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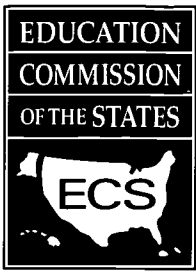
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## ABSTRACT

This report examines governance in K-12 public education and offers two approaches for altering public-education governance. The document is a product of the National Commission on Governing America's Schools, which is a special research group comprised of school-board members, state and local superintendents, teachers, for-profit education and charter-school representatives, governors, business leaders, education reformers, a state legislator, and leaders of a teachers' union. The commission was charged with developing ideas and strategies for modifying K-12 public-education governance to effect improvements for all students. The report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the condition of K-12 public education and Americans' perceptions of public education. It describes national and state dropout rates and completion rates, district performance, and trends affecting the state of K-12 public education. Chapter 2 examines the evolution of K-12 public-education governance, and the development of education from the 19th century up to the present. It focuses on such issues as centralized and decentralized approaches, the influence of industrial management, and strengths and weaknesses of current governance systems. The third chapter presents two systems of K-12 public education governance: publicly authorized, publicly funded, and publicly operated schools; and publicly authorized, publicly funded, and independently operated schools. A conclusion summarizes key findings. Two appendices describe the study. (Contains 57 references.) (RJM)

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# Report of the National Commission on Governing America's Schools

## What's Inside

- A Look at the Current Status of K-12 Public Education
- How K-12 Governance Evolved
- Two Governance Systems to Consider

# Governing America's Schools: Changing the Rules

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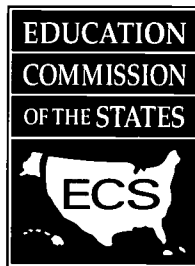
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# Governing America's Schools: Changing the Rules

Report of the National Commission  
on Governing America's Schools

*November 1999*



Education Commission of the States (ECS)  
707 17th Street, Suite 2700  
Denver, CO 80202-3427  
303-299-3600  
fax: 303-296-8332  
e-mail: [ecs@ecs.org](mailto:ecs@ecs.org)  
[www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)

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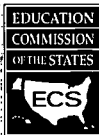
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Members of the National Commission are:

- Anthony Alvarado, chancellor of instruction, San Diego Unified School District
- Lynwood Battle, school board member, Cincinnati City School District
- Thomas Davis, state education board member, Missouri
- Howard Fuller, professor, Marquette University
- Frank Keating, governor, Oklahoma
- Diana Lam, superintendent, Providence Public Schools
- Donald McAdams, school board member, Houston Independent School District
- Deborah McGriff, executive vice president, Edison Schools, Inc.
- Luther Olsen, state representative, Wisconsin
- David Osborne, managing partner, Public Strategies Group
- Paul E. Patton, governor, Kentucky (commission co-chairman)
- Neal Peirce, syndicated columnist
- James Renier, retired chief executive officer and chairman, Honeywell Corporation, and chairman, Institute for Educational Leadership (commission co-chairman)
- Lisbeth Schorr, director, Harvard University Project on Effective Interventions
- Ted Sizer, chairman, Coalition of Essential Schools, and co-principal, Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School
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- Jacob Adams, assistant professor, Vanderbilt University
- Jane Hannaway, director, Education Policy Center, Urban Institute
- Paul Hill, professor, University of Washington
- Larry Pierce, independent consultant.

This report was written by Todd Ziebarth, ECS policy analyst. Other ECS staff members who worked on this report include:

- Jane Armstrong, director of policy studies
- Arleen Arnsperger, interim director of information services
- Josie Canales, communications coordinator
- Thomas P. Jandris, division director, constituent services
- Kay McClenney, interim president
- Robert Palaich, division director, policy research and implementation
- Sherry Freeland Walker, director of publications
- Suzanne Weiss, writer and editor.

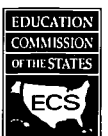
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  - Susan Mohrman, professor, University of Southern California
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  - Michael Resnick, associate executive director, National School Boards Association  
*(Effective School Governance: A Look At Today's Practice and Tomorrow's Promise)*
  - Harold Seamon, deputy executive director, National School Boards Association  
*(Effective School Governance: A Look At Today's Practice and Tomorrow's Promise)*
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  - David Tyack, professor, Stanford University  
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# Executive Summary

*"The right structure does not guarantee results. But the wrong structure aborts results and smothers even the best-directed efforts." – Peter Drucker, Managing for Results: Economic Tasks and Risk-Taking*

Nearly two decades of intensive reform and innovation have dramatically altered the landscape of American public education. Standards are in place in most states and districts, providing the basis for new ways of measuring and attaching consequences to the performance of students, teachers and schools. A variety of promising new national and state initiatives focused on improving teacher quality are under way. Charter schools, classroom technology, comprehensive school reform models and other innovations have changed the look and feel of public education, providing parents and students with a greater range of options and opportunities.

The nation's aspirations for public education have changed, too. Added to the traditional goals of broader access to schools and increased attendance is the belief that all students can and should be expected to achieve at high levels. As the public education system attempts to fulfill this new aspiration, some schools and districts are performing closer to the mark than others. While there are numerous school districts in which many students are achieving at satisfactory levels, few people believe that schools are as good as they can and ought to be, particularly in urban districts.

With the move to a standards-based system, the focus of policymakers and the public has shifted from which children fail to which schools and districts are failing children, why they are failing and what should be done in response. At the same time, there is unprecedented interest in the lessons to be learned from the experiences and accomplishments of districts and schools that are doing a good job of preparing students for the world that awaits them.

Over the past two decades, research has yielded a strong and growing body of evidence on what makes a successful school. The key elements are:

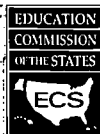
- A clear focus on academic learning in a climate of high expectations
- A safe and orderly school environment

- High standards for teachers, coupled with ambitious and ongoing professional development activities
- Collegial decisionmaking and a supportive professional environment organized around a common mission
- A partnership with parents and others in the community in support of students' high achievement
- Accountability for student performance.

## Governance Matters

Conditions vary among school districts, typically along social and economic lines, and seem to affect the degree to which the elements of successful schools are present within a district. Given the higher demands on public schools and the different conditions among districts, one way to increase the number of successful schools may be to alter public education governance – that is, change who makes what education decisions within states, districts and schools.

Governance arrangements establish the rules of the game. They determine, through statutes, collective bargaining and other legal agreements, regulations and court rulings, who is responsible and accountable for what within a system. In the education system, the real work of learning happens in the classroom, in the interaction between teacher and student. But as the Committee for Economic Development noted in its 1994 report, *Putting Learning First: Governing and Managing the Schools for High Achievement*, "this interaction is affected by innumerable large and small decisions made by principals, school boards, superintendents, state legislatures, education department officials and the federal government. These decisions and their implementation can either aid or hinder quality education in the classroom. This is the heart of education governance." Without good governance, good schools are the exception, not the rule.



## *The Governing America's Schools Initiative*

In January 1998, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) began work under a multi-year grant from the Joyce Foundation to examine K-12 public education governance. The major purposes of this project, called the Governing America's Schools initiative, are:

- To produce information about public education governance to help policymakers, educators and the general public make informed decisions about how to improve governance
- To promote a national dialogue among policymakers, educators and the general public about how states, districts and schools can improve governance.

As part of this initiative, ECS in February 1999 formed the National Commission on Governing America's Schools to develop options for improving K-12 public education governance. The National Commission's charge was to present ideas and strategies concerning modifications in K-12 public education governance that may lead to improvements for all students.

ECS invited a variety of individuals to serve on the National Commission. Members include current and former state and local school board members; current and former state and local superintendents; current and former teachers; for-profit education and charter school representatives; governors; business leaders; education, social services and public-sector reformers; a state legislator; and a teachers' union leader. Many National Commission members are parents as well.

## *The National Commission's Report*

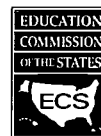
The National Commission considered several approaches to governance and chose to develop two for consideration by states and districts seeking improvement in their schools. These two approaches are based on available research about the relationship between governance systems and educational results; the experiences of states, districts and schools in changing their governance systems; and the various perspectives of National Commission members on this issue. The two approaches are:

- A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and publicly operated schools, based on some of the more promising trends within the prevailing system of public education governance
- A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and independently operated schools, based on some of the more promising alternatives to the prevailing system of public education governance.

These two approaches to public education governance are *evolutionary*, rather than revolutionary. Far from dismantling current structures and processes, they seek to preserve public education and build on the strengths of the prevailing system, and to infuse it with a greater capacity for adaptability, flexibility and accountability. In fact, many of the ideas and strategies embodied in these two approaches already are being implemented in states, districts and schools across the country: school-based decisionmaking, performance-based accountability, school choice and new kinds of relationships between schools and districts, as in the case of charter schools.

But thus far, too few states and districts have been able to put all of these ideas and strategies together into a coherent whole and to grapple successfully with the two trends that have dominated education reform for the past 15 years: the push to establish high standards and use them to improve performance and strengthen accountability, and the push to decentralize decision-making, shifting greater authority, and the ultimate responsibility for results, to the school level.

The challenge of balancing these two trends and making them work together, rather than at odds, is crucial to realizing the full potential of reform. After all, how can people on the front lines be legitimately held accountable for results unless they have real control over managing, staffing, allocating resources and other day-to-day decisions? And how can state and district leaders do a good job of steering the boat when they are so bogged down in rowing?



## Two Systems of K-12 Public Education Governance

The first approach developed by the National Commission accelerates the promising changes already under way, moving from the traditional one-size-fits-all *school system* to a more dynamic, diversified and high-performing *system of schools*. As in today's system, this approach calls for public authorities (primarily school districts) to fund, authorize, operate and oversee schools, although some schools are permitted to operate independently as charter schools.

Roles and responsibilities are redefined to focus states and districts on establishing clearly defined goals for schools, and providing them with the resources, tools and support they need to succeed. School staffs have greater autonomy and flexibility, but are held more strictly accountable for producing results. There are incentives for success and consequences for failure, and schools that do not meet established standards can be reconstituted. There is an emphasis on high standards, capacity building, collaboration, school choice, and diversification of educational opportunities and experiences.

The National Commission's second approach goes much further, significantly redefining the roles, responsibilities and interrelationship of states, districts, schools, communities, and public and private organizations. In this system, public authorities (primarily school districts) fund, authorize and oversee the performance of schools, *but do not directly operate them*. Instead, districts contract with independent entities – nonprofit and for-profit organizations, sole proprietorships, cooperatives – to run schools in much the same way they currently do charter schools.

In this system, teachers, principals, parents and others have considerable freedom to design, create and operate schools, limited only by state and federal laws and the terms of their contract with the district. Parents are allowed to enroll their child in any publicly funded school in the district (including private and parochial schools that come into the district).

This system has rewards for success and consequences for failure. It gives districts the authority to withdraw funding from schools that do not work and reward those that do. There is a strong emphasis on actively mobilizing all of the community's resources around the goal of educating children and on drawing on the energy and fresh ideas of public and private organizations.

The two governance models share significant common ground. Both call for the following:

- Strengthening, not discarding, the public system of education
- Allowing money to follow the child to the school he or she attends
- Granting individual schools control over their personnel and budget
- Giving parents more choice about where their children attend school
- Providing good information on student, teacher and school performance for parents and the community
- Redefining labor/management relations
- Focusing accountability systems on improved student achievement
- Strengthening local school boards.

## Next Steps

Clearly, the time is right for a broader, more vigorous discussion of this important issue. Across the nation, states and districts already are taking dramatic steps to alter governance structures and change how schools are designed, funded, managed, overseen and held accountable. Consider, for example:

- In early 1999, Michigan lawmakers enacted legislation that removed Detroit's locally elected school board and gave the city's mayor the authority to appoint a new school board. The new board has hired an interim CEO, undertaken a massive effort to repair the district's school buildings and begun to explore strategies for improving academic achievement. As part of this effort, the board is wrestling with the question of how much decisionmaking authority to maintain at the district level and how much authority to move to the school level.
- In Florida, state leaders recently appointed a task force to take a comprehensive look at how the entire public education system – from kindergarten through college – is governed. The change was prompted by a constitutional amendment that alters K-12 governance structures at the state level.

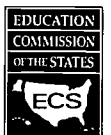


- California policymakers are exploring the possibility of creating a master plan for K-12 education, including a redefinition of the roles, responsibilities and interrelationships of the state, school districts and schools. Legislative staff members have prepared a first draft for state leaders, who are debating whether to move to the next step of the master planning process.

In the final phase of the Governing America's Schools initiative, the National Commission and ECS staff will do the following:

- Engage a national audience in discussion and debate about K-12 public education governance, including writing editorials and articles, and convening state, regional and national meetings
- Work directly with state and school district leaders interested in rethinking and redesigning their governance systems.

Toward these ends, the National Commission and ECS call on states and districts to convene appropriate groups of state, district, school and community leaders to explore ideas offered by the National Commission, as well as others, and define specific steps toward improving K-12 public education governance.



# A System of Publicly Authorized, Publicly Funded and *Publicly Operated* Schools

## The State Creates a Context for Schools and Districts To Excel.

State leaders possess unique opportunities to express public expectations for schools and to establish a policy framework that supports these expectations. The state:

- Promotes high expectations
- Establishes academic standards
- Provides adequate financial resources to districts
- Manages education information and reporting systems
- Develops the state's K-12 public education infrastructure
- Holds districts accountable for school and student performance
- Aligns education codes with the demands of performance-based accountability.

## The District Creates an Environment that Allows Schools To Focus on Teaching and Learning.

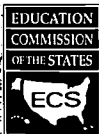
The school district directly operates public schools, but also allows the creation of some independently operated public schools, such as charters. The district hires the superintendent and principals, recruits teachers and other school staff, bargains with unions, provides services and holds schools accountable for results. School board policies provide guidance and direction to the district and create a framework within which the superintendent and other district employees work. The school district:

- Creates a vision for the district
- Establishes districtwide standards and strategically aligns resources and policies to support them
- Monitors, analyzes and reports school performance
- Provides instructional leadership
- Creates incentives for progress and consequences for failure for all decisionmakers in the district, as well as for students
- Gives parents the right to choose any public school in the district
- Engages parents and the community, and partners with public and private organizations.

## The School Creates an Environment Focused on Teaching and Learning and Is Held Accountable for Results.

As schools increase their ability to achieve district standards, they gain increasing freedom to accomplish results. They assume more direct programmatic, professional and financial responsibility for management of the school's instructional program. The individual school:

- Develops, implements and continuously fine-tunes plans for improving student learning
- Hires, evaluates and fires teachers and other school personnel
- Writes its own budget and receives funding on a weighted per-pupil basis
- Raises private revenue (up to a limit)
- Allocates resources as it sees fit
- Determines staffing patterns and class sizes
- Determines employees' salaries
- Purchases services from the district or from outside providers.



# A System of Publicly Authorized, Publicly Funded and *Independently Operated* Schools

## The State Creates a Context for Schools and Districts To Excel.

The state's role in a system of independently operated schools is similar to that of a publicly operated system. The state:

- Promotes high expectations
- Establishes minimum content and performance standards in a limited number of areas
- Provides adequate financial resources to districts
- Holds districts accountable for student achievement.
- Providing for the transformation of local school boards into chartering boards (CBs) empowered to authorize, fund, oversee and hold schools accountable for performance
- Reducing existing state restrictions on the use of both operating and capital funds
- Amending collective-bargaining laws so schools can hire and negotiate with principals and teachers
- Authorizing public school real estate trusts and allowing schools to lease space from them
- Granting parents the right to choose any publicly funded school for their child.

Because the roles and responsibilities of schools, districts, and public and private organizations are quite different within this system, changes in state statutes and education codes are necessary, such as:

## The District Creates an Environment that Allows Schools To Focus on Teaching and Learning.

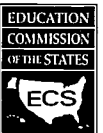
Independent entities – individual nonprofit or for-profit organizations, cooperatives, sole proprietorships and the like – operate most public schools in a district, under contract to the school board, i.e., the chartering board. Only in special circumstances does the district operate schools. Specifically, the district:

- Authorizes, distributes public funds to and oversees schools
- Educates, recruits and refers staff for schools.
- Provides timely, accurate and reliable information about schools
- Rewards schools that fulfill their charter requirements and removes funding from those that do not
- Partners with public and private organizations.

## The School Creates an Environment Focused on Teaching and Learning and Is Held Accountable for Results.

Each school is an independent legal entity, bound to a CB by its charter but not controlled by the CB. Schools occupy their own buildings, share buildings with other schools or provide children access to learning opportunities throughout the community. Each school defines its mission, curriculum and instructional program. In this system, the school:

- Sets standards, writes curriculum, designs instruction and controls use of time
- Writes its own budget and receives funding on a weighted per-pupil basis
- Borrows and spends money, purchases and leases space and equipment, buys insurance and purchases advice and assistance at its own discretion, bounded only by federal and state laws and the terms of its charter
- Raises private money (up to a limit)
- Hires and evaluates principals, teachers and other school staff; negotiates their pay, benefits and responsibilities
- Establishes standards and processes for student admission
- Is free to impose requirements related to student effort, attendance and conduct.



# Foreword

Throughout most of the 20th century, America's K-12 public school system has fulfilled the nation's major aspirations for education – increasing access to and attendance in schools. These priorities and expectations have served the country well historically. But in the past decade, another challenging goal has emerged, based on the belief that all students can and should be expected to achieve at high levels.

As the K-12 public education system attempts to fulfill the goal of academic achievement for all children, some districts are performing closer to the mark than others. In numerous districts, many students are learning, achieving and graduating at satisfactory levels, and succeeding after high school. But in the 1,000 or so largest, predominately urban districts – which collectively educate more than half of the K-12 student population – it is a different story.

While some urban districts are showing signs of improvement, most are struggling to provide students with an adequate education, and many people remain dissatisfied with their performance. Even in nonurban districts, where quality, performance and public support remain relatively high, few people think schools are as good as they can and should be.

An increasing amount of research over the last 20 years has shown that schools that are most successful in educating students are characterized by:

- A clear focus on academic learning in a climate of high expectations
- A safe and orderly school environment
- High standards for teachers, coupled with ambitious and continuing professional development activities
- Collegial decisionmaking and a supportive professional environment organized around a common mission
- A partnership with parents and others in the community in support of children's high achievement
- Accountability for student performance.

Conditions vary among districts, typically along social and economic lines, and seem to affect the degree to which characteristics of successful schools are present. Given these differences – and the new demands and challenges facing public education – one way to increase the number of successful schools may be to alter public education governance – changing who makes what education decisions within a state, district and school.

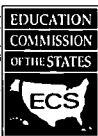
Governance arrangements establish the rules of the game, that is, they determine, through statutes, collective bargaining and other legal agreements, regulations and court rulings, who is responsible and accountable for what within a system. Changing these arrangements can serve as a catalyst for the creation and maintenance of successful schools. Furthermore, the effects of such alterations may be enhanced by improvements in other areas, such as teacher preparation, that affect the elements of a successful school.

In January 1998, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) began work under a multi-year grant from the Joyce Foundation to examine K-12 public education governance. (See Appendix A for a detailed project description.) As part of this initiative, ECS in February 1999 formed the National Commission on Governing America's Schools to develop options for improving public education governance. The National Commission's charge was to present ideas and strategies concerning modifications in K-12 public education governance that may lead to improvements for all students.

ECS selected a variety of individuals to serve on the National Commission. They include current and former state and local school board members; current and former state and local superintendents; current and former teachers; for-profit education and charter school representatives; governors; business leaders; education, social services and public-sector reformers; a state legislator; and a teachers' union leader. Many National Commission members are parents as well.

This report is the culmination of the National Commission's efforts. The approaches within it are based on available research about the relationship between K-12 public education governance systems and educational results; the experiences of states, districts and schools in changing their governance systems; and the various perspectives of the National Commission members themselves. They are offered as ideas for people to consider and put into practice as appropriate, rather than as simple solutions to complex problems.

ECS does not take a formal position on either of the approaches presented in this report. Rather, ECS' goal is to further stimulate the discussion and inform the debate about how this nation governs its schools by providing examples of what has worked and introducing new ideas about what may work. In doing so, ECS and the National Commission hope to support the many policymakers, educators and citizens who have devoted their lives to improving education, and work with them toward the fulfillment of the goal of academic achievement for all children.



# Chapter 1: The Condition of K-12 Public Education

The condition of K-12 public education is a major concern of the American public. Most people believe that an educated citizenry is a requirement for this country's long-term political, social and economic health. Currently, though, there is considerable debate throughout the nation over how well the K-12 public education system is fulfilling this requirement.

## *Americans' Perceptions About K-12 Public Education*

According to recent surveys, parents give high marks to their children's schools, but are less enthusiastic about schools in their community and think even less about the nation's schools overall.<sup>1</sup> Satisfaction with public education is lowest among groups most poorly served by the public schools, such as inner-city blacks, other minorities and people living in poverty, including the rural poor.<sup>2</sup>

Public opinion is split on the question of whether the nation's schools are as good as they used to be, with almost equal numbers of people believing that the schools are better or worse than before.<sup>3</sup> Still, many people, particularly employers and college-level educators, believe the public schools are not as good as they can and ought to be. In fact, their judgments about young people's academic skills are almost the exact opposite of judgments made by teachers, parents and students.

There is a surprising level of agreement, however, about the purposes of public education, with an overwhelming majority of people saying the goals of preparing students to be responsible citizens and helping students become economically self-sufficient are important.<sup>5</sup> There is also a remarkable degree of consensus about what it will take to improve school quality and student achievement: involving parents, ensuring top-notch staff and schools that guarantee the basics, teaching students good work habits, setting high expectations and standards for students, and ensuring safety and order.<sup>6</sup>

For the most part, public opinion supports improving education through reforming the existing system rather than creating an alternative system, such as one that provides a voucher to each parent to use in selecting and paying for private and/or church-related schools. At the same time, though, Americans support, under certain conditions, experimenting with alternatives such as vouchers on a smaller scale. For example, a majority of Americans favor a plan in which a parent would be given a voucher to pay part of the tuition at a private or church-related school.

## *National Picture of Performance*

How does public opinion match the actual performance of the nation's public schools? The answer to this question usually depends on what indicators are used to measure performance. For example, dropout rates, high school completion rates and standardized test scores often are used to illustrate both improving and declining performance or to prove that public schools are in both good and bad shape. (Note: For more information on the topics discussed in this chapter, please see Appendix B).

### **Dropout and High School Completion Rates**

Over the last 25 years, dropout rates have declined, and the difference in rates between whites and blacks has narrowed. Also, high school completion rates have increased, with the gap between whites and blacks narrowing here as well. Still, differences remain in the dropout and high school completion rates among whites, blacks and Hispanics, and the dropout rates and high school completion rates for Hispanics are particularly alarming.<sup>8</sup>

### **National Assessment of Educational Progress**

In 1969, the U.S. Department of Education began to administer the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a set of standardized tests in science, mathematics, reading and writing given to a national sample of students ages 9 (4<sup>th</sup> grade), 13 (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and 17 (12<sup>th</sup> grade). The purposes of the NAEP are to measure performance in these subject areas and to provide results that can be compared over time.

On the positive side, since the early 1970s, student performance largely has increased in reading and math, especially for whites and blacks. It also has increased in writing and science for some populations. Conversely, student performance has decreased in reading for Hispanics and in writing and science for some populations. Perhaps most significantly, considerable differences remain in the performance of whites, blacks and Hispanics at all age levels in all subjects.<sup>9</sup>

To explain the NAEP results, RAND examined the association between students' test scores from 1970 to 1990 and the dramatically changing demographics of the nation's families over the same period. As of 1990, there were more students from minority, low-income, single-parent and non-English-speaking families in the public schools.<sup>10</sup>

RAND researchers confirmed the relationship between social characteristics and student performance. Although achievement gains were not completely explained by family characteristics, the researchers did





find that the most important family characteristic influencing student performance was parents' education. In addition, they found that income, family size and mother's age at child's birth moderately influenced student performance.<sup>11</sup>

### **Third International Mathematics and Science Study**

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) provides international comparisons of student achievement in mathematics and science. TIMSS includes information on 500,000 students from 41 nations, including more than 33,000 U.S. students in more than 500 public and private schools.

Generally, U.S. 4<sup>th</sup> graders compare favorably to their counterparts in other countries in mathematics and science achievement, while 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders do not fare as well as their peers in these subjects. Simply stated, the longer U.S. students stay in school, the lower they perform relative to student in other countries.<sup>12</sup>

### **State Pictures of Performance**

Knowing how the nation's students are performing as a whole is useful information, but such knowledge conceals important variances among states and districts. Differences in dropout rates, high school completion and college entrance rates, and NAEP scores reveal wide disparities in performance from state to state. According to demographer Harold Hodgkinson, such differences reveal how misleading national averages often are.

#### **Dropout Rates**

Of the 29 states that reported their dropout data to the U.S. Department of Education for the 1994-95 school year, the lowest dropout rate was in North Dakota, where 2.5% of 9-12th graders dropped out of school during the 1994-95 school year. The highest dropout rate was in Louisiana, where 11.6% of students in grades 9-12 left school. Across the states, white students' dropout rates averaged about half of that of black and Hispanic students.<sup>13</sup>

#### **High School Completion and College Entrance Rates**

As of 1996, 39.7% of all 19-year-olds in the nation had completed high school and enrolled in college. There was a significant difference among the states, though. The percentage of 19-year-olds who had completed high school and enrolled in college ranged from a high of 50-60% in Nebraska, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Iowa and North Dakota to a low of 20-30% in Georgia, Florida, Arizona, Alaska and Nevada.<sup>14</sup>

Demographically, the states with the best rates of conversion of 19-year-olds from high school graduation to college admission have some of the most stable state populations in the country. On the other hand, those states with the smallest percentages of students who have completed high school and been admitted to college have some of the most transient state populations in the nation.<sup>15</sup>

Further, some states are very effective in producing high school graduates, yet less successful in getting them into college, such as Pennsylvania. Others graduate fewer students from high school but have larger percentages of graduates going to college, such as New York.<sup>16</sup>

Also, as of 1996, 34.9% of low-income 19-year-olds nationwide had completed high school and enrolled in college. Again, there were differences among the states, with figures ranging from a high of 70-80% in North Dakota and Puerto Rico to a low of 10-20% in Alaska and Nevada.<sup>17</sup>

### **National Assessment of Educational Progress**

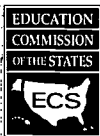
Performance among the states on the NAEP assessments varies widely. For example, on the 1996 NAEP mathematics assessment, six states had at least 25% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders score at or above the proficient level, compared with the national mark of 20%. In addition, between 1992 and 1996, seven states made significant improvement in the percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students reaching the proficient level. Still, only nine states reduced the disparity in the mathematics performance of white and minority students during this period.<sup>18</sup>

### **District Pictures of Performance**

The range of public school quality also varies considerably across the nation's 15,000 school districts. In numerous districts, many students are learning, achieving and graduating at satisfactory levels, and succeeding after high school. These districts most often are located in white, middle- to upper-income, well-educated communities. Many people in these districts are satisfied with the performance of their public schools.

A large number of the nation's children, though, are educated elsewhere, in a relatively small number of districts. For example:

- The 100 largest public school districts represent less than 1% of all school districts in the nation and are responsible for the education of 23% of all public school students.
- The 500 largest districts represent 3% of all school districts and are responsible for the education of 42% of all public school students.



- The 775 largest districts represent 5% of all school districts and are responsible for the education of 49% of all public school students.
- The 1,008 largest districts represent 7% of all school districts and are responsible for the education of 55% of all public school students.<sup>19</sup>

In a number of these large urban districts, many students are not learning, achieving and graduating at satisfactory levels and are insufficiently prepared for life after high school. For instance:

- Although high school enrollment increased by 5% in 74 urban districts between 1990 and 1994, the graduating class of 1994 was less than half the size of the freshman class of 1990 in these districts, suggesting that more than half of students in urban districts do not graduate on time.
- Some 43% of students in urban districts scored at the basic level or higher on the 1994 NAEP reading test.
- About 42% of students in urban districts scored at the basic level or higher on the 1996 NAEP mathematics test.
- Only 38% of students in urban districts scored at the basic level or higher on the 1996 NAEP science test.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, many people in urban districts are dissatisfied with the performance of their schools. According to a survey released by the National School Boards Foundation in 1999:

- Less than half (49%) of urban residents believe schools do a good or excellent job teaching reading, writing and mathematics.
- Only 37% of urban residents nationwide believe their schools are doing a good or excellent job in preparing students for college.
- Just 39% of urban residents believe schools do a good or excellent job involving parents in their children's education.
- Only 41% of urban residents believe schools do a good or excellent job hiring and keeping high-quality teachers.
- Just 33% of urban residents believe schools do a good or excellent job keeping violence out of schools.<sup>21</sup>

The nation's inability to adequately educate many children in urban areas is especially apparent when the performance of urban districts is compared with that of nonurban districts. For instance, the percent of 8th-grade students scoring at the basic level or higher on the 1996 NAEP mathematics test varied dramatically between urban and nonurban districts.<sup>22</sup>

<i>States and Types Of Districts</i>	<i>% of 8<sup>th</sup> Graders at Basic Level or Higher (NAEP math, 1996)</i>
<b>Maryland</b>	
Urban . . . . .	9%
Nonurban . . . . .	63%
<b>Missouri</b>	
Urban . . . . .	28%
Nonurban . . . . .	67%
<b>Michigan</b>	
Urban . . . . .	37%
Nonurban . . . . .	74%

Urban districts face unique circumstances, though. The proportion of minority students in these districts is almost double the proportion of minority students in all schools (65% compared to 36%). Students in the nation's largest and most urban districts also are more likely to be poor (45% of students in the nation's 100 largest districts are eligible for free lunch, compared to 33% of students in all schools).<sup>23</sup>

In spite of these circumstances, and demonstrating that it is possible to overcome family background in the education of disadvantaged students, a number of urban districts are showing signs of improvement and making progress toward providing a better education for their students. For example:

- In 1987, New York City's Community School District #2 ranked 10th in reading and fourth in mathematics out of the city's 32 districts. In 1996, it ranked second in both. These gains occurred during a time in which the number of immigrant students in the district increased and the student population grew poorer and more linguistically diverse.<sup>24</sup>
- From 1992-93 through 1997-98, the performance of El Paso, Texas, students on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) significantly improved, and the achievement gap between the various ethnic groups narrowed considerably. For example, in 1992-93, 81.4% of white students, 57.7% of black students and 54.2% of Hispanic students in El Paso passed the TAAS reading exam. In 1997-98, 95.4% of white students, 86.2% of black students and 83.5% of Hispanic students did so.<sup>25</sup>
- In Seattle, Washington, students' test scores have increased every year since 1996. These gains have been realized broadly throughout the district – across every grade level, subject area and ethnic group. In 1999, 56% of students scored at or above the national norm, compared to 51% in 1996.



## ***Trends Affecting the Condition of K-12 Public Education***

When reviewing the condition of K-12 public education, it also is worthwhile to examine the trends that are affecting, and likely will continue to affect, the condition of K-12 public education.

### **Education Trends**

- Throughout most of the 20th century, the American system of K-12 public education has fulfilled the nation's major aspirations for education – increasing attendance in and access to schools. Expectations for both children and schools have changed, however, making schooling both more difficult and more important than it was in earlier decades. To the earlier aspirations, a third goal has been added: academic achievement for all children.
- An increasing amount of research over the last 20 years has shown that schools that are most successful in educating their students contain certain characteristics, including: a clear focus on academic learning in a climate of high expectations; a safe and orderly school environment; high standards for teachers, coupled with ambitious and ongoing professional development activities; collegial decisionmaking and a supportive professional environment organized around a common mission; a partnership with parents and others in the community in support of children's high achievement; and accountability for student performance.
- Several states and districts require students to pass competency tests to advance through school and receive a high school diploma. Just as students are no longer guaranteed a diploma for simply attending school, educators and administrators increasingly must show that their work is having positive results on students.
- Competition among schools for students, educators and funds is increasing. Home schools, magnet schools, open-enrollment programs, charter schools, tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers point to the proliferation of school choice, which is driving competition for students and teachers. At the same time, contracting with providers for education services is becoming more attractive.
- With a large portion of the education workforce due to retire in the coming decade, and demand increasing for more professional development and smaller class sizes, the need for additional teachers and principals will be significant. Consider this prediction from the

Educational Testing Service: By 2010, the nation will have replaced 75% of all current teachers.

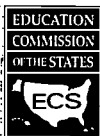
- Teacher shortages will be highly targeted, though, to rapidly expanding suburbs and certain specialties such as special and bilingual education. At the same time, the percentage of minority teachers is dwindling. The National Education Association expects the percentage of minority teachers to drop soon to an all-time low of 5%.

### **Demographic Trends**

- While the birthrate for whites is declining, high immigration rates of Hispanics and Asians are driving American population increases. The U.S. Census Bureau projects the majority of America's school-age children will be members of a racial/ethnic minority by 2030; nearly one in four are likely to be of Hispanic origin.
- Predicted increases in minority students will be confined to only six states, which will have increases in secondary school enrollments of 20% or more from 1997 to 2007: California, Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Eight will show actual declines: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Oklahoma and Maine.<sup>26</sup>
- After decades of decline, studies show school segregation is again on the rise, particularly for Hispanic students.<sup>27</sup> Immigration patterns and the reversal of desegregation rulings indicate this trend is likely to continue.
- Disproportionate numbers of children and women continue to fill the ranks of the poor.<sup>28</sup>
- In 2011, the first of the Baby Boomers will turn 65, and within 17 years, 70 million people will join them.<sup>29</sup> These senior citizens are expected to be wealthier and more inclined to exercise political clout than their predecessors, and may balk at footing the bill for educating an increasingly nonwhite, immigrant school-age population.

### **Technological Trends**

- Despite a lack of evidence that technology improves student achievement, investments in technology are increasing and likely will continue to be popular with politicians, parents and private-sector interests. Seven of 10 voters say it is important that the nation's schools be equipped with computers and up-to-date technology, according to a 1997 poll by Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc.



- New developments in education technology – from Internet access to new teaching techniques enabled by classroom computers – are driving changes in the education environment, such as enabling students to learn from multiple locations.

### **Economic Trends**

- Globalization of the economy is putting a premium on skills and innovation and increasing the demand for technically skilled workers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs requiring technical skills, but not necessarily a college degree, will be in demand in the near future.

### **Political Trends**

- The federal government is continuing to devolve power to the states. Whether the states can do a better job remains to be seen, but the public is likely to hold state and local decisionmakers accountable for their actions.
- For their part, state and local governments are finding it attractive to contract with nonprofit and for-profit companies to provide services, such as case management and welfare-to-work assistance. State and local decisionmakers also continue to refer initiatives to the people.
- Term limits on governors and state legislators are growing more common. Since 1990, 21 states have passed citizen initiatives limiting the terms of legislators.
- Leaders of both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) are placing greater emphasis on school reform and improvements in teaching and learning in the negotiations process. For example, Sandra Feldman, AFT president, recently proposed the forging of more streamlined contracts that set the parameters for salaries, benefits and working conditions but leave the details affecting instruction to teachers and building-level administrators.

### **Social Trends**

- New social ills are revealing the dark side of progress. Changing times are yielding new means for acting out antisocial or aggressive tendencies. Recent school shootings in various parts of the nation have focused increased attention on school safety and the needs of America's youth.

## *The Challenge*

What really is the condition of this nation's K-12 public education system? Given the varied viewpoints, data and trends, this obviously is a question without a simple, or single, answer. What is clear is that the public education system faces higher demands, and that conditions vary within the system, typically along social and economic lines, as schools attempt to meet these demands. Making the nation's K-12 systems more flexible and accountable can be the spark needed to increase the number of schools that succeed, particularly with children who fare poorly in the prevailing system. Without good governance, good schools are the exception, not the rule.



# Chapter 2: The Evolution of K-12 Public Education Governance

The U.S. Constitution is silent about public education, and therefore the legal obligation for its provision falls to the states. Of course, state action must be taken within the confines of the U.S. Constitution. States, for example, cannot segregate students by race without violating it. As long as the U.S. and the state constitutions are respected, however, states have almost complete power over education matters.

In state constitutions, “education” and “equal protection” clauses articulate a primary state role and responsibility regarding the provision of K-12 public education. In fact, in 49 of the 50 state constitutions, states are charged with providing public education in a “uniform,” “efficient” or like manner to ensure that all

youngsters share equally in the opportunities afforded by schooling.<sup>30</sup>

Imbued with constitutional authority over public education, states organize and operate systems of public schools. In practice, though, states delegate a considerable amount of responsibility for the provision of public education to local authorities or private entities. Although both are required to play within rules established by the state, they usually have significant authority over operational decisions.

While the specifics of K-12 governance systems vary by state, the typical system comprises the following:

<i>State</i>	<i>Regional/County</i>	<i>School District</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Others</i>
Governor	Regional/County Board	Local Board	Principals	Mayors
Legislature	Regional/County Superintendent	Local Superintendent	Teachers	Judges
State Board	Regional/County Department	Local Department	Parents	Unions
State Superintendent			Local School Council	Business Leaders
State Department				Community Leaders

How did the current K-12 public education governance system come to be? While history does not offer ready-made solutions to current governance issues, it can illuminate the discussion of governance options and enrich deliberation about them.

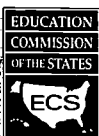
## 19th Century: The Establishment of Local Control

The actual everyday governance of public schools in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America – a mostly rural nation – was a grassroots affair conducted by locally elected trustees, who had extensive powers and duties. They established curriculum, employed staff, chose textbooks, decided how many grades of school were to be offered, built the necessary schools, awarded diplomas and established

the administrative structure needed to operate the schools.

Local superintendents had assigned duties and responsibilities, but the local board retained much control over district and school operations. In the absence of principals, appeals beyond a teacher went directly to the superintendent or, if there was no superintendent, to the secretary of the local board.

Formal governmental authority at the federal and state levels was almost nonexistent. It was left to locally elected trustees, ministers and educators to build on the legal foundation provided by federal and state governments and to determine the substance of public education.



The crusaders who spread public education generally shared the following beliefs:

- The purpose of public education was to train model citizens by inculcating a common denominator of nonsectarian morality and nonpartisan civic instruction.
- The common school should be free, open to all children and public in support and control.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, citizens generally seemed to agree that schooling not only provided private benefits but also fulfilled public purposes. Local lay trustees vastly outnumbered teachers and had powers unmatched in any system of public education in the world. Even in cities, large lay boards actively participated in all phases of decisionmaking and delegated many powers to decentralized ward school committees. Local lay control seemed to be the standard of republican education.

### *Early 20th Century: The Influence of Industrial Management*

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America's urban areas were growing at tremendous rates. Much of this growth was fueled by immigrants, who needed to be "Americanized." As America was becoming more urban, it also was going through a major industrial transformation. At the heart of that transformation was a belief in science and expert management based on rationality.

As a result, the existing system of education was deemed by many reform-minded educators to be too idiosyncratic, diverse and unpredictable in its outcome. Under the leadership of the administrative progressives, schools became part of the machinery of industrial efficiency. School management, according to the administrative progressives, could be rationalized along efficient corporate models, and schools themselves could be harnessed to produce the kinds of workers and citizens the new industrial order required. Schooling was seen as too important for the future of the nation to leave to laypersons.

Reformers began to focus on depoliticizing and differentiating public education, and turned to business for inspiration and support. Education leaders and their business partners believed progress was possible because science had given the "experts" – psychologists, superintendents, curriculum designers and managers – the necessary tools to plan the course of economic and social evolution.

From 1890 to 1920, city after city abolished decentralized ward committees, and the average number of central board members in cities of more than 100,000

dropped from 21 to seven. According to the new ideal of corporate management, these smaller boards were to decide "policy" and delegate "administration" to the superintendent and specialists. Decisions made by the superintendent multiplied, while those made by the local board declined.

While this local shift in decisionmaking was taking place, state departments of education began to grow in importance and size as a means of providing uniformity of practice within a state and assuring that districts met certain minimum standards. The main roles of state education departments were to consolidate rural districts, abolish decentralized ward committees in cities, give new legal standing and certification to new professional specialties such as counseling or special education, set standards for buildings and sanitation, mandate new subjects and reduce disparities of school finance.

### *Mid-Century: Rise of the Federal Government and Teachers' Unions*

Beginning in the 1950s, three major events or movements made it evident that elite education professionals could not deliver what they had promised, and the legitimacy of existing governance arrangements came into question.

#### **Sputnik**

America's success in World War II and the need to win the Cold War initiated a new education agenda. Although many people believed American superiority in science and technology had won World War II, leading scientists and foundation directors thought the quality of mathematics and science education in America's public schools was inadequate to meet the nation's premier policy objective – the containment of Communism.

The Cold War agenda emerged from discontent among intellectuals as well. Arthur Bestor, Richard Hofstadter and James Conant, for instance, leveled their criticisms directly at the wall of professionalism erected by the administrative progressives. They argued that elite educators used professionalism to contain education decisionmaking within their own tight circles.

National hand-wringing over education soon turned into finger pointing, however, with the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik on October 4, 1957. Critics blamed a legacy of progressive education as the culprit responsible for America's scientific decline. In response, the federal government proposed and passed the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which boosted efforts in science and mathematics.



## Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka

A few years before the launching of Sputnik, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* that intentionally segregated schools are inherently unequal and violate the U.S. Constitution's equal-protection guarantee. This decision mobilized new social movements and laid the groundwork for an education reform agenda whose goal was massive institutional change.

Congress, federal bureaucracies, the courts and newly formed education interest groups occupied a more significant portion of the landscape of K-12 public education governance during this period. For example, the federal government enacted several laws, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, that brought unprecedented attention to the needs of disadvantaged children who previously were neglected by the system.

As the federal interest in education grew, so did federally funded programs and the bureaucracies to oversee them. State education departments became virtual holding companies for a collection of federal and, later, state categorically funded programs, such as school desegregation, special education, compensatory education and migrant education. In an effort to secure compliance, federal and state policymakers stretched an ever-tightening regulatory net over schools, and state education departments became the enforcers.

Although state education departments received significant amounts of funding from the federal government, the money did little to alter state-local institutional relationships. Authority and control over curriculum remained firmly entrenched with local districts. Reformers largely assumed that problems of student achievement could be fixed through increased financial support and the reallocation of organizational resources at the state level. Ultimately, policymakers prided themselves on how little their reform efforts interfered with local decisionmaking and how little they altered the balance of power among the political forces that shaped education governance.

## Collective Bargaining

By the early 1960s, the number of educators had grown, and many schools and districts had long since lost the personal relationships that had characterized the pre-war operation of schools. Large districts tended to be impersonal and governed increasingly by rules and policies, while teachers sought greater participation in the determination of these directives.

During this period, the late Albert Shanker, then head of the New York City teachers' union, won collective

bargaining rights for teachers after a protracted teachers' strike. Shortly thereafter, the National Education Association adopted a policy of representation that would move that organization from one of a "meet-and-confer" pattern to one of collective bargaining and master agreements or contracts.

These new directions had significant implications. The primary mission of labor groups became one of seeking benefits and gains for its membership of teachers. For school board members and superintendents, there was now a new demand on their time – bargaining with teacher union affiliates.

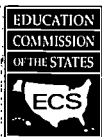
## The End of the Century: Quest for Excellence

The mid-1980s marked another major turning point in the evolution of K-12 public education governance in America. The ideology underpinning this shift asserted that the K-12 system was undermining the nation's international competitive capacity. The new ideology's manifesto was *A Nation at Risk*, which predicted in hyperbolic terms the demise of the United States as an international industrial leader if it did not improve public education.

The urgency for massive school reform intensified with talk about the new global economy, the increasing economic competitiveness of Asian countries and the emergence of a new world order based not on nations' wealth but on their work. As visionaries of the new world order saw it, newly developing global economies would reward highly educated countries and those individuals who add value to their country's goods and services. Conversely, those countries with poorly educated workers would suffer the most.

U.S. policymakers embraced this argument and undertook significant efforts to reform the public education system. At the national level, policymakers adopted goals, through America 2000 in 1991 and Goals 2000 in 1994, in a wide range of academic subjects.

Perhaps more significantly, after *A Nation at Risk*, state policymakers became more active in setting reform agendas. Governors, who traditionally were not central actors in K-12 public education governance systems, began to play an unprecedented role in school reform activity. In addition, states across the nation established more than 300 commissions and committees in the early 1980s to address education, and 44 states implemented large-scale school reform packages during the decade. Such activity has continued throughout the 1990s.



## Centralized Approaches

Since the early 1980s, states have become increasingly involved in certain areas that previously were left to local policymakers, educators and communities. They have provided increasingly higher percentages of education dollars, with state shares rising from approximately one-third to one-half of all education resources. School finance equity concerns frequently have resulted in state control over the distribution of all education dollars, whether raised from state or local sources.

States have taken statewide approaches to school improvement as well, aggressively establishing content and performance standards, writing student and teacher assessments, and creating accountability systems that ensure students, as well as board members, administrators and teachers, achieve established standards. As of January 1999, 49 states had established standards in some subject areas, 48 states had created assessments for their students, and 36 states were publishing annual report cards on individual schools.

Furthermore, 23 states had passed legislation that allows them to intervene in a district because of "academic bankruptcy" (i.e., chronically low academic performance). Since 1988, at least 12 of these states (and the federal government) actually intervened in such districts and charged the state department of education or another designated entity with managing them.

One of the more notable trends within this movement is the shifting of urban school system control to mayors (e.g., Chicago). Advocates of mayoral control contend that it ensures a higher level of accountability for the district and reduces the competing authorities that tend to constrain district leadership. Critics defend elected school board members as a necessary link between K-12 public education and voter preferences and contend that mayoral use of contracts for services such as building repairs may lead to trading school contracts for campaign contributions.

To date, there is a scarcity of research on how well state interventions work. State interventions are credited with eliminating nepotism within district decisionmaking processes, improving the district's administrative and financial management practices, upgrading schools' physical condition and implementing innovative programs. Still, student achievement often falls short of expectations, with mixed academic outcomes a result of most interventions.

## Decentralized Approaches

Toward the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, however, questions arose about the efficacy of relying solely on centralized approaches. Some educators and business groups began calling for a major overhaul of the education enterprise, through decentralizing decisionmaking and increasing the importance of student results.

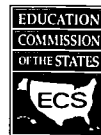
At the same time that states created these centralized governance approaches, they and districts moved to decentralized approaches through deregulation, school choice and site-based management (SBM). While these decentralized approaches increase the decisionmaking powers of certain institutions and individuals within K-12 systems, the state still has the ultimate authority to establish and change governance arrangements.

Deregulation. Based on the belief that autonomy is an important spur to school improvement, leaders in some states have removed certain regulations and mandates that dictate who makes what decisions. One of the earliest approaches in this effort to deregulate was the waiver. In the late 1980s, states such as South Carolina and Texas began to offer to waive districts' and schools' compliance with certain rules as incentives to encourage local innovation and high achievement. By 1993, more than 30 states had some form of noncompetitive waiver program for districts and schools.

Some states also have evaluated their state education codes. In 1995, South Carolina abolished nearly 100 state statutes and more than 500 rules governing K-12 education. Michigan eliminated 205 sections, modified 65 sections and added 25 new ones to its education code. Texas completely revised its education code, reducing the number of state directives by one-third.

In a three-state study of the effects of deregulation policies over several years, researchers concluded that "one of the most important effects of deregulation for school-level respondents was the removal of regulations as an excuse for traditional practice." The state policy implications of this study include the following:

- Deregulation should be viewed as one component among multiple supports and elements that states and districts can provide.
- Deregulation should be tied to accountability and incentive structures that promote continuous improvement.
- Development of credible and legitimate assessments is a high priority.
- Not all regulations can be eliminated. Rather than strictly eliminating regulations, policymakers should





think about "rationing" regulations. Political considerations and equity concerns will continue to lead to new regulation.

- Policymakers generally need to rely less on mandates and focus more on capacity building.<sup>31</sup>

**School choice.** Parental choice of schools has become one of today's most discussed public education issues and is affecting the K-12 public education governance system by expanding parents' decisionmaking power over student assignment. "Choice" is a broad descriptor covering many different ideas, including home schools, magnet schools, open enrollment, charter schools and vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions.

- *Home schools.* Since 1993, following years of court battles, it has been legal in all 50 states for parents to formally educate their children at home, from kindergarten through college. Most states have a home-schooling coordinator, and some, such as Iowa and Washington, have established resource centers for parents.

Several states also have adopted policies allowing home-schoolers to use public school libraries and computer rooms, sign up for certain courses or participate in extracurricular activities. In 1998, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that more than one million students nationwide are schooled at home. Other estimates range from 700,000 to two million.

- *Magnet schools.* Magnet schools offer a range of distinctive programs, typically emphasizing subject matter (e.g., math and science) or instructional approach (e.g., Montessori). Often created to facilitate the process of desegregation, magnet schools aim to achieve a racially balanced education environment by attracting students who reside outside a school's attendance zone. Some magnet schools use admissions policies based on various factors, including a student's race, grades and/or standardized test scores.
- *Open enrollment.* Open-enrollment policies free parents from traditional residency requirements in student assignment decisions and allow them to select a school suited to their children's particular interests, abilities and needs. A major objective of these programs is to diversify and expand the range of educational opportunities, experiences and environments available to students. Another objective is to bring about improvements in districts by forcing schools to compete for students.

More than 30 states have enacted some type of open-enrollment policy. In a majority of these states, families have the right to choose from among the public schools in any district in the state

(interdistrict open enrollment). Other states provide more limited options, with students being allowed to attend any school within their home district (intradistrict open enrollment).

Research on the effects of open enrollment remains inconclusive, primarily due to a lack of data. Little evidence is available to indicate whether students participating in open-enrollment programs learn at higher levels than students who remain in neighborhood schools. There is evidence, though, that shows that open-enrollment programs positively affect student, parent and teacher commitment to a school and contribute to a shared vision.

Furthermore, some research indicates that those districts that lose the most students (5-6%) and resources because of open-enrollment programs make the most changes to improve their competitiveness. On the other hand, those that lose the fewest students and resources make very few changes in response to open-enrollment programs.

- *Charter schools.* Charter schools are semi-autonomous schools founded by teachers, parents, community groups or private organizations that operate under a written contract with a state, district or other entity. This contract, or charter, details how the school will be organized and managed, what students will be taught and expected to achieve, and how success will be measured. Many charter schools enjoy freedom from rules and regulations affecting other public schools, as long as they continue to meet terms of their charters. Charter schools can be closed for failing to satisfy these terms.

Since 1991, 36 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted charter school legislation. More than 1,600 charter schools are operating, and their numbers are likely to grow. States follow distinctive approaches to charter school development, and the variations in these approaches profoundly affect the number, type and operation of charter schools in each state. Key variations in charter school laws include how many charter schools are permitted, who grants charters, who may start charter schools, how charter schools are financed and who sets personnel policies.

While it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions, several recent studies shed some light on who attends charter schools, how charter schools operate, and how districts react to and interact with charter schools. At this point, it is unclear whether charter schools are more effective than regular public schools in educating children, particularly disadvantaged ones, to high standards.



Some research has found, however, that when charter schools take enough students and dollars away from districts, the districts usually make significant changes. Still, other research has found that many districts are reluctant to become involved with charter schools, and there often are no mechanisms in place for charter schools and regular public schools to learn from each other.

- *Vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions.* Probably one of the most hotly debated changes to K-12 public education governance systems is the use of public money in private and parochial schools, usually through a voucher, tax credit or tax deduction. Wisconsin, Ohio and Florida have enacted publicly funded voucher programs. Wisconsin's program is targeted to low-income students in Milwaukee, Ohio's program primarily assists low-income children in Cleveland, and Florida's program is geared toward students in chronically low-performing schools throughout the state.

Vermont and Maine have long-standing variants of a voucher program, and Arizona, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Puerto Rico have enacted legislation that permits tax credits and/or tax deductions for education-related expenses. Further, a new wrinkle in the evolving debate about vouchers is the implementation of private voucher programs, in which private organizations provide scholarships for students to attend the private or parochial school of their choice.

Public opinion and the legal status of vouchers remain unclear. The public appears to support programs that offer partial payment of a private or parochial school's tuition, but to oppose programs that offer full payment. In November 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a case involving the Milwaukee voucher program. This decision allowed the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling, which determined that the program is constitutional, to stand. Courts in Vermont, Maine and Ohio have ruled against voucher programs.

There is little information available about the effects of tax credits and tax deductions, although a number of different studies examined the effects of vouchers. Most of the research revealed a successful targeting of very low-income minority pupils and substantial gains in parental satisfaction and involvement. The effect of participation in the program on students' academic achievement, however, is unclear, with different studies reaching different conclusions.

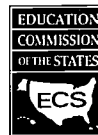
**Site-based management.** Initiatives to shift decision-making responsibilities away from school boards, superintendents and central administrative offices to schools are generically referred to as site-based man-

agement (SBM). The belief is that school and student performance will improve by making those persons closest to the student – principals, teachers and parents – more independent and responsible for results. In theory, the focus of school boards and central offices shifts from monitoring compliance to providing technical assistance and support, and from spending money according to centrally developed priorities to responding to individual schools' needs and requests.

There are, however, significant variations in how SBM is implemented in districts and schools across the nation. To better understand these variations, researchers examined 83 empirical studies of SBM. They found that SBM usually takes one of four forms: administrative-control, professional-control, community-control and balanced-control (i.e., balance among school professionals, parents and community members).<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, a RAND study of SBM in six urban districts concluded that no SBM effort "has yet created the hoped-for dramatic improvements in school quality." It noted, however, that "the modest results to date can be attributed at least partly to incomplete implementation." The researchers concluded that for SBM to work, reforms must address issues of autonomy, assistance and accountability. Specifically:

- School-level educators must control the checkbook; the hiring, evaluation and firing of staff; and the instructional strategies used in classrooms.
- States and districts should not attempt to deliver "one-size-fits-all" training and assistance.
- Schools should be free to select help from a range of public and private sources.
- Districts and states should nurture a "rich system of school-specific accountability," including new forms of testing and real consequences for schools that fail to educate children.
- Parents should be able to choose among schools.<sup>33</sup>



## An International Picture of Education Governance

*In recent years, numerous countries have changed the way decisions are made within their education systems. In a study of 14 countries,<sup>34</sup> the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) determined there is great diversity in how countries arrange their education governance systems, there are no easily identifiable models, and any comparisons between centralized and decentralized systems are no longer valid or useful.*

*Nonetheless, there is a general trend toward decentralizing authority, though this is being done in different ways. In France, the school, the regional and the central government share powers more or less equally. In Spain, the movement is toward a system where local educators make virtually all the decisions. In contrast, New Brunswick, Canada, has abolished school boards, and reorganized governance of the elementary and secondary education system around parent-focused structures at the school, district and provincial levels.*

*OECD also found that a country's education governance system is more a reflection of its cultural and political history than of any other single factor, such as population. When most decisions are made at an intermediate level (the state and district in the United States), it tends to be at the expense of the central government (the federal government in the United States). When, however, most decisions are made at the highest levels (such as the U.S. federal government), schools tend to enjoy considerable autonomy.*

*The most frequent types of decisions made by schools (55%) are those made within a framework established by another level of education governance, according to OECD. At the other education levels, decisions most often are made without reference to or consultation with other levels of governance. For instance, schools in the United States make relatively few (26%) of the total education decisions, ranking 12th out of the 14 countries studied, and only 5% of these decisions are made with complete autonomy. U.S. schools, however, are consulted on 24% of the decisions made on their behalf. The two percentages combined means U.S. schools participate in at least half of all education decisions made, the third highest participation rate among the 14 education systems studied.*

*Different levels of the education system tend to specialize in different areas of governance. For example, schools are most involved in decisions about instruction, while districts and regional units focus on personnel management and resource allocation decisions. The highest levels (the state and federal governments in the United States) make most of their decisions around planning and structural issues (e.g., course requirements, student assessment content and format, creation and closure of schools, credentialing).*

*Finally, choice and competition are present in several education systems. In New Zealand, for example, the Labor Party introduced full school choice and shifted most school funding to a per-capita basis, so dollars follow children to the school their parents choose. New Zealand also gave most governance authority over each school to a board made up of parents and allowed groups of parents to create new schools, much like charter schools in the United States.*

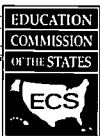
## Current Governance Systems: Strengths and Weaknesses

Current K-12 public education governance arrangements have resulted from an evolution of structures and processes over the course of two centuries and have both strengths and weaknesses.

For example, in some cases, the system standardizes delivery and resource allocation in order to cope with a large and diverse clientele. The more centrally made these decisions are, the more equitable the distribution tends to be. A California study, for instance, found little variation among schools for those resources controlled by the state (e.g., teachers per student) and substantial variation among the same schools for those resources

decided locally (e.g., number of Advanced Placement courses).<sup>35</sup>

In addition, the current system, in some cases, equalizes differences across local groups. For example, in the United States, the federal government is almost exclusively involved in the support of categorical programs aimed at minimizing differences among students (e.g., compensatory education, special education and school lunch programs). Furthermore, the system has the organizational capacity to respond to complex programs, such as Title I and special education. Specialized units with knowledgeable staff are created within state and district bureaucracies to meet detailed programmatic, eligibility and auditing requirements.



Nonetheless, these bureaucracies sometimes become inefficient and ineffective. In a study of public education in New York City, for instance, researchers concluded that most of the necessary functions were "over-administered and undersupervised." A large amount of resources was used to support central services. In fact, the school board's own analysis showed that only 42% of the budget was spent on classroom instruction during the 1995-96 school year.<sup>36</sup> While New York City may be an extreme example, many states and districts with centralized bureaucracies face questions about whether their functions are as efficient and effective as they could be and, indeed, whether these functions should continue to be performed by the central office.

Another concern is the constraints on the decision-making authority of districts and schools. For example, state constitutions limit capital and operating revenue sources, state statutes set employment and licensure requirements, collective bargaining agreements limit the discretion of policymakers and administrators, and institutional boundaries make it difficult to work with other public and nonpublic groups that affect children's lives.

Furthermore, notwithstanding the successful movement in several states, districts and schools toward a greater focus on student results, the current system, in

some instances, emphasizes process over results. Consequently, it tends to reward and encourage compliance and to ignore, discourage and even penalize creativity, risk-taking and inventiveness. As a result, accountability sometimes becomes separated from teaching and learning.

Compliance behavior in specified areas is important to an organization's stability and a valued attribute in any important social institution such as public education. Stability, however, can be maintained at the expense of flexibility and responsiveness to a changing environment and make it difficult for people to innovate and create new approaches to meet higher demands and expectations. If America is going to meet the goal of academic achievement for all children and properly prepare the next generation for the fast-paced, ever-changing and technologically oriented world that awaits them, K-12 public education governance systems must become even more flexible and accountable.

# Chapter 3: Two Systems of K-12 Public Education Governance

*"The real work of learning happens in the classroom, in the interaction between teacher and student. This interaction is affected by innumerable large and small decisions made by principals, school boards, superintendents, state legislatures, education department officials and the federal government. These decisions and their implementation can either aid or hinder quality education in the classroom. This is the heart of education governance." – Committee for Economic Development, Putting Learning First: Governing and Managing the Schools for High Achievement*

There are attributes within current K-12 public education governance arrangements that are essential to maintaining this country's commitment to public education. They include:

- Constitutional structure (e.g., federal and state authority, due process, equal protection, separation of church and state, open decisionmaking)
- Public responsibility through elected officials
- Public funding
- Student entitlement and obligation
- Schools that are free and open to all children of the state.

Using these characteristics as a foundation, this report examines the possible roles for states, districts and schools within two systems of governance focused on creating and maintaining successful schools and meeting the goal of academic achievement for all children.

The National Commission developed these two approaches based on available research about the relationship between governance systems and education results; the experiences of states, districts and schools in changing their governance systems; and National Commission members' own perspectives on this issue. The two approaches are:

- **A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and publicly operated schools, based on some of the more promising trends within the prevailing system of public education governance**
- **A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and independently operated schools, based on some of the more promising alternatives to the prevailing system of public education governance.**

These two approaches to public education governance are evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. Far from dismantling current structures and processes, they seek to preserve and build on the strengths of the prevailing system, and to infuse it with a greater capacity for adaptability, flexibility and accountability.

In fact, many of the ideas and strategies embodied in

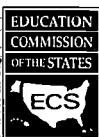
these two approaches already are being implemented in states, districts and schools across the country: school-based decisionmaking, performance-based accountability, school choice and new kinds of relationships between schools and districts, as in the case of charter schools. Too few states, districts and schools, however, have been able to put these ideas together into a coherent system that serves all children well.

## *A System of Publicly Authorized, Publicly Funded and Publicly Operated Schools*

The first approach developed by the National Commission accelerates the promising changes already under way in the prevailing system, moving from the traditional one-size-fits-all *school system* to a more dynamic, diversified and high-performing *system of schools*. As in today's system, this approach calls for public authorities (primarily school districts) to fund, authorize, operate and oversee schools, although some schools are permitted to operate independently as charter schools.

Roles and responsibilities are redefined to focus states and districts on establishing clearly defined goals for schools, and providing them with the resources, tools and support they need to succeed. School staffs have greater autonomy and flexibility, but are held more strictly accountable for producing results. There are incentives for success and consequences for failure, and schools that do not meet established standards can be reconstituted. There is an emphasis on high standards, capacity building, collaboration across traditional boundaries, school choice and diversification of educational opportunities and experiences.

A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and publicly operated schools is primarily based on two beliefs. The first is that districts have certain strengths that can be utilized within a K-12 public education governance system. Districts can achieve economies of scale in acquiring services, introduce strong incentives through an effective district-wide accountability system, reallocate resources to affect large numbers of people within the district and build the capacity of district



employees by creating opportunities for interaction among professionals.

The second is that certain decisions are most appropriately located with school staffs and parents. Placing authority over decisions such as staffing and budgeting at the school level, within an appropriate districtwide accountability system, can spur the creation and maintenance of successful schools and allow the district to be more responsive to student learning needs. Allowing parents to select their child's school can empower parents and motivate the district to provide different kinds of schools for different kinds of students.

Proponents of a system of publicly operated schools assert that several factors lend weight to this system. First, evidence exists that all students, under certain circumstances, can do well in this type of system. Second, there is a substantial level of public acceptance of this system. Third, it is easier to change the current system incrementally than to create a new system. Finally, there are several promising paths of continuous improvement within a system of publicly operated schools that have yet to be fully explored.

A discussion of the primary roles and responsibilities of states, districts and schools in a system of publicly operated schools follows.

### *The State Creates a Context for Schools and Districts To Excel.*

In this system, the state has the following roles:

#### ■ *Promoting high expectations*

State leaders are well-positioned to influence district and school operations within their borders. Governors or chief state school officers, for example, possess unique opportunities to express public expectations for schools and to establish a policy framework that supports these expectations.

Through words and actions, state leaders affirm that education systems exist to promote academic excellence and that the primary mission of schools is to educate all the children placed in their charge. Further, they affirm that governing authorities, political agents and citizens alike share the responsibility to ensure sound conditions of learning.

State leadership, too, is essential in promoting conditions for high-performing districts and schools. These conditions include high expectations, performance accountability, performance incentives, capacity building, quality schools in neighborhood contexts, adequate funding, collaboration between home and school, choice of public schools by parents and teachers, safe environments, professional collaboration and appropriate distribution of authority. In short, state leadership can establish a context for districts and schools to excel.

#### ■ *Establishing academic standards*

In a system of publicly operated schools, states establish academic standards for their K-12 public education systems, stating clearly what students should know and be able to do. A coherent definition of academic standards is essential to gauge progress on student achievement. Moreover, rigorous and consistent academic standards enable performance accountability and

promote equity in preparation for higher education, employment and civic participation. Such standards are the minimum standards that districts and schools must meet.

States may choose to develop social standards as a complement to academic content and performance standards, thus promoting students' abilities to succeed within the context of higher expectations. As an extension of the states' standards-setting responsibility, social standards encompass attributes of students' readiness to learn. These standards are also the minimum standards that districts and schools must meet.

#### ■ *Providing adequate financial resources to districts*

As a whole, states now provide approximately half of all education revenues. State resource allocation decisions, however, are based only partially on need. For the most part, resource competition and political feasibility dictate funding levels, while funding formulas often focus primarily on satisfying judicial mandates for equity.

Now, however, courts are beginning to shift the focus of education funding from equity to adequacy. Adequacy implies a level of funding sufficient – that is, adequate – to achieve a particular level of education. As researchers more clearly define an adequate level of funding, state policymakers gain an essential tool in linking education goals, processes and results.



### ■ *Developing the state's K-12 public education infrastructure*

Though districts and schools are responsible for student performance, states maintain a responsibility to enhance the capacity of these entities to do their jobs. Infrastructure development serves this end. By investing in education facilities, technology and licensure for teachers and administrators, states assume the capital costs for public education, perhaps realizing economies of scale, and invest in strong teachers and education leaders.

More specifically, investing in teacher and administrator licensure enables states to influence preservice and inservice training of teachers and administrators, aligning their development with the state's goals and influencing the professional culture that animates educators' work in schools.

### ■ *Holding districts accountable for student achievement*

Performance accountability is a governance system's primary mechanism for ensuring student achievement and making course corrections that enhance that achievement. By establishing standards, deploying resources to build capacity, reporting results and applying consequences, accountability systems focus policy, administration and practice on teaching and learning.

In a system of publicly operated schools, states hold districts accountable for student performance. In turn, districts hold schools accountable. From the state perspective, districts act as their agents in promoting student performance. By defining goals, articulating authority, motivating performance, building capacity and ensuring results, performance accountability becomes a central mechanism for promoting student performance.

States also need to specify what indicators will be used to represent student performance and capture a school's experiences. Such indicators provide a way of knowing and judging schools, and policymakers and others need as accurate and rich a picture as possible. Indicators need to capture the story, but they also need to be valid and reliable, particularly when used to reward some participants and sanction others. The selection of indicators defines the character and utility of accountability systems.

### ■ *Managing education information and reporting systems*

The use of state accountability systems and financial data support the attainment of student achievement. Because states define accountability measures and handle district allocations, and because economies of scale exist in the development of management information systems, states assume the responsibility for developing and operating this component in a system of publicly operated schools. States provide timely and relevant information to board members, administrators and teachers, and help them build school and individual capacity to achieve performance expectations.

### ■ *Aligning education codes with the demands of performance-based accountability*

In a system of publicly operated schools, states ensure that districts and schools operate with appropriate professional discretion to attain student achievement expectations. Within the context of procedural fairness and individual protections, states can align their education codes with the demands of performance-based accountability, satisfying their simultaneous requirements to promote student performance and professional discretion.



## Student Learning Gains Tied to Improved Policy Environment

A 1998 RAND study found that North Carolina and Texas posted the largest average gains in student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests administered from 1990 to 1997. These results are mirrored in state assessments administered during the same period, and there is evidence that scores of disadvantaged students improved more rapidly than those of advantaged students.

RAND researchers concluded that the most plausible explanation for the test score gains are found in each state's policy environment. Both states pursued remarkably similar paths, and each succeeded in changing the organizational environment and incentive structure for educators in ways that led to improvement.

According to the RAND study, the improvements do not seem to be explained by increasing spending per pupil, reducing class size or increasing teachers' experience. Instead, bringing about change required business and political leadership and stability of reform policies over a decade. The main elements of the reform policies include:

- Creating statewide academic standards by grade, with clear teaching goals
- Implementing the same standards for all students, except those in special education
- Linking state assessments to the standards
- Developing accountability systems that provide consequences for results
- Increasing local flexibility for teachers and administrators to achieve the standards
- Computerizing feedback systems for continuous improvement
- Shifting resources to the schools with the most disadvantaged students
- Building the infrastructure to sustain the reforms over time.<sup>37</sup>

## The District Creates an Environment that Allows Schools To Focus on Teaching and Learning.

Possible roles for school districts within a system of publicly operated schools are premised on the belief that districts have certain strengths that can be used within a K-12 public education governance system. Potential roles for districts therefore include creating an overall vision, establishing an environment focused on student learning and achievement, providing instructional leadership, accounting for results, engaging parents and the community, and partnering with public and private organizations.

The district directly operates public schools, but also allows the creation of some independently operated schools, such as charters. Parents have the right to enroll their child in any public school in the district. The district hires the superintendent and school principals, recruits and employs teachers and other school staff, bargains with unions, provides districtwide services and sets districtwide standards.

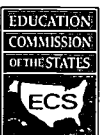
In a system of publicly operated schools, the district focuses on:

### □ Creating a vision for the district

Creating a powerful and compelling vision for a district's efforts is a primary responsibility for district leaders. Goal-setting and long-range and strategic planning are part of this process, but the concept of vision-setting reaches a higher level. It encompasses the best in forward thinking, innovative planning and community involvement.

Within a system of publicly operated schools, school boards demonstrate visionary leadership by critically evaluating the district's past and present plans and achievements; identifying trends and emerging issues, including their potential impact on policies and programs; and revising district goals in light of this information.

By combining the knowledge and experience gained from the past with their identification of future needs, school boards establish challenging goals. Reaching out to their communities, school boards involve others in





vision development and empower the appropriate parties to take part in implementing that vision. Above all, school boards make a powerful commitment to their vision and use it as a template for their decisions.

**■ *Establishing an environment focused on student learning and achievement***

In a system of publicly operated schools, school boards focus the district's efforts on increasing student learning and achievement. To establish such an environment, school boards do the following:

- Adopt an extensive set of district-wide standards, which meet or exceed the state's standards
- Establish measures of the standards
- Strategically align the district's resources to achieve the standards
- Track progress toward, and keep attention focused on, the standards
- Provide standards-based professional development for teachers
- Include incentives for progress and consequences for failure for all decisionmakers in the district, as well as for students.

A school board's policies provide ongoing guidance and direction to the district. These policies create a framework within which the superintendent and other district employees fulfill their responsibilities. A school board's policies reflect the school board's vision, define the district's goals and objectives, outline roles and responsibilities, allow for necessary flexibility in day-to-day operations and include measurable results. A school board reviews all decisions in terms of their impact on student learning and achievement.

When hiring and evaluating the superintendent, a school board ensures compatibility between the district's vision and the superintendent. Once hired, the superintendent functions as the district's chief execu-

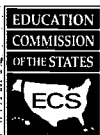
tive officer and the community's education leader. A school board provides the superintendent with the resources and flexibility he or she needs to focus on bringing the district's vision to fruition.

School boards have significant fiduciary responsibilities as stewards of public funds. It is their responsibility to see that funds are spent wisely, efficiently and equitably within the district. School boards adopt an annual district budget, approve needed school facilities and ensure that financial and human resources are spread equitably across the district.

Districts distribute dollars to each school based upon a weighted per-pupil funding formula, which takes into account students' particular needs. They also handle payroll and similar administrative services where economies of scale may be realized. Districts are not guaranteed that schools will use these services, but rather compete with other service providers for a school's business.

In a system of publicly operated schools, districts collaborate with unions to evolve knowledge-based, "trust-agreement" contracts focused on professional mechanisms for achieving student performance. For example, the Seattle school board and teachers' union included a trust agreement in the teachers' collective bargaining contract. This agreement defines standards of collaboration for the school board and union.

In addition, the contract requires extensive teacher involvement in developing every school's academic achievement plan, budget, personnel and professional development program. It gives schools the ability to select teachers for available positions regardless of seniority and permits teachers to be evaluated based on their students' academic performance. Within the framework of this agreement, the central administration and the teachers' union function to support schools.



## A New Policy Model for Local School Boards

The Illinois, Colorado and Missouri state school boards associations are working with selected local boards to develop and implement a policy governance model based on the work of John Carver. The Missouri program is called Visionary Organizational Leadership for Tomorrow's Schools (VOLTS). Ten principles characterize VOLTS:

1. The school board sits in trust for the ownership of the district.
2. The board's job is to create a shared vision; provide written, explicit policies; and assure district performance.
3. The board develops a plan for accomplishing its own work.
4. The board describes the desired results but stays out of the means of accomplishing those results except to say what is unacceptable.
5. The superintendent's job is to accomplish or move toward the ends and not violate limitations on the means.
6. The board measures school progress only against previously set criteria.
7. Rules exist for board decisionmaking.
8. Rules govern board policymaking.
9. A board decision is speaking with one voice.
10. Authority resides in the board, not in individuals.<sup>38</sup>

## Focusing on Customer Satisfaction and Student Performance

Through the Edmonton (Alberta, Canada) public schools' restructuring effort, the district establishes goals for education and guiding principles for management processes. In addition, it defines results, indicators and improvement targets, gathers data and uses this information to make decisions. Results focus on customer satisfaction and student performance. Together with the teachers' organization, the district has drawn up a simple yet powerful contract.

The central office focuses on holding schools accountable for achieving student results. It also provides customer-driven service to schools in quasi-open market conditions. The central office also identifies, develops and retains good principals and replaces ineffective ones.

Authority for program design and resource allocation at the school level rests with the principals, who use a variety of means to engage colleagues and the community in decisionmaking related to district-defined results. Principals have the resources and authority to provide overall direction for instruction, and they are accountable for achieving improvement targets. Teachers have many opportunities for professional development and leadership.<sup>39</sup>



## Funding Schools According to Student Needs

*The Seattle (Washington) school board implemented a weighted student-focused funding system that allocates resources based on each student's education needs. Certain students receive a higher per-student spending allotment because of a variety of factors (e.g., low income, low achievement, learning disabilities and limited-English-speaking abilities), and resources follow the student. This approach allows each school to determine its own expenditure plan, provides clear incentives for operational efficiency and aligns authority with responsibility.*

### ■ Providing instructional leadership

Within a system of publicly operated schools, districts provide instructional guidance to all schools initially and on a continuing basis to those schools that lack capacity. A district works with a school to define instructional objectives, design the curriculum, engage in professional development and use information in the school's decisionmaking. Districts provide professional development services to schools, as one provider among the many that schools can engage.

In collaboration with a school's staff, parents and community members, the superintendent hires and retains principals. Districts spend considerable time recruiting principals, grooming emerging leaders for principal positions, creating support networks for acting and probationary principals, and ensuring that principals participate along with teachers in staff development activities dealing with content-focused instruction.

The district commits to a process of continuous improvement in every classroom in every school. Principals and teachers routinely open up parts of their practice to observation by experts and colleagues; see change in practice as strategic, aligned, consistent and coherent, yet routine events; and participate in various forms of collaboration with other practitioners to examine and develop their practice. School board members also seek up-to-date information on key developments in instructional leadership, including emerging state requirements, research findings and effective practices.

### ■ Accounting for results

Because mostly public funds support the schools in this governance system, school boards are responsible for ensuring that these funds pay for efforts that contribute to the public good. An accountability system based on student performance is therefore an integral part of this system.

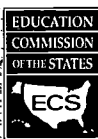
On a macro level, school boards establish districtwide goals and standards and determine whether the district as a whole is progressing toward accomplishment of these goals and standards. Progress (or lack thereof) is measured and reported to the community in quantifiable terms. For example, districts report to the schools and the

public on school spending and student improvement on a variety of indicators, disaggregating the data by race, socioeconomic class, gender, special education and bilingual status, as appropriate.

On a micro level, districts give mandated tests and monitor schools to ensure they are performing at a level consistent with the district's standards. There are provisions for exceptions, though. For example, schools with a well-developed and well-regarded curriculum that is impeded by the district's standards can petition the school board for exemption from the standards and for the substitution of a set of standards more appropriate to the school.

In a system of publicly operated schools, districts manage performance-based information systems, comparing schools and assisting them in analyzing their achievements and shortcomings. Increased planning requirements, monitoring and technical assistance occur for schools not meeting the standards. Low-performing schools, as measured against district standards, are not tolerated, even if the parents of children in such schools are satisfied with them. A district reconstitutes schools that fail to make adequate progress.

In the district's technical assistance role, officials may know, for example, that a particular school has been unusually successful in teaching math to a certain population of students. The district can share this fact with a school that is having a more difficult time in this area so the school staff knows where to turn for suggestions about new or different approaches. In a system of publicly operated schools, districts not only facilitate information-sharing among schools, but also help collect information about what is going on in other districts.



## New York District Striking the Right Balance

In 1987, New York City's Community District 2 began using a strategy of professional development to improve teaching and learning. This strategy consists of a set of principles about the process of systemic change and the role of professional development, as well as specific activities, or models of staff development, that focus on systemwide improvement of instruction.

Central to District 2's strategy is the creation of a culture of shared values around instructional improvement that binds the work of teachers and administrators into a coherent set of actions and programs. This system is guided by several principles:

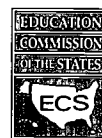
- *It's about instruction and only about instruction.* The district conveys the message that the work of everyone in the system, from central office administrators to school staff, is providing high-quality teaching to students.
- *Instructional change is a long, multi-stage process.* Learning begins with awareness of new ideas, followed by opportunities for planning, chances to try them and receive feedback, and time for reflection with others to refine practice.
- *Shared expertise is the driver of instructional change.* District staff and consultants regularly work with school staff on specific instructional approaches. Principals and teachers meet regularly on curriculum and teaching, visit other schools and classrooms, and work together on staff development issues.
- *Focus is on systemwide improvement.* The enemy of systemic change, according to District 2 staff, is the "project," which isolates and balkanizes new ideas and makes improvement the responsibility of a select few. To create systemic change, principals and teachers must regularly collaborate with others to examine and develop their practice.
- *Good ideas come from talented people working together.* The key to improvement is always people and their knowledge. Recruitment of highly talented professionals and development of their skills is the top priority. Weak principals and teachers are aggressively counseled out. Problems are addressed by putting people together to learn from one another.
- *Set clear expectations, then decentralize.* The district focuses on getting, developing and keeping good people and clarifying their mission. Then it gets out of the way.
- *Foster collegiality, caring and respect.* Helping people take risks and take on responsibility for children requires the cultivation of a deep personal and professional respect that is communicated at every level.

District 2's extensive professional development efforts include several vehicles for learning, including professional development laboratories, instructional consulting services, school visitations and peer networks, off-site training, and oversight and evaluation of principals.

These strategies have focused for many years on a few strands of content-focused training designed to have a cumulative impact over the long term, rather than on different workshop topics every inservice day or a new theme each year. The district has sponsored eight years of intensive work on teaching strategies for literacy development and four years on mathematics teaching.

District 2's strategy has elements of both centralization and decentralization. The district decides which instructional areas will receive priority attention, maintains the focus on these areas, forms and maintains relationships with consultants who provide training and support in priority areas and keeps school-site decisions focused on district priorities.

On the other hand, the strategy has a heavy focus on school-site decisionmaking related to which teachers receive training and support, which content areas receive attention and which consultants are employed over a specific period.<sup>40</sup>



### ■ *Engaging parents and the community*

A system of publicly operated schools allows parents to choose their children's public school. In effect, parental choice acts as a second accountability mechanism. An additional way for districts to engage parents and community members is to develop ways to work collaboratively with them to create conditions in schools, the home and the community that foster student learning.

Timely, accurate and reliable information from the district may increase parental and community support for the district's efforts and improve the chances of attracting the involvement of businesses and others in school activities. Districts may use a variety of formal and informal tools and media to report to parents and the community and ensure that the community understands schools' needs and that school staffs understand and respond to parent and community expectations.

### ■ *Partnering with public and private organizations*

Public schools are often the most accessible, appropriate and accountable institutions in children's lives and have become an integral component in many successful community partnerships. Within a system of publicly operated schools, school boards collaborate with entities outside the district to meet students' needs.

For example, school boards may establish children and youth development goals that transcend the funding and jurisdictional hurdles that typically prevent effective delivery of needed services. Explicit, substantive goals based on children's needs may allow providers to coordinate services more effectively and ensure help is available. In addition, school boards can contract with private providers for education services, as appropriate, taking into account such issues as quality, cost, the district's oversight authority and the school board's accountability to the public.

### **Forging Stronger School-Community Bonds**

*The DeKalb County (Georgia) school board has adopted the motto that "the school cannot live apart from the community." Among the activities that illustrate this commitment are these:*

- *From 30-90 minutes are scheduled prior to each board session for community members to comment.*
- *Studies to establish the need for new schools involve community representatives.*
- *Community forums are held in each board member's district to exchange information and recommendations on new initiatives and critical and recurring issues.*
- *The board has directed each school to adopt a School Community Action Team to link community and staff in working on issues to improve the school climate and instructional program.*
- *The international community is involved in addressing concerns for their children's education.*
- *A Special Education Task Force comprised of parents and community members was formed to improve services to special-needs children.<sup>41</sup>*



### Unique Partnership Helps At-Risk Students Succeed

*In 1990, the Institute for Student Achievement was formed to help a small group of students in the lowest quartile of their class in a Roosevelt, Long Island, New York, school. Since then, the institute has grown to help nearly 2,000 middle and high school students in six districts improve their grades and attendance and decrease expulsions and dropout rates. The institute operates through a collaborative effort among students, their parents or guardians, its own academic coordinators, counselors, outreach workers, school administrators and teachers, and community members.*

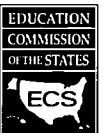
*Students who commit to the programs attend the institute's classes before their regular school day begins, in a period during the day and after school. These programs supplement and enrich their existing academic curriculum and help students keep pace with their studies and overcome learning difficulties. The institute's programs involve student's families and help both students and adults work through any issues or roadblocks to success. Community service is also a key element, helping students build a sense of responsibility, community and leadership potential. To date, 100% of the youngsters in the institute's programs have graduated from high school, and 96% have gone on to college.*

### El Paso Collaborates for Academic Excellence

*In the early 1990s, 11 key leaders in El Paso, Texas, formed the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence. Included were superintendents of the three largest school districts (El Paso, Ysleta and Socorro Independent School Districts), presidents of the El Paso Community College and the University of Texas, executive director of the Texas Education Agency's regional service center, lead organizer of the El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization, presidents of the Greater El Paso and El Paso Hispanic chambers of commerce, El Paso's mayor and the county judge.*

*The collaborative established the twin goals of ensuring academic success among all youngsters in area schools and that all students graduate from area high schools prepared to enter and succeed in a four-year college or university. To meet these goals, the collaborative created the following agenda:*

- *Implement a high-quality standards-based curriculum and instruction program for all students, coupled with professional development to ensure all school professionals are able to implement such a program*
- *Align assessments with standards and create accountability systems that ensure that rewards and sanctions for those persons charged with reaching student learning goals are clear and unequivocal*
- *Use data to make clear the need for change, to assess progress toward a goal and to inform the broad community about the status of local youngsters' educational achievement*
- *Prepare the best teachers possible, who, on completion of their university program, are equipped with the skills and abilities needed to help students meet the standards*
- *Ensure leadership's commitment to high achievement among all students and to the establishment of policies that support such achievement in districts, as well as in colleges and universities*
- *Engage the broad community to foster understanding and ensure support of renewal efforts.*<sup>42</sup>



## *The School Creates an Environment Focused on Teaching and Learning and Is Held Accountable for Results.*

Another belief that forms the basis of a system of publicly operated schools is that certain decisions most appropriately belong with schools and parents. Within this system, schools have the authority to develop a culture focused on student learning and achievement. The individual school:

- Develops, implements and continuously fine-tunes plans for improving student learning*
- Hires, evaluates and fires teachers and other school personnel*
- Writes its own budget and receives funding on a weighted per-pupil basis*
- Raises private revenue (up to a limit)*
- Allocates resources as it sees fit*
- Determines staffing patterns and class sizes*
- Determines employees' salaries*
- Purchases services from the district or from outside providers.*

In a system of publicly operated schools, schools are ultimately responsible and accountable for achieving results. Toward that end, schools develop and implement plans for improving student learning. Each principal, in collaboration with staff, parents and community members, prepares an annual statement of goals, objectives and activities within the context of district policy.

As schools increase their ability to achieve district standards, they gain increasing freedom to accomplish results in ways their staffs deem professionally responsible and demonstrably effective. With demonstrated capacity, schools assume more direct programmatic, professional and financial responsibility for management of their instructional program. This freedom may diversify instructional models within a district, and thereby expand choices to the parents and students it serves.

Within the framework of an effective district-wide accountability system, people at the school level hire, evaluate and fire teachers and other staff. Such personnel decisions belong to the school staff because it is they who can best decide which applicant can make the greatest contribution to student learning. This individual may be different from one deemed best by staff at another school.

In this system, schools mostly hire certified teachers, but there are provisions for hiring noncertified teachers. Such an approach treads on uncharted ground for public schools. There is little research, for example, on the effectiveness of teachers with different types and levels of training and education, and existing research indicates that fully licensed teachers are more effective than emergency credentialed teachers.

A prudent approach in the short run may be one similar to that set by New York's charter school law, which permits charter schools to hire noncertified teachers within limits (i.e., a cap of 30% or five individuals, whichever is less). Schools may experiment with different mixes of teacher skill and experience levels, thereby generating better information about the value associated with different credentials.

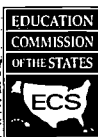
Teachers and other school-level personnel are employees of the district in this governance system, except in some arrangements, such as charter schools, where they may be school employees.

Within a system of publicly operated schools, schools write their own budgets and receive funding on a weighted per-pupil basis. School staffs also are able to use their resources in whatever ways make sense to them and to determine their staffing patterns and class sizes. A school may decide, for example, to hire a master teacher at a high salary and a number of junior staff at lower salaries. Similarly, a school may decide to conduct some teaching in large groups and some in small groups.

Schools also have the discretion to determine employees' salaries. One school, for example, may decide to pay teachers high salaries and in return expect exceptional performance, additional duties or greater responsibilities. Another may pay lower salaries and use a larger fraction of its resources for technology or professional development.

Schools are able to purchase services from the district, although the district is not necessarily the sole source of available services. A school, for example, may purchase professional development, accounting or curriculum services from the district, while purchasing other services from other providers, such as a university or a professional association. Such contracting for services must be done on an open, competitive basis.

Some supplemental funding from private sources, including parents, is allowed in a system of publicly operated schools. Because funding disparities may become exacerbated by such a policy, the district has to



monitor trends in this direction. Open-enrollment and nondiscrimination policies, coupled with a prohibition on requiring parents to pay extra fees, may reduce the likelihood of increased disparities and need to be enforced by the district.

## Issues and Challenges

Involving more people in decisions raises a number of policy issues concerning lines of authority, responsibility and accountability for the consequences of decisions. Which decisions ought to be shared, with whom and at what level? Answers to these questions can involve multiple factors, such as education merit, cost, and legal and financial responsibility. To hold those persons with decisionmaking authority accountable, though, it is essential that their performance be reviewed and evaluated regularly, which underscores the importance of effective state and district accountability systems.

Simply saying that some degree of discretion in making certain decisions resides at the school leaves open questions about the amount of discretion that school-level people are authorized to exercise and who has such discretion. The principal? The teachers? The principal and teachers, with approval of a local school council? The local school council itself? These questions are central to establishing the bounds of a system of publicly operated schools, and the way they are answered defines the nature of this system in important and basic ways.

In reality, the critical decisionmakers and the amount of influence they wield probably will vary from place to place. In some instances, parents may be the dominant decisionmakers. In other cases, it may be the teachers, and still in others it may be the principal or some democratic powersharing arrangement. Whatever these decisionmaking arrangements are, they need to be transparent so that teachers and other school staff can make an informed employment decision when joining a school, and parents can make an informed choice when enrolling their child.

Certain conditions need to be present for a system of publicly operated schools to work well. First, school staffs need to have the information and expertise required to make decisions that will improve their operations, particularly teaching and learning activities. In short, they need to have the capacity to lead themselves and the wherewithal to acquire assistance when needed.

Second, there needs to be some incentive, established through a districtwide accountability system, for school communities to want to improve teaching and learning. A considerable amount of research shows that schools that lack either capacity or performance incentives are unlikely to improve simply as a consequence of being granted greater autonomy.

One of the potential advantages of this approach to governance is that new ways of doing business may develop that are better suited to local situations. In addition, experience in professional organizations suggests that collective decisionmaking not only results in better decisions, but also produces a more committed staff. Further, private and nonprofit organizations often have found that small, dependent organizational bodies are an important part of entrepreneurial success.

This approach also raises certain equity issues. For example, questions are likely to be raised about the extent to which a school's funding may be supplemented by other funds, in particular funds from parents. *At the minimum, a sufficiently high basic level of public funding needs to be guaranteed.* Increased state responsibility for education funding may help keep disparities in check. Other equity issues raised by a system of publicly operated schools include differences in teacher and other school staff salaries.

## *A System of Publicly Authorized, Publicly Funded and Independently Operated Schools*

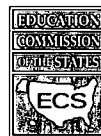
The National Commission's second approach goes much further, significantly redefining the roles, responsibilities and interrelationship of states, districts, schools, communities, and public and private organizations.

In this system, public authorities (primarily school districts) fund, authorize and oversee the performance of schools, *but do not directly operate them.* Instead, districts contract with independent entities – nonprofit and for-profit organizations, cooperatives, sole proprietorships and the like – to run schools in much the same way they currently do with charter schools.

In this system, teachers, principals and parents have considerable freedom to design, create and operate schools, limited only by state and federal laws and the terms of their contract with the district. Parents are allowed to enroll their child in any publicly funded school in the district (including private and parochial schools that come into the district).

This system has rewards for success and consequences for failure. It gives districts the authority to withdraw funding from schools that do not work and reward those that do. There is a strong emphasis on actively mobilizing all of the community's resources around the goal of educating children and of drawing on the energy and fresh ideas of public and private organizations.

There are four key aspects of a system of independently operated schools:





- It creates mechanisms that allow schools to focus on teaching and learning, and supports them in these efforts.
- It provides teachers, principals and parents greater freedom of action to create and maintain schools that respond to the beliefs, talents and needs of particular groups of children, parents and staff.
- It allows public support to be withdrawn from schools that do not work, allows families to leave schools that are failing their children and encourages the creation of promising new schools.

- It allows public and private organizations to contribute positively to school and student performance.

A discussion of the primary roles and responsibilities of states, districts and schools in a system of independently operated schools follows.

### *The State Creates a Context for Schools and Districts To Excel.*

Similar to the system of publicly operated schools, the state role in this system is focused on promoting high expectations, establishing minimum content and performance standards in a limited number of areas, providing adequate financial resources to districts and holding districts accountable for student achievement.

In addition, because the roles and responsibilities of schools, districts, and public and private organizations are considerably different within a system of independently operated schools, many changes in state education codes are necessary, such as:

- *Providing for the transformation of local school boards into chartering boards (CBs) empowered to authorize, fund, oversee and hold schools accountable for performance*

At the minimum, state laws transform school boards' roles and grant them the authority to charter schools within a given community, send all funds to schools on a weighted per-pupil basis and hold schools accountable for performance. (Note: In this report, the term "school boards" is synonymous with "chartering boards." The term "chartering boards" is used in describing a system of independently operated schools, however, to differentiate the new roles and responsibilities school boards have.)

In this system, state laws empower state education departments to oversee CBs and to decertify or create competitors for CBs that do not cancel the charters of low-performing schools and seek alternatives. State boards of education and CBs are authorized to require that schools cover certain core subjects and that all students pass certain examinations. State law also may require each CB to set aside some percentage of its gross revenue, such as 3%, for contracts for school evaluations.

- *Reducing existing state restrictions on the use of both operating and capital funds*

Such restrictions are greatly reduced to allow for greater flexibility in their use.

- *Amending collective-bargaining laws*

State laws concerning collective bargaining are amended to allow individual schools to employ and negotiate with principals and teachers.

- *Rewriting laws governing teacher and administrator preparation and qualifications*

CBs are permitted to recruit and educate a variety of individuals for principal and teacher positions, including traditional and nontraditional applicants.

- *Authorizing the creation of public school real-estate trusts*

Public school real-estate trusts are authorized by state law, with schools allowed to lease space from them and private parties.

- *Revising school-choice laws*

Parents have the right to choose any publicly funded school for their child. State laws include guarantees of fair student admission, forbid student expulsions except for cause and require that CBs authorize schools for children who cannot meet a regular school's reasonable attendance and conduct requirements.



## *The District Creates an Environment that Allows Schools To Focus on Teaching and Learning.*

The discussion of possible roles for districts within a system of independently operated schools is premised on the belief that appropriate functions of a district are the authorization and oversight, but not the operation, of schools within a community. Potential roles for districts therefore include authorizing, distributing public funds to and overseeing schools; providing timely, accurate and reliable information about schools; educating, recruiting and referring staff for schools; and partnering with public and private organizations to enhance schools.

Within a system of independently operated schools, there is still a need for a superintendent and a central administration. Their roles, however, are altered and supplemented with competitive markets for advice and assistance for schools. Essentially, the central administration is changed to a contracting agency, which allows virtually all public money available for education to be sent to schools.

In this system, the district focuses on:

### *Authorizing schools*

Within a system of independently operated schools, a school board, or chartering board (CB), retains ultimate responsibility for the education of children within a community, and fulfills that responsibility by creating and maintaining a supply of schools. A CB ensures that the district offers a range of approaches and services that matches the needs of local children, and that no child receives a low-quality education.

A CB maintains such a supply through the authorization and oversight of schools. A CB surveys community leaders, employers, parents and students to determine their needs; issues requests for proposals to open schools that serve these needs; and considers unsolicited proposals for schools when applicants prove they have sufficient community interest. A CB works with the district's superintendent, who is hired by the CB, to analyze the need for new types of schools and identify promising potential school operators.

A CB establishes general criteria for approving proposals for schools and creates fair proposal review processes open to all qualified school operators. Private and parochial schools may apply for a charter and come into the district as a public school. Schools run by either hate groups or religious organizations that do not adhere to applicable U.S. Supreme Court doctrines governing the separation of church and state are prohibited.

In considering a proposal from a group wanting to operate a particular school, a CB does not focus on whether the proposed school is right for all students in the locality or whether some groups dislike the proposed school. Instead, a CB focuses on whether there is sufficient demand for the proposed school and whether the people proposing to operate it have acceptable credentials. A CB operates a school itself only when there is a community need that others are unable or unwilling to meet.

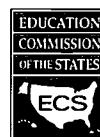
Once a school is authorized to open, a CB enters into a contract, or charter, with the school. The relationship between a CB and a school is based on this charter, which details the basic agreement about the school's goals, pedagogy, target population, student admissions and disciplinary criteria, funding, and freedoms and constraints on personnel.

Within each school's charter, a CB mandates standards in reading and mathematics and allows schools to apply additional standards to themselves. In addition, a CB requires the school to teach about American government and the foundations of the democratic process. A CB works with the superintendent to negotiate, review and renew charters.

Each school's charter also establishes the baseline on which its performance is evaluated and the grounds on which a CB may determine that performance is low enough to warrant termination (or nonrenewal) of the charter. Each school's performance baseline either is linked to national or state standards or is tailor-made for a particular situation. A CB encourages schools to set ambitious goals for student achievement gains, even schools with low-income students or others whose absolute achievement levels start out below average.

If school operators are reluctant to operate in low-income areas or to serve a primarily disadvantaged clientele, a CB may offer special incentives in the form of higher-than-average per-pupil revenues (e.g., federal programs such as Title I may provide these financial incentives to serve disadvantaged children). A CB also may require groups operating more than one school within a community to run a specified number of schools in low-income or otherwise disadvantaged areas. Another possibility is the authorization of "recovery schools" to help suspended and expelled students master age-appropriate academic skills and habits so they can return to regular schools.

Potential school operators have a safety valve for authorization. The state board of education, the state



superintendent, state colleges and universities, the city, the county or a specially created state chartering board also may be granted the authority to authorize and oversee schools within a community. For example, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, potential school operators can apply to the Milwaukee school board, the city of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Area Technical College or the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee for a charter to operate a school.

#### □ *Overseeing schools*

To perform its oversight functions in an effective manner, a CB continuously evaluates each school's performance. To fulfill this role, a CB contracts with an independent analysis organization, which conducts periodic reviews of school quality. (An independent analysis organization is discussed below.)

All students are assessed relative to standards. A CB requires schools to report their results in value-added terms (i.e., annualized rates of gain of average absolute scores) and share their efforts to help disadvantaged students learn at a rate that closes the gap between their performance and broader community standards.

A CB also determines whether disadvantaged students' progress in a given school is high or low relative to similar students' progress in other schools. Without that information, and the ability to authorize charters that use value-added measurements, a CB may find itself in the position of canceling a charter for a school that is doing a better job for disadvantaged students than any other in the district.

In addition to test scores, a CB holds each school accountable using other indicators, such as attendance rates, dropout, truancy, disciplinary problem and turnover rates, status of graduates, student portfolio assessments, qualitative school reviews and surveys of parents, students and employers. As appropriate, this information is disaggregated by grade level and students' sex, race and income.

A CB may award the operator of a highly successful school with an offer of additional charters or with the opportunity to admit enough students to support an enhanced academic program. Although some school operators may not take responsibility for additional schools or expand, others may. High-performing schools that do not want to expand still may benefit by attracting high-quality teachers and administrators and by charging fees to educators who want to learn about the school's methods so they can start their own schools.

A CB does not tolerate a low-performing school, as measured against a performance baseline, even if parents of children in such a school are satisfied with it. If a school fails to meet its performance baseline or violates its charter in another way (e.g., by "skimming" student applicants instead of picking at random), a CB

either demands improvements or terminates the school's charter and assigns the responsibility for the school to another operator.

When the latter occurs, larger districts or state education departments may contract with groups (probably regional or national firms) capable of staffing and running a school on short notice, until a long-term provider can be found. A CB closes schools that cannot attract enough students to meet their costs or retain good teachers.

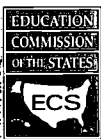
A CB is responsible for informing parents whenever a school is failing against its performance baseline, and parents may take their children out of these schools and move them into better schools. By constantly ensuring a sufficient supply of schools, a CB ensures that the children who leave a failing school have a better place to go. A CB also makes certain that no identifiable group of students is forced to accept a school that does not meet its needs if a different and more appropriate kind of school may be obtained with available public funds.

#### □ *Distributing public funds to schools*

Within a system of independently operated schools, public funds for schools still are raised from a combination of local, state and federal sources, as well as private donations. A CB pays schools by combining funds from all sources. These payments are based on a standard local per-pupil amount with weighting factors for students disadvantaged by poverty, immigrant status or disability. This method allows schools to provide supportive services and small classes for disadvantaged students. A CB also allocates a higher amount per pupil for high school students, but funding for similar students at a particular grade level is equal.

A CB is required to serve all children, including those who require special education services. There are at least two methods of providing funding for these children within a system of independently operated schools. Under one method, states create insurance pools into which schools pay fixed per-pupil amounts in return for assurance that the pool pays for special education services. Under the other method, a CB holds back the amount of money necessary to pay for special education services and provides the funds to either the schools or special vendors who serve handicapped children.

To discourage schools from unnecessarily referring children for special education services, a child's school can be required to donate the full per-pupil amount it receives for the child's education toward a handicapped child's special services. Since the school still provides the child's academic education, it is expected to request a special education placement only if it truly is unable to serve the child within the regular instructional program.



A school's funding, then, is equal to the weighted average per-pupil expenditure for its students (less a small amount to pay the district's oversight costs) times the number of students enrolled. Each school also receives a standard per-pupil amount for capital expenditures, building rent and maintenance, and no school has free space while others have to pay. As described below, an independent public authority (i.e., a public school real-estate trust) owns, builds, develops and leases space to schools.

The financial arrangements within a system of independently operated schools may create intradistrict equity, at least to the extent of ensuring that every school has the same amount of money to spend on instruction. These arrangements, however, will not eliminate the differences between neighborhoods with and without good public transit. Ideally, a community's leaders or a CB can provide students in remote areas of town, or in areas with few high-performing schools, transportation vouchers that can be used to pay for school- or privately provided transportation. State leaders also may establish a means-tested voucher for student transportation.

*Providing timely, accurate and reliable information about schools*

In a system of independently operated schools, parents are able to choose their child's school from among all publicly funded schools. If they become dissatisfied, they are free to move their child to another school. To help parents understand their choices and to permit the broader community to evaluate schools' results, a CB and the superintendent, through contractors, report on the effectiveness of individual schools.

School and student performance data are available to city leaders, education leaders, parents and the general public. Because such data have to be presented so lay users are able to assess school improvement or decline accurately, a CB disseminates information on a broad array of school and student performance measures. Information available on every school includes:

- Description of a school's mission, pedagogy, student body, academic demands and extracurricular activities
- Test scores for all students in value-added terms (i.e., annualized rates of gain on average absolute scores), disaggregated by grade level and students' sex, race and income
- Attendance, dropout, truancy, disciplinary problem and turnover rates (disaggregated by grade level and students' sex, race and income)
- Status of graduates, such as what percent go to what kinds of colleges, into what kind of work and into the military (disaggregated by grade level and students' sex, race and income)

- Student portfolio assessments, qualitative school reviews and surveys of parents, students and employers.

Within one year of the collection of this information, a CB makes it available on Web sites, in newspapers and newsletters, in free resource books and through school report cards. A CB also sponsors free and accessible school-choice fairs, in which parents may talk to staff, parents and students, and learn about a community's schools.

*Educating, recruiting and referring staff for schools*

In order to attract and retain the talent in the principal and teacher ranks necessary for a universal, high-quality public education system, a CB pursues arrangements for educating its own principals and teachers. Under one possible arrangement, a portion of the money currently going to colleges of education may be given to CBs, which then spend the funds on professional development. Colleges of education, teachers unions and private organizations compete for preservice and inservice professional development grants from a CB.

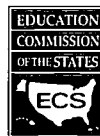
A CB is also responsible for recruiting and referring principals and teachers, including nontraditional applicants such as retirees or professionals in a field other than education.

*Partnering with public and private organizations*

Within a system of independently operated schools, a district shares responsibility for ensuring quality inputs, fostering school development and monitoring school performance with public and private organizations. In general, this system gives schools access to a broad set of community resources, both public and private, that can contribute to children's education. Although it does not guarantee that all of these resources will be used, or that every new entity contributing to public education will be effective, it does open up the possibility of immense new investment, innovation and collaboration.

A CB works with the superintendent to build partnerships with public and private organizations, including service providers, to enhance the schools. It fosters partnerships among public, nonprofit and for-profit providers of education services, such as schools, social services agencies, health and nutrition programs, and cultural and physical activities. It also works with private and religious schools to determine if there are opportunities for collaboration that serve the public interest.

Furthermore, a system of independently operated schools requires the following oversight and assistance organizations, which are provided by combinations of public and private investment and operated independently of the district:



Independent analysis organization. A CB and the superintendent are responsible for overseeing the district's performance. They, however, do not assign the actual oversight tasks to central administrative staff. Instead, the CB and the superintendent work with an independent analysis organization. One task of such an organization is to analyze and inform parents and the community about the performance of district schools.

This idea is modeled on the Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) experience, where the most influential systemwide performance assessments are done by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, a university-based organization jointly sponsored by CPS and several Chicago foundations. Although CPS provides the consortium with access to schools and test scores, consortium leaders conduct their surveys and analyses according to professional standards. Consortium leaders consider CPS leaders' comments about their analyses, but retain the authority to decide what will be published and when.

In addition, an independent analysis organization periodically visits each school and conducts and publishes school evaluations. These visits and evaluations are expected to stimulate a self-assessment by the school and are used in decisions about school reauthorizations, allocation of assistance resources to schools and school reconstitutions. This idea is modeled on the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Great Britain, which has motivated CPS and Massachusetts to begin building independent groups of expert school visitors.

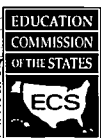
School incubator. In a system of independently operated schools, a school incubator, jointly sponsored by the state and private donors, provides administrators, teachers, parents and community groups with the time and place to work together and receive expert assistance in the development of a new school. School incubators serve groups interested in operating schools or slated by a CB to open a new school or take over an existing one. Prospective administrators and teachers of new schools are able to do the following:

- Experiment with and choose curriculum and instructional approaches and materials
- Plan how they will select and prepare teachers

- Develop materials to explain the school to parents and students
- Choose sources of ongoing advice and assistance
- Find and adapt facilities to fit their instructional program
- Decide how they will assess and demonstrate performance
- Learn how to manage their financial and legal responsibilities
- Design professional development experiences.

Public school real-estate trust. In a system of independently operated schools, a CB creates a public school real-estate trust that offers space on a fair basis to all schools. State and local governments also may create such trusts to serve the same geographic area. In any locality, one or more real-estate trusts assume ownership of a community's public school buildings, sell the surplus buildings, and build or lease additional facilities in areas with insufficient space. Such trusts help schools find space, as well as tenants for space they no longer need.

As mentioned earlier, schools receive funds for capital expenditures, rent and building maintenance. With that money, they lease buildings and grounds from the public school real-estate trust, or they lease commercial space. Individuals and foundations may donate land or facilities for school use, but properties are owned and leased out by the public school real-estate trust, not by individual schools. A system of independently operated schools does not allow some schools to obtain space for free while others have to pay for it, and does not allow schools to occupy excessively large facilities at no cost to themselves.



## ***The School Creates an Environment Focused on Teaching and Learning and Is Held Accountable for Results.***

Within a system of independently operated schools, each school is an independent legal entity, bound to a CB by its charter. Legally, most schools are individual nonprofit organizations, cooperatives or part of a larger nonprofit organization. At the discretion of a CB, some schools also may be sole proprietorships, individual for-profit organizations or part of a larger for-profit organization. In this system, the individual school:

- Sets standards, writes curriculum, designs instruction and controls use of time*
- Writes its own budget and receives funding on a weighted per-pupil basis*
- Borrows and spends money, purchases and leases space and equipment, buys insurance and purchases advice and assistance*
- Raises private money (up to a limit)*
- Hires and evaluates principals, teachers and other school staff; negotiates their pay, benefits and responsibilities*
- Establishes standards and processes for student admission*
- Is free to impose requirements related to student effort, attendance and conduct.*

Within a system of independently operated schools, schools are defined as organizations dedicated to providing a complete program of instruction to children of a certain age. Most schools either occupy their own buildings or share buildings with other schools. Some schools may not, though, and instead prefer to give children access to learning opportunities located throughout the community. In some cases, organizations that support children's learning in their own homes also may be considered schools.

Legally, the owners and operators of schools are the boards of directors of either a school or a school's parent organization. Principals and teachers who want to operate a single school may assemble a board of directors. Many schools, however, may be operated by organizations that oversee multiple schools.

Schools are responsible for fulfilling the terms of their charters but otherwise are not controlled by a CB. Through the chartering process, each school defines its own mission, climate, curriculum and instructional program. Given the wide range of social, cultural and language groups served by public education, different

schools are likely to establish different missions and pursue different approaches.

Basic civil rights guarantees and employee protections apply to each school, yet a school is not required to take actions incompatible with its charter. For example, a school commissioned to provide a particular curriculum is not required to change its curriculum just because one parent complains that it does not meet his or her child's needs. Also, a group that desires a particular curriculum may be able to obtain it for a particular school, but not have it mandated for all schools authorized by a CB.

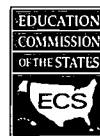
In a system of independently operated schools, mandatory standards in reading and mathematics apply to each school. Schools may choose to apply additional standards to themselves, though, and also may provide performance information in optional areas, such as art appreciation, to inform parents and students. Schools may seek endorsements from professional groups, which may state that the school's instructional programs in certain areas, such as American literature, meet the highest expectations.

Schools write their own budgets and receive funding on a weighted per-pupil basis. A school may choose to spend less on offering elective courses and more on hiring a highly qualified mathematics teacher. Schools control almost all public funds (except for a strictly limited set-aside for a district's oversight functions).

Schools borrow and spend money, purchase and lease space and equipment, buy insurance and purchase advice and assistance. In addition to funding from a CB, schools are able to raise private money and use it however they want. Individuals and corporations are able to donate to schools up to a certain amount and to districts without limit.

Schools select principals and teachers from among all qualified individuals, which include traditional and nontraditional applicants. Schools employ principals and teachers and negotiate their pay, benefits and responsibilities. Each school takes responsibility for the evaluation of its principal and teachers, and controls the use of school time.

Teachers are free agents, able to work in any school that wants them and to negotiate salaries and assignments commensurate with their individual performance and reputations. Teacher unions bargain directly with each school's board of directors.



Teacher unions are encouraged to focus on professional development and may become major providers of both preservice and inservice professional training. Teacher unions also may become the principal agency in a local teacher labor market that matches the skills and interests of teachers with the human resource requirements of the community's schools. In this role, teacher unions act as hiring halls for educators.

In this system, each school's charter determines its standards and processes for student admission. Criteria for admission cannot discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, handicapping condition or language ability. Furthermore, each school's charter requires admission via a publicly managed lottery, in which every student who applies has an equal chance of acceptance. If a lottery-based admission does not produce reasonable racial or income balances in student bodies, the CB can require schools to recruit minority applicants and stratify their lotteries so minority students have a greater-than-average chance of being selected.

Though virtually any student is able to gain admission to a particular school in a system of independently operated schools, schools are free to impose requirements related to student effort, attendance and conduct, as long as these are explicit up front and fairly applied. To prevent unwarranted advantages for schools serving wealthy families, schools that accept public funds are prohibited from charging extra tuition. Schools also are prohibited from hand-picking students, setting admissions standards not clearly derived from the school's mission and creating admissions requirements based on measures of general academic ability.

Through its charter with a CB, each school is obligated to publish its methods for helping students who experience academic difficulty, and required to give significant help to students who meet all attendance and effort requirements but still fail classes. A school is able to suspend or expel students, though, who do not complete the required work.

### Issues and Challenges

There are many issues and challenges inherent in a system of independently operated schools. Once a state provides for the transformation of a CB, a CB can move a district from its current situation to a system of independently operated schools in various ways. For example, at the outset, a CB can authorize existing public schools that are meeting high standards and community needs, and establish new charters with groups that have been petitioning for the opportunity to start new schools within the district.

Furthermore, a CB can place those schools that are not meeting high standards and community needs in receivership, and appoint a board of receivers for each of these schools. The board of receivers may be given a certain amount of time, such as two years, to prepare a plan for the school's continued operation. Only schools whose plans meet high standards and community needs at the end of the allotted time are authorized to continue operating.

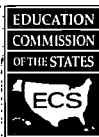
A system of independently operated schools tries to help schools better manage and deal with the turbulence of education politics. It primarily focuses CBs on authorizing and overseeing schools through contracting with groups to operate them and on altering charters only through equitable negotiation with school providers. The political pressures that lead some school boards to micromanage schools are not eliminated in this system, but CBs have a stable and plausible method for managing such pressures.

Depending on a CB's criteria for approving proposals for schools, the CB may have to make some difficult decisions about whether to contract with ideological groups or people who lack traditional qualifications as educators. Such decisions inevitably involve balancing the interests of competing groups. Making such decisions, however, is not the everyday work of CBs, which are concerned mainly with overseeing the performance of less controversial schools.

Another challenge in this system is to determine the difference between standards to which all schools should be held accountable and those that unnecessarily constrain schools' freedom and innovation. States have set standards in many disciplines, and, in theory, these can be used as the basis of school performance agreements. These standards, however, need to be demonstrably related to students' eventual success in further education, employment and citizenship. A system of independently operated schools requires state standards that reflect necessities for all children.

Standards also need to be measured and reported in value-added terms (i.e., annualized rates of gain of average absolute scores). This allows a CB to hold schools whose students start at different levels of performance responsible for improvement in a way that reflects the school's influence on student achievement. Furthermore, it permits a CB to select school operators whose promises may be less glittering but better grounded than their competitors.

A CB's use of weighted per-pupil funding may dramatically increase funding for schools in the most troubled areas of districts, but cannot create intrastate equity.



The struggle for equitable per-pupil funding between wealthy suburban districts and poor rural or inner-city districts must continue. It cannot be solved by a system of independently operated schools. Furthermore, there are other equity issues within a system of independently operated schools that need to be monitored by a CB, such as differences in principal, teacher and other school staff salaries.

A system of independently operated schools also imposes heavy demands on all the individuals who work within K-12 public education. Teachers need to master their subjects, effectively instruct and inspire students, and work closely with others in creating successful schools. Principals need to lead their schools as effective instructional organizations and maintain relationships of trust and confidence with parents, the CB, other schools, and public and private organizations.

Superintendents and their staffs need to exercise sound judgment about instruction and know how to tell the difference between schools that are struggling and schools that are improving. In addition, they need to know both how to assist struggling schools without taking the initiative away from them and when to terminate such schools' charters. CB members need to know how to identify a promising school proposal and how to exercise responsibility without falling prey to the temptation to make every important decision for schools.

Obviously, many people need to learn new roles. Role clarity thus needs to precede training. There is, however, no training institution that, in a few hours, can teach every persons involved all he or she needs to know. Much of the learning necessitated by a system of independently operated schools requires individual initiative and organized trial and error within schools.

## *Similarities and Differences in the Two Systems*

A review of the two systems reveals certain similarities and differences. In both systems, the state promotes high expectations, provides adequate financial resources for districts, holds districts accountable for school and student achievement, and aligns education codes to system requirements.

In a system of publicly operated schools, the state also establishes an extensive set of minimum standards, develops the state's K-12 public education infrastructure, and manages education information and reporting systems. In a system of independently operated schools, the state establishes a *limited set* of minimum standards and develops, on a limited basis, the state's K-12 public education infrastructure.

Both systems allow the district and independent operators to run schools. In a system of publicly operated schools, however, the district runs most schools. In the independently operated schools system, independent operators run most schools, while the district runs only a few under special circumstances and then temporarily.

This key distinction determines many of the remaining similarities and differences. In the system of publicly operated schools, districts form a districtwide vision, adopt an extensive set of districtwide standards, and work with schools on creating curriculum and instructional methods. The district holds schools accountable for meeting district standards.

On the other hand, in a system of independently operated schools, the district adopts limited districtwide standards, curriculum and instructional methods. The district spends most of its time authorizing and overseeing schools, holding them accountable to a district-approved charter with the school.

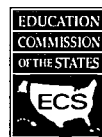
In both systems, the district hires the superintendent, raises private revenue and widely shares information to build commitment and trust in the district's and schools' purposes and missions. In terms of providing services to schools, the district provides a potentially extensive amount of services in a system of publicly operated schools, while the district provides a limited amount of services in a system of independently operated schools. Also, the district bargains with unions in a system of publicly operated schools, but not in a system of independently operated schools.

In a system of publicly operated schools, the district recruits and employs principals, teachers and other school staff, while in a system of independently operated schools the district recruits and potentially educates but does not employ principals, teachers and other school staff.

In both systems, schools write their own budgets; raise private revenue (up to a limit); allocate their resources; and hire, compensate, evaluate and fire their own teachers and other school staff. In a system of independently operated schools, schools bargain with unions as well.

Also in a system of independently operated schools, schools write and/or control an extensive amount of their standards, curriculum and instructional methods. Furthermore, schools within this system hire, compensate, evaluate and fire their principals.

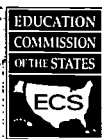
Entities outside the district play a much larger role in the operation of the district in a system of independently operated schools. In both systems, parents have a choice of schools.





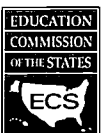
In summary, the two governance systems share significant common ground. Both call for the following:

- Strengthening, not discarding, the public system of education
- Allowing money to follow the child to the school he or she attends
- Granting individual schools control over their own personnel and budget
- Giving parents more choice about where their children attend school
- Providing good information on student, teacher and school performance for parents and the community
- Redefining labor/management relations
- Focusing accountability systems on improved student achievement
- Strengthening local school boards.



## Comparison of the Two Systems

	<i>A System of Publicly Operated Schools</i>	<i>A System of Independently Operated Schools</i>
<b>State</b>		
Promote high expectations	Yes	Yes
Establish minimum standards	Extensive	Limited
Provide adequate resources	Yes	Yes
Develop infrastructure (e.g., teacher licensure and certification)	Extensive	Limited
Hold districts accountable	Yes	Yes
Manage information systems	Yes	No
Align education codes	Yes	Yes
<b>District and School</b>		
District operation of schools	Most schools	Limited number of schools
Independent operation of schools	Limited number of schools	Most schools
Contracts between districts and schools	Limited number of schools	Most schools
Parental choice of schools	Yes	Yes
Districtwide standards	Extensive	Limited
Curriculum	Adopted by districts and schools (developed by districts, schools and others)	Mostly developed by schools
Instructional methods	Adopted by districts and schools (developed by districts, schools and others)	Mostly developed by schools
Superintendent hiring	School board	School board
Principal hiring	District and schools	Schools
Performance reporting	Yes	Yes
Weighted per-pupil funding	Yes	Yes
Level of collective bargaining	District	School
Role of entities outside of the school district	Varies	Extensive
Central provision of services	Possibly extensive	Limited
Raise private revenue	Districts and schools	Districts and schools
Teachers employed by district or school	District	School
Recruitment and/or education of teachers by the district	Recruitment and possibly arrangements for inservice education (including traditional and nontraditional applicants)	Recruitment and possibly preservice and inservice education (including traditional and nontraditional applicants)
Recruitment and/or education of principals by the district	Recruitment and possible inservice education (including traditional and nontraditional applicants)	Recruitment and possibly preservice and inservice education (including traditional and nontraditional applicants)
School-based budgeting	Yes	Yes
School-based resource allocation	Yes	Yes
School-based personnel decisions	Teachers and other school staff	Principals, teachers and other school staff



# Chapter 4: Conclusion

The United States' commitment to public education has served the nation well in the past and must continue to do so in the future. As the country enters the 21st century, its K-12 public education system must provide all students with an education that will prepare them to participate in the democratic political system and to compete in the economic workplace.

What distinguishes the task for the education system in the new millennium is the commitment to all children, not just the privileged few, not just the majority, but all children. The education system cannot exacerbate the differences between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Instead, all children need to be taught to high academic standards.

Therefore, an essential task for policymakers, educators and citizens is to create governance systems capable of creating and maintaining successful schools for all children. Improving governance arrangements can allow states and communities to balance core values underlying education, allowing American political communities large and small to be responsive to students, parents, educators and citizens and to enhance opportunities to realize higher student achievement.

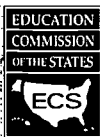
Clearly, the time is right for a broader, more vigorous discussion of K-12 public education governance. Across the nation, states and districts already are taking dramatic steps to alter governance systems and change how schools are designed, funded, managed, overseen and held accountable. Consider, for example:

- In early 1999, Michigan lawmakers enacted legislation that removed the locally elected school board in Detroit and gave the city's mayor the authority to appoint a new school board. The new board has hired an interim CEO, undertaken a massive effort to repair the district's school buildings and begun to explore strategies for improving academic achievement. As part of this effort, the board is wrestling with the question of how much decisionmaking authority to maintain at the district level and how much authority to move to the school level.
- In Florida, state leaders recently appointed a task force to take a comprehensive look at how the entire public education system – from kindergarten through college – is governed. The change was prompted by a constitutional amendment that alters K-12 governance structures at the state level.
- California policymakers are exploring the possibility of creating a master plan for K-12 education, including a redefinition of the roles, responsibilities and interrelationships of the state, school districts and schools. Legislative staff members have prepared a first draft for state leaders, who are debating whether to move to the next step of the master planning process.

In the final phase of the Governing America's Schools initiative, the National Commission and ECS staff will do the following:

- Engage a national audience in discussion and debate about K-12 public education governance, including writing editorials and articles, and convening state, regional and national meetings
- Work directly with state and school district leaders interested in rethinking and redesigning their governance systems.

Toward these ends, the National Commission and ECS call on states and districts to convene appropriate groups of state, district, school and community leaders to explore the ideas of the National Commission, as well as others, and define specific steps toward improving K-12 public education governance.



# Appendix A: Governing America's Schools Initiative Description

In January 1998, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) began work under a multi-year grant from the Joyce Foundation to examine K-12 public education governance. The major purposes of this project, termed the Governing America's Schools initiative, are:

- To produce information about K-12 public education governance to help policymakers, educators and the general public make informed decisions about how to improve governance
- To promote a national dialogue among policymakers, educators and the general public about how states, districts and schools can improve governance.

ECS divided the work of this project into three phases:

- Phase One: Research
- Phase Two: National Commission on Governing America's Schools
- Phase Three: Dissemination, Discussion and Assistance

## *Phase One: Research*

From January 1998 to January 1999, ECS worked with a number of individuals to develop a knowledge base about K-12 public education governance. ECS took an interdisciplinary, international approach to this task, and formed two groups to guide the development of this knowledge base. (Please see the Acknowledgments for a listing of the individuals who made up the Research Steering Committee and Research Advisory Board.)

In addition, ECS worked with a number of individuals in the writing of several reports. These individuals also are listed in the Acknowledgments.

## *Phase Two: National Commission on Governing America's Schools*

As the primary focus of phase two of this project, ECS formed the National Commission on Governing America's Schools in February 1999. The purpose of the National Commission (please see the Acknowledgments for a listing of members) was to develop options for improving K-12 public education governance. The National Commission's charge was to present ideas and strategies concerning modifications in K-12 public education governance that may lead to improvements for all students.

The National Commission met four times as a group, in February, July, October and November 1999. At its February meeting, members decided to develop several options and formed a working group for each. From February until July, each working group met one time, communicated via conference calls, phone calls, faxes and e-mail messages, and completed a preliminary report.

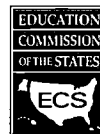
In July, the National Commission met and discussed the preliminary reports and presented them to about 100 policymakers and educators at a session of the ECS National Forum and Annual Meeting. From July to October, commission members completed an initial draft of the final report, which included revisions to the preliminary reports based upon feedback from the July meetings.

At its October meeting in Washington, D.C., the National Commission discussed the initial draft of the final report, agreed on some substantive changes and charged ECS staff with writing the final draft incorporating these changes. In November, the National Commission released its final report and discussed the contents with policymakers, educators and reporters.

## *Phase Three: Dissemination, Discussion and Assistance*

In conjunction with the release and dissemination of the National Commission's final report, ECS begins phase three of the project—the dissemination, discussion and assistance phase. In this phase, the National Commission and ECS staff will do the following:

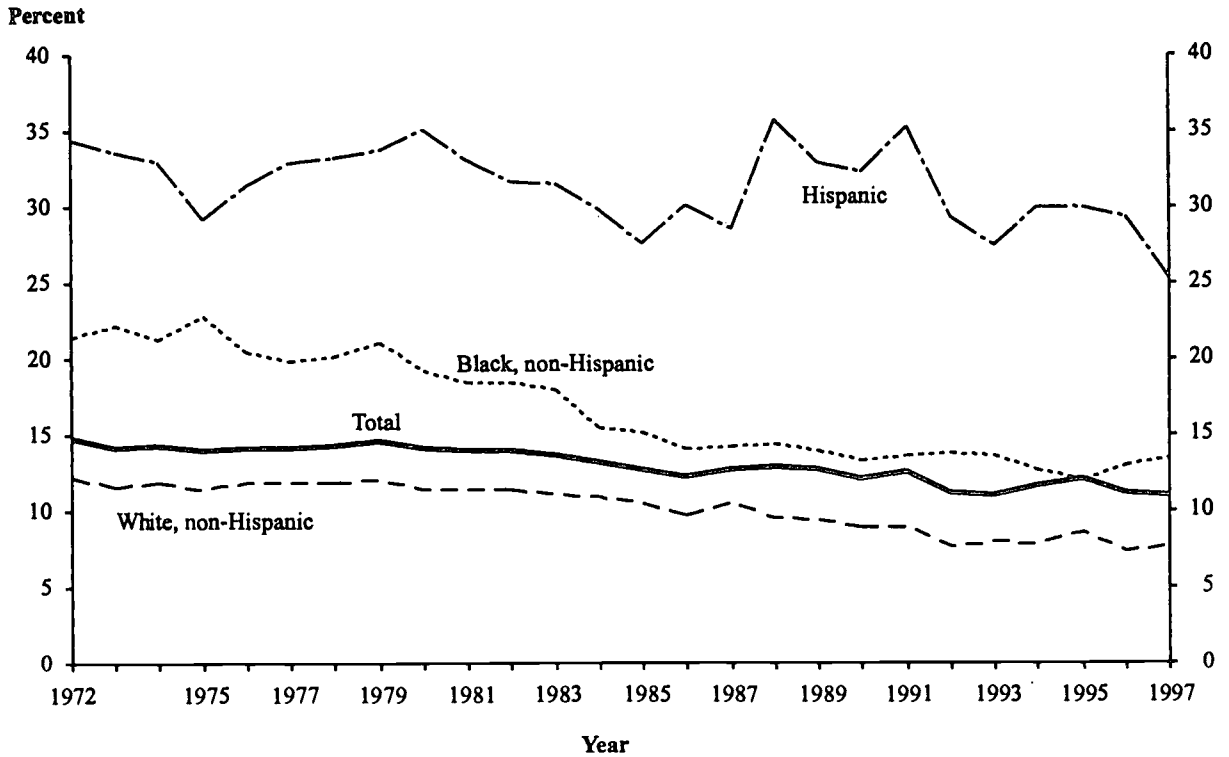
- Engage a national audience in discussion and debate about K-12 public education governance, including writing editorials and articles, and convening state, regional and national meetings
- Work directly with state and school district leaders interested in rethinking and redesigning their governance systems.



# Appendix B: The Condition of K-12 Public Education

*Table 1: Dropout Rates*

Status dropout rates, ages 16-24, by race-ethnicity: October 1972 through October 1997

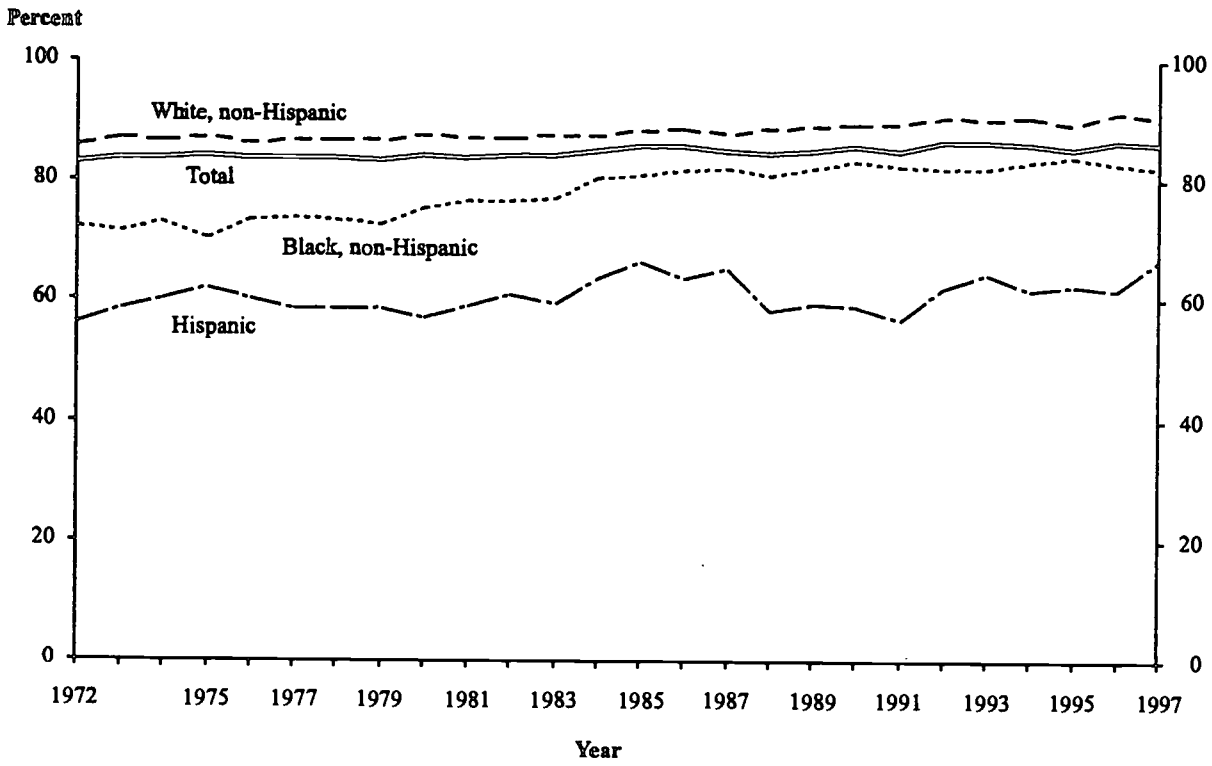


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, October (various years), unpublished data.



**Table 2: High School Completion Rates**

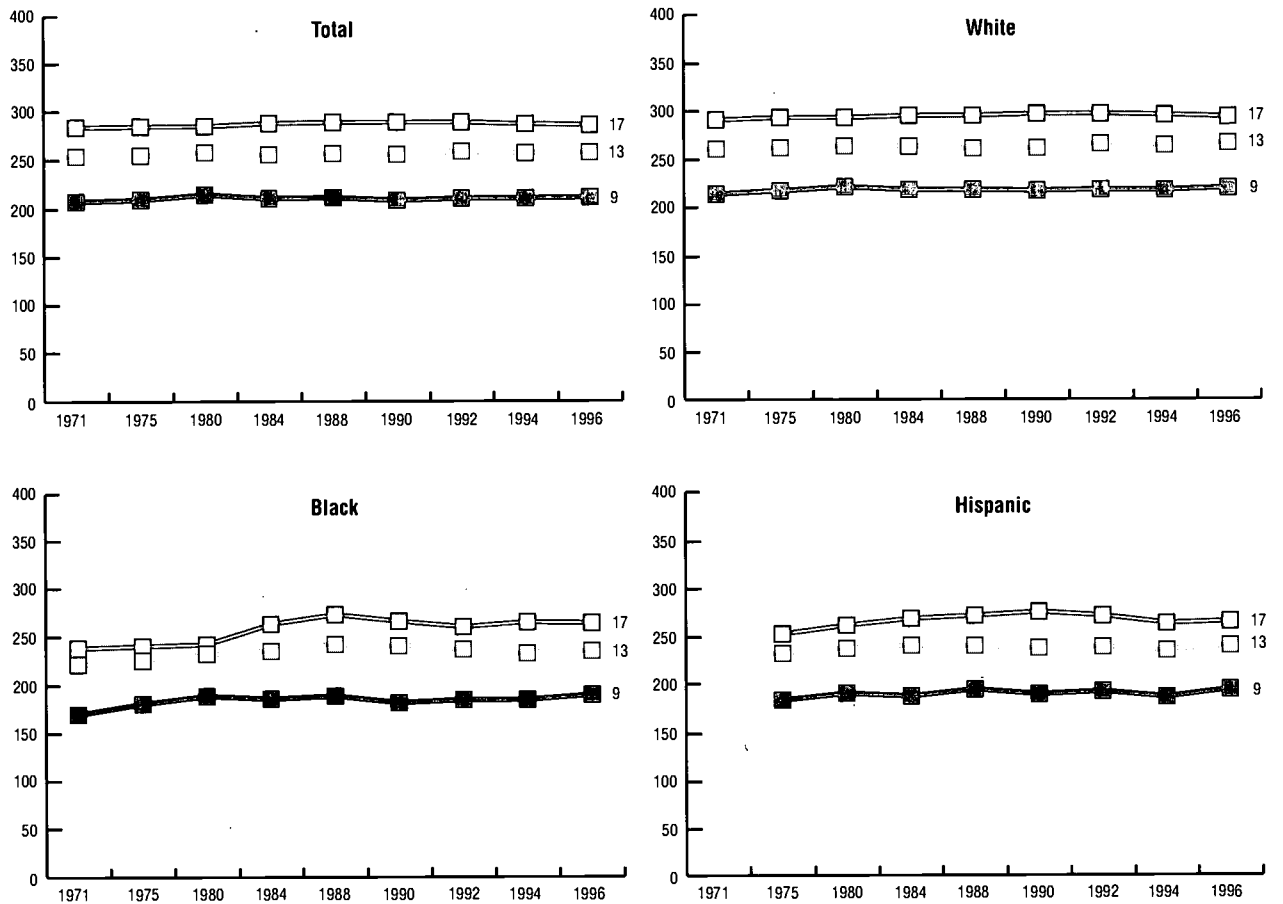
Completion rates, ages 18–24 not currently enrolled in high school or below, by race-ethnicity:  
October 1972 through October 1997



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, October (various years), unpublished data.



**Table 3: Average Reading Proficiency**

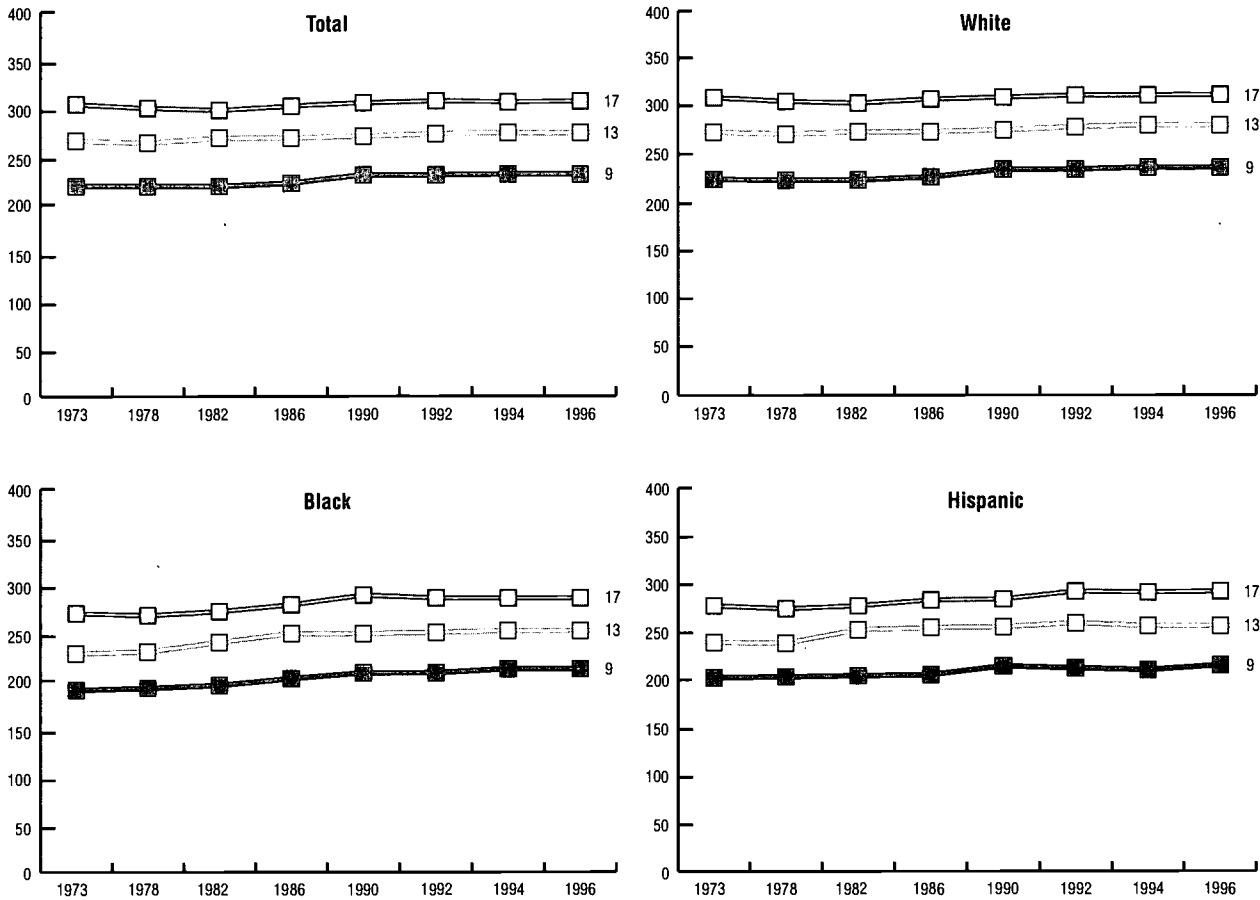


Level 150: Simple, discrete reading tasks  
 Level 200: Partial skills and understanding  
 Level 250: Interrelates ideas and makes generalizations  
 Level 300: Understands complicated information  
 Level 350: Learns from specialized reading materials

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress*, 1997.



**Table 4: Average Math Proficiency**



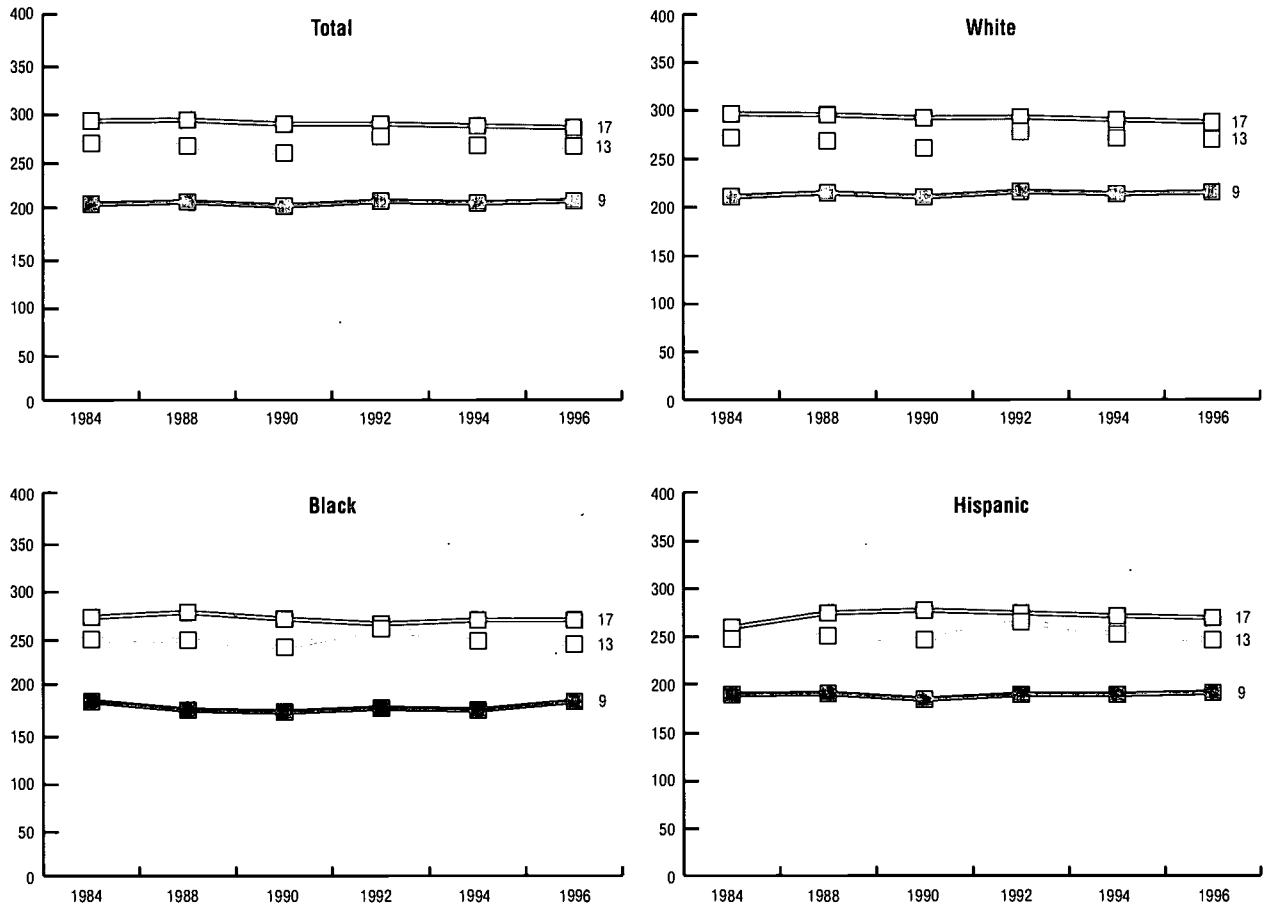
- Level 150: Simple, arithmetic facts
- Level 200: Beginning skills and understanding
- Level 250: Numerical operations and beginning problem solving
- Level 300: Moderately complex procedures and reasoning
- Level 350: Multi-step problem solving and algebra

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress*, 1997.



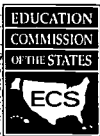


*Table 5: Average Writing Proficiency*

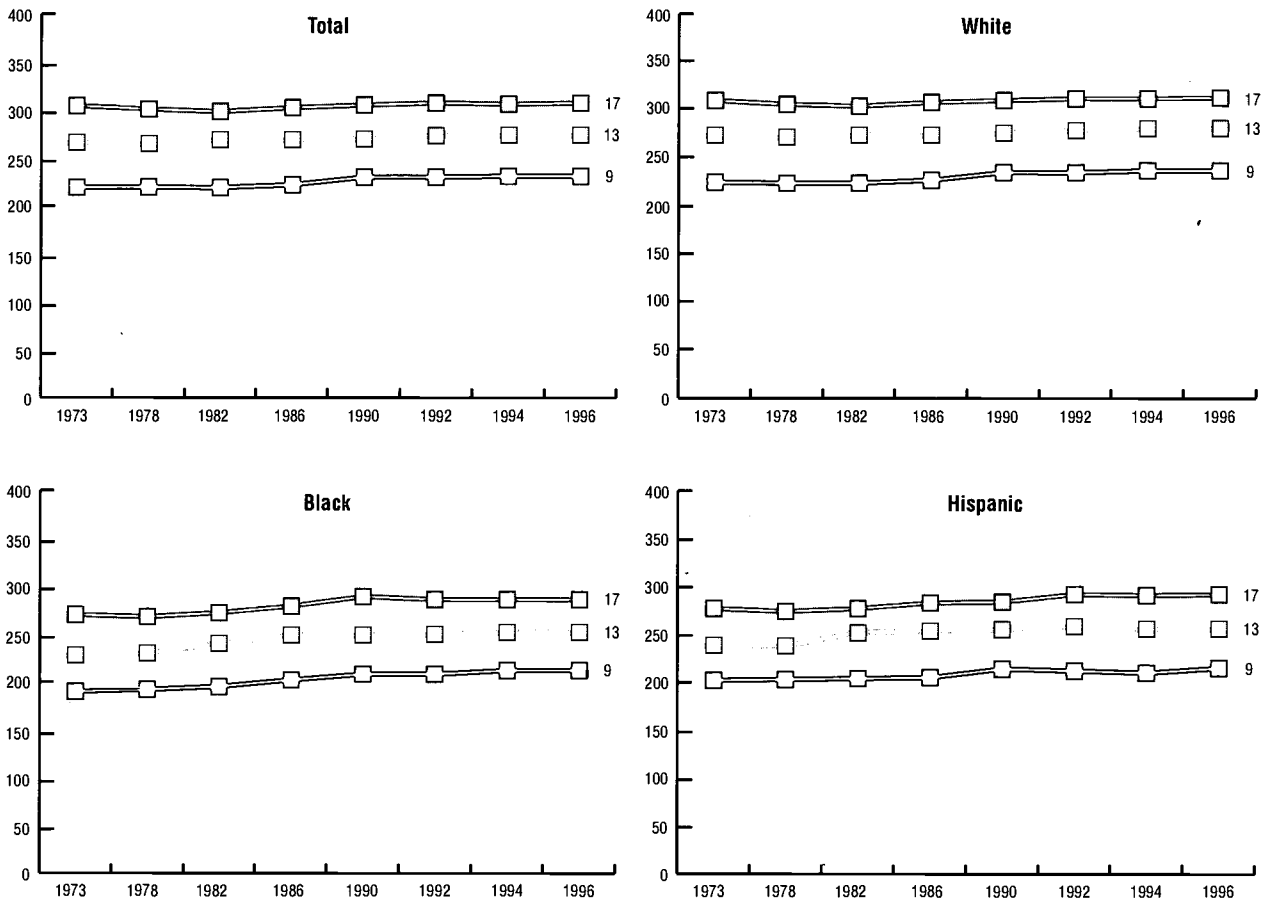


- Level 150: Disjointed, unclear writing
- Level 200: Incomplete, vague writing
- Level 250: Beginning focused, clear writing
- Level 300: Complete, sufficient writing
- Level 350: Effective, coherent writing

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress*, 1997.

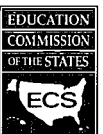


**Table 6: Average Science Proficiency**



- Level 150: Knows everyday science facts
- Level 200: Understands general scientific principles
- Level 250: Applies general scientific information
- Level 300: Analyzes scientific procedures and data
- Level 350: Integrates specialized scientific information

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress*, 1998.



**Table 7: Levels of Achievement in Reading**

<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>At or Above Basic</i>	<i>At or Above Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
<b>All</b>				
1992	38%	62%	31%	7%
1994	40	60	29	7
1998	38	62	29	6
<b>Whites</b>				
1992	29	71	35	8
1994	29	71	37	9
1998	27	73	39	10
<b>Blacks</b>				
1992	67	33	8	1
1994	69	31	9	1
1998	64	36	10	1
<b>Hispanics</b>				
1992	56	44	16	3
1994	64	36	13	2
1998	60	40	13	2

*Basic:* Fourth-grade students performing at the Basic Level should demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read. When reading text appropriate for 4th graders, they should be able to make relatively obvious connections between the text and their own experiences and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences.

*Proficient:* Fourth-grade students performing at the Proficient Level should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to 4th grade, they should be able to extend the ideas

in the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions and making connections to their own experiences. The connection between the text and what the student infers should be clear.

*Advanced:* Fourth-grade students performing at the Advanced Level should be able to generalize about topics in the reading selection and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices. When reading text appropriate to 4th grade, they should be able to judge text critically and, in general, give thorough answers that indicate careful thought.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1999, March). *NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

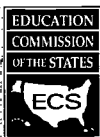


Table 7: Cont'd

<i>Grade 8</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>At or Above Basic</i>	<i>At or Above Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
<b>All</b>				
1992	31%	69%	29%	3%
1994	30	70	30	3
1998	26	74	33	3
<b>Whites</b>				
1992	22	78	36	4
1994	22	78	36	4
1998	18	82	41	4
<b>Blacks</b>				
1992	55	45	9	0
1994	56	44	9	0
1998	47	53	12	0
<b>Hispanics</b>				
1992	51	49	14	1
1994	51	49	14	1
1998	46	54	15	1

*Basic:* Eighth-grade students performing at the Basic Level should demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read and be able to make some interpretations. When reading text appropriate to 8th grade, they should be able to identify specific aspects of the text that reflect overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in the text to personal experience, and draw conclusions based on the text.

*Proficient:* Eighth-grade students performing at the Proficient Level should be able to show an overall understanding of the text, including inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to 8th grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, by drawing

conclusions and by making connections to their own experiences – including other reading experiences. Proficient 8th graders should be able to identify some of the devices authors use in composing text.

*Advanced:* Eighth-grade students performing at the Advanced Level should be able to describe the more abstract themes and ideas of the overall text. When reading text appropriate to 8th grade, they should be able to analyze both meaning and form and support their analyses explicitly with examples from the text; they should be able to extend text information by relating it to their experiences and to world events. At this level, student responses should be thorough, thoughtful and extensive.



**Table 7: Cont'd**

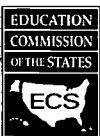
<i>Grade 12</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>At or Above Basic</i>	<i>At or Above Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
<b>All</b>				
1992	20%	80%	40%	4%
1994	25	74	36	4
1998	23	77	40	6
<b>Whites</b>				
1992	14	86	47	5
1994	19	81	43	5
1998	17	83	47	7
<b>Blacks</b>				
1992	39	61	18	1
1994	48	52	13	1
1998	43	57	18	1
<b>Hispanics</b>				
1992	34	66	24	2
1994	42	58	20	1
1998	36	64	26	2

*Basic:* Twelfth-grade students performing at the Basic Level should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding and make some interpretations of the text. When reading text appropriate to 12th grade, they should be able to identify and relate aspects of the text to its overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize interpretations, make connections among and relate ideas in the text to their personal experiences, and draw conclusions. They should be able to identify elements of an author's style.

*Proficient:* Twelfth-grade students performing at the Proficient Level should be able to show an overall understanding of the text which includes inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to 12th grade, they should be able to extend the ideas of the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions and making connections to their own personal experiences and other readings. Connections between

inferences and the text should be clear, even when implicit. These students should be able to analyze the author's use of literary devices.

*Advanced:* Twelfth-grade students performing at the Advanced Level should be able to describe more abstract themes and ideas in the overall text. When reading text appropriate to 12th grade, they should be able to analyze both the meaning and the form of the text and explicitly support their analyses with specific examples from the text. They should be able to extend the information from the text by relating it to their experiences and to the world. Their responses should be thorough, thoughtful and extensive.



**Table 8: Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)**

**GRADE 4**

**NATIONS' AVERAGE MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE COMPARED WITH THE U.S.**

NATION	AVERAGE	
SINGAPORE .....	625	↑
KOREA .....	611	
JAPAN .....	597	
HONG KONG .....	587	
(NETHERLANDS) .....	577	
CZECH REPUBLIC .....	567	
(AUSTRIA) .....	559	=
(SLOVENIA) .....	552	
IRELAND .....	550	
(HUNGARY) .....	548	
(AUSTRALIA) .....	546	
<b>UNITED STATES</b> .....	<b>545</b>	
CANADA .....	532	↓
(ISRAEL) .....	531	
(LATVIA (LSS)) .....	525	
SCOTLAND .....	520	
ENGLAND .....	513	
CYPRUS .....	502	
NORWAY .....	502	
NEW ZEALAND .....	499	
GREECE .....	492	
(THAILAND) .....	490	
PORTUGAL .....	475	
ICELAND .....	474	
IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC .....	429	
(KUWAIT) .....	400	
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 529</b>		

**GRADE 4**

**NATIONS' AVERAGE SCIENCE PERFORMANCE COMPARED WITH THE U.S.**

NATION	AVERAGE	
KOREA .....	597	↑
JAPAN .....	574	=
<b>UNITED STATES</b> .....	<b>565</b>	
(AUSTRIA) .....	565	
(AUSTRALIA) .....	562	
(NETHERLANDS) .....	557	
CZECH REPUBLIC .....	557	
ENGLAND .....	551	↓
CANADA .....	549	
SINGAPORE .....	547	
(SLOVENIA) .....	546	
IRELAND .....	539	
SCOTLAND .....	536	
HONG KONG .....	533	
(HUNGARY) .....	532	
NEW ZEALAND .....	531	
NORWAY .....	530	
(LATVIA (LSS)) .....	512	
(ISRAEL) .....	505	
ICELAND .....	505	
GREECE .....	497	
PORTUGAL .....	480	
CYPRUS .....	475	
(THAILAND) .....	473	
IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC .....	416	
(KUWAIT) .....	401	
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 524</b>		

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *Pursuing Excellence: A study of U.S. Fourth-Grade Mathematics and Science Achievement in International Context*. Figure 1. Washington D.C.: NCES.

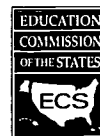
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *Pursuing Excellence: A study of U.S. Fourth-Grade Mathematics and Science Achievement in International Context*. Figure 2. Washington D.C.: NCES.

- Notes:
1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
  2. Latvia is designated LSS because only Latvian-speaking schools were tested.
  3. The international average is the average of the national average of the 26 nations.

- Notes:
1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
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  3. The international average is the average of the national average of the 26 nations.

- ↑ Nations with average scores significantly higher than the U.S.
- = Nations with average scores not significantly different than the U.S.
- ↓ Nations with average scores significantly lower than the U.S.

(Continued on next page)



NATIONS' AVERAGE MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE COMPARED WITH THE U.S.

NATION	AVERAGE
SINGAPORE	643
KOREA	607
JAPAN	605
HONG KONG	588
BELGIUM-FLEMISH	565
CZECH REPUBLIC	564
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	547
SWITZERLAND	545
(NETHERLANDS)	541
(SLOVENIA)	541
(BULGARIA)	540
(AUSTRIA)	539
FRANCE	538
HUNGARY	537
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	535
(AUSTRALIA)	530
IRELAND	527
CANADA	527
(BELGIUM-FRENCH)	526
SWEDEN	519
(THAILAND)	522
(ISRAEL)	522
(GERMANY)	509
NEW ZEALAND	508
ENGLAND	506
NORWAY	503
(DENMARK)	502
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>500</b>
(SCOTLAND)	498
LATVIA (LSS)	493
SPAIN	487
ICELAND	487
(GREECE)	484
(ROMANIA)	482
LITHUANIA	477
CYPRUS	474
PORTUGAL	454
IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC	428
(KUWAIT)	392
(COLUMBIA)	385
(SOUTH AFRICA)	354
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 513</b>	

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1996). *Pursuing Excellence: A study of U.S. Eighth-Grade Mathematics and Science Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Achievement in International Context*. Figure 1. Washington D.C.: NCES.

Notes:

1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
2. Latvia is designated LSS because only Latvian-speaking schools were tested.
3. The international average is the average of the national average of the 41 nations.
4. The country average for Sweden may appear to be out of place; however, statistically, its placement is correct.

NATIONS' AVERAGE SCIENCE PERFORMANCE COMPARED WITH THE U.S.

NATION	AVERAGE
SINGAPORE	607
CZECH REPUBLIC	574
JAPAN	571
KOREA	565
(BULGARIA)	565
(NETHERLANDS)	560
(SLOVENIA)	560
(AUSTRIA)	558
HUNGARY	554
ENGLAND	552
BELGIUM-FLEMISH	550
(AUSTRALIA)	545
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	544
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	538
IRELAND	538
SWEDEN	535
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>534</b>
(GERMANY)	531
CANADA	531
NORWAY	527
NEW ZEALAND	525
(THAILAND)	525
(ISRAEL)	524
HONG KONG	522
SWITZERLAND	522
(SCOTLAND)	517
SPAIN	517
FRANCE	498
(GREECE)	497
ICELAND	494
(ROMANIA)	486
LATVIA (LSS)	485
PORTUGAL	480
(DENMARK)	478
LITHUANIA	476
(BELGIUM-FRENCH)	471
IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC	470
CYPRUS	463
(KUWAIT)	430
(COLUMBIA)	411
(SOUTH AFRICA)	326
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 516</b>	

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1996). *Pursuing Excellence: A study of U.S. Eighth-Grade Mathematics and Science Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Achievement in International Context*. Figure 2. Washington D.C.: NCES.

Notes:

1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
2. Latvia is designated LSS because only Latvian-speaking schools were tested.
3. The international average is the average of the national average of the 41 nations.
4. The country average for Scotland (or Spain) may appear to be out of place; however, statistically, its placement is correct.



**FINAL YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL  
NATIONS' AVERAGE MATHEMATICS  
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE PERFORMANCE  
COMPARED WITH THE U.S.**

NATION	AVERAGE	
(NETHERLANDS)	560	↑
SWEDEN	552	
(DENMARK)	547	
SWITZERLAND	540	
(ICELAND)	534	
(NORWAY)	528	
(FRANCE)	523	
NEW ZEALAND	522	
(AUSTRALIA)	522	
(CANADA)	519	
(AUSTRIA)	518	
(SLOVENIA)	512	=
(GERMANY)	495	
HUNGARY	483	
(ITALY)	476	
(RUSSIAN FEDERATION)	471	
(LITHUANIA)	469	↓
CZECH REPUBLIC	466	
(UNITED STATES)	461	
(CYPRUS)	446	↓
(SOUTH AFRICA)	356	
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 500</b>		

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1998). *Pursuing Excellence: A Study of U.S. Twelfth-Grade Mathematics and Science Achievement in International Context*. Figure 1. Washington D.C.: NCES.

- Notes:
1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
  2. The international average is the average of the national average of the 21 nations.

- ↑ Nations with average scores significantly higher than the U.S.
- = Nations with average scores not significantly different than the U.S.
- ↓ Nations with average scores significantly lower than the U.S.

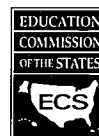
**FINAL YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL  
NATIONS' AVERAGE SCIENCE  
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE PERFORMANCE  
COMPARED WITH THE U.S.**

NATION	AVERAGE	
SWEDEN	559	↑
(NETHERLANDS)	558	
(ICELAND)	549	
(NORWAY)	544	
(CANADA)	532	
NEW ZEALAND	529	
(AUSTRALIA)	527	
SWITZERLAND	523	
(AUSTRIA)	520	
(SLOVENIA)	517	
(DENMARK)	509	
(GERMANY)	497	
(FRANCE)	487	
CZECH REPUBLIC	487	
(RUSSIAN FEDERATION)	481	
(UNITED STATES)	480	
(ITALY)	475	
HUNGARY	471	
(LITHUANIA)	461	
(CYPRUS)	448	↓
(SOUTH AFRICA)	349	
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 500</b>		

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1998). *Pursuing Excellence: A Study of U.S. Twelfth-Grade Mathematics and Science Achievement in International Context*. Figure 5. Washington D.C.: NCES.

- Notes:
1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
  2. The international average is the average of the national average of the 21 nations.

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**Table 8: Cont'd**

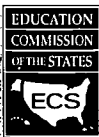
**FINAL YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL  
AVERAGE MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE  
OF ADVANCED MATHEMATICS  
STUDENTS IN ALL COUNTRIES**

NATION	AVERAGE	
FRANCE.....	557	↑
(RUSSIAN FEDERATION).....	542	
SWITZERLAND.....	533	
(AUSTRALIA).....	525	
(DENMARK).....	522	
(CYPRUS).....	518	
(LITHUANIA).....	516	
GREECE.....	513	
SWEDEN.....	512	
CANADA.....	509	
(SLOVENIA).....	475	=
(ITALY).....	474	
CZECH REPUBLIC.....	469	
(GERMANY).....	465	
(UNITED STATES).....	442	
(AUSTRIA).....	436	↓
NONE		
<b>INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE = 501</b>		

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. (1998). *Pursuing Excellence: A Study of U.S. Twelfth-Grade Mathematics and Science Achievement in International Context*. Figure 9. Washington D.C.: NCES.

- Notes:
1. Nations not meeting international guidelines are shown in parenthesis.
  2. The international average is the average of the national average of the 16 nations.

- ↑ Nations with average scores significantly higher than the U.S.
- = Nations with average scores not significantly different than the U.S.
- ↓ Nations with average scores significantly lower than the U.S.

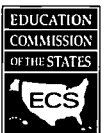


## Table 9: Dropout Rates by State

The following table shows the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders, by state, who dropped out during the 1994-95 school year. Only those states that reported their dropout data to the U.S. Department of Education are included.

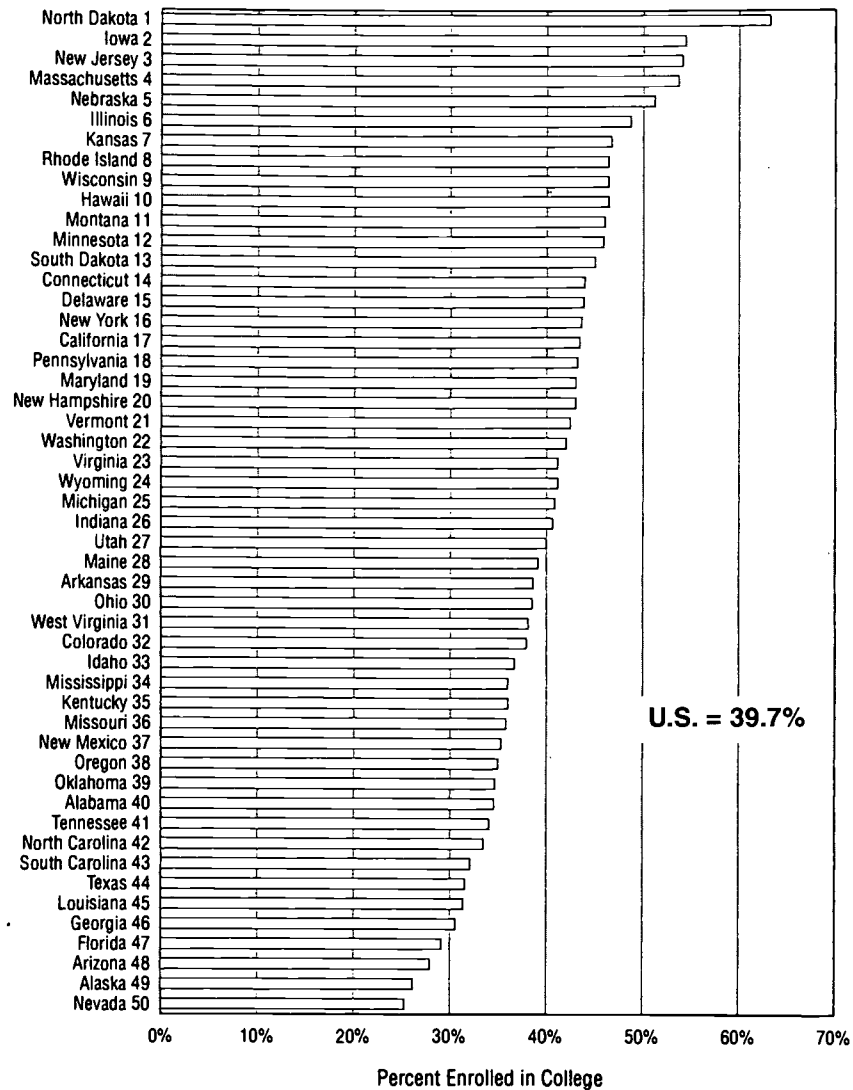
<i>State</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>
Alabama	5.6%	5.4%	6.1%	6.2%
Arkansas	4.1	3.4	6.0	8.2
California	3.9	2.4	6.7	5.6
Connecticut	4.8	3.1	8.3	12.5
Delaware	4.5	4.0	5.3	8.3
Georgia	8.5	7.7	9.7	12.5
Hawaii	4.7	7.8	6.3	6.1
Indiana	3.5	3.3	5.2	5.7
Iowa	3.1	2.7	10.3	8.5
Kansas	4.7	3.9	8.9	11.1
Louisiana	11.6	9.9	13.4	17.6
Maine	3.1	3.1	5.1	5.3
Massachusetts	3.3	2.7	5.7	7.7
Minnesota	5.3	4.1	20.5	16.6
Mississippi	6.2	5.5	6.8	5.5
Missouri	6.6	5.7	11.8	9.8
Montana	5.6	5.1	13.5	13.0
Nebraska	4.5	3.5	13.3	13.5
Nevada	9.6	8.1	13.0	15.0
New York	3.7	2.2	5.7	6.6
North Dakota	2.5	1.9	5.7	4.2
Ohio	5.4	4.3	11.4	14.3
Oregon	7.0	6.3	12.4	16.2
Pennsylvania	4.0	2.8	10.1	11.9
Rhode Island	4.6	3.8	9.6	8.1
South Carolina	2.8	2.5	3.4	3.3
Utah	4.4	-	-	-
West Virginia	3.8	3.8	4.4	0.9
Wyoming	5.7	5.2	13.4	9.4

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics (1997, March). *Dropout Rates in the United States, 1997*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

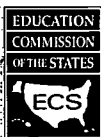


**Table 10: High School Completion and College Entrance Rates by State**

**Chance for College by Age 19, by State, 1996**

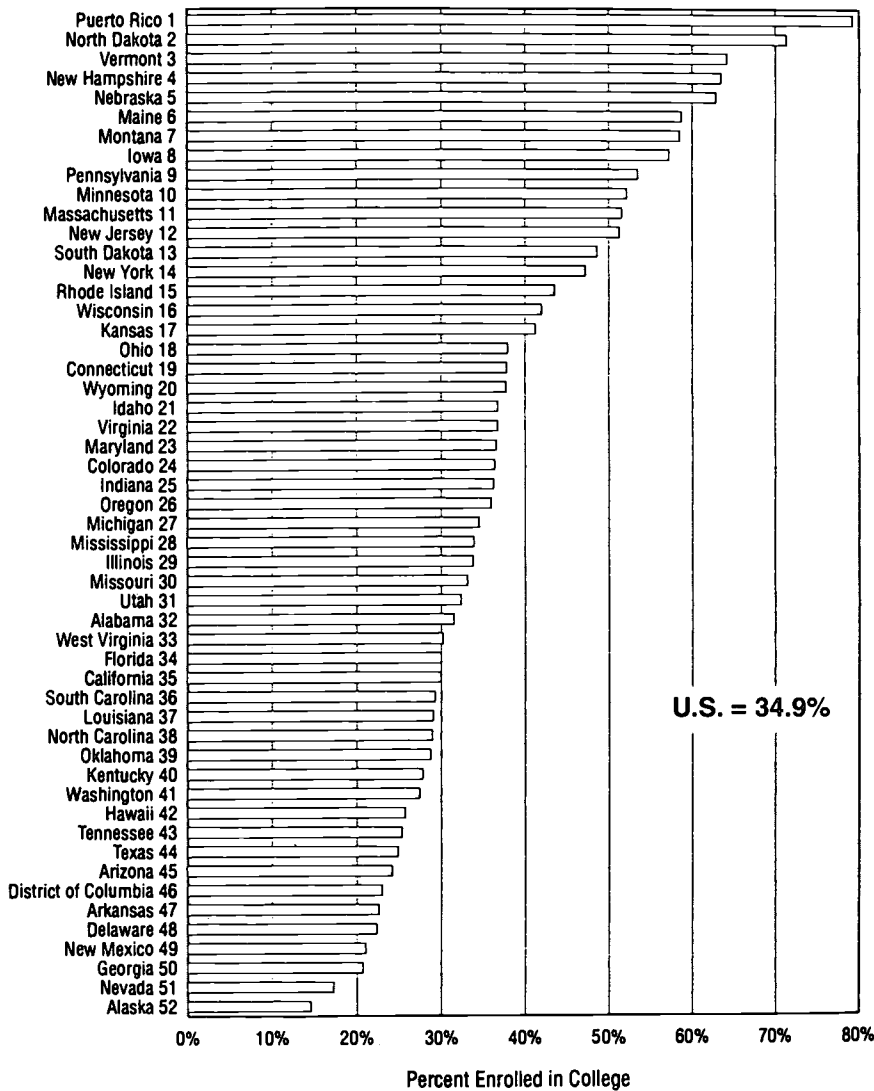


SOURCE: Mortenson Institute, *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* (Oskaloosa, IA: February 1999), p. 3.



**Table 11: High School Completion and College Entrance Rates for Low-Income Students by State**

**Chance for College for Dependent 18-to-24-Year Old Students From Low-Income Families, 1996**



SOURCE: Mortenson Institute, *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* (Oskaloosa, IA: February 1999), p. 1.

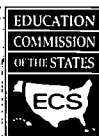


**Table 12: 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress  
Mathematics Assessment Results by State**

State	% at or Above Proficient Level	% Change from 1992 to 1996
Connecticut	31%	
Minnesota	29	+3
Maine	27	0
Wisconsin	27	+3
New Jersey	25	0
Texas	25	+10
Indiana	24	+8
Massachusetts	24	+1
Nebraska	24	+2
North Dakota	24	+2
Michigan	23	+5
Utah	23	+4
Vermont	23	Did not participate in 1992
Colorado	22	+5
Iowa	22	-4
Maryland	22	+4
Montana	22	Did not participate in 1992
Alaska	21	Did not participate in 1992
North Carolina	21	+8
Oregon	21	Did not participate in 1992
Washington	21	Did not participate in 1992
Missouri	20	+1
New York	20	+3
Pennsylvania	20	-2
Virginia	19	0
West Virginia	19	+7
Wyoming	19	0
Rhode Island	17	+4
Tennessee	17	+7
Delaware	16	-1
Hawaii	16	+1
Kentucky	16	+3
Arizona	15	+2
Florida	15	+2
Nevada	14	Did not participate in 1992
Arkansas	13	+3
Georgia	13	-2
New Mexico	13	+2
South Carolina	12	-1
Alabama	11	+1
California	11	-1
Louisiana	8	0
Mississippi	8	+2
District of Columbia	5	0

*Proficient:* Eighth-grade students performing at the Proficient Level should apply mathematical concepts and procedures consistently to complex problems in the five NAEP content strands – Number Sense, Properties and Operations; Measurement; Geometry and Spatial Sense; Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability; and Algebra and Functions.

SOURCE: Council of Chief State School Officers. (1997). *State Indicators of Science and Mathematics Education, 1997*. Washington, D.C.: CCSSO.



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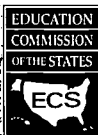
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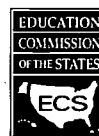


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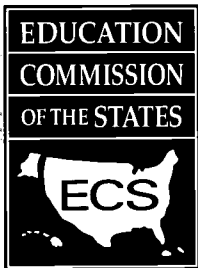


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Education Commission of the States  
707 17th Street, Suite 2700  
Denver, Colorado 80202-3427  
phone: 303-299-3600  
fax: 303-296-8332  
e-mail: [ecs@ecs.org](mailto:ecs@ecs.org)  
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