



THE
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*Building a Prosperous
Virginia for All*

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Limited Opportunities in Virginia's High Poverty Schools

Growing Number of High Poverty Schools in Virginia with Fewer Classes, Resources

RICHMOND, VA -- Students in high poverty schools across Virginia have less experienced instructors, less access to science, math, and advanced placement courses, and lower levels of state and local spending on instructors and instructional materials than students who attend schools with low levels of poverty, according to a new report from The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, an economic and policy research organization in Richmond.

In ground-breaking analysis of the resources and classes available at over 1,800 public schools across Virginia, the Institute's findings show striking deficiencies in the educational opportunities available to students in high poverty schools.

In schools where at least 75 percent of students receive free and reduced price lunch (a proxy for low income students):

- Less than half offer Physics
- Only 57 percent offer Calculus
- Less than three quarters offer an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) class
- Only about one third were fully accredited by the state
- Teachers are twice as likely to be in their first or second year of teaching compared to low poverty schools
- Teachers have lower average salaries (\$46,000 in 2013-2014) than low poverty schools (\$57,000)

In addition, the report shows that more than 80 percent of students in high poverty schools are students of color, with Black students (60 percent) and Hispanic students (18 percent)

comprising the largest racial/ethnic groups. More than one out of every five (22 percent) Black students attended a high poverty school compared to just 3 percent of White students.

“The students are the ones who feel the impact of these disparities,” says Chris Duncombe, a senior policy analyst with the Institute and co-author of the study. “And it’s largely Virginia’s Black and Latino students who are being deprived of the opportunity to pursue their goals and career ambitions.”

The report also shows that students in high poverty schools have worse outcomes when it comes to attendance, school performance, and graduation rates. “This is tragic because students from families with low incomes are the ones who benefit the most from heightened funding, and it’s struggling communities that could most benefit most from having more skilled, better educated workers,” says Duncombe.

The report recommends state and local leaders better target resources to high poverty schools and promote enrollment policies that encourage diverse schools.

The full report, *Unequal Opportunities*, is available online at www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org.

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About The Commonwealth Institute

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.