

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GRADUATION RATES

Strengthened accountability for graduation rates is critical. Currently, the No Child Left Behind Act includes provisions that are intended to hold schools accountable for improving academic achievement and graduation rates among all groups. However, states have wide latitude in how they calculate graduation rates; states are not mandated to meet any specific minimum graduation rate goal and are not required to make significant annual progress in improving these rates. Additionally, regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education further relaxed accountability by not requiring states to disaggregate graduation rate data and failing to require meaningful increases in graduation rates.

Related Federal Legislation

Every Student Counts Act, H.R. 2955. The Every Student Counts Act improves accountability for graduation rates by establishing a common definition for the calculation of graduation rates across schools, districts, and states. In addition, high schools would be required to increase graduation rates to at least 90 percent across all students and within each major subgroup of students.

Related Research and Publications

Who's Counted? Who's Counting? Understanding High School Graduation Rates (2006)

Lyndsay Pinkus, Alliance for Excellent Education

<http://all4ed.org/files/WhosCounting.pdf>

Who's Counted? Who's Counting? Understanding High School Graduation Rates explains the reasons why so many different graduation rate formulas and statistics exist, addresses why states report them differently, and discusses the limitations and benefits of each method. In addition, the report defines the policy changes that are needed to ensure that educators, school officials, parents, and the public receive timely and accurate information about how many students are actually graduating so that they can assess their schools' current effectiveness and make improvements.

Closing the Expectations Gap (2008)

American Diploma Project Network, Achieve, Inc.

<http://www.achieve.org/files/50-state-2008-final02-25-08.pdf>

This is Achieve's third annual 50-state progress report on the alignment of high school policies with the demands of college and the workforce. The report indicates that while more than a third of states have raised high school standards and graduation requirements, there is more work to be done to ensure that all students graduate ready for college and work. The report details state progress in implementing the American Diploma Project policy agenda, which advocates for the alignment of standards, graduation requirements, assessments, data systems, and accountability with the expectations of college faculty and employers.

Graduation Matters: Improving Accountability for High School Graduation (2007)

Daria Hall, The Education Trust

<http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Press+Room/Graduation+Matters.htm>

Graduation Matters examines state-state goals for graduation rates under the No Child Left Behind Act. The brief demonstrates how graduation rate improvement targets are set low, undermining the goal of graduating all students and ensuring that they are college-ready.

FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

Recommended Federal Policy Experts

Robert Balfanz
Associate Research Scientist
Center for Organization of Schools
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, MD
(410) 516-8800
rbalfanz@csos.jhu.edu
<http://web.jhu.edu/csos>

Daria Hall
Assistant Director, K-12 Policy Development
Education Trust
Washington, DC
(202) 293-1217
dhall@edtrust.org
www.edtrust.org

Laura Kaloi
Director of Public Policy
National Center for Learning Disabilities
Alexandria, VA
(703) 922-5039
LKaloi@nclد.org
www.nclد.org

Melissa Lazarín
Associate Director, Education Policy
First Focus
Washington, DC
(202) 657-0681
MelissaL@firstfocus.net
www.firstfocus.net

Bethany Little
Vice President for Policy and Federal
Advocacy
Alliance for Excellent Education
Washington, DC
(202) 828-0828
blittle@all4ed.org
www.all4ed.org

Christopher Swanson
Director of Editorial Projects in Education
Education Week
Bethesda, MD
(301) 280-3100
cswanson@epe.org
www.edweek.com

