





### **Education Playbook**

Policies for Transforming State Education Systems
November 2018

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Every state has the extraordinary opportunity to make a lasting impact on the economy, quality of life and future success of its citizens through education policy.

By all measures, a quality education is the foundation of thriving businesses and vibrant communities. Yet in 2018, millions of children across the United States were attending failing schools, and more than 15 percent of high schoolers <u>failed to graduate</u>. National test scores show that students' reading and math skills are stagnant or falling. And internationally, the <u>U.S. ranks 31st</u> in education, a mediocre position for the most accomplished nation on earth.

Education reform can change that.

With sound policies and visionary state leaders, strong education systems can ensure that each and every child has access to schools meeting his or her unique needs. Strong systems can ensure that schools deliver on the promise of a quality education, from robust early literacy programs to innovative 21<sup>st</sup>-century college and career pathways. Sound systems also optimize education resources by focusing funds on students—not bureaucracies—and by ensuring transparency and accountability to the families they serve.

#### Policies that Make a Difference

Founded by Governor Jeb Bush, ExcelinEd is a national nonprofit foundation with a mission to transform education. With a decades-long focus on state-level education policy, ExcelinEd provides hands-on expertise, resources and technical support in three broad policy areas that make significant, positive impacts on students and their future. This Education Playbook contains policy-specific briefs on each of these:

- Quality policies focus on improving the fundamentals, each of which is critical to the success of students, teachers and schools: Teacher Supports; Early Literacy; Fewer, Better Tests; School Accountability; and Education Funding.
- Innovation incorporates new research on learning and achievement to transform Industrial Ageclassrooms through College & Career Pathways and Next Generation Learning.
- Opportunity addresses the opportunity, achievement and equity gaps that currently exist in America's schools by expanding access to quality education for all children through Public Education Choice and Private Education Choice.

Each of the briefs describes how and why these policies can truly transform education in our states and, consequently, each state's future.

"Education is hard work for students, but it's even harder for the adults looking to transform education on their behalf. With a relentless focus on advancing big and bold policies, governors can give their next generation of citizens the very brightest of futures."

- Jeb Bush, 43rd Governor of Florida



## **TEACHER SUPPORTS**

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

We demand a great deal from America's teachers. Besides family members, teachers are among the most important individuals helping students to succeed. The list of what we expect is long yet incredibly important: to help ensure all students reach high standards through rigorous and engaging instruction; to employ science-based practices to teach all young students to read; to help overcome family and community challenges that some children bring with them to school; to prepare today's students to succeed in an ever-changing 21st-century world; and, increasingly, to help students develop essential social emotional skills—like grit, resilience and empathy—to better equip them for success.

#### WHY FOCUS ON TEACHER-SUPPORT STRATEGIES?

Teachers across all 50 states face mounting demands to provide students with an ever-widening range of opportunities and with deeper, more relevant preparation for college and career. Regrettably, state education systems fail to provide teachers with the comprehensive supports needed to meet these challenging demands. Compounding the problem are teacher shortages in many states, especially in critical subject areas and high-need communities.

- Between 2009 and 2014, the years of most recent available data, teacher education enrollments dropped from 691,000 to 451,000, a 35-percent reduction and a decrease of almost 240,000 teachers entering the classroom.
- Yet student enrollments are rising. The National Center for Education Statistics projects that the school-going population will increase by about 3 million students over the next 10 years.

Existing policies in many states make it *more* difficult for schools to recruit, retain and develop a diverse pool of talented and content-rich teachers for high-need areas and subjects. This may be due to a lack of financial incentives, inflexible teacher certification policies, weak or outdated teacher preparation programs and/or ineffective professional development opportunities.

To overcome these barriers, states need a suite of policies that support teachers and expand opportunities for other talented individuals to enter this great profession.

#### **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

Create alternative pathways that reduce barriers to entry, allowing qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession.

- Create "adjunct" certifications by which districts can issue local certification for part-time faculty, such as retired engineers or scientists in a community who want to give back to students by teaching part time.
- Attract more talented individuals into the teaching profession by creating incentives, such as teacher scholarships, and attracting proven recruitment programs, such as the <u>Relay Graduate School of Education</u> or <u>Teach for America</u>, to the state.
- Support in-state colleges of education in providing innovative programs, such as the undergraduate certification pathway offered by UTeach.
- Develop lower-cost and outcomes-based licensure and career ladder pathways through micro-credentialing.



## Expand existing teachers' capacity to help prepare all students for academic and career success.

- Improve state-supported professional development offerings to ensure teachers are coached in the latest science of reading instruction and other research-based approaches to teaching and learning.
- Allow teachers to earn endorsements in specialty areas through micro-credentials, such as those offered by Bloomboard and Digital Promise.
- Employ existing, high-quality professional development programs, such as <a href="Code.org">Code.org</a>, to allow teachers to become trained/certified in computer science instruction.

#### Increase teacher salaries by differentiating pay.

- Pay more to those teachers who teach the most at-risk students (e.g., students with special needs), those who
  teach in shortage subject areas (high school math and science), those who teach in more demanding school
  environments (e.g., low-performing schools and those in high-crime areas), and those who make great progress
  with students.
- Provide teacher leader and career ladder opportunities, such as those developed by <u>Opportunity Culture</u>;
   reward teachers who take on these roles so their compensation reflects both their workload and their prestige.

#### Resources

- Analysis of state law and regulations for teaching: <u>National Council on Teacher Quality</u>, <u>State Policy Yearbook</u> (2017).
- Alternative certification: <u>TNTP Teaching Fellows Program.</u>
- Providing teacher and leader career ladders: <u>Extending the Reach of Excellent Teaching "Introduction to Opportunity Culture."</u>
- **Differentiating pay:** <u>U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences Evaluation Report on</u> Federal Teacher Incentive Fund (2017).

#### Partner Highlight: Code.org

Code.org's goal to expand student access to computer science instruction includes resources and strategies for upskilling current teachers. These are described in detail in <a href="Recommendations for States Developing Computer Science">Recommendations for States Developing Computer Science</a> <a href="Teacher Pathways">Teacher Pathways</a>.



## EARLY LITERACY

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

If our children can't read, they don't stand a chance for a successful future. States must ensure every child learns how to read no later than the end of third grade. For improving education, third-grade reading is the most important measure on which policymakers should consider focusing. Literacy is the key for all students to learn, graduate and succeed.

#### WHY FOCUS ON EARLY LITERACY?

Failure in early literacy is not only an education problem, it's an economic and social problem, too. According to an Annie E. Casey Foundation report, children who are not reading proficiently in third grade are *four times* more likely to drop out of high school. African American and Hispanic students who are not proficient readers are *six times* more likely than proficient readers to drop out.

- According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 7 out of every 10 prison inmates can't read above a fourth-grade level.
- High school dropouts are not eligible for 90 percent of the jobs in the economy. And, dropouts make up nearly half of all heads-of-households on welfare.

It is imperative to address the illiteracy problem in our schools early. The future of our students *and* our communities depends on it.

#### **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

#### Establish a comprehensive, statewide K-3 reading program that includes:

- Assessment and Parent Notification: Administer a universal statewide early literacy screening within the first 30 days of school and notify parents if their child has a reading deficiency.
- Individualized Instruction: For students identified with a reading deficiency, establish individual reading plans using proven reading interventions for during the school day, before/after school and summer reading camp plus home reading strategies for parents.
- Support for Teachers: 1) Ensure teacher training programs are preparing teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read; 2) Provide statewide training on scientifically based reading research, with job-embedded training for teachers via reading coaches.
- Test-based Promotion and Intervention: Retain third graders who are severely below grade level and provide intensive interventions and specialized support from a highly effective teacher.

#### Take executive action to promote early literacy.

- Set an ambitious goal: e.g., 90% of third graders in our state will be proficient readers by 20XX.
- Invest in reading: e.g., offer free summer reading camps for struggling readers.
- Build a Statewide Literacy Campaign: e.g., with philanthropic support, ensure every baby receives his/her first book as he/she leaves the hospital.

#### POLICY IMPACT

#### Student outcomes and academic research support K-3 reading policy.

Eight of nine states with comprehensive K-3 reading policy have made greater improvements than states without such policy. Those eight states are Arizona, Indiana, Ohio, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Colorado and Florida.



#### RESEARCH & RESOURCES

#### Research on Florida's K-3 Reading policy found these improvements:

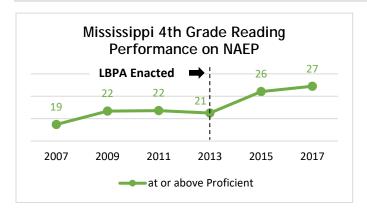
- Significant learning gains in the early grades. 1
- Increased performance within third grade. 1
- Retained students have a higher probability of graduating with a regular diploma.<sup>1</sup>
- Reduction in retentions in later grades.<sup>2</sup>
- Retained students, when compared to similar but promoted students, graduate with higher GPAs and take fewer remedial courses in high school.<sup>2</sup>

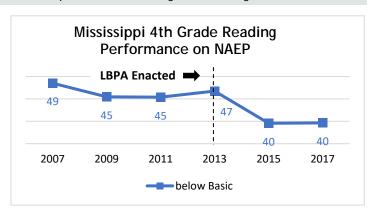
#### ExcelinEd Policy Resources:

- Early Literacy Fundamental Principles.
- Early Literacy Model Policy.
- K-3 Reading Impact Studies State-by-State Summary.
- K-3 Reading Communications Toolkit.

#### State Spotlight: Mississippi

Since the enactment of Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA), the state has made substantial improvement in student reading achievement, as demonstrated by both state and national tests. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grade 4 Reading, Mississippi has increased student proficiency by roughly six percentage points, while decreasing the percent of students below basic by about seven percentage points since the enactment of LBPA in 2013. Mississippi is now 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for improvements in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading.





"Our students are making historic gains in achievement levels and have made Mississippi one of the fastest improving states in the nation...Mississippi students are rewriting the story about public education in our state." - Dr. Carey Wright, State Superintendent of Education

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Costs and Benefits of Test-Based Promotion, Marcus Winters 2017

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Effects of Test-Based Retention on Student Outcomes Over Time: Regression discontinuity evidence from Florida, Guido Schwerdt, Martin R. West, Marcus A. Winters 2017



## FEWER, BETTER TESTS

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

Quality assessments are essential elements of impactful school accountability, academic rigor and effective classroom instruction that prepares students for postsecondary success. However, parents and teachers have long argued that children are over-tested, and that valuable instructional time is lost "teaching to the test."

Simple and effective policy changes can ensure that assessments serve their real purpose: measuring student achievement and providing actionable results that improve instruction and student learning. Fewer, Better Tests policy solutions give teachers more time to teach and ensure parents and teachers have access to easy-to-understand information to help their student.

#### MAKING THE TEST A TOOL FOR IMPROVEMENT

Every state can make significant improvements to their assessment system by:

#### **Providing More Time for Instruction**

- Move the state assessment to the last three weeks of school and shorten the state testing window to give teachers more instruction time, eliminate cramming prior to the test and reduce "dead time/movie time" after the test administration.
- Procure statewide summative assessments to allow for the piloting of flexible administration to allow students to demonstrate mastery when ready. This may mean allowing districts or schools to administer the state summative assessment once per guarter or when students are ready.

#### Streamlining and Improving State and District Assessment Systems

- Reduce the number of assessments by eliminating duplicative, low-quality or unnecessary tests.
- Provide technical assistance for interim assessments.
- Ensure statewide summative tests provide results that are comparable with other states.
- Independently evaluate the alignment of nationally recognized college entrance tests (e.g., SAT, ACT) to state standards in high school.
- Work with institutions of higher education in the state to identify a performance level or score on the state test that can be used for admissions and/or for placement into non-remedial postsecondary coursework.

#### Empowering Teachers with Useable, Timely Information

- Require student score reports for state assessments to be provided *both* to the current year teacher and incoming teacher of record to better inform instruction (e.g., provide the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher all her students' 4<sup>th</sup> grade score reports so she can better tailor instruction at the start of school).
- Require all results from *district required tests* to be provided to teachers within 48 hours or a shortened timeframe to inform instruction if the data are not turned around quickly to classroom teachers, the local test is taking away valuable teaching time and not being used as a diagnostic tool.

#### **Innovating**

- Transition to innovative, technology-based assessment models.
- Utilize online assessments to accelerate both delivery and scoring of assessments.



#### **Providing Better Information to Parents**

- Ensure parents understand the student expectations for each grade level, how teachers will help students reach them, and how the summative assessments measure student proficiency on those expectations.
- Require the state and districts to provide clear, transparent information to parents about their child's performance, progress, strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Require all results from state and district tests to be provided to parents within a useful timeframe.

#### FEWER, BETTER TESTS: IT'S WHAT PARENTS AND TEACHERS WANT

These solutions enjoy broad public support according to recently conducted national surveys:

- 76 percent of teachers and 73 percent of parents agreed that moving statewide, standardized tests to the last three weeks of the school year will give teachers more time to teach.
- 86 percent of teachers surveyed said that receiving copies of the state assessment results for both their current and incoming students would help them prepare instruction tailored to each student.
- 66 percent of parents surveyed believe state standardized tests give them helpful information about their child's academic progress.

#### EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND, PARENT-FRIENDLY SCORE REPORTS

State assessment results are the sole piece of information the state provides directly to parents, so score reports should provide helpful information to parents about their child.

- A clear explanation of the student's performance.
- Information on the student's areas of strengths and areas for improvement.
- Specific actions and resources to assist parents.
- Longitudinal information, if available.
- Information comparing the student's score to all students in the district, state or other states.

#### State Spotlight: California

California works with <u>Spotlight Education</u> to translate student assessment data into high-impact, customized narrative reports and personalized videos for parents.

#### Messaging That Works

- "Tests are a regular part of life, because in the real world, people must pass tests to drive a car, get into college, go into the military or get a job."
- "High-stakes tests are worrisome, but more concerning is whether our students are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to successfully compete for good jobs."

#### RESEARCH & RESOURCES

- Fewer, Better Tests <u>Surveys and Resources</u>.
- Fewer, Better Tests Policy Recommendations.



## SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

Our ability to prepare students to successfully compete with their peers from countries around the world will determine America's future in the global economy. While many factors contribute to raising student achievement, experience shows that by holding schools accountable for student learning—by measuring student performance against objective standards—we see results.

Creating a school accountability system that ensures students are ready for college and career by the time they graduate high school is imperative for all K-12 systems. Grading schools on an A-F scale, a policy designed in Florida and used in 14 other states, creates a shared sense of urgency for excellence, heightens focus on school quality, generates community support and provides clear information that everyone can understand.

High-quality, impactful school accountability systems rely on empowering parents and families with 21<sup>st</sup>-century student and school report cards that reflect state priorities, highlight the breadth of data and, most importantly, employ parent-friendly technology to turn student and school data into personalized stories.

#### Why Focus on School Accountability?

Because what gets measured, gets done. School accountability is the foundation for a strong state education system. Successful accountability systems set high expectations and instill in our young people, and their parents and educators, the belief that all children can learn; create incentives for schools, teachers and administrators to help all students achieve long-term success; provide transparent information to all stakeholders, empowering them with data to facilitate continuous improvement; empower parents to make informed choices; and hold all participants accountable to taxpayers.

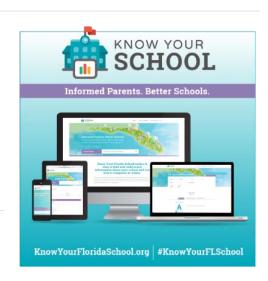
#### **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

#### Hold schools accountable for helping all students succeed.

- Set high standards for students and educators by establishing rigorous expectations.
- Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D and F to grade schools
- Base A-F grades on objective, concise student learning outcome measures that balance student proficiency and learning growth to proficient and advanced achievement, with a specific focus on the lowest performing students.

#### Reinvent school report cards.

 Web-based school report cards can be a powerful online and mobile tool that empowers families by helping parents understand school data, make informed choices and engage with schools to discuss academic achievement.





#### POLICY IMPACT

#### Student outcomes, academic research and public opinion support A-F school grading.

84 percent of those surveyed<sup>1</sup> in a national poll support assigning schools a letter grade based on how well they educate students. Further, 8 of 10 states with multiple years of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data after implementing A-F school grading outpaced the National Public improvement in Grade 4 Reading. Those states are Arizona, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah and Florida.

#### **RESEARCH & RESOURCES**

#### Florida

Schools facing accountability pressure changed their instructional practices in meaningful ways, which explained some of the test score gains in Florida's school grading system, per the American Economic Journal: Economic Policy<sup>2</sup>. While numerous studies have found that school accountability boosts test scores, evidence from a unique five-year, three-round survey of elementary schools in Florida reaffirmed that test score gains reflect genuine improvements.

#### **New York City**

Researchers at the Manhattan Institute<sup>3</sup> found positive, meaningful impacts continued six years after A-F was first adopted in NYC, but those ceased after A-F was repealed. The decision to stop reporting A-F summary letter grades removed an instrument that had led to positive changes at NYC's lowest-performing schools. Schools that would have earned an F in fall 2014—the first year of the system without A-F—showed no improvement relative to schools that would have earned higher grades.

#### **Policy Resources**

- ExcelinEd School Accountability Resources.
- A-F School Grading Fundamental Principles.
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and A-F School Grading Playbook.
- A-F School Grading Communications Toolkit.
- Reinventing School Report Cards.

#### State Spotlight: Florida

Rigorous accountability policy has Florida leading the nation on improvement in student learning. Florida improved more than any other state in the nation on the 2017 NAEP, with every student subgroup outperforming their peers in grades 4 and 8 Reading and grade 4 Mathematics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> May 2014 National Survey Conducted by McLaughlin & Associates.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> <u>Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure</u>. Cecilia Elena Rouse, Jane Hannaway, Dan Goldhaber and David Figlio. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 2013), pp. 251-281.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> <u>Grading Schools Promotes Accountability and Improvement: Evidence from NYC</u>, 2013-15, Marcus A. Winters. Education: PreK-12. Urban Policy EducationNYC. May 24, 2016.



## **EDUCATION FUNDING**

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

In states across the country, funding for schools is stuck in an industrial model, focused on "inputs" and specific instructional models that no longer work for most students. By *changing the way funding is structured*—and enhancing its transparency to the public—state leaders can enable districts and schools to improve and innovate on behalf of students.

#### WHY IS EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM NEEDED?

Too often, debates about state education funding focus solely on how much money should be provided to school districts. Far too little attention is paid to an equally or even more important question: *How can your state maximize the impact of existing funding?* 

Currently, the way states fund districts is so complex that only a handful of people in any state understand it. District leaders are hamstrung by a multitude of restrictions that lock in antiquated instructional models, preventing them from addressing the unique needs of their students, even when there's a strong desire to do so. The funding amount a district receives is not tied to the number of students it serves *or* the students' special needs or disadvantages. And in most states, funding is completely disconnected from school performance as well. In fact, the only way school districts can grow their budget is to raise local taxes.

#### **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

#### Implement Student-Centered Funding

Also referred to as weighted student funding, student-based allocation or student-based budgeting, student-centered funding means: (1) nearly all funding is provided to districts based on how many students they serve; (2) funds are also provided to address specific needs and challenges those students might have; and (3) funding for each student follows him or her to any district to ensure his or her needs can be met, regardless of district boundaries.

When compared to the current systems of big blocks of funding trapped in specific services or programs, student-centered funding is more transparent; it empowers district leaders to use funds to meet the unique needs of their students; it empowers parents to choose the district that is best for their children (with the money following their child); and it's fairer because all students in your state get the same base resources, with additional funding for students with special needs or disadvantages.

#### Maximize Financial Transparency

Through legislation and executive action, state leaders can promote financial transparency by requiring districts to report, for each school, actual revenue and expenditures per student, including how much they are spending on key instructional activities. Through a web portal, state leaders can enable schools to identify comparable schools and learn from them.

Financial transparency, particularly at the school level, is critical to the success of student-centered funding. It promotes more effective and efficient use of resources by enabling school leaders to identify comparable schools that are getting better student outcomes with the same or less funding. Transparency also promotes student opportunity by empowering parents with information on how much funding a school is receiving per student.



#### Add in Performance Funding

Funding for schools is currently based on inputs, regardless of how well schools do.

But performance funding in K-12 education can incentivize results. Examples include rewarding schools when they succeed with at-risk student populations or when their graduates get a decent paying job, succeed in college or enlist in the military.

Performance funding can be effective for two main reasons:

- It is more sensible to pay for what really matters, specifically, outcomes in terms of student performance and success, as opposed to inputs like seat-time. Indeed, there is broad agreement that linking payment to performance creates an incentive for better performance. This, in fact, has happened in higher education and other industries.
- The focus on outcomes allows policymakers to worry less about the inputs, like the number of hours of instruction or class size. As a result, districts are free to innovate.

#### State Spotlights: Florida, California, Colorado and Texas

Florida has a relatively simple funding formula, almost 90 percent of which is student-centered. Nearly all local funds are student-centered, as they are incorporated into the funding formula and adjusted for student enrollment.

California collapsed more than 50 separate funding programs into one, student-centered formula.

Colorado passed bipartisan legislation that creates a financial transparency website for schools.

Texas has a <u>financial transparency website</u> that allows schools to easily find comparable schools that are getting better results with the same or fewer resources. This information is also useful to policymakers, local leaders and parents.

#### RESEARCH & RESOURCES

- A <u>how-to guide</u> includes steps that states can take to meaningfully increase the proportion of their funding that
  is student-centered.
- The <u>model policy</u> pulls together best practices on financial transparency.
- The <u>policy brief</u> explains the benefits of performance funding that incorporates a modeling tool to help policymakers understand how performance funding can be affordable, predictable and equitable.



## **COLLEGE & CAREER PATHWAYS**

## Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

Too many students are unprepared for college and workforce success, leaving workers without the knowledge and skills to find meaningful work and leaving employers without the skilled employees they need to grow their businesses. The growing "skills gap"— the gap between what employers need and the preparation our education systems provide—has consequences for our nation's economic growth. To remove it, states should consider: 1) strengthening college and career pathway quality, better aligning student opportunities with in-demand skills and employment; 2) closing the access and equity gaps in pathway offerings; and 3) giving students a head start on college and career.

#### Why Focus on College & Career Pathways?

#### States with a Wide Skills Gap Miss Out on Economic Growth

According to a recent Korn Ferry <u>report</u>, the U.S. could experience a \$1.748 trillion revenue loss by 2030 because companies cannot find the skilled workers they need to grow their businesses. Nationwide, the skills gap is large and expanding:

- By <u>2020</u>, 65 percent of jobs in the nation will require postsecondary education, yet 30 percent of high school graduates do not enroll in college right after high school—and too many fail to complete college.
- Only 34 percent of 4-year college graduates in a <u>recent survey</u> strongly agreed that they will graduate with the knowledge and skills to be successful in the job market.
- 45 percent of human resource managers <u>report</u> jobs they cannot fill because they cannot find qualified talent, and 58 percent report that they have jobs that stay open for 12 weeks or longer, creating productivity and revenue losses.

The bottom line is that growing career demands and expectations mean that students cannot choose between a college or career path. They need to be prepared for both. In today's evolving and global economy, states can provide for that by linking the learning opportunities provided in schools with the skills and knowledge required for higher education and by employers.

#### Students Lack Access to Gaining In-Demand Knowledge & Skills

In far too many states, career and technical education (CTE) offerings are not aligned with employer demand. Further, schools lack incentives to offer college-level courses that could reduce students' college costs, and too many students lack access to courses that teach essential STEM skills. Code.org's 2018 State of Computer Science Education revealed how much further states have to go, especially with 500,000 unfilled computing jobs across the country. Here's what the report found:

- 70 percent of all states (35 of 50) do not require computer science to be offered in their high schools.
- 62 percent of states (31 of 50) do not fund computer science professional development for teachers.
- And there are equity challenges: Students in rural areas, students from low-income families and Black and Hispanic students are less likely to attend a school that provides access to computer science education.



#### **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

#### Strengthen the Quality and Alignment of Career Pathways

To close the skills gap in America and prepare our students for the rigors of college, career and life, states should consider revitalizing their current Career and Technical Education programs. These proactive steps can help each state achieve that goal:

- 1. Conduct a Career and Technical Education program audit. Convene partners across K-12, postsecondary and workforce/industry to prioritize state needs. Analyze existing program offerings and outcomes to evaluate whether they reflect current economic goals for the state.
- 2. Make necessary changes in program offerings. Eliminate dead-end pathways and update existing pathways to reflect industry standards. Develop new programs of study that will foster economic mobility and prosperity. Ensure students have opportunities for work-based learning.
- 3. Incentivize Outcomes. Provide financial incentives for success, such as student attainment of high-quality industry certifications.

#### State Spotlight: Tennessee Career and Technical Education and Course Access

Tennessee successfully brought together industry, K-12 schools and postsecondary education to identify industry needs and align program/course offerings to those needs. After completing its audit, the state retired 130 obsolete or low-value courses; created 73 new courses aligned to industry needs; and established a promoted list of 60 in-demand industry certifications. This audit process is now repeated on an annual basis to ensure continued alignment.

Further, Tennessee will allow students in public middle and high schools to take advantage of classes from other public schools, colleges, universities and other providers across the state through its Course Access Program, offering critical content that students would not otherwise be able to access.

#### **Close Access & Equity Gaps**

To close the access and equity gaps in college and career pathway offerings, states can consider taking these steps:

- 1. Evaluation. Conduct a statewide audit of course offerings and access.
- 2. Communication. Inform families of courses necessary for college and career readiness and options to access those courses.
- 3. Improvement. Implement specific policy solutions to improve access for students, which may include:
  - Expand offerings through a course access program to provide students with courses from diverse, accountable providers across the country. Students then can receive credit in their home school for these courses.
  - Increase access to computer science at all K-12 levels; offer both AP Computer Science A and AP Computer Science Principles courses.
  - Build the professional educator pipeline in "gap courses," and provide authentic, professional development training to teachers.
  - Revise teacher certification requirements to bring in industry leaders as teachers or co-teachers/cotrainers to the classroom.
  - Address key infrastructure needs in communities, increasing access to high-quality broadband both in and out of school.



#### State Spotlight: Florida and Incentives for Outcomes

Florida provides a financial incentive to schools and teachers each time a student earns a passing score on an AP, IB, AICE or industry certification exam.

The positive results have been staggering:

72.7 percent of Florida's high school graduates now take one of these exam options.

**59.3 percent** of Florida's high school graduates now pass one of them.

The AP incentive gives students and parents the potential to save more than \$128 million in tuition and fees by passing an AP exam. Many students who earned an industry certification in 2016-17 simultaneously earned college credit when they earned their industry certification - an estimated savings of \$11 million in tuition and fees for college.

#### Give Students Opportunities for a Head Start on College & Career

States should consider incentivizing outcomes instead of inputs like seat time. When a state provides a financial incentive to schools for a student who passes Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), dual/concurrent credit, CLEP, and other college-level courses, a student gets a head-start on college preparation, earns college credit before leaving high school, and makes college more reachable and affordable.

Similarly, when a state provides a financial incentive to schools for a student who earns an in-demand industry certification, the student becomes more engaged, earns a credential that signals to employers that the student has mastered the knowledge and skills that employers desire, and gets a head-start on college and career.

#### Partner Highlight: Modern States Education Alliance

Modern States Education Alliance is leading the way to more affordable and accessible college through its <u>Freshman</u> <u>Year for Free</u>™ program. Modern States partners with edX, an online learning platform, to "let students earn up to one year of college credit without tuition or textbook expense." They're doing this by offering CLEP courses and paying for the test and scheduling fee for the first 10,000 students.

#### **RESEARCH & RESOURCES**

Excel*in*Ed offers actionable resources for states as they work to address the skills, equity and access gaps on behalf of students. Additional research and resources are available on our <u>College & Career Pathways</u> and <u>Course Access</u> websites.

- Career and Technical Education Playbook Series.
- Leading in an Era of Change Series.
- College and Career Pathways: Equity and Access.
- Model policies: Course Access, AP Incentive Program, AP Partnerships and Industry Certification Program.
- Burning Glass Technologies, <u>The Narrow Ladder</u>, the Value of Industry Certifications in the Job Market.



## **NEXT GENERATION LEARNING**

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

The conventional, one-size-fits-all system of education anchored in the industrial age leaves too many students behind. Every student has unique talents and abilities, and every student deserves an education that adapts to their needs rather than requiring conformity to an outdated model of education.

States throughout the nation are exploring innovative, more student-centered education models and approaches, such as personalized learning and mastery-based education. Excel*in*Ed provides resources and support to states seeking to adopt and implement innovation policies and related pilot programs.

"Many, if not most, students still learn in classrooms that follow an educational model developed in the 19th century. The United States must create a system for the 21st century that is able to meet the unique needs of each individual learner and that takes advantage of every resource and opportunity inside and outside of a school."

From Learner at the Center of a Networked World, Aspen Institute Report

#### WHY ARE INNOVATION PROGRAMS AND PILOTS NEEDED?

#### Send a Signal of Support for Innovation and the Need for Change

State innovation and pilot programs support the incubation and scaling of alternative education models aligned to 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. A strong program should be anchored by a <u>new vision for graduates</u> with support not only from district teachers and leaders but also from local communities, business, industry and higher education leaders.

#### Provide a Mechanism for Flexibility

State policies often create obstacles to innovation at the school level as a result of funding, assessment and reporting requirements that restrain schools in traditional paradigms. Some states are successfully using innovation programs to provide the flexibility and support that schools need for new, student-centered learning models and practices. In their applications to use innovation programs, schools can identify, and request waivers from, state laws or regulations that hinder their ability to implement a specific model or to improve practices that could benefit student achievement.

#### WHAT STEPS CAN STATES TAKE?

#### **Launch Innovation or Pilot Programs**

Pilot programs encourage schools to develop a specific innovative learning model within state-established parameters. General innovation programs, in contrast, are typically broader in scope and can take many forms. States may create innovation zones, provide innovation-focused grants or offer official innovation school/district designations.

Both approaches allow for new models to develop and thrive. Further, they empower districts and schools to apply for flexibility from state statutes or regulations that may impede implementation. The best approach depends on individual circumstances in a state. Where innovative schools are already thriving, states can create a formal in-state network for leaders to collaborate and share resources and lessons learned.



#### State Spotlight: Colorado

State law provides specific guidelines for schools to participate in an <u>innovative education program</u> (Section 22-32.5-101 through 22-32.5-111).

#### Clear Away Unnecessary Policy Obstacles

Through flexibility requests and waivers, current innovation pilots and programs have already identified policy obstacles. Policymakers can take the following steps to clear barriers to innovation:

- 1. Align Higher Education Requirements. Nontraditional report cards and transcripts can place high school graduates at a disadvantage when applying for college admission, financial aid and scholarships. States can amend higher education policies to accommodate innovative models. They also can design appropriate accommodations for state data system requirements.
- 2. Provide Assessment Flexibility. Once-a-year evaluation of student proficiency on grade-level standards conflicts with the desire to break free of the traditional paradigms of time, place and pace. States can explore opportunities to implement flexible testing windows and maximize flexibility provided under federal law.
- 3. Dismantle Outdated Seat-Time Requirements. States can begin with a review of approved flexibility requests and/or waivers of seat-time to examine the replacement proposals and their success. Policymakers can also conduct a thorough statutory and regulatory audit to determine the many implications of time-based policies.

#### State Spotlight: Idaho

State law outlines steps for transitioning to mastery-based education through a <u>mastery-based incubator process</u> (section 33-1632).

#### Join ExcelinEd's Network of State Innovation Partners

ExcelinEd has assembled a network of states committed to ensuring that schools have the support and flexibility to develop new, student-centered models of learning. The Network focuses on issues that are common to all states, and our cohort of states represents a diverse set of programs at varying stages of implementation. ExcelinEd facilitates network convenings and provides state and national resources to support the Network's activities.

#### **RESEARCH & RESOURCES**

- Policy, Pilots, and the Path to Competency-Based Education: National Landscape Report.
- Tale of Three States.
- The Path to
   Personalized Learning:
   The Next Chapter in the
   Tale of Three States.
- Personalized
  Learning

  Meeting the
  needs of every
  student
  % Pace,
  Same Place

  Personalized learning
- Communicating Personalized Learning to Families and Stakeholders.
- #AskExcelinEd: How Can States Transition to Student-Centered Learning?



## **PUBLIC EDUCATION CHOICE**

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

Every child deserves access to a quality education that provides knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career and fulfilling life. Sadly, not every child has access to an excellent education. An effective way to improve education opportunities is by expanding access for families to high-quality public charter schools.

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools that have enhanced flexibility to meet the unique needs of their students. Instead of being run directly by a school district, charter schools operate under a performance contract with a district, state or other approved entity.

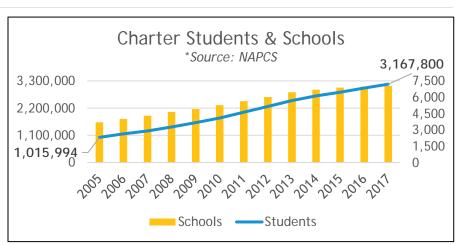
There is wide variety among types of charters: schools for students with special needs, schools that focus on STEM or the arts, schools for students experiencing the challenges of homelessness, schools that partner with local businesses and many more.

#### WHY EXPAND ACCESS TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS?

#### Demand for seats in high-quality charter schools is on the rise.

Enrollment in public charter schools has tripled since 2005. Today, more than three million students are enrolled in more than 7,000 charter schools across 44 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and Guam.

Yet the number of students who want to attend a charter school is three times higher than the number of students currently enrolled, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS).



## Parents and communities want high-quality public school options that meet the unique needs of their children.

- Charter schools help meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, ensuring every child has
  access to the best educational "fit." Through charter schools, states can: create unique learning environments
  for college and career readiness, such as a specific focus on STEM education, the arts or language emersion;
  provide flexibility to struggling students; offer unique teaching styles, such as project-based learning or
  classical education; and offer new high-quality options to students otherwise assigned to a low-performing
  neighborhood school.
- Charter schools also empower communities to create new public schools to address previously unmet needs for local families. For example, two moms in New York City founded the NYC Autism Charter School to provide high-quality education to students with autism—at no cost. These two parents are not alone. Similar stories can be found all over the country, and it reminds us that real people start charter schools to address real problems.



#### **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

The following steps will expedite expansion of public charter schools to meet escalating parent and student demand:

	Facilities	Ensure that charter schools have access to public school facilities <i>or</i> sufficient financing that would allow them an equivalent facility.  Example: Texas's Permanent School Fund can decrease the cost of bond financing for charters by ten percent.
<u>~~</u>	Funding	Policymakers can champion equitable funding to ensure that public dollars follow students regardless of which school they attend.  Example: Colorado passed a bipartisan bill (HB17 - 1375) that provided charters access to local funding sources.
C	Authorizing	In addition to local school boards, encourage the empowerment of new authorities, like public universities, to grant and oversee charters.  Example: The Mayor of Indianapolis may directly authorize charter schools.
	Talent	Whether through grants or through policy, encourage your best educators to start new and different schools.  Example: States could invest in programs like 4.0 Schools in New Orleans, which teaches and supports fellows to design new schools. Similar programs include Building Excellent Schools in Boston, and the NACA Inspired Schools Network in Albuquerque.

#### State Spotlight: Florida

In an effort to bring more high-impact charters to the Sunshine State, legislation was passed in 2017 to recruit the nation's most effective charter schools to serve Florida students in persistently low-performing school zones.

These "Schools of Hope" are charter schools that meet specific criteria. Each school must: 1) serve students from one or more persistently low-performing schools, 2) be located in the attendance zone of a persistently low-performing school or within a five-mile radius; and 3) be a Title I school.

To qualify, a Hope Operator is a nonprofit charter management organization that operates three or more charter schools with a record of successfully serving students from low-income families.



#### **OPEN ENROLLMENT**

In addition to policies that can help expand access to charter schools, consider further expanding public school choice through open enrollment policies, which allow students to attend public schools outside of their residentially assigned attendance zone. Two types of open enrollment approaches are described here:

#### Voluntary vs. Mandatory

Open enrollment may be voluntary or mandatory at the state or district level. Voluntary policies allow schools or districts to decide if they will accept students who live outside their boundaries. Mandatory policies require all districts to provide students the option to transfer and to accept students who request transfer. Restrictions on mandatory policies may include opt-out provisions, priorities for allowing transfer or desegregation provisions.

#### Intra-district vs. Inter-district

Intra-district policies allow a student to request admission to a school outside their residentially assigned attendance zone within the same district. Inter-district policies allow students to apply to schools across district boundaries within the same state.

#### RESEARCH & IMPACT

- Charter school students learn more in less time - <u>Urban Charter Schools Study</u>, CREDO, Stanford University (2015).
- The public charter school sector can and does improve over time - <u>National Charter</u> <u>School Study</u>, CREDO, Stanford University (2013).
- Charter school students from low-income families graduate from college at higher rates - <u>Richard Whitmire and The 74</u> (2017).
- Charter schools improve academic performance in neighborhood schools - <u>Dr. Sarah Cordes</u>, Temple University (2017).
- Charter schools are popular choices for families - <u>Dr. Susan Pendergrass</u>, NAPCS (2015).

- Charter schools include students with disabilities in the general education classes more frequently than other public schools- <u>National Center on</u> <u>Special Education in Charter Schools</u> (2018).
- 7. Charter school students are more likely to register to vote <u>Mathematica Policy Research</u> (2018).
- 8. Charter schools intentionally integrate students economically and demographically The Century Foundation (2018).
- 9. Charter schools differ from each other to accomplish specific goals <u>American Enterprise</u> Institute (2015).
- Charter friendly states are improving student outcomes at faster rates - <u>National Assessment for</u> <u>Educational Progress</u>, AZ and FL (2017).

For a more detailed description of these studies, check out ExcelinEd's Charter School website and policy toolkit.



## PRIVATE EDUCATION CHOICE

# Policy Brief Education Playbook - 2018

Every child deserves access to a quality education that provides knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career and fulfilling life. Unfortunately, many children are assigned to schools that don't fit their unique needs, and parents' options are limited to moving to a new community with a different school, which simply isn't feasible for many working families in America.

Beyond traditional public schools, however, a wide range of high-quality choices exist—including open enrollment at public schools, public charter schools, magnet schools, private schools and online options. A proven, effective method to deliver these opportunities is <u>private education choice</u>. Tax-credit scholarships, education scholarship accounts and vouchers are effective tools that are connecting families with new options. Today, nearly 500,000 students are enrolled in more than 50 such private education choice programs across 26 states and Washington, D.C.

#### Why Focus on Private Education Choice?

No family should be forced to send their child to a particular school based on zip code. Private education choice creates opportunity—particularly for children from low-income families or underserved communities that lack viable alternatives. Some states focus on offering private education choice to all students, while others opt to focus on particular groups of students like <u>students with special needs</u>, <u>students from low-income or working-class families</u>, <u>victims of bullying</u>, <u>foster children</u> and <u>children</u> of <u>military or veterans</u>.

Three main policy solutions empower families with private education choice.



#### **Education Scholarship Accounts (ESAs)**

ESAs are flexible spending accounts funded by the state and controlled by parents. With an ESA, parents can customize and direct funds to a combination of approved uses, such as tutoring, therapy for students with disabilities, instructional materials/curriculum, online programs, private school tuition, contracted services with school districts, exam fees and savings for future education expenses, among others. Learn more on Excel*in*Ed's <u>ESA website</u>, which includes <u>model ESA policy</u>, <u>research highlights</u> and <u>informative videos</u>.



#### **Tax-Credit Scholarships**

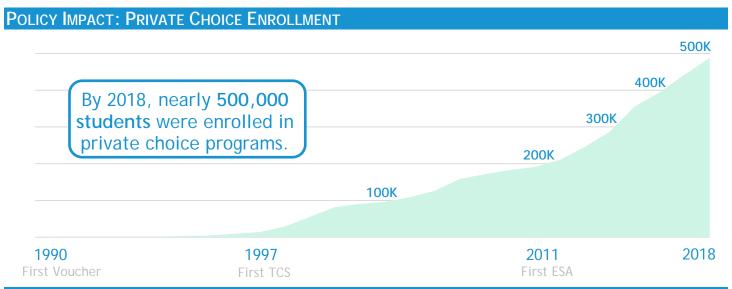
To provide for tax-credit scholarships, businesses and individuals make voluntary donations to nonprofit organizations that award private school scholarships to eligible students. In return, businesses and individuals receive a state tax credit. Learn more on Excel*in*Ed's <u>tax-credit scholarships website</u>, which includes a policy overview, policy design tips, model policy and informative videos.



#### Vouchers

Vouchers are state-funded coupons that parents redeem at private schools for tuition. Vouchers were the first form of private education choice, originally enacted in 1990 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Today, most private choice advocates favor ESAs, rather than vouchers, due to their flexibility and customization.





#### **RESEARCH & RESOURCES**

Research has found that providing greater opportunity through private education choice has demonstrated benefits, including:

- Improved academic outcomes for scholarship recipients.
- Improved academic outcomes for students who remain in public schools.
- Increased civic knowledge and engagement for scholarship recipients.
- Improved racial diversity.
- Financial savings to state taxpayers.

For a more detailed description of these research findings, check out Excel*in*Ed's <u>The Research on Private Education</u> Choice.

#### State Spotlight: Florida

<u>The Sunshine State made more progress</u> than any other state on the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress, the gold standard of student assessment. It is no coincidence that Florida is a model of a diverse, well-functioning educational environment where parents have multiple options for their children.

In the 2016-17 school year, <u>nearly half</u> (46.4 percent) of Florida's 3.7 million PreK-12 students attended a school other than the one they were residentially assigned. That means nearly 1.7 million PreK-12 students are selecting schools through tax-credit scholarships, ESAs, vouchers, magnet programs, open-enrollment public schools, charter schools, private schools, career and professional academies, home education or full-time virtual instruction.

When families have options, they choose schools best suited to the needs of their children, and the academic results speak volumes.

# ADVANCING OPPORTUNITY, INNOVATION & QUALITY IN EDUCATION

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