

EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE

Advancing Accountability



GEORGE W. BUSH
INSTITUTE



EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE

Increasing student achievement and improving the quality of our schools by using data and research-based education practices and policies with a focus on accountability and principal leadership.

BACKGROUND

As a nation, we need every student reading and doing math on grade level. Annual assessment data on student academic performance is critical to inform parents, educators, and the public about how our schools are performing, and it helps to identify where research-based interventions are needed to ensure that all students can be successful.

Annual, comparable, statewide assessments also give state and district leaders and policymakers the ability to focus resources on problem areas, find strategies that work, and reward results. Without this information, decision-makers are forced to spend taxpayer money based on guesses and then hope for the best. Objective, comparable data and timely, transparent reporting of data will rightly keep the focus rightly on student success within the education system.

Bush Institute accountability projects showcase data, transparency, and the need for strong accountability in education as the means to increase student achievement and quality schools for children of all races, ethnicities, and socio-economic status. Policymakers, mayors, business leaders, community members, parents, and the public can use the data, look at the fine print, and hold local school districts accountable for educating every child to high standards and graduating every student ready to succeed.

PROGRAM IMPACT

In 2015, the Bush Institute unveiled the [Big Idea of School Accountability](#) to provide the long history of our nation's reform efforts in education. The nation needed to know whether poor and minority students were achieving in school—America's progress is in lockstep with the progress of all its students. School districts and campuses would be held responsible by policymakers and taxpayers if they did not provide a quality education for every student. This idea came to be known as school accountability, and it was built around several key principles: creating rigorous academic standards, measuring student progress against those standards and making those results transparent to the public, and attaching some consequence to the results.

“Without meaningful accountability, our sights into reality will be dimmed. Without meaningful accountability, it is poor and minority children who suffer the most.”

- President George W. Bush

State of Our Cities: Profiles of Education Performance Around the Nation

Though education data is frequently collected and aggregated at the state level, data is rarely synthesized at the city level. In January 2015, the Bush Institute released the [Mayors' Report Card on Education](#), a project created with Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings. The report was designed to help mayors and other city leaders access and use city-level education data to make decisions to support the success of the students in their communities. The response to the initial report was so positive that an expanded online version of the report – now named [State of Our Cities](#) – was released in September 2016 so that additional mayors, the public, and policymakers can engage more vigorously in education in their local communities.

The data in the tool includes indicators on academic outcomes, district trends in enrollment, school finance, college and career pathways, school climate (e.g. chronic absenteeism), and early childhood education. The tool also includes data from our [Global Report Card](#), which allows city leaders, parents, and educators to compare their community's scores with global competitors. Mayors will be able to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in their own cities, and enable them to examine and learn from other cities that are excelling or innovating in areas where they struggle. *State of Our Cities* helps state policymakers observe trends across cities and look for ways to scale those practices that are showing results, as well as draw attention to the gaps in data availability and transparency, particularly at the city level.

“The work that the Bush Institute did is important for education policymakers, for city leaders, for parents, for citizens, for voters because for the first time ... we’ve got all these cities in one place, and ranking and stacking their performance on so many different levels.”

***- Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings on the
State of Our Cities education tool***

For more information on Advancing Accountability, please contact Anne Wicks Humphrey.

Email: AHumphrey@bushcenter.org | Phone: (214) 200-4300