

NextEd

TRANSFORMING CONNECTICUT'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Continuous Improvement Plan from The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents

The CAPSS Educational Transformation Project

Project Partners

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A working group of CAPSS members, called The Core Group, developed the recommendations in this report. CAPSS is grateful to the Superintendents, RESC Executive Directors, Assistant Superintendents and University Professors who met over two years to develop the recommendations in this proposal.

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BOOST QUALITY – HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY

**A Chapter in the
Background Paper for the Report**

**NEXTED:
Transforming Connecticut’s Education System**

**Developed By
Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
(CAPSS)**



November, 2011



Transforming Public Education in Connecticut

The Challenge of Creating a Learner-Centered School System

Purpose

Connecticut's public school superintendents believe that each child should come to school well fed, adequately clothed, and without fear. Every child should be inspired and challenged by a relevant and important curriculum that tackles real world problems. Every child should be taught by highly trained, professional educators in schools equipped with the technology necessary to enhance teaching and learning. Each child should graduate as a young adult, fully prepared to study at a high level, able to compete on the global stage, and committed to being a contributing member of our society.

Yet the current educational system is not working for all Connecticut students. It is not designed to meet the expectation of universal student success. A strong public school system is essential to maintaining our democratic heritage to create a climate of justice for all our citizens and contribute to the economic stability of our state. Our state must operate its schools understanding that the success of all of us is built on the success of each of us.

Tinkering with Connecticut's system of schooling will not help the state recapture its competitive advantage. The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents calls upon all of our citizens to enter into a spirited and thoughtful dialogue about what is required of a successful school in the 21st Century, what skills will be demanded of our graduates, and what accountability standards must be in place to make this educational transformation a reality.

With this call, it is necessary to revise our own vision of schooling and the social, economic, and political systems that support it. That cannot be done unless Connecticut decision-makers challenge the status quo, setting the cornerstone for a stronger, more equitable, and more vibrant Connecticut. The conversation will not be an easy one. But let us begin.

The Genesis of this Document

This report is the product of research, soul-searching, and debate among Connecticut's public school leaders, and their philanthropic and social service partners. We are grateful to Project Partners and their representatives including the H.A. Vance Foundation, The Nellie Mae Education Foundation, The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, and Dell whose contributions clarified our thinking and strengthened our message. The Educational Transformation Group examined Connecticut's current educational practices, policies, and student results.

Connecticut's educational, political, and social structures present a maze of challenges that cannot be fixed with one single strategy. The current system of public education must evolve in order to meet the dynamic needs of our children. Poverty, ethnicity, neighborhood instability, and individual disability cause inequities that imperil our economic and social fabric as a state.

As we drafted this report, we worked to define our core values, fundamental beliefs, and shared commitments as Connecticut's educational stewards. In our conversations, we shared moments of great pride and equally great despair. We saw notable achievement and insightful decision-making as well as evidence of failure and short-sighted thinking. Throughout our study, the Educational Transformation Group heard from internationally-noted experts. Some provided an ominous glimpse of the future, others advised restructuring of our economic and political supports, still others argued for dissolving most existing educational structures. Many of those ideas earned a place in shaping this report.

We present this vision of an educational transformation to the citizens of Connecticut in the hope that it will provoke statewide conversations about the nature of schooling and what we should expect of our pre-K-16 system. Examining our system of schooling will not be easy. Yet the people of Connecticut will never undertake a more important task.

The Core Principles Supporting the Transformation of our Schools

- Our citizens deserve schools that are second to none.
- No child in Connecticut should be deprived of the opportunity to reach his/her potential due to circumstances of geography, financial inequity, quality of teachers or the school support system.
- Each child's advancement through school should be based upon the mastery of a clearly-defined and sequenced series of skills and a base of knowledge in all disciplines. Each child should have access to instructional technologies, thought-provoking academic activities, and extra-curricular programs that promote the development of a fully functioning adult capable of asking difficult questions and solving sophisticated problems.
- Each child in Connecticut should daily enter a school environment that is designed for and committed to meeting individual academic needs and interests, while also respecting individuality and ensuring personal safety.
- Each educator in Connecticut must be well-educated in a chosen field of study, highly trained in pedagogy, capable of adjusting instruction to meet the needs of every child, and subject to valid accountability standards.
- Those charged with the governance of education K-16, those elected in local communities, our state's legislators, and the executive branch must act with efficiency, harmony, and wisdom to make Connecticut's education second to none. There is no higher responsibility for our state's leaders than to provide a world-class school system.

Connecticut's citizens must challenge the status quo to bring about transformational changes in educational outcomes.

CORE BELIEFS STATEMENT

- The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) holds to the following core beliefs.
- Every child is precious. Each child, regardless of any racial, ethnic, economic, physical, mental or cognitive condition, can and must learn to the same high standard
- Each child has sufficient ability to learn to high standards.
- There must be a strong, vibrant, and flexible public education system in order to meet the goal of every child learning to the same high standard.
- The public education system, as it is designed and functioning today, is not designed to achieve the goal of every child learning to high standards.
- Transformative change in public education cannot take place in isolation from the public.
- The family structure is vital to the growth of every child. It must be reinforced and fostered on an equitable and consistent basis.
- The public education system must integrate services to children and raise community expectations both for the education system and for the other systems that offer services to children and their families.
- In order to achieve the result of every child learning to high standards, the system of public education must be transformed.
- Effective leadership is essential for building the capacity for transformative change resulting, in every child learning to high standards.

Education Policy Direction

Policy making for education at federal and state levels are based on bureaucratic assumptions of hierarchy, centralized decision making, standardization, regulation, inspection. These characteristics are designed to limit unit and individual discretion, provide only one point or source of legitimacy, and depress creativity. The chief outcome of bureaucratic assumptions and thinking is stability, not change.

For local school administrators the model has produced ever increasing explicit formal legal and regulative constraints, less decision- making authority and flexibility, greater goal ambiguity and conflict about directions, more intensive external political influences, fewer incentive structures, and greater involvement of external authorities in the leadership of schools. Complicating the situation are the public organization constraints related to the lack of incentives for conserving resources and improving performance.

Virtually all the state and federal solutions of the “educational reform movement” have been bureaucratic: increase centralization, power and direction for the “top”; increase standardization through testing; increase regulations and mandates to limit school district and school discretion. None of this has resulted in any substantial improvement. The US is just as far behind or further behind the foreign competition as before the “reform movement” started. The agenda of expanding centralized controls, raising standards, top down change model, prescriptive policy, and incremental change has failed and will continue to fail.

Two major forces shaping organizations are the centralization of information due to technology and the decentralization of capability to the operational level. A balance of centralization and decentralization is needed to guide activity and encourage initiative and innovation. At government levels this means that activities should be directed more toward defining overall directions, providing capacity-building resources, and analyzing results using meaningful indicators. State Education Departments, for example, should be organized around “problems to be solved”, rather than regulative or narrow programmatic functions. Decentralized to the school district or school level should be responsibilities for the focus and content of the educational program, design of the instructional organization, determining staffing patterns, determination of expenditure priorities, and the development and evaluation of programs and priorities to address problems and priorities. The intent is to avoid separation of decision-making and implementation.

What is needed is the flexibility of operating units to invent, adapt and change to local conditions. If local schools are to be held accountable for outcomes they must have real authority for policymaking and implementing local decisions. Talking about holding schools accountable is useless until schools have the authority structures to be accountable.



BOOST QUALITY – HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY

Rationale for Transformation

Without high-quality teachers and leaders, the best-designed curriculum or most robust assessment system will not increase student learning or achievement. The transformation of Connecticut’s schools and schooling hinges on preparing, retaining, and developing excellent teachers and leaders. In this effort, it is critical to recruit, retain, and develop robust human capital at all levels of the educational system. While there is increasing evidence that teachers, of all school resources, make the greatest impact on student achievement, research also suggests that school and district leaders, too, play a critical role in student learning (see, e.g., Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Leithwood & Day, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Thus, a strategic approach must develop human capital at all levels of the educational system. We must therefore consider how to support human capital development across the system—including teachers and leaders at the school and district level.



The work of superintendents, principals, and teachers is more complex and demanding than ever before.

As children come to school with fewer and fewer resources, communities ask teachers and leaders to perform an expanding array of tasks. In a transformed system, teachers and leaders will work in novel and unfamiliar ways, adding a new layer of challenge to their jobs. Graduation-by-competency, for example, will require teachers and leaders to think, teach, and lead in unfamiliar ways. They will no longer be able to conceive of students as members of age-based cohorts. Instead, they must treat students as individuals and develop systems to support students’ progress at different rates and through different routes to graduation. Virtual learning, for instance, will broaden students’ options for learning. It will also place new demands on teachers to

develop effective online teaching strategies and on leaders to set the conditions for optimal learning in this new cyber-environment.

In short, human capital will take on increased importance as we work to make students’ learning more rigorous and relevant. Educational leaders and policymakers must be prepared to develop human capital across the educational system.

Human capital development involves:

- **Recruiting** teachers and leaders to teaching, school leadership and district leadership positions who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to transform the educational system.
- **Preparing** teachers and leaders through forward thinking programs that emphasize how to teach, learn, and lead in a transformed system
- **Hiring** individuals with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to thrive in a transformed system
- **Assigning** teachers and leaders to positions that capitalize on their strengths
- **Retaining** teachers and leaders through initial mentoring and ongoing support
- **Developing** teachers’ and leaders’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions through ongoing professional learning opportunities
- **Motivating and inspiring** teachers and leaders by offering them opportunities to assume greater or different responsibilities over time
- **Compensating and providing incentives** to teachers and leaders in ways that reflect their contributions to the system as well as acknowledging their growth in terms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- **Evaluating and supervising** teachers and leaders to provide individuals and the system with clear and accurate information about individuals’ strengths and weaknesses and how they should improve
- **Dismissing and transitioning** teachers and leaders out of the profession if their knowledge, skills, and dispositions consistently fail to support student learning or the transformation of the system

To radically transform our schools, we must make sure that we protect teachers’ time in which to do the complex, intellectual work of preparing to teach and hone their skills

(Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Fundamentally, a learner centered system is one in which the development of the capacity of students is the central focus of all activities. Those who must establish and maintain such a system, therefore, must in turn work in an environment that enables them to continually enhance their capacity to do the required work.

Transforming the educational system requires fundamental changes in each of these aspects of human capital development.

Putting the People with the Right Skills in the Right Places

As discussed, for too long, Connecticut's students have been under-prepared for the demands of working and living in today's (and tomorrow's) society. To rectify this, we must tap the knowledge and skills of all capable individuals who are committed to transforming students' learning. Connecticut cannot afford to exclude competent and committed professionals. States, including Connecticut, have resisted the development of alternative routes to teacher or leader positions. Some traditional teacher or leader preparation programs provide a route to becoming a highly effective teacher or leader. However, not every potential teacher or leader can or should follow the traditional preparation route. Many mid-career professionals with strong academic backgrounds and extensive, relevant work experience do not have the time, resources, or need to go through a traditional teacher or leader preparation program. New alternative paths to certification for teachers and school or district leaders should be permitted, provided they meet quality standards. Traditional programs that fail to prepare teachers or leaders to work in a transformed system should be discontinued.

For too long, too many educator preparation programs have failed to equip teachers and leaders with the skills and dispositions they need to prepare students for the complex demands of living in the 21st century. Our effort to provide students with more rigorous and relevant learning experiences must begin by preparing teachers to instruct in ways that promote the transformation of learning from a rote and abstract exercise to an integrated and authentic experience. Demands on teachers have increased dramatically as technology and globalization have increased the need for most high school students to graduate with very high level of skills that will allow them to succeed in post-secondary education. Teacher preparation programs will need to adapt in order to help teachers meet these demands.

Many teacher and leader preparation programs have also failed to prepare teachers and leaders to meet the needs of a shifting population of students. Connecticut's students

are diverse in a host of ways. Students come from a variety of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds and have a wide range of learning needs. Teachers must be able to differentiate instruction so that they can meet the diverse needs of students in their classrooms. Additionally, teachers and school and district leaders must understand how to work with families of diverse backgrounds so that each student fulfills his or her potential.

Similarly, leadership preparation programs have failed to provide individuals with key skills to navigate an ever more complex professional setting. Increasingly, school and district leaders will be called upon to use interpersonal skills to guide their organizations to success in the twenty-first century. As the brick-and-mortar schoolhouse loses its exclusive hold on the delivery of instruction, so too do the leadership skills associated with managing schools in the traditional sense become less relevant. School and district leaders need the skills to facilitate, motivate, and inspire teachers to teach and students to learn in new and novel formats, in and outside of the schoolhouse walls, and in and outside of the traditional school day and year. Leaders therefore need training in how to support and motivate teachers and students to perform at high levels. At the same time, mounting accountability pressures create the need for leaders to be trained in how to provide frank, critical, targeted feedback that improves teaching and learning.



Just as universities and service providers will need to revise preparation programs, schools and districts will need to alter their approach to teacher and leader assignment. Many schools and school systems have long assigned personnel to positions based on seniority or custom in deference to anachronistic contract language or established past practices. For too long, these factors have governed teacher and leader assignment. A transformed system needs to maximize the productivity of every person. Individuals should be assigned to positions based on their skills and competencies and on the composition of work teams. Leaders and teachers should work together to find the best position for each person.

Keeping and Motivating Teachers and Leaders

Teacher and leader retention is another important issue that districts and schools must address. This involves key changes in professional learning opportunities, in professional growth opportunities over teachers' and leaders' careers, and in teacher and leader compensation.

Teaching and leading at the school or district level is more and more challenging. At the lowest level of Maslow's hierarchy, working conditions affect teacher and school or district leader retention and productivity, not to mention student learning. Schools in poor or outdated facilities, without the technological and curricular resources needed for teaching and learning, curtail the progress that students can make. Twenty-first century skills demand twenty-first century facilities and resources. This is most critical in the areas that now feature the least advanced facilities and resources. Time in which to teach is another critical working condition. As we seek to close achievement gaps, we must increase the time students spend learning and teachers spend teaching. The danger is that in so doing, we will decrease the amount of time teachers spend collaborating, reflecting, and learning to teach more effectively. In the highest performing nations in the world, teachers spend a much higher portion of their workday planning and participating in professional learning opportunities than do American teachers. To radically transform our schools, we must make sure that we protect teachers' time in which to do the complex, intellectual work of preparing to teach and hone their skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010).



Strong teacher and leader preparation programs can provide the foundation for quality teaching and leading. However, a short-term program can only do so much. Moreover, teachers and school or district leaders are bound to encounter new challenges as their careers progress that designers of a preparation program simply could not have predicted. For these reasons, initial mentoring programs and ongoing professional learning

opportunities for new teachers and school and district leaders should be instituted, where absent, and revised, where present, to address the growing and shifting demands on teachers and school and district leaders.

The learning curve for new teachers and school and district leaders is considerable. Despite this, mentoring for new teachers and leaders is often haphazard, providing few of the supports that novices deem critical, or simply non-existent (Johnson & The Project on the Next

Teaching and leading at the school or district level is more and more challenging.

Generation of Teachers, 2004; Shoho, Barnett, & Tooms, 2010). A strong program of support would reduce the learning curve of beginning teachers and leaders, enabling them to become high quality instructors more rapidly.

For too long, professional learning opportunities for teachers and school and district leaders have been weak. In fact, many of the critiques levied at K-12 instruction—a focus on low-level questions, rote memorization, divorced from students' realities—could also describe teachers' and leaders' professional learning experiences. Thus, professional learning opportunities must change to support our desired changes in teaching and leading practice. Teacher and leader professional learning opportunities should equip educators with the skills and competencies to teach and lead in ways that will prepare students for our complex society. At the same time, the delivery of these learning opportunities should reflect the changes we want to see in the K-12 classrooms. Professional learning should be interactive and multi-modal, relevant to teachers' and leaders' work, and should promote deep thinking.

Additionally, professional learning should reflect research that indicates that collaboration among teachers is associated with greater student achievement and increased teacher retention. For too long, teacher collaboration has been accidental and informal rather than deliberate (Lortie, 1975; Johnson, 1990; Johnson et al., 2004). Collaboration among school or district leaders has also occurred too infrequently. Collaboration may become even more critical as society becomes more complex and the demands on teachers and leaders more profound. Career opportunities for teachers and school and district leaders should also change to meet the demands of individuals entering these professions today. Teaching has long been a flat profession in which a teacher's first day on the job is in many ways similar to her last (Lortie, 1975). Research on the newest generation of teachers suggests that this career structure will not retain them, (Johnson et al., 2004).

Moreover, research suggests that differentiated roles hold particular appeal to minority teachers (Henke et al., 2000) and highly effective teachers (Hart & Murphy, 1990), two groups that are especially critical to retain. To retain this generation of teachers and cultivate their talents, the teaching profession will need to offer new challenges and greater variety to these individuals over a career. Schools and district leaders will need to think creatively to develop special roles that retain teachers in districts or schools but enable them to apply their talents in new ways.

Lastly, we are asking teachers and school and district leaders to complete work that is increasingly complex and difficult.

Similarly, we should not assume that the school or district leadership roles, as currently constructed, will retain highly skilled individuals in the future. As we ask school and district leaders to do more with fewer resources, we run the risk of dissuading excellent candidates from pursuing these professional paths. Policymakers and leaders will need to think creatively about how to shape leadership roles in schools and districts so that the strongest potential leaders pursue and remain in these positions.

Lastly, we are asking teachers and school and district leaders to complete work that is increasingly complex and difficult. For too long, we have compensated teachers and leaders in ways that recognize and reward endurance, not effectiveness. The single salary schedule further discourages individuals who expect to be paid according to their effort and effectiveness from pursuing positions in teaching and school or district leadership. To attract and retain individuals whose skills and talents are valued across multiple sectors, educators must be paid adequately. If we truly value education, we must offer salaries that not only are competitive but also differentiated based on demonstrated skills, competencies, and results.

We must also recognize that teaching and leading in some settings is more challenging than in others. Teaching and leading in schools and districts with high percentages of low-income students whose home language is not English is more demanding than performing this work in schools and districts populated by high-income English-speaking students and families. The achievement gap between students in urban and suburban school districts is substantial. There is also a consistent trend of teachers and leaders moving from urban districts to suburban ones. We must provide incentives to ensure that high quality teachers and leaders work in urban systems.

Ensuring that Instruction and Leadership are High-Quality

Efforts to transform our educational system require a robust approach to evaluating educators' performance coupled with recognition and rewards for continuous exceptional performance and sanctions for teachers or leaders whose performance fails to meet expectations. Implementation of a learner-centered system requires teacher and school and district leader performance that is uniformly highly competent.

To transform schooling from its present condition to one that is learner centered requires all educators to perform at highly competent levels. For too long, teacher and school and district leader evaluations have been more an administrative exercise than a learning opportunity. The reasons for this are numerous, but at the teacher level include the infrequency of observations (Donaldson, 2011), poor quality feedback from administrators (Halverson & Clifford, 2006; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Weisberg et al., 2009), and the absence of consequences (Weisberg et al., 2009). To exert the greatest influence on teaching and learning, observations and evaluations should be more frequent, should result in higher quality feedback and should entail real consequences. Teachers and leaders who perform at high levels should be recognized and rewarded. As discussed below, teachers and leaders who perform poorly should receive sanctions.



Evaluation systems are also limited by the personnel involved. Evaluations based exclusively on the viewpoint of supervisory personnel are incomplete because they lack the perspective of those whose responsibilities are identical to those being evaluated. Moreover, as supervisors' roles expand, the time they can devote to evaluation declines. Research suggests that peer review among teachers can lead to improved teaching and learning. For these reasons, peer review is an appropriate and complementary component of any effort to revise evaluation systems to support the transformation of the educational system.

Lastly, teachers and leaders must be held directly accountable for results in a system that offers real consequences for poor performance. Tenure in its present form is, in essence, a lifetime contract that districts can terminate only if they can prove to an arbitration panel and a judge that an educator is either incompetent, immoral and/or insubordinate. The contracts of educators whose performance is competent but mediocre and who persist in mediocre performance are difficult to terminate. Pre-tenure years must include a standards-based performance appraisal conducted by a supervisor and peer evaluator who are both well trained. Tenure would be granted based on high level professional performance. Five-year renewable contracts would give districts the opportunity to remove educators whose performance does not rise above the mediocre level.



Guiding Principles

- Human capital is fundamental to transforming our educational system.
- Improving human capital requires substantial changes to teacher and school and district leader recruitment and preparation, hiring and assignment, retention and development, compensation, evaluation, and tenure.
- A systemic approach to building human capital that addresses all of the above functions will result in enhanced learning and increased achievement for students.

Major Recommendations

The preparation of teachers and leaders should guarantee a focus on richer and deeper instructional or leadership skills and include more experiences working in a school setting. Candidates should participate in guided apprenticeships or internships with the first year in a teaching or leadership role should be structured as an internship with strong, consistent coaching by experienced teachers or leaders committed to transformation.

Tenure would be granted based on high level professional performance.

The first year in a teaching or leadership role should be structured as an internship with strong, consistent coaching by experienced teachers or leaders committed to transformation.

The preparation of school and district leaders should include training in how to create the conditions for high-quality instruction that results in all students meeting established standards.

K-12 education leaders should develop a stronger link with higher education so that pre- and in-service professional learning is based on the knowledge and skills that educators need to perform at competent levels.

District leaders should develop systems to organize and facilitate teachers' and school leaders' efforts to support child success via this competency-based model.

Preparation programs should include extensive clinical experience as well as the knowledge and skills to develop and maintain high reliability organizations.

Professional learning opportunities for teachers and school or district leaders should be sustained and job-embedded. School and district leaders should configure schedules to support extended blocks of time dedicated to teacher or leader collaboration. Collaboration should focus on observing and discussing effective teaching or leadership practice and analyzing student performance with colleagues. This must include collaborative time to analyze student work and plan for instruction. The structure of the day and school year will need to change to make this possible.

The state should grant professional learning credit based on demonstrated competency, not seat time.

The state and districts should compensate teachers and school and district leaders at a level that is competitive with other skilled professions in order to attract and retain individuals whose talents are sought by other sectors. This involves offering incentives for high performance.

Evaluation systems for professional educators should be standards-based across all curriculum areas. This requires systemic and ongoing research and development and regular reviews to update performance standards.

Peer review of performance should play a role in evaluation systems for teachers and school and district leaders.

When a reduction in force is required for teachers or leaders, seniority must not be the sole determinant. Reduction in force should be based on performance, student achievement, and professional activity as well as on seniority.

The state should revise tenure for professional educators. After educators show outstanding performance resulting in student learning, they will receive five-year contracts that are renewable based on performance. Districts will have the option of not renewing these contracts based on judgments concerning performance.

Key Issues and Supporting Recommendations (Major Recommendations are repeated under each key issue.)

Key Issue 1: *The Connecticut educational system needs to recruit teachers and leaders to teaching, school leadership, and district leadership positions who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to transform the educational system.*

Recommendation 1: Connecticut should develop multiple paths to teacher and school and district leader certification to reduce barriers to becoming an educator without lowering standards or responding to supply and demand fluctuations. In line with a transformed system for K-12 students, the state should grant certification to teachers and school and district leaders based on demonstrated competency, not on seat time.

Recommendation 2: Connecticut should actively recruit and provide incentives to attract under-represented populations to teaching and leadership positions. Given Connecticut's achievement gap, attracting minorities to teaching and leadership roles must be a priority.

Key Issue 2: *The Connecticut educational system needs to prepare teachers and leaders through forward-thinking programs that emphasize how to teach, learn, and lead in a transformed system and assign teachers and leaders to positions that capitalize on their strengths.*

Recommendation 3: The preparation of teachers and leaders should guarantee a focus on richer and deeper instructional or leadership skills and include more experiences working in a school setting. Candidates should participate in guided apprenticeships or internships with master teachers or leaders in their first year on the job.

Recommendation 4: The preparation of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders must include more robust training focused on meeting the needs of students with diverse (broadly defined) backgrounds.

Recommendation 5: The preparation of school and district leaders should include training in how to create the conditions for high-quality instruction that results in all students meeting established standards.

Recommendation 6: The preparation of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders should include in-depth training in how to analyze various forms of data and how to develop a variety of assessments.

Recommendation 7: School and district leaders should think more strategically about assigning personnel to positions that capitalize on their strengths.

Recommendation 8: K-12 education leaders should develop a stronger link with higher education so that pre- and in-service professional learning is based on the knowledge and skills that educators need to perform at competent levels.

Recommendation 9: District leaders should develop systems to organize and facilitate teachers' and school leaders' efforts to support child success via this competency-based model.

Recommendation 10: Preparation programs should include extensive clinical experience as well as the knowledge and skills to develop and maintain successful organizations.

Recommendation 11: The school district should balance teacher support and accountability to ensure effective and consistent implementation of evaluation systems.

Recommendation 12: Developing school and school system leadership should be a district and state priority. The state should support exemplary leadership development programs. Preparation programs should be required to publish the number of graduates annually, the number of graduates who obtain positions, and other related outcome data. The state should decertify programs that are ineffective.

Key Issue 3: *Districts and schools need to retain teachers and leaders through initial mentoring and ongoing support, ongoing professional learning opportunities, opportunities to assume greater or different responsibilities over time; and compensating teachers and leaders in ways that reflect their contributions to the system as well as their growth in terms of knowledge, skills, and work-habits.*

Recommendation 13: The first year in a teaching or leadership role should be structured as an internship with strong, consistent coaching by experienced teachers or leaders committed to transformation.

Recommendation 14: Professional learning opportunities for teachers and school or district leaders should be sustained and job-embedded. School and district leaders should configure schedules to support extended blocks of time dedicated to teacher or leader collaboration. Collaboration should focus on observing and discussing effective teaching or leadership practice and analyzing student performance with colleagues. This must include collaborative time to analyze student work and plan for instruction. The structure of the day and school year will need to change to make this possible.

Recommendation 15: The state should grant professional learning credit based on demonstrated competency, not on seat time.

Recommendation 16: Districts should develop leadership roles and opportunities to offer teachers and leaders new or different responsibilities as they progress in their career.

Recommendation 17: The state should ensure that districts and schools possess the working conditions and resources to support a transformed educational system. The state should make a particular effort to ensure that the working conditions and resources in settings serving low-income children are equal to those in settings serving their higher-income peers.

Recommendation 18: The state and districts should compensate teachers and school and district leaders at a level that is competitive with other skilled professions in order to attract and retain individuals whose talents are sought by other sectors. This involves offering incentives for high performance.

Recommendation 19: The state and districts should create incentives for teachers and school and district leaders who successfully work in systems serving high percentages of low-income students.

Key Issue 4: *Districts and schools need to evaluate and supervise teachers and leaders to provide individuals and the system with clear and accurate information about individuals' strengths and weaknesses, about how they should improve, and about whether their performance merits rewards or intervention and, potentially, dismissal.*

Recommendation 20: Evaluation systems for professional educators should be standards-based across all curriculum areas. This requires systemic and ongoing research and development and regular reviews to update performance standards.

Recommendation 21: Teachers', school leaders', and district leaders' evaluations should be tied to growth in student learning, and to the demonstration of professional skills, continuous professional learning to improve practice, and active engagement in professional responsibilities.

Recommendation 22: Peer review of performance should play a role in evaluation systems for teachers and school and district leaders.

Recommendation 23: A rigorous evaluation system for professional educators should be linked to incentives for high performing teachers and leaders and consequences for low performing ones.

Recommendation 24: Districts should move to dismiss teachers and leaders whose performance is consistently poor. To the extent possible, districts should transition these individuals out of education for the benefit of other districts and their students.

Recommendation 25: When a reduction in force is required for teachers or leaders, seniority must not be the sole determinant. Reduction in force should be based on performance, student achievement, professional activity, as well as on seniority.

Key Issue 5: *The state needs to revise the tenure law to include a rigorous, standards-based review process that is more tightly connected to student learning.*

Recommendation 26: The state should revise tenure for professional educators. After educators show outstanding performance resulting in student learning, they will receive five-year contracts that are renewable based on performance. Districts will have the option of not renewing these contracts based on judgments concerning performance.

Key Issue 6: Professional Learning and Technology-
The importance of using technology to support personalized learning and to provide a motivating learning environment continues to increase with each new class of students. Therefore, special attention must be paid to guarantee that all teachers and leaders are comfortable with and skilled in the use of technology for these purposes.

Recommendation 27: Expand opportunities for educators to have access to technology-based content, resources, and tools where and when they need them.

Recommendation 28: Leverage the concept of social networking technologies and platforms to enhance communities of practice that provide career-long personal learning opportunities for educators within and across schools, pre-service preparation and in-service education institutions, and professional organizations.

Recommendation 29: Use technology to provide all learners with online access to effective teaching and better learning opportunities and options, especially in places where they are not otherwise available.

Recommendation 30: Provide pre-service and in-service educators with professional learning experiences powered by technology to increase their digital literacy and enable them to create compelling assignments for children that improve learning, assessment, and instructional practices.

Recommendation 30: Provide professional learning that can support using technology as part of the learning process.

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OTHER CHAPTERS in the NEXTED Report

Complex Problems

Raise the Bar

Make It Personal

Make It Personal By Design

Start With Early Childhood

Reform Leadership

Offer More Options and Choices

Retool Assessments and Accountability

Involve Students and Parents

Leverage Technology

Continue Transformation

The original report and the related Background Papers can be found and downloaded from the NEXTED web site.

<http://www.ctnexted.org>