Beyond Tinkering

Creating Real Opportunities for Today's Learners and for Generations of Ohioans to Come

Action Recommendations for the Strickland Administration, 128th Ohio General Assembly and State Board of Education

January 2009

A Report from Ohio Grantmakers Forum
Beyond Tinkering
Creating Real Opportunities for Today’s Learners
and for Generations of Ohioans to Come

Ohio Grantmakers Forum
Ohio Grantmakers Forum is an association of foundations, corporate contributions programs and other grantmaking organizations. Its mission is to provide leadership for organized philanthropy in Ohio and to enhance the ability of members to fulfill their charitable goals.

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January 2009

TO: Governor Ted Strickland  
   Members of the 128th Ohio General Assembly  
   Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Board of Trustees, Ohio Grantmakers Forum

Over the past 20 years, state and local leaders have worked to improve student, school and system performance. Gubernatorial commissions, citizens’ task forces, national research organizations, charitable foundations and advocacy groups have weighed in on how to improve education in Ohio.

Substantial progress has been made, but this is not the time to celebrate. We still have a long way to go if our students are to have the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in a global community in which information and innovation are highly prized and rewarded. It is in this context that Ohio Grantmakers Forum (OGF) convened two workgroups composed of 43 people from 33 stakeholder organizations, asking them to explore ways to prepare Ohio students for success in the global economy and to guarantee quality teaching and effective school leadership in classrooms and schools. We timed this work to coincide with the ongoing work of Governor Strickland and his staff to develop a comprehensive education reform plan for Ohio.

With a common commitment, this diverse group of Ohioans worked together for six months. There was give and take on many issues, but they pushed themselves to steer away from the lowest common denominators. In the end, they agreed on the recommendations that are presented in Beyond Tinkering: Creating Real Opportunities for Today's Learners and for Generations of Ohioans to Come.

Ohio Grantmakers Forum’s Board of Trustees approved this report and is pleased to present it, together with the following groups that have endorsed it:

- Business Alliance for Higher Education and the Economy (BAHEE)
- EDvention
- Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools
- Ohio Education Association
- Ohio Grantmakers Forum
- KidsOhio.org
- Ohio College Access Network
- Ohio Federation of Teachers
- Ohio School Boards Association
- Thomas B. Fordham Institute

The Board appreciates the dedicated efforts of those who crafted these recommendations. Their names are listed on the following page.

As we advance our action recommendations for your review and consideration, we recognize the extreme fiscal challenges facing our state today. At the same time we also recognize that this provides an extraordinary opportunity, perhaps a mandate, to look at how we invest our current education resources. Many of these recommendations do not touch funding at all but focus on different approaches to educating our students. In other cases there may need to be a reallocation of existing resources and in rare cases, new dollars. And there is something else on which we agree: The state’s current fiscal condition and the rapidly changing world in which all of us live make it imperative that we commit ourselves to using scarce resources wisely—and that we take the actions recommended in this report now.
OGF and Its Partners

Preventing Students for Success in the Global Economy Workgroup

The Cleveland Foundation*
Helen Williams, Co-Chair

KidsOhio.org
Mark Real, Co-Chair

KnowledgeWorks Foundation*
Andrew Benson, Co-Chair

Business Alliance for Higher Education and the Economy
Shaun Yoder

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Martha Holden Jennings Foundation*
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Guaranteeing Quality Teaching and Effective School Leadership Workgroup

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The Findlay-Hancock County Community Foundation*
Marty Rothey

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Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
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Wellyn Collins—Cincinnati Public Schools
Jeff Cooney—Oregon Schools

Ohio School Boards Association
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Stark Education Partnership, Inc.*
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Emmy Partin

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Executive Summary

We live in a global community in which knowledge and innovation are highly prized and rewarded. Competition—for business investment, for jobs and talent, for consumer dollars—is intense and global. Essential workforce skills are being redefined in the blink of an eye. Employer expectations are higher than ever before—and rising. The rote learners of past generations are being replaced by creative, critical and analytical problem solvers.

What actions must we take to ensure that Ohioans are, in fact, able to compete and succeed in the 21st century economy, that they will be ready for postsecondary education without remediation, and that they will enter the workplace with the assets that make them ready to learn in the workplace where job-specific education and training will occur?

The key is education. But then, we’ve known this for some time. It is why in Ohio—and across the nation—we have undergone more than a decade of significant education reform. Substantial progress has been made, but the job is far from complete. Incremental changes are not getting the job done. Tinkering with the systems we have will not serve the educational needs of our children, nor will it meet the state’s need for a more innovative and skilled workforce.

Bolder action is required and the pace of improvement must be accelerated. We must find ways to scale up our successes. We can no longer defend—or tolerate—an industrial-age school model that is out of step with the demands of the 21st century in which jobs, careers and workplaces are learning-intensive, and where people often have many jobs over the course of their lifetimes. We can no longer be satisfied with a school model that structures instruction and learning for a fast-disappearing industrial era.

Ohio needs to (1) significantly increase education attainment levels for all of its citizens, (2) align much more closely the knowledge and skills of its high school graduates with the expectations of college and the workplace, (3) close persistent achievement gaps, (4) better prepare its young people to compete internationally, and (5) make learning more relevant to young people’s lives.

These daunting challenges explain why Ohio Grantmakers Forum (OGF) and its partners engaged in an open and honest assessment of the performance of Ohio’s schools and the students they serve. It is the basis for the recommendations that are presented in Beyond Tinkering: Creating Real Opportunities for Today’s Learners and for Generations of Ohioans to Come.

OGF and its partners’ 11 action recommendations are structured around three imperatives:

1. A bold plan for accelerating the pace of innovation—for restructuring the traditional, industrial model of teaching and learning and for addressing the lowest-performing schools in our state—is needed to keep pace with the demands of the 21st century.

Therefore, OGF and its partners make three recommendations:

- **Recommendation #1: Create Ohio Innovation Zones and an Incentive Fund.** Seed transformative educational innovation by attracting and building on promising school and instructional models; introduce district-wide innovations that personalize and deepen teaching and learning; and eliminate operational and regulatory barriers.

- **Recommendation #2: Focus on transforming low-performing schools.** Develop a statewide plan targeting the 10 percent of lowest-performing schools; focus on research-based best practices;
create a coordinating body to lead the work; and reassess and reallocate school improvement dollars.

**Recommendation #3: Develop a statewide P-16 education technology plan.** Develop a plan that addresses technology as a diagnostic tool and an approach to instruction and data management; improves teacher capacity in using technology; identifies ways to close the “equity gap”; and enhances agility and flexibility.

2 Bold action is required to refine Ohio’s academic standards and restructure the state’s assessment system. The state standards need to be revised to articulate what we expect all students to know and be able to do so they are ready to compete in the increasingly global labor market, can live and thrive in a diverse society and can participate as informed members of our democracy. And we need to move to a more balanced assessment system that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities in different ways; informs teaching strategies and improves learning; and provides a complete picture of how schools are doing against a consistent set of expectations.

Therefore, OGF and its partners call for four actions that need to be taken quickly:

**Recommendation #4: Develop a “graduate profile.”** This profile, which will be used to establish the next generation of academic standards, should identify the foundational content and skills (i.e., work-related skills, international workplace expectations, technology skills, learning and thinking skills, citizenship skills and other competencies identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills) that all graduates should master.

**Recommendation #5: Reevaluate and revise Ohio’s academic standards.** Ensure that standards are aligned to college and career expectations, benchmarked internationally and streamlined to focus on depth vs. breadth, and include 21st century skills. Grade-level standards should be replaced with course-specific standards in grades 7-12.

**Recommendation #6: Revise the state’s assessment and accountability framework.**

Develop a new system that informs and improves the quality and consistency of instruction and learning, has multiple measures, ascertains whether students are meeting important mileposts during their school careers, and holds schools accountable. Specifically, expand K-8 assessments so there is a greater focus on performance assessments and significantly revamp the current grade 9-12 exams:

- Replace the Ohio Graduation Test with end-of-course exams (grades 9-12).
- Participate in an international assessment that allows for international benchmarking and comparisons.
- Adopt EPAS battery of assessments—i.e., Explore (8th and 9th grades), Plan (10th grade) and ACT (11th and 12th grades).
- Institute a 12th-grade Capstone Project.

**Recommendation #7: Provide instructional supports to promote high-quality teaching and learning.** Facilitate the development of performance assessments and corresponding rubrics; act as a clearinghouse for curriculum frameworks, lesson plans and instructional methods; and provide high-quality professional development.
3 Bold steps are needed to ensure that we have the very best teachers and principals working in all of our classrooms and schools for the benefit of all of our students, especially minority and low-income students who traditionally have been underserved.

Therefore, OGF and its partners make four recommendations:

- **Recommendation #8: Strengthen standards and evaluation for teachers and principals.** Amend the teacher and principal standards in key areas; develop a deployment strategy for the standards; create model hiring and evaluation protocols based on the standards; and provide teacher-level, value-added reports with the appropriate privacy precautions.

- **Recommendation #9: Improve Ohio’s teaching and learning conditions.** Provide financial incentives to encourage schools and districts to implement changes to improve teaching and learning environments; strengthen the awarding of tenure; ensure high-quality professional development; and reconcile the language of teacher dismissal to that of other public employees.

- **Recommendation #10: Develop a new educator compensation system.** Create a task force to develop new educator compensation system models that broaden and strengthen the pool of individuals who are attracted to and retained in teaching and school leadership; and improve the connections among compensation, teaching excellence and higher levels of student learning.

- **Recommendation #11: Ensure an equitable distribution of high-quality teachers and principals across all schools.** Develop and implement strategies that ensure effective educators teach and lead in all Ohio schools; provide innovation and incentive grants to develop graduate-level teacher residency programs and principal leadership programs; and design programs that provide time for teacher collaboration and planning, team teaching, reorganization of the school day/year and other innovative practices.
Education is more important to the success of every Ohioan than ever before. Our high school graduates today must know more and be capable of much more than earlier generations. And to meet and exceed the demands of a bright new century, they must be prepared to enter and succeed in higher education.

Yet, many of our public schools, which helped generations of Ohioans meet the challenges of the 19th and 20th centuries, are not designed to prepare all of today’s students to meet the revolutionary demands of the 21st century. We are losing too many students along the education pipeline, and far too many of our graduates are not prepared for continued learning in college and the workplace.

Just as education matters for individuals, it has serious consequences for the state of Ohio. In fact, it is the key to Ohio’s future economic prosperity. This is confirmed by a study—commissioned by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland—of 75 years of state income growth. That analysis points to the importance of innovation (i.e., the capacity to generate and apply new ideas to the creation and upgrading of products and services) and talent, which involves the development of technology-savvy workers with a strong work ethic and advanced synthesizing, reasoning, collaboration, communication and problem-solving skills, as the core drivers of competitiveness in the 21st century economy.

This view is embraced by two Harvard University economists, Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, in their highly regarded *The Race Between Education and Technology* (2008). Based on their extensive analysis of historical data, they argue that mass education has long been the competitive advantage that has allowed the United States to build wealth while reducing income inequality. Yet, professors Goldin and Katz write that America’s education system began to stagnate during the last third of the 20th century, at the same time the rest of the world began to invest heavily in the education of its citizens.

*It’s an alarming scenario—made worse by the Education Trust’s recent declaration that the United States is the only country in the industrialized world where children are less likely to graduate from high school than their parents were.*

*Beyond Tinkering* is a response to this challenge. It builds on OGF’s 2006 report, *Education for Ohio’s Future*, which called for state education policy improvements in five areas: (1) creating a seamless P-16 system with clear goals, (2) setting world-class standards and stronger accountability, (3) guaranteeing quality teachers and principals in every classroom and school, (4) accelerating innovations and options throughout the system, and (5) ensuring adequate funding tied to results.

That initial report was generated by OGF’s Education Task Force, which was formed to consider how philanthropy might better understand and address the issues of education in Ohio. With representatives from 30 OGF member organizations, the task force created a multi-phase, collaborative project involving both research and action.
Following the release of that initial report, OGF sponsored a statewide conference—
“Beyond Tinkering: A Conversation about Education and Ohio’s Economic Future”— in
May 2007. More than 200 educators, business leaders, public officials, foundation leaders
and other stakeholders participated, and the conference was followed by eight regional
conversations that gave a broader group of stakeholders a chance to talk about the
implications of state education reform for students and schools in their regions.

As an outgrowth of those initiatives, OGF convened two workgroups composed of 43
people from 33 stakeholder organizations. The workgroups were composed of teachers
and the unions that represent them; principals, superintendents and school board
members and their professional associations; representatives of regional education and
business partnerships; higher education faculty; educational service centers; employer
organizations; community charter schools and their professional association; community-
based organizations; and charitable and corporate foundations.

With a common commitment to achieve uncommon results, these stakeholders worked
together for six months. We explored ways to prepare Ohio students for success in the
global economy and to guarantee quality teaching and effective school leadership in
classrooms and schools. We pushed ourselves to pursue bold actions as we steered away
from the lowest common denominators. In the end, we agreed on the recommendations
that are presented in this consensus document.

This does not mean that everyone is agreed on every detail, or that everyone is satisfied
with the rate of change that is called for in these pages. But all of us agree with what
Benjamin Franklin said when he rose, in 1787, to defend and vote for the new
Constitution of the United States. That Constitution, Franklin admitted, was not perfect,
but it offered the joint wisdom of a diverse group of people and, going forward, it would
be enhanced by the power of their diverse interests. Franklin concluded, “I cannot help
expressing a wish that every member of the Convention who may still have objections to
it, would with me, on this occasion, doubt a little of his own infallibility and to make
manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.”

In that spirit, we embrace this report and commit ourselves to advocating for its
acceptance—and for its use as a starting point in shaping an education improvement
agenda for Ohio’s schools and the children they serve. We stand together in the conviction
that public education is a critical investment, that all Ohio students must be prepared for
success in the global economy, and that nothing we do to meet this challenge will be
more important than guaranteeing an effective teacher and principal in every classroom
and school.
Meeting the Challenge

“If we did the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves.”

Coming from Thomas Edison, a native-born Ohioan and one of the world’s greatest innovators of all time, these words are both humbling and inspiring. And they are timely because never before in Ohio history has the need to “do the things we are capable of” been greater. Never before have we confronted a more compelling, urgent need “to astound”—not just ourselves, but other states and nations.

The scenario is by now well-defined: We live in a global community in which knowledge and innovation—real solutions—are highly prized and rewarded. Competition—for business investment, for jobs and talent, for consumer dollars—is intense and global. Essential workforce skills are being redefined in the blink of an eye. Employer expectations are higher than ever before—and rising. The rote learners of past generations are being replaced by creative, critical and analytical problem solvers.

Yet, seismic change in our national and global economies is not the only force that is having a significant impact on our state. Startling demographic trends are changing the face of Ohio, with demographers predicting that populations that have the lowest levels of educational attainment will account for most of our population growth. And the growing disparity in literacy and numeracy skills among our school-age and adult populations is confirmed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which reports that while America’s educational attainment is no better than mediocre, its degree of inequality—the gap between our best and least proficient—is among the highest in developed countries.

Serious challenges, indeed. And here’s the million-dollar question: What actions must we take to ensure that Ohioans are, in fact, able to do all the things we are capable of—as individuals and as a state—within such an environment? What will it take to astound—and to succeed—in a knowledge-based, technology-driven, solutions-oriented economy?

The key is education. But then, we’ve known this for some time.

It is why in Ohio—and across the nation—we have undergone more than a decade of significant education reform. We have raised expectations for all students. We have established academic content standards to define what students need to know and be able to do to be successful after high school. We have implemented assessment programs aligned with standards to hold schools, teachers and learners accountable.

We have improved conventional approaches to teacher recruitment, preparation, deployment and development (e.g., the use of the PRAXIS III assessment, state-funded induction services, new standards for teachers and principals, alternative certification programs and the like). We have begun to change the way instruction is delivered and schools are designed (e.g., Ohio’s small schools initiative, Early College High Schools, STEM learning initiatives, etc.), driven in part by a new understanding of how students learn.

Our teachers, school leaders and others inside and outside the system are working hard. We have many innovative educators in schools and classrooms across Ohio committed to preparing our students to be successful. We are making progress, which is confirmed by improved test scores and marginally higher levels of student attainment. For example;

- In 2008, a record number of our students, 65 percent, took the ACT. The state’s average score ranks us ninth highest in the nation.
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for 8th-grade reading show Ohio’s students scoring above the national average with only two states scoring significantly higher than Ohio.
- The 4th-grade NAEP mathematics results indicate that only four states scored higher than Ohio.
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Based on Ohio’s accountability system, there is positive movement on student progress: The performance index has increased 25 points since its inception in 1999-2000; 10 percent of districts have earned the new “excellent with distinction” rating; and fewer districts are labeled “academic watch.” And Ohio is nationally recognized on a number of measures.

- Education Week’s 2009 Quality Counts report ranks Ohio sixth out of the 50 states on a comprehensive set of education measures, up from 29th in 1998. Its Diplomas Count 2008 report indicates Ohio is one of only nine states to raise graduation rates by 5 percent or more from 2001 to 2005.
- According to a recent Education Trust report, Missing the Mark, Ohio is one of only two states that has developed a comprehensive strategy to address the inequitable distribution of teachers in the state.
- The Ohio Department of Education received the Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education.

Yet, the job is far from complete. Incremental changes are not getting it done. Tinkering with the systems we have will not serve the educational needs of our children, nor will it meet the state’s need for greater innovation-building capacity. And focusing exclusively on policies and practices at the kindergarten through high school level, while ignoring the first years of life, will not produce the needed results. According to From the Beginning, the final report of the School Readiness Solutions Group (2006), nearly one-third of the 130,000 Ohio children entering kindergarten each year are not prepared to succeed as learners. They require special intervention services, and several thousand of them end up repeating kindergarten or another grade in their primary years.

Bolder action is required and the pace of improvement must be accelerated. We must find ways to scale up our successes. We can no longer defend—or tolerate—an industrial-age school model that is out of step with the demands of the 21st century in which jobs, careers and workplaces are learning-intensive, and where people often have many jobs over the course of their lifetimes. We can no longer be satisfied with a school model that structures instruction and learning for a fast-disappearing industrial era.

As we confront this reality, there is another that has to be addressed. The redesign of Ohio’s schools and the broader learning opportunities our children need cannot be driven just by the world as we know it today—or the way it will be tomorrow. Change strategies must be shaped by what we see on a farther time horizon—by what we imagine future classrooms will look like; how the roles of states and school districts will change; how technologies not yet known will radically change the way today’s grade-banded, one-size-fits-all lessons are delivered; how teachers will be supported and empowered to do a better job and give individual attention to more students; and how achievement will be assessed in a new student-centered learning environment.

To be sure, we can only imagine—and we must! And as we define and advocate for bold changes in our approaches to teaching and learning—steps that can be taken today—we must embed in them the flexibility that will allow us to change course and to steepen our trajectory of progress as the learning opportunities and imperatives for future generations become clearer.

With this farther time horizon in mind, what should we be doing today? How can we create real opportunities for today’s learners while laying the foundation for even greater learning experiences for generations of Ohioans to come?

**We need to significantly increase education attainment levels for our citizens. Education beyond high school and lifelong learning in the workplace must become routine expectations—and realities—for every Ohioan.**

Ohio's higher education attainment rates are among the lowest in the nation—38th in the percentage of
citizens ages 25 through 64 with an associate’s degree, and 37th in the percentage of citizens with a bachelor’s degree. *University System of Ohio Strategic Plan*

- We cannot ignore the fact that less than half of Ohio’s 4th graders meet NAEP mathematics standards, or that just over one-third of our 8th graders are meeting NAEP reading standards. *National Assessment of Educational Progress 2007 Report*

*We need to align much more closely the knowledge and skills of our high school graduates with the expectations of college and the workplace so that every young person graduates from high school college- and career-ready.*

- According to U.S. employers, 45 percent of high school graduates do not have the skills to advance beyond entry-level jobs. And college faculty report that 42 percent of their first-year students are not adequately prepared for college-level work—needing to take remedial mathematics and/or English courses. *Ohio Business Roundtable, The Talent Challenge: What Ohio Must Do to Thrive, Not Merely Survive, in a Flat World, 2006*

- Just 24 percent of Ohio high school students take a rigorous course of study, which is the best predictor of college success—and is why Ohio now requires the Ohio Core Curriculum for all high school students. *Ohio Board of Regents, Making the Transition from High School to College in Ohio, 2005*

*We need to close persistent achievement gaps. Our nation’s future will be shaped in large part by the degree to which we are capable of closing these gaps.*

- Every day, an estimated 164 of Ohio’s young people drop out of school. They are part of a national pattern in which an estimated 6,829 American young people drop out each day. In Ohio and across the nation, a disproportionate number of these dropouts are poor and minority students who attend underperforming and under-resourced schools. *Ohio Public-Private Collaborative Commission, Support Student Success, 2008*

- In Ohio there is more than a 21-point difference in 3rd-grade reading scores between poor and wealthier students, a 19-point gap in the graduation rate between black and white students, and more than a 23-point gap between white and Hispanic students. *Ohio Department of Education, 2008 State Report Card*

*We need to do a better job of preparing our young people to compete internationally because we are falling behind other nations.*

- International comparisons show that the United States is 17th in eighth-grade reading, 26th in eighth-grade mathematics, 20th in eighth-grade science and 16th in the percentage of students who graduate from high school. *Programme for International Student Assessment, 2003*

- In the 1960s, the United States led the world in high school qualifications and Korea was 27th. Now Korea leads the world and the U.S. is 13th and falling. As recently as 1995, the U.S. was second in the world on college-level graduation rates; just a decade later it has slipped to 14th, slightly below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average. *OECD-PISA*

*We need to make learning more relevant to our young people’s lives.*

- Study after study confirms that large numbers of students—including many who are performing well in the classroom—do not see how success in school leads to success in life. They do not believe that staying in school and succeeding will be worth the dedication and hard work.

- Teaching and learning—what they involve, what they look like and where and when they take place—need clear definition. It means adopting a new view of schools and classrooms, and making a new commitment to providing personalized learning experiences and supportive learning communities for every child. And it means developing new cross-disciplinary approaches to learning, personalizing instruction, creating work-based and
career-based learning opportunities that are neither “walled-in” nor “building-centered,” and making much better use of technology.

These daunting imperatives explain why Ohio Grantmakers Forum and its partners—a diverse and balanced group of education stakeholders engaged in an open and honest assessment of the performance of Ohio’s schools and the students they serve—have focused their attention on three compelling priorities.

1. **Accelerate the pace of system and structural innovation to improve all students’ preparation for success beyond high school.**

2. **Refine Ohio’s academic standards and restructure the state’s assessment system so that all students are ready to compete in the increasingly global labor market and diverse society.**

3. **Guarantee quality teaching and effective principal leadership in all of Ohio’s classrooms and schools.**

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**A Comment about “College”**

The terms “college” and “postsecondary,” which are used interchangeably throughout this report, refer to formal learning experiences beyond high school. These experiences include two- and four-year college courses, adult career-technical programs, apprenticeships and other learning opportunities provided by both public and private institutions and organizations. The inclusiveness of these terms confirms research that shows a convergence of the skills and attributes required for success in traditional colleges and careers.
A bold plan for accelerating the pace of innovation—for restructuring the traditional, industrial model of teaching and learning and for addressing the lowest-achieving schools in our state—is needed to keep pace with the demands of the 21st century where jobs, careers and workplaces are learning-intensive, and where people often have many jobs and careers over the course of their lifetimes.

In its 2006 report, *Education for Ohio’s Future*, Ohio Grantmakers Forum observed that innovation has driven improvements in virtually every sector of the American economy from health care and energy to technology and bioscience. Yet, the report said, “despite some encouraging exceptions, too much of education remains largely stuck in an outdated model that assumes a nine-month school year, a six-hour school day, the prevalence of stay-at-home moms, adherence to rigid grading systems and standardized testing, separate and distinct subject areas, pencil-and-paper testing, and stand-and-deliver lecture-style instruction.”

Today, the situation has barely changed. Our schools are still virtually locked into an industrial-age model and our well-worn pathways to reform—which some have characterized as improvement-oriented tinkering—have yielded only limited results.

Real innovation is needed in the way schools operate—how they deliver instruction and use their assets, how they use time and talent, and how they allocate and spend resources. Maintaining our traditional definitions of “schooling” and preserving boundaries between schools and communities will undermine efforts to find real solutions and to get better results.

To prepare all students to succeed in the 21st century economy, schools must be given more flexibility—more options in how they deliver educational services, how they organize instruction and school calendars, and how they manage human resources. The state, districts and communities must be empowered to transform all of our schools, but with a special responsibility and urgency for transforming our lowest-performing schools. The education system must have the capacity to use technology as a teaching and learning tool, to prepare all teachers to make effective use of this 21st century asset, and to ensure that every student is proficient in this area. And parents must have choices about what schools and learning environments are best for their children.

Few would disagree that meeting these three challenges would be truly astounding. But if we allow ourselves to be inspired by Thomas Edison’s faith in the power of human potential, there is no reason that such an outcome cannot be realized. There is no reason why we cannot transform our educational system by creating a new culture of learning that changes the way schools operate, expecting every student to excel in a rigorous and relevant curriculum, welcoming the multiple ways students learn, empowering teachers and principals to become more effective professionals, and creating a sense of shared responsibility for the success of every student.

**RECOMMENDATION #1 CREATE OHIO INNOVATION ZONES AND AN INCENTIVE FUND**

The state of Ohio should create Ohio Innovation Zones (similar to the Colorado Innovation Schools Act of 2008) and an Incentive Fund to seed transformative educational innovation, support and scale up of successful educational enterprises, and build a strong culture to support these activities in local communities and throughout the state’s system of public education. Innovative transformation should be predicated on decisions and practices that are in the best interest of students. In many cases, this will not require additional financial resources but simply a willingness to think about learning in new ways.

In cases where resources are needed to launch the desired innovation, the state should create an Incentive Fund with both public and private dollars to help fund these promising initiatives. However, once these innovations are launched, local communities, schools, districts and the state should find ways to reallocate and repurpose current resources for their continuation. The state should create an advisory committee made up of both public- and private-sector members to help determine the awarding of the grants (similar to the
Third Frontier Advisory Committee). Specific focus areas should include the following:

■ Attract and build on promising school and instructional models. The state has made significant investments in Early College High Schools, the Ohio School Transformation Initiative (OHSTI), Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) high schools and the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). These efforts have attracted considerable federal and private-sector dollars and are gaining increasing traction with students and parents. The state also should consider successful state and national school models, including charter schools that can be brought to scale.

■ Introduce innovations with district-wide impact. Develop new school and instructional models (e.g., mastery learning, extended school day approaches, more time for instructional collaboration and re-inventing the senior year) and expand personalized learning at the system level (e.g., district-wide individualized learning plans, a middle school capstone project and online courses).

■ Eliminate operational and regulatory barriers that preclude schools from pursuing innovative solutions and models that are in the best interest of students and their families. These barriers may include district and charter school relationships, financial disincentives that preclude district-to-district collaboration and more flexible approaches to union and management agreements.

RECOMMENDATION #2 | FOCUS ON TRANSFORMING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

According to the 2007-2008 Ohio Report Card, more districts (518, or almost 85 percent) and schools (2,438, or almost 70 percent) than ever before are rated “effective” or higher. And the number of schools rated “continuous improvement” or lower declined by almost 5 percent. But there are still too many Ohio students who are attending schools that are not meeting expectations.

Nearly 100 Ohio schools serving more than 66,000 students have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for six or more consecutive years. According to federal law, these schools are required to undergo serious restructuring. An additional 90 schools serving another 58,000 students have failed to make AYP for five years and must draft restructuring plans this year.

Under federal law, there are several options for restructuring: replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the school’s inability to improve; outsourcing the operation of the school to private management; reopening the school as a charter school; turning the operation of the school over to the state; or implementing any other major restructuring of the school’s governance arrangement.

Some will suggest that federal law may change in 2009—and that may well be true. But the imperative of transforming low-performing schools will not change, and Ohio should not need a federal law to deal with schools that are not meeting the mark for the students they serve (and in some cases have not done so for years).

Ohio should take the following actions:

■ Develop a statewide plan—targeting the 10 percent of lowest-performing schools—with shared responsibility that extends beyond school boundaries (i.e., the community, higher education and business) for transforming these schools. The Ohio Department of Education should rethink its capacity—and the ability of regional improvement structures—to assist these schools, and should take whatever action is required to ensure that these schools get the support and targeted resources they need.

■ Focus on what research says works best: Organize in clusters/networks of schools; create enabling conditions including flexibility and school-based authority; help build capacity (e.g., principal and teacher quality/commitment); and help mobilize political will (see work of MassInsight).

■ Help districts and schools develop rigorous restructuring plans by providing guidance and support especially in the areas of instruction and budgetary planning, but cede the authority for these new plans to local districts and communities.
■ Create a coordinating body to lead the work and assist in the creation and development of partnerships that cut across funding streams and student and family support services (e.g., social services, mental health, etc.) to provide a coordinated, interagency delivery model, at both the state and local levels, to ensure students’ success. Eliminate barriers and identify opportunities for flexibility and cross-training of agency staffs.

■ Reassess and reallocate current school improvement dollars and other state funding streams to ensure support for districts’ and schools’ turnaround strategies.

**RECOMMENDATION #3 DEVELOP A STATEWIDE P-16 EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY PLAN**

As we move to develop an education system that will meet the needs of our students now and in the future, and as technology becomes more affordable and software more student-centered, we cannot overemphasize the critical role that technology will play in:

■ delivering customized and personalized instruction to raise student achievement, narrow achievement gaps, engage students, and improve capacity and efficiency in our schools;

■ providing students access to teachers and instruction not currently available in their local communities;

■ offering on-demand supports, interventions and accelerations with a student-centered focus; and

■ connecting students and teachers with the world.

We worry about a lack of foresight, planning and flexibility in understanding the technological changes and dynamics in instructional methodology and design that will limit Ohio’s future educational capacity and our state’s ability to compete in an increasingly technological world. Recent reports indicate that “students power down” when entering schools, when in fact, they should be “powering up.”

For this reason, the State Board of Education, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Board of Regents and Ohio Department of Development should work collaboratively to evaluate the state’s overall technology infrastructure and develop a statewide P-16 education technology action plan for transforming teaching and learning through technology. This plan, which should be developed and carried out in collaboration with the higher education and employer communities and be based on promising practices in Ohio and across the country, should (1) clarify the goals and potential of technology use as a diagnostic tool and an approach to instruction and data management (e.g., common electronic portfolios) and as a skill that all students should acquire; (2) address the need for professional development to ensure teachers’ ability to make effective use of technology as an instructional and learning tool; (3) focus on ways to close the “equity gap” so all students have access to up-to-date technology; and (4) be agile, nimble and flexible to ensure the technology and infrastructure stay cutting edge.

2 Bold action is required to refine Ohio’s academic standards and restructure the state’s assessment system. The state standards need to be revised to articulate what we expect all students to know and be able to do so they are ready to compete in the increasingly global labor market, can live and thrive in a diverse society, and can participate as informed members of our democracy. And we need to move to a more balanced assessment system that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities in different ways; informs teaching strategies and improves learning; and provides a complete picture of how schools are doing against a consistent set of expectations.

Ohio needs challenging expectations for all of its students. Without them, our students will not be ready to compete in the increasingly global labor market and diverse society. Yet, rigorous standards alone are not enough. As Ohio Grantmakers Forum reported in *Education for Ohio’s Future*, teachers and principals also need the curriculum tools and training to bring these standards to life in their classrooms, and all students should have supports around them to help them succeed.
In 2001, Ohio adopted its first K-12 academic content standards that defined the knowledge and skills students needed to be successful in various subjects. New assessment and accountability systems soon followed. And on the whole, these reforms have produced positive results. There have been improvements in student achievement at almost all grade levels and in most subject areas, as both average and absolute test scores have gone up. Independent reviewers also have documented that Ohio’s traditionally underserved students have made gains at rates faster than the average Ohio students.

Not everyone agrees on the quality of Ohio’s academic content standards—on whether they address all of the competencies, including 21st century skills, that are needed for success today and in the future, or on how they stack up against current and evolving standards and expectations in high-performing states and nations. There is, however, an emerging consensus on the following points:

- While Ohio has come far in the development of academic standards compared to other states, current Ohio standards have not been developed to world-class levels and, therefore, lack when compared to international benchmarks and expectations.

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**Defining College Readiness**

In most discussions of “college readiness,” emphasis is given to high school courses taken and grades received along with scores on national tests as its primary metrics. Yet, in *Toward a More Comprehensive Conception of College Readiness* (March 2007), David Conley argues persuasively that a broader conception of this term is needed. He points to recent research that sheds light on the key elements of college success.

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**Key Cognitive Strategies**
- Intellectual Openness
- Inquisitiveness
- Analysis
- Reasoning, Argumentation and Proof
- Interpretation
- Precision and Accuracy
- Problem Solving

**Key Content**
- Writing—Overarching
- Research—Overarching
- Core Subject Areas—English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, Arts

**Academic Behaviors**
- Study Skills
- Time Management
- Persistence
- Self Monitoring

**Contextual Skills and Awareness**
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- College Knowledge
- Interaction with people from different background and cultures
Although on paper Ohio’s academic standards are aligned with first-year, college-level academic expectations, in practice there is no assurance that high school course-taking patterns align with the written standards. In large part, this reflects the fact that the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) is the dominant test, which means that 11th- and 12th-grade learning tends to be de-emphasized. Efforts to raise Ohio’s standards must be accelerated to ensure readiness for college and career.

Ohio has too many standards. Its learner outcomes need to be redefined and far fewer standards need to be developed at every grade level and in every content area in a way that promotes deeper, richer instruction and learning of key content and skills. And the state’s new standards—with a narrower and deeper focus—must be aligned with a new assessment system that provides multiple measures of students’ academic performance.

In recent years, the job of strengthening the connections among standards, assessments and accountability has attracted a great deal of attention, both in Ohio and across the nation. Again, progress has been made, but concerns remain about the way Ohio presently assesses students’ acquisition and application of identified knowledge and skills. Too often, assessment systems do not measure what matters most—i.e., they are not being used to determine whether students are on a trajectory toward success at the next level, whether it be the next grade, postsecondary education, the workplace or a lifetime of learning experiences and opportunities.

Assessment results are not being used sufficiently to guide instruction and to support meaningful personalization for students through interventions and supports. Results are not readily accessible or timely, there is insufficient planning time to interpret and understand results and the breadth of what the assessments measure is limited.

Too much emphasis is placed on paper-and-pencil tests, often ignoring portfolios, classroom-based assessments and other performance measures that can measure a broader range of knowledge and skills.

Assessments at all levels—classroom, school, district and state—have not taken full advantage of the improvements in technology to assess, provide immediate feedback and provide on-the-spot interventions and supports.

Ohio’s current assessments are focused too narrowly on what can be measured on a paper-and-pencil test—they do not measure the full range and level of knowledge and skills needed for success after high school. There is not even enough emphasis on knowledge and skills beyond the 10th grade due in large part to the focus on the 10th-grade-level OGT.

Assessments are not informed by global standards and expectations.

The unintended consequences of No Child Left Behind’s (NCLB’s) focus on literacy and mathematics has led to a “shallow covering” of a multitude of topics instead of in-depth instruction in classrooms across Ohio, placing a far greater emphasis on passing tests than on learning critical content and skills.

While bold action is needed to refine Ohio’s academic standards and restructure the state’s assessment system, it simply cannot take years to achieve these priorities. Several models have been developed to assist in refining and narrowing the scope of the standards and substantial work has already been done to benchmark Ohio’s standards to the best in the world. Ohio should continue to learn from lessons of other states and incorporate national work currently being conducted by organizations such as Achieve, Council of Chief State School Officers, Fordham, National Governors Association and others. Similarly, work on Ohio’s new assessment system can be based on past experience and on assessments that have “proven” effective both in Ohio and elsewhere, but any such assessment system must be tightly aligned with the new standards and promote improved teaching and higher student learning.
**Recommendation #4**  
**Develop a Graduate Profile**

Beginning with the end in mind, the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Board of Regents, in collaboration with educators, families, business and community leaders and other education stakeholders, should develop a “graduate profile” that provides a holistic picture of what a successful student knows and is able to do at the end of his or her high school education, from both a systems perspective as well as from the vantage point of the individual learner.

This profile, which will be used to establish the next generation of academic standards, should identify the foundational content and skills (i.e., work-related skills, international workplace expectations, technology skills, learning and thinking skills, citizenship skills and other competencies identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills) that all graduates should master, while being sensitive to differences in students’ interests and the ways they learn. In addition, this profile should be designed to help schools and districts improve the performance of their students and be aligned with the University System of Ohio’s college-ready expectations.

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### What this looks like from a Systems Perspective
- Demonstrates competence in a rigorous and relevant core curriculum (as reflected in the Ohio Core Curriculum) that includes English (reading and language arts), mathematics, science, foreign languages, history, geography, civics and the arts – and that reflects what students need to know and be able to do in a 21st century global environment.
- Is a confident, creative, critical-thinking problem solver – one who is able to explore issues from an interdisciplinary perspective, apply knowledge in new settings and discern data from propaganda.
- Is capable of setting, planning and achieving goals, independently and in teams, and has the capacity to adapt to change, deal with ambiguity and respond appropriately.
- Demonstrates strong citizenship skills, including leadership, ethics, conflict resolution, self-direction and personal responsibility.
- Has well-developed computer and information technology skills, and uses technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills needed to be a life-long learner.
- Is a skilled communicator, capable of writing clearly, speaking effectively and listening with comprehension.
- Is culturally competent, understands other cultures and is proficient in a language in addition to English.
- Has developed financial, economic, social and business literacy, including entrepreneurial skills.

### What this looks like from a Student Perspective
- Creates samples of his/her work that prove competency in core subject areas.
- Develops and acts on his/her desire to read, write, speak and compute.
- Develops strategies to learn how to study.
- Writes essays, memoranda, letters and other documents.
- Articulates his/her own learning style, challenges and opportunities.
- Charts his/her own progress and learning competencies.
- Uses technology to find and create knowledge and to communicate appropriately in online communities.
- Has the desire to participate in extracurricular activities, non-classroom learning experiences and service learning.
- Makes presentations and designs projects.
- Learns how to research issues, problems and ideas.
- Evaluates information and can discern data from propaganda.
- Understands and demonstrates knowledge of interdisciplinary learning and thinking.
- Prioritizes personal health and wellness.
- Participates as an active, engaged and informed citizen of our democracy.
Framework for 21st Century Learning

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has developed a unified, collective vision for 21st century learning that can be used to strengthen American education. The key elements of 21st century learning are represented in the graphic and descriptions at the right. The graphic represents both 21st century skills and student outcomes (as represented by the arches of the rainbow) and support systems (as represented by the pools at the bottom).

RECOMMENDATION #5 | REEVALUATE AND REVISE OHIO’S ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Board of Regents should work collaboratively to reevaluate and revise the state’s current academic content standards to ensure that they are rigorous and capable of preparing students for success in the 21st century global economy, and to make certain that these standards are aligned with the expectations and needs of the higher-education and employer communities.

These standards should be linked to specific courses and subject areas, not just traditional grade bands. They should allow for and encourage cross-disciplinary and project-based learning. They should be updated periodically as the “graduate profile” evolves. And the new standards should be redefined and refocused quickly, not through a process that requires years to take this critical “next step” in standards-based reform.

This reassessment of the state’s academic standards should ensure the following:

- Standards are aligned to college and career expectations, including key cognitive strategies, key content areas, academic behaviors and contextual skills and awareness.
- Standards will continually be benchmarked against international standards and expectations in high-performing countries and states, and to cutting-edge, emerging knowledge.
- Standards are streamlined to focus on depth vs. breadth in core subject areas with an emphasis on rigor and 21st century skills and global competencies (e.g., foreign languages in the early grades).
- Standards are clarified to provide teachers with specific guidance on curriculum and instruction and to measure students’ and teachers’ progress toward meeting expectations.
- Grade-level standards are replaced with course-specific standards in grades 7-12. These course-specific standards should be developed to allow for integrated and cross-disciplinary learning and instruction.

Ohio’s Exceptional Students: By the Numbers

- Just over 14.5 percent of students in Ohio schools are identified as special needs, which translates to over 266,000 students.
- More than 35,000 limited English proficient students/English language learners were enrolled in our public schools during the 2006-2007 school year, which represents a 182 percent increase over the last ten years and a 68 percent increase during the last five years.
- 16 percent, or 294,000, of Ohio’s students are identified as gifted and talented.
Learners with Special Needs and Talents: Supporting Individual Needs

It is accepted today that children learn in a wide variety of ways—including children with disabilities, English language learners and children identified as gifted and talented—and should be able to have their individual needs met in a general education classroom. OGF recognizes that learning differences exist along a vast continuum and that strategic, targeted and personalized instruction can positively affect student achievement. We acknowledge the difficulty of meeting the individualized needs of all of our students but also acknowledge the responsibility to do so.

Yet, OGF’s workgroups chose not to explicitly address the issue of learners with special needs in the context of academic standards, assessments and high-quality instruction. Very simply, we did not have the expertise or the time to delve into this critically important topic. However, we encourage Ohio’s education policy leaders to do so—to work with our recommendations in ways that eliminate significant opportunity gaps for students who are struggling with learning, behaviors and English acquisition and for students who need additional challenges to meet their learning needs. We recommend that Ohio’s leaders be guided by Linda Darling-Hammond’s counsel (in The Special Edge, Summer 2008) that:

- All students have multiple and complex experiences, strength and identities;
- These complex sets of experiences require that all students be taught as individuals;
- All teachers need to be observant and diagnostic in their approaches; and
- Teachers should be aware of general and individual patterns of learning as they assess and plan instruction.

We urge Ohio’s leaders to create policies and expectations to ensure that all students are held to high standards; that students are provided the necessary instruction, supports and interventions to succeed; and that we continue to hold our schools accountable for educating all of Ohio’s students.

RECOMMENDATION #6 REVISE THE STATE’S ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

If Ohio is committed to every student being fully prepared for success after high school, the same attention must be paid to aligning expectations of what we want students to know and be able to do and also be evident in the design of the assessment and accountability system. In other words, how we measure learning throughout the educational journey, what we do to assist students in their learning based on those measures, when and how we seamlessly indicate readiness for success beyond high school, and how we hold ourselves accountable for doing this well should all be aligned to the goal of preparing students to be successful in college, careers and citizenship.

Given this, we must redesign Ohio’s assessment and accountability framework, ensuring that the new assessment system is both an assessment OF learning and an assessment FOR learning. The new assessment system must:

1. Inform and improve the quality and consistency of instruction and learning through the use of multiple measures and technology.
2. Ascertain whether students are meeting certain mileposts that signify readiness to succeed in classrooms, in careers and in citizenship.
3. Motivate students to take their education more seriously by showing them that they are capable of learning at higher levels and/or by showing them where their strengths and weaknesses are.
4. Find a balance between the tension of multiple measures, providing student options and the critical issues of validity and reliability.
5. Hold schools accountable to students, parents and the public for ensuring that students are meeting challenging academic expectations throughout their K-12 education careers.

In creating a balanced assessment system, it is important both to set a longer-term vision for what the system will accomplish, and recommend what steps can be taken now to advance that vision in substantive and urgent ways.
Beyond Tinkering | Creating Real Opportunities for Today’s Learners and for Generations of Ohioans to Come

Principles of a Balanced Assessment System

Aligned to Expectations
1. Assessment will be aligned to the state’s new academic standards, measuring knowledge and skills deemed to be the most important for student success, including 21st century skills.
2. Assessments will be valid, reliable and aligned from kindergarten through high school, allowing for comparisons within and across schools and districts.
3. High school assessments will be seen as valid and reliable by higher education and business as measures of college- and career-ready.

Supportive of Teaching and Learning
4. Assessments will be designed to promote and improve learning by informing teaching strategies.
5. Assessments will stretch to measure high rigor and student capability, with results mapping to high student supports.
6. Teachers will be engaged partners in the assessment process (e.g., K-12 educators will be involved in their development, along with higher education and business; and teachers will participate in scoring the assessments).
7. Results will be available on a timely basis, providing useful, actionable information for students, teachers, parents and policymakers.
8. Technology will be used to improve test measures and scoring, as well as the timeliness and specificity of feedback (e.g., online and computer adaptive testing).

Include Multiple Measures of Student Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
9. Multiple measures will be used, providing options for students to demonstrate proficiency in more than one way and at more than one time (e.g., large-scale assessments, performance measures, interim assessments and classroom assessments).
10. Multiple-choice, short-answer, extended-response and essay questions will be used to measure more than the discrete recall of knowledge (e.g., rigorous core knowledge, problem solving and analytic skills).

Indicate Readiness for College and Career
11. Results will be reported in ways that allow students, parents and teachers to easily understand them; help people understand whether students are on track for attaining college- and career-ready status; and point to appropriate actions to improve performance.
12. Assessments will include measures of work-ready skills (e.g., Work Keys and industry credentials.)
13. Uniform college-ready cut scores that set the bar for students to enter credit-bearing college coursework will be established by higher education and K-12 educators.

Proposed K-8 Assessment Framework

The overall framework of Ohio’s K-8 assessments is solid. In general, it measures the right content at the right time, allowing for critical value-added analysis in grades 3-8. It has a combination of diagnostic and achievement tests that provide teachers in the early grades with critical information on how to assist our youngest learners. However, as changes are made to the student standards, more must be done to align the K-8 assessments to these new expectations, including a better balance between paper-and-pencil tests and formative assessments and a strong vertical alignment throughout the assessment system.
Therefore, the state should align assessments to revised and streamlined standards, including 21st century skills.

1. Keep current K-8 testing schedule and ensure alignment of entire K-12 assessment system.

2. Develop a better balance of various types of K-8 assessments, with emphasis on performance assessments and classroom, interim and formative assessments.


4. Encourage and incentivize schools and districts to use an 8th-grade Capstone Project aligned to state standards.

While we have chosen to focus on K-12 assessments, we are acutely aware of the importance of early learning. We support efforts to guarantee that all children in licensed out-of-home settings, regardless of special needs and hours of care, are in safe and healthy learning environments that promote their development and readiness for school. We acknowledge that the state’s Early Learning Content Standards are considered to be among the best in the nation. We agree with the School Readiness Solutions Group’s call (2006) for better program and professional preparation standards to ensure that all children are being nurtured by competent professionals. We believe that the assessments used in all early-learning settings should be developmentally appropriate and linked to the state’s content standards.

Proposed High School Assessment Framework

Just as local schools use a variety of assessments to measure K-8 student learning, there is a role for the state to identify and develop a more robust, balanced high school assessment system. The proposed high school assessment system does not necessarily reduce the number of state level assessments overall. But it does clarify and streamline the many purposes for and use of these assessments, so that they become a part of—not apart from—the classroom learning experience.

The proposed assessment system also measures a broader range of knowledge and skills to help guide instruction, inform learning and determine whether students are on track for success after high school. The assessment system identifies multiple measures—some with high stakes, some without—that allow students to reach milestones at different times in their high school careers while still allowing for a transparent, statewide accountability system to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

1. Develop end-of-course exams (grades 9-12) to replace the Ohio Graduation Tests.

   • The state should adopt a series of end-of-course (EOC) exams—aligned to the expectations of the Ohio Core Curriculum—that students take as they complete coursework. The exams would count for a percentage of a student’s grade and be administered in place of a teacher’s end-of-course exam.

   • Students would be required to pass a certain number of core tests for graduation (e.g., English I, II, III, Algebra I and II, U.S. History, Biology, Chemistry, Physics), but students could choose from a broader list of exams to demonstrate a special interest or depth of knowledge/skill in areas of their choice. Incentives should be considered to encourage students to go above and beyond the required exams for graduation (e.g., scholarships, fast-tracked admissions, college credit, etc.). In addition, a special “with distinction” diploma should be awarded to identify students’ additional skill areas.

   • EOC exams would drive a tight alignment with state standards and help ensure consistency of content and instruction across the state. Performance on exams in selected higher-level courses (English III and Algebra II) could be used for placement in credit-bearing college courses.

   • Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate assessments could be used in lieu of state EOC exams.
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• Credit would be awarded for proficiency using a new “credit system” that shifts Ohio’s focus from evaluating student learning based on an obsolete notion of “seat time” (i.e., the traditional Carnegie Unit) to directly assessing students’ academic performance, competence and mastery. Students would be able to “test out” of classes and earn credit.
• EOC exams should be used to measure value-added progress at the high school level. Attention should be paid to the high school value-added pilot developed by Battelle for Kids in partnership with 40 of Ohio’s school districts.
• Where possible, Ohio should adopt existing EOC exams or work with other states in the development of EOC exams to limit costs.

2. Participate in an international assessment to allow for international benchmarking and comparisons.
• Determine the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the PISA (Programme of International Student Assessment) and TIMSS/PIRLS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study/Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) assessment systems and choose one that will allow Ohio to benchmark the achievement of our students to students across the world.
• Examine the international benchmarking report (January 2009) from Achieve, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, which will provide an analysis of these assessments.
• If possible, include international assessment items in existing Ohio assessments to limit the number of tests a student must take.

3. Adopt ACT’s Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) battery of assessments (Explore for 8th and 9th grades, Plan for 10th grade and ACT for 11th and 12th grades).
• Provide this battery of assessments for all Ohio students to help students and families prepare for high school and determine if students are prepared for success after high school, both in college and careers.
• Include Explore and Plan as they are designed to provide students, parents and teachers with feedback on personally relevant career options and provide a focus on career preparation.

4. Institute a 12th-grade Capstone Project.
• This multi-disciplinary performance assessment (perhaps a topic of the student’s choosing) would be designed to demonstrate a student’s writing, speaking, technology, teamwork, research, innovation, creativity, critical-thinking abilities and other 21st century skills.
• State guidance should be provided on project expectations, but projects should be managed and scored at the school level.
• These projects should help inform the “with distinction” diploma, if students choose that path.
• Students enrolled in dual enrollment programs should be exempt from the Capstone Project.

While we have not directly addressed accountability matters—preferring to concentrate on the issues of academic standards and assessment systems—it is clear that Ohio’s approach to accountability needs to be revisited and changes need to be made. Most importantly, the state’s accountability system should be recalibrated to reflect new academic standards and assessment measures. Beyond that, the Ohio Department of Education should build its capacity to help low-performing schools and districts ensure that their students are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for success in the 21st century economy. The
basis for these reforms, however, should be a clear understanding of how the state’s accountability system is working. Has it been effective? Is it working as expected? Is Ohio getting the outcomes it needs? What unintended consequences have been identified? With the answers to these questions, the state’s education policy leaders should make changes that improve the system.

**RECOMMENDATION #7 PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Ohio should provide a robust set of instructional supports to promote high-quality teaching and learning aligned with the state’s new academic standards and assessment system. The Ohio Department of Education should take the following actions:

- Facilitate the development of performance assessments and corresponding rubrics that allow teachers to gauge student learning, skill acquisition and the ability to apply and construct knowledge.

- Act as a clearinghouse for (as opposed to the developer of) high-quality curriculum frameworks, lesson plans and instructional methods.

- Provide and/or “champion” meaningful, high-quality professional development focused on individualizing instruction, increasing rigor and using interdisciplinary and collaborative instructional approaches; tie learning to the global practicalities of 21st century jobs to help students see the relevance in what they are learning; and explore strategies for providing significant supports through the use of technology, including providing teachers with access to an “OpenCourseware” system.

3 **Bold steps are needed to ensure that we have the very best teachers and principals working in all of our classrooms and schools for the benefit of all of our students, especially minority and low-income students who traditionally have been underserved.**

For any school—and for any state—high-quality instruction is a strategic investment. Teacher quality is the school-based factor that makes the most impact on student achievement. And high-quality principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction among the school-related factors that influence student achievement.

As Ohio Grantmakers Forum acknowledged in its 2006 report, “If we are going to be competitive nationally and internationally, we need to have the best and brightest teachers working in all of our classrooms with all of our students. We have a special responsibility to ensure that students who traditionally have been underserved, particularly minority and low-income students, benefit from the best educators.”

In recent years, the Ohio Department of Education and other stakeholder groups have taken several steps to strengthen the quality of teachers and principals, including the development of standards and performance indicators. It has established mentoring and induction programs for new teachers. It has established career lattices and professional development programs. And the Ohio Department of Education and school districts have made several attempts to strengthen principal leadership.

As encouraging as these reforms have been, they have not effectively addressed some of the most pressing issues surrounding teacher and principal quality, either at the state or local level. As such, our recommendations—some of which are both bold and controversial—seek to incorporate some of the most promising national thinking and practices for the benefit of all of Ohio’s children.

In developing our recommendations, we have been guided by several agreements among our diverse stakeholder group:

- These recommendations should be seen as a “compact” among educators, school leaders and state government to improve the quality of teaching and learning by improving the conditions of teaching and learning. As such, they should be viewed together as a package, not as a disparate set of menu options.

- While it is appropriate for the state to determine what can be done to improve teacher and principal
quality, boards of education, districts and schools should have considerable flexibility in deciding how it should be done.

- These recommendations will require a new culture of teaching and learning that promotes respect for educators (as professionals) and sets high expectations for the educational achievement of every child. Education cannot be isolated from other aspects of child and youth development, nor from what happens in the home. Therefore, schools should promote an environment in which the responsibility for results is shared by schools, communities and families.

- Finally, schools and districts will need sufficient and predictable resources to carry these recommendations out, as the investment in and support of high-quality teachers and principals must be a long-term strategy.

Most of our recommendations call for immediate and significant changes in public policy and practice at both the state and local levels. Yet, we understand that longer-term reforms will be needed in order to truly have maximum impact on the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. Some reforms may involve the way teachers fit into futuristic classrooms where student-centered technology is commonplace. Others may be reflected in learning practices that make greater use of teachers as coaches and tutors. To be sure, these and other changes will lead to dramatically different approaches to teacher and principal recruitment and preparation—and to professional development opportunities that prepare these educators for exciting, new roles.

RECOMMENDATION #8
STRENGTHEN STANDARDS AND EVALUATION FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

At the direction of Senate Bill 2, the Ohio Standards Board—comprised of teachers, school administrators, school board members and higher education faculty—created Standards for Ohio Educators, which lays out the defining standards for teachers and principals at all stages of their careers, and delineates criteria for high-quality professional development. Coupled with the academic content standards for students, these benchmarks provide Ohio educators with a powerful path to improve their practice and increase student achievement.

Standards for Ohio Educators, which were approved in October 2005 by the State Board of Education, were thoroughly vetted locally and nationally and are widely regarded as high-quality. However, given the proposed revisions to student standards, these educator standards need appropriate revisions as well, to assure that the attributes and skills we wish to develop and promote in students are similarly developed and promoted in teachers and principals. The standards also should be fully deployed, implemented and integrated into local district practice. Therefore, our recommendations include the following:

- The Educator Standards Board should quickly and efficiently create an addendum to Ohio’s teacher and principal standards that identifies the critical skills of global competence, technology proficiency, data analysis and use, and other 21st century skills needed by educators in order to effectively develop these skills in students. This addendum should be aligned to the revisions and expectations in the state’s student standards.

- The Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Board of Regents and Ohio’s education stakeholders are urged
to develop a deployment strategy, in partnership with the Educator Standards Board and Ohio’s stakeholder organizations, to ensure that the teacher and principal standards are embedded in educator preparation programs and induction programs, and that the Educator Standards Board’s professional development standards are embedded in local practices and local professional development centers.

The Ohio Department of Education, in partnership with Ohio’s education stakeholders, should develop model hiring protocols based on the Educator Standards Board standards for teachers and principals. The model hiring instrument should be promoted to boards of educations, districts and schools as an important tool in evaluating a prospective candidate’s readiness for teaching and school leadership.

Currently, teacher and principal evaluation is not widely regarded as an effective formative or summative tool to inform practice or assess effectiveness. In fact, nearly all stakeholders agree that evaluations often are conducted inconsistently and do not generate the kind of information that is needed for effective decision making. A more comprehensive and robust evaluation product and process are imperative to strengthen teacher and principal quality and ultimately student performance. Therefore, our recommendations include the following:

- In partnership with school districts and education stakeholders, the Ohio Department of Education should develop model teacher and principal evaluation instruments and processes to be used for all teachers and principals on an annual basis. These models should be based on the Educator Standards Board standards and student performance over time as determined by value-added data and other demonstrations of students’ skills and abilities. The models may be locally adopted or adapted to improve the practice of teaching, provide systemic support, inform movement along the career lattice, and inform employment decisions.

- The Ohio Department of Education, along with its value-added vendor, should develop a robust teacher verification system to ensure the validity and reliability of value-added data and teacher level reports.

- As value-added data are powerful diagnostic tools that can be used to improve teaching and learning, the Ohio Department of Education should provide all Ohio teachers with teacher-level, value-added reports. These reports should be made available to teachers, principals and other school officials with legitimate interest, but include privacy precautions that would preclude the reports from being made publicly available or available through public records requests. These reports should inform on-going, job embedded professional development for educators so that they understand the reports and use the data to improve their teaching and their students’ learning.

**RECOMMENDATION #9  IMPROVE OHIO’S TEACHING AND LEARNING CONDITIONS**

Research tells us that one of the major reasons teachers leave the profession is the absence of a supportive “professional culture” in their schools. This reality may be reflected in school leadership structures that do not allow teachers to serve in leadership roles. It may be indicated by a lack of opportunities for teachers to plan and collaborate during the school day. Or it could be seen in inadequate or nonexistent instructional support mechanisms.

Yet, the issue here isn’t simply a matter of teacher retention. Optimal teaching and learning conditions in school buildings are prerequisites to student learning. Principals need appropriate resources and supports to provide the working conditions where their staff can thrive. They need to be instructional leaders who understand, model and evaluate high-quality teaching; who build on-site collaborative learning environments; and who are held accountable for results. Teachers need environments in which they are not isolated, but rather surrounded and supported by colleagues who...
share the same common goal—higher student performance—regardless of their respective roles in the building.

All educators need time and flexibility to evaluate student data in real time to guide instruction; to work in large and small groups with students; to engage in school-based, data driven professional development; to research relevant topics; and to interact more proactively with students’ families. And these educators need to be the most competent and inspiring principals and teachers in our schools. Therefore, our recommendations include the following:

- The Ohio Department of Education should provide financial incentives to encourage schools and districts to implement significant changes in their teaching and learning environments by enhancing their professional cultures, engaging teachers and principals in shared leadership, empowering teachers as decision-makers, providing teachers with instructional support and developing opportunities for teachers to collaborate in ways that advance their professional practice and student learning. These incentives might support restructuring of classes, lengthening the school day, changing the school year, providing wraparound services to students on the school site, development of professional learning communities, etc.

- The Ohio General Assembly should strengthen the language in the Ohio Revised Code to make school districts’ awarding of tenure the product of a meaningful, aligned process that involves a rigorous and robust formative evaluation connected to the teacher licensure cycle. Through this intentional process—as opposed to a default process—teachers seeking tenure would demonstrate their quality and potential based on the Standards for Ohio Educators and student performance over time as determined by value-added data and other measures. With this change in the Ohio Revised Code, eligibility for tenure would be aligned with the teacher licensure cycle and be available to teachers after seven years of teaching and completion of their first five-year professional license.

- The Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Regents should ensure that investments—by the state, districts, schools and teachers—in professional development and continuing education (e.g., requirement of a master’s degree) are producing a high return on investment as measured by improved student achievement. Additional professional development should be made available to all educators based on Ohio’s professional development standards and in areas where value-added and other student data suggests it is needed most.

- The Ohio General Assembly should change the Ohio Revised Code to reconcile the language of teacher dismissal to that of dismissal for other public employees covered under Ohio’s collective bargaining laws to ensure adequate protection of teachers while making equitable the causes for dismissal for all Ohio public employees.

RECOMMENDATION #10

DEVELOP A NEW EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SYSTEM

Teacher compensation has garnered much national attention lately, ranging from discussions of merit pay to performance pay to a complete overhaul of compensation. Given the new market realities of a global economy, in which a generation of new workers have options all over the world, will have many different jobs in their lifetime, and expect to be paid well for higher education credentials and job performance, the current educator compensation system in Ohio should be examined.

We believe an in-depth analysis of teacher compensation in Ohio is due, with no “sacred cows” left unexamined. Therefore, our recommendations include the following:

- The Governor and leaders in the Ohio General Assembly should jointly convene an Ohio Task Force on Compensation and Performance, made up of affected stakeholder groups and the private and public sectors to develop new educator compensation system models that may be locally adopted or adapted. These models would (1) broaden and strengthen the pool of individuals who are attracted to and retained in teaching and school leadership, and (2) improve the connections among compensation, teaching excellence and higher levels of student learning. The Task Force should be charged with developing the parameters of a compensation system that:
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- Attracts and retains high-quality educators by establishing base pay levels that are competitive with other professions;
- Ensures that incentives for teachers and principals (i.e., increases in pay and other awards) are sufficient to drive improved performance;
- Is supported by an assessment system that generates valid and reliable indicators of both student performance and educator skills, using value-added measures to gauge improvements in student performance;
- Provides incentives that support efforts to fill positions in schools and subject areas where there are documented shortages of skilled educators; and
- Establishes and supports new career tracks that provide educators better opportunities for career advancement and leadership while remaining in the classroom.

**RECOMMENDATION #11**

**ENSURE AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS ACROSS ALL SCHOOLS**

Ohio schools, like those across the nation, have serious problems with inequitable distribution of high-quality teachers and principals in schools where students arrive with the most deficits. The Ohio Department of Education has made some solid strides trying to rectify this situation, but inequities abound. Therefore, our recommendations are as follows:

- The Ohio Board of Regents and Ohio Department of Education should develop and implement strategies that provide the resources, support and training that allow for effective educators to teach and lead in all schools in Ohio, paying special attention to underrepresented minority populations and rural areas. The Ohio Department of Education should concentrate these efforts around two critical areas:
  - Identifying schools with high rates of teacher and principal turnover, high proportions of inexperienced or out-of-field teachers, high rates of student poverty, and low rates of student performance; and using this identification for purposes of intervention, professional development and human and financial resource allocation to address these and other conditions critical to effective learning environments.
  - Identifying shortage subject areas such as mathematics, science, special education, foreign language or other areas where there is an identified need.

- In addition, the Ohio Board of Regents and Ohio Department of Education should provide innovation and incentive grants to encourage higher education, school districts and other education partners to work together to develop or replicate innovative partnerships to address a wide range of quality teaching and leadership needs, including funding for the following:
  - Graduate-level teacher training programs that use clinically-based residency models (e.g., the Boston Residency Model and the Woodrow Wilson STEM Teaching Fellows program) that draw teaching candidates with appropriate content expertise immediately into the classroom under the guidance of a distinguished mentor teacher—while the candidate simultaneously studies the academics of teaching—and then follows with two to three years of ongoing mentoring and induction.
  - Graduate-level programs that recruit and train exceptional principal candidates through rigorous selection, intensive training and ongoing support so that principals are equipped to allocate resources (financial and other) to make the best decisions for the particular needs of their school and provide the working conditions where their staff and students can thrive and are held accountable for results.
  - Teacher training programs that attract qualified, underrepresented minorities and mid-career professionals into the profession and into subject areas where they are needed most, which
might include tuition remission, loan forgiveness and other incentives; and

- Programs that reorganize the school day/year to provide additional time for embedded, site-based professional development, peer collaboration and planning, team teaching and other innovative practices.

These partnerships should be evaluated to see where there is the greatest impact on student achievement and where continued investment is warranted.

Ohio Grantmakers Forum is an association of foundations, corporate contributions programs and other grantmaking organizations. Its mission is to provide leadership for organized philanthropy in Ohio and to enhance the ability of members to fulfill their charitable goals.