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## New study evaluates job performance of schools

By Texas Public Policy Foundation

A new study asks why, despite decades of reform, massive infusions of funds, aggressive efforts by policymakers and the strong commitment of educators, there is no significant improvement in academic proficiency of high school graduates, closure of the achievement gap and increase in high school graduation rates.

The full study, "Paying For Education," is available online at [www.TexasPolicy.com](http://www.TexasPolicy.com).

Co-published with the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, the study's findings include:

- Academic performance is far below grade-level proficiency, although Texas elementary and middle school students generally keep pace with average national performance.
- For Texas high schools, performance and graduation rates remain at the bottom of the nation.
- Students in Texas public schools may be one to two years behind grade-level proficiency of their peers in Texas private schools and students in public schools throughout the nation.
- Many graduates of Texas public schools are unprepared to succeed in skilled vocational training or college.
- Overall performance of students in Texas has not significantly improved over the past several decades.
- Public schools are not overcoming the educational disadvantages associated with race, ethnicity and income.

The achievement gap continues to blight the lifetime opportunities of African-American and Hispanic youth.

Chris Patterson, director of research for the Texas Public Policy Foundation and author of the study, noted, "The failure of schools to do their part in building a highly educated workforce has mounting consequences for Texas."

Patterson notes in her study that Texans have before them "an opportunity to fundamentally change the delivery of public education" and improve academic achievement throughout the state.

"Introducing school choice as a new form of delivering education offers Texans a proven means to improve government-operated schools and educational outcomes of individuals," Patterson said. "Texans can no longer afford to pay the price exacted by our current education system. The cost is paid in opportunity: personal dreams, economic growth and quality of life."

"Texans have made a tremendous commitment to funding public education," said Robert C. Enlow, executive director of the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation. "There should be an open debate about how effectively that commitment is being used by the current educational system, and how school choice would lead to more successful outcomes for Texas children. This paper is an important piece of that discussion."