



“The Vision and Role of CCSSO in the 21st Century”
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Please note, this document is written as a speech and coordinates with Gene Wilhoit’s PowerPoint presentation.

The United States of America celebrated a milestone last month. We are now 300,000,000 strong. Of those Americans, there are approximately 50,000,000 k-12 students with a little more than 3,000,000 educators working with them, expending approximately \$463 billion in public taxpayer dollars.

And, there are only 51 men and women in the states and the District of Columbia, five in the territories, and one at the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)—just 57 people—who have the awesome responsibility to manage and lead this loosely coupled public enterprise.

We are privileged to be in the offices we hold. Historically, our responsibilities have been of great importance; yet, today our new promise to America is transformational, to educate children to levels higher than any time in our history and to leave none of them behind.

And, we know we face a very different world. Our economy has become global. A recent publication estimated that economic reordering of the world will eliminate national economic boundaries and result in China, the U.S., and India being the largest economies, in that order. And, the inherent relationship between knowledge and economic progress is cemented in the minds of the leaders of those, and other, nations.

The “melting pot” is experiencing a rapid demographic shift. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) predicts in just 10 years 25% of our students will be English Language Learners. And we face a dangerous national learning gap; placing students of color and the poor in lifelong jeopardy and through the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) we have been shown the “international gap” between our students and those of other nations.

In this environment, your board has given me and the staff of CCSSO the honor to lead, serve, and support your efforts and to advocate for your interests. This role presents not only great opportunities but also great challenges, as all important work should.

I have characterized this new work as a once in a lifetime opportunity to: 1) assert the appropriate role of state education agencies in education policymaking, 2) lead an educational learning renaissance, 3) influence the national agenda in education, and 4)

meet a promise that we have made to every single child in America—regardless of race, ethnicity or color, parentage and poverty, location and geography—we will educate each and all of them to high levels.

What is exciting is that we, as chief state school officers, are prepared to deliver on this promise, largely due to your previous and current work. I and others in this room have “gone to school” with some masterful leaders of CCSSO over recent years.

Peter McWalters brought us face-to-face with the importance of leadership, helping us move from generalized rhetoric to a set of comprehensive strategies that are a cornerstone of much of our work today.

Suellen Reed charged us be thoughtful, as we penned our future expectations for our children, to hold dear the responsibility we have to insure this generation is prepared to participate in this democratic society.

Mike Ward asked us to confront an ugly reality we all face, that far too many of our young people do not make it to graduation. We struggled that year to find better ways to serve, as we continue to struggle today.

Ted Stilwell reminded us of our historic roots and laid out the difficulties all of us were to experience leading change. Ted challenged us to dig deeper, to embrace the complexities inherent in our work and called on us to deliver on the issues of standards and assessments, improving instructional practice and linking research and development to effective instruction.

And, we could not have had a better match between strong leadership and historic context than when Dave Driscoll reminded us there are times to sit, but 2004 was a time to stand, to stay at the table to craft common sense and logical changes to a law we all believe is right minded and morally-based. Dave worked tirelessly in words and actions and with a passion for all children, to link our work in our states to what should and could be at the national level and to “take on these goals and lead the way...to be out front and proactive”.

And this year, Valerie Woodruff walked us outside our national borders into the realities of world changes. Her global imperative caused us to rethink basic assumptions about every aspect of our work. One of the greatest gifts one person can give to others is to help them see the world in a new context.

And, Valerie, you demonstrated to the rest of us through your work back home in Delaware, a shining example of what we all have been talking about—a child-centered, world-class standards based, comprehensive education system, grounded in research and best practices, supported by quality tools for educators and inclusive in its work.

And on Sunday morning of this Annual Policy Forum, Libby Burmaster will outline her agenda for CCSSO this coming year. Her call to action will build upon what has come before and will challenge us to new levels of leadership called for in the 21st century.

Because of our individual work as states and through our collaborative work at the Council, we are more focused, connected, and united in our vision and goals and we have a greater capacity to lead.

Yes, we have much more to learn and farther to travel on this continuous journey, but across the country today, our public pronouncements as chiefs are very similar. They reflect our shared belief system and the growth we have made. The future work before us will be just as challenging as that we have experienced and must be more focused and more precise.

So, tonight, I'd like to share with you about what I -- as one of you -- see as our role in the next great challenge in public education in America; the challenge of educating every one of our children to graduate prepared to be productive members of a global society. Those words might sound vaguely familiar to you – they are similar but not exact to the current CCSSO vision statement. Although our vision was written several years ago, I'm not sure we were thinking on a global scale then like many of us are doing now.

Therefore, allow me to offer my thoughts for what we in education must be thinking about, as well as how CCSSO can and will support change in the system.

We at CCSSO will be watching, listening, seeking guidance and direction from you, we will take seriously our responsibility to raise issues we see on the horizon, we will call “family meetings” to discuss our triumphs and those areas we have fallen short and we will always call on you to lead and do the morally right thing for our children.

This is your organization and it will go where you steer it. Direct and open conversations during this forum and throughout the years ahead are essential.

Facilitating High Quality Learning for Each One of Our Students to Succeed in the 21st Century

It all starts in the middle. Our challenge is to transform learning for each of our students in a way that makes them not only productive members of our country, but prepares them for success in a global context that takes full advantage of the 21st century in which we currently operate.

Let me say that again ... in which we currently operate. Isn't it strange? We talk about new learning for a new century and preparing students for 21st century learning and we talk about those things like they're still years away – the reality is they are not – and we must step up our efforts to transform learning now to deliver on our promise to children.

Collaborative Problem Solving

This may seem like a funny place to start – sure we all agree we should be working with others and collaboratively solving these issues – but we don't do it often enough or it is not a central precept driving our actions.

In order for CCSSO to lead the transformation of the nature of learning in this new century, each of you has a responsibility to develop a systemic outreach to those who have similar ambitions and convictions to reach mutual goals and CCSSO must model such behaviors. No one individual or organization has all the answers. We need help from the best minds, creative thinkers, and hardest workers. We have too many intractable problems, like far too many drop outs and intolerable learning gaps, to solve alone. Not one of us has yet gone to scale with best practice. Not one has the equations for turning around toxic environments.

Through your organization, we can link with others to build new systems using quality research from our best universities and federal research and dissemination systems, best practices from schools, districts, states, and from around the world, as well as innovative new models that make learning unlike anything we've seen in the past.

A recent business article stated that in the next five years, we will experience more inventions and innovative new products, gadgets, and gizmos than have been produced in the past 50 years. The rate of change in the global knowledge economy is impacting everything we do – including everything we do in education. It is our responsibility as leaders to promote, identify, and raise up this innovation in education and use it to change the landscape of teaching and learning.

Student, Family, and Public Engagement

We are stewards of PUBLIC schools. In this democracy the public (students, families, and citizens) are our primary stakeholders. Every once in a while, the public reminds us, as they did earlier this month, that they are the ultimate owners and decision-makers. They send us small signals when they are discontented and confused and when circumstances get out of bounds, they step in and correct.

There are lots of signals being sent today that should be getting our attention, causing us to question, and compelling us to address. Often, these signals come from our lowest performing schools in our most disadvantaged communities. We must look to what the families of those children we serve are saying as well as the public and community served by the schools, and also we must consider what students are telling us they need from their schools today. When we truly listen to all these voices then we will have started to build the system that will educate each of our children for success.

And when we listen, how can we ignore the reality of mass democratization and of societal choice? How do we provide dynamic learning options for each child and family, especially in low-performing environments? It really is a matter of equity. I believe our current conversation and resulting schemes around choice are 20th century solutions to 21st century cries. Shouldn't we be the ones expanding thinking about a multitude of publicly sponsored opportunities to accelerate learning?

Standards

For the last several months many of us have begun to hear rumblings that included the words “national standards” from diverse individuals and groups including governors, mayors, and former federal officials.

I submit to you that in a system of education that serves such a highly diverse and transitory culture that shared standards aren't simply an option but a mandatory conversation.

And let's be clear about what these standards should and shouldn't be. They should create a high floor from which states could build but they should not be the ceiling. They should be created by a wide array of experts and educators working together. They should be open for voluntary participation.

They should not be federally driven. These internationally competitive standards must reflect knowledge, thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as the school to work, college preparedness, and 21st century learning that will prepare students for whatever path they choose.

We should be considerate of all students' learning needs, whether the student lives in inner-city Philadelphia or rural Iowa – we have a transient population and children may find themselves in any number of school settings during their k-12 careers – none of them should have to worry about whether they will be behind their peers when they arrive. Each of them deserves to be prepared at the same high level. And all of them are needed as skilled learners in our country's knowledge-based economy.

I do not see an option on this issue, as leaders of education in this country, we are the designated agents to wrestle with this issue, like it or not. Does anyone in this room honestly believe that this issue is not coming to a head, and if we ignore, it will go away?

I remind you of the upcoming report from ED comparing and contrasting our state standards with National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the contrasting and confusing state report cards from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Fordham Foundation and Education Counts, the public statement from the Executive Director of the Council of Great City Schools calling for assessments tied to national standards, the promising work of the American Diploma Project under Achieve and the upcoming RFP from a group of states led by Ohio for development of a common Algebra 2 exam, and the growing calls for international comparisons supported by data from TIMSS and PISA.

Let's not kid ourselves on this one – this is a heavy lift for us as an organization, and collectively, as the broader education community. This will require a diverse range of thoughtful leaders and opinion makers coming together to ensure that what is educationally sound for all children is paramount and that we check at the door the

collective ideologies, biases, and preconceived notions about what standards are and are not.

Will this be easy? No; nor should it be, but when we collectively agree that this is the right thing to do for each child and we collectively agree to begin to address this issue then we are headed in the right direction. This is an area in which I believe CCSSO can be a galvanizing and central player and I look forward to talking with the chiefs more throughout the coming days about this challenge and how we at CCSSO can lead and collaborate in this agenda.

Coherent and Balances System of Assessment and Accountability

We can't talk about standards without talking about assessments; I'm talking about ensuring a coherent, balanced – and let me add – educationally appropriate use of a variety of assessments.

There is a rightful place for summative assessments, and we and the feds must continue our efforts to get it right. I promise this is priority one for the board and staff. As we all live in this era dominated by adequate yearly progress (AYP), we as leaders must move beyond assessments that track a given point in time to a variety of assessments that measure growth of students over time toward achievement of high standards.

We must lead the way to discover how to utilize portfolios, adaptive, formative, and other forms of assessment, provide educationally sound alternative assessments for non-native language speakers and students with special needs, and find the right balance of accountability measurement so as to satisfy the requirements of NCLB and improve the use of assessments as an integral part of the learning process.

We should not be against assessment in any way – it's a natural part of a sound education process – we should however demand that our use of assessment be educationally—and not politically—driven and that at the heart of assessment are the children we seek to serve.

Robust and Comprehensive Data Systems

Our assessment data are only as good as the data systems that collect and report those data – all of us need better systems.

The growing consensus is that in the era of standards based reform, a major missing piece of the puzzle is data. Every state must quickly develop a robust system of student data and information that allows us to not only report on assessment data for state and NCLB accountability purposes, but to use those data for diagnostic and instructional decision making.

The data we provide to the public must be thorough, transparent, and useable by educators, parents, researchers, and business leaders, among others.

And we must develop our systems with each other in mind. What's wrong with all of us working toward common definitions, similar collection and reporting methodologies?

Consider what this would do to reduce misrepresentation of our work, to answer persistent problems, to identify outstanding practices, and to place us at the center of the national conversation about data use. Surely, we have learned from our early efforts to shape the national reporting systems that cannot afford to be in a position of constantly reacting.

It is important that we are able to look at a student's, school's, district's, state's and nation's progress and make determinations in real time based on accurate data and information. We will need to work with a variety of different players in this area; but again, by building on the data quality work already begun and through team work we can transform the data we use 1) to inform this nation, 2) make better policy decisions, and 3) improve the lives of students.

Continuum of Development for Educators

Of course none of the proceeding discussion matters at all if the teachers in the classroom and the principals in the schools aren't trained to cause learning to occur in a manner consistent with the 21st century. The role of teacher in this new equation must not only change, but it must be elevated to that of true professional. In order to do this we must of course transform the way instruction is delivered, the way teachers are prepared and credentialed and the way teachers are continuously trained, mentored, supported, and compensated in their profession.

It is encouraging to hear new conversations about moving from teacher "quality" to teaching "effectiveness," which should free us up to marry what are now separate and disconnected conversations.

And we are losing too many educators. Working conditions, limited authority to make decisions, and lack of administrative support and advancement affect performance and longevity.

We have authority and/or persuasion to do something about every one of these issues.

And we cannot ignore Kati Haycock's disturbing message about the placement of less experienced, transitory, and emergency certified teachers in schools serving students in poverty. We must achieve equity in this critical area.

The new equation of teaching in the 21st century requires a complete continuum of professional development for educators from pre-service and beyond. It will require us to rethink preparation programs and engage the higher ed community in a dialogue that not only encourages but demands a change in the way in which teachers enter the profession.

This continuum of support includes those beyond the classroom and building, to administrators and our own state education agency (SEA) staffs, to equip them to add value to the learning of all students.

Systems of Support for Student Learning

In the 21st century, targeted, results-driven learning for each child is the new constant, the new standard, with time, place, and strategy being variables.

The unspoken reality that we must begin to verbalize is an individualized learning journey for each child, a centerpiece of learning in the 21st century. Supports that encourage student learning outside the four walls of the classroom and use modern technology must be the norm, not the exception. This will require us to lead conversations with educators about new and diverse learning opportunities – enriched early childhood experiences for all of our children, use of public and private resources like libraries and museums, enriched after school programs, whether they be conducted at school or in a location outside the school context.

In the 21st century, learning will take place 24/7/7—that means any time any location on the 7 continents—and our efforts to enable this learning must be supported at all times.

Efficient and Effective Use of Resources

We can't accomplish any of these without the efficient and effective use of all resources available to us. These include human, fiscal, and technological resources; and as stewards of the public resources, first we must show them that we are using them wisely and efficiently.

Then, we must be willing to advocate in our states to ensure that the task of facilitating learning in the 21st century is supported in the highest possible way. One of the toughest challenges we face as education leaders is transforming the national commitment to education.

Moreover, we must come together to advocate for education's proper investment of federal resources.

As our President Valerie Woodruff advocated for greater federal support in her recent testimony to the Commission on No Child Left Behind, she stated: "Even though federal law generally requires state standards, state accountability determinations, state data reporting, state systems of rewards and consequences, and more, federal funding generally treats states as administrative overhead to be minimized instead of a core player in standards-based reform." This must change.

This is a very large and demanding agenda. This is an extremely complex arena. This is the most important work adults are doing in this country. This is our agenda. Yes, CCSSO will intensify our efforts to "Help Our Members Educate America." We must do more - we will work to become the preeminent and most trusted voice on educating America's children and youth. We will be a recognized spokesperson for public

education. And we will do so by collaborating as members, CCSSO staff, and other partners through leadership, advocacy, and service.

Thank you.