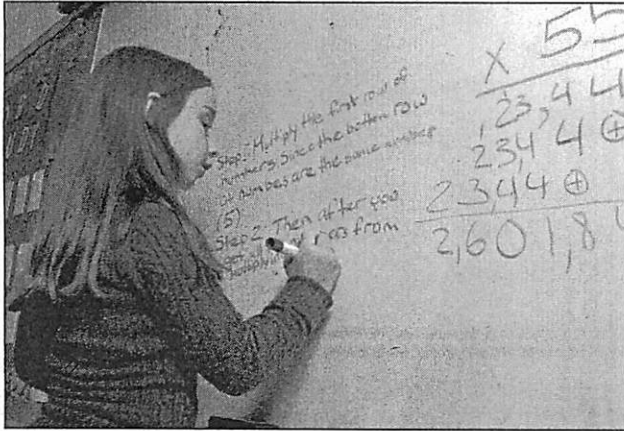


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## Report: Innovation in education is lacking

*U.S. Chamber supports reinventing classroom instruction*



Innovation in education is lacking in many parts of the nation, thus undermining efforts to better prepare students for the workforce, according to a recent report by the U.S. Chamber Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW), the Center for American Progress, and Frederick M. Hess of the American Enterprise Institute.

The report, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Innovation*, looks at the degree to which states have created a flexible, performance-based system of schooling.

"The quality of our workforce and the intellectual breadth and depth of our future leaders are directly related to the quality of education we provide today," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan tells the audience at an education event at U.S. Chamber headquarters.

One of the main barriers to innovation, the report found, is rigid education bureaucracies that limit teacher autonomy.

"Our school system is archaic and hidebound, a relic of a time when steel factories formed the backbone of the American economy," according to Arthur Rothkopf, Chamber senior vice president and counselor to the president. "Education institutions lack opportunities to reinvent themselves in more effective ways. Educators should have opportunities to devise smarter solutions—and then be held accountable."

The report does identify positive developments in education - most states now have charter schools, for example, and almost every state has some sort of alternative teacher certification program.

"I think they touch on some real problems," says Sheila Jordan, superintendent, Alameda County Office of Education. She adds, though, that the report, "...sort of misses the point about

the regulations the federal government has that doesn't allow the districts to break down the bureaucracy. Some of the issues they raise are valid but they should look at what's working in charter schools and make sure that they enable the district schools to have the same privileges."

Among the report's major findings and recommendations:

- Rigid education bureaucracies impede quality schooling. Only about one-third of teachers approve of how their schools are run.

Throughout our educational system, a traditionalist school culture limits autonomy and innovation.

- Teacher evaluations are not based on performance. State systems for evaluating the effectiveness of teachers are focused almost entirely on inputs such as training and years of experience, even though these factors have been shown to have little impact on student achievement.
- Major barriers exist to the removal of poor-performing teachers. Seventy-two percent of principals say that tenure policies are a barrier to firing ineffective teachers. Another 61% say that teacher unions are an obstacle.
- States and districts must empower schools and principals. 65% of principals report that undue documentation is a barrier to firing ineffective teachers.
- Reform teacher pay and reward teachers whose performance improves student achievement.
- States and districts must support charter schools and other forms of public school choice.
- States and districts must encourage entrepreneurial organizations such as Teach For America and Wireless Generation.

Addressing the report's finding about a lack of innovation in public schools, Jordan states, "It's not just the ability to innovate, but it's the opportunity to take a look at what is working at other schools and spread those requirements."

To see the full report go to [www.uschamber.com/reportcard](http://www.uschamber.com/reportcard).