

What's the Right Path Forward for Public Education in the United States?

To choose wisely, first consider these questions — what is the goal for public education? What must we accomplish? How will we know when we get there? In other words, what is the aim of the public education system in the United States?

The right path forward allows the flexibility and inclusiveness necessary for **community and teacher input in forming public education policies**. Most people understand that a plan is most likely to be successful when the planning involves the very people that will be asked to make the plan work.

The right path provides the freedom to allow the **curriculum to be developed for and by local school communities** based on their unique needs, desires, resources, and in keeping with the goal. The best educational outcomes occur when teaching practices are based on research, the evidence it reveals, appropriate guidelines, and standards of practice. Our government has a responsibility to support education research and a duty to share that information.

The right path develops a system that is itself accountable to the people it exists to serve, therefore putting an **end to high stakes testing for student, teacher, and school evaluation**. Doing so would effectively end classroom practices that may improve test scores but don't improve education. To move forward, isn't it time to admit that No Child Left Behind has had unintended consequences because its expectations rested only on test scores?

The right path for the United States has historically been the one toward quality and equality in educational opportunities. So, **equitable funding for all public school communities** shouldn't be a hard choice for the country to make. The best schools are well funded and surrounded by community supports. All children deserve nothing less.

The right path forward begins with understanding that the re-writing of No Child Left Behind has provided an opportunity to make all of our schools better. Working together, we can not only change the wayward direction of the law, we can make progress towards the goal of quality educational opportunities for all children that was envisioned in the 1965 version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This time, it's essential that we get it right.

"America's future will be determined by the home and the school. The child becomes largely what he is taught; hence we must watch what we teach, and how we live." Jane Addams

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