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Below the Surface: Solving the Hidden Graduation Rate Crisis

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Apr 06, 2015

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The U.S. national high school graduation rate recently reached a record high with 81 percent of the Class of 2013 graduating within four years. While this accomplishment is laudable, it should not obscure the fact that more than 1,200 high schools, serving more than 1.1 million students, still fail to graduate one-third or more of their students each year. These low-graduation-rate high schools primarily educate low-income students and students of color.

With the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) pending before the U.S. Congress, now is the time to ensure that federal, state, and local policy intently focuses on the nation’s lowest-performing high schools. Specifically, ESEA must ensure that states and school districts target resources and reform toward high schools that repeatedly fail to graduate one-third or more of their students.

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