

PHYSTC16-2015-000018

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the PHYSTC16 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Physics is a Choice: Advocating for K-12 Physics at the State, District and School Levels

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While the 2013 AIP survey of physics teachers showed that 39% of American high school graduates have taken a physics course, our survey of state departments of education showed that there is a remarkable variation in physics-taking rates from state to state. Among the 29 states from which we received detailed enrollment information, the enrollment rates ranged from a low of 9% to a high of 71%. While these rates are weakly correlated to socioeconomics, state-level policy decisions appear to play an enormous role. Data from school districts in Florida, which is a weak high school physics state, also show remarkable variation (from 0% to 70%), this time highlighting the importance of policy decisions at the district level. I will share anecdotes and strategies (both successful and unsuccessful) from my advocacy work in Florida at the state, district and school levels.