



**COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS
Recommendations for the President-Elect's Education Transition Team and Congress**

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) believes that every student should have access to a high quality public education. Accordingly, the nation's chief state school officers are continuing to lead efforts to dramatically improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. The foundations for comprehensive standards-based reform are now in place, nationwide, and state education agencies (SEAs) are now implementing next generation systems of accountability and assessment, new models of teacher effectiveness and school improvement, and innovative support strategies for children, birth through adolescence, to ensure all students are equipped for success in college or the workplace after graduation.

Implementing the next generation of standards-based reform requires bold thinking and a revitalized state-federal partnership—based on mutual trust and a commitment to work collaboratively—to improve opportunities for all students. In the Obama Administration's—and Congress'—development of a new education agenda, chief state school officers respectfully submit recommendations in four core areas: (1) promoting state innovation and continuous improvement; (2) strategically investing in state and local capacity building; (3) accelerating change through an improved focus on teachers; and (4) promoting better integration and coordination of federal child focused programs. Each set of recommendations includes short term opportunities (e.g. regulatory/administrative and early legislation such as an economic stimulus package) and longer term legislative and leadership opportunities to accomplish these objectives.

I. Promote State Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Federal education laws and leadership should encourage, not stifle, innovation and provide a policy environment that supports multiple educationally sound models rather than enforcing narrow compliance with a single federal approach. The federal government must stimulate and support states to build on the foundations and lessons of standards-based reform efforts to develop and implement more innovative and powerful strategies to enhance teaching and learning, along with more valid and effective accountability and school improvement initiatives.

Short Term Recommendations: (1) invite states to propose innovative and educationally sound models of assessment and accountability for approval through the Secretary's existing waiver authority; (2) significantly expand the growth model and differentiated accountability pilots to all states that propose educationally sound approaches, particularly those approaches that show promise for reflecting the success of and growth within schools; (3) respect state authority by creating a new proactive consultation with states on proposed timelines, and implementation requirements for all programs, to recognize conditions on the ground; (4) work with state education leaders in a comprehensive "innovation review" of pending regulatory issues (e.g. the implementation timeline and graduation rate accountability framework and supplemental educational services and choice requirements of the final Title I regulations; and the relationship between new Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations and implementation of critical state longitudinal data systems); (5) further improve/strengthen the peer review process to accommodate innovation; and (6) ensure top

U.S. Department of Education leadership includes individuals with deep implementation experience such as a state chief.

Longer Term Recommendations: (1) support multi-state partnerships to empower states to address shared challenges (e.g. funding for regularly convening states, researchers, and technical assistance providers around priority issues); (2) support flexible and blended funding models, which will enable states and localities to direct funding toward unique local needs or challenges; (3) support legislation to authorize and fund Early Learning Challenge Grants to stimulate state and private sector investment in high quality early education services for pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including evidence-based home visitation programs, such as—but not limited to—the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY); (4) provide technical assistance and resources to address the unique challenges of middle and high school reform; (5) support state efforts to work collaboratively to develop consistent, internationally benchmarked, state standards under the auspices of a rich voluntary common core and with an emphasis on skills and competencies; and (6) focus more attention and support on partnerships with business, communities, and parents to curb dropout rates and increase graduation rates.

II. Increase Strategic Investments in State and Local Capacity Building

The federal government must provide greater support for states and districts to ensure that every student has access to effective teachers, resources, and interventions necessary to achieve to his/her full potential. This means that states must have the ability to provide better technical assistance to districts and schools, to turn around consistently underperforming districts, and to empower districts to become agents of change in underperforming schools.

Short Term Recommendations: (1) include resources in the economic stimulus package for school infrastructure and green technology, including ubiquitous broadband deployment reaching into rural areas (states are prepared to spend these funds immediately); (2) provide additional resources for state school improvement efforts and set aside resources for state collaboration to address shared challenges; (3) target additional resources for research and development and technical assistance (e.g. evaluation, dissemination, international benchmarking, going to scale, supporting urban districts); (4) target additional resources for the State Longitudinal Data Systems program (including ongoing support for the State Education Data Center and state data coordinators in every SEA); (5) increase investments in next generation state assessment systems and innovative accountability models; (6) expand funding for Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grant programs in the economic stimulus package and build state capacity to manage early childhood programs (including funding for the State Advisory Councils authorized by the Head Start Act); and (7) urge the new Office of Management and Budget director to clarify that the E-rate is not subject to the Anti-Deficiency Act, because among other reasons the funding does not come from the U.S. Treasury.

Longer Term Recommendations: (1) use the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) to strengthen the work of regional labs/comprehensive centers to conduct practical research, evaluation, and technical assistance requested by states/localities; (2) use reauthorization of ESRA to strengthen the State Longitudinal Data Systems program (e.g. expand systems to include birth to 20 data, strengthen the State Education Data Center and codify the state data coordinators set-aside); (3) expand investment in high quality early learning programs; (4) use Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization to authorize long-term support for state school improvement programs (with adequate state set-asides) and for new research and technical assistance to support states and localities; (5) develop new tools to

eliminate early education achievement disparities (e.g. fund and evaluate an intensive birth to age five early education demonstration program to eliminate early achievement disparities in 20 urban communities with high levels of poverty and low levels of student achievement, and a research center to stimulate and evaluate new approaches to accelerating the learning progress of at-risk young children); and (6) create a national state-federal partnership to eliminate dropouts, with an emphasis on those schools with the highest dropouts, including aggressive redesign and intervention actions.

III. Accelerate Improvement through an Improved Focus on Teachers and Leaders

The improved preparation, induction, mentoring, and continued support of educators are critical to improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps. Federal, state, and local policies must support teachers and leaders along the career continuum from aspiring through retiring, through a redesigned system of educator supports that redefines the entire system of recruitment, selection, induction, mentoring, certification, licensing, and professional development, so that we have high quality, effective educators at all levels that can dramatically improve the achievement of each and every child. This comprehensive system of educator development cannot be formed in a vacuum, but instead must align, coordinate, and support sound policies and practices at the federal, state, and local levels.

Short Term Recommendations: (1) support passage of an enhanced Teacher Excellence for All Children Act (TEACH) that will ensure large scale and systemic implementation at the state level to recruit successful teachers for high need subjects and schools, increase performance-based teacher and leader assessments, establish model induction systems, increase mentoring, expand loan forgiveness, promote career ladders, and improve and expand professional development; and (2) continue support for the Teacher Incentive Fund and work with states to develop a thoughtful proposal to authorize the program.

Longer Term Recommendations: (1) support the inclusion of, within the development of SEA data systems, a coherent teacher data system that will link and access teacher and student data; (2) develop a systemic and coherent approach to educator development and support; (3) authorize a National Educator Recruitment Collaborative that will serve as a national clearinghouse for states, districts, and schools to access a diverse pool of teacher and leader applicants to fill high need and shortage areas and serve the goal of more equitably distributing highly qualified educators across the country; and (4) support state efforts to attract non-traditional educators into the teaching labor market.

IV. Promote Integration and Coordination of Child-Focused Federal Programs

The federal government must improve integration and coordination of all federal programs focused on serving children, including ESEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Perkins, Higher Education Act (HEA), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and related early childhood, health, and social services programs. Federal children's programs should work together as a seamless whole to address each student's individualized needs. Disjunction between programs starts with poorly conceived relationships between related laws and is exacerbated by uncoordinated and imperfect implementation strategies. These defects lead to poor execution, wasted resources, significant administrative and reporting challenges, and suboptimal results for children and youth.

Short Term Recommendations: (1) reorganize the U.S. Department of Education to make certain leadership in key offices works together to ensure better coordination (e.g. the leadership of Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), and Office of Vocational and Adult Education

(OVAE) should work in close proximity to each other and should report to a common senior leader); (2) develop Memorandums of Understanding with relevant offices in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to better ensure the coordination of health, early childhood, social service, and education programs; (3) review data reporting requirements department wide and eliminate redundant and unnecessary reporting particularly with regard to IDEA and ESEA reporting; and (4) promote state, federal, and private sector collaboration in early learning by establishing a Presidential Early Learning Council.

Longer Term Recommendations: (1) work with Congress to strengthen and improve the statutory relationships between major laws, including Perkins, IDEA, and ESEA (and the programs within each to develop common goals, definitions, and data across them) and update the Department's regulations to improve coordination and integration of programs; (2) update the Department's data systems to ensure data can be seamlessly shared both horizontally (between offices) and vertically and seek legislation to authorize broader data sharing between education and other workforce and social service agencies around the needs of children; (3) conduct a comprehensive review of all reports and data required from states and eliminate federal reporting requirements that do not answer predetermined policy impact questions; and (4) promote integration of early childhood and K–12 policy, funding, data, and professional development systems.

For more information on CCSSO's Transition Policy Recommendations, please contact Scott Frein, Director of Advocacy, at 202-336-7010 or scottf@ccsso.org.