

ESEA Data Should Be Cross-Tabulated by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

The reauthorization of ESEA is an opportunity to address a gap in the current accountability and data reporting system. Currently, although State Report Cards have to report academic assessment data disaggregated by subgroups, including sex, schools do not have to report graduation rates disaggregated by sex. Additionally, both assessment and graduation rate data are not reported in a cross-tabulated manner (i.e., within each subgroup, further disaggregated by sex so that, for example, schools and communities know what is happening for key population subgroups such as African American boys and African American girls).

The lack of segmented data has enabled a reliance on overgeneralizations regarding differences in achievement by gender – masking problems for both males and females, and particularly for students of color, where the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender can be of major import. Analyzing data by better focused subgroups will help bring to light barriers that otherwise would go unnoticed, and thus will lead to better targeted and more effective interventions.

- To ensure meaningful accountability and school improvement going forward:
 - Data reported by States and LEAs on graduation rates, academic assessments, and any other indicators of student performance should be fully disaggregated and cross-tabulated by gender across all categories.
 - This is not tantamount to adding a new data requirement to ESEA, as schools already collect these data. The only difference is that the data otherwise reported by race will be disaggregated further, by sex. And as under current law, the data would not be reported in this manner in cases where a subgroup is too small to protect student privacy.
 - Subgroup data also will not be costly or burdensome, as longitudinal data systems with individual student identifiers – which all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico already have – can easily cross-tabulate the data.
 - The improved accountability and school improvement systems must hold LEAs accountable for the performance of all subgroups of students, fully disaggregated, and cross-tabulated by gender and race/ethnicity.

Reporting and basing accountability on data fully disaggregated by each subgroup and cross-tabulated by gender will help to ensure that the needs of subgroups of students are not hidden, and that school improvements and community efforts are driven by data and not by assumptions and stereotypes about the needs of boys and girls in school.