

## The Miracle of Teachers

Read what teachers have accomplished in elevating the success of students through the years in the **Going Beyond** folder for Chapter 4 at [EffectiveTeaching.com](http://EffectiveTeaching.com).

“If the heavens were all parchment, and the trees of the forest all pens, and every human being were a scribe, it would be impossible to record all that I have learned from my teachers.”

—Yochanan ben Zakkai

### What teachers do is nothing short of a miracle that humbles and inspires us all.

For what you do, know that you are  
respected,  
indispensable, and  
loved.

### What Teachers Have Accomplished

**Each day, 150,000 children come to your classrooms from a homeless situation.** Some 8,000 children are reported every day to public agencies as having been abused or neglected. One child out of eight is born each year to an unwed teenage mother. And one out of five is born into poverty.

Yet, when they walk into your classrooms you do not ask if they are in this country legally or illegally, if their parents beat them the night before, if they had breakfast, or if they are homeless.

**You welcome them. You nurture them. You love them and you teach them.**

You teach them to acquire the knowledge and skills that will make them productive citizens and will help them grow to their fullest potential as human beings.

And because of what you do, this is what you have accomplished according to the Center on Education Policy:

1. **More Children Are Attending Full-Day Kindergarten.** In 1983, just under one-third of kindergarteners went to school. Now, more than 60 percent of kindergarteners attend school for a full day.
2. **Americans Are Becoming More Educated.** In 1945, 24 percent of adults age 25 and older had completed high school, and in 2004 86 percent completed high school. In the same time period, the proportion of adults who had attained at least a bachelor's degree increased from 4 percent to 27 percent.
3. **High School Students Are Taking a More Challenging Curriculum.** The percentage of high school graduates completing a core academic curriculum—including four years of English and three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies—*quadrupled* between 1982 and 2000, from 14 percent to 57 percent.

4. **More High School Students Are Completing Advanced Math and Science Courses.** The percentage of high school graduates completing advanced math courses (any course more challenging than algebra II or geometry) climbed from 26 percent in 1982 to 45 percent in 2000, and the percentage completing advanced science courses (any course more challenging than general biology) rose from 35 percent to 63 percent.
5. **More High School Students Are Taking AP Courses and Exams.** Between school years 1983–84 and 2003–04, the number of students taking AP exams rose from 177,000 to more than 1.1 million, and the number of AP exams taken grew from almost 240,000 to 1.8 million.
6. **More Students With Disabilities Are Being Educated in Regular Classrooms.** Between school years 1985–86 and 2003–04, the percentage of students with disabilities educated in regular classrooms for most of the school day with non-disabled students grew from 26 percent to 50 percent.
7. **Student Achievement Has Gone Up in Math.** In 2004, 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds scored significantly higher on the long-term trend tests of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than they had in 1982. Gains have been particularly dramatic for 9-year-olds—their average scores jumped from 219 in 1982 to 241 in 2004. For 13-year-olds, average scores rose from 269 in 1982 to 281 in 2004.
8. **Younger Students Are Showing Gains in Reading Achievement.** According to the long-term trend data of the NAEP, reading achievement for 9-year-olds reached the highest level, 219, since NAEP began testing reading in 1971; most of the gains occurred since 1999.
9. **In Other Academic Subjects, Achievement Has Improved or Stayed the Same.** Since the 1990s, NAEP scores have gone up for students in grades 4 and 8 in writing, history, and geography.
10. **Some Achievement Gaps Are Narrowing.** NAEP test score gaps in math and reading among Caucasian and minority students have tapered to the smallest margins in three decades. Data from the regular NAEP assessment in writing also shows a reduction in the gap between Caucasians and African Americans in average scale scores at grade 4, from 26 points in 1998 to 21 points in 2000. Although scores have gone up for Caucasian students, African American and Hispanic students have gained at a somewhat faster rate.
11. **SAT Scores Have Gone Up, Even as Many More Students Are Taking the Test.** Scores on the SAT college entrance exam are higher than they were 10 or 20 years ago. The number of test takers has grown to more than 1.4 million students in 2004. The group of SAT test takers has also become more racially and ethnically diverse than it was 20 years ago.
12. **ACT Test Scores Have Remained Stable, Even as the Number of Test Takers Has Surged.** The number of test takers has grown from about 1 million in 1994 to 1.2 million in 2004.
13. **More Students Complete High School.** The United States is a world leader in high school completion. A reported 87 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds have completed high school, and more than two-thirds of 25- to 29-year-olds have completed some college.

14. **Almost All U.S. Classrooms Have Internet Access.** Virtually all public schools (99 percent) have Internet access—an increase from just 35 percent in 1994. The percentage of instructional rooms with Internet access has climbed from just 3 percent in 1994 to 93 percent in 2003.
15. **Students Are Safe at School.** Rates of crime and violence at school, or on the way to and from school, fell by half during the past decade. During the past several years, the percentage of students who carried a weapon on school property, were involved in a physical fight at school, or felt unsafe at school or traveling to or from school has also decreased significantly. Children are safer at school than in the community or at home.
16. **Parents Would Rather Reform the Current Public Education System Than Find an Alternative System.** The percentage of public school parents who prefer to reform the existing system has grown from 60 percent in 2000 to 72 percent in 2004. A reported 61 percent of public school parents also gave the schools in their community a grade of A or B—a 52 percent increase compared to those who gave these grades in 1998.
17. **Public School Teachers Are Better Educated and More Experienced Than Private School Teachers.** In school year 1999–2000, 47 percent of public school teachers versus 35 percent of private school teachers held a master’s degree or higher. Only 13 percent of public school teachers have less than three years of experience, compared with almost 24 percent of private school teachers; 58 percent of public school teachers have 10 or more years of experience, compared with 45 percent of private school teachers.
18. **Fewer High School Teachers Are Teaching Outside Their Field of Preparation.** Between 1987–99 and 1999–2000, the percentage of high school students enrolled in classes taught by an out-of-field teacher—one who lacked a major, minor, or certification in the subject being taught—decreased for most core academic subjects, including English.
19. **More Students Are Going to College.** The number of students enrolled in two- and four-year colleges has climbed steadily over the past two decades from 10,618,000 students in 1984 to 14,257,000 in 2002. By 2003, 64 percent of high school graduates went to college right out of high school, a jump from about 55 percent in 1984; 55 percent of women high school graduates went to college in 1984, while 67 percent went in 2003.
20. **More Young Adults Are Completing Four-Year College Degrees.** In 2002, 29 percent of young adults ages 25 to 29 held a bachelor’s degree, compared with 22 percent in 1985. College completion rates have risen steadily for Caucasian and African American youth but have fluctuated for Hispanic youth.
21. **More Women Are Earning College and Graduate Degrees.** Since 1984, the percentage of college, graduate, and professional degrees earned by women has risen steadily. The share of degree holders who are women has increased in fields where women were once seriously underrepresented, such as medicine, dentistry, and law.
22. **You Bring Diverse People Together.** The public schools continue to be successful in bringing together the most diverse population of students among the industrialized nations and preparing large numbers of immigrants for life in America and the world.

**You ARE the Difference**

“Education is the most important business around.  
Teachers are the landscapers of the human race.”

–Anna Quindlen

You don't make a difference as much as you ARE the difference. It only takes one person to make a difference, and blessed is that person who does.

Thank you for your energy, your dedication, your commitment, and your love for children.

**Most importantly, thank you for your passion to BE the difference.**

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Much of the statistical information has been excerpted from “Do You Know . . . The Latest Good News About American Education?” Center on Education Policy. August 2005. The Center for Education Policy is a non-profit advocate for effective schools. [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).