

Supporting Secondary School Redesign

SPRING 2007

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

SUPPORTING STATE CAPACITY BUILDING

CCSSO Secondary School Redesign National Meeting, April 2007

Thirty-six state teams, including three chief state school officers, attended CCSSO's Secondary School Redesign National Meeting, April 1–3, in Austin, Texas. With support from the U.S. Department of Education, the Communities Foundation of Texas, and Dell, Inc., more than 200 state officials, national content experts, and partner organization representatives participated in work sessions with the goal of deepening and supporting cross-state work and capacity building for implementing statewide secondary school redesign. The conversations were structured around four "high leverage" entry points of redesign.

With assistance from state officials and critical partners, CCSSO identified four issues as high-leverage entry points for states to improve secondary school student outcomes:

- Adolescent Literacy
- Postsecondary Education Options (including AP, IB dual enrollment, CTE, Tech Prep, and early college high schools)
- Leadership for Facilitating Change
- Transforming Instruction

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High Leverage Entry Points of Redesign

A majority of the participating states have built expertise in discrete areas of school redesign, and their successes and lessons learned can inform the ongoing work of other states. A few states are ready to embark on statewide change efforts but remain unclear as to which redesign entry points will engender the greatest change in their respective state contexts.

This landscape necessitates that CCSSO continues to share promising state policy and practice, help states build on what they have already begun with critical partners (e.g., Achieve, Alliance for Excellent Education, Jobs for the Future, National Governors Association), and bring coherence to the varied and sometimes overwhelming secondary school redesign efforts across the states.



At the CCSSO Secondary School Redesign National Meeting in Austin, Texas, CCSSO Executive Director Gene Wilhoit (above left) interviews panelists Juan Pineda (center), Austin YouthWorks high school senior, and Meghan Bostic (right), University of Kentucky freshman, about what students need to be prepared for the future.

SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The U.S. Department of Education has issued its notice inviting applications for the next grantee cohort of the Small Learning Communities Grants Program. The application and additional information are available [online](#).

CCSSO will share additional information with states to help support LEA applications for this competition. Information from CCSSO to its network of states is forthcoming.

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SUPPORTING STATE CAPACITY BUILDING

CCSSO Secondary School Redesign National Meeting, April 2007

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Meeting Sessions

The program opened with a Leadership for Facilitating Change plenary panel featuring student leaders from the University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, Austin Voices (a public education fund), and American YouthWorks (a nonprofit organization and charter school). Hector Montenegro, superintendent of Ysleta Independent School District, addressed student comments, and the discussion was facilitated by CCSSO Executive Director Gene Wilhoit. Students discussed the urgent need to redesign high schools that better prepare young people for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Other distinguished plenary panelists discussed adolescent literacy, postsecondary options, and transforming instruction. Shirley J. Neeley, Texas commissioner of education, and Kerri L. Briggs, acting assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education at the U.S. Department of Education, also shared remarks.

The bulk of the meeting was dedicated to cross-state team work sessions along each of the four high-leverage

entry points. By the end of the meeting, each cross-state team achieved consensus around action steps to continue building a professional learning community and guide CCSSO's work to execute plans for product development to support state capacity-building efforts.

The following ideas for cross-state tools or resources emerged:

- **Adolescent Literacy:** A guide to help content area teachers implement adolescent literacy instructional strategies in their discipline-specific classroom instruction
- **Postsecondary Options:** A self-assessment tool on awareness, access, and quality of postsecondary options as compared with effective and promising strategies
- **Leadership for Facilitating Change:** Self-assessment tool for developing, planning, and coordinating statewide high school redesign strategies
- **Transforming Instruction:** Web-based portal of data, research, tools, and exemplars to help edu-

cators engage students in more effective learning

In addition to these plans, states are developing state-specific plans for implementing the cross-state tools, marketing these opportunities, and connecting them to current and/or future state efforts.

Next Steps

CCSSO is currently reviewing cross-state and state-specific plans and will engage partners, states, and content experts in the development process, with an expected completion of initial tools by early fall. A second meeting will be convened in September for participating states to share the tools and obtain feedback for moving forward.

For more information, please contact Angela Hernandez-Marshall at angelahm@ccsso.org.

NOW AVAILABLE

Rigor & Reality: Taking Secondary School Reform Statewide, June 2006

This proceedings document from CCSSO's federally-sponsored June 2006 Secondary School Redesign Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, highlights the promising secondary school redesign efforts of state officials, practitioners, and researchers that were discussed during the meeting. National, state, and local school experts shared recommendations around various components of secondary school redesign, from strategic use of data, to ensuring a rigorous and relevant learning experience across the content ar-

eas, to expanding learning options for all students.

The document also captures key points from cross-state conversations on the following topics:

- academic rigor
- facilitating transitions into and out of high school
- measuring student achievement
- systems accountability

Participants addressed the possibilities and challenges ahead for scaling up "islands of excellence" and realizing statewide secondary school redesign. A detailed appendix provides further information on numerous resources and tools that were mentioned during the meeting.

See CCSSO's [website](#) for links to the full document, as well as individual chapters.

RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

Silent Epidemic: National Summit and Suite of Materials

On May 9, Secretary Margaret Spellings, First Lady Laura Bush, and more than 500 other stakeholders participated in the [Summit on America's Silent Epidemic](#), a day-long event targeting the national high school dropout crisis and sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Civic Enterprises, the National Governors Association, MTV, and TIME. The following materials accompanied the summit:

- [Ending the Silent Epidemic: A Blueprint to Address America's High School Dropout Crisis](#) includes a 10-point action plan for the federal government, states, districts, schools, and the community.
- The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center created a new, [online tool](#) to provide comparable graduation rates for every district and state. The mapping tool calculates the Cumulative Promotion Index, which estimates the probability that a student in the ninth grade will complete high school on time with a regular diploma.
- Robert Balfanz wrote [What Your Community Can Do to End Its Dropout Crisis: Learnings from Research and Practice](#) to share over a decade's worth of practical advice on confronting the dropout crisis.
- The National Summit on America's Silent Epidemic [Fact Sheet](#) presents key related data.
- [Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age: The Case for Reform](#) provides more information about raising the compulsory school age to 18.
- Access video clips from [The Dropout Chronicles](#), a documentary that follows three high school students and their obstacles to graduation.
- [The California Dropout Research Project](#) posts research and policy reports on high school graduation from 2002 to the present.
- The NGA Center for Best Practices wrote [Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date](#) to update progress on the 2005 Graduation Counts Compact, a 50-state commitment to commonly calculate high school graduate rates.
- [Ten Steps to a Local Summit](#) offers advice on planning and carrying out local dropout summits.
- Secretary Margaret Spellings and Senator Edward Kennedy, chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, wrote a [joint op-ed](#) for *The Politico* on May 12.



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Additional Resources

State High School Redesign Efforts



Closing the Expectations Gap 2007, Achieve

This [report](#) updates Achieve's previous survey of efforts in all 50 states to align high school standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and accountability systems with the demands of college and work. Major findings include the following:

- Graduation Requirements: 13 states require high school students to complete a college and work ready curriculum to earn a diploma.
- Academic Standards: 12 states report that their high school standards are aligned with college and workplace expectations.
- Assessment: nine states administer high school assessments that are also used by higher education to place students in credit bearing courses.
- Accountability: nine states hold high schools accountable for the college readiness of their graduates and offer incentives for improving college-ready graduation rates.
- Data Systems: five states have longitudinal data systems that can track students from pre-K through college graduation.

High School Practice

Making Progress toward Graduation: Evidence from the Talent Development High School Project, Research Summary Video Presentation Series, MDRC



This seven-minute [video](#) presents findings from an evaluation of the Talent Development model, which aims to restructure classrooms and instruction for improved student engagement and achievement. Between 1998 and 2004, the study compared incoming ninth graders in Talent Development schools with schools that did not use Talent Development but had similar poverty rates in Philadelphia.

Major findings include the following:

- Attendance increased by about five percentage points, which is equivalent to about nine extra days per school year.
- The passing rate for algebra increased by 25 percentage points.
- Tenth grade promotion improved by eight percentage points.
- Eleventh grade math test scores and attendance rates improved.

A NEW STATE ROLE IN SUPPORTING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Massachusetts Commonwealth Pilot Schools

At its March 2007 meeting, the Board of Education in Massachusetts approved the following four underperforming schools to become “Commonwealth Pilot Schools”:

- Academy Pilot Middle School, Fitchburg Public Schools
- Duggan Middle School, Springfield Public Schools
- The English High School, Boston Public Schools
- Putnam Vocational-Technical High School, Springfield Public Schools

After being labeled schools with state accountability improvement status for four years, the Board of Education considered two options for these schools: grant Commonwealth Pilot School status or declare the schools “chronically underperforming schools” and intervene with increased state oversight. The Commonwealth Pilot School model in Massachusetts offers site-based autonomies similar to those of pilot schools currently operating within the Boston Public Schools system. The Boston Pilot Schools are small secondary schools with increased autonomy in the areas of staffing, budget, curriculum and assessment, governance and policies, and the school calendar. Other defining characteristics of pilot schools are accountability to high standards, personalization, and vision.

The Commonwealth Pilot School Model

Commonwealth Pilot Schools are framed around four principles:

- maximum autonomy over resources in exchange for increased accountability for student results
- buy-in and ownership of the Commonwealth Pilot School model by the school community
- ensuring that the right conditions are in place for each school to be successful
- closely documenting the progress and process of each school so that there are ample data and feedback to use in mid-course correction and improvement

Two-thirds of school faculty and administrators at each school must approve the conversion decision. A design team composed of district, school, and community members develops the school proposal based on state guidelines, and the proposal is approved by district, union, and state leaders.

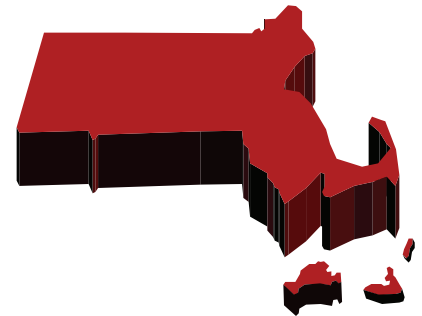
Key proposal elements include the following:

- school-wide math and English language arts assessments aligned to curriculum and state frameworks and administered four to six times per year
- assessment results used to inform curriculum, instruction, and student support

- ample group and individualized instructional time in math and English language arts
- before- and after-school academic support opportunities
- full-time faculty coaches for English language arts and math
- periodic evaluations of faculty by school administrators regarding content knowledge, student learning, and commitment to the school’s culture and pilot model
- at least one hour per week devoted to faculty discussions of collaborative work and instructional improvement

A New State Partnership

The Commonwealth Pilot School model structures a new partnership between the local community and state agency. Local and state leaders identify and annually evaluate the school principal. At these schools, the state will uniquely report on student engagement and achievement indicators, along with practices used to increase student achievement. After two years, an external team will visit the schools to collect and analyze evidence of pre-identified benchmarks of performance, which will then be reported to the district, union, and state. These accountability benchmarks are being developed, and the two-year review will determine if the schools will return to district oversight or remain under state watch. The state’s exit criteria, due in fall 2009, will be multifaceted and based on a site visit, a self-assessment, and accountability data.



Support during the planning and implementation phases is provided by the state and the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), an organization that also supports the Boston Pilot Schools. State leaders are in the early stages of planning a network with design teams and principals. Ideas include pairing pilot schools with high-functioning schools, linking to district resources, and identifying other supportive partners.

CCE began working intensively with the design teams in late January to explain and frame the pilot model, along with helping design teams write and revise their initial proposals for review by state-appointed review panels. Now that all four schools have been granted pilot status, CCE has continued to work with each school on use of time, election-to-work agreements, and school-specific issues.

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A NEW STATE ROLE IN SUPPORTING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Massachusetts Commonwealth Pilot Schools

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Summer activities will further support the Commonwealth Pilot Schools as they plan to implement curricula and orient staff and communities to the pilot model. CCE is holding a summer design institute for all Boston Pilot Schools and other interested schools. Some pilot schools will work with other technical assistance providers based on curricula.

Initial Lessons Learned

The Massachusetts Department of Education plans to continue the project and offers several lessons to interested states. First, a great deal of time is required to plan and support school redesign. The four Commonwealth Pilot Schools accomplished 12 to 18 months of planning in only six to eight weeks. Second, clear expectations of student and school performance outcomes (i.e., better instruction and achievement) should guide the conversion process. Third, to assist schools with their new responsibilities related to nonprofit management, state-level expertise in budgeting, staffing, and governance is needed. A fourth lesson is that conversions work best when initiated by the school and community based on the need to meet student needs in new way.

Status Update

In preparation to open in fall 2007, the schools are currently planning their school calendars, selecting staff, establishing

school governing boards, filling leadership positions, refining curricular plans and materials, and preparing for summer professional development activities. According to local press, the English High School in Boston will reduce enrollment to 400 students with two small learning communities, each headed by an assistant headmaster. Five staff subcommittees are providing input to the design team of local staff, community, and university partners. The subcommittees are working through implementation details for the intervention programs, special education and English language learners, school climate, advisories, and the senior institute.

In late May, the chairman of the state Board of Education will led a statewide pilot schools conference. This informational event allowed participants to discuss school redesign options beyond the state's charter school initiative. Panelists included Boston Pilot School leaders and community members, along with a principal and superintendent from the Commonwealth Pilot Schools. Breakout sessions gave participants the opportunity to ask questions and further probe experiences with the various autonomies. All Massachusetts superintendents and principals were invited, along with education groups.

For more information, please contact Sally Bachofer, state manager of school evaluation, at 781-338-3503 or sbachofer@doe.mass.edu, or access the webpage at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/redesign>.

RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council U.S. Department of Education

Created in 2006, the Academic Competitiveness Council (ACC) is composed of federal officials with responsibilities for managing existing federal programs that promote mathematics and science. In this [report](#), the ACC inventoried 105 federal science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. Findings include a "general dearth" of effective practices and activities in STEM education across, some duplication between programs, and critical programmatic gaps (e.g., math education).

In response, the ACC issued six recommendations to improve the evidence base of STEM practices:

- The ACC program inventory and goals and metrics should be living resources, updated regularly and used to facilitate stronger interagency coordination.
- Agencies and the federal government at large should foster knowledge of effective practices through improved evaluation and/or implementation of proven,

research based instructional materials and methods.

- Federal agencies should improve the coordination of their K–12 STEM education programs with states and local school systems.
- Federal agencies should adjust program designs and operations so that programs can be assessed and measurable results can be achieved consistent with the programs' goals.
- Funding for federal STEM education programs designed to improve STEM education outcomes should not increase unless a plan for rigorous, independent evaluation is in place appropriate to the types of activities funded.

Agencies with STEM education programs should collaborate on implementing ACC recommendations under the auspices of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC).

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RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS



Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents: A Guidance Document from the Center on Instruction, The Reading, Special Education, and English Language Learner Strands of the Center on Instruction (COI)

The first section of this [guidance document](#) from the Center on Instruction focuses on improving academic literacy instruction for students in grades 4—12. It discusses recommendations to improve literacy instruction in the content areas, includes instructional recommendations for English language learners, and addresses critical elements of instruction for special reading classes with struggling readers.

The second part includes advice from eight experts about improving academic literacy instruction for adolescents.

The last part highlights four states and their activities in support of improved adolescent literacy instruction.

In a [video conference](#) held April 30, 2007, Dr. Joseph Torgesen of COI's Reading Strand provided an overview of the report. Click on "Overview of Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents" for access.



New Resources on the Transition into High School, The National High School Center

The National High School Center released [four new resources](#) (three are written by MDRC) on supporting and guiding a smooth transition for students into high school. According to MDRC's research in four urban districts, of the up to 40 percent of ninth graders not promoted to tenth grade on time, less than 20 percent graduate from high school. These data signify the critical nature of this transition point.

- "State and District-Level Support for Successful Transitions into High School" is an MDRC policy brief.
- "Toward Ensuring a Smooth Transition into High School" is an MDRC compilation of best practices based on evaluations of the Talent Development and Project Transition models.
- "Managing the Transition to Ninth Grade in a Comprehensive Urban High School" is an MDRC case study on one school's positive outcomes with the Ninth Grade Success Academy, a component of the Talent Development model.
- The National High School Center developed a fact sheet on the ninth-grade bulge, which provides recent statistics documenting the high number of students who are held back in the ninth grade.



Straight from the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students, The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

This [report](#) focuses on lessons learned from participants and staff of the TRIO Upward Bound and Talent Search programs in Texas. Researchers held focus groups with 135 program alumni who are first-generation college students, and interviews were conducted with Upward Bound and Talent Search administrators. The study aimed to identify the messages and services that most impact college enrollment for first-generation college students. Key areas included raising student aspirations, helping students navigate college admissions, and easing the transition into college. Practitioners and policymakers are urged to take the following steps:

- Utilize, align, and improve funding for a variety of existing resources (including high school counselors, precollege programs, and state access initiatives) to provide college information to all students as early as possible.
- Support student preparation through high school requirements aligned to college expectations in addition to both remedial and advanced course options. Focus additional funding and support on students who are underrepresented in higher education.
- Intensify precollege and college support initiatives to meet students' academic, social, and financial needs.

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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