

Education Week, March 28, 1990

# A Road Map for Restructuring Schools

Earlier this year, the Education Commission of the States and the National Governors' Association convened education leaders in two regional workshops to discuss strategies for redesigning state education systems to meet national performance goals. More than 300 participants collaborated on the design of a road map for state policy makers to follow. The following principles of restructuring and steps for policy makers to take are the results of this effort.

## Principles of Restructuring

1. The goal of restructuring is to improve learning for all students.
2. The entire system — from schoolhouse to statehouse — is involved in restructuring and must change.
3. Curriculum and instruction must actively engage students and promote higher-order thinking as well as basic skills.
4. Schools must have the authority and flexibility to create educationally sound programs based on their needs and resources.
5. Accountability for results must accompany authority and flexibility and rest on measures that assess important learning goals.
6. Roles and responsibilities throughout the education system must shift from enforcement and monitoring to facilitating and creating schools as stimulating teaching and learning environments.
7. Restructuring requires consistent and coherent policies across all parts of the system including curriculum, assessment, professional development, teacher and administrator development and accountability systems.
8. Restructuring requires expanded leadership at all levels of the system and new broad-based coalitions of support.
9. Restructuring requires risk-taking and experimentation in order to transform schools into dynamic, self-renewing organizations.
10. Restructuring requires substantial investment in human resource development.
11. Equity and excellence must be treated as compatible and achievable goals.
12. The education system must collaborate with social service agencies to ensure all students are ready to learn when they enter school.
13. Restructuring requires the support of the broader community, including business and industry, as well as the entire education community — every citizen has a part to play.
14. There is no one "silver bullet" to solve our education problems — solutions will be complex and result in schools and education systems which are diverse.

## Steps for Policy Makers To Take

1. **Develop a vision of desired student outcomes and a vision of a restructured education system.**
  - Set clear, high, shared expectations
  - Develop a specific and demanding statement of what basic skills, thinking skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors you want all students to have when they complete school
  - Student outcomes should meet employability criteria suggested by business and industry
  - Ensure educators and policy makers have a clear understanding and ownership of these goals and expectations

Examples: Kansas, Vermont, New Mexico, Connecticut, Ontario
2. **Build a coalition of business, community, education and political leaders.**
  - Create a coalition to bring external pressure on the education system for productive change
  - Work with coalition leaders to help them understand why and how the system needs to be restructured

- Help the coalition identify an appropriate role, agenda and goals
  - Sell the agenda to policy makers and the public
- Examples: South Carolina Business/Education Partnership, Washington Business Roundtable, Mathematical Sciences Education Board State Coalitions
3. **Gain public and political support.**
    - Develop a statewide media campaign on the need to restructure the system
    - Hold regional meetings to help develop goals and expectations and gain widespread public and political support for achieving them
    - Identify and train spokespersons to advocate system restructuring
    - Get business and political leaders to carry the restructuring banner
    - Make restructuring efforts visible

Examples: Mississippi, South Carolina, Arkansas, New Mexico
  4. **Provide flexibility, encourage experimentation and decentralize decision making.**
    - Develop a process that allows participating schools and districts to obtain waivers
    - Deregulate schools to promote innovation
    - Use incentives to encourage risk taking and experimentation
    - Decentralize authority by encouraging site-based management

Examples: Hawaii, South Carolina, North Carolina, Washington, Colorado, Oregon
  5. **Shift state and local education agency roles from enforcement to assistance.**
    - Agencies should continue monitoring to satisfy federal regulations and ensure equity
    - State education agencies should provide or broker high-quality technical assistance to districts and schools
    - State education agencies should develop model collaborative projects within states
    - State and local agencies should develop a fair and clear accountability system
    - Local education agencies should provide information and technical assistance to schools as they restructure

Examples: Massachusetts, Kentucky, New Mexico
  6. **Restructure teacher and administrator education.**
    - Redesign teacher education to model instruction for an active learning classroom
    - Strengthen the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum
    - Develop programs that focus on content knowledge and new forms of pedagogy
    - Develop administrator training programs which encourage the use of research and inquiry methods
    - Link schools with universities and other sources of information to help teachers expand their knowledge of teaching and learning
    - Strengthen the clinical experience by placing teacher candidates in schools that are restructuring
    - Actively recruit minority students into teacher education
    - Provide scholarships or forgivable loans to attract talented students
    - Determine teacher and administrator requirements for licensure which will support restructuring

Examples: California, Maine, Connecticut, North Carolina, Wisconsin
  7. **Provide ongoing development opportunities for every teacher and administrator.**
    - Provide time for teacher renewal, collaboration and the acquisition of new skills, understandings and attitudes
    - Establish high-quality programs to train administrators in research and inquiry methods
    - Refocus existing staff development resources to support restructuring
    - Provide incentives for teachers to receive national board certification
    - Provide incentives for teachers to excel

Examples: Vermont, California, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Pennsylvania

8. **Hold the system accountable.**
  - Develop new performance assessments that measure students' ability to think, solve problems and apply basic skills
  - Develop multiple ways to measure progress to avoid "high stakes" testing and teaching to a single test
  - Hold the education system accountable by making information on the success of the education system available to policy makers and the public
  - Develop "outcomes-based" accreditation procedures
  - Provide rewards for high-achieving schools and sanctions for low-achieving schools.

Examples: Kentucky, North Carolina, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Maryland, South Carolina, Minnesota
9. **Give all students every chance to learn and contribute.**
  - Institute early childhood programs so that all children are ready to learn when they enter school
  - Mentor all students at risk of failure
  - Create programs that engage students in community service
  - Collaborate with other social service agencies to fulfill the needs of all children
  - Encourage parental involvement

Examples: Rhode Island, New York, Missouri, Arkansas
10. **Use policies as catalysts to promote and support restructuring.**
  - Create public school choice plans
  - Consider alternative certification policies
  - Encourage school-site management
  - Provide incentives to reward accomplishments
  - Provide innovation and creativity grants to schools
  - Align and revise state policies to support restructuring

Examples: Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Ohio, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois, Delaware, Arkansas, Rhode Island, New Mexico, Pennsylvania
11. **Identify pilot restructuring sites.**
  - Use competitive grants to identify schools and districts ready to begin restructuring
  - Select pilot sites or lead schools to begin restructuring efforts
  - Build on existing restructuring efforts already underway in a state or district
  - Provide necessary support to pilot sites
12. **Find new resources and reallocate existing resources for restructuring.**
  - "Prime the pump" using incentive or competitive grants
  - Help states and districts design plans for the reallocation of existing resources
  - Develop business/education partnerships
  - Secure grants from federal, state and the private sector to provide start-up costs for restructuring
13. **Use technology to support restructuring.**
  - Use technology to explore new ways to deliver instruction. Do not use technology as an "add-on" to the traditional lecture, recite, test method of instruction
  - Be prepared to handle policy decisions on jurisdiction over distance learning, i.e., teacher certification, textbook and curriculum approval
  - Strive for new collaborative arrangements between urban and rural schools and institutions out of state

The ECS/NGA Restructuring Workshops were supported by grants from the American Express Foundation, ARCO Foundation, BellSouth Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Control Data Corporation and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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