National Enrollment Trends•

An estimated 46 million students were enrolled in public schools in the United States in 1997-98. Enrollment in U.S. schools increased by 15 percent from 1987-88, lower than the 21 percent growth rate experienced by Texas schools over the same period. Nationally this represented almost 6 million additional students. The U.S. public school population was 17 percent African American, 14 percent Hispanic, 5 percent other minority, and 65 percent white in 1995-96, the latest year for which data on enroll• ment by ethnicity are available. By comparison, in 1995-96 Texas public school enrollment was 14 percent African American, 37 percent His• panic, 3 percent other minority, and 46 percent white.

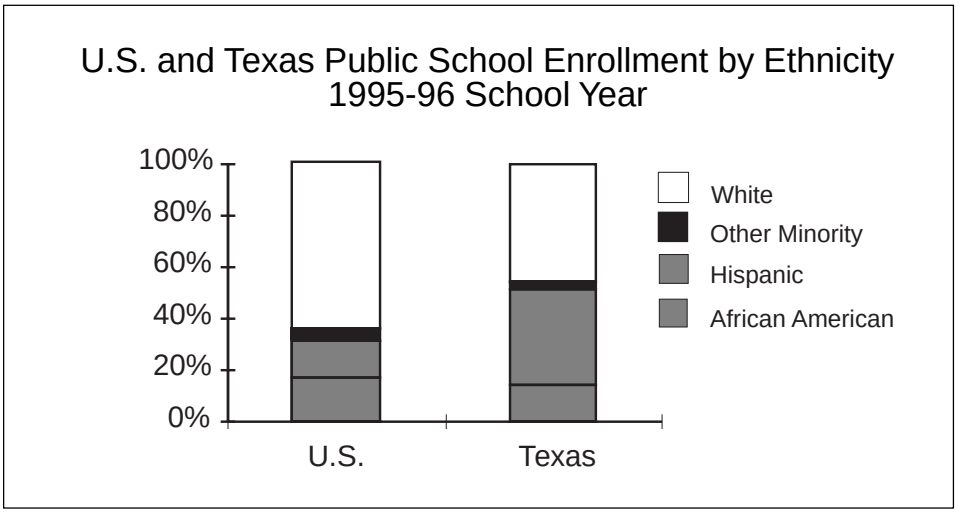
Nationally the number of Hispanic students increased by 61 percent from 1987-88 to 1995-96, the highest growth rate of any ethnic group. The African American student population grew at a faster rate than the total student population, increasing by 16 percent. Students from other minority groups increased by 49 percent. The lowest growth rate was for white students, whose numbers increased by only 3 percent from 1987-88 to 1995• 96.

The National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program, which provides free and reduced-price lunches to students from low-income families, is used as an indicator of studentsÕ socioeconomic status. In 1988-89, on average 27 percent of students nation• ally participated in the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program each day. The participation rate increased to 32 percent nationally in 1996-97. In Texas participation was already at 33 percent in 1988-89 and increased faster than the nation, reaching 39 percent in 1996-97. As noted earlier, 48 percent of Texas students are eligible to participate in this program.

Student participation in special instructional programs has not fol• lowed the same pattern nationally as in Texas. Participation in special education programs was already at 11 percent nationally in 1987-88 com• pared to 8 percent in Texas. The large increase in participation in Texas Ñ 61 percent between 1987-88 and 1995-96 compared to 25 percent nationally Ñ brought participation rates in Texas to the national average of 12 percent in 1995-96.

Participation in programs for gifted and talented students remained stable at about 6 percent of students nation• ally from 1987-88 to 1993-94, the latest year for which national data are available. In Texas during the same period the number of students partici• pating in programs for gifted and talented students increased by 62 percent, bringing the participation rate to 7 percent of students in 1993-94.

Bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) programs grew at a slower rate nationally than in Texas from 1987-88 to 1993-94. The percent of students served in bilingual education and ESL programs in• creased nationally from 5 percent of all students in 1987-88 to 7 percent in1993-94. In Texas, which is one of the top five states in the nation in percent of school-age population that is second language learners, participa• tion in bilingual education and ESL programs increased from 7 percent of all students in 1987-88 to 10 percent in 1993-94.



Source: TEA PEIMS 1995-96; NCES 1998a.

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1990-91. The remaining 25 percent of students receiving special education services are identified under 11 handicapping conditions Ñ auditory impairment, autistic, deaf/blind, developmentally delayed, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injured, visual impairment, noncategorical early childhood, and other health impairment.

Although all districts follow the same state and federal guidelines for identification of students to receive special education services, the data suggest that there is likely variation in application of those guidelines. As a result, percent of students receiving special education services varied in 1997-98 from a low of 9 percent in the El Paso region to a high of 17 percent in the Abilene region. Identification of students for special education services is related to district size, with larger districts identifying a smaller percentage of their students.

The number of students participating in bilingual education and English as a second language programs (ESL) has almost doubled in the past 10 years, reflecting the increase in students who are second language learners attending Texas public schools. In 1997-98 12 percent of Texas public school students were participating in these special language programs.

As Table 2 on page 6 shows, participation in programs for gifted and talented students has doubled since 1987-88 and 8 percent of all students now participate in these programs compared to 5 percent ten years ago. Districts were required to offer programs for gifted and talented students beginning with the 1990-91 school year. Those programs became eligible for state funding that same year.

The percentage of students enrolled in career and technology programs has remained fairly constant over the past decade at 17 percent of total students. This includes students enrolled in a state-approved career and technology education course as an elective, as a participant in the districtÕs career and technology coherent sequence of courses program, or as a participant in the districtÕs tech prep program. Career and technology courses are only offered to students in the secondary grades. In 1997-98, 41 percent of students in grades 7-12 were enrolled in career and technology courses, the same percentage as ten years earlier.

In 1997-98 there were 1,702,963 students participating in special instructional programs (special education, bilingual/ESL, gifted and talented, or career and technology programs). This represents 44 percent of all students. Students can be enrolled in more than one special instructional program. For example, a student receiving special education services may also be enrolled in a career and technology program. However, only 12 percent of students participating in special instructional programs are enrolled in more than one type of program. About 56 percent of students receive no special instructional services.

Texas statute mandated prekindergarten programs for four-year-old children who are second language

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