

HOPE STREET GROUP 2012 COLLOQUIUM EDUCATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Overview

The level and quality of education both have an enormous impact on an individual's ability to be economically stable and prosperous in today's world. When you consider the statistics, it is clear that the United States needs to make improvements when it comes to public education delivery.

- Nearly 1 out of 4 Americans attending public schools will drop out before graduating, a statistic that is significantly higher for low-income and minority students
- Those who do not graduate from high school earn an average of only \$11,000 per year compared to \$23,000 for those with a diploma and over \$50,000 with a college degree
- Unemployment rates are higher for those without a high school diploma at over 14 percent.
- Teacher quality directly impacts earning ability with a good teacher adding over \$10,000 to the lifetime earnings of a student, according to the Hoover Institution

To find ways to improve America's schools, Hope Street Group brought together a wide-ranging and collaborative group of education stakeholders including educators, district administrators, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders at the 2012 Annual Colloquium to develop a shared agenda and vocabulary promoting transformational change in America's schools. The goal was to bring together diverse thinkers and experts from different backgrounds to gain different perspectives and ideas for driving progress.

The group started the days' discussion around what education would ideally look like in the United States by 2025. The group reached consensus on three central areas of focus to bring about change: developing new approaches to elevate individual teacher voice and the status of the teaching profession overall, better use of technology in the classroom to encourage individualized learning, and greater transparency to empower parents and decision makers to pursue innovative policies.

Summary of Group Consensus

Participants agreed upon the following areas of focus to move public education forward:

Elevating Teacher Voice

Background: Studies show that significant percentages of teachers support current education reform movements, yet the voices of these teachers are not always heard. A 2011 report by the National Center for Education Information, for example, found that nearly 60 percent of teachers were open to basing pay on performance. Further, nearly half of the teachers surveyed indicated they supported basing teacher performance on student achievement.

Idea: We should encourage and work with unions to promote excellent teaching, elevate the profession, and represent individual teacher voice in reform efforts.

Barriers:

- Current union model offers a one-size-fits-all approach for teachers, which includes many benefits for participation but does not represent the views of every teacher, particularly teachers who support reform efforts. Teachers want to be seen as professionals and given fair representation that treats them as individuals not as part of a collective
- Lack of communication to teachers about other alternatives

Recommendations for Improvement:

Participants developed a menu of options for better engagement with unions to better serve teachers:

- Highlight and emulate instances where unions and policymakers have worked together to achieve meaningful school reforms
- Work with and engage union leaders
- Encourage teachers to engage union leaders to push for greater involvement in moving forward with reform efforts
- Disseminate information to teachers directly through either mass media or direct outreach
- Create an additional union or support network with new priorities
- Direct communication with management and school leaders

Technology

Background: Advances in technology may provide invaluable tools to enhance student learning. Example included a pilot program in Chicago Public Schools that focused on individualized learning through technology improved student performance from significantly below average to bring students near grade level.

Idea: The current classroom set up does not account for the wide range of individual student needs or different paces of learning. Even the best teacher cannot teach to every skill level at all times. The use of technology in education allows us to create teaching and learning environments that individualize education so students will learn at their own pace. Students are less likely to fall behind with technology that recognizes where they are and develops lesson plans based on their individual needs.

Barriers:

- Are technology tools designed to meet the needs of diverse learners (Howard Garner's multiple intelligences-linguistic, kinesthetic, visual, musical, etc.)?
- Must have a mind shift from the teacher as traditional instructor to a facilitator and manager
- An increase in technology would lead to a decrease in traditional teaching positions

Recommendations for Improvement:

- Students spend a portion of their day with technology that is catered to their individual skill level and learning style
- Teacher training programs and professional development opportunities shift to focus on preparing teachers to be facilitators

Innovative Policies

Background: It will take innovative new approaches to developing educational policies to create the environment for reform. We will need to work with elected officials, school district administrators, and other decision makers to work toward making the changes necessary.

Idea: There are three areas of policy that must be affected if we are going to evoke change and all three need to work in concert.

1. Choice and Information
2. Accountability and Autonomy
3. Governance

Barriers:

1. Choice and Information
 - To increase choice, there must be an increase in transparency of information for both students and parents
2. Accountability and Autonomy
 - Current teacher evaluations and career structure (pay, tenure, etc.) are not designed to hold teachers accountable for student learning and reward for success
 - Restrictions on districts to work autonomously
3. Governance
 - Local school boards with unknowledgeable/unqualified members making policy decisions

Recommendations for Improvement:

1. Choice and Information
 - Increase and promote transparency through the widespread use of technology
 - Implement policies that allow for greater school choice for parents
2. Accountability and Autonomy
 - Engage teachers in reform of evaluations and in revamping the teaching profession
 - Increase the number of charter schools and promote autonomous public schools (i.e. Manual H.S. as an Innovation School in Colorado)
3. Governance
 - Engage elected leaders and decision makers to encourage change

Next Steps

Hope Street Group is best positioned to currently focus on two out of three areas: elevating the teacher voice and developing and/or identifying innovative policies and models that are focused around accountability and autonomy for teachers in order to professionalize the teaching profession. Hope Street Group concentrates on teacher evaluation as the lever that promotes teacher accountability, allows for professional development and growth, and is built *with* teacher voice.

Our next steps include bringing together groups of practical and solutions-focused stakeholders in education to share experiences, collaboratively develop innovative ideas and practices, and then find examples of successful results across the areas of elevating the teacher voice and innovative policies. We will compile data and results to publish and replicate as a best-practices "action guide" for education stakeholders to emulate.

However, Hope Street Group views technology as a fundamental game changer in the nexus of transformation and hope to be honing in on this topic in the future.

Call to Action

- A. Provide feedback on the content outlined in this brief based on your reflections from the breakout sessions
- B. Send us examples where you see innovative leaders implementing game-changing solutions within each of the three areas of focus discussed
- C. Provide reflections on the initial ideas developed during the Colloquium, suggesting most particularly any concept, model, entity, enterprise, or individual whom or which you believe could be of assistance in taking the next steps forward