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## **ED IN 08 UNVEILS NEW ANALYSIS AND REPORT CARD SURROUNDING 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF *A NATION AT RISK***

***The report shows American students are still at risk and presidential leadership is necessary to protect America's national interests and economic future***

WASHINGTON, DC — As the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *A Nation at Risk* approaches, Strong American Schools' ED in 08 campaign today unveiled an original analysis and report card showing the lack of progress in the school reform movement since the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's letter to the American people, *A Nation at Risk*.

"Our schools have been underperforming for 25 years," said Roy Romer, the chairman of ED in 08. "America is slipping farther and farther behind the rest of the world academically because we have been unable to enact meaningful reforms or substantially improve student learning in the last quarter century. We know that the American public supports education reform – the missing piece is leadership – on national and local levels. Without vigorous national leadership, states and schools cannot significantly improve their antiquated education systems. Students in our nation's schools deserve a robust and world-class education that offers them a pathway towards the American dream."

*A Nation at Risk*, published on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1983, warned that American schools were being eroded by a "rising tide of mediocrity." The report was one of the first comprehensive assessments of the American education system and explained that America's once unchallenged schools were being overtaken by its international competitors, and America's weak education system was undermining American prosperity, security and society. *A Nation at Risk* documented deep problems in America's academic standards and expectations, the time allocated for learning and the quality of the teaching force.

ED in 08's report, *A Stagnant Nation: Why American Students Are Still at Risk*, explains that few of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's recommendations related to time, teaching and standards, have yet to be enacted. The report also says that America's economic future remains gravely at risk. Findings include:

- **Time.** *A Nation at Risk* urged schools and state legislatures to break the six-hour-a-day, 180-day-per-year calendar and consider seven-hour school days and 200- to 220-day school years. Yet, today only one state has a pilot program to significantly expand learning time and nationwide, the amount of time elementary school students spend learning core academic subjects has increased by only approximately 36 minutes per week, amounting to fewer than ten minutes per day.

- **Teaching.** The Commission urged policymakers to help recruit the best and brightest to teaching by making the profession more attractive. To that end, the Commission recommended making teacher compensation “professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based.” Yet today only five states have large-scale programs in place for performance pay or career-ladder incentives. And, only about 8 percent of public school districts offer pay incentives to reward excellence in teaching—a figure that has remained virtually unchanged since 1984. In 2004, only six percent of U.S. school districts could offer recruitment incentives in mathematics, despite the fact that nearly 30 percent of districts reported great difficulty hiring qualified math teachers to fill vacancies.
- **Standards & Expectations.** The Commission recommended that states and districts raise standards and expectations so classroom grades reflect actual learning. Yet 12<sup>th</sup> grade reading and science scores dropped as average high school GPAs were increasing. Students are earning better grades in “tougher” courses, yet actual learning is stagnant or declining. In addition, states have failed to set rigorous academic standards in the lower grades. One study found that out of 32 states, not one state had set standards for 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading that were high enough to meet the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test and 24 had set standards so low they did not reach even the most basic level.

The paper includes a report card that critically scrutinizes the lack of progress in the school reform movement. The report also shines a light on the lack of learning taking place in America’s schools, including: one in four high school seniors cannot glean basic information about subway fares by reading a Metrorail guide; two out of five high school seniors lack math skills that are commonly taught in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade math; and reading skills have declined for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from all backgrounds, including those with college-educated parents.

“America is supposed to be the land of opportunity, but we are failing future generations if we are not providing our students and children with the basic tools necessary for them to succeed in life,” said Marc Lampkin, the executive director of ED in 08. “State and local leaders have tried to enact reforms like the ones outlined in *A Nation at Risk*, but reform cannot and will not happen without courageous leadership from the President of the United States and support from parents, teachers, volunteers, elected officials and education reform advocates. We need to take a serious look at the way we are currently educating our students and rally, as a nation, around the reforms recommended first by *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, and today by ED in 08.”

ED in 08 is a national, nonpartisan campaign that calls on all the presidential candidates to propose plans to ensure that American students will graduate from high school with the skills needed to compete in a global economy. The executive summary of *A Stagnant Nation: Why American Students Are Still at Risk* and the report card are attached or can be found at [www.edin08.com](http://www.edin08.com).

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