

Minority student performance continues to lag despite achievement gains, report reveals

October 17 2012

(Phys.org)—African American and Latino students made achievement gains after test-based accountability was implemented in Texas during the 1990s, yet overall student performance continues to lag, according to a policy report released by the Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis (IUPRA) at The University of Texas at Austin.

Dubbed the "Texas Miracle," dramatic achievement gains by African American and [Latino students](#) across grade levels were shown by data collected from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams.

However, the [report](#) notes that the perceived success of the test-based [accountability](#) measures—which provided the impetus for the national No Child Left Behind Act—did not take into account long-term outcomes that have indicated an overall lag in [student performance](#).

That perceived success of test-based accountability gave us "a false sense of security" regarding achievement in our schools, according to the authors of the report, Julian Vasquez Heilig, associate professor, and Richard J. Reddick, assistant professor, both in the College of Education and faculty affiliates of the department of African and African Diaspora Studies at The University of Texas at Austin, and Su Jin Jez, assistant professor of public policy and administration at California State University in Sacramento. "Considering that the ultimate goal of our schools is frequently framed as college and career readiness by the Legislature, it appears that our current system is not meeting those

goals."

The study examined state-released K-12 and [higher education](#) data in conjunction with data from national sources to compare Texas with the other most populous states and also rank the Lone Star State relative to all other states. Each of the most populous states—Texas, New York and California—performed worse during the past decade relative to other states.

"This research report challenges many of the assertions made over the decade about the Texas Miracle in education. The three authors provide a clear set of data that identifies the state's true strengths and weaknesses, particularly for African American and Latino students," said King Davis, professor of African and African Diaspora Studies and director of the Institute for [Urban Policy](#) and Research Analysis.

The report noted that, although Texas typically performs in the middle between New York and California on the K-12 and higher education measures, the state saw more trends of decline and stasis than growth between 2000 and 2010 relative to all states in the nation.

To promote college and career readiness, the report recommends that policymakers focus on equitable funding for Texas schools (K-12 and higher education) relative to other states and stop depending solely on high-stakes testing as a measuring stick of the state's educational progress.

"In the upcoming legislative session, there must be attention paid to the need for more equitable resources for low-income school districts," said Davis. "Without this attention, the Texas Miracle will continue to be a nightmare for these students, their communities, and the state as a whole. The Institute will provide additional reports on education and other key topics in Texas over the year."

The Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis, along with the African and African Diaspora Studies Department and the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies, comprise the three branches of Black Studies in the College of Liberal Arts.

More information: www.utexas.edu/cola/insts/iupra/Briefs.php

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

Citation: Minority student performance continues to lag despite achievement gains, report reveals (2012, October 17) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-minority-student-lag-gains-reveals.html>

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