



## Stepping Up the Pace

PREAL and the Lemann Foundation highlight the need for faster, more effective education reforms in Brazil



More Brazilian children attend school than ever before, but only a few master the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed as adults.

With the fifth largest economy in the world and a growing role in hemispheric and world affairs, Brazil is on its way to joining the ranks of developed countries. Unfortunately, the country's education system isn't keeping pace. In 2007, the Brazilian population had just seven years of schooling on average, and the country's performance on international assessments continues to rank among the lowest. Furthermore, countries that were behind Brazil in education indicators in the past have now surpassed them. Indeed, educational shortcomings are severe enough that some analysts fear that they will keep Brazil from realizing its economic and social potential.

In an effort to highlight the urgent need for change and build demand for reform, in 2007, PREAL partnered with the Lemann Foundation to produce a national education report card in Brazil. Launched in late 2009, the report card, *Saindo da inércia? (Overcoming inertia?)*, concludes that, despite steady increases in enrollment and investment, students are not acquiring the competencies needed to excel in a global economy, and it makes recommendations for moving forward at a faster pace. The report has sparked healthy debate among both government and non-governmental stakeholders about how to improve key education indicators. More than 650 representatives of municipal education departments discussed the report's key findings at Lemann-sponsored workshops. Among the main action items generated during the discussions were the creation of new training programs in teaching, the systematic use of classroom assessment, and the implementation of national learning standards to accelerate the development of high quality education for all students. The State of Ceará has also used the report card's nine subjects as the organizing principle for their own research on municipal education in the state.

The report card has also helped bring together leaders from the business sector concerned about the slow educational advances in Brazil. About 40 members of the Social Committee of Federation of State Enterprises of the State of São Paulo (FIESP) used the report card to discuss Brazilian education compared with that of other countries and how the private sector can help schools improve. Rio de Janeiro Secretary of Education Claudia Costin and former São Paulo Secretary of Education Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro joined the group for the discussion. FIESP also posted a summary of the report card's main findings, as well as the report card itself on its website as a reference for other business leaders. Another event convened some 80 Brazilian investors to analyze conditions for future investments in the country – education being a major concern. They used report card information as the basis of their discussion. In addition, a Brazilian entrepreneur also requested 70 copies of the report to use during a debate on educational proposals for post-Lula administration.



Former Secretary of Education for Brazil, and current Secretary of Education for the state of São Paulo, Paulo Renato Souza, discusses the findings from the 2009 Brazil report card with PREAL staff.

Outside Brazil, the report card has also provided much-needed information on Brazilian education to an English-speaking public. Undergraduate and graduate students from Harvard's Public Policy Immersion Program used the report to better understand the Brazilian public policy context. A senior manager at Apple Inc., the executive director of a Costa Rican non-profit education organization, the executive vice president for Latin America of Education Media and Publishing Group, and a consultant at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt International also requested the English version of the report to help inform their work. Additionally, several journalists solicited information in English to use in articles on education in light of Brazil's growing importance in the global economy and the upcoming presidential election. Sharing the report card with scholars, businessmen, and civil society leaders outside of Brazil facilitates the exchange of best practices and lessons learned and can contribute to better education policies both in Brazil and in other parts of the world.

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*Iona Becskeházy  
Lemann Foundation  
Executive Director*

Moreover, extensive media coverage—including articles in the *New York Times*, French newspaper *La Croix*, and national newspapers, magazines, websites, and television networks—continues to position our partners as credible experts and strengthens their ability to advocate for reform. In addition, drawing on local experts to assign grades and involving civil society actors from across a variety of sectors in the production of the report helps to increase ownership of the problem and, hopefully, demand for solutions. Iona Becskeházy, Executive Director of the Lemann Foundation, summed it up this way: "Writing and publishing the Brazil Report Card with PREAL has helped raise awareness that can lead us to a new educational level. It has also contributed to reinforcing a monitoring culture in the country - something that we have been actively advocating for here in Brazil."

Building on the report card's success, the Lemann Foundation is now using PREAL's strategic policy areas (standards and evaluation, effective school management, strengthening the teaching profession, education finance) to guide their education investments and studies. Work is already underway on a sub-national report card, covering five states in Brazil, in an effort to take a closer look at local education characteristics and build demand for change at the state and municipal levels. Additionally, the Lemann Foundation is working to establish a Brazilian policy analysis center based on PREAL's model and agenda in order to bridge the gap between research and policy in the country. PREAL's co-director in Washington, D.C. has agreed to serve on this new project's international advisory board to help guarantee the relevance, quality and scope of the research agenda. Through on-going partnership efforts such as these, PREAL and the Lemann Foundation hope to continue to raise awareness in Brazil and step up the pace of education improvement.

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