



HOOVER INSTITUTION

Regulation and Accountability in US Education

Based on the work of Nora Gordon and Paul E. Peterson

“What We Know About Our Schools,” an essay by Nora Gordon and Paul E. Peterson, includes an examination of the evolution and impact of regulation and accountability measures in the US education system.

Key Points on Regulation and Accountability

1. States have increasingly intervened in the operational control of local districts, as the share of school revenues coming from state grants has risen.
2. In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* asserted that educational standards and expectations had fallen, sparking state-level accountability measures. Many states began publishing the results of students' performance on state-designed tests at each school and rewarding or penalizing districts based on these tests.
3. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 formulated a detailed accountability system for all schools nationwide. It required annual testing in grades three through eight, with results publicly reported at the school level for all students and specific subgroups.
4. The NCLB's requirement that all students be proficient in key subject areas by 2014 became increasingly unworkable, leading to waivers and eventually replacement by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015.
5. ESSA eliminated many NCLB rules but still required states to continue annual testing and reporting to receive federal funds.
6. Concerns about testing practices include excessive time spent on test preparation, shifts away from non-tested subjects, and instances of test manipulation.
7. Research shows that states enacting accountability legislation prior to implementation of the NCLB showed larger gains in performance than those without an accountability system, as measured by tests of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).
8. Overall, the nation's multidecade experiment with accountability neither generated wholesale improvements nor disastrously interfered with local school operations; however, it produced modest positive effects on student achievement.

Based on “What We Know About Our Schools,” by Nora Gordon and Paul E. Peterson,
at www.hoover.org/fact-based-policy-program.



HOOVER INSTITUTION

**TENNENBAUM PROGRAM
FOR FACT-BASED POLICY**

The Tennenbaum Program for Fact-Based Policy is a Hoover Institution initiative that collects and analyzes facts, provides easy-to-digest nontechnical essays and derivative products, and shares reliable information on the nation's highly debated policy issues.

