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Subject: The Americano: Governor Jeb Bush Discusses Hispanic Student Success

[Governor Jeb Bush Discusses Hispanic Student Success](#)

by [Jeb Bush](#)

Jun 8, 2011

The Americano

<http://theamericano.com/blog/2011/06/hispanic-student-success/>

The American dream – an unspoken promise to pursue the possibility of prosperity and success – inspires individuals to take responsibility for their future, work hard and seek a full life. A quality education is the ticket to the American dream. A quality education equips students with the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and their careers.

America has traditionally been a country of immigrants, a trend that continues today. In March, the Pew Research Center reported a tremendous shift in our nation's population growth. According to the report, racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 91.7 percent of the United States' growth between 2000 and 2010.

Hispanics – our nation's largest minority group – accounted for more than half of that growth. In fact, the 2010 Census reports that Hispanics comprise 16.3 percent of the U.S. population.

As these individuals and their families engage in their communities and involve themselves as citizens, they become neighbors, co-workers, leaders and voters. Their contributions will shape our nation. As these citizens are a crucial part of our society, providing the children of these families with a quality education is a critical investment.

Sadly, throughout our nation, too many minority students score below their peers on standardized tests. These students are victims of education myths – assumptions that a student's background, zip code or parents' salary level determines their ability to learn. But this is unacceptable; our nation's destiny depends on the success of all students.

Florida is busting these long-held myths and equipping students to pursue the American Dream.

In 1998, nearly half of Florida's fourth graders were functionally illiterate, according to the National Assessment for Educational Progress. These dismal statistics weren't just a snapshot of the present but also a bleak outlook for the future. Low expectations and a lack of accountability in schools were dooming millions of children to a life of poverty and dependence. Students weren't learning the basic skills to succeed in or beyond the classroom.

The next year, Florida adopted the core belief that all students can learn, stopped accepting excuses for poor performance and started challenging the status quo. Today's results prove the remarkable turnaround in Florida's schools.

According to the same assessment tool used over a decade ago, nearly three-quarters of today's fourth graders are reading above the national average with minority students making the greatest gains. In fact, Florida's fourth grade Hispanic students read as well or better than the average of *all* students in 31 states and D.C.

Graduation rates are another sign of rising student achievement in the Sunshine State. Since 1999, Florida's graduation rate has increased by 21 percentage points, from 60 to 81 percent, and Hispanic students have made the greatest improvement, jumping 23 percentage points. Not only are more Hispanic students graduating, more are taking and passing Advanced Placement courses and leaving better prepared for college.

Florida's story proves that all students can learn. A combination of high expectations for *all* students, accountability for schools and unprecedented choices gives *every* student the opportunity to achieve their God-given potential for learning.

Many state leaders across the nation have begun taking steps to improve their quality of education. Indiana, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Louisiana – just to name a few – have passed legislation holding all students to high

expectations and all schools accountable for student learning. This is a great beginning. But, success is never final and reform is never finished. We must continue reforming and transforming education to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap.

This is a national priority. The success of today's students will determine the future of our communities, states and our nation. It is crucial that we equip each and every student for this task.