

# Supporting Secondary School Redesign

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## SAVE THE DATE

### CCSSO Secondary School Redesign Conference

The Council of Chief State School Officers' Secondary School Redesign Project will be convening a meeting from April 1–3 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Austin, Texas. The goal of this meeting is to provide state education agencies with the opportunity to support state capacity building for effective delivery of research- and evidence-based secondary school redesign strategies.

CCSSO will sponsor a three-member team from each state, although all states are encouraged to send additional team members (partners in the work). Those state teams

will work in multi-state groups on one of several key issue areas of secondary school redesign, including (but not limited to) adolescent literacy, early college and dual enrollment opportunities, leadership for facilitating change, and improving instruction.

More information will be communicated to chief state school officers and lead state agency high school improvement staff in late January. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Angela Hernandez-Marshall at [angelahm@ccsso.org](mailto:angelahm@ccsso.org) or (202) 336-7036.

## RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

### ***Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners.***

Deborah J. Short & Shannon Fitzsimmons, Center for Applied Linguistics



This Alliance for Excellent Education [report](#) to the Carnegie Corporation of New York finds that the nation's growing English language learner (ELL) population, which increased by more than 65 percent between 1994 and 2004, has been largely ignored as policymakers consider ways to improve adolescent reading and writing proficiency levels. The report cautions that the same literacy interventions will not necessarily work for both native English speakers and ELL students. And because adolescent English language learners enter schools with different levels of literacy proficiency, both in English and in their native languages, there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to the literacy challenges that confront them. The report recommends different strategies for surmounting the six challenges it identifies to improving the literacy development of English language learners.



### ***The College Ladder: Linking Secondary and Postsecondary Education for Success for All Students.***

Jennifer Brown Lerner & Betsy Brand, American Youth Policy Forum

This [compendium](#) identifies and describes schools, programs, and policies that link secondary and postsecondary education learning options (SPLOs), which help students earn college credit or take college-level courses while in high school. Through profiles of various SPLOs, practitioners can learn what models and strategies are cost effective and may produce positive student outcomes.

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## BUILDING STATE FRAMEWORKS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL REDESIGN

### New Hampshire's High School Redesign Efforts: From High Schools to Learning Communities

Three years ago, the New Hampshire Department of Education created a High School Redesign Task Force to help develop a vision for New Hampshire high schools. The task force was driven by high school redesign efforts in New England, particularly in Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont, and by the Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University, as well as by national initiatives led by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Governors Association, and the U.S. Department of Education. The task force was also formed to address the state's concerns regarding high school dropouts; in 2004–05, there was a 12.9 percent statewide high school dropout rate.

The team organized statewide stakeholder focus groups, researched successful high school models, held statewide high school reform summits, and ultimately created the vision document, [\*New Hampshire's Vision for Redesign: Moving from High Schools to Learning Communities\*](#). That document included input from a variety of stakeholders including students, practitioners, higher education officials, the business community, and policymakers.

The task force, through its research and focus groups, uncovered what was and was not working in the state's high schools. It determined that programs based on higher levels of rigor and postsecondary expectations, such as Running Start, Advanced Placement, and the International Baccalaureate program, were doing quite well. Efforts that emphasized the relevance of learning, such as internships and work-based learning, career and technical education's use of apprenticeships and career academies, community service, and performance- and project-based learning, also were making an impact.

Conversely, the task force found that "old style" teaching methods (teacher-focused teaching instead of student-focused learning) were not working. In addition, high student-teacher ratios, too much focus on the breadth of curriculum versus the depth, and an in-

flexible daily schedule and early start times were not optimal for learning. The team also noted the math, science, and social studies curricula were not keeping pace with real-world expectations.

As a result, New Hampshire's "Follow The Child" initiative, as well as new requirements in the state's Minimum Standards for School Approval, incorporate the findings of the task force in an attempt to redesign the state's high schools and emphasize learning styles that are interdisciplinary, experiential, competency-based, and applicable to the real world.

#### Follow The Child

New Hampshire's "Follow The Child" initiative was established by Commissioner Lyonel Tracy and is the state's overarching educational effort, which emphasizes personalized learning and assessment. The initiative's goals are as follows:

- All high school graduates will be college, work, and life ready.
- All students will maintain proper physical fitness and personal health.
- All students will be confident, responsible, contributing citizens.

The [Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations](#) is a partner with New Hampshire in providing professional development and support to districts and schools interested in being a part of the initiative.

#### Minimum Standards for School Approval

In addition to the state's "Follow The Child" initiative, some new and unique provisions in New Hampshire's Minimum Standards for School Approval were promulgated by the State Board of Education in 2005 and support the state's high school redesign work. The provisions demonstrate the state board's commitment to providing schools with both flexibility and opportunity, and do the following:

- emphasize personalization of learning
- provide greater flexibility at the local level in developing a school calendar
- allow for extended learning opportunities for credit towards graduation
- validate the use of distance learning and technology as integral parts of the learning process
- increase rigor by raising the expectations for high school credit requirements in math and health
- set a three-year transition process so that, by the 2008–2009 school year, all high schools in the state move from a Carnegie Unit-based grading system to credit based on competency demonstration

According to Paul Leather, director of the Division of Career Technology and Adult Learning and director of high school redesign at the New Hampshire Department of Education, there are challenges to the development of a public school system based on the validation of community experience for credit. The needs of students who cannot afford to pay for private instruction, who do not have the transportation resources to take advantage of learning opportunities outside of school, who attend school in areas of the state with varied and limited resources, and/or who attend schools that cannot afford the latest technologies need to be taken into account. He says what is important in this design is that all students have the opportunity to learn in flexible environments, regardless of district-to-district differences.

#### Redefining the School Year

New Hampshire's new Minimum Standards for School Approval define the school year through hours of instructional time per year, instead of using the traditional 180-day calendar.



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## Supporting the Achievement of Each Secondary School Student: Ohio's Striving Readers Grant Initiative

### Literacy Supports for Students in Greatest Need

The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS), in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Ohio State University (OSU), was the only state-level recipient of the most recent U.S. Department of Education Striving Readers Grants competition. Ohio's comprehensive literacy project is designed to address the literacy needs of secondary students within the state's juvenile corrections facilities. The plan demonstrates a clear movement toward strategic cross-agency collaboration and a commitment to support effective literacy instruction for each student in Ohio.

The five-year grant funds allow Ohio DYS to implement [Scholastic's Read 180](#) intervention program across the seven sites that provide education programs for incarcerated youth. The program will be adapted to the various middle school, high school, alternative, and GED instructional settings that make up the range of services at these sites.

Lisa Crider, project director of the Striving to Achieve in Reading and Re-Entry (STARR) program at DYS, heads the Striving Readers-supported efforts. "We identified Scholastic's Read 180 as a strong program that would work well for our students." She explained that the majority of students are 14 to 16 years of age but their literacy and writing skills typically fall well below the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade reading levels.

### Building a Cadre of Literacy Teachers

To ensure effective implementation of the curriculum, DYS has partnered with ODE to take advantage of its State Institute for Reading Instruction, or SIRI model, to train the STARR program's site-based literacy coaches and site administrators. Crider hopes that this institute will enhance teachers' ability to teach literacy across the

content areas and provide strong student supports for the DYS writing academies.

In addition to the initial training, DYS will continue to convene monthly meetings on site with each literacy coach to ensure successful transfer of knowledge and to address emergent needs. Trainers will also work closely with literacy coaches and administrators to assess student needs and continue to customize the training to best fit those needs.

At this early stage, ODE and DYS staffs have already identified critical needs, including defining what the coaching should look like and providing greater support in the area of building capacity. According to Angela Sangeorge, director of ODE's Office of Reading Improvement, the purpose for also providing school administrators with professional development is to drive greater articulation of cross-content literacy throughout the school buildings.

### Taking SIRI Statewide

SIRI is a 25-hour workshop, usually implemented over 8 weeks, that has been embraced by school districts across the state. To date, SIRI staff has already trained more than 15,000 secondary school teachers to teach literacy across the core content areas. The supports to DYS, as well as similar support that the Office of Reading Improvement is providing to Gear-Up federal grantees across the state, together continue to inform the work of the Office of Reading Improvement. The office's latest plan is to roll out similar professional development strategies for middle schools and high schools across the state.

This new statewide initiative incorporates e-learning modules as part of the professional development to teachers, and officials anticipate that all teachers will begin receiving training by summer 2007. The decision to use e-modules resulted from early findings from SIRI's independent evaluators at the Univer-

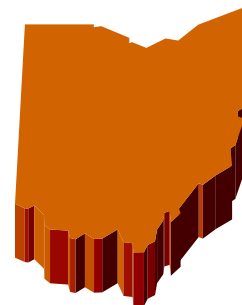
sity of Cincinnati. They discovered that while SIRI practices were successful in knowledge transfer to teachers, there was less assurance that the train-the-trainer model being used could ensure fidelity of the content. E-modules will allow for "virtual" and more direct instruction to teachers.

### Ensuring Statewide Efforts are Strategic

With strong encouragement from Ohio State Superintendent Susan Zelman, the staff at the Office of Reading Improvement is also working to ensure that their work is not done in isolation of other important school improvement efforts by state and regional agencies.

According to Sangeorge, the Office of Reading Improvement staff continually work to inform the regional school improvement teams of the products that ODE has made available to educators. In addition, they work with school improvement teams to help identify appropriate and effective intervention strategies for needs-improvement schools.

To find out more about the Striving Readers Grants Program, click [here](#). For more information about ODE's Office of Reading Improvement, click [here](#).



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### *(New Hampshire's Redesign Efforts, continued from Page 2)*

Combined with the harnessing of community resources, students can fulfill credit requirements at various times and places and not necessarily inside the school walls.

The transition from the traditional 180-day calendar to a flexible calendar based on hours has been developed as an opportunity to provide schools with innovative pathways of delivering education that address students' personal learning needs.

### **Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs)**

New Hampshire's new rule on extended learning allows credit to be granted for activities, including (but not limited to) independent study, private instruction, team sports, performing groups, internships, community service, work study, distance learning, and dual college enrollment.

The allowance of ELOs for credit enables students to propose, according to local policy, alternative approaches to acquiring skills and knowledge other than in the traditional classroom setting. The teacher's role in extended learning is to ensure that the approval of proposals must be based on the student meeting the standards of competency established by the district and school before credit toward graduation can be earned.

If a district chooses to implement extended learning opportunities, it must establish local board policies describing the process of approval, including the expected involvement of the student and parents in the process, and other terms and conditions such as the demonstration of competencies gained through the experience and the awarding of credit. Local policy should also indicate how extended learning opportunities will be made available for all students. Certified school personnel must oversee, plan, approve, and assess the program of study and the ELO must be prior approved.

According to Paul Leather, this rule reinforces the concept of learning at any time and any place as long as the quality of the learning opportunity meets the same high standards expected in the classroom. The experience must be rigorous, relevant to the student, and personalized. Personalization, in this case, should connect the teacher, student, and community in authentic ways.

### **Moving from Carnegie Units to a Competency-Based System**

The New Hampshire Minimum Standards for School Approval also address the transition from a system based on the Carnegie Unit to a system that uses the demonstration of mastery of competencies to measure student achievement. By the 2008–2009 school year, all school districts will be asked by the state department of education to certify and demonstrate that they have a process in place to assess competency for all courses at the high school level. It

is not anticipated that actual course level competencies will be reviewed by the department as part of the school approval process. Instead, the department will require local districts to assure that a plan and method of assessing course-level competencies has been developed, supported by policy, that includes the implementation of state standards. The plan and method will be regularly reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness.

In emphasizing the need for local flexibility and autonomy for school districts to implement competency assessment, the state has given local districts the following responsibilities:

- identify or develop high school course competencies
- decide on appropriate competency assessment methods
- define sufficiency (in other words, identifying the necessary and sufficient evidence for students to demonstrate mastery of competencies and thus pass the course and gain the credit)

While sufficiency of evidence and appropriate assessment methods are local responsibilities, the school districts are encouraged to think of these as extending beyond a single test to multiple forms of assessment.

Districts and high schools are also encouraged to focus on defining and reaching a common understanding of the parameters and critical indicators of their competency assessment process, rather than writing competencies on a course-by-course basis. The department is identifying templates and models for competencies, and has started the process of collecting competencies to share with all districts and high schools in the state.

Leather says the state hopes the change from Carnegie Units to credit by demonstration of mastery of competencies will help schools focus on student learning at a high level, rather than on seat time to earn credits. The new system should also help districts think about the standards they want students to reach and how students will demonstrate what they have learned. Districts will be accountable for their students reaching acceptable levels of achievement.

### **State Technical Assistance and Support**

School districts cannot be expected to implement New Hampshire's new high school redesign requirements without support from the state, especially since the requirements challenge schools to think very differently about how they operate. In the past year, New Hampshire received a small grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) to help implement the competency assessment process. New Hampshire also received a grant under phase two of the National Governors Association's Honor States Grant Program to turn around low-performing high schools. The state has used those and other grant dollars, in addition to some

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state and NCLB money, to provide various forms of technical assistance to its districts.

For example, New Hampshire sponsored a year-long, 45-person state council to examine the tough questions about what moving away from Carnegie Units and using extended learning opportunities and assessing the mastery of course-level competencies means for districts.

The department has also built and supported a series of regional high school principal networks to shore up the kind of whole school change necessary to implement the new model. It has partnered with the New Hampshire School Administrators Association and the New Hampshire School Principals Association to help their members better understand the new mandates, look at promising practices, and learn from successes in other states.

In addition, the state has provided mini-grants to lead groups of districts and individual schools to start the process of implementing a performance-based system. It has also supported and disseminated competency development and assessment strategies through the regional Technical Assistance Centers and has created a comprehensive state-level technical assistance and monitoring process for high schools (with support from the Center for Secondary School Redesign) that will assess school readiness to put the performance-based model into place.

Finally, the state's P–16 Working Group will review and evaluate secondary curriculum expectations, competencies, and student transcript design in a longitudinal process to evaluate the effectiveness of New Hampshire's evolving model in better preparing students for success in college and careers.

## RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

***Measured Progress: A Report on the High School Reform Movement***, Craig D. Jerald



In this [report](#), the author summarizes research findings on high school reform conducted in the past half-decade. He argues that the American high school is not as impervious to change as many believe it to be. Reformers all over the country are actively working toward forming smaller and more personal learning communities to foster positive relationships between students and teachers, are offering more curriculum-based and rigorous courses that are aligned with workforce requirements, are creating intensive “catch-up” courses that enable students to get back on track to college, and are forming partnerships with communities for a more integrated approach to education. The report concludes that these strategies, in combination with strong planning and leadership at all levels, should be followed on an ongoing basis to make continuous progression in high school reform.

***Expanding Learning Time in High Schools***, Hilary C. Pennington, Center for American Progress



This [report](#) examines high schools that have

implemented an extended learning day as part of the required educational program for all students, rather than just providing voluntary after-school programs. It explores particular issues related to expanding time at the high school level, presents examples of how schools accomplish this, and analyzes the implications that would arise for school design, capacity, and financing if these approaches were applied on a more systemic scale.

***Are they Really Ready to Work: Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century U.S. Workforce***



The Conference Board, Corporate Offices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management conducted a study of the corporate perspective

on the readiness of new entrants into the U.S. workforce by level of educational attainment. According to the [report](#), over 40 percent of recent high school graduates are not sufficiently prepared for jobs after high school. Based on a survey of 431 human resource professionals, the findings reveal frustration among employers at the lack of preparedness of all new workforce entrants—both high school graduates and two- and four-year college graduates.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. Through leadership, advocacy, and service, the Council assists chief state school officers and their organizations in achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life.

**Council of Chief State School Officers**

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