



Building a 21st Century U.S. Education System

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Essential Components of a Successful Education System

Business Roundtable's *Essential Components of a Successful Education System* is a nine-point policy agenda for K-12 education improvement. This framework was adopted in September 1990, and updated in May 1995 and February 2000. It is based on the fundamental belief that all children can and must learn at much higher levels — from students who now drop out of school to those considered to be high achievers. The nine components are a comprehensive, integrated strategy for system change. Taken together, they outline the changes needed, in each state and community, to improve student achievement. The components are:

1. **Standards.** A successful system clearly defines, in measurable terms, expectations for what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in school, in the workplace and in life. A successful system aligns and focuses its policies and programs on student achievement of high academic standards.
2. **Assessments.** A successful system focuses on results, measuring and reporting student, school and system performance so that students, teachers, parents and the public can understand and act on the information.
3. **Accountability.** A successful system bases consequences for policymakers, educators, and students on demonstrated performance. It provides students the curriculum, instruction and time they need to succeed. It assists schools that are struggling to improve, rewards exemplary schools and penalizes schools that persistently fail to educate their students.
4. **Professional Development.** A successful system insists on meaningful preparation and continuous learning for teachers and administrators that drives improved teaching, learning and school management.
5. **School Autonomy.** A successful system gives individual schools the freedom of action and resources necessary for high performance and true accountability.
6. **Parent Involvement.** A successful system enables parents to support the learning process, influence schools and make choices about their children's education.
7. **Learning Readiness.** A successful system recognizes the importance of the years before children come to school. It provides high-quality pre-kindergarten education for disadvantaged children. It also seeks the help of other public and private agencies to overcome learning barriers caused by poverty, neglect, violence or ill health for students of all ages.
8. **Technology.** A successful system uses technology to broaden access to knowledge and to improve learning and productivity.
9. **Safety and Discipline.** A successful system provides a safe, well-disciplined and caring environment for student learning.

