



The Education Agenda

Prepare the Future believes that there is no silver bullet in education reform. No one change alone – small schools, early childhood education, increased funding, high-stakes testing – will sufficiently improve the educational outcomes for all America’s students, especially for those with whom we have historically failed. For this reason, **Prepare the Future** is committed to significant, systemic, and comprehensive change in the present system of public education. The implementation of these changes will look different in every district, but no element of this agenda can be left out if we truly want all America’s children to succeed. The Education Agenda of Prepare The Future consists of the following elements:

1) The belief that all children can learn to high standards.

Children succeed or fail according to our expectations. Ample research demonstrates that when we implement policies and practices that reflect high expectations, students – even those with whom we have historically failed – succeed at high levels. We must create the conditions for every child to graduate prepared for post-secondary education, a job that can support a family, and the knowledge and skills to be a good citizen. Every decision related to education, from the choice of assignments and assessments in the classroom to the setting of standards and the allocation of budgets at all levels of government, must be made based on whether it contributes to the ability of all children – including poor children, children of color, children for whom English is not a first language and children with disabilities – to learn to high standards.

2) Reliance on effective, evidence-based instructional strategies and management and governance practices including:

- High standards of academic achievement for all students.
- Highly qualified, highly effective teachers and administrators.
- Quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood opportunities for children beginning at age three, including full-day kindergarten.
- Effective individualized help for students that need it, both during and beyond the normal school day, week and year.
- Safe and smaller schools and classes.
- Meaningful parent and community engagement.
- Up-to-date instructional materials, facilities, and technology.
- Ways to meet the health and social service needs of students and families, by connecting them to non-school providers and by acting as their advocate.

3) A results-based accountability system.

- *For educators* – We need an educator accountability system with meaningful

rewards for success, assistance for those who struggle, and penalties for persistent or dramatic failure based on student performance, with the school used as the unit of measurement.

- *For students* – We need a student accountability system that ensures that students are promoted and graduate when they have mastered the necessary skills and acquired the necessary knowledge. We must have a testing system that, unlike the current proliferation of multiple-choice tests, uses multiple sound assessment strategies to measure desirable outcomes that are worth teaching to.
- *For citizens* – Accountability for students and teachers should not be required unless citizens meet their responsibility to provide schools and students with the support and resources they need to learn to high levels.

4) Adequate resources, equitably raised and distributed.

- *Adequacy* means that enough resources will be provided to create the conditions in which all students can know and do what they must to succeed. Because some students may need more or different strategies than other students to succeed to the desired level, what is adequate will not be the same for all students and all schools.
- *Equity* in raising and distributing funds means that low-income students should be able to enjoy the opportunities of an adequate level of funding without being required to exert more or less tax effort than fellow, more affluent citizens.

Implementation of Prepare The Future's education agenda will provide to all children the educational opportunity that each of us wants for our own children and grandchildren. Any state or school system that bases sustained policy and practice on these four elements will create the conditions that allow their students to learn to the high levels they need to prepare them for a lifetime of success.