Folks: This reading has three parts to it from different sources but they are all on the same topic.

Source:
http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-data-us-department-education-highlights-educational-inequities-around-teache

New Data from U.S. Department of Education Highlights Educational Inequities Around Teacher Experience, Discipline and High School Rigor

March 6, 2012

Minority students across America face harsher discipline, have less access to rigorous high school curricula, and are more often taught by lower-paid and less experienced teachers, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

In an event at Howard University attended by civil rights and education reform groups, federal education officials today released new data from a national survey of more than 72,000 schools serving 85% of the nation's students. The self-reported data, Part II of the 2009-10 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), covers a range of issues including college and career readiness, discipline, school finance, and student retention.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan said the CRDC findings are a wake-up call to educators at every level and issued a broad challenge to work together to address educational inequities.

"The power of the data is not only in the numbers themselves, but in the impact it can have when married with the courage and the will to change. The undeniable truth is that the everyday educational experience for many students of color violates the principle of equity at the heart of the American promise. It is our collective duty to change that," Duncan said.

Among the key findings are:

- African-American students, particularly males, are far more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their peers. Black students make up 18% of the students in the CRDC sample, but 35% of the students suspended once, and 39% of the students expelled.
- Students learning English (ELL) were 6% of the CRDC high school enrollment, but made up 12% of students retained.
- Only 29% of high-minority high schools offered Calculus, compared to 55% of schools with the lowest black and Hispanic enrollment.
- Teachers in high-minority schools were paid $2,251 less per year than their colleagues in teaching in low-minority schools in the same district.

Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Russlynn Ali said that for the first time, this survey includes detailed discipline data, including in-school suspensions, referrals to law enforcement, and school-related arrests.

"These new data categories are a powerful tool to aid schools and districts in crafting policy, and can unleash the power of research to advance reform in schools," Ali said.

Part II of the CRDC also provides a clear, comparative picture of college and career readiness, school finance, teacher absenteeism, student harassment and bullying, student restraint and seclusion, and grade-level student retention.

The data from both phases of the 2009-10 CRDC are available on OCR's website for the CRDC, http://ocrdata.ed.gov. The website, which has been improved for better usability, also contains CRDC data from 2000-2006.

For further information about OCR, please visit, www.ed.gov/ocr. For further information on the 2009-10 CRDC, visit http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/whatsnew.html.

Source:
http://www2.ed.gov/news/av/audio/2012/03062012.doc

PRESS CONFERENCE CALL
On Civil Rights Data Collection, Part II
3:30 p.m. ET Tuesday, March 6, 2012

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by, at this time all participants are in a listen-only mode, during the question-and-answer session, please press * one on your touchtone phone. Today's conference is being recorded, if you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. And now I'd like to turn the meeting

over to the Assistant Press Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education, Daren Briscoe, sir you may begin.

Daren Briscoe: Hi everyone and thanks for joining us on the call today, sorry for the brief delay. I'm here with Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights, Russlynn Ali and she's here to give a short statement about today's release of the Civil Rights Data Collection, after which we will open it up to questions. And I think with that we're ready to begin.

Russlynn Ali: Thank you everyone for joining us today, what we released today was a series of data points - a national data tool if you will that talks about access and opportunity, it's the first of its kind. For many years you have probably heard Secretary Duncan refer to education as the civil rights issue of our time, we are working hard here in the Department to close the achievement gap and ensure that we help schools transform.

A key to doing that is having good information about the root causes of the achievement gap and about whether all students in fact have equal opportunity to learn, that is what this Civil Rights Data Collection seeks to answer. It is a larger collection than ever before, covering about 85 percent of students in the country, it is 7,000 school districts and over 72,000 schools. It examines indicators that's aggregated across all racial subgroups, across sex, across discipline status, that is whether students have served under IDEA or Section 504.

And for the first time we have user friendly tools - snapshots if you will for you and members of your community to study what's happening in their school districts and states. The data portend a very disturbing picture. They tell us that across the country African American, Latino students, students with disabilities, English language learners, those that have been undisturbed for too long continue to receive less than their fair share of our most important resources.

We see when we study, for example, discipline rates here for the first time, we have data that tells us not just whether students are suspended or expelled, but whether they are suspended more than once. Whether their suspension was in school or out-of-school, whether they are suspended under zero tolerance policies, whether they are referred to law enforcement, whether they are arrested in school, and on all of those measures you will see that African American students are disproportionately represented in them.

For example, African American students represented about 18 percent of the sample in the Civil Rights Data Collection, but 46 percent of multiple out-of-school suspensions and 39 percent of expulsions. We also for the first time can cross-tabulate and compare race and gender and we see for example that African American girls and African American boys are suspended at higher rates than almost any other group. In fact, African American girls are suspended out-of-school at rates higher in fact than even Latino boys.

We see that students with disabilities for example are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension at least one of them compared to their peers. We also have - we're able to compare districts and see differing patterns with very similar kids across the country. And importantly, we can look to success stories -those schools where the opportunity gap is being closed, places that are defying these trends and showing what's possible.

For the first time in the state is that we also have information about seclusion and restraint, how many students of any particular race are subject to physical restraint or mechanical restraint for example and you'll see that African Americans are far more likely - African American students with disabilities are far more likely to be subject to mechanical restraints. Let it be clear, mechanical restraints ought not be an appropriate use of restraint to ensure that students are protected. These data point to who is the recipient of those kinds of punishments and sanctions.

As the President talks about our common goal, and that is that by 2020 we will once again lead the world in a percentage of college graduates, we must ask ourselves whether we're providing the opportunity for all

students to even get to college in high school, and the answer from these data released today are unfortunately no. That while there has been great movement in the country to ensure that states adopt college and career-ready standards, far too often students of color in the schools in which they reside don't offer those high rigor cap classes.

You'll see for example that schools with mostly Latino and African American students only about 29 percent of them offer calculus. This data allows you to look at algebra, we see who's taking algebra early and the very good news is that when students get algebra early, they are successful in it. African American and Latino students that take algebra and early rates are extraordinarily successful in those classes, and in fact 79 percent of them pass. These data look at things like access to talented and gifted programs, retention rates for the first time you can see who's being held back and who's not.

You would see for example that English language learners make up about 6 percent of the high school enrollment in the sample but about 12 percent of those students that are held back a year. These data also look at things like teacher equity and we can see where our first and second year teachers - those most new to the profession, reside. By and large they are teaching in schools serving mostly African American and Latino students while schools serving fewest of those students in the very same district often have much more resources and a lot more teacher experience.

With that, let me stop and answer any questions that you might have. One caveat - two caveats to these data, they are self-reported and while we are terrible grateful to the schools and districts across the country that reported these elements, they are reporting them for the very first time. So we have a process in place to ensure the accuracy of the data moving forward if we realize that there has been some inaccuracy in reporting now. And lastly as you study the data released today and the snapshot that we provided for you, I want to caution you not to make national projections from these data.

Though they do represent 85 percent of the students in our nation's public schools, they are not intended to be reflective of all schools in the country. We will be releasing national projections soon on indicators that it's appropriate to do so - expect those in about a month or two. With that, let me open it up to any questions, thanks again for taking the time.

Coordinator: Yes, thank you, at this time if you would like to ask a question please press * one on your touchtone phone, to withdraw your question press * two. Again please press * one for any questions, our first question comes from Mr. Mark Sherman with LRT Publications, your line is open.

Mark Sherman: Russlynn Ali, I have - I've taken note of the various statements that you have made and that have been reported in other outlets of a national nature. However, the Web site at the moment does not have any national data, so I, myself, am unable to refer to anything. What national data is available at this point?

Russlynn Ali: So Mark, as I just explained, we don't have the national projections - the weighted national projections because we're releasing this data in real time, as we receive them. What you can do and we have done, you'll also find on our Web site is an analysis of the sample itself. So as we talked about the data points on this telephone call and those points that you'll see in the snapshot on our Web site and that I believe was e-mailed in anticipation of this call, that is - those are runs of the sample. So you are - we are looking at trends that the sample reveals, given that that sample represents 85 percent of the nation's schools, those trends are certainly reliable, but they are not national projections.

Mark Sherman: I do have your press release but I'm not in possession of any analysis of the sample. Is that a separate item?

Daren Briscoe: Mark, this is Daren, we can email that to you.

Mark Sherman: Thank you so much.

Daren Briscoe: All right, next question.

Russlynn Ali: And it should be on our Web site for others on the phone - at ed.gov/ocr you'll see the document that we're referring to.

Coordinator: Thank you and once again to ask a question please press * one, our next question comes from Jonathan Hicks with BET.com, your line is open.

Jonathan Hicks: Hi thanks very much, the question I have is what is new here is the fact that you have these tools of collecting all these data, and my question is what has been involved in putting together that collection process? And what are the sources, I know that you mentioned you have a whole bunch of schools that are providing information but how did this data collection process come about?

Russlynn Ali: Well, the collection is actually been happening since 1968 by statute in the Office for Civil Rights. They are always self reported data, that said, this - the Obama/Duncan administration has really set about transforming the Civil Rights Data Collection, (tricking) lots of metrological tweaks and more than that, expanding it to answer some of these underlying questions. Some of the details of discipline as we've talked about, referral to law enforcement, access to courses, success in SAT taking. Other indicators include access to AP and success in those tests.

So while the collection itself has been in play for a very long time, these kinds of indicators in it, the size of it, we've expanded the size to include 85 percent of the nation's school children, those are all new. The data were self-reported in that we requested from the Office for Civil Rights districts to provide these data for all of their schools, they were verified by the superintendent as accurate as the district knew how. We have had an extraordinary response rate, almost every school in the sample requested replied. We have some audit and edit checks built in if you will, to help ensure the reliability and the accuracy of the data, but we do not have an audit function. Does that answer your question?

Jonathan Hicks: It does indeed, let me just follow-up with one thing, once you come up with the data that reveals such - the information such as what a lot of people have been reporting today about the differences the gap in sort of disciplinary action and suspensions and so on, then what? I mean does the Department come up with guideline solutions - I mean what happens after that - after the problem's been identified?

Russlynn Ali: So identifying the problem is certainly part of it, we haven't waited for these data to set about changing these patterns. So certainly first step would be data is for us to continue studying them here in the Department, we hope that districts and communities and educators across the nation will do a kind of self-analysis with these data and understand the patterns in their schools and communities and then set about changing them. We in the Office for Civil Rights have launched 14 large-scale investigations into disparate discipline rates in districts around the country, we received that...

Jonathan Hicks: I'm sorry, about the - the Department did what?

Russlynn Ali: Over the last couple of years we have launched 14 large-scale investigations into disparate discipline rates across the country, we receive hundreds of complaints every year alleging concerns with the way disciplinary sanctions are implemented and we steadfastly resolve those cases. In the large-scale compliance reviews that we've launched - those are those 14 investigations I referred to, we are working with districts across the country where there are concerns to ensure that they in fact are complying with the nation's Civil Rights laws and not treating students in a discriminatory manner when it comes to despair discipline rates.

Jonathan Hicks: Got you, thank you.

Russlynn Ali: Additionally on discipline though, enforcement really is an important piece of it, but it is just a piece of it. These patterns while not always rising to the level of a civil rights violation, do reveal some disturbing

information about what's happening in our schools when it comes to classroom management, when it comes to school culture. So we at the Department have worked hard to provide resources to schools through school improvement grants, through Title I and other funding sources, including IDEA, Part B to ensure that good strategies like positive behavioral interventions and support and RTI can be used to help teachers and educators and principals deal with these problems.

Jonathan Hicks: Thank you.

Coordinator: Thank you, our next question comes from Chloe Hilliard, Loop21.com, your line is open. Ms. Hilliard, please go ahead.

Chloe Hilliard: Okay, so my question is: I heard you say that you've expanded the data requested from previous years, you said it started in 1968, was there any resistance to the additional line of questioning asked? Did any of the schools that were involved find anything a little bit more invasive or, you know, a little bit more of a challenge to respond to?

Russlynn Ali: Well, certainly these data were challenging to respond to and lots of places folks weren't collecting these kinds of data and they were being asked to for the very first time. But no, we - I don't recall any district or state or school that was recalcitrant or refused to comply, in fact in anticipation of this release, I've talked to lots of the large district superintendents in the country and almost all of them told me last night things like they are appreciative of having these data.

They tell them problems in their community and they will be used in professional development seminars, they'll be used with their teachers and their school leaders to identify what's happening in their communities and do a real self analysis on how to solve them. So while I'm sure that no superintendent or educator likes the fact that there are these equity concerns in their school districts, all that I have spoken with are really owning these data and these problems and working with a sincere sense of urgency to solve the problems that they describe.

Chloe Hilliard: Thank you, and one quick question just in that I just like - so has the Obama administration given any incentive to schools or is there any talk of how these schools will be awarded for turning these figures around?

Russlynn Ali: Well these figures again these are patterns that we - today's data allow us to go deeper and at the school level and see what's happening across the country but we have been working hard to confront lots of these problems since the early days of our administration, so that $5 billion is now invested in our nation's lowest performing schools around school improvement grants is hugely important. And when those schools are turning themselves around as we've seen, these patterns that the data revealed today change.

We're seeing for example in states that are winners of the Race to the Top, states like Ohio and Kentucky that are using their Race to the Top dollars to ensure access to AP courses and success in them. States like Massachusetts that are using those Race to the Top monies to ensure access and success in STEM. We also have IDEA, Part B that really works to ensure that students with disabilities get the support they need and can also be used to do things like PBIS and RTI.

So it is certainly the work that we are all doing here in the Department to try and confront some of these problems. That said, with this level of granular detail, with the ability to now dissect broad sweeping problems like disparate suspension rates and now we can dig deep into what kinds of suspensions and how often. We do - we are going to hold ourselves accountable for understanding what the data say and working to support schools across the nation and helping to change the patterns.

Chloe Hilliard: Thank you very much.

Coordinator: Thank you, our next question comes from Sarah Gonzalez with StateImpact Florida. Your line is open, please go ahead and check your mute button.

Sarah Gonzalez: Hello, yes, can you hear me?

Russlynn Ali: Yes.

Sarah Gonzalez: Okay, you mentioned discipline and you mentioned that minorities have the highest discipline and I noticed that corporal punishment is one of the forms of discipline on there, and I'm wondering a couple of things, one if any state stood out as having the highest instances of corporal punishment use in schools and also if minorities also fell into that same trend of being, you know, having the highest corporal punishment instances than other students.

Russlynn Ali: We did not dissect all the data points in the collection, there are dozens and dozens of them, so while we are making available and reporting corporal punishment data, we have not yet had the opportunity to do an analysis of it in a desegregated way. We will do it moving forward and also as of about a few minutes ago is now accessible to everyone in the nation to do similar analyses.

We do know for example that when we look at zero tolerance policies that African American students represent about - in those states that have zero tolerance policies, in those districts that have zero tolerance policies, African American and Latino students represent about 45 percent of the student body, but 56 percent of the students expelled under those kinds of policies.

Sarah Gonzalez: Okay, so when you say, you know, you haven't been able to do much analysis that includes also just which states have the highest instances of corporal punishment?

Russlynn Ali: Yes, we did not go deep in corporal - in the corporal punishment and I just - I do want to be clear that today was really about releasing the data, the kinds of snapshot analyses that you see on our Web site in the document that we refer to in this conversation are really just one iota of the kinds of analyses that folks can do with these data across all of the indicators. But national and state estimations for corporal punishment will be a part of what we release in the coming weeks.

Sarah Gonzalez: When you say estimations, you're just basically mean I guess the trends?

Russlynn Ali: Yes, the national projections if you will, yes. But we'll also be able to examine that in a desegregated way and for the districts and schools in the sample, you can see those rates on the site today.

Sarah Gonzalez: Okay, thank you.

Russlynn Ali: Thank you.

Daren Briscoe: Folks, I want to thank those of you who have been waiting patiently on the line, we've got time for one more question.

Coordinator: Yes, thank you, Susan Ferriss with Center for Public Integrity, your line is open.

Susan Ferriss: Yes, hi, I was wondering if you could define for what you use for the purposes of this analysis as zero tolerance policies, because schools often have very different definitions of what that means when they discipline a student.

Russlynn Ali: Yes, we're pulling up the actual definition now, these definitions can also be find - found on our Web site for zero tolerance policy is defined as a policy that results in mandatory expulsion of any student who commits one or more specified offenses. The policy is considered zero tolerance even if there are some exceptions to

the mandatory aspect of the expulsion such as allowing the chief administering officer of an LEA to modify an expulsion on a case-by-case basis. So what you're looking for the definition there was where there is effectively a mandatory minimum for the offense created.

Susan Ferriss: Okay, so even if there's some discretion, there - if there was a potential for expulsion or was called zero tolerance, you included it?

Russlynn Ali: No, the discretion here is where there might be an adjudicatory process or where you might have instances as described where the chief administering officer of the LEA modify the expulsion on a case-by-case basis. But where expulsions are the given sanction for any particular offense, that constitutes a zero tolerance policy.

Susan Ferriss: Okay, okay.

Daren Briscoe: All right, now with that folks, we're going to wrap up. I want to thank you all again for joining, if you have any follow-up questions, you can send them to me at - it's daren.briscoe@ed.gov and we can follow-up with you afterwards. Thanks again.

Coordinator: Thank you for participating on today's conference call, you may disconnect at this time.

END

Source:
http://www.npr.org/2012/03/09/148299511/questions-grow-over-race-discipline-report

Questions Grow Over Race Discipline Report

March 9, 2012

The Department of Education's top civil rights official, Russlynn Ali, speaks with host Michel Martin about a new report. It finds students of color have less access to high-level classes, their teachers are often paid less than those of white students in same district, and suspension rates for black students are disproportionately high.

TRANSCRIPT

MICHEL MARTIN, HOST:

I'm Michel Martin, and this is TELL ME MORE from NPR News.

Coming up, for a lot of kids, basketball isn't just something to do. It's a way out and up. But are some of the coaches working with the youngest players looking out for the kids' interests or their own? We'll ask the author of "Play Their Hearts Out: A Coach, His Star Recruit, and the Youth Basketball Machine." That conversation is coming up in a few minutes.

But first, we want to talk about some of the difficulties many young men of color are facing in the classroom. A new report from the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights suggests that school discipline policies may not be color blind. African-American students, particularly boys, are far more likely to be expelled or suspended from school than students of other races.

The report also detailed disparities in the quality of classes offered to minority students and the pay offered to teachers in schools that serve more children of color.

We wanted to talk more about this, so we're joined now by Russlynn Ali. She is the assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education. She worked closely on the study, and she's with us once again. Welcome back to the program. Thank you so much for joining us again.

RUSSLYNN ALI: Thank you, Michel. Great to be here.

MARTIN: Now the report covers more than discipline, and we're going to get to some of those issues in a minute. But discipline is where we want to start. According to this report, black students made up 18 percent of those covered in the survey. But black students were at 35 percent of those who were suspended from school, and 39 percent of those expelled. And the report said that black boys in particular were at greater risk. Can you just give us a sense of why you think that is?

ALI: Well, Michel, it's really hard to find one reason or answer for these disturbing trends we're seeing across the country. Some of it, unfortunately, as we've seen over the last couple of years in our investigations does have to do with different treatment on the basis of race. Sometimes we see students with the very same offenses, the very same history, receiving very different punishments.

But that does not explain these very disturbing trends and the story that these data portends. Something else is happening here. What is terribly exciting about these data is we are now armed with the ammunition to find out what else is happening.

MARTIN: When this report came out, the secretary of education, your boss Arnie Duncan, said, quote, "The undeniable truth is that the every day education experience for too many students of color violates the principle of equity at the heart of the American promise," unquote. Why did he say that?

ALI: Because when we look at these data and, as you mentioned, Michel, what we released is what we're calling an opportunity gap tool. Data about the experiences that students have as they journey through pre-kindergarten, elementary school, middle, and high school, what courses are they getting, what resources are we providing them. And across the board on most of these indicators, students of color get less of everything that we know makes a difference in public education. That is a question of fundamental fairness.

MARTIN: You know, you can see where some people might argue or question whether race is the determining factor here or if race is a proxy for something else. So, the question I would have is, do you know whether, say, students in the same school were treated differently, in the same community were treated differently? So, you can really isolate race as being the variable.

ALI: That's a very good question. From these data, we cannot tell that. We know trends about suspension. We know much more than we ever knew before. Who's been suspended once, who's been suspended more than once, whether students are referred to law enforcement, whether they are arrested in school. But we don't know for what types of offenses and we don't know, in all cases, of students that are treated differently for the very same activity. We have to ask ourselves further. And educators across the country, we hope, will look at these data, do some self-analyses about their schools and ask themselves these same questions, and then set about changing these disturbing patterns.

MARTIN: How would you recommend they go about doing that?

ALI: We've provided some supports in the Department of Education. Things like positive behavioral interventions and supports. Alternative strategies to disciplinary actions, supports to ensure that the school environment is healthy, that teachers have classroom management professional development to help deal with these problems.

As we've seen, and I've talked to educators across the country, they will tell me things like: I'm trying to manage an already too crowded classroom. The easiest thing for me to do is put the problem child outside of my classroom to get the business of learning

done for the kids that want to learn. While that might be understandable in those instantaneous decisions, we have to ensure that those kids that we call problem kids still get learning supports to stay in school.

MARTIN: You have to ask how much is conscious and how much of it is unconscious that the same behavior that a child who looks one way might exhibit might be viewed in a certain way. But the same behavior that another child exhibits might be viewed in a very different way. It's kind of the saggy pants syndrome, if you don't mind my calling it that.

I mean, there are people who would say well, you know, the kid might be an NBA superstar's kid, but if his pants are sagging, you know, he's going to get followed in the mall. And it's just something that certain behavior, as expressed by certain people, just evokes a different reaction. Do you think that that might be possible? Or do you think that there are again other factors at work, because I think some people are used to thinking of discrimination as being a conscious act and some people suggest that perhaps it isn't.

ALI: I think we are, in fact, seeing that. We are seeing perhaps it's ignorance, perhaps it's a lack of understanding, perhaps it's a need for acceptance of different cultures. But we have seen in some of our investigations instances where the very same activity, it yields a different response on behalf of the adults in some of those cultural presumptions do enter into the fray.

But it's precisely these kinds of conversations that we are also seeing educators have with these data, where they're looking at them and they get a big aha and a heavy heart for not realizing that sometimes they are making those somewhat bias decisions.

MARTIN: On the other hand, you can see where people would look at this data and say: Well, so what if a child is acting out as you put it or behaving in a way that comprises the educational experience for other kids? I don't care what color he is, he needs to go. He or she - but as you point out mainly he - needs to go because every child's educational experience is compromised by poor behavior. And what do you say to that?

ALI: That's right, too. You cannot rush to judgment around these data. Equalizing disciplinary rates is not the fix to these patterns. It's going to require a community effort, a student effort, a parent effort, an educator effort, and certainly Washington needs to support those efforts. But these data tell us there's no one problem, there's no one solution, but we know for sure that if students aren't in school they can't learn.

MARTIN: We're talking about racial disparities and discipline and other aspects of American schools. Our guest is Russlynn Ali. She's the assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education.

I want to switch gears a little bit, but it's a related subject. You spoken previously on this program about bullying and the need to take school bullying seriously. A lot of jurisdictions now are looking at criminalizing this behavior or taking more stringent action against this kind of behavior, sanctioning it more strongly.

And I'm wondering if you are at all concerned now that you're at the apex of both of these issues, whether one is fighting the other? I mean, if you increase law enforcement scrutiny of school behavior under the rubric of bullying, are you concerned that then sends more kids into the system and triggers more disciplinary responses, which then people will consider discriminatory?

ALI: Discipline and ensuring that students feel safe doesn't necessarily mean that students have to be kicked out of school. We have seen alternate disciplinary strategies that help to ensure students are reprimanded for bad behavior, also work to fix the culture of schools so that all students feel safe and that kind of bullying and harassment isn't tolerated. But it doesn't have to be a zero sum game. In order to make all students feel safe you don't in turn have to kick out most students, certainly not students of a certain race or sex.

MARTIN: What is the Department of Education doing to support this kind of nuanced approach that you would say would be the ideal, from what I'm hearing you say.

ALI: We have, for the last couple of years, been working to support educators in the field with ensuring dollars can be used to support better school environment and alternative to disciplinary action strategies by ensuring that, where appropriate, enforce the civil rights laws vigorously to ensure that these practices are implemented with fundamental fairness. We release these data in the spirit of transparency, almost simultaneously to when we received it.

MARTIN: Just in the couple of minutes that we have left, I want to move a little bit away from discipline and talk about teachers and resources. The report finds that teachers in schools with a lot of minority students are getting paid less than their colleagues in mainly white schools, even in the same district. Why might that be?

ALI: How much teachers get paid is a function, usually, of a lock step single salary schedule. Things like how many years of experience they have, how many credentials they have, how many master's degrees or higher education degrees they have, so that's one of the causes of these disparities. That, though, is linked to patterns where we see almost everywhere across the country, that schools that serve mostly African-American and Latino students employ most of the teachers that are newest to the profession.

Those teachers - their salaries are a lot less than experienced teachers that are clustered in schools serving mostly affluent and white students.

MARTIN: So is it that the more experienced teachers get, the more likely they are to move to majority white districts or is it that the teachers in majority white districts tend to stay there long enough to aggregate more salary, whereas there's more turnover in the minority heavy districts?

ALI: Both. There's more turnover in the minority heavy districts, in part because the teachers leave.

MARTIN: OK. And, finally, Hispanic and African-American majority schools are also offering fewer high level courses, like calculus and physics, than white majority schools. And, again, what do we know about why this happens? And do you see a remedy?

ALI: That is a hugely important concern, especially as we work to achieve the president's goal that, by 2020, we will lead the world once again in the percentage of college graduates. If students are not ready for college by the time they graduate high school, they will be ill-prepared to succeed in the demands of post-secondary work, whether they're in an apprenticeship program or a two or four year college.

It is also hard to know why that is, but for sure, we know that schools serving mostly African-American and Latino students, now, for the first time ever, we know that they are far less likely to have those higher rigor courses.

Some say it's because we don't have the resources to have the labs and the supports and the interventions in those schools. Some say, unfortunately, it's because kids can't do it. But we know that that myth has been debunked, because when we provide students with those rigorous courses and the supports they and their teachers need to succeed, they will soar.

MARTIN: Russlynn Ali is the assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education. She was kind enough to join us here in our studios here in Washington, D.C.

Assistant Secretary Ali, thank you for joining us once again.

ALI: Thank you, Michel.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

MARTIN: Coming up, it's time for March Madness with college basketball's finest on the road to the final four, but a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author is asking whether the youth leagues that feed the system are doing the game more harm than good.

GEORGE DOHRMANN: The players that are coming out of this grass roots system are so lacking in fundamentals, so lacking in morals, so lacking in the lessons that we think of that sports teaches.

MARTIN: The author of "Play Their Hearts Out" is with us. That's just ahead on TELL ME MORE from NPR News. I'm Michel Martin.

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