



## **STRATEGIC BUSINESS LEADERSHIP TO ADVANCE EDUCATION REFORM**



Companies and senior executives are respected advocates for education reform. Corporate leadership helps put education issues at the forefront of public debate and brings a business approach to solving education problems.

Some companies have dedicated many years and resources to advocating for education reform. For example, Edward B. Rust, Jr., State Farm chairman and CEO, chairs or serves on the boards of several major business-led education organizations that raise awareness and build urgency for reform. In addition to his active involvement in national education affairs, Arthur Ryan, chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial, has made a long-term investment in New Jersey education policy a priority for himself and his company.

### **Checklist of Education Leadership Strategies for Companies**

Executives and businesses are well-suited to use their voice with policymakers, education leaders, the public and other companies. They can:

- ✓ Use the bully pulpit to make the case that the global economy demands higher expectations, a renewed commitment to math and science investments and data-driven decision making
- ✓ Communicate with the public, media, employees and students about the importance of public education reform to companies, America's competitiveness, individual citizens and society at large
- ✓ Invest corporate resources, including charitable giving programs, dedicated staff positions and employee time, to public education
- ✓ Join or start local or statewide nonprofit coalitions of like-minded business leaders to advance education reform
- ✓ Identify and support senior staff to focus their time on education policy and reform
- ✓ Serve on local, statewide and national school boards, commissions and task forces
- ✓ Focus on state-level and school district policy and practice as the unit of change, rather than individual schools
- ✓ Keep the public conversation focused on the vision for the public education system
- ✓ Sustain the public's commitment to school reform over time
- ✓ Take the "long view" (beyond political election cycles) and bring neutrality to politically polarized situations
- ✓ Play a convening role to bridge institutional barriers that block reform or make the system incoherent
- ✓ Stay the course even when the going gets rough; be willing to address challenges and make mid-course corrections
- ✓ Hold policymakers and educators accountable for improvement