



NEGP MONTHLY

A monthly in-depth look at states and communities and their efforts to reach the National Education Goals
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Topic Highlighted in this Issue:

BRINGING ALL STUDENTS TO HIGH STANDARDS

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NEGP Hearing Sites in 2000:

Los Angeles, CA

Burlington, VT

Atlanta, Georgia

Chicago, Illinois

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NEGP HEARS THE EVIDENCE, SUGGESTS STEPS TO BRING ALL STUDENTS TO HIGH STANDARDS

District, state, and federal efforts at improving the nation's K-12 education system have focused on one overarching goal-to make sure all students meet high academic standards. Because there are tough challenges, the Goals Panel chair, Governor Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, focused a national teleconference and four regional field hearings on schools and states that have succeeded. The Panel heard testimony from educators who had overcome barriers and showed evidence of improved student achievement and, in some instances, showed truly dramatic progress. In examining these efforts, the National Education Goals Panel sought out the lessons to be learned and the policy directions the Panel recommends to others seeking to bring all students to high standards.

A report summarizing the evidence presented from these successful initiatives and their common themes was released at a public meeting of the National Education Goals Panel on December 7 in Washington, D.C. "I came away from the field hearings so optimistic," Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, the Panel chair, said at the meeting. Describing highlights from the testimony, he noted that one sure message from the report is that "the country needs to take note of the bipartisan interest in education."

The Panel adopted several recommendations for action based on the findings detailed in the report. The themes and the recommendations reflect testimony from a wide spectrum of people involved in assuring higher student achievement-students, teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, university presidents, business leaders, school board members, and academic researchers.

The report, *Bringing All Students to High Standards*, particularly concerns the kinds of policies made by districts and states that foster academic progress. Policies are important because they build



a framework for school change beyond the influence of a single, charismatic leader. They also assure that efforts are serving all students, not just a few. Schools respond to policies according to their own circumstances, but the hearings revealed certain common strategies useful for schools anywhere in the country.

High Expectations for All Students

The very real achievement gaps between white and minority students and between poor and non-poor students are considered unacceptable, rather than inevitable, in schools making excellent academic progress. Principals and superintendents testified that their schools have narrowed the performance gap because they set high expectations for all and accept no excuses for any student. When parents are coached on the importance of their children working harder in school, there is greater buy-in on the part of students, as happened in Los Angeles' enrollment in Advanced Placement classes.

In addition to state and local academic standards, policymaking to support high expectations can come from education institutions themselves. Georgia's state P-16 council, for example, ensures that all secondary school students have on-campus experiences that help them understand what they need to do to prepare for college.

Consistency Over Time

Schools that achieve academic progress rely on consistent policies and efforts, not silver-bullet solutions or programs. The expectations remain high, giving everyone learning targets they know in advance, building trust that the initiatives are not fads, and encouraging modifications and evolution rather than abandoning less-than-perfect attempts.

Texas, for example, started education reforms in the early 1990s and kept to the task through changes in state leadership, spurred by ongoing support of the business community. This long-term leadership was the primary reason why Texas, along with similar efforts in North Carolina, produced the most progress on the National Education Goals during the 1990s. On the other hand, California's policymaking has shifted over time, including its strategies on assessment and accountability, resulting in a regression of academic achievement in the same decade.

Clear Accountability

Many of the common themes expressed by local and state leadership that produce results at the classroom level reflected their response to pressures from accountability systems. Accountability keeps the focus on high expectations in every classroom. Some policies, as in Texas for example, require schools to make progress among all sub-groups of students, not just the achievement average for the whole school. Many set sanctions for schools that do not improve over time, as in Chicago where scores on standardized tests have increased substantially.

Schools of choice, such as charters, usually must meet state accountability measures to keep their charters, and in addition have a their own built-in accountability factor. Dissatisfied parents will choose other options. For the teachers at the Vaughn Learning Center in Los Angeles, the most significant accountability was internal, according to the principal, because they now had the authority to take "ownership" of the school and be responsible for its progress.



The National Education Goals Panel

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Using Data to Drive Improvement

To be consistent and focused, schools need reliable data and a capacity to analyze and use data to improve student achievement. Sometimes the data that used to leverage reforms have come from "outside" sources, such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Both the First in the World Consortium (a group of school districts north of Chicago) and the state of Minnesota used TIMSS to obtain data on their students and to determine their strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction.

Data from state accountability systems often drive successful efforts to close achievement gaps. Districts such as Brazosport, Texas, use state achievement data to implement quality improvements and monitor their progress. Similarly, six states use criteria developed by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award program to use data in a process intended to improve state department of education administrative operations.

Improving Teacher Quality

Those seeking to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap know that teacher quality is critical. Current and prospective teachers require increased knowledge and skills to teach to standards in classrooms today. The problem is exacerbated whenever teachers are assigned to teach subjects in which they are not prepared, especially in low-income schools.

Recruitment efforts to attract more able teachers are underway all over the country. Despite a teacher shortage, especially in certain areas such as math and science, states are raising the bar and taking steps to assure that present and new teachers have the background to teach in a standards-based environment. Connecticut, for example, sees the results of a long-term investment in preparing and supporting teachers in the reading performance of fourth-grade students, the highest in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In the mid-1980s, state policies established standards for the selection, preparation, induction and professional development of teachers. Coupled with a state achievement test, the efforts have paid off. District 2 in New York City has moved its students up academically by making professional development an essential part of teaching, dedicating funding and time to support teaching quality.

Some states and districts also are experimenting with alternative teacher compensation plans based on value-added data or performance-based data. School-wide rewards for improved student performance also are being used in about 20 states.



Expanding the School Day and Year

An underpinning of standards-based reforms is that the goals for students remain high, but the time provided to students to reach the goals is flexible. This is just beginning to be implemented as a policy in schools, but the few that have extended the school day and year can point to good results. After-school, Saturday, and summer opportunities for further learning give struggling students more time to meet expectations. An important factor, however, is quality use of additional time.

Support for Children and Families

Schools achieving greater academic success have learned that they must pay attention to the health and social services needs of their students and families. Schools can pinpoint problem areas, such as Chicago's decision to purchase eyeglasses for thousands of students needing them. They also can offer a convenient place for the delivery of services, such as the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers established by Kentucky's education reform plan. These centers, now in more than 1,000 of the state's 1,400 schools, help remove barriers to student achievement and also increase teachers' beliefs that collaborative efforts can overcome factors holding back student progress.

Many of those testifying at the hearings described special efforts to reach parents, such as with family literacy programs or, as in Vermont, with supports that begin even before children are born.

Linking Schools and Businesses

In addition to state-wide support from business groups that provides continuity for school improvement, as in Texas, many local efforts also reflect long-term, substantive interest of business leadership in helping schools with their goals. In Miami-Dade County, Florida, the school district and local businesses have partnered to locate schools for employees' children on business property. Business leaders also coach school districts and states that are implementing the Baldrige criteria.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The testimony presented to the National Education Goals Panel represented a range of initiatives and approaches to improve learning. More than diversity, however, the presenters made clear that progress was being made because of strategies that states began to take often a decade ago and have persisted in following. State policies are not the only reason many schools show extraordinary academic progress, despite great odds, but they often are the catalyst and the consistent influence on school and district efforts.

The hearings suggested refinements and further areas for state policymaking, which the Goals Panel summarized in a few recommendations. The Panel chair, Governor Tommy Thompson, will send the recommendations to all governors and state policymakers across the country, asking them to consider these policies in their school reform efforts. The recommendations adopted by the Goals Panel December 7 include:



THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS



Goal 1: Ready to Learn



Goal 2: School Completion



Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship



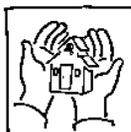
Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development



Goal 5: Mathematics and Science



Goal 6: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning



Goal 7: Safe, Disciplined and Alcohol- and Drug-free Schools



Goal 8: Parental Participation

School Leadership-

- Strong leadership at the school level is essential. Recommendation: *That schools of education and local school districts review how they identify and train potential school leaders, and elevate the attention and resources devoted to training school principals in instructional leadership aimed at increasing student achievement.*

Professional Development

- High-quality professional development for educators is necessary if student achievement is to improve. Recommendation: *That the National Education Goals Panel reaffirms the following elements of improved professional development, specifically: 1) Pre-service Teacher Education-that the accreditation of teacher education programs be linked both to the ability of their graduates to demonstrate mastery of the academic standards they are preparing to teach, as well as to their competence as teachers; 2) Initial Teacher Licensure and Certification-that they be linked to teachers' demonstration of knowledge of academic standards and related assessments; 3) State Support of Professional Development-that states support and reward teachers who complete continuing education and professional development activities linked to standards that increase their teaching competence, and combine the study of teaching, learning, and subject matter knowledge; whether offered at schools or universities, such opportunities should last long enough and be sufficiently intense to make teachers more effective at helping all students meet high academic standards.*

Involving Higher Education

- Higher education needs to be a stronger partner in standards-based reform. Recommendation: *That state policy should link academic standards to the accreditation of teacher education programs, the certification of teachers, and the provision of university-based professional development. State policy should encourage school-college collaboration from the establishment of formal K-16 councils to informal cooperation. Further, the admissions requirements of public colleges and universities should be linked to state academic standards.*

Extra Help for Students

- Testing student achievement will not improve student learning unless it triggers additional help for the stu



What is the National Education Goals Panel?

The National Education Goals Panel is a unique bipartisan body of state and federal officials created in 1990 by President Bush and the nation's Governors to report state and national progress and urge education improvement efforts to reach a set of National Education Goals.

Who serves on the National Education Goals Panel and how are they chosen?

Eight governors, four state legislators, four members of the U.S. Congress, and two members appointed by the President serve on the Goals Panel. Members are appointed by the leadership of the National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the U.S. Senate and House, and the President.

What does the Goals Panel do?

The Goals Panel has been charged to:

- Report state and national progress toward the National Education Goals.
- Work to establish a system of high academic standards and assessments.
- Identify promising and effective reform strategies.
- Recommend actions for state, federal and local governments to take.
- Build a nationwide, bipartisan consensus to achieve the Goals.

The annual Goals Report and other publications of the Panel are available without charge upon request from the Goals Panel or at its web site www.negp.gov. Publications requests can be made by mail, fax, or e-mail, or by Internet.

dents and schools that need it. Recommendation: *That states should provide policy and resources to give students additional opportunities, such as summer school, after-school programs or other instructional opportunities with high-quality teaching and assistance where it is needed.*

Data Use

- Successful schools use a wealth of information from student assessments and community outreach (beyond student scores and rankings) to guide decisions on policy, practice, and resource allocation. Recommendation: *That schools of education and in-service professional development be asked to provide training in the fundamentals of data use so that educators and administrators are prepared to base their decisions on data and information; local businesses can be an important resource in these efforts.*

Staying the Course

- Statewide improvements in student achievement are most likely when states ensure continuity of education reform policies. Recommendation: *That states attempt to maintain consistency, predictability and fairness in their education reform policies by making continual mid-course refinements in efforts to define and implement academic standards, seizing every opportunity to explain their purpose and address public concerns.*

Upcoming Panel Events and Products

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| January 18, 2001 | Next meeting of the Panel's Measuring Success Task Force, chaired by Gov. John McKernan of Maine. At the Panel's December 7 meeting Gov. McKernan indicated the kinds of new data that the Task Force considers essential for the nation to measure the effects of education reform efforts and the Panel to measure progress towards shared education goals. January 18 Task Force members will discuss incentives, policy changes and budget needs for securing better national education data. |
| February 24, 2001 | Meeting of the National Education Goals Panel to receive and respond to the data recommendations from Gov. McKernan, and announce plans of the new 2001 Panel chair. |



Products

Now available from the Panel (www.negp.gov):

Bringing All Students to High Standards by Robert Rothman. Report (described above) of education practices used in schools and states that have significantly raised student achievement.

January release:

Promising Practices 2000: Progress Toward the Goals. Descriptions of state policies in 20 states performing well and/or improving on 8 NEGP measures of progress. Contact information as well as policy summaries are given for the following states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia and Wyoming.