



## *Are Parents Ready for New High School Curriculum Requirements?*

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The State Board of Education has recommended the implementation of a new, more rigorous curriculum for Michigan high schools. All students would be required to take four years of English; one year each of Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and an additional math class in the senior year; one year each of Biology, Physics or Chemistry, and one additional year of science; three years of social science; and two years of world languages. The recommendations respond to the Cherry Commission's call for higher academic standards for all high school students. The Governor has argued that unless the state has a highly educated workforce, Michigan will not be able to compete in the global economy. The new curriculum requirements are intended to increase the number of students who will be prepared for post-secondary education, and so to contribute to the development of the workforce of the future.

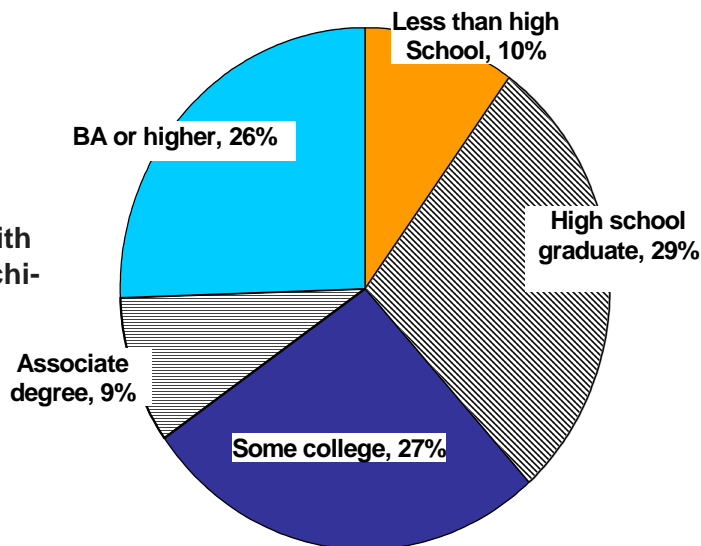
Figure 1 shows the educational attainment of parents with children enrolled in Michigan public schools, measured in terms of the level of education a parent has achieved.

In 2000, ten percent of Michigan parents had dropped out of high school and 29 percent had completed only high school. Only one quarter of parents have a Bachelor's degree or Professional or Graduate degree. An additional nine percent have an Associate's Degree. Parents with some college may have taken one class in a community college or multiple courses in a university, but they have not completed a degree program.

The distribution of parents with college degrees varies by district characteristics, as Figure 2 illustrates. In 311 districts in the state, including those in Detroit, other central cities, and much of rural Michigan, at least half of all parents of children enrolled in public schools have no more than a high school education.

Parental support is critical to students' academic success, and especially so as Michigan introduces new, more rigorous expectations for students. Parents who have dropped out of high school or who only have a high school diploma are likely to face challenges in providing academic support for their children. This will require

**Figure 1: Educational Attainment of Parents with Children Enrolled in Michigan Public Schools**

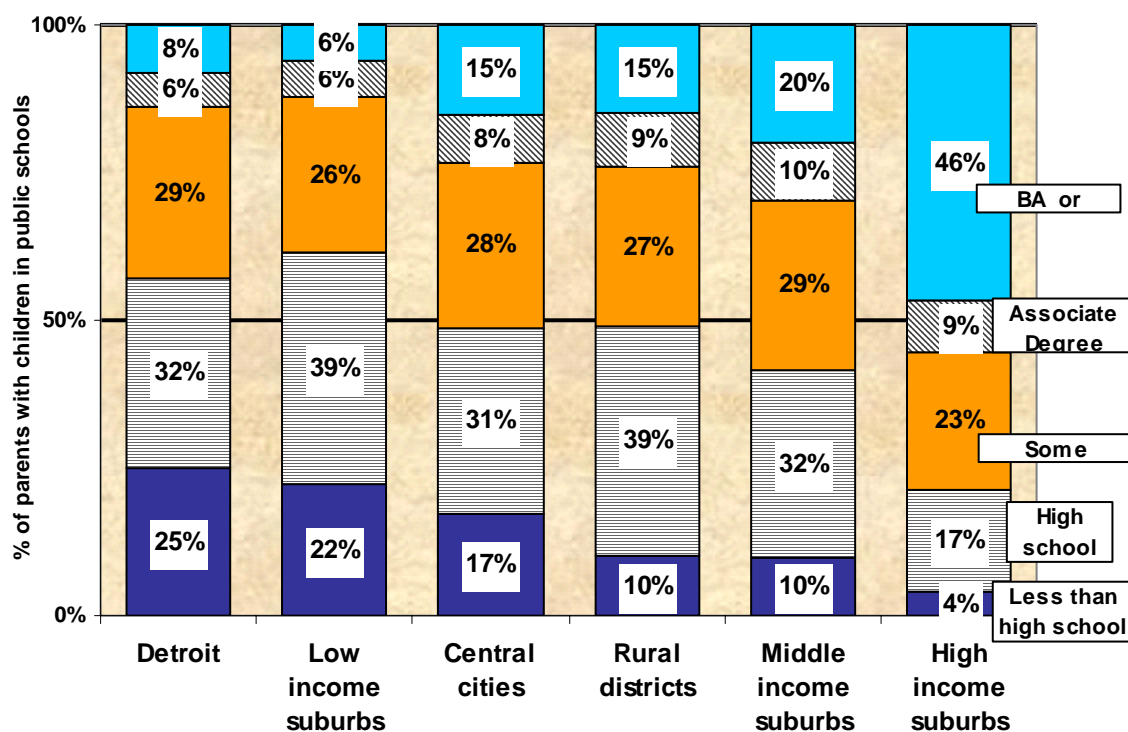


schools in these districts to provide extra support for students if they are to succeed with the new curriculum.

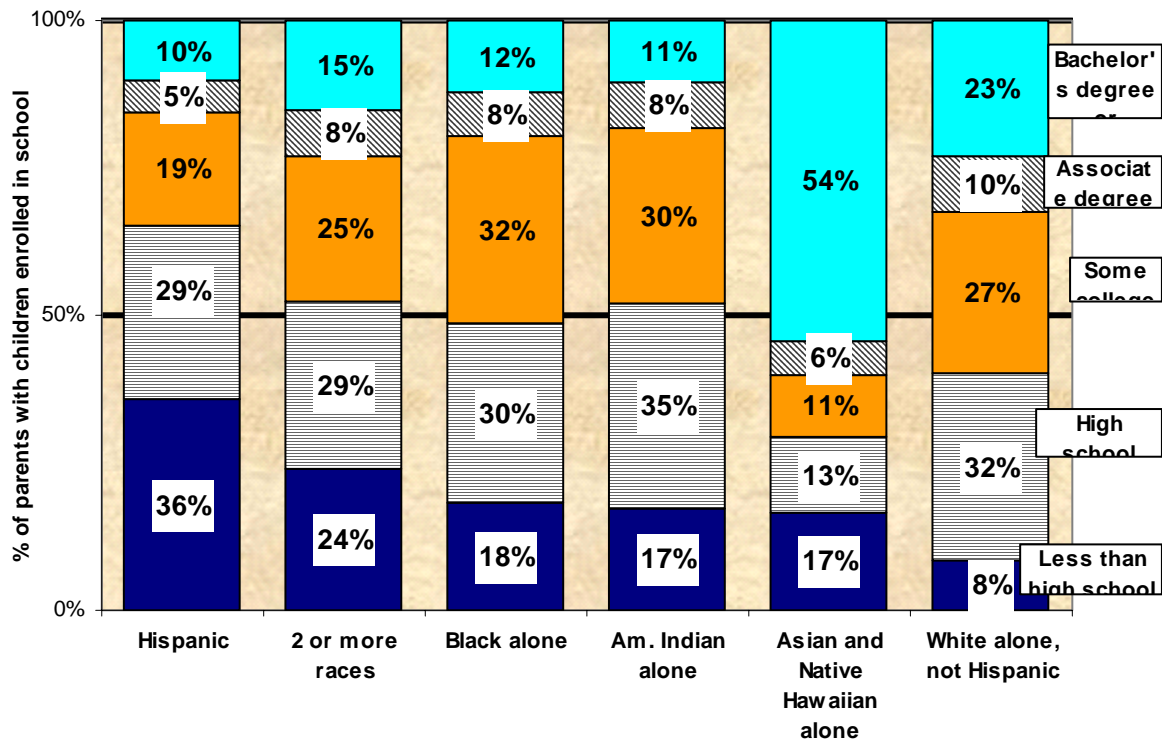
Educational attainment also varies by race and ethnicity, as shown in Figure 3.

Hispanic parents have the lowest educational attainment of any racial or ethnic group. In Multiracial, African American, and American Indian families, only half of parents with children in public schools have completed high school. Parents in these communities may face difficulties in providing

**Figure 2: Educational Attainment of Parents by District Characteristics**



**Figure 3: Educational Attainment of Parents with Children by the Race and Ethnicity of the Parents**



support for their children as they seek to satisfy demanding new state standards.

The new high school curriculum will be more rigorous than the curriculum that most Michigan parents studied when they were in school. The burden of ensuring that students master the new curriculum will have to be carried by teachers in many urban and rural districts. Intensive professional development and rigorous teacher preparation programs for math and science teachers especially will therefore be required to ensure the success of the new high school curriculum.

Notes: School District Demographics, published by the National Center for Educational Statistics reworks data from the Census of Population and Housing specifically for school districts. School District Demographics also provides detailed information on the characteristics of parents who have children enrolled in public schools.

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