Recommendation Regarding English Language Learners
By Dr. José M. Torres
with support from Dual Language Education of New Mexico’s Edward Tabet-Cubero, David Rogers, and Attorney, Jim Lyons

As the only Commissioner on the Federal Commission on Equity and Excellence in Education who is a sitting superintendent, I offer the following perspective on what I see as necessary to ensure equity and excellence for English Language Learners (ELL). From my perspective, equity and excellence are two sides of one coin; one cannot exist without the other. One cannot have equity without excellence. One cannot have excellence without equity. And when it comes to the education of language minority students, it seems to me to be the highest injustice, the largest inequitable practice that we would consider that a student would need to lose a language to learn a language. In my School District, a school district of 41,000 students, the second largest in Illinois, Elgin School District U-46, we have begun to transform all of our language instruction programs to dual language because we believe and sufficient research supports that well-implemented dual language programs will close the gap for English Language Learners while providing enrichment opportunities to English only students to learn a second (or third) language.

More than one in five students in US schools possess a primary home language other than English, and approximately half of those students are considered limited English proficient or English language learners. The US Department of Education predicts that one in 4 students will be identified as an ELL by 2025. English language learners are and will continue to be the fastest growing sub-group of students in US schools, and their academic success is paramount to the country’s future economic viability. The large gap in achievement between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers demonstrates that ELLs have not been provided equal opportunity to learn and demonstrate their knowledge on valid and reliable assessments. This is due to a system that has perpetuated low expectations for these students, relegated them to classrooms with teachers ill-prepared to meet their instructional needs, and forced them to take invalid standardized assessments in English that are more a test of their English proficiency than their actual content knowledge and skills.

Jim Lyons states that the United States’ one-language educational standard is an irrational impediment to economic development, innovation, and growth. It delimits the scale of trade—both in goods and ideas—and reduces the Nation’s productive potential. The one-language standard minimizes the likelihood that U.S. students will be able to meet the challenges and to seize the opportunities ahead. English proficiency (only) is too low a bar for students who must compete and collaborate in a complex, dynamic, culturally and linguistically diverse global environment.

Some have characterized students who possess a language other than English as an academic and financial drain on our public schools. However, these students possess the
potential to be an asset to our school system as well as our economy. After all in our schizophrenic language policies, we exterminate students’ native language in early childhood and elementary education and later, require a “foreign” language for college admission. Often times, the very students who lost their language in their elementary years are required to take a language course to graduate from high school and enter college. These students bring the resource of diverse languages to the classroom and workplace that is needed for the country to compete in a 21st century global economy. Rather than foster their academic and linguistic growth in their native languages and simultaneously capitalize on those languages by offering English proficient students the opportunity to learn other languages from their peers, US public schools systematically eradicate languages other than English at the elementary level then turn around and require foreign language study at the secondary level. As a candidate in the 2008 presidential election, then Senator Obama observed, Understand that my starting principle is everybody should be bilingual or everybody should be trilingual.”...We as a society do a really bad job teaching foreign languages, and it is costing us when it comes to being competitive in a global marketplace.”

Students are most apt to acquire native-like proficiency in multiple languages when they begin learning them at an early age. Two-way dual language programs offer native English speaking students and native speakers of other languages to learn language from and alongside one another in fully integrated classrooms. And over thirty years of research and five independent meta-analysis have proven that dual language programs are the only programs that result in a complete closing of the achievement gap between ELLs and their native English speaking peers. This closing of the gap over time is demonstrated in figure 1 below, which represents over 6,000,000 student records on English reading tests.

If the evidence is so clear that dual language programs not only close the achievement gap for English language learners, but also offer English-speaking students the best opportunity to become fully proficient in a second language, then why is it that there are not more programs available across the country? As described by the US Department of Education and the White House in their report, “Winning the Future: Improving Education for the Latino Community,” there are examples around the country such as the Saint Paul Public School District that have begun to close the gap for English learners through the implementation of dual language, but such models are few and far between. Our programs in School District U-46 are another example of this model. US schools need a long-term vision for success for English learners and language study, as well as the political will to utilize students’ native languages for content instruction as they acquire English proficiency through the most effective ELL program model, which is dual language. Only then will we reach our aim of equity and excellence in education.
English Learners’ Long-Term K-12 Achievement in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) on Standardized Tests in English Reading Compared across Seven Program Models
(Results aggregated from longitudinal studies of well-implemented, mature programs in five school districts and in California (1998-2000)

Program 1: Two-way Dual Language Education (DLE), including Content ESL
Program 2: One-way DLE, including ESL taught through academic content
Program 3: Transitional BE, including ESL taught through academic content
Program 4: Transitional BE, including ESL, both taught traditionally
Program 5: ESL taught through academic content using current approaches with no L1 use
Program 6: ESL pullout - taught by pullout from mainstream classroom with no L1 use
Program 7: Proposition 227 in California (successive 2-year quasi-longitudinal cohorts)

Footnotes/Citations:


Reforming Exclusionary School Discipline Policies as a Strategy for Equity & Excellence
By Ben Jealous and Marc H. Morial

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
National Urban League
UNCF

Introduction

More than ever, our national prosperity and the foundation of our democracy depend on our ability to fully educate all of our children. But, each year millions of our children are pushed out of school through exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension, expulsion, and referral to law enforcement for offenses that can and should be handled in school. This trend, often referred to as the “School-to-Prison Pipeline,” disproportionately affects African-American children and those with special needs by pushing them out of school, thereby denying far too many students the opportunity to realize their potential.

The disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline is, in part, both a response to and a consequence of schools’ lack of resources to meet student needs. We see this at the classroom level in the form of teachers who lack the updated training and access to specialized colleagues that would allow them to individualize instruction. And those resource inequities coalesce at the school level when administrators lack the funding for specially trained staff to diagnose learning disabilities, support students learning English, coach teachers in differentiating instruction, or connect troubled families with community-based resources. Insufficient and inadequate resources are further compounded by the pressures placed on schools and educators to produce high test scores. This toxic mix of elements debilitates schools and renders many of them unable to serve an increasingly diverse mix of students well. One unacceptable response is to push out students that schools lack the resources to serve through suspension, expulsion or referrals to the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

The individual cases of exclusionary discipline vividly illustrate this issue and its implications.

Tragically, children like six-year-old Salecia Johnson, who was handcuffed and taken to the police station for throwing a temper tantrum at her elementary school in Milledgeville, Georgia, are being denied a meaningful chance to learn. With disciplinary rates now more than double what

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1 Though this document focuses on exclusionary discipline and African-American students, reflecting the constituency of the organizations which assembled it, its conclusions and recommendations apply to the wide range of students currently being pushed out of school through punitive policies and practices, to the detriment of their personal achievement and our nation’s collective advancement. Moreover, reforms which expand opportunity for students most disproportionately impacted by inequitable discipline policies will benefit all students by improving their schools’ climate and prospects for learning.

2 Jeff Martin and Jeri Clausing, Police Handcuff Georgia Kindergartner for Tantrum. ASSOC. PRESS (April 19, 2012).
they were in the 1970s, this type of treatment is all too common, especially for African Americans, and must be reckoned with if we truly wish to graduate all children.

Disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline

The last two decades have seen a tremendous spike in the use of exclusionary discipline in schools. Over 3,000,000 students were suspended in 2009-2010, the most recent year for which national data are available. These discipline rates are compounded by severe racial disparities, especially for African-American students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, “across all districts, African-American students are over 3½ times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers.” A recent study of school discipline in Texas by the Council of State Governments found race to be a predictive factor for disciplinary action: African-American students were 31% more likely to be disciplined for discretionary offenses in schools compared to their white or Latino counterparts, and over 80% of African-American male students had been suspended or expelled at least once during middle or high school. And in New York City, data reported through the Student Safety Act reveals that in 2011, more than 95% of the students arrested in the city’s schools were African-American or Latino.

Sadly, African-American students not only receive the lion’s share of exclusionary discipline in schools, they also receive harsher treatment. While white students are disproportionately likely to be disciplined for “objective” offenses, such as alcohol possession, students of color are disproportionately likely to be disciplined for “subjective” offenses like disorderly conduct and disrupting public school. Even when students of different races/ethnicities are penalized for the same offenses, African-American students receive harsher punishments for engaging in the same behavior as students from other backgrounds.

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4 Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection Summary 2 (2012). http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CMOCRTheTransformedCRDCFINAL3-15-12Accessible-1.pdf. Despite comprising only 18% of students in the Civil Rights Data Collection sample, African-American students were 35% of students suspended once, 46% of those suspended more than once, and 39% of students expelled. Furthermore, the CRDC indicates that “Over 70% of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American.”
While school safety is critical to ensuring that students are able to learn, excessive exclusionary discipline does not make schools safer; instead, it threatens both student safety and academic performance. The American Psychological Association has found no evidence that the use of suspension, expulsion, or zero-tolerance policies has resulted in improvements in student behavior or increases in school safety. Indeed, such practices have negative effects on student academic performance: students who are suspended and/or expelled, especially those who are repeatedly disciplined, are far more likely to be held back a grade, drop out of school, or become involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system than their peers. Students who are arrested are twice as likely to drop out as their peers. Excessive use of exclusionary discipline harms not only the individual student being disciplined, but the whole school: schools with high suspension rates score lower on state accountability tests than other schools, even when adjusting for demographic differences. Our national over-reliance on exclusionary discipline is severely hampering students’ ability to complete school on time, if at all. Put simply, when a student is not in school, she cannot learn, and we are pushing far too many children out of school.

The push-out phenomenon has a palpable effect on our nation. Aside from the moral injustice of denying children educational opportunity, there are also economic consequences. In 2011, approximately 1.2 million students did not graduate from high school; the estimated lost lifetime earnings for that class of dropouts is $154 billion. School-based arrests have placed such a drain on state funds that fiscally conservative organizations, such as the Texas Public Policy Foundation, have begun calling for reforms to rethink school-to-court referral practices. Clearly, pushing students out negatively affects America’s bottom line.

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National education policies may contribute to this trend. The current focus on standardized test scores in evaluating schools, teachers, principals, and students appears to have created unintended incentives for struggling schools to push out students whose performance on tests may threaten the school’s standings. These schools are sanctioned for lower performance rather than receiving support in the areas they need it, reinforcing the idea that schools must improve test scores by any means.15

**Remedying disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline**

Our nation is based on the ideal of equal opportunity. Sadly, for many African-American students, this ideal is absent from their educational experience. If we are ever to truly provide equal educational opportunity for all of our children, we must address the alarming rates at which African-American students are pushed out of our nation’s schools.

Thankfully, there are proven solutions to securing school safety that do not rely on exclusionary discipline. School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (“SWPBS”) is an evidence-based approach to improving school discipline being implemented in over 10,000 U.S. schools. Effective implementation of SWPBS has been shown to reduce disciplinary rates and improve student attendance, academic achievement, and perceptions of school safety.17 Implementation of Restorative Justice, another best practice in school discipline, resulted in a 40% drop in suspensions and a 60% drop in arrests in Denver Public Schools.18 Bi-partisan support from multiple stakeholders (including lawmakers, families, and educators) for efforts to improve school discipline have resulted in significant changes in the disciplinary policies and practices of school districts such as Baltimore19 and Los Angeles (L.A. Unified School District)20, and at the state level in Colorado21; Florida22; Louisiana23; and Maryland24 among others.

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To address the high and racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline, we provide below several specific recommendations. While some of these recommendations advocate change at the federal level, schools and communities can pave the path to improvement by adjusting their practices and responses to school conditions.

School, district, and state-level practice recommendations

1. **Implement evidence-based approaches to improving school discipline.**

   Such initiatives, including SWPBS and Restorative Justice programs, provide demonstrably effective frameworks through which schools may reduce reliance on exclusionary discipline while also positively restructuring school culture by improving student behavior, academic achievement, and attendance.

2. **Collect, analyze, and publically report disciplinary data.**

   To ensure that implementation of best practices like SWPBS and Restorative Justice are effective, all schools (including charter schools and alternative schools) must collect and analyze their discipline data and share it with all educational stakeholders, including parents and community members. This data should be disaggregated by race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and English proficiency, and be further disaggregated by gender to provide for more informed decision-making. Armed with this data, school staff and leadership can better identify patterns of exclusionary discipline. Schools can compare data to their student populations, with neighboring schools, or the district to identify high or racially disparate rates. Problematic rates of exclusionary discipline may then be addressed through targeted professional development, the deployment of additional school-based supports and services, and improved classroom management structures, practices, and policies.

3. **Revise state law and school district policies to curb the use of suspension, expulsion, arrest, and referral to alternative school.**

   The great majority of school suspensions and school-based arrests are for minor misbehavior. For example, in California, almost half of all suspensions are for “willful defiance.” And in Florida, almost 70% of the state’s 20,000 school-based arrests in 2007 were for misdemeanors—a revelation which prompted a significant change to state law. States and school districts

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26 Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Delinquency in Florida’s Schools: A Five Year Study (2004-05 through 2008-09) 1 (2009).
should limit the use of suspension, expulsion, arrest, and alternative schools to incidents that pose risks to school and student safety. They should also require the use of more inclusive, non-exclusionary practices to address more mundane student misbehavior.

**Federal policy recommendations**

4. **Require annual reporting of disciplinary indicators collected in the 2012 Civil Rights Data Collection (conducted by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights).**

The U.S. Department of Education’s most recent Civil rights Data Collections (“CRDCs”) have required states and school districts to report an expanded set of indicators, including more indicators related to climate and the use of exclusionary discipline. Again, this data should be disaggregated by race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and English proficiency, and be further disaggregated by gender. Although the most recent CRDC recorded data from a record number of schools and districts, the Department of Education should replace the sample method and instead convert the CRDC into a true universal data collection that includes data from all schools and districts, including all charter schools and alternative schools. Finally, this data should be publically reported in accessible formats, building upon the enhanced accessibility of the most recent CRDC data.

5. **Include school discipline data as an indicator of school success and improvement in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.**

Federal policy should require that unusually high and/or racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline trigger mandatory technical assistance and support, rather than punitive sanctions, from federal, state, and local educational agencies. Schools that exhibit excessive or disparate disciplinary data should be supported in adopting effective, positive approaches to improving school climate and limiting the use of exclusionary discipline.

6. **Hold federal grant applicants and recipients to a high standard.**

The U.S. Department of Education should closely examine discipline data for schools, states, and districts as part of assessing applications for competitive funding. And, similar to requirements in the Race to the Top-District grant competition, applicants with high or racially disparate discipline data should be compelled to create and implement discipline reform plans based on evidence-based practices in order to receive federal competitive grant funding. In addition, these requirements should be added to the existing set of “global priorities” for federal competitive education grant programs, such that they may be used as a lever in future grant programs to encourage discipline reform.

7. **Provide additional resources to support disciplinary reforms.**

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27 A model for this approach is evident in the process required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which is designed to eliminate such disparities. 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(22).
Many school districts need additional funds and technical assistance to replace exclusionary discipline methods with: (a) effective, evidence-based school-based discipline frameworks that will be implemented in a culturally relevant manner, such as SWPBS and Restorative Justice programs; and (b) increased reliance on school-based service providers such as mental health practitioners, school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, and school nurses. Commitments to use these interventions may also be encouraged and rewarded through competitive preferences in federal funding competitions.

8. **Promote inter-agency and multi-stakeholder cooperation and innovation.**

On a larger scale, the federal government can also provide additional funds for comprehensive local or regional strategies involving multiple stakeholders – including, but not limited to, schools, the justice system, parents, and students – to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline and the number of students entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems from school.

9. **Redirect students toward schools and away from justice system involvement.**

Federal policy should require states to establish procedures for the prompt reenrollment of students in schools upon return from expulsion and juvenile justice placement, and for facilitating the transfer of credits earned during those placements. In too many school districts, students are often relegated to alternative education settings without being offered an opportunity to reintegrate into mainstream education. But federal funding can promote innovative practices aimed at ensuring the educational success of students reentering school from expulsion and juvenile justice placements.

10. **Mitigate the perverse incentives of test-based accountability.**

While standardized tests can serve an important diagnostic function, their misuse can also undermine pedagogy. Federal policy can help to deemphasize standardized tests, and the collateral consequences of misplaced reliance on scores, by developing and implementing school, teacher, and student assessment mechanisms that rely on multiple sources of diverse evidence of learning.

**Conclusion**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Urban League and UNCF are all committed to dismantling the “School-to-Prison Pipeline” and promoting quality education for all students. Progress in our efforts to improve educational opportunity by curbing the high and racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline will be illustrated by the following indicators:

- Annual rates of suspension, expulsion and referral to law enforcement – particularly those implemented under zero-tolerance policies – should decrease.
- Grade-level promotion rates and high school graduation rates should increase.
• Differentials should narrow between the discipline rates of African-American students and students of other racial and ethnic groups.
• Schools should see a redirection of resources away from punitive measures and toward inclusive, evidence-based practices such as Restorative Justice and School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (“SWPBS”).

Equipping schools to address student needs constructively – rather than turning to the disproportionate application of exclusionary discipline policies – will pay dividends in both equity and excellence. The strategies for making school discipline policies more equitable are supported by research on school improvement. Their implementation has the potential to expand learning opportunities for substantial portions of the student population currently being underserved, and in turn, advance our collective march toward excellence.
Rural Students and Communities
By Doris Williams

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.

- James Madison

Nearly 10 million students attend public schools in rural places in the U.S., comprising almost 20 percent of all students enrolled in the nation’s public education system.\(^1\) Public education policy has either ignored their existence or forced upon them the ill-fitting policies and programs designed primarily to address the challenges of their more urban and suburban counterparts. The urgent need to improve the outcomes of public education in America should never become a battle between rural and non-rural places. Yet, advocates for rural education are in a constant battle to have their voices heard above the clamor of urban-centric reform to bring attention to the inequities and the unique challenges and opportunities of rural schools, students, and communities. Ignoring or paying only passing attention to rural education comes at a heavy price — low academic achievement, concentrated and persistent poverty, deep and abiding economic and political oppression — all threats to the exercise of democracy and the guarantee of “domestic tranquility.” At the same time, rural education has the largely untapped potential to inform education and community reform in ways that will help ensure genuine access to a quality education for all children, an informed citizenry, a viable democracy and a thriving economy.

The Rural Imperative

One-third of public schools in the United States are in locales designated as rural by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). There is wide variation among states with rural schools ranging from 6.6% of public schools in Massachusetts to 78.6% in South Dakota. More than half of all rural schools are in 15 states — South Dakota, Montana, Vermont, North Dakota, Maine, Alaska, Nebraska, Wyoming, Arkansas, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Iowa, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. At the same time, more than half of all rural students in the United States attend schools in 11 states, including, in order of rural enrollment size, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Alabama. The four states with the largest rural enrollments—Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, and Ohio—serve one-fourth of all rural students in the United States.\(^2\)

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2 Ibid.
In 22 states, half or more of all rural school districts are considered small, that is, they enroll fewer than the national median enrollment of 537 students. The largest rural school districts are concentrated in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic, the result of repeated consolidations over the years.\(^3\)

The numbers clearly indicate that America cannot meet its public education challenge without supporting and learning from its rural schools and communities. These schools and communities are not microcosms of urban and suburban places. They operate in unique contexts – cultural, economic, ecological and historical – and require responses designed especially to address their unique challenges and build upon the unique opportunities they present.

Rural Disparities

Multiple disparities impact rural student access to a quality public education—among them, the differential funding available to support public education. The Rural School and Community Trust found that, excluding funds for capital construction, debt service, and other long-term outlays, “most states provide a slightly disproportional amount of funding per pupil to rural districts.”\(^4\) The researchers attribute this finding to the fact that many state formulas take into account poverty levels, which tend to be higher in rural districts, and per pupil fixed costs, which are also higher for small districts. But, this finding also suggests that adequacy is just as important a goal as equity in the quest for quality education. Further, the generalization of this finding does not hold for all states. In Mississippi, for example, where 54.7% of students attended a rural school district, only 47.2% of state funding went to rural districts.

There are also wide disparities within the rural subset of public schools. Many state funding formulas leave capital expenditures, transportation, teacher pay supplements and, in some cases, benefits, for local governments to provide. Property taxes, local sales taxes, fines, and forfeitures provide the local portion of school funding. Obviously, low-income rural communities with low property values and low sales tax incomes are at a distinct disadvantage here.

Another Rural Trust study examined high school dropout rates and related factors in more than 600 rural high schools in 15 Southern and Southwestern states. These schools are in districts that are among the 800 poorest rural school districts in the United States. Seventy-seven percent of the “Rural 800” districts and 97% of Rural 800 students are in those 15 states. Almost 60% of students in these districts are children of

\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
color. They are twice as likely to be English language learners as other rural students and 24 percent more likely than students in all other districts.  

The Rural Trust study revealed the magnitude of the disparities between rural and non-rural school districts, and between the poorest and the most affluent rural districts. For example,

- Title I eligibility rate in the Rural 800 districts in the 15 states more than doubled that of all other districts, including other rural districts.
- Rural schools in these districts operated with less state and local per pupil funding ($7,731) compared to other rural districts ($8,134) and non-rural districts ($9,611).
- Only 6 in 10 students in these districts graduated high school, compared to 70% among other rural districts and 67% among non-rural districts.

While these districts are racially diverse with children of color comprising more than half of the student populations, nearly half (47%) of students in the lowest graduation-rate quintile are African American. In fact, rural African Americans and Latinos are twice as likely as non-Hispanic Whites to drop out of high school.

The study identified 20 Rural 800 districts within the 15 target states with graduation rates and reading and math proficiency rates in the top 20%. These districts tended to be smaller than other Rural 800 districts. More importantly, they differed substantially in racial and ethnic composition from Rural 800 districts as a whole. Eighty-three percent of students in the high-performing, high-poverty districts were White; less than one percent of them were English language learners.

In nine states, more than half of all rural students live in poverty, based on their eligibility for free and reduced priced meals. New Mexico leads the nation with respect to the percent of rural students living in poverty (81%); however, eight other states reflect comparable conditions of poverty for their rural students: Louisiana (68%), Mississippi (64%), Arkansas (59%), Oklahoma (59%), South Carolina (57%), Kentucky (55%), West Virginia (53%) and Alabama (51%).

Indeed, race and poverty intersect to increase the risk of inequity and academic underperformance in rural places. For example, 13 states have a concentration of

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9 Ibid.
students of color in their poorest rural communities. Nine of these 13 states are West of the Mississippi River, where rural Latino/a and Native American students and families are concentrated, with other states in the Southeast serving as the home to a concentration of African American students and families.\textsuperscript{10} Federal education policy and funding must be designed to 1) encourage states to make equitable investments in public education for all children, and 2) target federal assistance and funding to ensure the existence of a high quality educational baseline that gives every child the opportunity to become career and college ready and able to exercise the full freedoms and responsibilities of a democratic society.

Uniqueness of the Rural Challenge

Rural schools are similar in many ways to non-rural schools, but operate in contexts that pose challenges that require unique responses. First, rural schools and districts vary in size, from the one-room, one-school districts in the remote locales of Montana, to the more highly consolidated, larger schools and districts in the Deep South. Available resources vary even within the subset of places designated as rural – from “high-amenity” communities of choice serving predominately White students, to high-poverty communities disproportionately serving high needs students of color. This diversity of contexts indicates that there can be no canned approach to addressing issues of disparity in rural education.

One of the greatest challenges that rural school districts face is hiring and retaining a critical mass of highly effective teachers, an area that affects student outcomes and is directly related to funding. Salaries are lower; benefits, supports, and special services are more difficult to access; and smaller staffs mean multiple course preparations across multiple subjects, requiring multiple certifications for teachers.

There are other factors limiting the ability of rural places to attract and retain teachers. Teachers and school leaders are professionally and personally isolated as they are often the most highly educated people in the community. There are limited choices for housing, entertainment, and social networks. There are fewer jobs for spouses in local labor markets and fewer opportunities for teachers to supplement their incomes with summer employment. However, the technology is available to change these realities and it is doing so in many places. All rural communities must have access to that technology, including the broadband access that can help reduce isolation and support alternative economic opportunities.

Uniqueness of the Rural Opportunity

Rural schools and districts are often small. Many times, they are centers of community life, holders of the most valuable real estate, the largest employer and an assemblage of

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 14.
the most highly educated people accessible to the community. This combination of characteristics makes for exciting research potential and adaptation of educational models that speak to the uniqueness of rural places and the development of the whole child.

Open spaces and natural resources make excellent laboratories for place-based learning that connects STEM and other academic areas to the economic, social, and environmental concerns of the community. Such practice could provide models for leveraging limited resources to meet the pressing needs of rural communities while helping rural schools and communities improve together. Rural education can provide models for parent and community engagement and for the development of engaging, challenging, and relevant educational experiences for children of all abilities and backgrounds.

**Righting the Wrongs in Rural Education: Recommendations**

Research has confirmed that the Southeast (South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida), the Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana), the Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico) and Appalachia (Kentucky and Tennessee) are among the nation’s highest priority rural education districts and communities.\(^1\) Multiple indicators in each of these states, and others, clearly demonstrate the importance of rural-specific strategies to remedy past and present inequities and provide adequate resources to support educational equity and excellence in rural places.

To that end, federal policy and funding should:

1. Make equity a priority in Title I and other educational funding programs, ensuring that educational excellence is not the privilege of the elite but a right of citizenship in the United States of America. Reduce the impact of number weighting in the allocation formula while increasing the effect of concentrated poverty such that places with high concentrations of poverty are not funded at a lower per pupil level than places with higher numbers but lower concentrations. See [http://www.formulafairness.com](http://www.formulafairness.com) for more extensive discussion of inequities in Title I funding of high-poverty rural schools.

2. Promote equity over competition in public school funding. Many rural districts do not have the personnel, resources, or experience to compete with better resourced districts for federal funding. Competition under such conditions will either widen the gap between poor rural and other districts, or make poor rural districts the step children of urban-centric education reform organizations.

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 18.
3. Fund research on rural education that allows rural places the opportunity to develop, refine, and scale up innovations that speak to their unique challenges and strengths. Establish and adequately fund an office of rural education research and innovation within the Department of Education.

4. Establish a National Rural Teacher Corps through targeted scholarships, housing assistance, and other incentives. Such an effort could be a hybrid of the former National Health Service Corps, the Ozarks Teacher Corps and the growing number of grow-your-own teacher development programs. It should encourage the development of rural education programs within teacher education programs and connect teacher preparation to rural schools to provide prospective rural teachers the benefits of learning to teach in a rural setting.

5. Incentivize and fund partnerships between and among educational, social service, and economic development entities to provide decent and affordable housing for teachers and critical services for children and families in high need, low-income schools and districts. Various state- and locally-sponsored housing and scholarship incentive programs for hard-to-staff schools and full-service community schools provide excellent models for these kinds of partnerships.

6. While acknowledging and preserving the rights and responsibilities of states, federal funding and strategies should speak boldly to the issues of race and poverty in places that have demonstrated over long periods of time a lack of will to provide a quality education for all children. The “achievement gap” should be attacked for what it is – the result of inequitable treatment and opportunity across great divides.

7. Invest in rural education leadership development that includes school- and district-based leaders as well as policy makers at the local level.

If America is to remain a free democracy, we must arm all of our citizens with “the power knowledge gives.” That means we must educate all children at high levels, rural children included.

Resources:


The grant program that the commission has recommended in our main report should support programs involving the appointment of full time health coordinators in schools with large populations of low income students and the establishment of health clinics in schools in areas that lack easy access to hospitals or community health clinics. Health coordinators can establish programs with near-by health facilities to ensure that students receive regular examinations and treatments, and they can work with parents, teachers, social workers and other school personnel to promote continuing follow-up activities. For schools that are not near accessible community health facilities, the most effective way to promote health and the development of positive health habits and behaviors is to create a health clinic on or near school premises. The presence of school-based health clinics has been shown to result in decreases in hospitalization for children with chronic or pre-existing conditions, and in significant reductions in absenteeism due to illness.

In theory, school based health clinics can be established on a large scale basis in low income neighborhoods with virtually no increase in federal or state financial support since virtually all at-risk students are covered by Medicaid and the state Children’s Health Insurance Program; in addition, most other students will be covered by private insurance as the Affordable Health Care Act becomes fully implemented. In practice, however, lack of stable, guaranteed funding is the main reason why only a few such school-based health clinics have, in fact, been established in the past. Under current law, school-based health clinics cannot qualify as Medicaid eligible facilities and they can only receive Medicaid re-imbursement through contractual arrangements with other community facilities, and in accordance with a myriad of state and federal regulatory requirements. ¹

The federal government should establish a school wide health center initiative on a three year demonstration basis in six or more locations in different types of communities in different states. If the experience with this initiative is successful, the model should be widely disseminated throughout the country on a phase-in basis thereafter. The initiative would utilize existing Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program funding sources and would not require the creation of a new funding program. It would channel existing Medicaid funding to school-based health centers, stabilize funding for such centers and allow them to provide services to all children in a Title I school.

A school should be eligible for school wide funding for its school-based health center (SBHC) if at least 75% of its students come from families whose income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. If a school is eligible, all students in the school will be entitled to receive health center services at no charge to them or their families.

A “school-based health center” for these purposes would an entity as defined in 42 U.S.C.A. § 1397jj(c)(9) and that provides, at a minimum, comprehensive health services during school hours to children and adolescents in accordance with established standards, community practices, and state laws. The center would operate in co-operation with a local hospital, public health department or community health facility. It would cover the following types of services:

a) An annual “early periodic screening, diagnostic and treatment health check ups and necessary follow-ups

b) Treatment of minor, acute, and chronic medical conditions and referrals to, and follow up for, specialty care

c) Mental health assessments, crisis intervention, counseling, treatment and referral to a continuum of services including emergency psychiatric care, community support programs, inpatient care, and outpatient programs

d) Dental services

e) Vision services (including eyeglasses prescriptions)

f) Health education services

The school-based health center would receive an annual per capita fee for each child enrolled in the school. This fee would be based on the average Medicaid reimbursement rates in the state for the recommended average utilization of the covered services for the student population in the school, and a supplemental allotment for the costs of student enrollment. Responsibility for these payments would be shared by the federal and state governments in accordance with a formula based on the ratio of Medicaid eligible students (133% of the federal poverty rate) and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) eligible students (200% of the federal poverty rate). The Medicaid sharing rate would apply to the proportion of Medicaid eligible students in the school and the SCHIP sharing rate would apply to the proportion of SCHIP eligible students in the school.

An “SBHC Access Card” should be provided to all students in the school, and students would be required to swipe the cards in order to utilize health center services. These cards will be linked
to a computerized data system that will a) validate their current Medicaid and/or SCHIP eligibility; b) inform Medicaid and SCHIP of each specific service being provided; and b) generate reimbursement from private insurance companies for students who are not Medicaid or SCHIP eligible.

School-based health centers would be required to work with the school to conduct a comprehensive assessment of student health needs, particularly those that are having the greatest impact on learning; identify and commit to specific goals and strategies that address those needs; create a comprehensive plan, including benchmarks for assessing success and numerical targets for student utilization of health services; conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the plan; and revise the plan as necessary.
Statement on Charter Schools

By David G. Sciarra, James E. Ryan and Randi Weingarten

This Report contains a brief discussion on "Charter Schools and Choice," noting the growth of these schools in recent years. The Report calls on states to "monitor the performance" of charters and to undertake research to "understand the effects of charters on equity and access."

As states authorize more charter schools and those schools enroll greater numbers of students, especially in high poverty communities, concerns have arisen over their effectiveness and impact on the equitable delivery of high quality public education to all students in the communities in which they are located.

As this Report correctly notes, the limited research available shows many charter schools perform on assessments at the same level or below district-run schools, and some charters rank among the states' persistently lowest performing schools. Data is also beginning to show that charter schools do not always serve students comparable to those enrolled in district schools, particularly the very poor and those at-risk of academic failure, students with disabilities, and those learning English. In addition, financial mismanagement and irregularities among charters is becoming a recurring problem in many states. For example, in New Jersey since 1996, nearly one-third of all authorized charter schools have surrendered their charters or had their charters revoked, mostly due to mismanagement.

Also, because many states require charter authorizers to perform only perfunctory evaluations, little is known about what works -- and what doesn't -- in charter schools. Lessons learned about both how successful practices might help improve public education and how to avoid or correct unsuccessful practices are lost. And charters are not required, typically, to disclose contributions, grants, and other support from private and foundation sources, giving some select charters a distinct advantage over other charters and district schools and again depriving the public of knowledge crucial to assessing the performance of charter schools.

There is wide variation in how states authorize, regulate and hold charters accountable for academic and fiscal performance. Reform of those laws is essential -- and urgently needed -- to make certain that these schools operate equitably, effectively, and with full accountability to communities they serve. States, through their charter laws, must ensure charter schools make a solid contribution to the overall improvement of public education in their host districts -- for every student, including those with diverse needs, and not just for those attending charters.

Among the basic areas most in need of state policy reform include:
• Encouraging innovation, such as giving priority to multi-district charters that seek to serve a socio-economically and racially diverse student body, or that address the needs of English language learners or students at-risk of dropping out.

• Ensuring that charter schools are not impeding access, through means explicit or subtle, to any and all students who are eligible to enroll, including very low income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

• Requiring public transparency in the lottery process; in maintaining waiting lists and documenting transfers and attrition; in adhering to state and federal due process in student discipline matters; and by disclosure of annual budgets, including funds and other support received from private sources.

• Evaluating the academic and fiscal performance of charters on an ongoing basis, and funding independent, quality research on charter programs, practices and performance.

• Establishing local education collaborations between districts and charters to facilitate community-wide efforts to improve performance and accountability, strengthen professional development, and collect and disseminate data and research, especially in high poverty communities where both district and charter schools are in dire need of high quality technical assistance and support.

The number of charter schools is increasing, with growing debate about their proper place in state public education systems. To ensure equity and excellence in those systems, states must create a policy environment built on the expectation that charters will be fully accountable to the public, and operate effectively and equitably in the communities they serve. After all, the states have the responsibility to ensure students the quality education they must have to succeed and are legally entitled to receive, regardless of how the state allows its local schools to be governed.
Statement on the Educational Impact of Immigration Status
By Thomas A. Saenz

As the Commission report discusses, there are a number of external factors that have an undeniable – and undeniably disparate – impact on the educational experience of students in schools. As a consequence, these factors also have a significant impact on educational achievement, contributing to the education gaps that Latino and African American students continue to experience and that our nation must successfully address in order to ensure our continued economic and political success in the future. However, one significant external factor that our report does not discuss, but which affects millions of students, is immigration status.

Thirty years ago, in the case of Plyler v. Doe, the United States Supreme Court held that our Constitution guarantees access to public elementary and secondary school for all students, regardless of immigration status. In support of the decision, the Court majority noted that many of the currently undocumented students would adjust their status at some point in their lives and be expected to contribute to the nation’s economic development. That conclusion remains true today, particularly as the near-term prospect of federal immigration reform, including a program to provide legal protections to those millions of undocumented immigrants who have lived here for years and contributed to our national economy, has improved in recent months. Indeed, federal immigration reform that includes such a program could obviate many of the educational impacts of immigration status if the program is broadly available and successfully reaches and includes the vast majority of undocumented individuals in the United States.

The issue of federal immigration policy is beyond the scope of the Commission, but unless and until federal immigration reform is achieved and implemented, we must acknowledge the significant educational effects of immigration status. For example, students who are themselves undocumented face an uncertain prospect of being able to access higher education. The national landscape with regard to such access is decidedly mixed. While over a dozen states have enacted laws to permit high school graduates, regardless of immigration status, to pay reduced tuition rates at public universities and colleges, two-thirds have not provided such affordability for undocumented students, and some states have actively restricted undocumented students’ ability to enroll in public universities. With respect to private universities, affordability also varies, but lack of eligibility for federal student loans and grants impedes access for undocumented students. With the uncertainty of access to higher education, and the increased importance of such further education in today’s economy, some undocumented students may conclude that achievement in public school is less important. (Of course, this is by no means universal. Many undocumented students have thrived at school and gone on to success in higher education; some of these students have taken a leading role as “DREAMers” in advocating immigration reform.)

In addition, undocumented students face the daily fear of being apprehended and placed into removal proceedings. These fears persist despite the fact that school sites have generally been deemed off limits to federal immigration enforcement. Even if
school may be a safe place, students have fears and concerns about what may happen outside of school. These fears are heightened in jurisdictions where local or state policymakers have opted to engage in local enforcement of immigration laws despite the serious constitutional questions around such efforts. For example, one question under a blanket state mandate of local enforcement is how it would be implemented with regard to school-based law enforcement officers.

Fears regarding heightened enforcement and the prospect of deportation or removal are not confined to students who are themselves undocumented. Many United States citizen schoolchildren today have one or both parents who are undocumented. For these students, particularly those of elementary school age, concern and fear that a parent might be picked up and detained during the school day can be a major distraction from the task of learning.

These are just a few examples of how immigration status may affect educational achievement. Other issues include harassment of students because of their own or their parents' actual or presumed immigration status, access to field trips at government buildings or other sites, access to extracurricular enrichment programs and opportunities, and other barriers to a full and equitable educational experience.

The Commission report does not address these issues, in part because they are bound up with issues of public policy related to immigration enforcement that are beyond the scope of this Commission and upon which it can express no opinion. Moreover, as noted above, it is possible that congressional legislation may soon resolve these issues for a number of the affected students. Still, the importance of these issues should not be discounted as external factors with a significant impact on the challenge of ensuring equity and excellence in our education system.
Statement of Matt Miller  
Columnist, Washington Post; senior fellow, Center for American Progress

I’m writing briefly to suggest a few ways the media, educators and foundations might follow up on the issues raised by the Commission to advance the national conversation and promote changes in public policy.

The Media

While there are many issues the press could pick up on in the report, the most underreported and consequential is the link between deep inequities in school finance (at the district level in many states, and at the school level even in states where per pupil district funding is similar) and deep inequities in the caliber of teacher that schools in affluent and poor neighborhoods can attract and retain. This injustice might be the subject of columns and editorials at both the local and national level, and also the subject of well-reported feature pieces or investigations in print and electronic media that bring these facts to life and give the story a human dimension.

For editorial boards and columnists, one possible template for the argument would run something like this:

- Everyone now agrees effective teaching is the key driver of student achievement (and thus of children’s life chances, to the extent schools can shape them).

- The distribution of effective teachers is radically unequal in the US, in a way that is unique among wealthy nations.

- This inequity is intimately related to funding inequities. Funding inequities at the district level lead to inequities in teacher quality, while within districts, funding inequities are effectively created by teacher quality inequities. (That’s because at the school level within districts, higher salaries go to more experienced teachers concentrated in better off neighborhoods, and lower salaries to the novices who tend to be concentrated in lower income schools; this pattern is often masked by district accounting practices that use only average district salaries to show what schools “spend”).

- Money isn’t everything -- this must be noted -- but teacher/principal salaries are the biggest portion of school budgets, and thus fundamentally relevant to attracting and retaining talent.

- In particular, disparities in school funding between poor areas and their nearby affluent communities matter, because the competition for teaching talent takes place in local labor markets (in many states – like Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York – such between-district disparities remain significant).
- In many states these disparities occur because the US, alone among advanced nations, relies heavily on local sources of finance for school funding.

- This local finance mechanism actually gives wealthier areas a hidden tax break that is not well understood—because property-rich locales can tax themselves at lower rates and generate more spending per pupil than can property-poor areas that tax themselves at higher rates.

- The result, unsurprisingly, is that the best teachers gravitate toward lower poverty schools over time, often in affluent suburbs—which pay more, have easier to teach kids, and better working conditions (which are also related to finance inequities in terms of facilities, safety, etc. It should be easy to document the “facilities gap” here with photos and descriptions of the contrast, etc.). We effectively rely on “the missionary plan” to staff schools in poor neighborhoods—and all the evidence shows that “the missionary plan” isn’t working.

- To be sure, there are examples where plenty of money goes into poor districts with bad results. It doesn’t make sense to invest more in such places until management can be improved. But these areas are exceptions in America, not the rule.

- Broadly speaking, if we truly want to remedy the inequitable distribution of teaching talent—and improve the proportion of effective teachers in the nation’s poorest schools—we must address America’s uniquely inequitable system of school finance, so that schools in poorer neighborhoods have the wherewithal to compete for talent.

- Until we take on this issue—about which there has been a conspiracy of silence among education reformers, because of fear of stepping on the third rail of “local control and funding” of schools, or from reluctance to challenge districts that systematically assign less qualified and experienced teachers to poor children—we will only be tinkering around the edges of America’s educational woes, and will doom millions of children to the sidelines of the global economy...

   Television, radio and internet producers, as well as longer-form or narrative print journalists, might bring these issues to life by finding two schools to compare that are only a few miles apart but which have very different spending per pupil, and thus different ranges of teacher and principal salaries and caliber of staff, and also very different kinds of facilities. The story could be told through the eyes of two children, or two teachers, or two families—and the teacher corps might be compared in terms of such key metrics as the proportion who teach “out of field,” or the proportion who are inexperienced, poorly trained, or who were dismal students themselves. The Education Trust, The Council on Great City Schools and the Education Law Center are good resources to tap for a start on such research. In some cases districts will need to be aggressively prodded to share salary data at the school level.
In any such pieces, it’s important to note that in poor schools across America there are thousands of talented, dedicated teachers working their hearts out for kids under impossibly tough conditions. But it is these teachers who have told me with passion over the years how mediocre too many of their colleagues are. All the research shows that after several years with unqualified teachers many of these kids can never catch up. Nothing could be more unjust.

**Educators and Foundations**

What if we had a passionate, articulate corps of high school juniors and seniors in high poverty schools who became the face of a new movement for educational justice? Might that not shake up the debate? I’d urge teachers and other educators at the local level to use this report as a starting point for recruiting and training such a corps and preparing them to make a difference while still in high school. I can imagine a special cross-disciplinary class or seminar being developed, perhaps called “School Finance Inequity: Issues and Action” (or something like that). It should be seen as an honor to be selected for this class. The kids would study the history of movements for social change, examine the nature and impact of inequities in education today, and investigate their manifestation in their local area. They’d write reports, make short films (i.e. comparing their poorly funded school with nearby well-funded ones), and write op-eds for local newspapers or blogs. They would be trained in speaking, advocacy and outreach to become effective champions for reform. They would meet with editorial boards and public officials to press their case. They would dream up and organize creative campaigns (and even protests) to get the media to cover these issues more routinely. They might find counterparts in affluent schools with whom to join hands in eye-catching calls for reform.

These are just early thoughts on which others can surely improve. Interested foundations might work with local schools (or an eventual national network) to develop relevant curriculum and training programs, as well as to make various experts and resources available. A near-term goal might be the creation of a national corps of, say, 500 students each year (25 each in the top 20 high poverty districts) who become smart, sophisticated activists, and part of a growing reform network in the years ahead. Nothing seems more powerful (or more likely to garner media attention) than students who themselves are victims of educational injustice calling attention to what’s wrong and speaking out forcefully for change.

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Equity and Excellence Commission

Compendium Paper
Transforming the Teaching Profession
By Randi Weingarten

American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
Council of Chief State School Officers
Council of the Great City Schools
United States Department of Education
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service
National Education Association
National School Boards Association

Improving student learning and educational equity require strong, consistent, and sustained collaboration among parents, teachers, school boards, superintendents and administrators, business leaders, and the community. And such improvements require that we all take responsibility for the academic and social well-being of the students in our charge. It is in this spirit of collaboration that we offer this joint statement on elevating the teaching profession to improve the education of our students.

THE CHALLENGE

The education system we created in the 20th century served our nation well. We were a world leader in universal high school attendance and in higher education attainment, and we opened our doors to all students. And though our educated citizenry helped fuel a sustained period of rapid economic growth, the goal of educating all students to the same high levels has not yet been realized. The fast-paced, dynamic, global world of the 21st century places new demands on all of us, as citizens and as workers. To productively engage in our democracy and compete in our global economy, all students will need strong, well-rounded academic foundations; cultural and global competencies; the ability to collaborate, communicate, and solve problems; and strong digital literacy skills. And their teachers and principals – who are critical to ensuring this high-quality education – need a similar and wide range of knowledge, skills, and strategies to guide their students. Now more than ever, to meet the challenges that confront us, we must take bold steps to transform and elevate the teaching profession to ensure that highly skilled and effective educators are at the helm.

THE GOAL

There is no one path to success. Different districts, schools, principals, and teachers will employ different approaches and take different pathways. But the goal remains constant: that every student exits high school prepared for postsecondary study, well-informed as a citizen, and
ready for the workplace. We therefore judge our success in transforming the teaching profession by our students’ outcomes:

- High levels of student achievement, judged by multiple measures that assess students’ ability to understand and apply the knowledge and skills that matter most to their readiness for college, careers, and citizenship;
- Increased equity, judged by continuously narrowing the gaps in achievement and opportunity between more and less privileged populations of students; and
- Increased global competitiveness, judged by American students’ academic performance on internationally benchmarked measures.

THE ELEMENTS OF A TRANSFORMED PROFESSION

The core elements of a transformed profession will include—

1. A Culture of Shared Responsibility and Leadership: In a transformed profession, educators take collective ownership for student learning; structures of shared decision-making and open-door practice provide educators with the collaborative autonomy to do what is best for each student; and the profession takes upon itself the responsibility for ensuring that high standards of practice are met. In this professional culture, teachers and principals together make the primary decisions about educator selection, assignment, evaluation, dismissal, and career advancement – with student learning at the center of all such decisions.

2. Top Talent, Prepared for Success: Students with effective teachers perform at higher levels; they have higher graduation rates, higher college-going rates, higher levels of civic participation, and higher lifetime earnings. Thus, attracting a high-performing and diverse pool of talented individuals to become teachers and principals is a critical priority – whether these are new graduates or career switchers, and whether they enter the profession through traditional or alternative pathways. We must support programs that prepare highly effective educators and offer high quality and substantive curricula and clinical preparation experiences. We should expand the most successful programs, help other programs improve, and close down the lowest-performing programs if they fail to improve after receiving support. Preparation should include significant clinical opportunities that involve highly effective teachers or principals to oversee, mentor, and evaluate aspiring educators (preferably in the school environments in which the candidates will ultimately work). Further, aspiring educators must meet a high bar for entering the profession, demonstrating strong knowledge in the content they teach; have mastered a repertoire of instructional strategies and know when to use each appropriately; have the dispositions and aptitudes to work effectively with students
and with colleagues; and are learners themselves who know how to plan purposefully, analyze student learning outcomes, reflect on their own practice, and adjust as needed.

3. Continuous Growth and Professional Development: Effective teachers and principals are career-long learners. Effective schools and districts are learning communities where teachers and principals individually and collaboratively continuously reflect on and improve their practice. Such communities of practice thrive when there is structured time for collaborative work informed by a rich array of data and access to internal and external expertise. We must take seriously the need to evaluate the efficacy of professional development so that we can more methodically improve it, channeling our investments into activities and supports that make a difference. From induction for novice teachers designed to accelerate their growth and development, to replicating the practices of the most accomplished teachers, professional development is a critical lever of improvement.

As a profession, we must develop greater competency in using it.

4. Effective Teachers and Principals: Effective educators have high standards of professional practice and demonstrate their ability to improve student learning. Thus, effectiveness must be evaluated based on measures of student academic growth, evidence from classroom and school practice, and contributions to colleagues and the school community. The results of the evaluations should guide professional support and development and inform personnel decisions such as teacher and principal assignments, the granting of professional status (e.g., tenure), promotion to leadership roles, and dismissal for those who, despite receiving support, are ineffective. Good evaluation systems should provide feedback to educators from both colleagues and supervisors that is meaningful, credible, and actionable, and should use evidence-based processes that are fair, accurate, and transparent.

5. A Professional Career Continuum with Competitive Compensation: Educators are one of our nation’s most valuable resources. We must create a profession that attracts great people into our schools and classrooms – and keeps them in the profession. To do this, we need to offer educators career pathways that provide opportunities for increasingly responsible roles, whether they choose to stay in the classroom, become instructional leaders, or move into administration. And these roles must be coupled with compensation that is high enough to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce; reflects the effectiveness, expertise, and contributions of each educator; and is consistent with the societal regard accorded to comparable professions.

6. Conditions for Successful Teaching and Learning: High-functioning systems can amplify the accomplishments of their educators, but a dysfunctional school or district can undermine the impact of even the best teachers. We need schools and districts whose climates and cultures,
use of time, approaches to staffing, use of technology, deployment of support services, and engagement of families and communities are optimized to continuously improve outcomes for the students they serve. Further, we must be prepared to get the best teachers and principals to the highest-need students (including low-income students, minority students, English learners, and students with disabilities), and to ensure that all students have access to the other resources (such as technology; instructional materials; and social, health, and nutritional services) necessary to support their academic success.

7. Engaged Communities: Finally, no community can flourish unless its children are safe, healthy, well-nourished, and well-educated; and no school can be a strong pillar of a thriving community without deep community responsibility for and ownership of the school’s academic success. Thus, recognizing that the fate of communities and their schools are inextricably linked, we must make schools stronger by educators embracing community resources, expertise, and activities; and we must make communities stronger by anchoring them around highly effective schools.