

## METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING THAT 660 SCHOOLS ACCOUNT FOR ROUGHLY HALF OF ALL AFRICAN AMERICAN DROPOUTS

*The question we posed to ourselves is: **What is the minimum number of schools that would need to be improved (and have access to greater student supports) in order to reach half the African American males who fall off the path to graduation?** Here is how we found that the answer was about 660.*

Approximations of how many African American students failed to reach grade 12 on-time were determined using the Common Core of Data files produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as part of its annual Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey. (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pubschuniv.asp>). These data files provide the number of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students at each public high school in the nation. Using prior files to identify the number of 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students in those schools three years prior allows us to estimate how many students left school during the interim years of high school. This calculation, more commonly known as a school's Promoting Power, provides a valid measure of a school's ability to promote students in a timely fashion. It was developed as a proxy for longitudinal cohort graduation rates and as a predecessor to the federal Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) that schools and districts are now required to report.

Estimates were calculated for the graduating class of 2012, using the number of 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students enrolled in public schools at the start of the 2008-09 school year and the number of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students in those schools three years later, 2011-12. For our calculations, only regular and vocational high schools with at least 300 students were included. (High schools that range only from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>-grade were also included, using the number of 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students enrolled during the 2009-10 school year). Based on this sample of 12,619 high schools, there were approximately 675,839 African American 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students enrolled during the 2008-09 school year, and only 458,551 African American 12<sup>th</sup>-graders three years later. Thus, roughly 217,288 African American students left the public school system or were not promoted on time over the three years in between. These numbers are similar to those reported in the federal Adjusted Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) for the class of 2012 which estimated that 219,962 African American students failed to graduate on-time out of roughly 687,381 African American students who started high school in 2008-09. (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/AFGR0812.asp>).

By ranking all public high schools from greatest to fewest in terms of the number of African American students that were lost or fell off track from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>-grade, it takes only the top 660 schools (out of 12,619) to account for 50 percent of all African American student attrition. 1,490 schools account for 75 percent of all African American student attrition, and 90 percent can be accounted for among 2,460 schools.

Using the NCES unique identifying number for each public school also allowed us to merge other data about each high school, including the percent of students eligible for the federally funded Free and Reduced Lunch Program and each school's ACGR data for the class of 2012. Information on the percent of students with disabilities, as well as data on the number of out-of-school suspensions, number of students repeating 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and the number of legal incidents for the 2011-12 school year were also merged from the Civil Rights Data Collection produced as part of the 2011-12 survey by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (<http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>). Lastly, census tract data such as local poverty rates were merged in using the latitude and longitude of each school as reported as part of the CCD files.