



FACT SHEET

Opportunity gap

The opportunity gap – the difference in performance between low-income students and their wealthier peers – is larger in Connecticut than any other state, according to recent data from the U.S. Dept. of Education. Low-income kids are typically two or more grade levels behind in core subjects.

Whether the problem is getting worse or better is open to debate. Over the past five years, the gap in scores on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test given to 10th graders has grown in math, science, reading and writing. On the other hand, the state Department of Education recently released a report showing that the gap had narrowed in districts it had targeted for improvement.

Connection to juvenile justice

Children who fall behind in school are at high risk of truancy and dropping out. Both are risk factors for arrest. A recent study by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute looked at more than 900,000 Texas students and found that those with higher rates of suspensions and expulsions were more likely to enter the juvenile justice system.

Race and ethnicity

On average, minority families have lower incomes than white families in Connecticut. Problems that affect low-income families have a greater impact on communities of color. So the opportunity gap in our schools contributes to the racial imbalance we see in the juvenile justice system.

Social mobility

Americans believe that anyone who works hard enough can become a CEO, a best-selling author or even president. The path to success, we are taught, begins with applying oneself to excel in school. If low-income students don't have access to quality education, however, is this cherished belief true?

Some interesting facts about achievement in Connecticut

The performance of our low-income students is poor even when compared with low-income students from other states.

Low-income students in grades 4 and 8 scored in the bottom third nationally on standardized tests. So it's not a case of Connecticut having a large gap because our highest achievers are doing so well. *(Connecticut Council for Education Reform)*

We see a gap even in generally wealthy communities.

For example, low-income students in Greenwich and West Hartford score worse than their peers on fourth-grade Mastery Tests. *(Connecticut Council for Education Reform)*