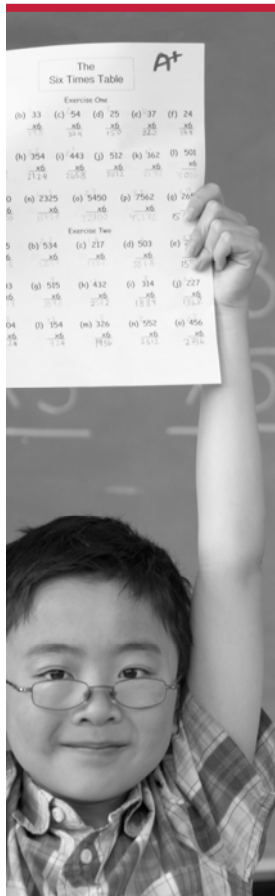


FIRST FOCUS: EDUCATION

ENHANCING EDUCATION BEFORE, INSIDE, & OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Children's health, education, family economics, child welfare, and child safety are the five core issue areas in which First Focus is working to promote bipartisan policy solutions.



Upward mobility and opportunity have long been the hallmarks of American society, as generation after generation surpassed their parents' achievements. But declining high school graduation rates threaten this progress, especially for young Americans of color. First Focus believes America can improve graduation rates and restore access to the American Dream by strengthening policies and programs to meet the needs of students before, inside, and outside of the classroom.

BEFORE THE CLASSROOM

◆ **Early Childhood Education and Child Care.** Ensuring that all children enter the classroom ready to learn is a central element of First Focus's mission to graduate every child from high school ready for college and the workforce. First Focus also believes that affordable, high-quality child care is essential to supporting the healthy development of children. Both approaches require a comprehensive approach, where children from birth to five, have access to high-quality educational opportunities and a safe environment in which to thrive.

INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

◆ **High School Reform.** One million youth fail to graduate from high school every year. The proportions are particularly concerning among students of color. First Focus is working to strengthen federal accountability requirements to promote graduation, including advocating for standard graduation benchmarks and strengthened federal support for high schools.

◆ **Standards and Accountability.** The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has strengthened accountability in education. First Focus works to ensure that parents and the community have the information and tools that they need to play a meaningful role in the accountability process. First Focus also ensures that all children, including those who are learning English, are appropriately included in accountability and assessment systems.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

◆ **Community Engagement.** The challenge of educating our students must not fall to schools alone; the whole community must be engaged. First Focus works to create policy incentives for closer collaboration

between schools and communities. Such partnerships will more effectively leverage community resources and coordinate support services to meet students' needs in and outside the classroom.

◆ **Student Mobility and Housing.** Over a decade ago, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that one in six of the nation's third-graders moved schools three or more times since the first grade. Further, GAO found that excessive mobility negatively impacts student achievement. First Focus works with housing, education, and child welfare advocates to reduce homelessness and student mobility in an effort to increase academic achievement.

◆ **Comprehensive Youth Development.** Children and youth do not develop according to the silos in which they are served by federal programs. First Focus is working to strengthen federal policy to more effectively leverage public-private partnerships in order to meet the comprehensive needs of young people.

CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

◆ **Federal Funding for Education.** Particularly in recent years, federal policy-makers have failed to fully equip states and school districts with the resources needed to achieve federal education goals, particularly those established by NCLB. First Focus works with allies in the education community, as well as non-traditional partners, to support increased investment for children in the federal budget, including education.

◆ **Children of Immigrants.** Children of immigrants make up 20 percent of the U.S. population. This figure includes undocumented and legal immigrants, as well as the U.S.-born children of immigrants who make up the majority of these children (61 percent). Moreover, immigrants make up nearly 30 percent of America's dropouts. First Focus's approach to education recognizes the changing demographics of our nation's children and strives to ensure that all children in America, regardless of immigration status, have access to high-quality educational opportunities before, inside, and outside of the classroom.



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY