2 High Expectations, Voluntary National Standards, and Accountability for All Students Learning

If we are to deliver on the promise of better use of learning time, we must have the highest expectations for our students and educators and fair accountability systems. Then we must adequately finance a high-quality educational experience for every student.

The Challenge

Variable Standards

Virtually every workplace establishes quality standards for its employees. Nurses, electricians, airline pilots, accountants, automobile mechanics, lawyers, physicians, and teachers all earn certifications and/or licenses. Some of these credentials are national and others are state-specific. But regardless, expectations are usually high and there is little variation around the country. Measurements of performance and investments in preparation are also similar.

Tragically, the commitment to uniformity in expectations and standards for what students should be taught is not reflected in the K-12 education system that helps prepare all these workers. This is despite the fact that the need for and value of rigorous curriculum standards in every American classroom are rarely disputed.

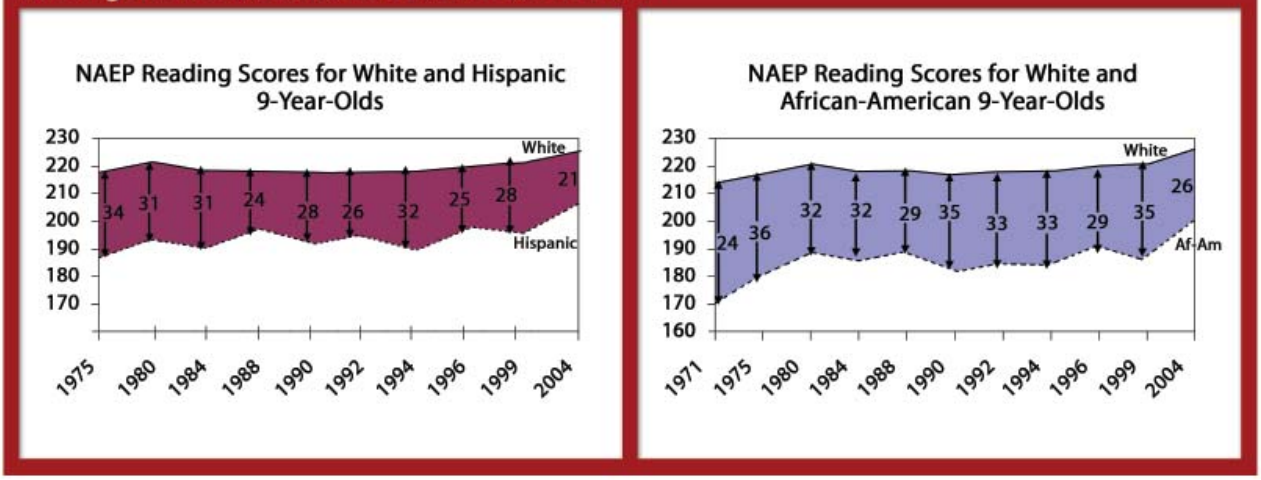
Standards were initially posed as a core element for promoting educational excellence in 1989 by President George H. W. Bush and the nation's governors at the first National Education Summit. Encouraged by President William J. Clinton and the nation's business leaders, most states began developing and implementing curriculum standards in the 1990s. The few that had not done so by 2001, when the No Child Left Behind Act (the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) was passed, have now designed and instituted them. Educators and policymakers have embraced standards as the mechanism to ensure that every student, no matter what school he or she attends, masters the skills and develops the knowledge needed to participate in a global economy and complex world community. During the same timeframe that rigorous curriculum standards and accountability systems were beginning to be adopted, some progress was made in narrowing the achievement gap between white students and students of color. (See Figure 8.)

However, it has become very apparent that not all standards are alike. There is little common understanding across states about what students need to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school and little consensus on what constitutes "rigorous." Some states have established curriculum standards that push students to aim high, while others have them settle for the minimum. Because states were allowed to design their own standards for academic achievement, we currently have more than 50 different sets of standards.

There is little common understanding across states about what students need to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school and little consensus on what constitutes "rigorous."

It is not only the content of the curriculum standards that matters, but also their construction. There is great variation in the clarity and coherence of state curriculum standards in subject areas within and across grade levels, and often standards are simply vague and immeasurable. For example, careful observers have found variation in standards

Figure 8: Achievement Gap in Reading Among White Students and Students of Color[103]



when comparing the English Language Arts (ELA) standards of Michigan, where questions have been raised about content, coherence and clarity, and those of Alabama, which are considered to be among the best ELA standards in the nation.[104]

Nowhere is the harm of variable standards, which guide teaching, greater than in the core academic subjects of reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. Reading is the most crucial subject to master, as it is the gateway to learning in all other subjects.

Despite the pivotal importance of reading to one's academic growth, too many students struggle to attain basic literacy. Over one-third of all fourth-graders read below basic levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a nationwide test known as the nation's report card. That number is much higher for some groups of students. Fifty-five percent of low-income fourth graders tested at below basic levels, and approximately 60% of low-income African-American and 56% of Latino children did the same. This gap narrows little by eighth grade.[105]

[103] Perie, M. and R. Moran and A.D. Lutkus, *NAEP 2004 Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance in Reading and Mathematics* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, July 2005). Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2005/2005464.pdf. For more details on the NAEP exam, please see footnote 32.

[104] Sandra Stotsky, *The State of English Standards* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2005). Available at: http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/FullReport[01-03-05].pdf

[105] M. Daane, P. Donahue and W. Grigg, *The Nation's Report Card: Reading Highlights 2003* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Nov. 2003). Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2003/2004452.pdf

The reading challenges are especially great for the growing numbers of students who speak little English in their homes. Gaps for this group on NAEP indicate that our teaching force has not yet mastered the special techniques that can help these students learn to read in a timely way and pursue other curriculum content in English.

Failure to teach reading well swells the ranks of students in special education, apparently a major reason for the higher per-pupil education expenditure in this country compared with most of our peers. Children with a "specific learning disability" account for nearly half of the roughly 6 million children (ages 6-21) in special education.[106] If they had been taught to read, the number of students in special education would be much fewer. Researchers have concluded that approximately 80% of these children and youth with learning disabilities have not learned or been taught how to read adequately. The majority of children who are poor readers at age 9 or older continue to have reading difficulties into adulthood; even the best, most intensive programs do not completely address the reading shortcomings of older students.[107]

Over the past decade, educators nationwide have concentrated attention on early reading literacy. While significant results have been slow to appear, it is important not to ignore reading skills that must be developed beyond 3rd grade. According to a recent report from the Alliance for Excellent Education, approximately 8 million young people between 4th and 12th grade struggle to read at grade level. Some 70% of them need remediation. These struggling readers can read words on a page, but they are usually not able to comprehend what they read.[108]

International comparisons make clear that American students have just as significant shortcomings in math and science as in reading. Indeed, state standards in math appear to have declined over a four-year period.[109] This has occurred despite the fact that science and engineering have long propelled our economy, and they will continue to do so here as well as around the world.[110]

Inadequate Measurements

High expectations expressed through quality standards are not enough. In all too many places, standards for what students must master are presented as challenging but in practice are watered down and simply not designed to ensure that students are ready to move into the next stage in their development. Accountability for results is critical to ensuring a high-quality education for all students. A first step toward accountability is measuring outcomes. Too often, what is not measured is overlooked.

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[106] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, *Number of Children Served Under IDEA, Part* B, Table AA7, 2002. Available at: http://www.ideadata.org/tables27th%5Car_aa7.htm

[107] G.R. Lyon et. al., "Rethinking Learning Disabilities," *Rethinking Special Education for a New Century* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham foundation and the Progressive Policy Institute, 2002). Available at http://www.ppionline.org/documents/SpecialEd_complete_volume.pdf.

[108] Gina Biancarosa and Catherine Snow, *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Available at: http://www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/ReadingNext.pdf

[109] David Klein, *The State of Math Standards* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2005). Available at: http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/mathstandards05FINAL.pdf

[110] National Science Board, *Task Force on National Workforce Policies for Science and Engineering* (Arlington, VA: National Science Board, 2003).

There must be ways to measure whether standards are met and hold accountable those responsible for producing results.[111] Current measures of accountability, particularly those mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), seek to ensure steady achievement gains by all students in all schools. We applaud these efforts and, in doing so, recognize that standardized tests are a valid and important measure of student performance. However, student performance is itself only one element in a complex system of contributions by multiple actors, all of which require measurement to judge progress in a comprehensive effort at change.

The variation in state standards and measurement demeans the meaning of proficiency from state to state, making it difficult for parents and teachers to accurately and meaningfully gauge how well their children are learning in comparison to their peers.

Some of the more compelling interim and outcome indicators that have been suggested by research and that apply to different clusters of people and levels of authority include: results of health and developmental screening for young children; appropriate developmental and educational progress from pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade; examination of student portfolios; gains in student achievement on NAEP/state tests; reduced K-12 dropout rate; increase in students pursuing higher level math and science courses; increase in board-certified teachers; adoption of master teacher positions; post-secondary enrollment increases; reduced remediation at post-secondary institutions; increased persistence and graduation rates in post-secondary education; and reduction and ultimate elimination of the achievement gap between white and non-white students.

The foregoing measures are possibilities. They build on what the results of standardized tests tell us, but they also implicate a wider range of actors in sustained efforts at comprehensive improvement.

One of NCLB's shortcomings is its failure to set the same standards of performance across states. Instead, each state chooses its own test to measure student performance and defines its own level for "proficiency" on that test. The variation in state standards and measurement demeans the meaning of proficiency from state to state, making it difficult for parents and teachers to accurately and meaningfully gauge how well their children are learning in comparison to their peers. As Figure 9 shows, the proportion of students achieving at the proficient level on national measures, such as the NAEP test, can vary greatly from the proportion attaining proficiency on state achievement tests. Students who appear to be proficient by their own state's standards may

[111] High-school graduation rates provide one example of an area where measurements and accountability had until recently been sorely lacking. For years, the federal government, as well as states, had used a range of often dubious and widely varying methodologies to calculate high-school graduation rates. As a result, the true extent of the nation's high-school dropout problem remained hidden for far too long, and it was difficult to identify academic programs that needed improving. In July 2005, however, the National Governors Association (NGA) took a major step forward in this arena as 45 governors and 12 national organizations agreed to adopt a consistent formula for calculating high-school graduation rates. The agreement is non-binding, but it indicates that the governors recognized the value in replacing the current patchwork of approaches with a single, uniform measure. For more information on the NGA's agreement, see: http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.6c9a8a9ebc6ae07eee28aca9501010a0/vgnextoid=f599184d94525010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD

Figure 9: Comparison of Percent of Students Achieving at or Above the Proficient Level on State Tests and the National Assessment of Educational Progress[112]

4th Grade Reading - Percent at or above proficient (2003)

	State Test	NAEP	Difference
Alabama	77	22	55
Texas	85	27	58
Mississippi	87	18	69

4th Grade Math - Percent at or above proficient (2003)

	State Test	NAEP	Difference
Texas	87	33	54
Tennessee	79	24	55
Mississippi	74	17	57

8th Grade Reading - Percent at or above proficient (2003)

	State Test	NAEP	Difference
Georgia	81	26	55
North Carolina	86	29	57
Texas	88	26	62

actually not be getting the education they need to excel in another state, much less the global economy.

The result of variation in the rigor of standards and accountability for meeting them is just as apparent in the student performance gaps among sub-groups. For example, on NAEP tests, 4th grade African-Americans in Delaware scored 18 points higher than 4th grade African-Americans in California – a gap of nearly two years' worth of learning.[113]

Lack of Expert Help to Low-Performing Schools and Districts

Perhaps the most urgent challenge facing states and districts in bringing all schools up to a high national standard of performance is how to turn around continually low-performing schools. Federal and state laws promise assistance, but effective help is all too rare. While many states have established school support teams, they are underfunded and only able to assist a few schools. Districts, which receive extra federal money and sometimes state funds to help struggling schools, have been slow to devise systems of assistance that produce the desired achievement gains in their low-performing schools.

A major part of the problem is poorly designed mechanisms in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) intended to help these schools. In addition to inadequate funding, NCLB puts too much of the responsibility for improving schools on the schools themselves. It neglects to enhance the capacity of state education

[112] Skinner, Ronald A., "State of the States," *Education Week*, Jan. 6, 2005. Available at: http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2005/tables/17achieve-t1.html

[113] M. Daane, P. Donahue and W. Grigg, *The Nation's Report Card: Reading Highlights 2003* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Nov. 2003). Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2003/2004452.pdf

agencies and districts to develop multiple approaches and accompanying accountability measures for delivering effective help.[114]

Another serious part of the problem is that district and school leaders, as well as policymakers at all levels, too often pursue particular policies or implement specific programs without evidence of their effectiveness. As a result, districts and schools may dedicate substantial funds to efforts that yield little. District and school leaders need to develop and publicly explain their expectations and plans for improving schools, sometimes referred to as "strategic intent," and the results they expect from their actions. They also must pursue evidence-based policies and practices.[115] They do not have funds to waste on efforts that may or may not improve instruction and learning – nor do students have the time. When districts and schools make short-sighted decisions, it is students who pay the highest price.

Some states and districts are engaging in new public-private partnerships to bring help to low-performing schools. Both Georgia and Mississippi have contracted with the comprehensive school reform model America's Choice with promising results. Hartford, Connecticut, and Kansas City, Missouri, have done the same with other models, Success for All and First Things First, respectively, and seen significant student achievement gains. In Philadelphia, the education management organization, Edison Schools, has improved test scores in low-performing schools, leading the district to invite the company to manage additional schools.

Adequate and Efficient Funding

Money matters in meeting standards of performance, and it matters more if it is well and fairly spent.

Funding Inequities

Although expenditures for education in the United States are high, they are grossly inequitable. In more than half the states, lawsuits challenge not only inequities from district to district, but also the adequacy of state funding for public education. This litigation is based on guarantees found in state constitutions that variously provide for "sound," "basic," "adequate," or "sufficient" education. Increasingly, state high courts are finding that education funding is insufficient to meet these fundamental promises. Litigation is costly, cumbersome, and time-consuming; it drains resources that could better go to school improvement. States must reconsider how well they are providing their students with the sound education they require. In doing so, they must also remain constantly alert about how effectively available funds are being targeted to critical needs.

Just as harmful as state funding inequities are district budgeting practices that actually punish high-poverty schools. Districts receive funds

[114] Phyllis McClure, *School Improvement Under No Child Left Behind* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2005). Available at: http://www.americanprogress.org/atf/cf/{E9245FE4-9A2B-43C7-A521-5D6FF2E06E03}/MCCLURE3-03-2005.PDF

[115] Robert E. Slavin, *Evidence-Based Reform: Advancing the Education of Students At Risk* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress and Institute for America's Future, 2005). Available at: http://www.americanprogress.org/atf/cf/{E9245FE4-9A2B-43C7-A521-5D6FF2E06E03}/Slavin%203%2017%20FINAL.pdf

from multiple sources – federal, state, and local governments as well as foundations and other philanthropies – and, in turn, disperse them through expenditure systems that are fragmented and typically isolated from one another. As a result, districts not only have trouble understanding and explaining how they spend their money, they often make budgetary decisions that lead to less money for low-performing and high-poverty schools. This happens especially when districts allocate money among schools as if all teachers make the same salary, even though better-paid teachers, those usually with more years of experience, are much more likely to be teaching in relatively more affluent neighborhoods. Districts need to switch to allocation systems that account for actual teacher pay. Then high-poverty schools that struggle to retain more experienced teachers can recapture funds and expend them on extra teacher training, more teachers and smaller classes, after-school programs or many other uses.[116]

Finally, the United States must acknowledge and respond to the gross regional differences in fiscal abilities to provide a high-quality education. As researchers at the Rand Corporation and the American Institutes of Research have pointed out, inequities in education financing and results are greater among states than within states.[117]

Figure 10: Average Adjusted Per-Student Expenditure (2002)[118]

State	Average Per-Pupil Expenditure	Rank
District of Columbia	$11,269	1
New Jersey	$10,235	2
New York	$10,002	3
Vermont	$9,915	4
Nevada	$6,380	48
Mississippi	$6,143	49
Arizona	$6,010	50
Utah	$5,132	51

[116] Paul T. Hill and Marguerite Roza, "How Within-District Spending Inequities Help Some Schools to Fail," *Brookings Papers on Education Policy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, *2004*).

[117] David W. Grissmer et. al., *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Publications, 2000). Also, David Grissmer and Ann Flanagan, *Exploring Rapid Achievement Gains in North Carolina and Texas* (Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel, 1998). Available at: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/grissmer.pdf. Also see Jay Chambers, *Geographic Variations in Public Schools' Costs* (Washington, DC: American Institute for Research, 1998). Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/9804.pdf

[118] Lynn Olsen, "Financial Evolution," *Education Week*, January 6, 2005.

Inefficient Spending

Money for education is often spent inefficiently throughout the system – from local school districts to the federal government. Federal, state, district, and school spending decisions have focused on inputs rather than outputs – calculating what went into districts and schools, rather than what results were generated.

Federal, state, district, and school spending decisions have focused on inputs rather than outputs – calculating what went into districts and schools, rather than what results were generated.

As a result, budget decisions often seem to occur in a black box with little clear understanding of the purpose behind particular decisions, how they may affect or be affected by other decisions, what outcomes are expected from them or how to assess whether outcomes were achieved. In an era of high standards and higher expectations of students, inefficient practices must not continue. One first step could be the "efficiency reviews" voluntarily requested by districts in Texas and Virginia to identify ways to save and reallocate funds.

Under-funding

The federal government in 1965 recognized the need to direct some of its dollars to the nation's poorest schools through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which renewed and revised ESEA, increased funding significantly and directed these funds more sharply to the highest poverty communities. It also placed major new responsibilities on educators at all levels and promised to underwrite their cost. But Congress and the administration broke their promise. The law was underfunded by $10 billion in 2005 alone, and the cumulative shortfall is projected to total $39 billion by the end of 2006.[119] Many states, in turn, are estimating substantial shortfalls in funding used for meeting their responsibilities, and support for elements of the Act is eroding.

The federal government is not alone in placing new demands on state education agencies. State legislatures have directed these agencies to take on numerous responsibilities, including developing standards, assessment and accountability systems, reporting data to the public, and providing expert assistance to the lowest performing schools. Legislators have been right in expecting agencies to fulfill these responsibilities, but they have been short-sighted in under-funding these specific efforts. As demands on state education agencies have increased, lack of funding has led them to shrink in size. As a result, they do not have the staff needed to carry out these additional responsibilities.

Federal and state support for pre-school programs has continued to fall short. The federal Head Start program is only serving three out of five eligible children.[120] Similarly, only 10% of the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds are served by state-funded pre-kindergarten.

[119] Democratic Staff, Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, *FY 2006 Bush Budget: Breaks Promises, Underfunds K-12 Funding, and Forces Students to Pay More for College,* Feb. 7, 2005. Available at: http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/photos/FY06budgetsummary.pdf. This figure assumes that Congress will appropriate funding in FY 2006 as laid out in President Bush's FY 2006 budget.

[120] Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, *Head Start Improves Achievement and Reduces Crime* (Washington, DC: Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003). Available at: http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/HeadStartBrief.pdf

Federal and state funding for after-school programs is also problematic, despite overwhelming public support for these expenditures. As noted earlier, 14 million children in this country leave school and return to an empty home every afternoon. In addition, mayors in 86 cities have reported that only one-third of school-age children in their communities who need after-school care have been able to get it.[121] There simply are not enough programs for all of these students.

Safe and Modern Schools

The quality of our nation's school buildings is one area in which the lack of funding is most readily apparent. Despite clear evidence that students taught in safe, secure and structurally sound learning environments tend to perform better academically, [122] too many of our children spend their days in sub-par facilities. America's public school buildings are on average nearly a half-century old and, understandably, need some work. The most recent federal assessment of the condition of the nation's schools found that one in four schools reported that at least one of their on-site buildings was in less than adequate condition.[123] This same report also found that about 25% of schools were overcrowded, with student enrollment swelling to more than 5% above capacity. While no district is exempt, these poor conditions plague high-poverty and high-minority schools in particular.[124]

Most of the nation's public schools were designed for a bygone era when learning was based on the one-size-fits-all manufacturing model. The dialogue between students and teachers was largely one-sided, with teachers delivering the curriculum to a fairly homogenous set of students via large-group lectures. Today's most promising educational models are better aligned with the needs of a rapidly changing world and a more diverse group of students with a range of needs and learning styles. These teaching methods incorporate greater levels of student participation, group work, interdisciplinary learning, and technology in the classroom. Learning spaces should facilitate such models and be updated as necessary. One way to finance this continual improvement might be through a digital opportunity investment trust, which seeks to recapture a portion of the revenue from auctioning public airwaves.

In addition to being sound and modern, school facilities must be safe. High-profile incidents of school violence portrayed in the media scare parents, students, and citizens alike, although the recent nationwide decline in crime among the general population has been paralleled in schools. The violent crime rate, which measures reported incidents of murder, rape and assault against students at school, fell to 24 incidents per 1,000 students in 2002, down from 48 a decade earlier. Yet, 21% of students ages 12-18 reported that street gangs were

[121] Chrisanne L. Gayl, *After-School Programs: Expanding Access and Ensuring Quality* (Washington, DC: Progressive Policy Institute, 2004). Available at: http://www.ppionline.org/documents/afterschool_0704.pdf
[122] Glen I. Earthman, *School Facility Conditions and Student Academic Achievement* (Los Angeles, CA: Institute for Democracy, Education & Access, UCLA, 2002). Available at: http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/williams/reports/pdfs/wws08-Earthman.pdf
[123] Laurie Lewis et. al., *Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, June 2000). Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000032
[124] Mark. Schneider, *The Educational Adequacy of New Jersey Public School Facilities* (Washington, DC: Ford Foundation, Building Education Success Together, 2004). Available at: http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/PrincipalsSurveyAug2004.pdf

present at their schools in 2003.[125] Steps must be taken to ensure that schools provide a safe environment in which students can learn.

Wide variations in standards, accountability, and education financing mean that there are very different expectations and opportunities for students in different states. However, it is increasingly evident that in a global society, expectations for American students need to be universally higher. In order for students to perform at those higher levels, schools need to be financed adequately, with the costs shared among local communities, states, and the federal government.

The Recommendation

The federal government should support the crafting, adoption, and promotion of voluntary, rigorous national curriculum standards in core subject areas so that students can succeed in every academic setting and in the national and global marketplaces. It should also expand national accountability measures and assist low-performing schools and districts. It should initiate a national conversation about not only the importance of standards and accountability but also the need for paying sufficiently and equitably for public schooling, including modern and safe facilities, from pre-school to college.

Many scholars and researchers have identified and debated what students should know and be able to do in a wide range of subjects. It is now time to engage state leaders and to resolve these debates, push for consensus and codify what standards we need, and share them with the public, especially parents and educators. High-quality and sensible national curriculum standards and companion accountability measures are necessary in the core subjects of reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. There also must be national guidance about how to catch students up. For example, in adolescent reading, there has been progress in developing tools to successfully help struggling readers, but educators do not yet have an overall strategy to employ them effectively.[126] Expansion of a federal program similar to the Striving Readers initiative, which funds literacy interventions for struggling middle- and high-school students, could be very helpful.

Educators should also be judged by fair measurements and accountability systems. We do not purport to provide a definitive set of measurements. Instead, we strongly urge adoption of measurements that go beyond standardized testing and include effective, research-based methods. They must be rigorous, accepted, clear, and understood by those being measured, those doing the measuring, and the community to which public systems are ultimately accountable.

These measurements must seek to assess outcomes, but, because improving education is a long-term process, they must also seek to

[125] J.F. DeVoe et. al., *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2004* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Nov. 2004). Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005002

[126] Gina Biancarosa and Catherine Snow, *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Available at: http://www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/ReadingNext.pdf

provide reliable accounting of interim results and help diagnose student learning problems. This is the best way to determine if the various interventions developed and implemented by states, districts, schools, and in individual classrooms are moving in the right direction. If not, interim assessments will enable the testing of the assumptions behind specific courses of action, the determination of why certain interventions are not working, and the triggering of midcourse corrections to give the reforms a better chance of succeeding.

If students are to reach the achievement goals set for them, and if schools are to become the student-centered institutions they need to be, every dollar districts receive must not only be accounted for but also must be deliberately directed toward student learning goals. Central to this is the construction of comprehensive finance information systems. District and school leaders cannot make educationally sound, fiscally responsible decisions without data.

Finally, once we have a grasp on how money is actually spent, the country's leaders need to begin a conversation with our citizenry about appropriate national functions in education. What is the right mix of federal, state, and local responsibilities to reach a more uniform, high-quality system of education throughout the country?

Over the past two decades, the issues of national standards, national tests, and education finance inequity have been subject to national debate, but never simultaneously nor in a sustained way. This Task Force urgently calls for a new discussion about all three.

Over the past two decades, the issues of national standards, national tests, and education finance inequity have been subject to national debate, but never simultaneously nor in a sustained way.

Aligning Spending With Strategies in Boston

In 1999, Boston Public Schools (BPS) undertook a thorough review of the district's professional development expenditures. BPS expected to find that the bulk of professional development funds were spent on school-based coaches, the core element of its efforts to improve instruction. It discovered, however, that only $5 million – just 21% – of its training dollars were actually spent on coaches. With this knowledge, the district was able to reallocate resources to provide additional funds for coaching and to reinforce and further align professional development with coaching and the district's reform goals.

Information here is from:
Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development, *Investing in Learning: School Funding Policies to Foster High Performance: A Statement on National Policy* (Washington, DC: Committee for Economic Development, 2004). Available at: http://www.ced.org/docs/report/report_educfinance.pdf

The nation must keep its promise of sufficient resources to enable state agencies, school districts, schools, colleges and students each to play their part in producing higher levels of student learning and development. Our nation spends a lot of money on education. The Task Force recommendations promote money-saving efficiencies, but also call for greater financial investments. We are a wealthy country. We should invest more because it is morally right to help each generation achieve its full potential, economically necessary if we are to promote a high standard of living for all Americans, and politically vital if we are to maintain our nation's leadership in global affairs.

One Place to Save Money: Our Nation's Student Loan Programs

We call in this report for substantial increases in the need-based Pell Grants for post-secondary education. Those increases could be paid for if the federal government operated its major student loan program more efficiently. Under the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), banks and other lenders provide loans to students that are guaranteed through state agencies and are in turn insured by the federal government. In contrast, under the federal Direct Loan Program, colleges and universities offer loans to students, and the federal government provides them with the capital for doing so. In 2003-04, FFELP comprised 75% of the government's $57 billion in guaranteed student loans and the Direct Loan Program about 23%.

The Direct Loan Program is cheaper than FFELP for two reasons. The government can borrow money at lower rates than private lenders can and, as the government provides the capital for the Direct Loan, it receives the interest payments. Greater use of the Direct Loan Program would generate considerable cost savings, which could be used to fund other student aid programs. If, for example, FFELP were eliminated and all loans were made via the Direct Loan Program, enough savings would be generated to provide each Pell Grant recipient with an additional $1,000 per year.

Information here is from:

Democratic Staff, Committee on Education and the Workforce, *Student Direct Loans are Better for Taxpayers*, January, 2005. Available at: http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/directloansummary.html

Democratic Staff, Committee on Education and the Workforce, *Bipartisan Student Loan Bill Would Boost Funding for College Scholarships by $12 billion Without Costing Taxpayers A Dime, Says CBO*, January 12, 2005. Available at: http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/releases/rel11205b.html