The World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020 focuses on Learning for All for a simple reason: growth, development and poverty reduction depend on the knowledge and skills that people acquire.

The Education Strategy 2020 emphasizes the need to:
Invest early. Invest smartly. Invest for all.

In working with partners to achieve Learning for All, the World Bank will focus on two strategic goals:
• Reforming education systems, beyond inputs
• Building the knowledge base for reform

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In 2010, the World Bank Group embarked on a year-long, comprehensive process of global consultations and technical work to shape the Bank’s Education Strategy 2020. From Argentina to Mongolia, extensive consultations were held with stakeholders from more than 100 countries. In these conversations, representatives of governments, development partners, students, teachers, researchers, civil society, and business shared their views about the emerging education challenges facing developing countries and how the Bank can best support countries to expand both education access and quality.
Why Education? Why a New Strategy?

Education, a basic human right, is fundamental to development, poverty reduction, and growth. Investing in human potential advances many development goals, from health and gender equity to civic engagement and innovation.

By unleashing the power of the human mind, education provides individuals with opportunities to improve their own quality of life and allows them to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

The World Bank has made substantial contributions to educational development around the world for almost 50 years. Thanks to the concerted efforts of governments, civil society, the Bank, and many other partners, the number of out-of-school primary school-aged children fell over the past decade from some 106 million in 1999 to some 69 million in 2008. Even in the poorest countries, primary school enrollment rates have surged above 80% and school completion rates above 60%.

But too many young people are finishing school without the knowledge and skills required for productive employment in a 21st-century labor market. Education systems must do a better job preparing young people for the rapidly changing economic and technological landscape. Countries need more skilled and agile workforces to increase their competitiveness and growth. Demographic shifts are creating "youth bulges" at the secondary and tertiary levels in middle-income countries. Rapid advances in information and communication technologies hold promise for making education more effective and inclusive.

These changes call for a rethinking of the Bank’s education strategy over the next decade, setting out new priorities for investment, technical support, and policy assistance that focus on achieving Learning for All.

Why Learning for All?

While continuing the Bank’s commitment to help countries reach the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the new Education Strategy 2020 focuses on the goal of Learning for All. Learning for All means giving all people equitable opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to have healthy and satisfying lives, to be good citizens, and to be productive contributors to their countries’ economic development.

The driver of development will ultimately be what young people learn. This applies to learning in and out of school, from preschool to the labor market across low-income countries, fragile states, and middle-income countries. The Strategy will support countries to ensure that more schooling evolves into more learning.

The Strategy emphasizes the need to:

- **Invest early.** Guarantees that in early childhood, young people acquire the foundational skills that will translate into a lifetime of learning.
- **Invest smartly.** Support efficient interventions and policy reforms that result in schooling and learning gains.
- **Invest for all.** Ensure that all students—including girls and disadvantaged groups—are able to acquire the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in life.

How to Achieve Learning for All?

To help achieve Learning for All, the World Bank will focus on two strategic goals to maximize impact:

- **Reform education systems, beyond inputs.** While trained teachers, classrooms, and textbooks are crucial, education systems work better when standards, rules, responsibilities, financing and incentives are clear and aligned to achieve education goals, and outcomes are measured and monitored.

- **Build a global knowledge base for education reform.** To inform and guide policies that strengthen education systems and achieve results, the World Bank will invest in more research and knowledge generation. This means impact evaluations, learning assessments, and new initiatives such as the development of the System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER) program. SABER will provide detailed analysis of countries’ capacities across the education system—from early childhood development programs and teacher policies to tertiary education and skills development—to help them use evidence to inform policy-making.
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Development, growth, and poverty reduction depend on the knowledge and skills that people acquire—not just the number of years they spend in school.

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Achieving Learning for All

Learning for All: Investing in People’s Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development

The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433 USA
www.worldbank.org/education
eservice@worldbank.org
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