The Research Alliance for New York City Schools conducts rigorous studies on topics that matter to the City’s public schools. We work to advance equity and excellence in education by providing credible, nonpartisan evidence about policies and practices that promote student success.

Founded in 2008 at New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, the Research Alliance focuses on:

- Maintaining a unique archive of longitudinal data from NYC schools;
- Conducting rigorous, applied research in collaboration with policymakers, educators and other research institutions; and
- Communicating the results of our work to education stakeholders in NYC and around the nation, with the goal of informing smarter policies and more effective schools.

The Research Alliance in Action

The Research Alliance strives to produce work with immediate, practical value for a range of stakeholders.

- We regularly brief the NYC Department of Education about emerging findings and trends and their implications for policy.
- We create customized reports with data and recommendations for individual schools in many of our studies, allowing them to identify—in a timely way—where they are succeeding and where they can improve.
- Our findings inform the work of community groups. For instance, the Legal, Economic, and Educational Advancement Project at Fordham Law School used our report, High School Choice in New York City, to help design a curriculum for volunteers working with middle school students and their families.

Learning from Successful Schools

The Research Alliance’s report on “turnaround” middle schools identified overarching conditions, as well as specific strategies, that helped middle schools enhance teaching and learning and dramatically improve their performance.

This is one of several Research Alliance studies that look closely at the practices of successful middle and high schools, in hopes of pinpointing strategies that might be expanded or replicated.

Mapping Progress and Plugging Leaks in the Pipeline to College and Careers

The Research Alliance has shed light on areas of real progress for the City, such as improved graduation rates. But we have also drawn attention to serious gaps between groups of students, and between aspirations for the system as a whole and its actual performance. This work has included studies of:

- Achievement and development in the middle grades and high school;
- Critical transition points, where students may need extra support; and
- Preparation for success in college and careers.

Our recent brief, The Condition of NYC High Schools, revealed college readiness as an area of particular concern, with only 21 percent of students leaving high school equipped for college-level work in 2010 (based on the current NYS measure). To help identify practices and conditions that promote access to and success in higher education, we are evaluating a variety of programs aimed at helping students reach college, including the Expanded Success Initiative, iMentor, and the City’s new small schools of choice. We have also engaged in a groundbreaking partnership with CUNY and the NYC DOE to investigate factors associated with students’ enrollment and success in college.

Expanding Educational Measurement Beyond Test Scores

There is growing concern in NYC and around the nation that a narrow focus on “achievement” as reflected by test scores and graduation rates does not provide rich information about other goals of education or about contextual factors that likely influence teaching and learning.

Since 2010, we have been working with the NYC DOE to ensure that its School Survey—the largest in the nation—captures reliable and actionable data about the learning environment in each of the City’s public schools. In turn, this work is:

- Improving the DOE’s accountability system;
- Arming schools with better information about strengths they can build on and areas they need to improve; and
- Helping families make more informed decisions about which high school their child should attend.

Many of our studies incorporate measures of student engagement, effort, and self-efficacy. And we regularly gather teacher perspectives on challenges they experience in their schools and classrooms, as well as the supports they find helpful. This work provides the foundation for developing more meaningful, more actionable measures of school progress and performance.

Promoting Data and Evidence in Education Policy and Practice

Until recently, there was little high-quality evidence to inform the work of teachers, administrators and education policymakers. The Research Alliance was established explicitly to meet this need in New York City. We have done so by:

- Examining the use of data and technology in schools, including studies of large-scale student data systems, technology-enhanced instruction, and tools that address specific obstacles to learning.
- Building an archive of information about NYC students, teachers and schools, alongside rich survey and interview data from ongoing studies—this archive is the largest and most comprehensive of its kind and provides a vital anchor for future research.
- Collaborating with other research-practice partnerships, which enables us to share lessons and develop cross-city studies that address pressing national education issues.

### Keeping Students on Track

The Research Alliance develops and tests “early warning indicators” to help schools recognize and support struggling students. For example, we found that students who earn at least 10 course credits and pass at least one Regents exam in 9th grade are significantly more likely to graduate than classmates who do not. The strength of this on-track indicator is good news for educators, since it suggests that a student’s chances of graduating can be improved in school, in spite of external factors that may be beyond a school’s reach.

**Graduation Rates for Students Who Were On- and Off-Track at the End of 9th Grade (Among Students Who Were First-Time 9th Graders in 2007)**

![Graph showing graduation rates for students who were on- and off-track at the end of 9th grade.](image)

**Source:** Research Alliance calculations based on data provided by the NYC DOE.
The Research Alliance is advancing knowledge about:

• Achievement and development in the middle grades;

• High school achievement, attainment, and post-secondary preparation;

• The use of data and technology for education policy and practice; and

• Contexts that support effective teaching.

“I believe [the Research Alliance] is a model from which we in Congress, and the country, can learn a great deal. Your partnership with New York City schools to generate useful, timely, actionable research is a crucial step the research community must take to ensure that the knowledge it generates is relevant, as well as rigorous.”

George Miller, U.S. House of Representatives, Senior Democrat on the Education and the Workforce Committee

www.ranycs.org

The Research Alliance for New York City Schools
285 Mercer Street, Third Floor
New York, NY 10003
(212) 992-7697
Research.Alliance@nyu.edu

Twitter: @RANYCS
Facebook.com/RANYCS