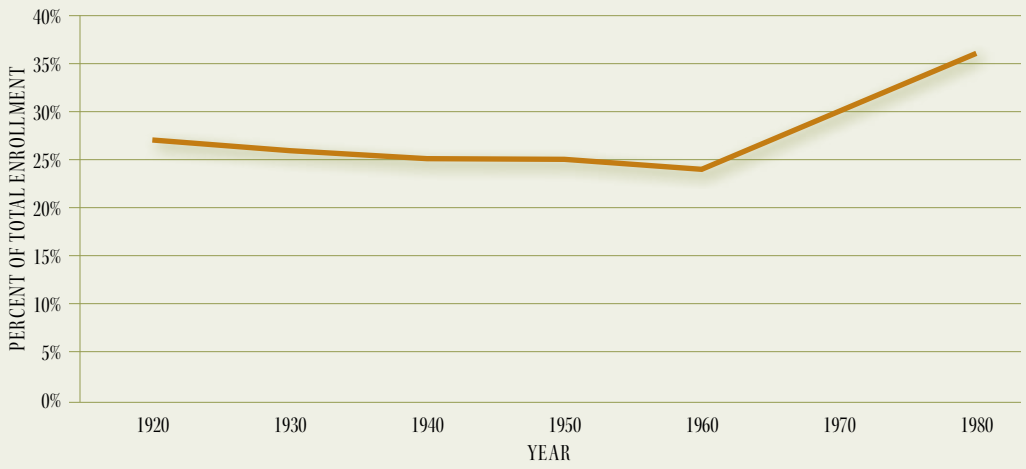
The federal Office of Education reported in 1920 that the percentage of African Americans in Southern public schools remained at 26 percent. Afterwards, the percentage declined slightly during each decade until 1960, when African Americans made up 24 percent of the South's public school population.

After 1890, the adoption of segregation, disfranchisement, and White supremacy by Southern states helped to suppress Black enrollment in public schools for almost 80 years. First, Black children in the segregated South often dropped out of school early. The inadequate, shoddy public schools in which these students were concentrated did not seem to demonstrably improve their lives in the segregated South. Many communities in the South were slow to provide public education for African Americans. For example, until the early 1940s, many rural areas did not offer a public high school education to African American youth. Schooling for Black students ended three to four years earlier than for White students.

The second factor undercutting Black enrollment was the segregated South's agricultural economy, which depended on cheap labor for more than 75 years after emancipation. The Deep South's sharecropper system for farming meant that Black families were often totally dependent on White landowners for their livelihoods. White landowners usually valued Black youth as workers—not as students. As a result, Black boys and girls often went to the fields instead of the schoolhouse.

Finally, many African Americans fled with their families to other parts of the nation in search of better opportunities, including education. In the mid-1940s, mechanization added to the out-migration by eliminating the need for most field

Students of Color in the South's Public Schools
1920 to 1980



American students in the South's public schools.

In 1960, non-Whites represented only one in four of all public school students in the South—about the same proportion as in 1920. Ten years later in 1970, however, students of color comprised nearly one-third the region's public school enrollment. By 1980, the South's non-White students represented 36 percent of all public school students—the nation's largest percentage.

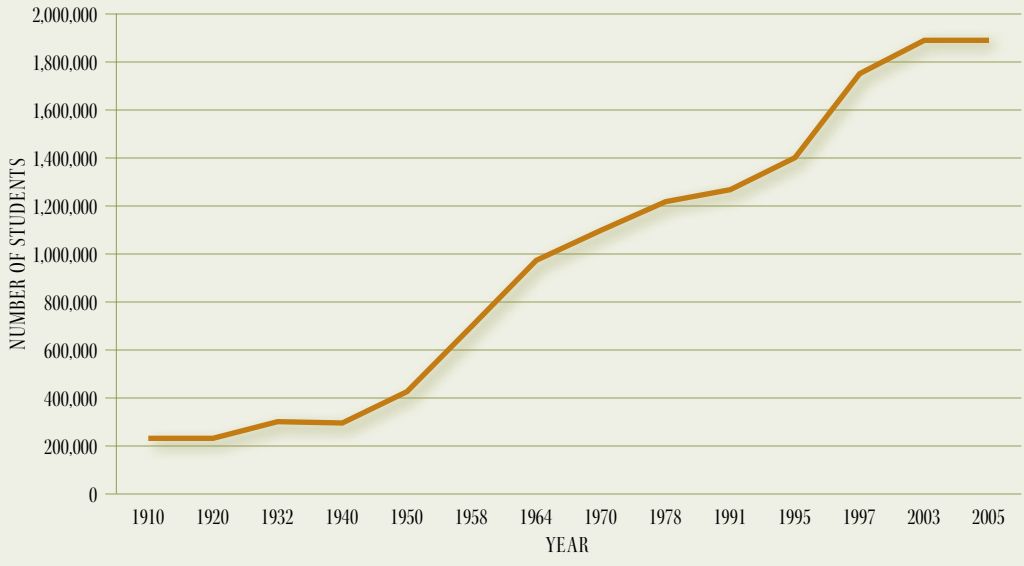
hands, and agricultural jobs that Blacks typically held in the region declined. A mechanical cotton-picker, for example, could pick several hundred times more cotton than an efficient field hand. Investing in machinery, Southern landowners abandoned sharecropping and moved a large number of African American families off the land.

From 1870 through the 1950s, five million African Americans left the South.[5] The "Great Migration" reconfigured America's racial landscape and diminished the South's Black population and Black enrollment in the region's public schools.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregated schools were inherently unequal and violated the US Constitution. This landmark decision foretold the end of the segregated South and created the prospect of a new future for African

This reversal in the South's enrollment patterns was the result of changes in White enrollment as much as in Black enrollment. Even before the US Supreme Court rendered the *Brown* decision in 1954, the Court's opinion on other racial discrimination issues had begun to prompt White flight from the South's public schools.

Private School Enrollment in the South
1910 to 2005



Private elementary and secondary schools have a long tradition in the South, and Catholic schools were some states' first schoolhouses. But by the start of the 20th century, private schools were an insignificant force for educating most of the South's children. In 1910, for instance, less than four percent of the South's elementary and secondary school population was enrolled in private schools.

The role of private schools in the South changed quickly in the 1940s when the US Supreme Court issued a series of opinions outlawing segregated education in graduate and professional schools in the South.[6] These decisions did not have a direct impact on the South's public schools, but they signaled to Southern White policymakers that the Court might reach the same opinion in relation to publicly supported elementary and secondary schools. When the Court issued the *Brown* decision, White students fled from the public schools in record numbers, often with state-funded vouchers, to the region's private schools.

From 1940 to 1950, private school enrollment in the 15 states of the South rose by more than 125,000 students—a 42 percent increase, the largest since private school enrollment was first documented. By 1958, four years after the *Brown* decision, private enrollment jumped by 134 percent. In 1964, as school desegregation inched across the South with "all deliberate speed," nearly one million predominantly White students enrolled in private schools. The number of private school students in the South more than tripled within the span of 25 years. Overall, the region's White flight from public schools from 1940 through 1980 helped to quadruple the percentage of Southern White students attending private schools.

Enrollment in the South's private schools continued to escalate at a slower pace through the late 1970s. In 1978, approximately 1.2 million students attended private schools in the region. In the early 1990s, the numbers in private schools began to increase rapidly again but slowed considerably after 1997.

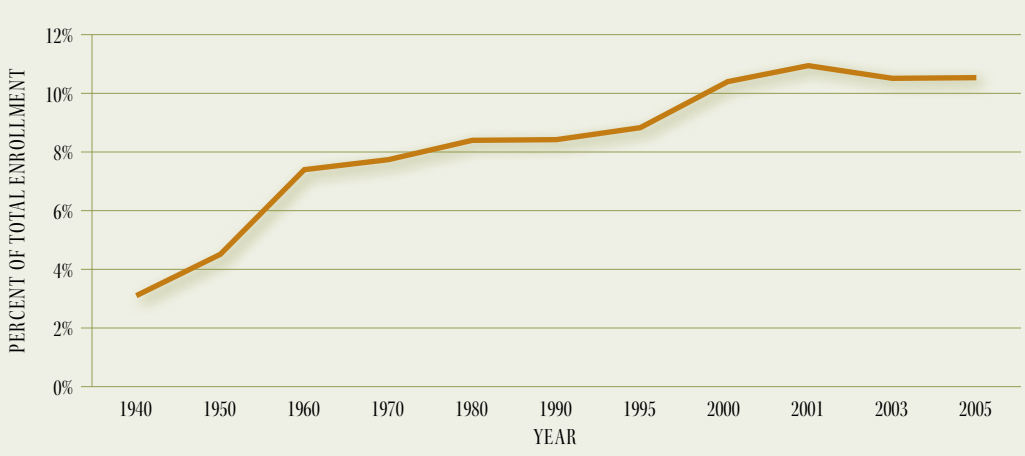
During the last 10 years, the number of private students has increased as the South's population has grown, but the percentage of Southern students—most of whom are White—enrolled in private schools has remained essentially flat at little more than 10 percent.[7]

Contemporary Trends: Hispanic and Black Population Growth 1978-2008

Thirty years ago, only two states—New Mexico and Hawaii—had a majority of non-White students, and students of color comprised only one-fourth of the public school enrollment across the United States. In 1978, the South (33 percent) and the West (28 percent) led the nation in the percentage of non-White enrollment. During the last three decades, the percentage of students of color has grown in every region, in large part due to an increase in Hispanic students.

In the Southern states, Hispanic students increased from six percent of public school enrollment in 1978 to more than 20 percent in 2008. These gains in Hispanic enrollment have been substantial in almost every Southern state.

Private School Enrollment as a Percentage of Total School Enrollment in the South
1940 to 2005



Hispanic Growth in the South's Public Schools: 1968–2008

In 1970, the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare reported that a little more than two million "Spanish American" students were enrolled in public schools in the United States as of 1968. This news release was the first national count of Hispanics in America's public schools. Seventy percent of the students attended schools in five states: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Hispanic students constituted 17 percent of the total public school enrollment in these five combined states. Florida had only 17,000 Hispanic students, amounting to four percent of the state's public school population. Virtually no Hispanics were enrolled in the other Southern states.

In 1972, due to enrollment in Texas and Florida, Hispanic students numbered almost 515,000, or approximately five percent, in the Southern states' public schools. In 1976, the numbers had increased to almost 835,000—all but 30,000 found in Texas (706,000) and Florida (99,000). One in four Texas students in 1976 was Hispanic. In Florida, Hispanics comprised six percent of public school enrollment.

During the ten year period from 1976 to 1986, Hispanic enrollment increased by more than 1.1 million students across the nation. In 1986, more than 1.25 million Hispanic students attended public schools in the South. Most of the region's growth was confined to Texas, where in 1986, one in three public school students was Hispanic, primarily of Mexican descent. This notable increase in Texas may have been in part caused by or a consequence of the 1982 US Supreme Court's opinion in *Plyler v. Doe,* which upheld the decision of US District Court Judge William Wayne Justice striking down a 1975 Texas law that withheld state funds from local school districts for educating children of undocumented residents.

From 1986-2008, the growth of Latino students spread rapidly across the South. In Texas, 47 percent of all public school students were Hispanic by 2008. In Florida, the number of Hispanics soared from one in ten students to one in four. In 1986 in North Carolina and Georgia, Hispanic children numbered one out of every 200 students in each state's public schools. Twenty-two years later, one out of every ten students in the public schools in these Southern states was Hispanic.

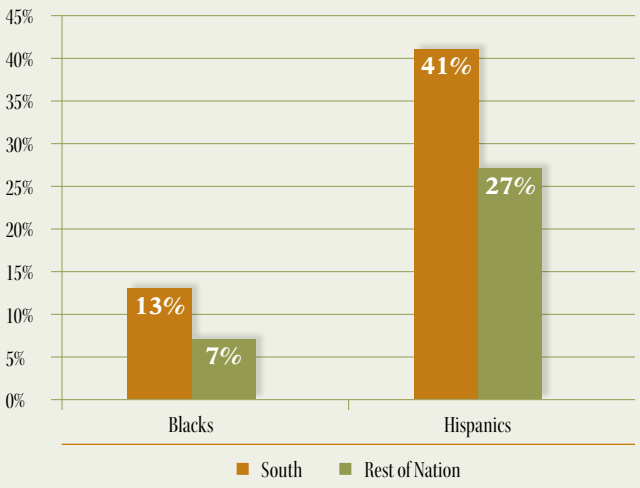
The number of students of other ethnicities and races has also grown. The South's percentage of Asian-Pacific Islander students almost tripled during the last 30 years—from less than one percent to almost three percent. In Virginia, the percentage of these students more than doubled—from 2.4 percent to 5.4 percent. In Maryland, Asian-Pacific Islander students in the public schools doubled from less than three percent to six percent.

Although comparatively small in total numbers, the proportion of Native American students also doubled. In recent years, the number of students who self-identify as multi-racial or as an "other" race has also grown significantly.[8]

The percentage of African American students in the South's public schools has remained relatively constant during the last three decades. Black students have constituted between 24 and 27 percent of the total student population in the region since 1978. Within the South, Mississippi and South Carolina are the only two states where the percentage of Black children in the public schools has notably declined. In Mississippi, Black students constituted 56 percent of the public school enrollment in 1978. In 2008, this number dropped to 51 percent. In South Carolina, the percentage dropped from 45 percent to 40 percent during the same period. By way of contrast, most Southern states have experienced a slight increase in the proportion of Black enrollment in the public schools.

In 2003, Western states became the first region where students of color formed a majority in the public schools. Four Western states enrolled less than a majority of White students: Arizona, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico. This regional trend, however, was largely the product of changing demographics

Growth of Black and Hispanic Populations
2000 to 2008



in only one Western state, California, where two-thirds of all students of color in the region were enrolled. This pattern persists today.

The number of students of color has grown more rapidly in public schools in the South than in any other region. In 2000, African American, Latino, and other non-White students made up 44 percent of the public school's student body in the South. In 2008, this number had grown to 50 percent. In 2009, students of color constituted 51 percent of the South's public schoolchildren.

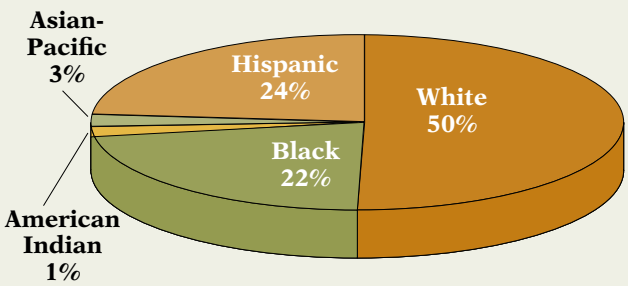
The rise in the number of students of color in the South is the result of a growing Latino population and a reversal of the historical decline in the number of Blacks. In 1980, less than six percent of the South's residents were Hispanic. By 1990, this percentage grew to about eight percent. In 2000, Latinos made up slightly more than 11 percent of the South's population—almost double the region's percentage of Hispanic population 20 years earlier. In 2008, 14.9 percent of the South's population was Hispanic. From 2000-2008, the Latino population increased faster in the South than in any other region.

The growth of African American and Latino populations in the South is largely a result of in-migration. Ending more than eight decades of out-migration, African Americans began returning to the South by 1980. Between 1975 and 1980, the South had a net gain of more than 100,000 African Americans. (By way of contrast, between 1965 and 1970, Southern states experienced a net loss of more than 280,000 African Americans.) From 1995 to 2000, Southern states experienced increased in-migration of African Americans by almost 350,000 persons, while the other US regions had a net decline.[9]

The movement of Hispanics into the South included both international and domestic migration. From 1995 to 2000, Southern states experienced an increase of more than 1.2 million Hispanics from abroad and more than 250,000 from elsewhere in the United States. Since 2003, however, the US Census population surveys have shown that migration patterns within the United States account for a much larger portion of the South's continuing Hispanic growth. From 2007 to 2008, for instance, 44 percent of the approximately 600,000 new Latino residents in the Southern states came from other regions of the country.

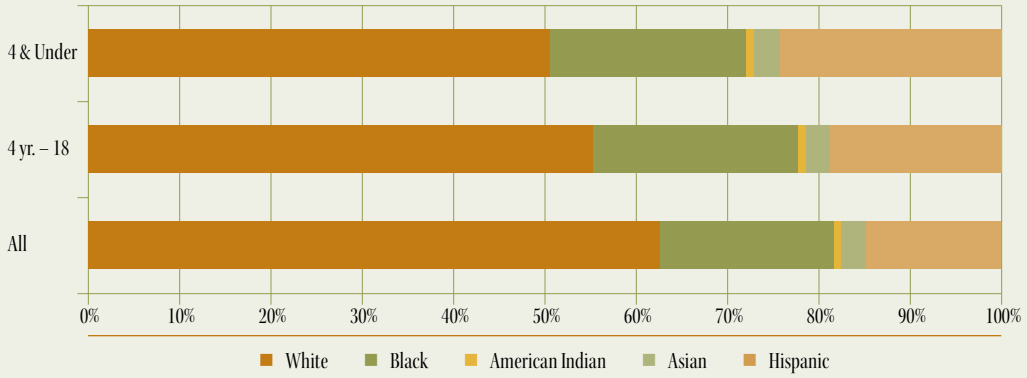
Higher rates of birth among the South's Hispanic and African American populations in recent years explain a significant part of the increase in school enrollment. In 2007, women of color outside the 15 states of the South accounted for 44 percent of live births, while in the Southern states, half of all births were to women of color. Five of the six Southern states with a majority of students of color in the public schools in 2009 also were the states where a majority of births in 2007 were to women of color.

Distribution of Births in the South by Mother's Racial or Ethnic Identity
2007



This trend has been underway for several years in the South and has helped to reconfigure the demographic characteristics of the region's younger-age children. In 2008, almost two out of three residents of Southern states were White. Among the South's school-age children (4-18), however, only 55 percent were White. And among children four years and younger, children of color represented half of the South's population.

Distribution of South's Population by Race, Ethnicity, and Age
2008



The demographic trends that have transformed the South's public schools in recent decades will likely continue in the years ahead. Without dramatic, unforeseeable developments, the US Census Bureau's projections that children of color will become a majority of the nation's school-age youth will become a reality within little more than another decade. In Georgia, Florida, Texas, and most other Southern states, students of color constitute sizeable majorities in the early grades. As these students continue to move through the public schools, they will sustain and deepen trends in evidence today.

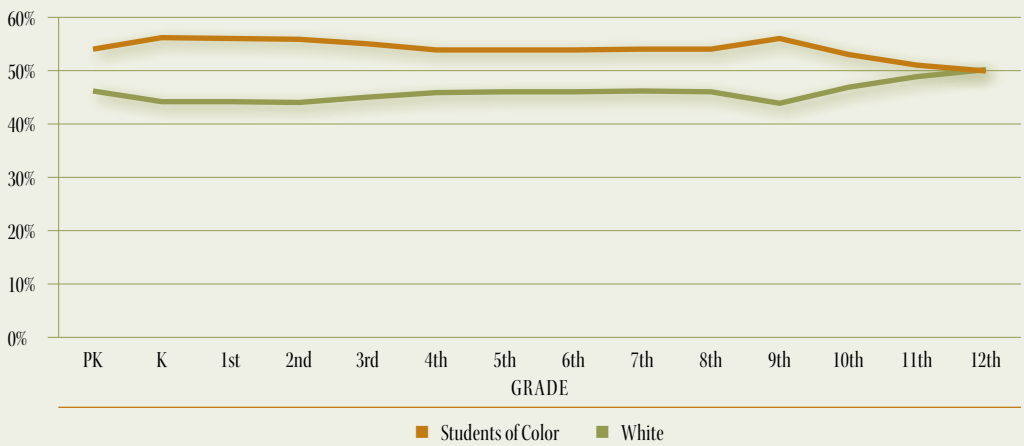
Implications

The South's new diverse majority follows in the wake of another important transformation: the emergence in 2006 of a new majority of low income students in the South's public schools for the first time in more than a half century.[10] The South has the largest number and highest percentage of low income public school students in the nation. In 2008, 14 states across the nation had a majority of low income students in the public schools. Eleven of these states were Southern.

The South is the only region of the country to have a majority of both low income students and students of color in public schools. This development emerged earlier in a few states, but is unprecedented at the regional level.

These new developments are changing far more than public school enrollment patterns. They constitute perhaps the greatest challenges that the South has faced since the 1954 Supreme Court opinion outlawing school segregation. They also create the necessity for a profound, unprecedented transformation in Southern education in order

Georgia Public School Enrollment by Grade and Race/Ethnicity
2009



The South's New and Diverse Majorities

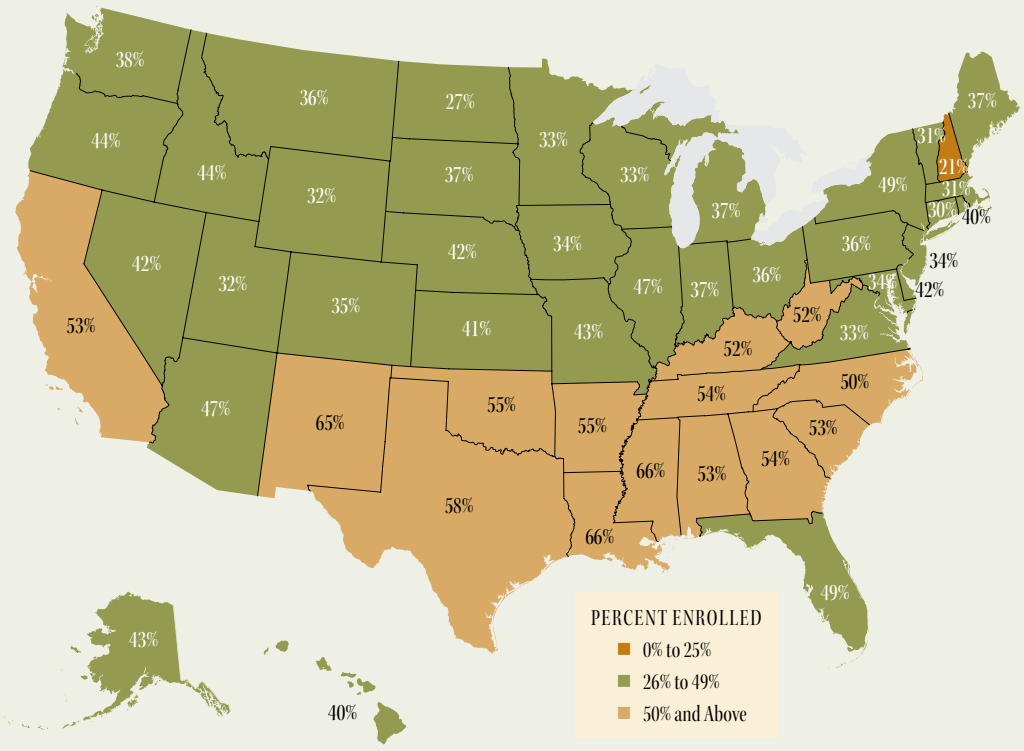
In 2006, low income students formed a new majority of the South's public school students. In 2008, students of color—primarily African American and Hispanic students—became a majority of the South's public school enrollment.

Because African American and Hispanic students tend to have families with lower incomes than White students, four of the five Southern states with a majority of students of color in the public schools also have a majority of low income students in those schools.

Several states in the region with a substantial majority of low income students have relatively smaller percentages of non-White public school students. For example, low income students comprise more than 50 percent of the public school enrollment in West Virginia and Kentucky, where the percentage of students of color is less than 15 percent. Arkansas and Tennessee also have a majority of low income students, but less than one-third of the public school enrollment in each state is non-White. North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama also had a majority of low income students in their public schools in 2008, but the percentages of students of color in these states were smaller.

Among the Southern states, only Virginia does not have a majority of students of color nor a majority of low income students. This is a new, diverse, and quite different South with regard to public education.

Low Income Student Enrollment in US Public Schools
2008

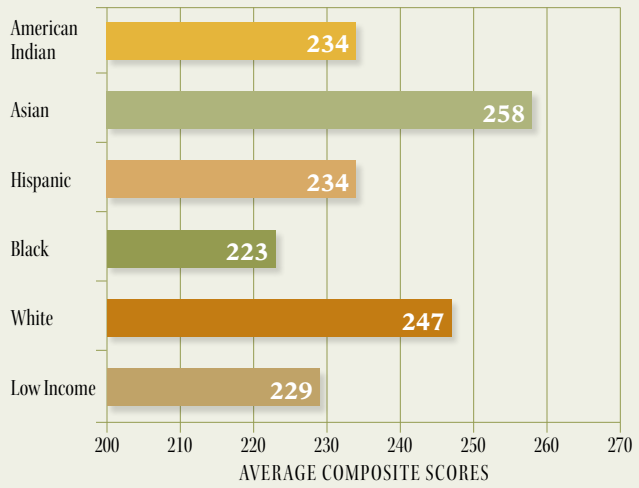


for the region to improve its education, quality of life, and economy.

South's New and Diverse Majorities Score Lowest on Tests

The students who now constitute the largest groups in the South's public schools are the students who in the aggregate are scoring lowest on state-mandated tests and on the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only national performance examination for K-12 students. In all Southern states, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students, as well as low income students of all races and ethnicities, including Whites,

4th Grade NAEP Math Scores
Census South Student Groups – 2009



This chart includes NAEP data for the Census South, which includes students in Delaware and the District of Columbia.

score below average on virtually every state-required test in every subject. These lower-scoring students also graduate at lower rates than White students in the South.

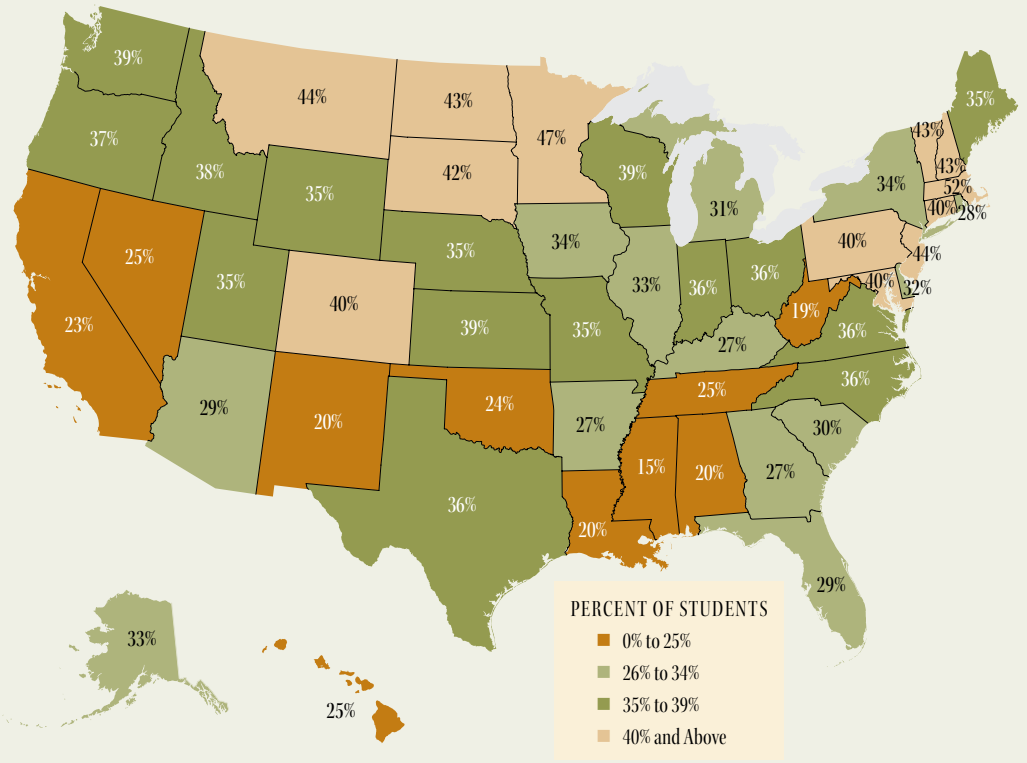
Low-performing students are a challenge for educators in every state of the union, but in the South their numbers have established patterns that shape the states' entire performance. For example, in the NAEP's 2009 math examinations for 4th grade students, the lowest average composite scores came from the students who together constitute the South's new and diverse majorities in the public schools. In turn, Southern states generally score lowest among the nation on this test.

Most Southern states already lag behind the rest of the country in measures of educational achievement and attainment. Southern states have the nation's smallest percentages of students performing at proficient or above on NAEP's 4th and 8th grade tests. Southern states also have some of the nation's lowest rates for on-time high school graduation. If these trends continue, the South's future and that of its people will be bleak.

South's New and Diverse Majorities Receive Fewest Educational Resources

The South lags behind the nation in per pupil expenditures. Most students of color and low income students receive the fewest educational resources to support their success in the region's public schools.[11] This pattern of underfunding has a long history and is shared by states outside the region. But unlike most other states, Southern states are now underfunding the education of a majority of their students.

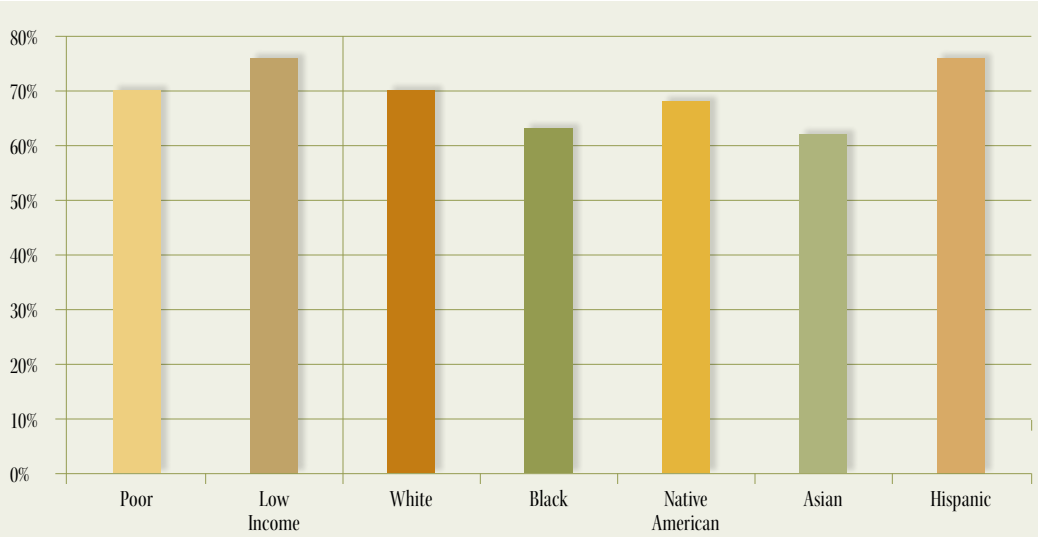
Eighth Grade Students at or above Proficient in Mathematics
2009



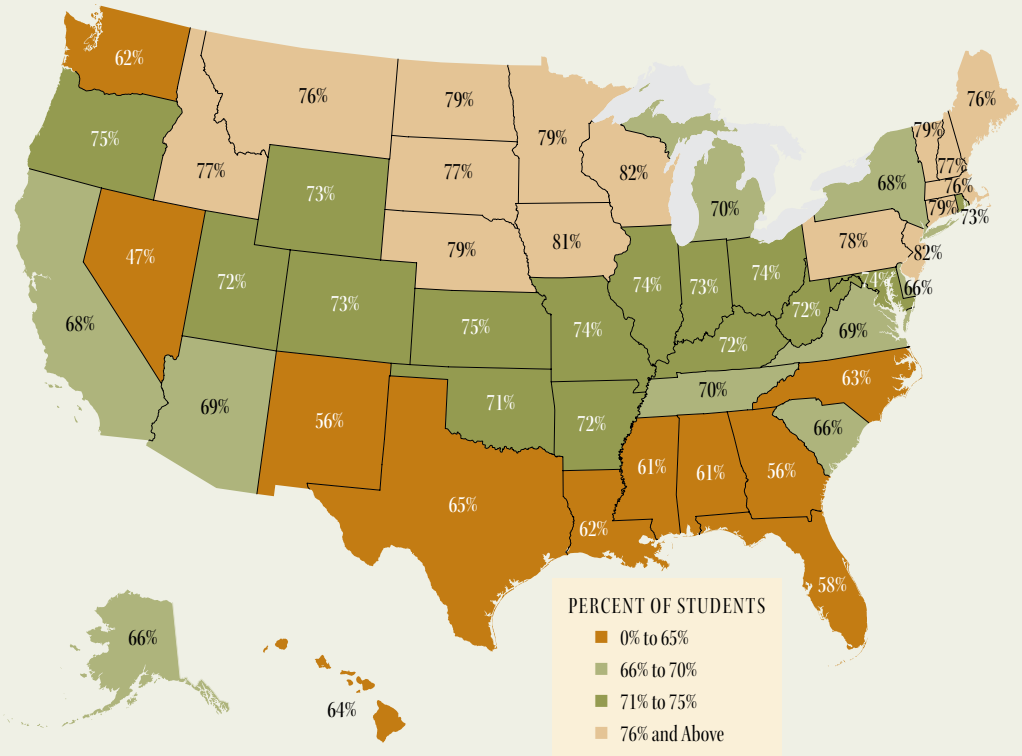
South's Future Workforce and Economy Depend on New and Diverse Majorities

For much of its history, the South's economy was based on unskilled labor for agricultural work and related industries. During the era of Jim Crow and segregation, the region's states often used the laws and machinery of government to ensure a supply of cheap or forced labor. By refusing to develop the skills of Black labor, the South reduced the skill levels and employment costs of all its workers.[12]

Percent of US Students in Public School Districts below the National Per Pupil Expenditure
School Year 2004–2005



High School Graduation Rates
2006



In today's global economy, a large, unskilled workforce is a major competitive disadvantage. A well-educated workforce is necessary to attract high-end jobs, fuel growth in new technology and information industries, and increase workplace productivity. As a recent SEF report, *No Time To Lose,* observes: "Education is among America's most critical economic assets—the primary means for developing the necessary human capital to assure future growth and prosperity."

The South will become increasingly marginalized in the global economy and fall further behind if the region's new and diverse majorities in its public schools continue to expand and underachieve,

Diverse Students, Less Than Diverse Schools

The South has the nation's most diverse student population, but this trend does not mean that public schools in the South necessarily have diverse student enrollments. Data assembled by Richard Fry at the Pew Hispanic Center show that almost 40 percent of Hispanic students in the South in 2006 attended public schools where the total student population was 90 percent or more Hispanic. In Texas, more than half the Latino students attended such "virtually segregated" schools. One third of the South's African American students in 2006 also attended schools that were 90 percent or more Black.

These schools are not "virtually segregated" by law, but as the result of racially identifiable housing patterns and school attendance zones that determine which school a student may attend. De facto school segregation today is not as monolithic or severe as it was in the segregated South of the past. In 1968, for example, nine out of every ten Black students in Alabama attended public schools that were 95 percent or more Black—and 85 percent attended all-Black schools. In 2006, 40 percent of Alabama's Black students were in schools with at least 95 percent Black enrollment. It is noteworthy, however, that more than 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education,* school desegregation remains elusive for so many of the South's African American and Latino students.

As the South increases the diversity of its students, Southern states must find new ways to insure more diversity within individual schools, not just within school systems.

leaving school without the skills necessary for participation in a high-wage economy. In addition, the social and governmental costs of a very large, under-educated population in a world economy and diverse society built on high-wage, high-profit industries can become staggering.

Conclusion

The South that once built and sustained an economy and a society on the under-education of children of color now has a majority of students of color whose education and human development are essential for its future in a high-wage, high-skilled economy. The region's new diverse majority of public schoolchildren has changed—and will continue to change—the South's economic and educational imperatives. These changes mark the beginning of a new era, with far-reaching implications for the South's people and policymakers.

All children have God-given talents worthy of development. The new diverse majority in public schools is a vital regional asset. They will comprise a future diverse workforce that can create an important comparative advantage for the region and nation in a diverse global community of nations and markets.

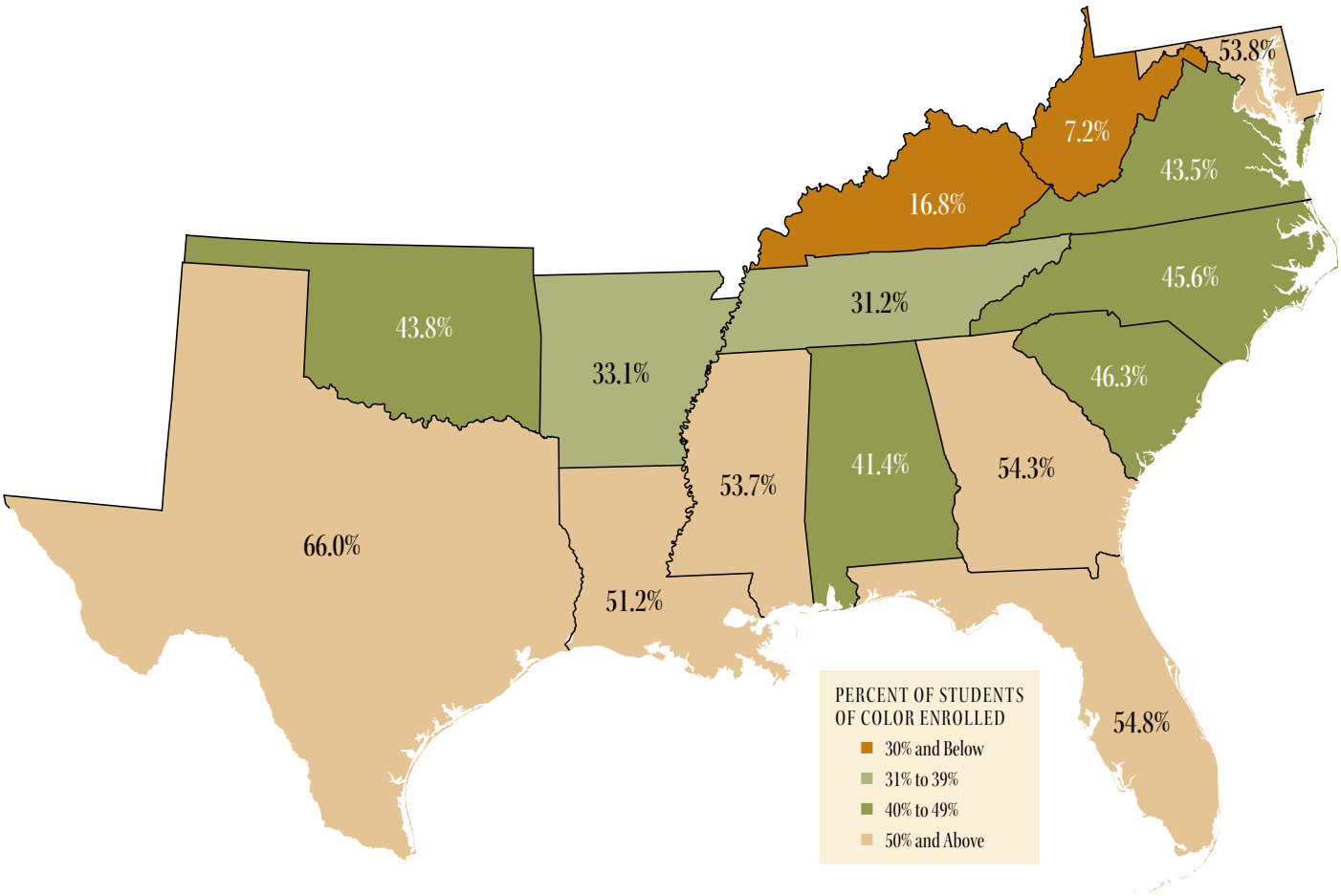
But will the South adequately educate, prepare, and equip these diverse students? Or will old patterns of underinvestment in Southern education persist? Will the South act now to help its new diverse majority of students become a much needed, highly skilled workforce of the future through more and better education, or will it bequeath division, dependency, and poverty to succeeding generations?

As it has in the past, the South forecasts emerging changes for the entire nation. In the same year that the United States broke ranks with its own history and inaugurated the first African American President, the American South also made history in its public schools by enrolling a majority of non-White students. Both developments show how much America is changing and how much Americans must learn to adapt to these changes.

This transformation in public school enrollment requires fundamental changes in how public education is financed and undertaken in order to ensure that all students are afforded a fair opportunity for a good education. No challenge is now more important than helping the South's new, diverse majority of public school students realize the full measure of their potential for themselves and the rest of the region. It is that simple and that profound.

Appendix 1 – Students of Color in the South's Public Schools

2009



South	**50.8%**
Historical Confederate South	**53.1%**
Deep South	**50.2%**

	Percent Students of Color
Alabama*†	41.4%
Arkansas*	33.1%
Florida*	54.8%
Georgia*†	54.3%
Kentucky	16.8%
Louisiana*†	51.2%
Maryland	53.8%
Mississippi*†	53.7%
North Carolina*	45.6%
Oklahoma	43.8%
South Carolina*†	46.3%
Tennessee*	31.2%
Texas*	66.0%
Virginia*	43.5%
West Virginia	7.2%

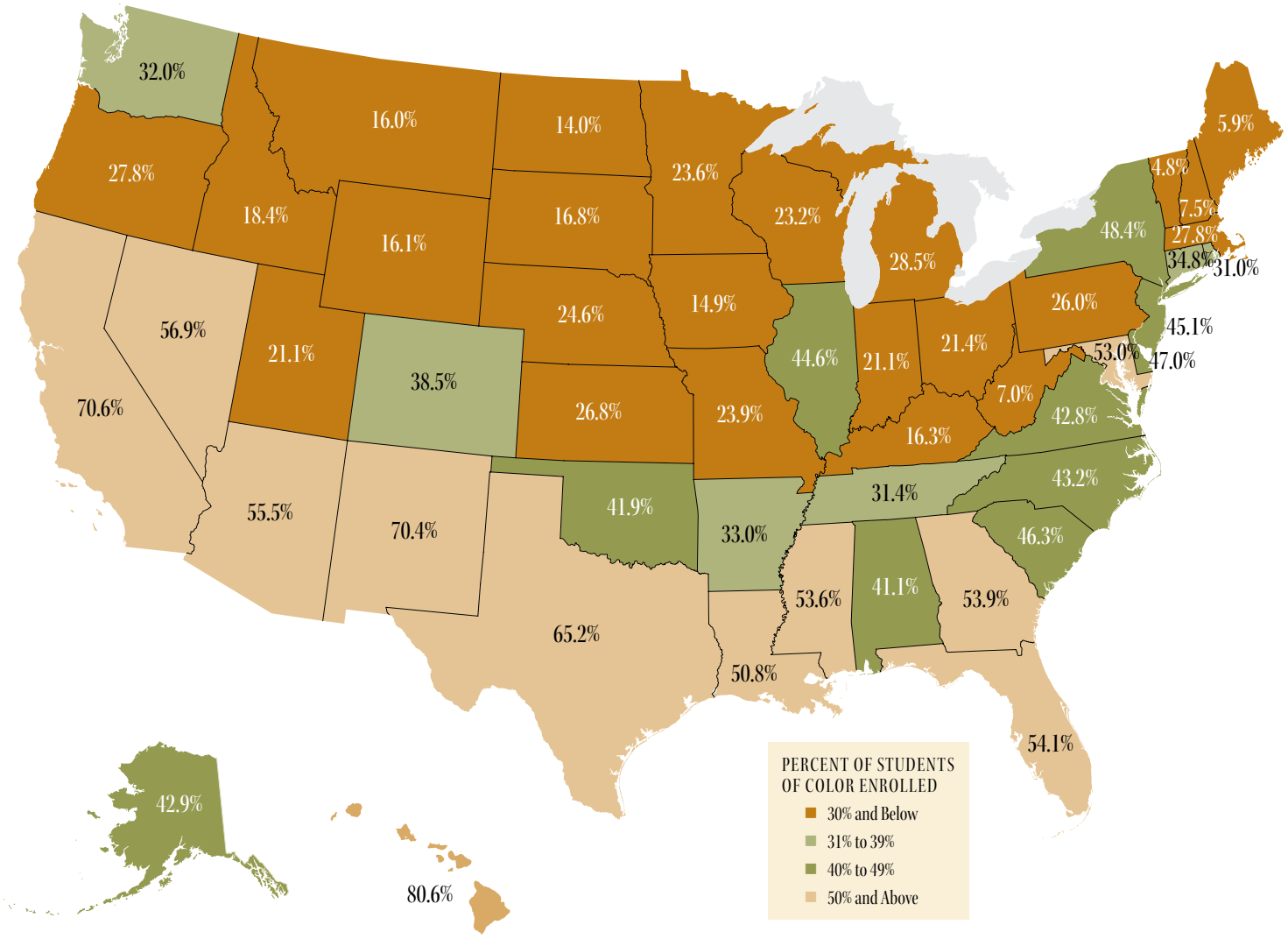
**The Historical Confederate South is made up of these states.*

†The Deep South is made up of these states.

SOURCE: Southern state departments of education, September-November, 2009

Appendix 2 – Students of Color in US Public Schools

2008



Nation	**44.0%**
South	**50.0%**
Non-South	**41.0%**

STUDENTS OF COLOR IN US PUBLIC SCHOOLS

	Percent Students of Color
Northeast	**36.8%**
Connecticut	34.8%
Delaware	47.0%
Maine	5.9%
Massachusetts	27.8%
New Hampshire	7.5%
New Jersey	45.1%
New York	48.4%
Pennsylvania	26.0%
Rhode Island	31.0%
Vermont	4.8%
Midwest	**27.5%**
Illinois	44.6%
Indiana	21.1%
Iowa	14.9%
Kansas	26.8%
Michigan	28.5%
Minnesota	23.6%
Missouri	23.9%
Nebraska	24.6%
North Dakota	14.0%
Ohio	21.4%
South Dakota	16.8%
Wisconsin	23.2%

	Percent Students of Color
South	**50.0%**
Alabama	41.1%
Arkansas	33.0%
Florida	54.1%
Georgia	53.9%
Kentucky	16.3%
Louisiana	50.8%
Maryland	53.0%
Mississippi	53.6%
North Carolina	43.2%
Oklahoma	41.9%
South Carolina	46.3%
Tennessee	31.4%
Texas	65.2%
Virginia	42.8%
West Virginia	7.0%
West	**56.3%**
Alaska	42.9%
Arizona	55.5%
California	70.6%
Colorado	38.5%
Hawaii	80.6%
Idaho	18.4%
Montana	16.0%
Nevada	56.9%
New Mexico	70.4%
Oregon	27.8%
Utah	21.1%
Washington	32.0%
Wyoming	16.1%

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary and Secondary School Universe Survey by state or jurisdiction: School year 2007-08." 2009.

Appendix 3

Counting Race and Ethnicity in Public School Enrollment

Race is a "social construction"— a man-made cultural concept that delineates people by skin color, phenotype, habits, and ancestry. Ethnicity is an equally complex notion, emanating from heritage, culture, and social history. Genetically, all human beings are far more similar than different, and studies have shown that more genetic variability exists within human racial groups than between them. Nonetheless, race and ethnicity continue to reflect people's diverse collective experiences, cultures, and habits of mind.

In the United States, the prevailing method for determining a person's race and/or ethnicity is by self-identification. Although manuscript censuses from the late 1800s reveal that census-takers once may have occasionally used their own observations and judgments to determine some individuals' race and ethnicity, the US Census, the nation's primary source for data on race and ethnicity, has a long, consistent history of permitting people to self-identify in terms of race.

The US Department of Education also collects enrollment data by race and ethnicity. It currently includes six categories: White (not of Hispanic origin), Black (not of Hispanic origin), Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan Native. There is also an "unspecified" group for people who do not match any of the other racial/ethnic categories. In published databases and calculations, the US Department of Education usually excludes these "unspecified" designations from its numbers.

As a consequence, a small percentage of students self-identified as some other race or ethnicity or as "mixed race" in some states, including Southern states, are considered "unspecified" and are not included in the US Department of Education's national databases. This exclusion is problematic.

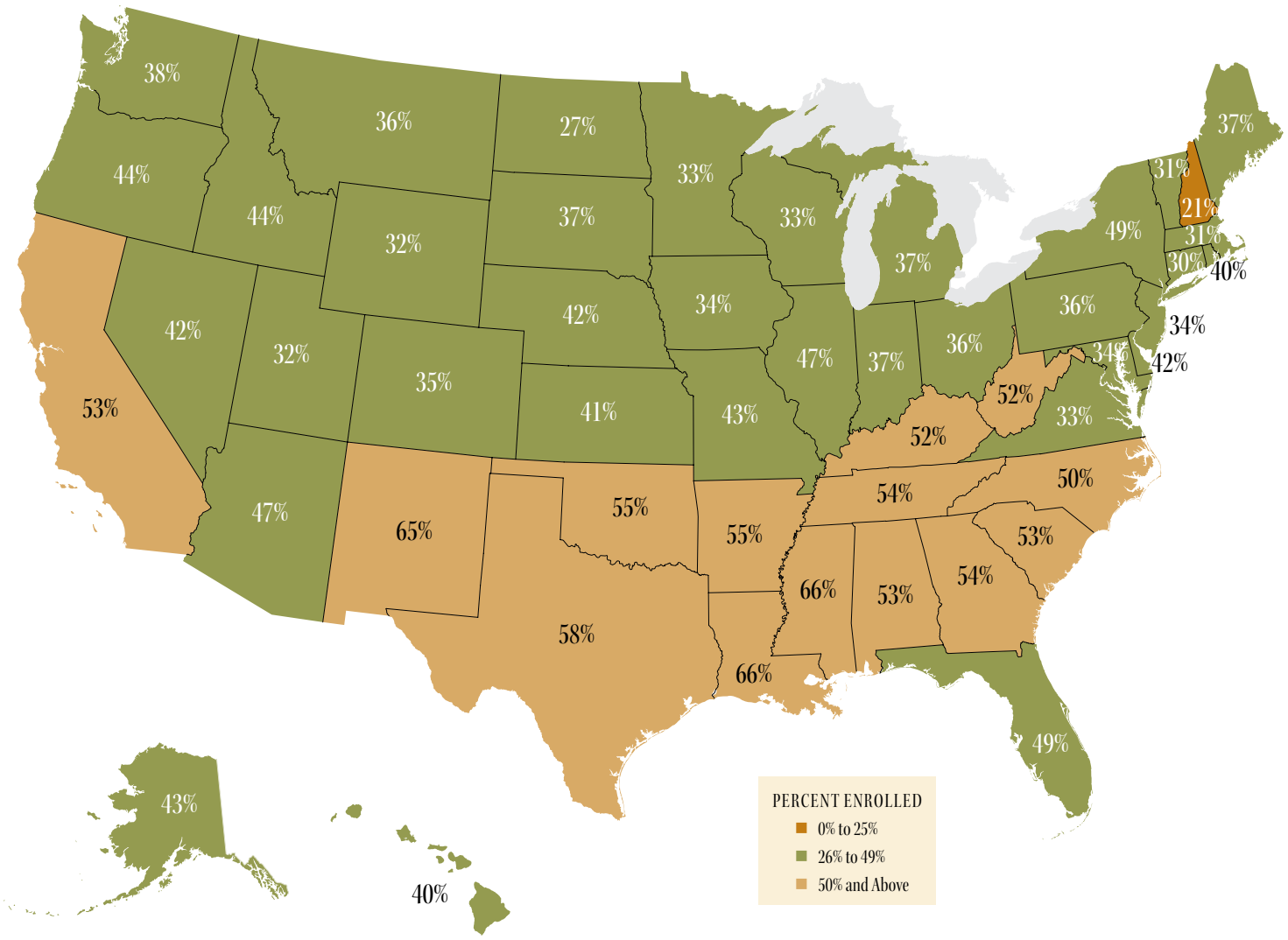
In the school year 2007-08, the Georgia Department of Education reported 49,354 students of "mixed race." This group of self-identified students represented approximately 3 percent of the Georgia public school enrollment, which the state department reported on its website. Similarly, the Florida Department of Education in 2007-08 reported more than 100,000 "mixed race" students. The US Department of Education, however, did not include these states' "mixed race" students in its count of state enrollment by race and ethnicity. (See Table 2, *Public Elementary and Secondary School Student Enrollment and Staff Counts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2007–08 / First Look,* November 2009.) They were excluded as "students for whom race/ethnicity was not reported," since they did not self-identify as one of the federal department's five primary categories for race/ethnicity. (These students are included in this report's counts for the Southern states in the school years of 2007-08 and 2008-09.)

The US Department of Education has new regulations relating to reporting race and ethnicity that will go into effect for the school year of 2010-11 (See *Federal Register,* Vol. 72, No. 202/ Friday, October 19, 2007, page 59266). These regulations attempt to address any problems of double-counting students. They will permit states to collect data with a more diverse set of racial and ethnic identities, but to count and report to the federal government every student only according to the federal categories. It is not clear if and how states will be able to accurately report self-identified "others" by race or ethnicity under these regulations if the respondents fail to conform to the regulations' mandatory categories.

In addition, with the stated purpose of avoiding double-counting students, the new regulations may statistically obscure or undercount persons in racial groups that have some Hispanic ethnicity. The regulations provide the following example for guiding reporting: "A respondent self-identifies as Hispanic/Latino and as Asian and Black or African American. This respondent is reported only in the Hispanic/Latino category." Following this procedure, states may report accurately those with Hispanic ethnicity but may undercount those also self-identifying as Black or another category. If states revise their future collection procedures to match only the federal reporting categories and procedures, they may undercount racial groups by continuing to exclude the "other" races and by failing to create sub-categories that permit a count of self-identified student groupings that exist within Hispanic ethnicity.

Appendix 4 – Low Income Students in US Public Schools

2008



Nation	**45.8%**
South	**52.0%**
Non-South	**42.1%**

LOW INCOME STUDENTS IN US PUBLIC SCHOOLS

	Percent of Low Income Students
Northeast	**39.1%**
Connecticut	30.0%
Delaware	41.6%
Maine	37.2%
Massachusetts	30.9%
New Hampshire	21.4%
New Jersey	33.5%
New York	49.3%
Pennsylvania	35.8%
Rhode Island	40.2%
Vermont	31.0%
Midwest	**38.5%**
Illinois	47.3%
Indiana	37.2%
Iowa	33.5%
Kansas	40.8%
Michigan	37.2%
Minnesota	32.5%
Missouri	43.2%
Nebraska	42.3%
North Dakota	27.1%
Ohio	35.7%
South Dakota	37.1%
Wisconsin	33.4%

	Percent of Low Income Students
South	**52.0%**
Alabama	52.5%
Arkansas	54.8%
Florida	48.5%
Georgia	53.9%
Kentucky	51.5%
Louisiana	65.6%
Maryland	33.7%
Mississippi	66.2%
North Carolina	49.6%
Oklahoma	55.4%
South Carolina	53.4%
Tennessee	53.8%
Texas	57.5%
Virginia	33.2%
West Virginia	52.3%
West	**47.6%**
Alaska	42.8%
Arizona	47.0%
California	52.9%
Colorado	35.3%
Hawaii	39.9%
Idaho	44.0%
Montana	36.2%
Nevada	42.3%
New Mexico	65.2%
Oregon	44.2%
Utah	31.7%
Washington	38.2%
Wyoming	32.3%

SOURCE: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Endnotes

[1]This report uses some different terms interchangeably, since different data sources use a variety of terms for racial and ethnic identities. African American and Black denote a single group, as do the terms Hispanic and Latino. Asian-Pacific Islander applies to children with recent ancestry from nations in Asia and the Pacific Ocean. Native American and American Indian are also used interchangeably. The report refers to students or children of color as those who identify as "non-White." The term "minority student" is not used, since non-White students in the South's public schools no longer constitute a minority in the student population. Admittedly, even "students of color" is an imprecise and somewhat inaccurate term, since some Hispanic students are white in skin color, even if they do not self-identify as White. All racial and ethnic terms are "social constructions" that change over time as societies and people change their perspectives and understanding of human similarities and differences.

[2]*A New Majority: Low Income Students in the South's Public Schools,* 2007.

[3]Data for school attendance from 1870 through 1910 relate to any school attendance—not exclusively public school attendance. The US Census for several decades after the Civil War did not distinguish between public and private schooling in their questionnaires. Some censuses did not ask about school enrollment. In those decades, data compiled by Vance was used. See *All These People,* p. 407. During this period, it was also difficult in many locations in the South to distinguish between public and private schooling, since public and private funds were often combined to cover the cost of children's education. It was also a period when funding of public education was bitterly disputed in many Southern local communities.

[4]Early censuses did not report school-age population. Historically, the school-age population of African Americans has matched or exceeded the group's total population in the South. For this reason, the percentage of total Black population has been used as a proxy for school-age population. Vance's data for school-age populations for an 11-state South bears out the general accuracy of this practice. See *All These People,* p. 406.

[5]Hamilton, "The Negro Leaves the South." Also see Lemann, *The Promised Land.* An out-migration of White Southerners from the South also occurred during this same period as Whites, too, sought better economic and social opportunities elsewhere in America. This White migration partially countered the effect of the Black migration on school enrollment.

[6]See Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice,* p. 256-284; Sam P. Wiggins, *Higher Education in the South,* p. 169.

[7]Also, it appears that private school enrollment in the South as a whole is no longer virtually all-White as it was in the 1960s. In 2005, it appears that students of color constituted between eight and 12 percent of the region's private school enrollment.

[8]The National Center for Education Statistics of the US Department of Education has adopted the practice of counting only students identified as one of six pre-determined categories of race or ethnicity. All "others" are excluded from federal calculations. See Appendix 3.

[9]William H. Frey, "The New Great Migration: Black Americans' Return to the South, 1965-2000."

[10]*A New Majority: Low Income Students in the South's Public Schools,* 2007.

[11]*No Time to Lose: Why America Needs an Education Amendment to the US Constitution to Improve Public Education,* 2009.

[12]See Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name;* Marshall, *Labor in the South.*

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