

Supporting Student Success

A New
Learning
Day
in Ohio



Ohio

Public-Private
Collaborative Commission

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INSIDE FRONT COVER

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Our Vision

All Ohio learners will have access to and reap the benefits of a birth-to-career, student-centered, competency-based education system, with responsibility for results shared by communities, families and schools.

Getting Results . . .

1 All students will master core academic content and work-related skills. They will be creative, critical thinking, confident problem solvers with the ability to work in teams and make effective and innovative use of what they know. And they will acquire the citizenship and living skills that allow them to accept personal responsibility and lead ethical, self-directed lives.

2 All students will graduate from high school having completed the Ohio Core Curriculum.

3 All Ohioans will be ready to pursue and earn postsecondary credentials and degrees without remediation; and they will enter the workforce prepared for future learning, with the assets that make them ready to learn in the workplace where job-specific education and training will occur.

The Governor's Charge (draft still being reviewed by the Governor)

Ohio's future depends on the ability of its education system to meet the unique academic and non-academic needs of all students. This system must educate the "whole child," produce high school graduates who are creative, critical thinking problem solvers, and prepare students to become productive, responsible adults who lead satisfying lives. It must enable all students, especially those from low income and underserved populations, to experience success with advanced levels of learning, in turn preparing them to succeed in postsecondary education and work.

For this purpose, the Ohio General Assembly established the Ohio Core Curriculum. It raises expectations for what every student will know and be able to do in order to earn a high school diploma. Yet, the expectation that high school graduates complete this more demanding curriculum marks the starting point for more sweeping changes. It calls for a systemic approach to providing necessary support services for all students. It demands that families, educators, human service providers, employers and communities have the capacity and will to help all students meet these new and higher performance standards.

The Public-Private Collaborative Commission is charged by the Governor and state legislators with making policy and program recommendations that promote greater student success on multiple dimensions. Specifically, we are asking the Commission to help us answer the five critically important questions highlighted on this page.

We look forward to hearing your recommendations and working with you to ensure that all students graduate from high school having completed the Ohio Core Curriculum, and they are ready for success in college and the workplace without remediation.

Thank you.

Signature
Governor

Five Questions for the Public-Private Collaborative Commission to Answer

- 1 What can we do to increase students' and families' awareness of the standards reflected in the Ohio Core Curriculum and to build their understanding that these expectations, as well as learning beyond high school, are needed for success in the classroom, on the job and in life?
- 2 What changes in state education policy and local education practice are needed to motivate and support students to meet higher expectations, successfully complete the requirements of the Ohio Core Curriculum and challenge them to be creative and innovative?
- 3 What incentives can be created and what new school models can be used to promote higher levels of student achievement, keep all students in the education pipeline until they have graduated from high school and improve levels of performance?
- 4 What services – including internships, mentorships, career planning, guidance counseling and college readiness assistance – are needed to promote greater success for all students?
- 5 How can we ensure that all students' unique academic and non-academic needs are met and what steps should be taken to ensure that schools, other government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and communities work collaboratively for this purpose?

Understanding Student Success

The Commission understands that rethinking education's purposes, practices and personnel requires a clear definition of *student success*. It knows that success must go beyond the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills; and that it cannot be just a set of numbers indicating students' performance on one or more tests.

With this in mind, the Commission built its action priorities around three separate, but not mutually exclusive components of student success in the 21st century.

Mastery of Core Academic Content and Work-Related Skills

Successful students will be ready for postsecondary education, broadly defined, without remediation; and they will enter the workforce with the assets that make them ready to learn in the workplace where job-specific education and training will occur. This readiness depends on students' competence in core subject areas, including English (reading and language arts), mathematics, science, foreign languages, history, geography, civics and the arts. Students will be confident, globally aware learners, just as they will develop financial, economic, social and business literacy. They will be able to work in teams, demonstrate cultural competency and be proficient in languages other than English. They will be skilled communicators, capable of writing clearly, speaking effectively and listening with comprehension. They will have well-developed computer and information technology skills, demonstrating their capacity for *anytime, anywhere, self-directed learning*. And their competency in core academic content areas – and their resilience as learners – will be reflected in completion of the Ohio Core Curriculum.

Development of Learning and Thinking Skills

Successful students will be creative, critical thinking, confident problem solvers. They will be able to set, plan and achieve goals, independently and in teams; and have the capacity to adapt to change. Very simply, they will be able to make effective and innovative use of what they know.

Strong Citizenship and Living Skills

Successful students will have strong citizenship skills, including leadership, ethics, self-direction and personal responsibility. They will have organizing, planning and conflict resolution skills. They will have respect for cultural diversity and the ability to overcome barriers. And they will be prepared to participate actively in Ohio's vibrant democracy in their communities, state and nation.

A New Learning Day

Expanding responsibility for student success beyond school boundaries

We all are familiar with the phrase “draw a line in the sand.” It’s an expression that means defining a limit or a boundary – a level of tolerance – beyond which one will not step.

At this critical moment in time, it is fitting and essential that Ohioans draw such a line in the sand. We are facing unprecedented pressures to develop our state’s enormous talent pool into a globally competent workforce – one that will position our state for future growth and prosperity.

Ohioans are not alone in this regard. Serious discussions about changes in education policy are underway at the federal level, and similar conversations have been launched here in Ohio and many other states. All such dialogue is proceeding with due recognition of the rapid, dramatic changes around us. Technological advances are creating new knowledge at a blinding pace, changing countless jobs and workplaces and, in turn, entire organizations. All these changes are effectively redefining the essential knowledge, skills and sensitivities our young people and our adult workers need to succeed.

It is time for Ohio to declare in no uncertain terms that we no longer will tolerate a system of public education that allows any child to leave school and enter the adult world without the creative, critical thinking and problem-solving skills – and without the core academic content and work-related skills – he or she needs to become a productive, responsible adult with a successful, satisfying life. This means putting an end to a pattern in which too many young people drop out of school; and too many graduate without requisite core academic content and competence to participate in the global economic workforce. Ohio needs a world-class education system if it is to return to the head of the class.

Ohio’s leaders know that our state is at a critical juncture. In 2006, they drew a metaphorical line in the sand in legislation that established the rigorous Ohio Core Curriculum. This new curriculum raised expectations for what all Ohio schoolchildren must know and be able to do to earn a high school diploma. At the same time, state legislators created the ***Public-Private Collaborative Commission*** to make policy and program recommendations that promote greater student success.

The Commission has responded in kind. It has underscored the line state leaders have drawn in the sand by providing the framework for a new education system, one that builds on the strengths of Ohio’s early childhood initiatives, schools and postsecondary education institutions. As the Commission has strived to give shape and direction to state legislators’ “line in the sand,” by necessity it has had to confront existing boundaries. ***Ironically, the Commission’s response to the task we have been given focuses not on defining and fortifying existing boundaries but rather on reconfiguring them – and in some cases, taking them down.***

The fact is, despite the improvements in teaching and learning that have been made in Ohio during the past decade – and progress *has* been made – the pace and magnitude of improvement have not matched the pace and magnitude of the changes shaping the world in which our children learn and develop and, eventually, will apply the knowledge and skills they acquire as students.

Deep down inside, we all know about this growing mismatch between the realities of the world around us and the preparation we are providing our young people for this new world. For example, we know that one in three adult Ohioans has only a high school diploma or GED, and that approximately 18 percent of the state's population does not have a high school diploma. We will not change these telling indicators unless we change our education system.

We also know that incremental change in our school system is not getting the job done. The well-worn pathway we have followed—tinkering with the systems we have—yields limited results. In other words, improvement-oriented tinkering, constrained by the boundaries of traditional concepts of teaching and learning, and traditional notions about schools and classrooms, simply will not serve the educational needs of our children or the innovation capacity-building needs of our state.

Those boundaries must be reconfigured and cross-boundary bridges must be built as we develop the kind of education system Ohioans need and deserve. We expect such a system to prepare Ohio's young people for the new world around them. We also expect that this new system will support and assist Ohio's dedicated educational workforce, enticing more talented people to become teachers, principals, superintendents and student support professionals – and engaging them in the important work that lies ahead.

What is required is a fundamental rethinking of how and where we design, deliver, customize and validate educational experiences for our young people – and, most critically, how we support them throughout their student years.

Governor Strickland's charge to the Commission is really a challenge to identify what Ohio must do to ensure that all children, *with no exceptions*, have opportunities to realize their full potential in an increasingly demanding and competitive world where the ability to think critically and creatively – and to learn continuously – is the key to opportunity and prosperity.

As Commission members explored the questions posed to them by the Governor and members of the Ohio General Assembly, they found inspiration in the highly regarded *A New Day for Learning* report released in January 2007. Funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation, the report provides a national context and policy platform for the Governor's charge and the Commission's work. *A New Day for Learning* characterizes our nation's need to ensure that all children have maximum opportunities to succeed as both "imperative and urgent."

The Commission agrees with this assessment. We also concur with the report's unblinking description of what's at stake if we fail as educators, education consumers and policymakers in crafting a new educational system that proceeds with advances in teaching-learning knowledge and technologies. In the report's words, "Quite simply, unless we profoundly change our thinking and policies about when, where and how children learn and develop, our steady progress as an economy and as a society will end."

The Commission has welcomed and wrestled with Governor Strickland's charge to make policy and program recommendations that promote greater student success. We have grounded our response in a finite set of guiding principles, which are highlighted on page 12 of this report. With these principles in mind, the Commission has crafted a focused set of action priorities and recommendations that reflect our vision of a future in which *all Ohio learners will have access to and reap the benefits of a birth-to-career, student-centered, competency-based education system with responsibility for results shared by communities, families and schools.*

In our vision, accountability for learning and student success will no longer be fixed only on schools; rather, responsibility for accelerating every student's learning will be shared by the community. And in this new community-driven system, learning will no longer be defined and limited by traditional school walls, structures and timetables.

From “Seat Time” to Competency

Ohio's system of education can no longer function with industrial age fixtures such as the Carnegie Unit, which, in effect, limits and controls learning through the use of outdated, age-determined grades, traditional academic disciplines, course structured school days and lock-step curriculum and instruction. Introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, the Carnegie Unit measures the amount of time students study a subject. It uses “seat time” as a surrogate for the knowledge and skills that students acquire.

The Carnegie Unit has been preserved for more than 100 years, largely because it has met colleges' and universities' need for a standardized measure of students' preparation for postsecondary education. But too often, the presumed connection between the Carnegie Unit and students' knowledge and skills is little more than an illusion.

In 1993, Ernest L. Boyer, then president of the Carnegie Foundation, concluded that the Carnegie Unit was obsolete – that the time had come to bury it once and for all. Boyer and other critics of the Carnegie Unit labeled it a barrier to innovative class scheduling, out-of-class field experiences, distance learning, performance-based assessments and other 21st century teaching and learning practices.

The Commission agrees. It applauds state legislators' foresight in directing the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Ohio Board of Regents and the Partnership for Continued Learning, to develop a statewide plan implementing methods for students to earn units of high school credit based on the demonstration of subject area competency, instead of, or in combination with, completing hours of classroom instruction.

Knowing that such a plan is being developed – and that it will be considered by the State Board of Education no later than March 31, 2009, the Commission has decided not to formally recommend this transition. But it agrees that Ohio's new education system must be performance-based and competency-based; and it believes that its four game-changing action priorities lay the groundwork for this much-needed shift.

In our vision, classroom instruction will be dovetailed with opportunities for learning, healthy development and productive citizenship outside the school's walls. For example, classroom instruction will be combined with work experiences in real-world community settings. Imagine authentic, relevant, challenging learning taking place in a botanical garden in Cleveland, a law office in East Liverpool, a video production company in Dayton, an agriculture extension office in Marion, an art museum in Toledo, a construction site in Steubenville, a nature preserve in Adams County. Imagine how more engaged students will become—and how the work of

educators with these students will be enhanced because they are engaged. The possibilities are limitless!

The vital question, of course, is, *how do we make this vision come to life in every Ohio community?*

Members of the Commission believe that the last thing Ohio needs is another report that outlines a long and exhaustive list of recommended actions, some that will be implemented and others that will simply gather dust. Nor is it appropriate to impose on schools a comprehensive, top-down, state-driven roadmap to school improvement. Experience tells us that in most communities such a roadmap will not be followed, and it will not produce the desired results.

Instead, the Commission has identified **four “game-changing” action priorities** that will extend the responsibility for ensuring student success to all sectors of the community. The action priorities we define and discuss in detail in the pages that follow form the basis for a powerful, break-the-mold approach to promoting and achieving student success.

Four Keys to Success

- 1 Improvement efforts must be grounded in and owned by the community. They cannot be top-down or directed by the state.
- 2 Ohioans must embrace a broad vision that views the whole day as an opportunity for learning. They must buy into a new culture of learning and have the political will to make it a reality.
- 3 Our efforts cannot be walled-in or building-centered. We can no longer place all the responsibility for teaching and learning educators and schools.
- 4 Changes in policy and practice must reflect an understanding that “fixing” schools by adding rigor to the curriculum and strengthening instruction, important as it is, is not a sufficient reform strategy. Such actions must be accompanied by an array of learner supports that can add immeasurably to the probabilities of success.

The system we envision encompasses *a new anytime, anywhere, anyone culture of learning. This is an education system that encompasses and builds on the strengths of Ohio’s school system and maintains an unrelenting focus on standards.* It is a system that engages whole communities in fundamentally changing the ways schools operate, welcoming the multiple ways students learn and helping educators become more successful with greater numbers of them.

Historically, time during the school day and inside the school’s walls was the only or primary academic learning time. This view of time, whole group (class) instruction, lock-step curriculums and Carnegie Unit measures have been the constants in our education system. Little wonder that diverse students exposed to standardized, industrial age production-instruction technologies have variable learning outcomes. With a new learning day, this approach is fundamentally changed.

When we acknowledge that the majority of time for learning is available *outside* the traditional school day and *beyond* traditional school boundaries, it becomes clear that the industrial age model for schooling has out-lived its usefulness. We can and should personalize and customize

learning, taking advantage of out-of-school time, as we help every young person achieve core standards and get ready for adult workplaces with their own changing boundaries and requirements. In workplaces as in schools, the lock-step production era is fast-disappearing. Such is the new world around us, a world for which our students must be prepared.

The Commission believes this expanded view of teaching, learning, schooling and education is the key to supporting student success. It is why we have borrowed the Mott Foundation’s mantra – a new day for learning – and used it as an inspiration for fashioning our own vision of what we are calling ... *a new learning day in Ohio*.

On behalf of the Commission, we want to express our gratitude for the opportunity the Governor and members of the Ohio General Assembly have given us to engage in one of the most important policy discussions that will occur in our lifetimes. We also want to pay special tribute to the determined leadership provided by Senator Ron Amstutz who tirelessly advocated for ensuring that state policy creating the rigorous Ohio Core Curriculum also would provide for appropriate and adequate supports for Ohio schoolchildren working to meet challenging new standards.

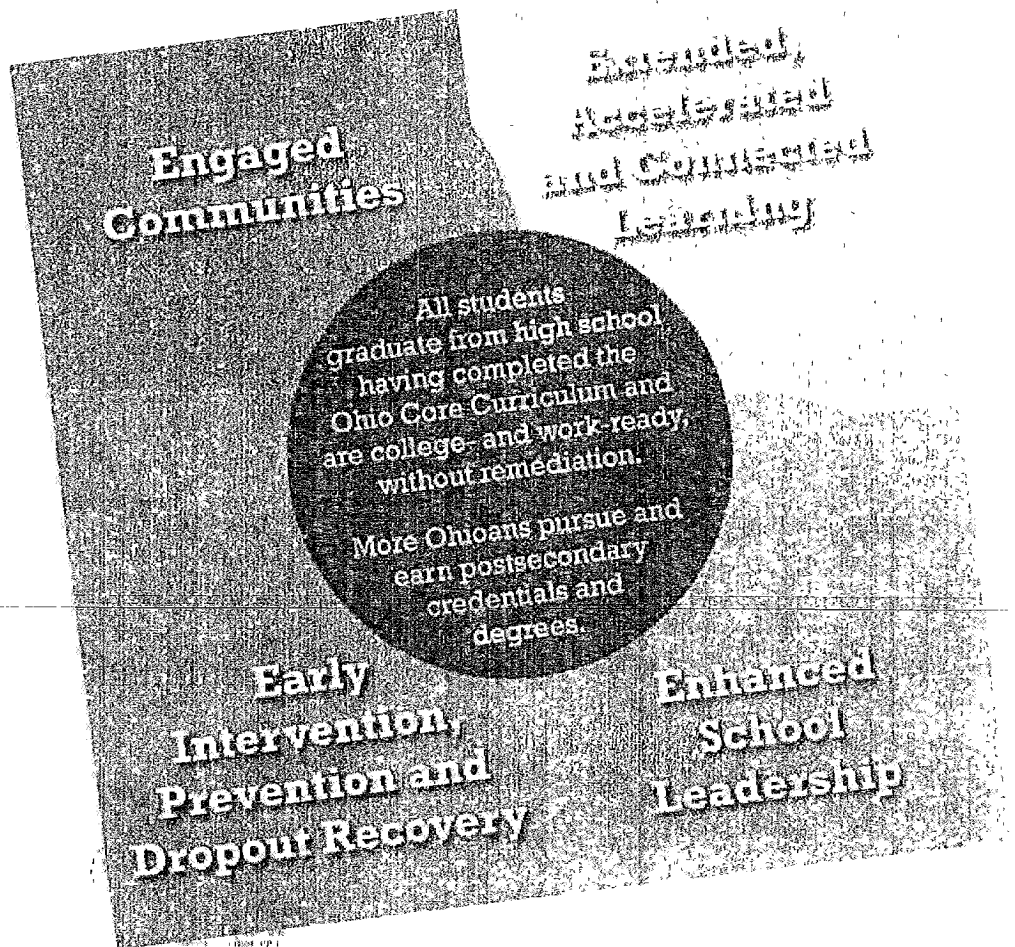
The actions we have proposed are substantial in scope and ambitious in design. They will not be easy to implement, nor can they be implemented quickly. And they will not be inexpensive. Members of the Commission are convinced, however, that the cost of not embracing them is incalculable, and the consequences for our citizenry and our state unacceptable.

And that is a line that all Ohioans must collectively draw in the sand.

Signature
Dr. Gene T. Harris, co-chair

Signature
Jerry Jurgensen, co-chair

Four Game-Changing Action Priorities



These four game-changing action priorities reflect a determination to create a new birth-to-career, student-centered, competency-based learning system ... one that blends the higher expectations of a standards-based, accountable education system with a set of comprehensive, coherent and cohesive learning supports. This blend of assets will help students acquire a solid grounding in core subjects, while gaining competence with 21st century workforce skills, such as thinking critically and creatively, knowing how to solve problems and working in teams.

Rethinking Learner Supports: Four Game-Changing Action Priorities

Ohio's education system must bridge the gap between how students live, how they learn and how schools structure learning. Unfortunately, many of today's schools structure instruction and learning for a fast-disappearing industrial era in which a majority of their students became assembly line workers.

As economic, social and cultural change continues at a breath-taking pace, one wonders if Ohio's education system is poised to keep pace. The traditional model of education, which was relevant for industrial age economic development, is out-of-step with the demands of 21st century work and workplaces of every description.

For example, in the industrial model, school-related learning often was enough. Once schooling was finished and a new job commenced, significant learning needs were no longer evident. Not so in the 21st century where jobs, careers and workplaces are learning-intensive, and where people often have many jobs and careers over the course of their lifetimes

This means that today's students must gain more than content knowledge in core subject areas, and more than social competence for healthy living and productive citizenship. They must be **prepared for future learning** because job and even career changes are increasingly the rule rather than the exception – and because plant shut-downs and job terminations are familiar realities.

In this economic environment, today's students must be adaptable – and this requires preparation for future learning. They need to understand that most of them, regardless of their age, will spend

Guiding Principles . . .

PRINCIPLE 1. What children learn is not simply the responsibility of our schools. That responsibility must be shared by educators, businesses, community-based organizations, foundations and other non-profit groups, and most importantly families. And learning cannot be confined to what happens inside a school's walls and during the conventional school day.

PRINCIPLE 2. Our willingness and capacity to engage the whole community in a robust, sustainable learning system that is committed to the success of **every** student is the key to Ohio's future economic competitiveness. This system cannot be accomplished simply by creating new **rules** at the state or federal level, or by mandating top-down changes in the structure and operation of schools. It requires a new set of well-defined and widely accepted **roles and responsibilities** for all community stakeholders, as well as **new relationships** through which public and private entities work together to create, optimize and sustain a new birth-to-career, student-centered, competency-based system of learning.

PRINCIPLE 3. Not all students' needs are the same. So Ohio must take advantage of advances in instructional technology and information systems to ensure that all students' unique academic and non-academic needs are met.

PRINCIPLE 4. Ohio's culture of learning must establish a closer link between higher levels of academic achievement and the economic well being for our students, families and communities. Expectations about what all students should learn, know and be able to do must be raised dramatically, and efforts to prepare all students to be creative and critical thinking problem solvers must be intensified.

their adult lives in a multi-tasking, multifaceted, technology-driven, diverse and vibrant world. Teamwork focused on creativity and innovation will be the norm in homes, businesses and industries – and in public sector organizations. *Today's learners must arrive equipped accordingly.*

To prepare students for this new environment, the Commission's recommendations are structured around *four game-changing action priorities* that keep the best of today's education system at the same time that a 21st century learning system is created efficiently, effectively and quickly.

Action Priority #1

Create a new culture of learning in which entire communities share responsibility for the well-being and educational performance of every student

Action Priority #2

Meet the learning needs of all students through a system of extended, accelerated and connected learning

Action Priority #3

Make dropout prevention, early intervention and recovery a priority in every Ohio school and school district, beginning in the early grades

Action Priority #4

Enhance school leaders' willingness and capacity to build strategic bridges with families and communities

*The Commission's use of the "game" metaphor is not meant to trivialize the challenge of improving student and school performance. To the contrary, it serves as a reminder that ensuring student success involves the five core elements of most games: (1) **engaging the right players** and getting them to work as a team; (2) **understanding the rules** that shape the relationships among public- and private-sector stakeholders; (3) **defining the roles** that govern the behavior of all players; (4) **developing the strategies** or action plans needed to succeed; and (5) **recognizing the stakes** or the consequences of all activity, which in this case involve all students' success in mastering the core academic content and work-related skills that will prepare them to succeed in work and postsecondary education.*

These four game-changing action priorities, which are the focus of this report, reflect the Commission's guiding principles, which are highlighted to the previous page. Most critically, they confirm Commission members' belief that *extending the learning day* and taking academic learning outside the school's walls are the keys to improving student performance, ensuring student success and meeting the purposes set out in Am. Sub. SB 311:

1. All students graduate from high school having completed the Ohio Core Curriculum and are college- and work-ready, without remediation.
2. More Ohioans pursue and earn postsecondary credentials and degrees.

The Commission's four game-changing action priorities acknowledge that no education system can *"do it all, alone"* for all future needs. Arguably, the best educators can do is to contribute to child and youth development in four indispensable ways:

- Taking a “whole child” approach and working with families and communities to improve children’s well being;
- Providing solid grounding in core subjects – especially science, mathematics, literacy and language;
- Ensuring that every student has gained competence with 21st century workforce skills such as thinking critically and creatively, knowing how to solve problems and working in teams; and
- Preparing students for future learning by making sure they are ready and able to learn in the workplace (“work ready”), just as they are ready for success in their first credit-bearing college courses (“college ready”).

Building on Ohio’s Assets

In order for Ohio to grow and prosper, it must raise the educational achievements of its citizens. Yet, keeping abreast of economic opportunities and risks involves inherent uncertainties and sometimes daunting complexity. And often, it is accompanied by two challenges: (1) anticipating the future, and (2) using education’s assets to create a more desirable future. Very simply, connecting education and economic development is easy to write out, but this work is hard to do.

Such is the high stakes game Ohioans must play. Given investments in resources and time required to effect meaningful changes in their education system – and the high stakes that are involved – Ohioans can ill afford to make mistakes.

One way to guard against costly, dangerous mistakes and, at the same time, to enhance success, is by building on strengths and assets. Fortunately, Ohio has multiple assets on which to build. ***Together they comprise the groundwork for a new learning day and the new education system needed to advance Ohioans and their state.***

In recent years, Ohio has been a leader in exploring several key elements of a comprehensive education reform agenda, starting with P-16 planning. Substantial progress has been made at all levels of the state’s P-16 education system. Like the pieces of a large puzzle, Ohio’s education improvement assets signal achievements, aspirations and opportunities.

“Extending the learning day through afterschool programs and other out-of-school, community-based services cannot become an excuse for fortifying today’s schools and protecting walled-in models and industrial age approaches to teaching and learning.”

Yet, something has been missing. It is the equivalent of the picture on the top of the puzzle box, a systemic picture that shows both how the pieces fit together and why the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts.

That is the promise of the Commission’s four game-changing action priorities. They join Ohio’s assets in a comprehensive, cohesive framework. They communicate and advocate for a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts, at the same time reminding readers that this whole depends fundamentally on each part.

In fact, the Commission's game changing action priorities and recommendations are credible and feasible because many of them are grounded in one or more of the state's education improvement initiatives. These assets include its early childhood education and school readiness reforms, student and teaching success agendas, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) learning and high school redesign efforts, and 10-year strategic plan for higher education.

In short, not everything in the Commission's report is new because the work needed in Ohio should not be thought of as *out with the old, in with the new*. In fact, one of the strengths of the Commission's work is its determination to create a new birth-to-career, student-centered, competency-based learning system. Significantly, this system blends the higher expectations of a standards-based, accountable education system with a set of comprehensive, coherent and cohesive learning supports. It is this blend of assets that will help Ohio students acquire a solid grounding in core subjects while gaining competence with 21st century workforce skills, such as thinking critically and creatively, knowing how to solve problems and working in teams. In short, this is the kind of P-16 system that enables Ohioans to both benefit from, and help create, more desirable futures themselves and their communities.



GAME CHANGING ACTION PRIORITY #1

Engaged Communities: Creating a culture of shared responsibility

“Community engagement” can take two different forms. The first, which can lead to cynicism about the underlying motives and vested interests of the people, groups and organizations calling for engagement, amounts to little more than ratifying decisions that leaders already have made and supporting their established agendas.

The second form is radically different. Here, community engagement requires lasting commitments, activities and sacrifices. It is authentic because engagement begins and proceeds from a powerful premise – *that important, complex public problems cannot be solved unless citizen leaders from all walks of life collaborate to craft solutions*. A recent report from the Center for Public Engagement provides a compelling description of this second approach:

“Authentic public engagement ... is a highly inclusive problem-solving approach through which regular citizens deliberate and collaborate on complex public problems. Rather than relegating people to the sidelines, it invites them to join the public dialogue surrounding a problem and provides them the tools to do so productively. As a result, leaders know where the public stands as problem-solving progresses, while citizens themselves contribute solutions through their input, ideas, and actions.”¹

Authentic community engagement is *not* a “one and done” affair. Because the issues that need to be addressed are both urgent and complex; because no one person, group or organization can deal with them alone; and because tested solutions are in short supply, the call for community engagement is genuine. Nothing short of a sustained, collaborative partnership will get the job done.

In the past, Ohio communities, broadly defined, have had varied experiences with community engagement. Not surprisingly, many of these experiences have been short-term, special projects in which the public has been relegated to the sidelines while a few leaders have done the heavy lifting.

This is not what the Commission has in mind. Rather, its vision for Ohio’s new education system draws heavily on the experiences of other communities – and sometimes entire counties – where engagement has been authentic and sustained over time. Examples include some of Ohio’s P-16 Councils, Family and Children First Councils, and Partnerships for Success. Here, structures have been designed to convene, organize and mobilize diverse local stakeholders for collective action to solve important problems and achieve common purposes. A strong sense of community “ownership” has been established, in part because partnerships have been tailored to respond to unique needs and local circumstances.

Many communities already have assets in place. They have councils, collaboratives, partnerships and task forces focused on one or more special issues concerning children and their families, such as mental health, child abuse and neglect, health disparities and crime prevention. The

¹ Center for Advances in Public Engagement, Public engagement: A primer from public agenda, Essentials no. 1, pp. 1-12 (2008).

Commission believes it is time to view these special issues and problems in a holistic framework – and to “connect the dots,” using birth-to-career education reform as a centerpiece.

Authentic community engagement, then, proceeds with local private-public partnerships, in collaboration with school leaders and with a focus on (1) extended, accelerated and connected learning; (2) early intervention and dropout prevention and recovery; and (3) birth-to-postsecondary education and career education pipelines

As the Commission has defined it, student success will not be achieved without this kind of authentic community engagement. When the stakes are high, as they are in Ohio today, and when we confront urgent complex problems, as we do now, authentic community engagement with a strong sense of local ownership and shared responsibility provides the only sure path to successful solutions.

State government cannot do this work for communities, and top-down solutions are not the answer. Ohio’s *new learning day* belongs to local schools, neighborhoods and communities. And these localities must take ownership of this timely opportunity, determining what the best structures are, what the critical relationships must be, and what essential actions must be taken to stop the dropouts, improve teaching and learning, support student success and provide educational ladders into postsecondary education for greater numbers of Ohio’s young people.

In the Commission’s view, this kind of authentic community engagement is needed to build Ohio’s educational capacities for today’s economic and societal realities. Educators, especially school leaders, are centerpieces in this work, but they cannot do it all, and they cannot do it alone. Entire communities must share responsibility for the well-being of children, youth and families – and also for the educational performance of every student. Nothing short of this kind of sustained, accountable, representative engagement, evident in the ability to organize and mobilize for collective action to achieve common purposes, will get the job done.

As the job gets done, the “educational game” will change for the better and all Ohioans will benefit. This is the basis for the Commission’s action recommendations.

1 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Promote the development and effective operation of local/regional, private/public councils, partnerships and task forces, and charge them with birth-to-career education planning and P-16 systems change functions.

In recent years, P-16 councils in Ohio and other states have become one of the most popular vehicles for strengthening the connection between public schools and higher education – and between schools and the people they serve. One of the most comprehensive analyses of P-16 councils, presented as part of *Education Week’s* June 2008 report – “*Diploma Count 2008: School to College: Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition*” – suggests that the rapid growth of these collaborative bodies is a source of both encouragement and concern. It acknowledges that state-level P-16 councils have not yet been tested and many are experiencing difficulties as they seek to build support and the clear agendas that are necessary for success.

Yet, the more powerful P-16 story is rooted in local communities, where these public-private, collaborative councils – bearing many names – are attracting substantial attention and support. By bringing together key representatives from all levels of education, community-based organizations, families, non-profit foundations, civic leaders and the employer community, and public officials, these councils are working to better align educational institutions from birth through postsecondary education.

In *P-16: The Last Education Reform*, the Stark Education Partnership’s Joseph Rochford wisely cautions that P-16 is not a program or a project, nor is it the “flavor of the month.” Instead, it is an integrated system of education – a new way of thinking about and creating the conditions both inside and beyond the classroom that produce higher levels of student achievement, more students going on to postsecondary education and better outcomes for students, educators and communities. And here is the bottom line: P-16, like birth-to-career education, is a strategy for engaging the whole community in systemic reform, in bringing down education’s unproductive “silos,” in raising expectations for what students and schools can accomplish, and in dramatically driving economic growth and prosperity for communities, regions and the state.

The Commission believes that P-16 councils, along with other local/regional public-private collaboratives, are uniquely positioned to drive sustained education improvement – and to create an authentic sense of local ownership for the success of every student. In other words, it doesn’t matter what the council, task force or partnership is called; what matters is that it assumes oversight for birth-to-career, P-16 planning and systems change through strategic resource mobilization and coordination. As Rochford asserts:

“In many cases, we already have adequate resources within the community to substantially improve education and the quality of life. What we have evolved throughout our history, and especially in the last decades of the 20th century, have been multiple ‘specialty’ organizations. Simply put, we each grew up separately with separate responsibilities. Experts, within our own spheres of responsibility, we need now to come together to decide how we can more closely align our efforts. This is what P-16 is all about.”

For this purpose, the Commission recommends that the state of Ohio provide research-based, capacity-building planning support, including reliable information about best practices in the development and operation of P-16 Councils, partnerships and task forces to schools and school districts that want to form new alliances with their surrounding communities. In addition, it should support communities’ efforts to develop and carry out collaborations that expand the boundaries of school improvement and escape the constraints of “building-centered,” “walled-in” and “educator-controlled” approaches to learning.

Specifically, the state should:

- Provide start-up funding, technical assistance and professional development for P-16 councils and comparable public-private partnerships focused on authentic, holistic community engagement;
- Provide incentives to colleges, universities and other postsecondary education institutions to develop partnership centers, charging them to mobilize resources, supports and assistance to P-12 schools’ extended learning initiatives;

- Charge the Partnership for Continuing Learning with lead responsibilities for regional coordination, capacity-building and networking of community P-16 councils and task forces; and charge the state-level Family and Children's First Council with the responsibility for developing regional school improvement and community engagement/action plans and determining how best to proceed with P-16 and birth-to-career systems change and resource mobilization.

The benefits of this activity – of authentic community engagement partnerships – will be limited if youth and their families are not involved. Therefore, the Commission recommends that local, public-private collaboratives and the state be directed by the Governor and state legislators to work together to *ensure that representative youth and parent leaders participate in school improvement planning and authentic community engagement partnerships.*

This action is particularly important in high-poverty communities where accelerated learning and dropout prevention initiatives are critically needed. Promising success stories in Ohio and other states confirm that adult professionals' and civic leaders' views of what it takes to engage young people and their parents and ensure student success are essential, but insufficient to improve results. Representative youth leaders and parents have valuable knowledge and expertise about needed improvements in nearly every aspect of education and schooling.

For example, youth and families know where to locate programs and services and when to offer them in order to maximize participation and engagement. They have valuable ideas about how to improve school climate and safety. They have first-hand knowledge about some of the causes of unhealthy behaviors and school-related problems. And some are ready, willing and able to help implement solutions, including outreach to parents and young people whom adult professionals cannot reach because of social-cultural divides.

This recommendation is grounded in such untapped resources and timely opportunities. It is rooted in the idea of *doing with*, in addition to doing for, students and their families. And it is based on a full understanding that student, parent and family engagement is the surest pathway to sustainable school improvement. Called "empowerment" in some circles, this success pathway provides multiple benefits, including authentic community engagement and shared responsibility for results.

This emphasis on authentic community engagement is founded on an important asset. All schools, colleges and universities are part and parcel of the communities in which they are located and whose citizens they serve. Furthermore, the success of local efforts to ensure that all students graduate from high school having completed a challenging curriculum – and that all graduates are ready to pursue and earn postsecondary credentials and degrees without remediation – depends heavily on the support and involvement of each area's universities, colleges and adult career-technical programs.

For this reason, the Commission recommends that the state also provide incentives for colleges, schools and departments of education in Ohio's colleges and universities to invest strategically in partnerships with local school districts. Specifically, the state should:

- Promote research on vital aspects of whole systems education reform, starting with the knowledge and skills needed by a competent, stable education workforce; and

- Encourage arts and sciences faculty to become key players with education faculty and Ohio's teachers and principals to ensure that educators are fully grounded in their respective content areas.

Finally, the Commission urges the state and local communities to squarely address the issue of **leadership**. Knowledgeable, competent leaders are needed to ensure that local public-private alliances recruit and retain the right stakeholders, have a clear and sensible vision of the future, focus on the most important priorities, have the determination to implement and achieve critical goals and use evaluation and data to continuously learn and improve. Local leaders' ability to do this important work depends on local knowledge about their schools and communities, but also on coaching, consultation and capacity-building provided by outside experts and online resources.

This need for leadership is re-enforced by *Education Week's* recent assessment of the nation's fledgling P-16 councils. Fortunately, the experience of Ohio's advanced collaboratives confirms that solid, pioneering leadership is not beyond our reach. And the state's charitable foundations, with their deep commitment to community-based education improvement, are uniquely positioned to champion and support innovations and capacity-building in support of local leadership for authentic community engagement.

2 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Design and execute a multi-faceted public education campaign to show parents, families, and civic leaders the importance of postsecondary education and its benefits for their children and local communities.

In its statement of guiding principles, the Commission acknowledged that the responsibility for learning is shared by all sectors of the community, including educators, employers, non-profit groups, community-based organizations, and most importantly, families. It pointed to the importance of engaging all stakeholders in a robust, sustainable education improvement system – and to create a community-wide sense of responsibility for the success of every child.

But there was something more in that statement of principles – an assertion that Ohio's culture of learning must establish a closer link between higher levels of academic achievement and the economic well being that our students, families and communities desire. Common expectations about what all students should learn, know and be able to do must be raised dramatically.

To be sure, improved accessibility and greater student success require changes in the way Ohioans see themselves, just as it demands that greater value be placed on continued learning. Access and success are defined, in part, by people's understanding of education's benefits, the level of their aspirations for learning beyond high school and their awareness and familiarity with opportunities for advanced learning.

Meeting this standard will be no small task. In fact, it could well be one of the biggest challenges facing those who are tasked with turning the recommendations contained in this report into action – and into a new learning day in Ohio. And in an education system that is no longer walled-in and building centered, this challenge becomes the responsibility of all stakeholders, not just educators and school leaders.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Partnership for Continued Learning, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, design and implement a research-based, sustained marketing campaign, funded with both public and private dollars, to raise awareness of the value of education and continued learning beyond high school. Specifically, the Partnership should:

- Engage in this initiative a broad range of community-based organizations and stakeholder groups, including the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Board of Regents and all elements of the University System of Ohio, community-based organizations (e.g., United Way, Urban League and many others), the employer community, faith-based groups, college access programs, charitable foundations and the media;
- Ensure that the education campaign includes direct communication with students, parents and families through stakeholder and neighborhood organizations, and other groups with which parents and families identify; and
- Publicize the connections between student success and dropout prevention and early intervention.

The Commission is convinced that this marketing initiative should not simply be a traditional advertising campaign. Instead, it must engage a broad range of stakeholders using their communication channels and penetrating their day-to-day operations and programs to create a new learning culture and promote learning opportunities for all Ohioans.



GAME CHANGING ACTION PRIORITY #2

Extended, Accelerated and Connected Learning: Meeting the needs of all students

Industrial age schools have long been structured around a belief that teachers are the most important and often the only qualified sources of instruction. In addition, schools traditionally have operated with an assumption that school-based curriculums, implemented via formal textbooks, provide the most reliable tools for learning.

These perspectives have promoted and reinforced the core idea that the most meaningful teaching and learning occur inside the school's walls and during the regular school day. Homework and other out-of-school assignments have been structured around this same idea; they have been viewed as supports for the essential work that happens in the classroom.

Today, this industrial age school model is difficult to defend and sustain. To be sure, the most critical variable affecting students' academic performance is access to a competent, caring, engaged and dedicated teacher. But the Internet, mass media, seemingly endless teaching and learning technologies and services available in the marketplace, learning-rich youth development agencies and powerful youth subcultures and networks all conspire against any model of teaching and learning that is contained within the school's walls and limited largely to the regular school day.

"Anytime, anywhere, anyone learning" is the phrase that characterizes these societal realities for young people, adults and families – a phrase the Commission believes stakes out *a new learning day* for Ohio's students.

Consider the facts: Engaged academic learning time is one of the most important factors in determining student achievement. Yet, on average, children and young people spend somewhere between 9 and 13 percent of their waking hours in school. And research on time utilization during school hours indicates that, on average, just 50 to 60 percent of a young person's school time is devoted to academic learning.

Despite these limitations, the industrial age model persists. As a result, educators often feel trapped in a system in which they are held largely accountable for their students' academic achievement, including students' performance on standardized tests, but have influence and control over such a small portion of students' out-of-school, waking hours.

This flawed formula helps explain why students who lack strong family and community learning supports during out-of-school time often do not reach their full potential. And when students are not successful, neither are their teachers. Little wonder, then, that nearly three out of ten Ohio teachers leave the profession during the first five years of their service.

Clearly, students who are falling behind, or at risk of doing so, have special needs for more learning time. Yet, these special needs students are not alone; gifted and talented students' needs follow suit. In short, students' needs cannot be met entirely inside the school's walls and during the school day. All students need opportunities for accelerated

and extended learning opportunities and resources, especially ones that are connected to their classrooms.

Such an approach to out-of-school time takes learning and instruction, along with school improvement overall, outside the walls of the building and beyond the regular school day. It calls for holistic thinking as well as a focus on the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of the “whole child.” It requires that attention be given to a child’s family, peer and community environments. Positive environments for learning and healthy development in homes and communities are needed, including caring, committed and competent adults who provide guidance and support.

It should be noted that this new model of teaching and learning is not restricted to school-age children. Early experiences – from the beginning of life – affect learning, as well as the social and emotional development that are critical to children’s well being and future success. Decades of research confirm that what children know and can do when they start school helps determine their success in the classroom and the workplace – and throughout their lives. This research emphasizes the importance of backward mapping to the early years of child development and with firm plans to intensify positive learning experiences and healthy development from birth and beyond.

The Commission applauds Ohio’s commitment to building an early learning system – beginning with infants and toddlers – that helps all young children develop physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually, and that gives parents choices so they can determine how best to prepare their children for the challenges that lie ahead. Two years ago, that commitment was reflected in the report of the School Readiness Solutions Group of the State Board of Education. And today, it has been given life by the collaborative efforts of the Strickland Administration, members of the Ohio General Assembly and the education community.

Since this work is well under way, the Commission has decided not to advance action recommendations for infants, toddlers, and their families. But its members are agreed on the need to ensure that all children in out-of-home early learning settings, beginning with infants and toddlers, are in environments that support and promote their healthy development and school readiness. For this purpose, Commission members believe that (1) bold action is needed to establish entry-level licensure and preparation standards for teachers and administrators of birth-to-three and preschool programs; (2) the state’s Step Up to Quality initiative should be fully implemented; and (3) the state should create a professional development and career reward system that supports an explicit expectation that all early learning personnel will extend and deepen their knowledge, skills and competencies.

At every level of child and youth development, Ohio’s *new learning day* involves a silent but all-important competition. The reality is that educators, parents, policy makers and community leaders must compete for young people’s time and learning. The competitors are well-known. They include video games, the lures of the streets and television, and unproductive, unhealthy “hanging out” with peers. A Carnegie Foundation Report published in the 1990s had it right: *It is a matter of time.* This is the basis for the Commission’s belief that out-of-school time opportunities and resources – especially engaged learning that is extended, accelerated and connected back to classrooms – is a game-changing action priority. It is the basis for the Commission’s call for a new learning day in Ohio.

1 ACTION RECOMMENDATION. Expand students' access to high-quality out-of-school learning opportunities that address both academic and non-academic barriers to learning success, and broaden community understanding and support for the value of these programs and services.

Most schools and districts are not well positioned or resourced to map all of the community, neighborhood, and family assets for learning during out-of-school time. These assets include programs and services offered in youth development agencies such as boys and girls clubs and YMCAs, “safe haven” programs offered by nonprofit agencies located in neighborhoods with too much violence and crime, and afterschool programs located in faith-based organizations. Other assets include those at school, such as extended day programs (more school after school) and school-based 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which focus on positive youth development alongside student academic success.

Local community leaders, including representative youth and parent leaders, are in the best position to map these and other kinds of out-of-school time assets. They also are in the best position to help school leaders develop solid bridges to these local assets. These assets include the people who will serve as school-community “connectors” and “go betweens,” accepting primary responsibility for ensuring that learning during out-of-school time extends, accelerates and enriches in-school, classroom-based learning. And they also are in the best position to begin crafting local/regional youth policy—an important, missing component statewide.

The Commission believes, with good reason, that this asset mapping and development, together with school-family-community bridging mechanisms, comprises a pathway to student success. Therefore, it recommends that:

- Community-based P-16 councils and similar public-private partnerships should be given responsibility for promoting and facilitating collaborative initiatives involving out-of-school-time programs; and for collaborating with school leaders to ensure that their outside learning experiences are connected to classrooms, benefiting students as well as their teachers.
- The state should work collaboratively with community-based P-16 councils and other public-private partnerships to secure funding to support professional development initiatives for extended, accelerated, and connected learning programs, with a special focus on helping students and their teachers bridge learning during out-of-school time with learning in schools and classrooms.

The second action step reflects the need for teachers and other school staff to “unlearn” some models as they learn how to implement more powerful learning-instruction models that effectively connect out-of-school time learning and instruction with efforts during the school day. Used to extend and accelerate learning during out-of-school time, these new models offer access to complementary kinds of learning, which can be both powerful and effective.

For example: *community-based, project-centered learning* involves the application, testing and utilization of academic content and problem-solving methods. *Community-based service learning* allows students to volunteer and prepare for civic engagement and democratic

citizenship. **Explicit academic learning** through tutoring, coaching and mentoring offers both academic remediation and enrichment opportunities.

In addition, **embedded academic learning** harnesses the instructional power of young people's favorite activities (including music, the arts and athletics). **Social and emotional learning** helps young people learn how to develop and maintain caring, respectful relationships with others, develop good character and make solid moral decisions, set goals and solve problems, and take responsibility for their personal health and well being. **Blended learning** integrates conventional classroom-based learning and instruction with computer-assisted and technology-enhanced learning. Importantly, **all of these hybrid learning models have the potential to that they reinforce, extend, accelerate, and enrich classroom-based learning and instruction.**

Clearly, dedicated teachers with large classes cannot provide every student learning opportunities like these, nor are they able to customize and accelerate learning for individual students. Yet, customized or personalized learning, accelerated or slowed down, is precisely what many students need, just as it is what their teachers need to succeed with them.

In short, out-of-school time learning that is extended, accelerated and connected back to classrooms, benefits teachers as well as students. This learning is an important and under-developed pathway for student success. Reaping the benefits of this pathway depends fundamentally on teachers prepared to take advantage of the abundant opportunities.

To support this action recommendation, the Commission calls for three additional steps.

- Broaden access to Internet and broadband service so that all learners can take advantage of distance learning and other online resources.

This action step is grounded in the Commission's understanding of "the digital divide" that separates students, families, schools and communities with high technology resources and capacities from those with few or no such resources. Under-resourced schools need help in this important area. So do high-poverty communities. Neighborhood- and community-based technology centers, connected to schools and accessible to young people and their families, provide a proven strategy for bridging the digital divide.

- The state should work with local partnerships to provide stable, adequate and collaborative funding for afterschool and other out-of-school-time programs by blending a number of funding sources, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers, TANF and Child Care Development Block Grant dollars.

Schools, districts, and neighborhood communities hit hard by unemployment, health disparities, and the loss of local tax revenues are hard-pressed to offer all of the out-of-school time programs and services students, families, and educators need. Funding is a special priority – and the selective, strategic blending and braiding of funds from existing sources, as permitted by regulatory guidelines, is a best practice for operating and extending out-of-school time programs and services. Local partnerships need help from state policy leaders and funding experts in this important resource development work.

- Use relevant child and youth development research (e.g., the Developmental Assets Framework, or the Communities that Care Framework) to monitor student progress and healthy development; and identify risk factors indicative of needs for early intervention.

The research on positive youth development and the companion research on problem behaviors in youth are being joined and integrated. Together, these youth development assets, also called protective factors, provide important indicators of healthy development and school success. On the other side of the ledger, the research also provides predictors and correlates (risk factors) of problem behaviors and negative trajectories such as school dropouts, crime and delinquency, early sexual behavior and pregnancy and substance abuse.

Schools, districts, and their community partners with good information about these developmental assets, protective factors and risk factors are positioned to act affirmatively to support student success and responsively when risk factors for falling behind and dropping out are evident. In fact, Ohio's Partnership for Success Counties, some of the state's Family and Children's First Councils and P-16 Councils, and leading school districts already are collecting and using this kind of student data. The Commission believes the time has arrived to join these data with important school data (e.g., academic achievement, attendance, suspensions and expulsions and the like), enabling holistic decision making about what it takes for student success; and marshalling both in-school and out-of-school resources to ensure success.

2 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate the gaps between P-12 and postsecondary expectations, accelerating learning whenever possible and ensuring that students who master the Ohio Core Curriculum have the knowledge and skills required for success in college and in the workplace, without remediation.

Multiple reports, both state and national, indicate that the time has come to accelerate learning for students needing it. Gifted and talented students as well as under-achieving students typically need such accelerated learning to reach their potentials; and more concretely, to get and keep them engaged in academic learning and connected to their schools.

Some accelerated learning requires bridging and "boundary blurring" actions. Examples include the Ohio's Postsecondary Enrollment Option (PSEO), Early College High Schools and the state's Seniors-to-Sophomores initiative, in which students spend some of their time, prior to high school graduation, in upper-level schools, colleges and universities.

STEM students are perhaps the most visible examples of accelerated learning. For example, Ohio has exemplary schools in which elementary age students tackle engineering and mathematics curricula once restricted to college age students. Other states have comparable examples. The Commission especially acknowledges and applauds STEM education's focus on more than just course titles and discrete disciplines. As an innovative example of accelerated learning, it is changing the way students learn in a broad range of subject areas and it is helping young people develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills.

To support and extend these innovative learning opportunities, and to close the gaps between P-12 and postsecondary expectations, the Commission calls for four action steps:

- The state and local communities should work together to strengthen collaborations between secondary schools, higher education institutions and the employer community, enabling them to customize and accelerate learning opportunities and experiences.
- The Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Board of Regents should intensify their efforts to develop low-stakes assessments that students can take (online or in other settings) to know whether they are ready for college or the workplace.
- To ensure that high school students and their families have credible and timely information about their readiness for college and careers, the state should require all students to take the ACT pretests (i.e., EXPLORE and PLAN) or other assessments that are recognized by employers and the postsecondary community.

3 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Expand students' access to work- and career-based learning experiences (including but not limited to internships, mentoring, youth apprenticeships and co-ops) that make education more relevant and give them opportunities to develop 21st century skills.

All students, but especially students challenged by poverty and its correlates, must believe that success in school leads to success in life. Especially in today's economic climate – in which learning beyond high school is a practical necessity for stable employment and economic well being – students must believe that staying in school and succeeding will be worth the dedication, hard work and attendant sacrifices. They must know how to map pathways to success, including postsecondary education. And they will need the kinds of assistance, social supports and resources that caring adults and college-age students are able to provide as they continue their educational journeys.

For this purpose, the Commission recommends four action steps:

- The state should work with school leaders and community-based P-16 councils/partnerships to ensure that all students have access to career counseling, tutoring, mentoring and college-access services beginning in the middle-school grades and continuing into higher school, based on best practices in Ohio and other states.

Students, parents and families need reliable information about the importance of postsecondary education in the new economy; and also how best to help their children achieve this success. Opportunities to engage parents and entire families in this important regard also provide new avenues for schools and entire districts to engage and support parents and families, increasing their involvement in their children's education.

Presently, the Ohio Department of Education is developing on-line career planning tools designed to demystify the pathways to postsecondary education and careers, and to help students see connections between their aspirations and coursework and assessment preparation. The Commission applauds this work and hopes that it will continue.

Thanks to the pioneering efforts of Ohio's P-16 Councils and Family and Children's First Councils, the state also is developing an inventory of promising practices. The Commission believes that it is time to formalize approaches to this area – to harvest promising practices, integrate them and take them to scale statewide. Student support professionals, especially counselors and psychologists, will be centerpieces in this agenda.

- The state should work with business organizations to improve employers' awareness, understanding and support for work-based learning and its relation to students' preparation for future learning – and develop a statewide policy on work-based learning, particularly as it relates to career and technical education, with guidelines for the incorporation of academic standards and the protection of students.

Education and business need each other. Nowhere is symbiotic relationship more obvious than in the area of work-based learning. In fact, a growing number of enlightened business leaders view work-based strategies as providing an unusually high return on investment, recognizing that this approach to learning can improve the quality of the graduates they hire. Like progressive educators, they know that when young people understand the nature of work and the opportunities available to them, they are more likely to become productive, responsible members of the community.

Work-based learning – and particularly career and technical education – is a significant workforce development strategy. Improved skills lead to greater efficiencies and the availability of a better trained labor pool encourages business growth. Work-based learning experiences also reduce training costs, increase employee loyalty and reduce absenteeism. But students also benefit from work-based learning, which leads to higher graduation rates, opens doors to credentialing and certification of key skills and offers better preparation for success in the world of work. Students whose families lack postsecondary education histories are especially likely to benefit from work-based and career-opportunity learning.

- The state should continue to invest in Ohio's network of STEM schools, which offer students unique opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills in a wide range of content areas using hands-on, problem-solving, project-based learning approaches.

STEM learning is not limited to instruction to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It is an innovative approach to instruction – to teaching and learning that prepares students for the next step in their lives. STEM education helps all students – from elementary to high school – acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

STEM subjects open doors to exciting and rewarding careers, just as they provide valuable life skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking and creativity. In addition, this innovative approach to teaching and learning has much to offer students who are not challenged by more traditional approaches. According to the Ohio Department of Education, only 81 percent of Ohio tenth-grade students are proficient in mathematics, and only 72 percent in science. Rigorous and relevant STEM education can improve student achievement in all subjects, and it can help students acquire the skills required by today's changing economy – whether they choose to go to college or land a well-paying job.

- Provide tuition and other cost-related incentives for college, university and postsecondary career-technical students to mentor, coach and help teach school-age students.

Just as students can benefit from a variety of hands-on, work-based learning experiences, their academic achievement also can be enhanced by one-on-one and small group learning relationships. Working with caring, supportive mentors or coaches – individuals who teach, counsel and inspire – students can master subject areas in which they have been experiencing difficulty, just as they can learn new skills and explore promising career interests.

But most schools and school districts will never have enough well-trained professionals to give their students this kind of personalized instruction and coaching. Yet, the creative, committed mentors and coaches they need often are nearby. They are students enrolled in area universities, colleges and adult career-technical programs. The Commission believes that with the right kinds of incentives – which could take the form of tuition remission – these students should be recruited to make the commitment of time and effort that will enrich the learning experiences of other young people. And in the process, these young mentors and coaches will be enhancing their own education and preparing themselves to be productive professionals.



GAME CHANGING ACTION PRIORITY #3

Prevention, Early Intervention and Recovery: Ending the dropout epidemic

Researchers have analyzed the 2008 graduation data, and both journalists and education reformers have begun disseminating their findings. The news is not good.

Every day an estimated 164 of Ohio's young people drop out of school. They are part of a national pattern in which an estimated 6,829 American young people drop out each day. In Ohio and across the nation, a disproportionate number of these dropouts are poor and minority students who attend under-performing and under-resourced schools. Many have parents who did not succeed in school either.

These data amount to a clarion call for action because, clearly, the school dropout problem has reached epidemic proportions. Like diseases of the body, this epidemic needs an effective cure as well as solid strategies for both early intervention and prevention. Such a comprehensive, systematic approach is long overdue because fragmented, piece-meal approaches have not been effective.

As important as a comprehensive approach to the dropout epidemic is for young people and their families, it also provides benefits for all Ohioans. The research on the undesirable consequences and costs of dropouts is definitive; it provides a compelling rationale for heightened efforts to keep young people in school and on track towards high school graduation.

For starters, school dropouts overall face an undesirable future. Their destiny is driven in large part by dismal job and career opportunities. Even a superficial look at jobs and careers, both old and new, in today's global economy supports this conclusion. In today's economy, those who leave school without earning a degree that counts will end up in jobs involving simple routines and requiring low-level knowledge and skills. Typically, these jobs will provide minimum wages and minimal, if any, health benefits.

Discouraging as this pattern is, that's the good news about dropouts' employment prospects. For example, far too many dropouts will have difficulty gaining *any* employment, and many of those who do find jobs will have difficulty keeping them.

Research about the consequences and costs of this epidemic does not stop with the personal consequences of dropping out. Profound social costs and steep economic costs are associated with leaving school prematurely.

Researchers from multiple fields have thoroughly documented these costs. Dropping out is associated with multiple social problems, especially those that co-occur and nest in each other over time. These problems start with unemployment and job insecurities. They include substance abuse, mental illness (especially depression), health problems (especially obesity and heart disease), violent behavior (especially domestic violence), crime and delinquency, and child abuse and neglect. Even worse, researchers have documented the inter-generational transmission of these same problems, starting with children of dropouts who also drop out.

In addition to these social costs, when young people drop out and develop co-occurring problems, *the economic costs of failure* are enormous. For example, a dropout with a family system manifesting co-occurring problems can cost society a million dollars or more. These costs of failure are an enormous drain on Ohio's limited funding for education as well as for health and social services. The Commission's recommended, comprehensive approach to the dropout problem closes this resource drain and offers important returns on the Ohio's new investments.

This is the core rationale for the priority the Commission has assigned to early intervention, dropout prevention and recovery. Economic and policy investments in this game-changing action priority are warranted and provide a commonsense way to improve the social fabric of Ohio's schools, families and communities. Most of all, investments in this area provide the opportunity to retain and recapture a critically important asset – Ohio's young people. This is the basis for the Commission's action recommendations.

1 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Make student success and dropout prevention a priority statewide and in every Ohio school and school district, beginning in the early grades.

The dropout issue is a prominent feature of Ohio's high school scene. Yet, it is *not* a uniquely "high school" issue, nor is it simply an education issue. As a consequence, Ohio's response to this crisis cannot be focused exclusively on the high school and it cannot be narrow designed to address little more than academic issues.

School dropouts – and more positively, student success – must be a priority at every level of the education "pipeline." It must be addressed in birth to three programs, early childhood education initiatives, K-12 schools and postsecondary education institutions. It must be given special attention – in the form of transition supports – as students move from one education level to the next. And it must be part of a "raise all boats" *whole systems approach* to improving the performance of schools and the students they serve.

In *The Last Dropout: Stop the Epidemic*, Bill Milliken goes further. Reminding us that dropout prevention and recovery efforts need to address both academic and non-academic issues, he writes,

"Kids need to be turned on to living before you can turn them on to learning. Whether it's drug addiction, family dysfunction, lack of health care, homelessness, joblessness or plain poverty, the strategy must be the same: Meet these pressing needs first, and then young people can concentrate on the three R's."

The Commission believes that dropout prevention and recovery must be a priority statewide and in every Ohio school and school district. *Intervening early must be the defining feature of the state's response.* And intervening early requires solid, timely information about young people who are at risk for dropping out.

Many schools and school districts have begun to address this issue. Some have achieved positive results, using either national early intervention models or "home-grown" approaches. One such national model is reflected in the Jobs for Ohio Graduates (JOG)

initiative, which has achieved consistently high graduation rate for high-risk youth. JOG also has boosted college retention rates, compared to those for all second-year students in Ohio's public colleges and universities. It is an important start, even though JOG does not include the massive work with health and social service providers that will be required to stamp out the dropout epidemic.

Unfortunately, most schools and communities have, at best, piecemeal approaches to addressing the dropout issue. They do not understand the seriousness of their dropout crises and do not have ready access to the resources that are currently being devoted to ending it. Most of all, they do not have a strategic dropout prevention, intervention and recovery plan that capitalizes on both school and community resources. They do not have effective early warning and rapid response systems. And they have not developed a comprehensive and sustained campaign to end the epidemic.

What would such a campaign look like? For starters, it would give educators the ability to obtain, disseminate and use valid and reliable data about students, starting with their academic performance, but also including information about their developmental assets, protective, factors, and risk factors. It would ensure that teachers and school leaders are prepared, willing and able to identify students who are not on a trajectory to success.

Since most educators and school leaders know early – in the elementary- and middle-school grades – which students are and are not on track to graduate on time, it also would focus attention on risk factors that often predict dropping out of school. These risk factors include aggregating absences, inseparable academic and behavioral problems, discipline issues, school mobility or transience, lack of engagement in school activities and no “connection” to school, the absence of a sense of attachment with at least one with a caring adult at the school, involvement in the juvenile justice system and falling behind grade- or competency-level standards as reflected by portfolios, grades and/or test scores.

“States are making tremendous progress on building aligned data systems that share data between K–12 and postsecondary systems; however, further alignment that includes early childhood and graduate school, as well as other social services, is critical to creating an integrated education system.”

Data Quality Campaign
February 2008

Toward a comprehensive approach to the dropout problem, the Commission offers the following action recommendations:

- The state should expand literacy and language intervention initiatives for all students – at all grade levels – whose knowledge and skills (reading, writing and speaking) are below the proficient level. The Commission also urges the state to create a culture that makes all teachers literacy instructors and provide all teachers with the professional development needed to acquire required instructional skills.
- The state should focus and streamline relevant data systems to make it easier to track drop outs at all levels—but especially at critical junctures in the “education pipeline” (e.g., kindergarten and grades 5, 8 and 9) – and support early identification of students and families who need special services, supports and resources.

- In close collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Board of Regents, the Partnership for Continued Learning should identify schools' and school districts' promising efforts to deal with the dropout problem and disseminate information about proven "best practices."
- The Ohio Department of Education should provide technical assistance to schools and school districts that want to redesign their schedules to extend reading and mathematics time for students whose skills are below the proficient level (i.e., block scheduling); intensify career counseling during the middle school years; and allow in-school time for elective activities such as tutoring, mentoring and other supplemental education services and study skills instruction.

2 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Develop and implement a state-level and community-wide intervention plan that mobilizes and focuses community resources and efforts at the key points where and when students fall off the path to high school graduation.

Schools and communities must have the capacity to identify and implement, in a timely manner, research-supported interventions and complex initiatives for (1) students who have fallen behind academically, especially those needing academic remediation; (2) students with social-emotional and behavior problems; and (3) students with other demonstrable risk factors that often predict dropping out. For this purpose,

- The Ohio Department of Education should be directed to work collaboratively with the Partnership for Continued Learning and the state-level Family and Children First Council to (1) help school districts and their community partners develop the data and assessment systems needed for early warning and rapid response systems; (2) develop strong connections with community health and social service providers and families to address non-academic barriers – especially health disparities and mental health needs; and (3) develop information resources that schools and their partners can use to educate communities about the seriousness of their dropout problem.
- The state should identify ways to redeploy, blend and braid Title IV-E (social security and child welfare), Title I (funding for schools with children on free and reduced lunch), Title XI (special education), TANF funds and relevant mental health, health and juvenile justice funding streams to support school-family-community coordinators responsible for dropout prevention, early intervention and recovery.
- State and local education policy leaders should work together to develop "bridge" programs that allow incoming ninth graders with weak literacy and mathematics skills to enroll in accelerated summer school programs.

3 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Support communities' efforts to eliminate dropping out as an option for students through P-16 councils or other community-based, public-private partnerships.

The Commission believes that the state should provide funding for school attendance clerks, social workers and psychologists who will be charged with responsibility for tracking down

truants and dropouts, addressing the root causes of their problems and working with their families to get them back in school quickly. In addition, it should develop innovative and relevant alternative programs – both within and outside schools and school districts – for those who drop out and for students who are struggling in school (and are thinking about leaving before earning a diploma). In developing these “second chance” programs, the state should ensure they are sufficiently rigorous for jobs in the new economy and truly relevant to students’ needs and interests.

The state also should provide incentives for community colleges and adult career-technical programs to offer alternative education and training for high school dropouts that combines high school completion with readiness for postsecondary education. This recommendation mirrors provisions of the state’s 10-year higher education strategic plan, which calls for the state’s colleges to “reach out to all students who do not complete their high school education and work to re-engage them through high school completion and college preparedness programs.”

The Commission applauds the University System of Ohio for its innovative thinking; and more specifically for its collaborative funding plan and its suggestion that students who complete the high school diploma on a college campus or in a adult career-technical program may be counted on the graduation statistics compiled by the Ohio Department of Education. This approach gives both high schools and colleges incentives to participate.

Finally, Commission members are encouraged by the fact that work already has begun on a new career pathway. This pathway focuses on a “Stackable Certificates” initiative built on learning competencies. It helps school dropouts and other adult learners connect pre-college academic work to credit-bearing career-technical coursework. Through this competency-based initiative, school dropouts and other adult learners will have access to Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) services that prepare them to achieve a score on the GED that is equivalent to readiness for postsecondary education.

In addition, this “Stackable Certificates” initiative will allow learners to see a transparent path to learning and skill development with an “open door” and drop-in and drop-out opportunities throughout their working lives. It will offer learners a series of small steps with defined rewards that build confidence for both students and employers. And it will offer fluid paths that recognize that learners can be at different levels in each of four basic skill areas: mathematics, reading, writing and language.

The Commission urges the state’s education policy leaders, as well as the providers of adult workforce education and training services, to move forward with this initiative – and to ensure that its doors are wide open to school dropouts and others in jeopardy of leaving school before earning a diploma. “Stackable Certificates” will give these young people a second chance to focus on learning.

School Leadership: Making bridge-building a priority

School leaders – principals, superintendents and district administrators – are “game changers” because of the special power and authority they enjoy over school and district improvement planning and resource allocations. Three facts confirm the centrality of school leaders in every school and school district:

1. Every *high-performing* school or district enjoys competent, stable leadership.
2. Every *low-performing* school or district exhibits leadership problems, such as principals overwhelmed by their jobs, embattled superintendents taking heat from local school boards and persistent turnover among principals and superintendents.
3. Every *back-on-track* school or district with a turnaround success story to tell has benefited from turnaround leadership.

In short, advocates for Ohio’s new education system have a clear, important choice. Ignore school leaders and “the education game” will not change. Prioritize their professional development in support of new roles, responsibilities and opportunities with expanded school and district improvement planning for a new education system, and these school leaders will pave the way for the hard work ahead.

In fact, the other three game-changing action priorities will not be successful without new models and operational structures for school leadership. All three require leaders who are ready, willing and able to *build strategic bridges* to families, youth, communities, businesses, local governments and postsecondary education. And all three depend on leaders who understand that leadership is:

- *Collaborative* because it is shared with family and community stakeholders, not restricted to school and district boundaries;
- *Distributed* inside the school and the district because it is shared with teachers, student support professionals and representative youth leaders; and
- *Adaptive* because it changes as knowledge and conditions change and is a centerpiece in continuous quality improvement systems.

Historically, school leadership has been assigned to a single person or a small group of individuals. The focus of school leaders’ responsibilities has been on managing schedules and budgets, overseeing building maintenance and operations, promoting discipline and, most of all, serving as instructional leaders.

Five years ago, the Governor’s Commission on Teaching Success called for a rethinking of what is meant by school leadership – and recommended changes in the way Ohio’s principals are trained, licensed, supported and rewarded. As a result of the implementation of some of that group’s recommendations – as well as additional initiatives of the Ohio Department of Education – a growing number of Ohio’s dedicated principals, superintendents and district administrators have embarked on the journey toward new models of leadership.

These pioneering leaders have taken improvement plans “outside the walls” of the school and the district. They have begun to develop firm, strategic partnerships with families, communities, young people, businesses and postsecondary education. And they have become pioneers in embracing genuine collaboration and inter-organizational bridge-building, often working to create birth-to-career or P-16 systems.

Unfortunately, most of Ohio’s principals, superintendents and district administrators have not been prepared for these new leadership models or the partnerships that make them necessary. They have not been trained to become *great leaders* who share their jobs with other people and their organizations. They are not prepared to build and strengthen the new bridges that connect schools, districts, families and communities.

To the contrary, most of Ohio’s school leaders have been prepared to work inside school and district walls, protecting and enforcing traditional boundaries, jurisdictions and accountability mechanisms. Instead of building bridges, these leaders have learned how to buffer schools and districts from outside interference.

These school leaders’ building-centered, walled-in approach to leadership and management is a mainstay in preservice education, professional development programs and textbooks for school leaders. In the same vein, professors of educational leadership, administration and policy, as well as professional development specialists, disseminate and reinforce a walled-in, building-centered approach. No wonder the system is perpetuated.

No one is to blame for this persistent, self-reinforcing pattern of school leadership and leadership development. It is a systems problem—one engrained in the traditions of American schooling. Today, this tradition has outlived its usefulness. *A new learning day in Ohio* depends on new models for school leadership, models that are dovetailed with the other three game-changing priorities. This is why the Commission is making the recommendations that follow.

1 ACTION RECOMMENDATION; Build school leaders’ skills to engage communities and work collaboratively with families, community leaders, community-based organizations, employers, representative youth leaders, and other stakeholders.

Ohio’s new learning day entails multiple changes that benefit students, educators, parents and the community. All such benefits hinge on adult professionals’ learning and continuing professional development. Both preservice education programs and continuing professional development programs provide opportunities for education and human service professionals to learn new competencies and acquire new knowledge and understanding needed to build strategic bridges to family, community and regional resources for academic success and healthy development.

This professional education is as timely as it is important. Although recent survey data are not available, a study in the late 1990’s indicated that only one in six schools, colleges and departments of education – in our colleges and universities – offered even one course focused on family and community partnerships and working relationships. There is work to be done.

Partnerships among colleges and universities, the Ohio Department of Education and local schools and districts provide ideal structures and opportunities for this new learning day for adult professionals. The advice of the well-known educator John Goodlad and his associates is worth heeding: *Develop these partnerships for simultaneous renewal and improvement.*

Goodlad's rationale is straight-forward and compelling. If we change schools by adding expanded school improvement models and P-16 initiatives without changing preparation programs, every new graduate will need to be re-trained. Conversely, if we change preparation programs without changing schools, nearly every new graduate's innovative impulses will be "washed out" in the realities of school experience. The message is clear: Schools and "ed schools" must reform and renew simultaneously and interactively. Each benefits and learns from the other.

In full agreement with Professor Goodlad, the Commission recommends:

- The state of Ohio should revise its pre-service preparation programs and embedded professional development for principals, district staff and superintendents – as well as for teachers, counselors, school psychologists, school nurses and social workers – ensuring that they include specific training for expanded school improvement models that implement new learning day approaches.
- The state's colleges and universities should be directed to ensure that arts and sciences faculty members are fully engaged in such partnerships because they offer invaluable content (subject matter) knowledge provided in the Ohio Core Curriculum and, in turn, new jobs and careers.
- Make sure that preparation and training initiatives are aligned with the state's new standards for school leaders, and work collaboratively with Ohio's principal, school administrator and teacher organizations, and with other affected professional trade associations, to design and carry out this initiative.

It should be emphasized that the Commission has not limited its recommendation to principals, superintendents and top district-level staff. It believes that counselors, school social workers, school nurses and psychologists who work in schools must be involved in these partnerships. These human services professionals play essential roles in school-family-community bridge-building; in dropout prevention, early intervention, and recovery; and in extended, accelerated, and connected learning opportunities. In short, these professionals share leadership for Ohio's new education agenda and the programs that prepare and support them must be part of partnerships for simultaneous renewal.

The Commission also recommends that:

- The state's colleges and universities should be directed to launch faculty development programs for those who prepare educators and school leaders, including opportunities for school leaders with expertise in expanded learning approaches to provide technical support for faculty development.

- The state should provide an advanced certificate for teacher-leaders (expert teachers who serve as mentors, coaches and subject-specific instructional leaders for other teachers and for teachers who work in community-based, out-of-school time programs). This initiative should be backed by a statewide policy that supports expanded professional development for all teachers to help them get ready for and to use out-of-school time learning resources effectively.
- Working collaboratively, the Ohio Board of Regents, Department of Education and Partnership for Continued Learning should develop role-specific, community-of-practice networks for school leaders; support networks of schools and P-16 initiatives, and facilitate cross-school and cross-site leadership-related learning and development.

These recommendations stem from a fundamental reality. Many of Ohio's education professors have been recruited from the ranks of school and district practitioners. Their practice expertise is a distinctive asset. Yet, many have not experienced the kind of education system being developed in Ohio and in other states. Many have not experienced successes with bridges to family and community resources. Many have not been key stakeholders in firm partnerships for simultaneous renewal.

College and university faculty without special expertise in expanded school improvement planning and models cannot be expected to provide it to their students and practitioner colleagues. Therefore, the Committee urges the state – and its colleges and universities – to make immediate investments in faculty development in Educational Leadership Programs, teacher education programs and human services professional education programs. Ohio's pioneering faculty in these fields can and should serve as joint designers and providers of this faculty development agenda; and they can and should be joined by school and community pioneers already performing this innovative school improvement work.

Networking gifted and talented leaders with rich experience and connecting novice leaders to them is an important strategy. Ohio is rich in its innovative leaders and pioneering schools, districts and partner families and community agencies. Each has success stories and promising innovations that may benefit the others. Finding ways to harvest these important contributions and disseminate them quickly and widely is an important priority – just as it is an accelerator for much-needed system changes.

Conventional training offered by experts who visit innovative sites is one way, indeed the traditional way, to disseminate promising innovations and success stories and take them to scale. Networking for mutual learning and innovation exchanges is arguably a better way, but not at the expense of conventional training. Therefore, the Commission calls for assistance, supports and resources for networking school leaders – broadly defined – to exchange innovations, develop promising practices, gain implementation supports and share lessons learned. Local P-16 councils and comparable partnerships, as well as charitable foundations should be included in these networking sessions.

Finally, the Commission believes that the Ohio Department of Education should be directed to serve as a clearinghouse that harvests and disseminates emergent research knowledge and best practices (and promising practices) related to school leaders' community outreach and engagement practices,

2 ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Secure resources for the preparation and the use of school-family-community coordinators, ensuring they have the competencies needed for the horizontal and vertical dimensions of P-16 improvement planning.

A new learning day depends on strong communication and solid bridging mechanisms among schools, families, community organizations, postsecondary education, and the private sector. Principals and superintendents have roles to play in this bridge-building, but they cannot do it all, alone. Best practice with new learning day approaches includes specially prepared and supported school-family-community coordinators who forge new working relationships among people and facilitate partnerships among organizations. Once these bridges are in place, these coordinators function as “the social glue” that keeps diverse people working together in pursuit of common purposes.

Parents and families are a special priority, and these coordinators have key roles to play. Research supports the view that parents can play pivotal roles in the academic success of their children. Authentic parental involvement improves academic achievement and overall well being in every conceivable family classification. The challenge is to make authentic involvement a reality.

Conventional parental involvement – that is, participation in the PTA, attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in classrooms and on field trips – has not been fully successful in many schools and districts. Even where it has been effective, such involvement is in decline. One reason is that many mothers, who have been the mainstays in parental involvement, are now employed; and others have multiple demands on their time and energy.

These parental and familial realities can be joined to others. Perhaps above all, families with multiple stresses – housing worries, food insecurities and economic woes – are the least likely to become involved in their children’s schooling. And children in the most vulnerable families typically are the ones with the most risk factors for falling behind, exhibiting problem behaviors and dropping out. Children in foster homes and children whose families move constantly from one place (and school) to another are special priorities.

In its consideration of community engagement strategies – its first game changing action priority – the Commission urged the state to ensure that representative youth and parent leaders participate in school improvement planning. It re-enforces that recommendation here by urging the state to expand and intensify school- and district-based models for parent empowerment and family support focused on student success. Such efforts will allow schools, districts and their community partners to respond to parents’ needs (e.g., child care supports after school, English language learning and adult workforce training). Already underway in some Ohio schools, these programs engage parents and entire families in new ways. They cause parents to think twice about moving their children to another school; and they persuade parents to become more involved in their children’s schooling, promoting their school success.

Creating a More Desirable Future

To be drafted after 7/2 meeting



Selected Resources

To be developed . . .



Acknowledgements

To be drafted . . .

