

Session 1: Trends in Educational Attainment and Achievement

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Heard on the Street

“We had the lead and blew it”

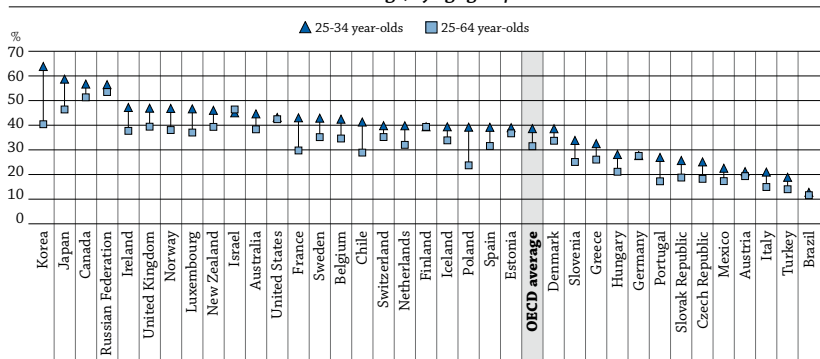
From Tuesday's *Wall Street Journal* on new OECD achievement test of “problem solving in technology rich environments”

Our Agenda

1. “To what extent have educational outcomes in the U.S. been stalling compared to other countries?”
2. Discuss trends in attainment and achievement
3. What and how could a study contribute?


The kind of evidence used to illustrate “blown lead” (OECD)

Chart A1.1. Population that has attained tertiary education (2011)
Percentage, by age group



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25-34 year-olds who have attained tertiary education.

Source: OECD, Table A1.3a. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932846215>

A 'stall' in High School Graduation? (Goldin)

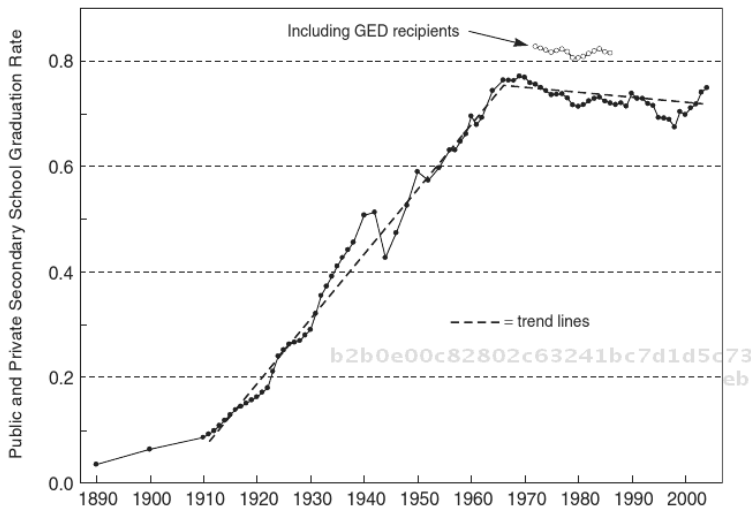


Figure 9.2. Public and Private Secondary School Graduation Rates: 1890 to 2004.

More recent 'uptick' in High School Graduation? (Murnane)

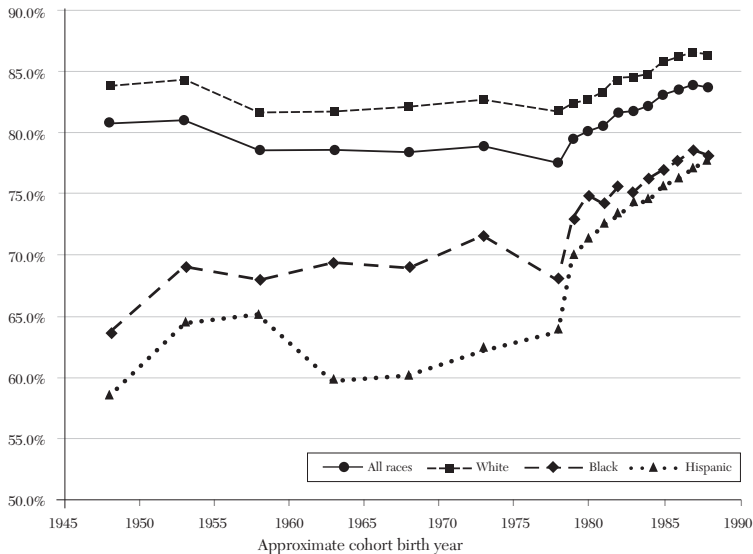
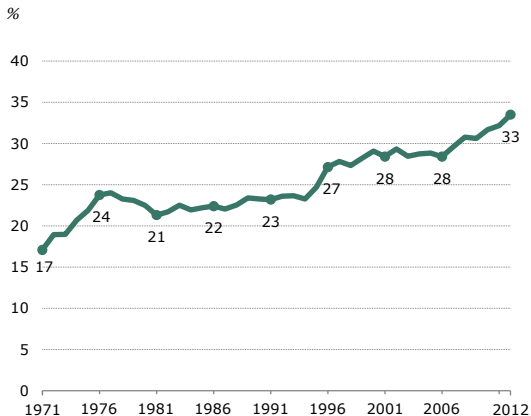


Figure 1. U.S. High School Graduation Rate for 20-24 Year Olds

Steady progress on college degrees? (Pew)

Share of 25- to 29-Year-Olds Completing Four-Year College Degrees, 1971-2012



Note: The educational attainment question was changed in 1992. Before 1992, persons completing at least four years of college are considered to have completed at least a four-year college degree.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of March Current Population Surveys, 1971-2012

Achievement: not a top scorer? (Carnoy)

TABLE 1

Overall average national scale scores, reading and math, for U.S. and six comparison countries, PISA 2009

	TOP SCORING				SIMILAR POST-INDUSTRIAL				U.S.	U.S. VERSUS:	
	Canada	Finland	Korea	Average*	France	Germany	U.K.	Average*		Top-scoring average	Similar post-industrial average
<i>Reading</i>	524	536	539	533	496	497	494	496	500	-33	+4
<i>Math</i>	527	541	546	538	497	513	492	501	487	-50	-13

* Simple (unweighted) average of three countries

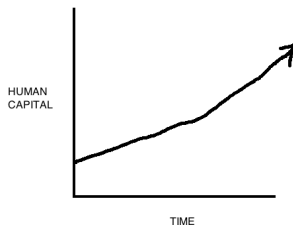
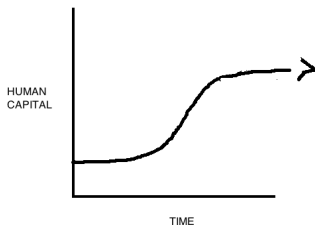
Source: Authors' analysis of OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2010)

My take

- ▶ Much of industrialized world has caught up
- ▶ Some signs of stall, *but also* of recent uptick
- ▶ Measuring attainment is hard, achievement even harder

Meaning of 'blown lead' depends on historical process

Two alternative growth paths of Human Capital



Convergence in level, convergence in growth rate, or path-dependent divergence?