

Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform

Narrowing the
Achievement Gaps

Closing the
Staffing Gaps

Reducing the
Funding Gaps



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Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform

NARROWING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS, CLOSING THE STAFFING GAPS, REDUCING THE FUNDING GAPS

“Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this Commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the university at Cambridge, public schools and grammar schools in the towns ...”

Massachusetts Constitution, Part II, Chapter 5, Section 2



Introduction

The Massachusetts Teachers Association and the AFT Massachusetts support high expectations for every child, regardless of

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background or ability. We believe that every child has a basic right to a great public school staffed by highly effective teachers and leaders. We believe great public schools can address some of the disadvantages that stand in the way of academic achievement, if provided with the tools and resources to get the job done. We believe that providing high-quality, sustained professional development to improve the knowledge and skills of all educators is essential to narrowing the achievement gaps.

We believe that state policy-makers and local school committees are obligated to provide the resources needed for schools to do the job of educating all students to high standards. We believe that Massachusetts is fortunate to have thousands

of dedicated educators in our schools, but that all of us can, and must, do better for all of our state's children.

It is time for state, district, school, and teacher leaders to work collaboratively to create effective teaching and learning conditions to fulfill the promise of education reform. Highly effective teachers need working conditions that allow for collaborative decision-making; textbooks, instructional materials, and resources to meet the needs of all their students; and control over their own profession. Schools need instructional leaders to assist in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and managers to run efficient, safe and engaging learning environments.

While our students have scored first in the nation in reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8 on National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, the “nation’s report card”) the 2005 “flat” MCAS results illustrate the problem. The state reports, “... [I]n English language arts at grade 10 and in mathematics at grades 4, 5, 8, and 10, performance gaps in these subjects increased between 2001 and 2005 as white students improved at faster rates than African-American and Hispanic students.”⁹ Commissioner David Driscoll, in referring to these results, stated, “The main thing is to

recognize that we have hit a plateau ... it is a warning sign and we need to really look at teaching and learning and capacity-building.”¹⁰

The stakes could not be higher. The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC) states:

“What does being literate for the New Economy mean? At one time, mastering a set of mechanical skills could ensure a lifetime of good employment. That possibility is increasingly unrealistic in a world defined by complexity, competitiveness, and market change. In the twenty-first century, strong basic skills are essential to be able to participate in a world governed by complex information and communication technology. A single set of technical skills is no longer sufficient.”

According to this report, although Massachusetts is doing well relative to the rest of the country, we have 280,000 high school dropouts and another 667,000 workers who have a high school credential but have limited skills.¹¹

Unfortunately, the promise to poor children outlined in MERA has been lost in bureaucratic rule-making about testing and accountability. The Commonwealth has expended enormous time and resources on a school-inspection

process that fails to improve schools. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability reports that district “improvement efforts are sporadic, piecemeal, and not aligned to student assessment data because there is no systematic planning, execution, and management.”¹²

The Rennie Center for Education Policy and Research reports, “The state’s heavy and sustained investment in the development of standards and assessments has not been matched in developing the capacity of teachers and educational leaders.”¹³

We believe that in order to fulfill the promise of education reform for all of our children, we must work collaboratively to narrow the achievement gaps, close the staffing gaps, and reduce the funding gaps.

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What We Mean When We Say ...

Education is filled with jargon that often excludes those outside the profession from engaging in meaningful conversation about schools and student achievement. We offer these definitions of the terms used throughout this report.

Achievement Gaps:

These are the differences in academic performance between student groups based on poverty, race, language, gender, and disability status. Too often, achievement gaps are reported through MCAS scores. However, disadvantaged students – those who attend high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools – are less likely to have access to a challenging and rigorous curriculum. They are more likely to have lower rates of successful course and school completion. They also are more likely to have higher mobility, absenteeism, dropout, and discipline rates.

Core Academic Program:

Outlined in the Education Reform Act of 1993, Chapter 69, Section 1D, mandates that all public school children be provided instruction related to all of the learning standards articulated in the seven Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks: The Arts; English Language Arts; Foreign Languages; Health; History and Social Sciences; Mathematics; and Science, Engineering, and Technology. As a result of the *McDuffy* decision, a public school education in Massachusetts must include instruction in these seven capabilities.

Hard-to-staff Schools:

Those having difficulty in finding and retaining qualified and effective teachers. Because of their location in economically depressed or isolated communities, high poverty and rural schools tend to be hard-to-staff. These schools offer comparatively low salaries and lack the amenities that other districts use to attract and retain teachers. Typically, hard-to-staff schools have high turnover rates and a high percentage of relatively new teachers, which makes it difficult not only to maintain stability, but also to develop a strong organizational culture that supports learning.¹⁴

Highly Effective Teachers:

Practitioners possess a teaching license and maintain knowledge about their content areas and the pedagogical skills needed to educate a diverse student population. Highly effective teachers know what to teach, how to teach, and how to adapt instructional strategies to address student needs.

High-poverty Schools:

Those in which 40 percent or more of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL). A high-poverty district has 40 percent or more students eligible for FRPL; high schools in such districts, which tend not to accurately report the percentage of FRPL students, are considered high-poverty schools.¹⁶

High-stakes Tests:

MCAS is a high-stakes test for high school students because they must pass in order to graduate. MCAS is a high-stakes test for schools because the school can be designated as *in need of improvement* under the federal accountability system or *underperforming* under the state accountability system based on student test results.

Instructional Leader:

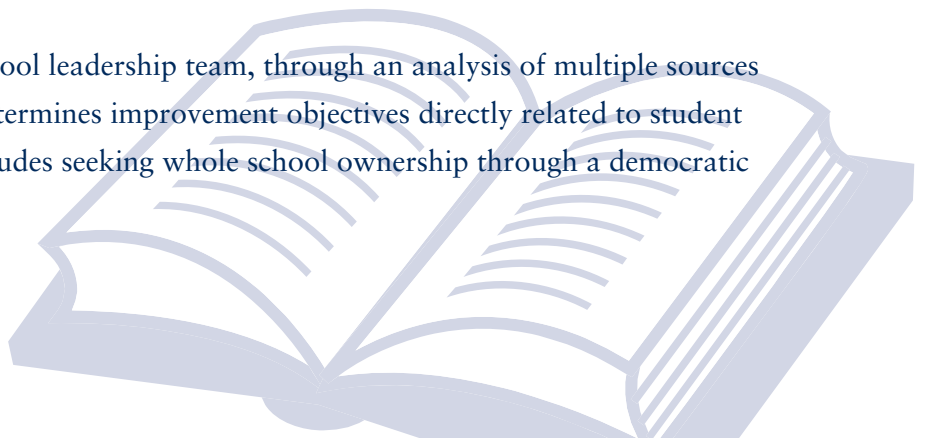
An effective, licensed educator, respected for his/her instructional abilities. Instructional leaders work with colleagues in such teaching and learning activities as mentoring beginning teachers; providing peer assistance; writing curriculum materials, such as scope and sequence, curriculum maps, model lessons, and standards-based units of instruction; coaching teachers inside classrooms; observing teaching practices and providing formative assessment; training teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals in the content of various curricular and instructional programs and practices; and acting as the instructional leader of a school or content area department. An instructional leader is a member of the school faculty.

School-based Professional Development:

Training that provides direct instruction, practice, and coaching and specifically addresses the knowledge and skills that teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals must have in order to successfully attain the school's improvement objectives, increase student achievement, and narrow the achievement gaps.

School Improvement:

A process by which a collaborative school leadership team, through an analysis of multiple sources of student data and educator input, determines improvement objectives directly related to student achievement. School improvement includes seeking whole school ownership through a democratic



process, professional development for staff, and program evaluation to determine the degree of success in attaining objectives.

School Manager:

An effective, licensed educator who is able to manage a complex operation. Managers focus their time and expertise on making schools run efficiently and effectively. This includes creating school schedules for teachers and students; enabling parents to get up-to-date information about their children's academic, social and behavioral performance; ensuring that teachers and students have the textbooks and instructional materials necessary for teaching and learning; overseeing the care and maintenance of the physical plant; and developing and implementing the school budget. A school manager is an administrator.

Teacher Career Path:

A plan that acknowledges teachers' knowledge and skill levels at various stages of their careers. Resident teachers, who are in their first three years of practice and still learning their craft, are provided with significant support from the school and district. Fully-licensed teachers are effective in their practice. Highly effective teachers are encouraged and supported to go through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) licensure program and provided with opportunities to become instructional leaders without leaving the teaching ranks.

Technical Assistance:

Training, coaching, and guidance provided by experienced, highly effective and respected educators to colleagues in schools and districts. Technical assistance should not be a one-size-fits-all improvement process, but rather should be designed to meet the needs of specific schools or districts.



Recommendations for Narrowing the Achievement Gaps

1. State policy-makers and district, school, and association/union leaders should institute early childhood programs and full-day kindergartens, reduce class size, and provide either extended day or after-school programs to address educational inequities that disadvantaged children bring to school.

The root cause of persistent educational inequality is most often a child's socioeconomic status. The seeds of inequality are sown early, and the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged only grows wider as the child matures. Schools can address some of these inequities through educational programs beginning in early childhood and continuing through school completion.

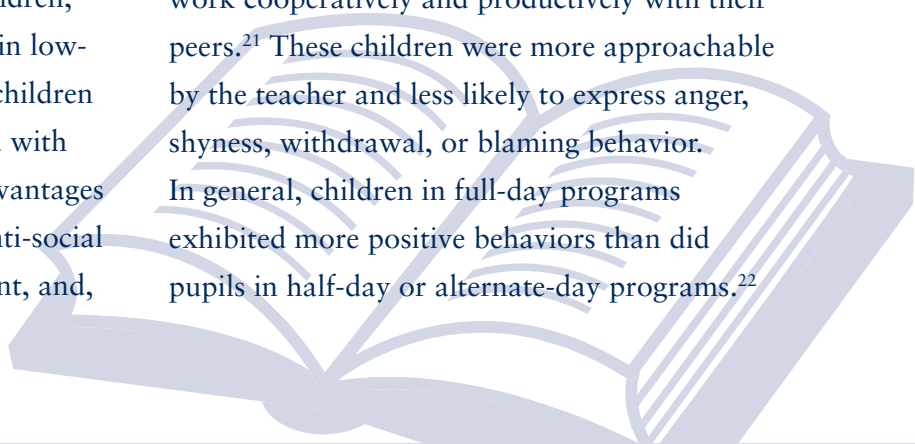
In Massachusetts, 12 percent of children live in poverty (income below the federal poverty level of \$20,000 for a family of four); 7 percent of white children, 29 percent of black children, and 36 percent of Latino children live in poverty. An additional 16 percent live in low-income households¹⁷ (family income of \$40,000 for a family of four): 19 percent of white children, 54 percent of black children, and 69 percent of Latino children live in low-income households. Nearly half of all children face one risk-factor or more associated with gaps in school readiness.¹⁸ These disadvantages lead to poor academic achievement, anti-social behavior, lack of educational attainment, and,

eventually, unemployment and criminality.

Disadvantaged children enter kindergarten with substantial gaps in measures of reading and mathematics proficiency and readiness to learn. Middle-class children enter school better prepared. Data indicate that these gaps grow over time so that disadvantaged children do not achieve at the same rate as their more advantaged peers. Achievement gaps tend to widen over time. Poor academic achievement results in unemployment or under-employment in adulthood.¹⁹

Early Childhood Programs: A Rand study of early childhood education found that high-quality early childhood programs that address learning gaps have long-term positive consequences for children.²⁰ The most effective early childhood programs are school-centered and staffed by teachers holding bachelor's degrees and licensed by the state.

Full-day Kindergarten: Researchers report that children attending full-day kindergarten programs are more independent learners, are more engaged in learning, and are better able to work cooperatively and productively with their peers.²¹ These children were more approachable by the teacher and less likely to express anger, shyness, withdrawal, or blaming behavior. In general, children in full-day programs exhibited more positive behaviors than did pupils in half-day or alternate-day programs.²²



Children who attend full-day kindergarten programs are more independent learners, are more engaged in learning, and are better able to work cooperatively and productively with their peers.

A study in the *American Journal of Education* reports that children in full-day programs are more likely to come from economically,

socially, and academically disadvantaged homes than those in half-day programs. In addition, all full-day kindergarteners, regardless of background, learn more in the course of the year than those in half-day programs.²³

For children of working parents, full-day kindergarten limits the number of transitions that must be made during a day, reducing child and parental stress.²⁴

Small Class Size: The Tennessee STAR study of class size found that students from small classes in the primary grades are more likely to graduate from high school, to attend college, and to achieve at higher levels. Data analysis found that being in a small class “appears to have cut the black-white gap in the probability of taking a college-entrance exam by more than half.” Preliminary data show that students in small classes are more likely to graduate on schedule, less likely to drop out of high school, and more likely to graduate in the

top 25 percent of the class. In addition, small-class students graduated with higher grade point averages than regular-class-size students. Research findings also show that STAR students who attended small classes in grades K-3 were between 6 and 13 months ahead of their regular-class peers in math, reading, and science in grades 4, 6, and 8.²⁵

Extended Learning Time/After-School Programs: A growing body of research identifies the benefits from well-planned, well-staffed programs that address academic, enrichment, and recreational interests.²⁶ Such programs should include a wide array of possibilities from extended learning day to after-school programs. Programs should be created to meet the needs of the children served.

A longer day should be thoughtfully designed. If students sit in their seats for two more hours taking classes or being drilled for tests, there is evidence that this is an ineffective use of time and resources. However, if all students are offered enriching activities, more time studying a variety of subjects, a chance to get fresh air and exercise, and have a quiet place to do homework, this is effective practice – especially for the many students who do not have such opportunities.

Some children may benefit from a longer school day while others may be better served by less formal after-school programs. It is worth exploring different ways that a longer school

day could be structured. We support the process underway in Massachusetts in which teachers are involved in designing extended day programs that address the needs of their school. Parents also need to be deeply involved to make sure that programs meets the needs of their children and families. It is important for both parents and teachers to have choices, if there is going to be a substantial change in the schedule in a particular school.

The Massachusetts 2020 (Mass2020) study *Time for a Change* reports on the educational impact that may result from extended learning time. When instructional time is increased, teachers and students have more opportunities for hands-on learning, small group work, and individualized instruction. Increased time allows for enrichment opportunities in the arts, foreign languages, sports and clubs that are often the first victims of budget cuts. Teachers, parents, and students agree that these activities are often the most rewarding part of the instructional day.²⁷

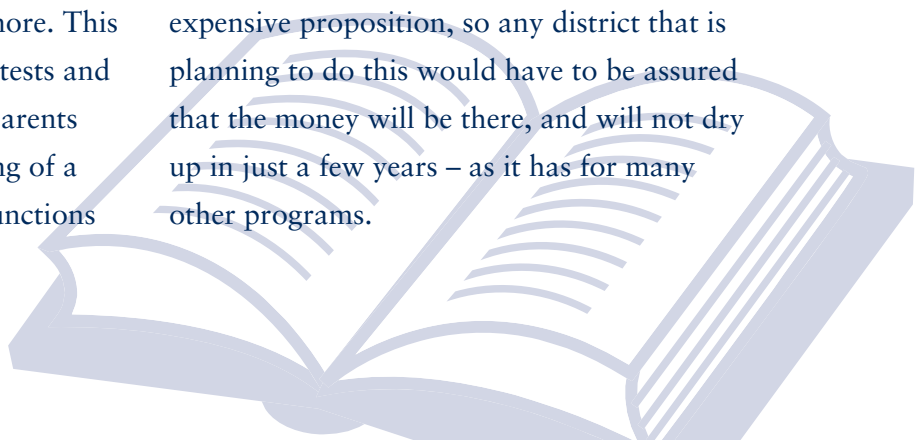
However, studies show that most teachers routinely work 45 to 50 hours per week during the school year, and some work even more. This includes preparing for classes, grading tests and papers, and meeting with students or parents before or after school. Any restructuring of a school day must bear in mind all the functions that a teacher performs.²⁸

In addition, many teachers currently lack time during the school day to work collaboratively with other teachers on developing curricula and improving instruction. Any plan designed to extend the school day should include time for teachers to work collaboratively with one another. Teachers must be fairly compensated for their time. A competitive salary structure reflecting the time commitment needed to make such programs successful is a critical component of any plan.

It is essential, therefore, that all aspects of extending the school day are subject to collective bargaining – this includes joint labor-management planning teams, professional development needed to implement new programs/schedules, and pensionable compensation for additional time.

Extending the school day or year would be an expensive proposition, so any district that is planning to do this would have to be assured that the money will be there, and will not dry up in just a few years – as it has for many other programs.

Preliminary data show that students in small classes are more likely to graduate on schedule, less likely to drop out of high school, and more likely to graduate in the top 25 percent of the class.



2. State, district, school, and association/union leaders should collaborate to develop a simple school-improvement process that fosters a culture of high expectations and provides access to a rigorous curriculum for all children that results in improving student achievement and narrowing the achievement gaps.

To ensure that all children are provided with the education to which they are entitled, school leadership teams must be trained in collaborative decision-making and the development and implementation of simple improvement plans.

School Improvement Planning: Massachusetts requires that all schools have improvement plans, yet the Department of Education has not developed a simple school improvement process for all schools to follow.²⁹ As former Boston Superintendent Tom Payzant argues, “The real work of teaching and learning has to occur school by school, and you can’t use a single, cookie-cutter model in every school to shape the design for improvement. But you have to provide a framework for schools to work within, or lots of time will be spent trying to figure out how to improve student achievement without the necessary knowledge and support for doing so.”³⁰

We could not agree more. The lack of success in turning low-scoring schools around has led to some decision-makers calling for turning “failures” into charter schools or turning them over to private managers.³¹ However, the public expects change in our schools to come through reforming the existing system and not through creating alternatives. By a margin of 4-1, the public favors keeping students in schools that need improvement and making additional efforts to help students improve their performance.³²

Research and experience demonstrate that collaborative models result in greater ownership on the part of all educators than those imposed in a “top down” fashion. The National Governors Association reports, “Implementing reforms requires an open, inclusive process. Teachers and other involved parties must be invited to participate in formulating new policies, and involved in initial and subsequent discussions. Lack of stakeholder support can scuttle reform initiatives, as well as lead to antipathy or suspicion that can undermine future reform attempts.”³³

Culture of High Expectations: Providing all students with a rigorous curriculum and challenging learning experiences are essential in narrowing the gaps. The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks set high academic standards. However, schools must provide all of

our children with teaching and learning experiences that allow them to acquire the knowledge and skills defined by the frameworks.

The nine characteristics of effective schools are the product of extensive research investigating school practices that result in positive student achievement. They are: 1) clear and shared focus; 2) high expectations for all students; 3) curriculum and instruction aligned with the Curriculum Frameworks learning standards; 4) frequent monitoring of student learning; 5) effective school leadership; 6) professional development focused on educator needs; 7) supportive learning environment for all students; 8) high levels of family and community involvement; and 9) high levels of collaboration and communication among teachers, administrators, parents, and students.³⁴

A study of effective high-poverty schools in California found, “In more successful schools, both teachers and principals reported that their schools have well-defined plans for instructional improvement and that they put priority on meeting” the state and federal goals.³⁵

Research and experience demonstrate that collaborative school improvement models result in greater ownership on the part of all educators and are more successful than “cookie cutter” models imposed in a “top down” fashion.



3 • State policy-makers should redirect resources and personnel away from school and district inspection processes and toward capacity-building in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools through sustained training and technical assistance based on replicable, proven improvement practices and models.

Technical Assistance: The DOE is charged with the implementation – and success – of education reform. MassPartners for Public Schools argues that low-performing schools, “should be our priority and should see an infusion of not only resources but meaningful, thoughtful, technical assistance.”³⁶

The Rennie Center’s study of state capacity found, “state reviews need to move beyond planning and help districts and schools address their deficiencies in curriculum, professional development, assessment, and budgeting.” This study also found that the DOE currently has no “concrete strategy for technical assistance at the district level.”³⁷

Providing meaningful technical assistance to help high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools and districts increase their school improvement capacity is one positive means by which the Department of Education can serve the field.

By eliminating the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (OEQA) and

the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) much-needed resources can be allocated to hiring highly effective teachers and principals to work for the DOE as school and district coaches.

In addition, these resources may also be allocated to reestablish regional centers, perhaps at state university, college, and community college campuses, to provide school district personnel with professional development and technical assistance.

Finally, the DOE should enter into an agreement with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to develop an educator-based school-inspection process.

Capacity Building: Many school leaders need training to develop evidence-based school improvement plans. Schools must build capacity to analyze student achievement outcomes and adjust improvement strategies when necessary. This may include any process that increases the capability of educators to provide better teaching and learning experiences for all children. This may involve training in proven improvement strategies, providing decision-making opportunities, and empowering educators to act.³⁸ Effective capacity building enables all individuals in the school to carry out their tasks to the best of their ability.

4 • State, district, school, and association/union leaders should develop parent, family, and community engagement programs to assist parents in learning how to create school-like environments within the home that allow their children to be academically successful.

Many children walk through the school door burdened with problems of poverty, discrimination, substance abuse, domestic instability, and illiteracy, to name a few. The school cannot be the only societal institution to solve these problems; however, the school will address those learning issues within its control.

To narrow the achievement gaps, two-way communication between school and home is essential. Educators must understand the cultures of their students, the concerns of their parents and families, and the barriers that impede effective communication. Parents must understand the importance of such home factors as good nutrition, a good night's sleep, reading to children, and reducing the number of hours spent in front of the television.

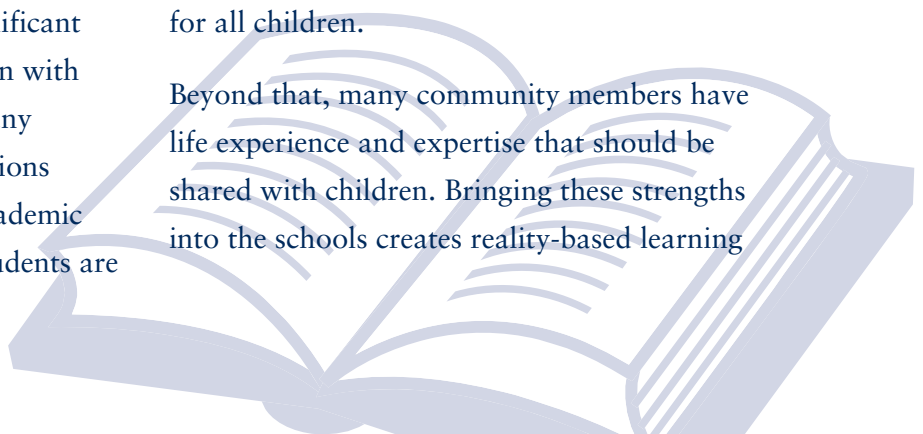
Parent and Family Involvement: A significant body of research endorses collaboration with families as an essential component of any reform strategy. With frequent interactions between schools and families about academic learning and other school activities, students are

more likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, working hard, thinking creatively, helping one another, and staying in school.³⁹

The most successful reform initiatives include parent-school collaboration as a means of developing a more inclusive school culture.⁴⁰ These initiatives focus on parent-family-school engagement that has at its core student academic outcomes. The National Parent Teacher Association has identified six standards for effective parent/family involvement: 1) communicating; 2) parenting; 3) student learning; 4) volunteering; 5) school decision-making and advocacy; and 6) collaborating with community.

Community Engagement: Our public schools are integral to our community. The American public is highly supportive and takes great pride in its schools. Community commitment is critical for school improvement to occur. It is essential that both parents and community members know what is happening in the schools, help set priorities, and ensure that the educators have the resources to get the job done for all children.

Beyond that, many community members have life experience and expertise that should be shared with children. Bringing these strengths into the schools creates reality-based learning



experiences, especially for disadvantaged students. Experts from the business community or faith-based organizations have a wealth of knowledge and experience that will open windows for many of our children. Providing students with reading buddies or mentors enriches not only their lives, but also those of the adults with whom they work. Our schools must have community members' time, expertise, financial support, cultural resources and voting power to implement and sustain improvement efforts.

With frequent interactions between schools and families about academic learning and other school activities, students are more likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, working hard, thinking creatively, helping one another, and staying in school.

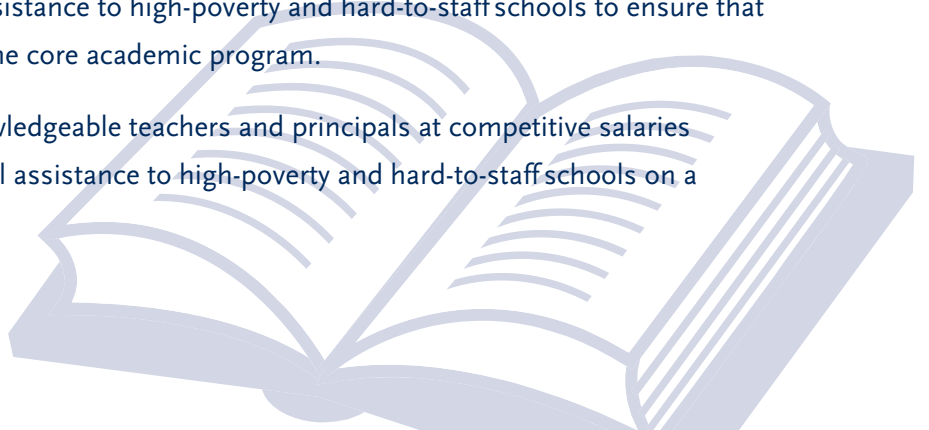
Recommended Actions for Narrowing the Achievement Gaps

The Legislature should

- A. Enact legislation to fund and implement full-day kindergarten and reduce class sizes in Grades K-3 to 15 students per teacher.
- B. Expand funding for extended day or after-school programs.
- C. Eliminate the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and reallocate the funding to the Department of Education, earmarked to provide high-quality, ongoing technical assistance to high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools.
- D. Enact legislation that charges the state auditor with auditing school district finances on a five-year cycle.
- E. Enact legislation that mandates collaboration between the Department of Education and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges for the development and implementation of a school-inspection system.

The Department of Education should

- A. Develop regulations – in collaboration with MassPartners for Public Schools – for the full implementation of a simple and useful school-improvement process that all schools must use in developing their plans.
- B. Train school leadership teams in collaborative decision-making and developing evidence-based school-improvement plans.
- C. Develop training programs in collaboration with the Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association using the National Parent Teacher Association standards for parent and family involvement programs.
- D. Provide oversight and technical assistance to high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools to ensure that all students have equal access to the core academic program.
- E. Hire competent, experienced, knowledgeable teachers and principals at competitive salaries who will train and provide technical assistance to high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools on a priority basis.



- F. Reestablish regional service offices, preferably at state university, state college, and community college campuses, as technical assistance help centers and training sites for school personnel.

The Department of Early Education and Care should

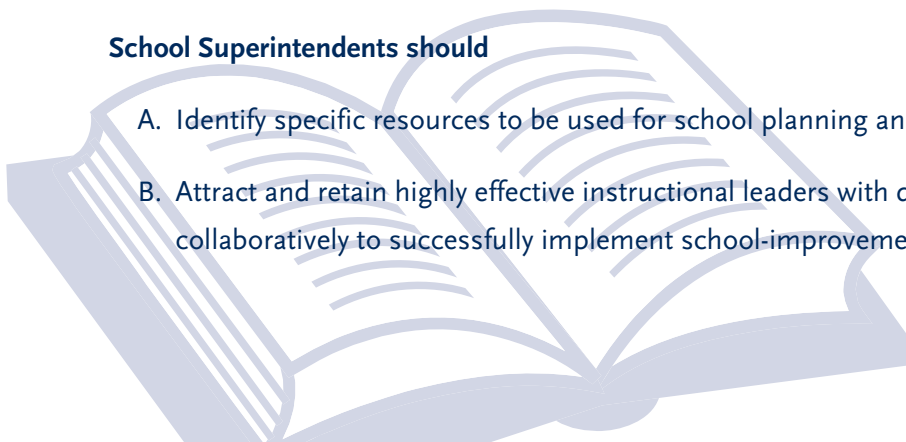
- A. Develop regulations in collaboration with the Department of Education for the establishment of school-based early childhood education programs staffed by licensed teachers for disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds.
- B. Develop training programs in collaboration with the Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association using the National Parent Teacher Association standards for parent and family involvement programs.

School Committee and Association/Union Leaders should bargain collectively to

- A. Address the teaching and learning conditions related to early childhood and full-day kindergarten programs.
- B. Reduce the class size in grades K-3 on a realistic implementation schedule. However, both parties should ensure that reduced class sizes do not result in the hiring of unqualified teachers.
- C. Develop well-planned extended learning time or after-school programs for students in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools. An “opt-out” provision must be provided for those teachers who are unable to work extended school hours. Educators working in after-school programs must be well-trained and have planning time built into their work-day. Such programs must ensure that teacher salaries reflect the additional length of the school day. Educators in after-school programs must be compensated for their experience and expertise.
- D. Determine the professional development, time, and compensation for school leadership team members.

School Superintendents should

- A. Identify specific resources to be used for school planning and implementation.
- B. Attract and retain highly effective instructional leaders with demonstrated proficiency in working collaboratively to successfully implement school-improvement strategies.



- C. Ensure collaboration and completion of statutory and regulatory school plans and action plans required.
- D. Acknowledge and address barriers – economic, social, linguistic, educational, cultural, and geographic – that limit effective parent and family engagement practices.
- E. Provide high-quality, sustained professional development to school personnel about family engagement resulting in positive, productive programs and practices.

School Principals and Teacher Leaders should

- A. Use multiple data points – MCAS, standardized assessments, classroom performance, student attendance, compliance with Individualized Education and 504 Plans – to determine specific areas of school improvement.
- B. Define evidence-based improvement objectives specifically to address student achievement and narrow the gaps.
- C. Determine educators’ assessment of school performance, using such instruments as the National Education Association’s KEYS 2.0 Online Survey.⁴¹
- D. Develop School Improvement Plans with teaching and learning objectives that will improve student learning and narrow the achievement gaps.
- E. Ensure widespread agreement, or buy-in ownership, on school objectives and plans among the school staff through a democratic process.⁴²
- F. Use program-evaluation protocols to measure the effectiveness of improvement strategies on teaching and learning and narrowing the achievement gaps.
- G. Provide training to parents and caregivers on assisting their children in the acquisition of language, literacy and mathematics skills.
- H. Create parent-engagement projects that result in effective partnerships between school and home that focus on student learning.
- I. Develop volunteer programs that allow parents and families to engage in positive ways with schools.



Higher Education Institutions should

- A. Develop graduate-level courses specifically in school-improvement strategies for high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools.
- B. Develop undergraduate- and graduate-level courses in parent and family involvement and engagement.



Recommendations for Closing the Staffing Gaps

5. Districts should provide school-based professional development specifically related to educators' knowledge and skills about curriculum, instruction and assessment practices in order to recruit well-educated individuals to teaching and to retain highly effective practitioners.

For decades, educators have complained that district professional development is ineffective, which has resulted in a certain cynicism within the profession. In general, districts have failed to create the adult learning conditions necessary to improve educator knowledge and skills as a means of improving student achievement and narrowing the gaps.⁴³ Professional development tends to be piecemeal, fragmented, and incoherent; does little to change instructional practices; typically is not integrated into teachers' daily work; is poorly evaluated; is not conceptually or programmatically linked to teacher preparation; and generally fails to provide adequate follow-up resources and support to sustain changes in teachers' practices and/or school structures.⁴⁴

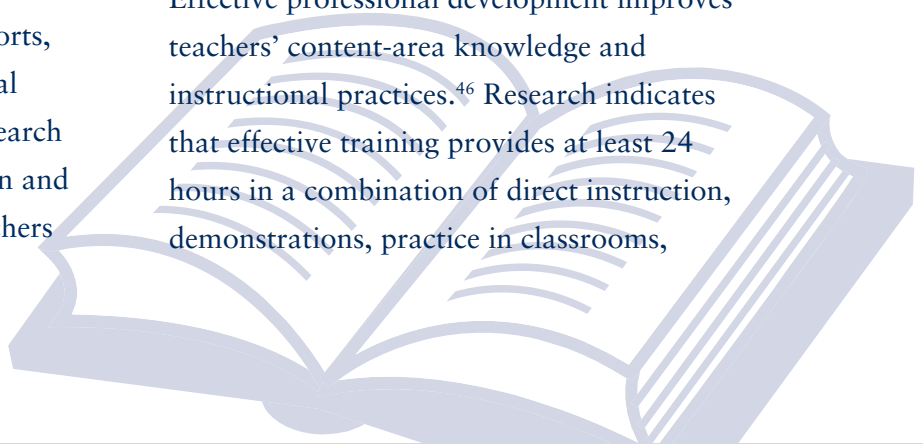
The Office of Educational Quality reports, "Teachers are not receiving professional development in key skill areas that research has associated with effective instruction and improved student achievement. ... Teachers

and administrators are uncertain about what constitutes a complete curriculum. A majority of districts have not articulated a district-wide, content-driven, and fully developed curriculum that is aligned to the state curriculum frameworks."⁴⁵

Effective Professional Development: Job-embedded professional development means that part of the educator's workday and work year is focused solely on professional learning. Educators must broaden their knowledge and skills about curriculum mapping and models, instructional practices, and assessment strategies. They must understand how their students learn based on learning styles, readiness, independence, and interests.

Effective professional development includes theoretical knowledge and practical applications of analyzing and using evidence in making curricular, instructional, and administrative decisions; and understanding how adults learn, in order to coach colleagues through changes in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school improvement processes.

Effective professional development improves teachers' content-area knowledge and instructional practices.⁴⁶ Research indicates that effective training provides at least 24 hours in a combination of direct instruction, demonstrations, practice in classrooms,



and feedback by knowledgeable coaches until the new knowledge and skills are acquired.⁴⁷

Teachers must have multiple opportunities to plan for and practice the new learning in their own classrooms.⁴⁸ Embedded professional development allows colleagues to learn collaboratively and develop a professional learning community within the school.⁴⁹

Effective professional development includes theoretical knowledge and practical applications of analyzing and using evidence in making curricular, instructional, and administrative decisions.

Teacher Time: To embed professional learning within the work day and work year, teachers must be relieved from non-instructional tasks, such as bus duty and monitoring halls. Instead, their time should be used to work collaboratively on lesson and unit plans, analyze student work, align curriculum and instruction with learning standards, and develop local assessments. In other words, teacher time must be spent on professional work that allows students and schools to benefit from their expertise.

The Mass2020 study *Time for a Change* reports that time for professional development and planning is directly related to promoting student achievement. “Teachers believe that their practice is honed through reflecting and planning with colleagues. Without the collegiality built through these sessions, teachers are more likely to feel isolated in their work. Additionally, the common planning time facilitates the development of a more coherent curriculum across subject areas and classes, so that different classes can become mutually reinforcing.”⁵⁰

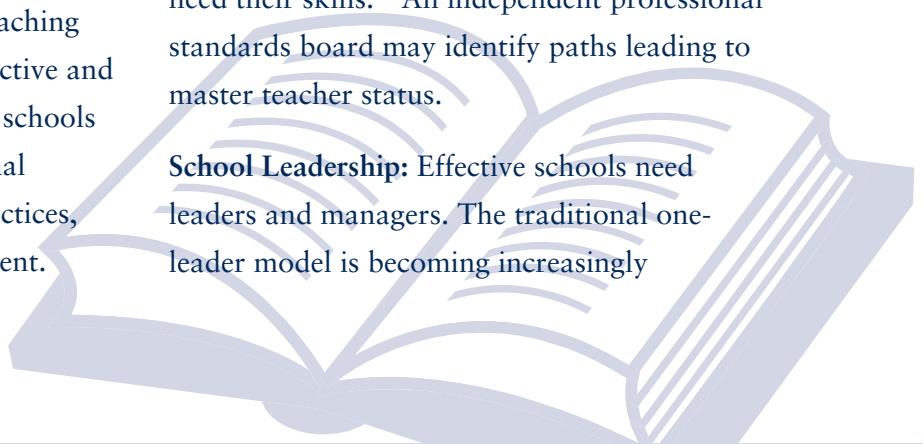
6 State policy-makers and education leaders should work with the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the AFT Massachusetts to create a teacher career path from resident teacher through instructional leadership specialist as a means of retaining highly effective teachers in the profession and encouraging them to teach in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools.

Schools must provide incentives to highly effective teachers to remain in the profession, and, more important, to choose to work in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools.⁵¹ Experienced teachers, leaders, and managers bring superior knowledge, efficiency, and insight to their practice. The conditions that make it difficult for teachers to teach also make it difficult for students to learn. Struggling schools often have the least experienced, least prepared teachers. When teachers in disadvantaged schools gain more experience and improve their skills, some may leave for more lucrative and supportive jobs in more supportive suburbs or districts. Effective schools have supportive cultures in which educators collaborate and communicate about teaching and learning. However, the lack of effective and sustained instructional leadership robs schools of time and resources to develop internal capacity and competence with new practices, thereby undercutting school improvement.

Instructional Career Path: We know a teacher-designed career path is vital to retain highly effective practitioners in the profession. This model acknowledges teachers' knowledge and skills at different career stages. Schools with large numbers of new teachers need instructional leadership in mentoring, induction, professional learning, and capacity building. Those with lower academic achievement need content coaches, staff developers, evidence analysts, and curriculum developers.

A career path begins with Resident Teachers who are learning their craft; after three years, they are Professional Teachers. Some will then become Master Teachers, or *accomplished teachers*, through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The NBPTS successfully identifies highly effective teachers and has found that board-certified teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than teachers without board certification.⁵² National Board Certified Teachers are able to teach all students to a level of deeper understanding, but few board-certified teachers work in the schools that most need their skills.⁵³ An independent professional standards board may identify paths leading to master teacher status.

School Leadership: Effective schools need leaders and managers. The traditional one-leader model is becoming increasingly



ineffective as principals are charged with being both leaders and managers.⁵⁴ The OEQA reports, “School principals often function as building managers rather than instructional leaders, as mandated by state education reform laws.”⁵⁵ Massachusetts’ three *chronically underperforming*

schools have significant, documented leadership and managerial problems.⁵⁶ We have no shortage of teachers licensed to be principals; we have a shortage of teachers willing to take on the job as currently defined.⁵⁷ The restrictions placed on principals with regard to joining associations/unions, attaining professional status, and receiving long-term contracts are disincentives for qualified teachers.

One solution is a two-leader model: a principal teacher or instructional leader and a principal administrator or school manager.⁵⁸ The instructional leader is an experienced practitioner with solid instructional knowledge and skills. The leader guides teaching and learning, coaching teachers and paraprofessionals and curriculum and instruction, and leading professional development focused on instructional improvement and student achievement. The school manager is an experienced practitioner with solid managerial knowledge and skills. The manager would maintain the physical plant and be responsible for transportation, food services, clerical support, class scheduling, student behavior management and discipline, budget development and maintenance, report card processing, and school safety.

We have no shortage of teachers licensed to be principals; we have a shortage of teachers willing to take on the job as currently defined. One solution is a two-leader model: a principal teacher or instructional leader and a principal administrator or school manager.

7 State policy-makers, school committee members and teacher association/union leaders should adopt policies and create working conditions that result in attracting highly effective, licensed practitioners to all of our classrooms, especially those in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools.

Stanford University's Linda Darling-Hammond argues, "We need to be artistic in articulating how to prepare teachers, rather than lowering standards. It would be penny-wise and pound-foolish to bring people into teaching unarmed."⁵⁹

The North Carolina Teachers Working Conditions Initiative reports that teachers' working conditions are important predictors of student performance and make a difference in teacher retention. "Teachers indicated that working in a collegial atmosphere led by a principal with a strong instructional emphasis mattered most in teachers' decisions about whether to stay in the school in which they work. Teachers value school settings where they are not isolated, working together with leadership that supports their efforts."⁶⁰

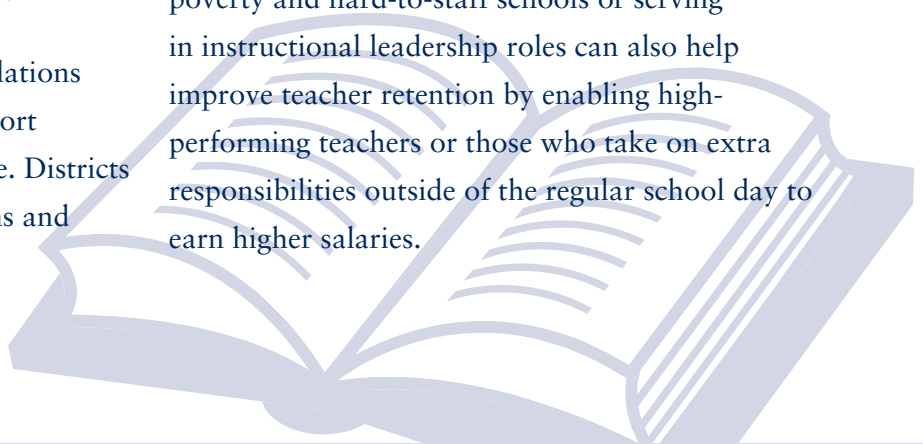
Mentor Programs: Massachusetts regulations entitle new teachers to significant support through their first two years of practice. Districts are mandated to provide such programs and

report their activities and success to the DOE. Every new teacher must be provided with a trained mentor, time to observe other teachers teach, and assistance in developing a professional portfolio.

Harvard's Next Generation of Teachers Project research illustrates the lack of district resources devoted to new teacher induction.⁶¹ As a result, many promising practitioners leave the field due to lack of support during their first five years of practice. The DOE has also failed to provide compliance oversight for these regulated programs.

Induction programs that are comprehensive in helping new teachers develop the skills necessary to be effective in the classroom are essential. Such programs should provide a combination of job-embedded professional development and coaching by a trained mentor.

Incentives: Incentives and resources must be provided to licensed teachers so that all schools are successful in ensuring that all students acquire the knowledge and skills defined in the seven Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Competitive pay initiatives that reward teachers for taking on challenging placements in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools or serving in instructional leadership roles can also help improve teacher retention by enabling high-performing teachers or those who take on extra responsibilities outside of the regular school day to earn higher salaries.



Since there is widespread consensus that highly effective teachers must be attracted to our neediest schools, it seems logical that the conditions are in place at the state, district, and school levels for this to happen. The growing body of research on teacher working conditions identifies the problems schools must solve in order to attract and retain effective practitioners in the teaching force.

Educators and policy-makers agree that of the factors over which the educational system has control, “The single most important determinant

of success for a student is the knowledge and skills of that child’s teacher.”⁶²

But, that is not the whole story. A highly effective teacher alone will not be successful without resources and support.

Since there is widespread consensus that highly effective teachers must be attracted to our neediest schools, it seems logical that the conditions are in place at the state, district, and school levels for this to happen. Yet state policies and regulations and teacher working conditions have proven to be disincentives. The growing body of research on teacher working conditions identifies the problems schools must solve in order to attract and retain effective practitioners in the teaching force.⁶³

However, the research finds that teachers who are supported in their first years of teaching are more likely to be successful in their practice and to stay in the profession.⁶⁴ A more stable teaching force will result in better student achievement. A California study of effective high-poverty schools reports that “teachers with at least five years of full-time teaching experience were more likely, on average, to be from schools with higher [student test scores].”⁶⁵

8 • State policy-makers should establish an independent Professional Standards Board to regulate educator training for entry and advancement within the profession and specify Praxis I and II as the Massachusetts teacher tests.

The Commonwealth must grant teachers and administrators the right to set professional standards and to control entry and exit from the profession. Creation of an autonomous educator preparation and licensure board will provide the teaching profession with legal standing equal to law, medicine, accounting, and architecture.

Independent Professional Standards Board:

The mission of the Professional Standards Board is to assure competence and promote excellence within the teaching profession. This would include all licensed educators: teachers, guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, library media specialists, school social workers and psychologists, nurses, department chairpersons, principals, assistant principals, and superintendents.

The Professional Standards Board's membership would reflect the various educational constituencies and would draw upon the expertise of teachers, principals, and superintendents, school committee members,

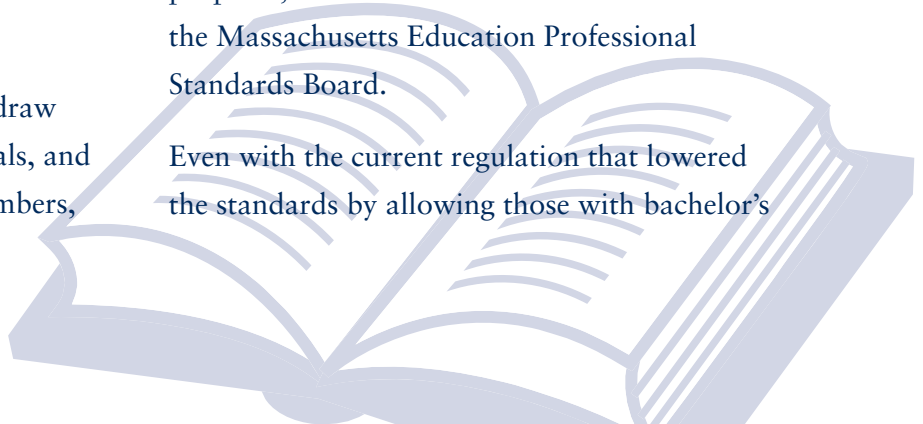
educator-preparation-program faculties, and parents.

Twelve states have professional standards boards.⁶⁶ Such a board is established by statute and accountable to the Legislature. The board would have the authority to set standards for the licensure of K-12 teachers and administrators. It would have the authority to set standards for preparation programs. It would have the authority to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and the authority to revoke, suspend, or reinstate a practitioner's license. The Board could hire staff and establish and administer its own budget.

Historically, high standards are better maintained where members of that profession control entry. During times of labor shortages, when standards for entrance into the teaching profession are often under pressure to be relaxed, an autonomous board would be the best safeguard against such measures.⁶⁷

Current law sets a fee for applicants for licensure and relicensure that goes to the Commonwealth's General Fund. Under this proposal, those fees would be used to fund the Massachusetts Education Professional Standards Board.

Even with the current regulation that lowered the standards by allowing those with bachelor's



degrees who have passed the MTEL to receive teaching licenses, the Department of Education is still issuing waivers to schools unable to attract qualified teachers. For the 2004-2005 academic year, the total number of waivers issued was 3,257. As of January 2006, 2,528 waivers had been issued. In Springfield, 92 waivers were issued in 2004-2005; as of January 2006, 213 had been issued.⁶⁸

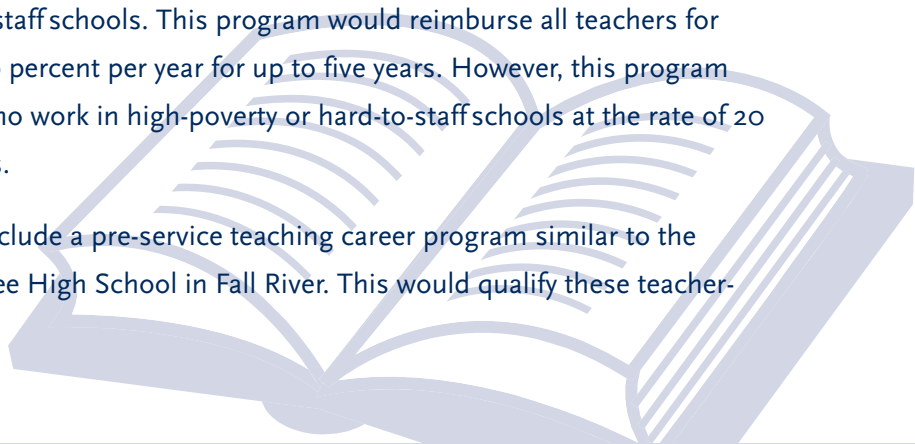
Teacher Tests: The federal government requires that all prospective teachers take and pass state tests. Currently, all applicants for teaching licenses in Massachusetts must pass the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL). Having a state-specific test eliminates potential candidates from the teaching pool. By replacing the MTEL with Praxis I and II, we would significantly increase the number of qualified, licensed teacher candidates. Praxis I and II are administered by the Educational Testing Service, also known as the College Board. These teacher tests are currently used by 42 states and territories, including all other New England states. By moving to Praxis I and II, we would be expanding the potential pool of qualified teachers and ensuring that a more diverse teaching force would be working in our schools.

During times of labor shortages, when standards for entrance into the teaching profession are often under pressure to be relaxed, an independent professional standards board is the best safeguard against such measures.

Recommended Actions for Closing the Staffing Gaps

The Legislature should

- A. Enact legislation to allocate funds for professional development for teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals.
- B. Enact legislation to establish incentives and requirements to improve the recruitment and retention of quality teachers, including mentoring, improvements to the retirement system, and expansion of incentives for advanced degrees and National Board certification.
- C. Enact legislation to establish an autonomous teacher preparation and licensure board composed of teachers, principals, and superintendents, as well as school committee and higher education representatives. This board would provide the teaching profession with the same legal standing now afforded to other major professions.
- D. Enact legislation to replace the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure with Praxis I and II.
- E. Enact legislation to establish a minimum teaching salary of \$50,000.
- F. Amend Chapter 69 to allow administrators – instructional leaders and school managers – to join associations/unions, to bargain collectively, and to achieve professional status.
- G. Amend Chapter 15A, Section 19C, *The Master Teacher Corps*, so that teachers who achieve master teacher status through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and choose to teach in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools are eligible for the annual salary differential of \$5,000 and National Board Certified teachers who choose to move from one district to another under this provision have portability of professional teaching status.
- H. Reestablish and Fund Chapter 15A, Section 19A, *The Attracting Excellence to Teaching – Student Loan Repayment Program*, to complement the federal National Defense Education Act-Perkins Grant Program, so that loan-forgiveness programs are available to licensed teachers who choose to work in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools. This program would reimburse all teachers for their student loans at the rate of 10 percent per year for up to five years. However, this program would reimburse those teachers who work in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools at the rate of 20 percent per year for up to five years.
- I. Amend Chapter 74, Section 1, to include a pre-service teaching career program similar to the Teacher Academy Program at Durfee High School in Fall River. This would qualify these teacher-

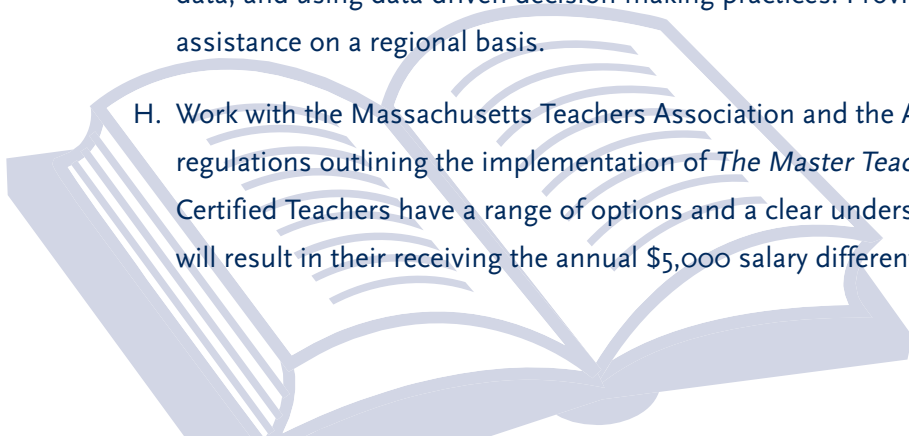


pipeline programs for vocational education funding and oversight.

- J. Restore the earmarking of \$125 per student for the purpose of providing professional development to educators: school-based professional development directly related to the knowledge and skills that educators must have in order to attain school improvement objectives; new teacher mentor and induction programs.

The Department of Education should

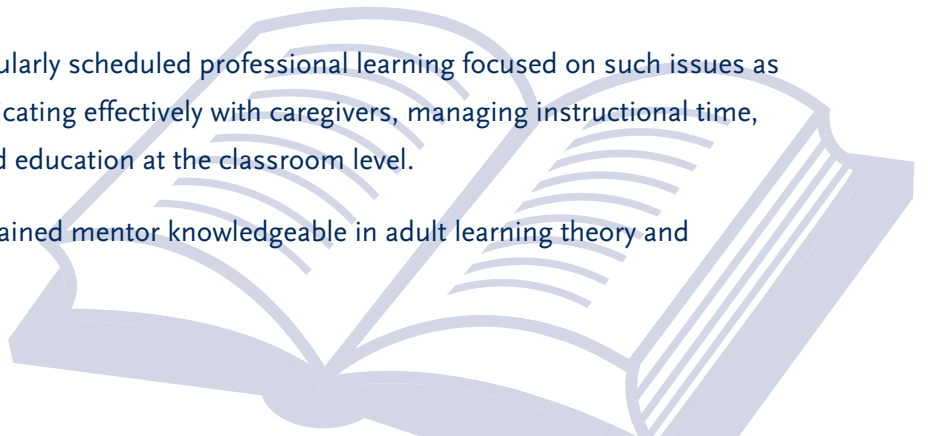
- A. Develop guidelines for professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals directly related to school-improvement plans.
- B. Develop regulations – in collaboration with MassPartners for Public Schools – for the full implementation of the mandated three-year district improvement plans and the annual district action plans.
- C. Develop standard templates for district improvement plans and district action plans to be used by all districts, which make connections between educator learning and student achievement needs.
- D. Develop internal capacity to provide oversight, training, and technical assistance to school districts in improvement-planning requirements.
- E. Provide technical assistance to districts, especially small districts that may lack internal capacity, in developing aligned scope and sequence and professional development plans and determining program-evaluation protocols to be used.
- F. Audit and publicly report the expenditure of district funding on professional development.
- G. Expand the leadership training topics for school principals and teacher-leaders to include school-improvement planning; creating professional learning communities; analyzing student assessment data; and using data-driven decision-making practices. Provide this training and technical assistance on a regional basis.
- H. Work with the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the AFT Massachusetts to promulgate regulations outlining the implementation of *The Master Teacher Corps*, so that National Board Certified Teachers have a range of options and a clear understanding of the time commitment that will result in their receiving the annual \$5,000 salary differential from the state.



- I. Work with the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the AFT Massachusetts to implement the mandated outreach to under-represented populations to increase their participation in the NBPTS licensure process.
- J. Provide oversight to ensure that school districts fulfill their regulatory obligations to new teachers.
- K. Provide training and technical assistance in districts that lack the capacity to create regulatory new teacher programs.

School Committee and Association/Union Leaders should bargain collectively to

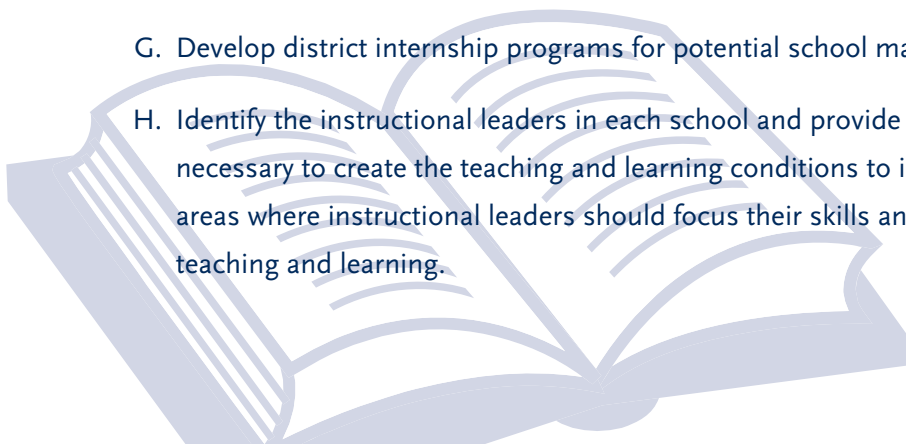
- A. Create time within the teacher workday and work year for sustained, job-embedded professional development.
- B. Provide contractual per diem compensation for additional days added to the work year.
- C. Define the criteria for teacher career-path plans from resident teacher through instructional leader that acknowledge the knowledge and skills of educators and provide incentives to those who serve in leadership capacities beyond the regular school day.
- D. Create district support for teachers participating in the NBPTS licensure process by providing a flexible work schedule during the application year.
- E. Provide salaries competitive with those in professions requiring similar educational attainment.
- F. Define a right of return to an open position for those teachers who chose to become principals.
- G. Implement the statutory and regulatory mentor and induction requirements at the district and school levels.
- H. Develop salary incentives for teachers holding Initial or Professional Licenses who work in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools.
- I. Provide every new teacher with regularly scheduled professional learning focused on such issues as classroom management, communicating effectively with caregivers, managing instructional time, and implementing standards-based education at the classroom level.
- J. Provide every new teacher with a trained mentor knowledgeable in adult learning theory and formative evaluation.



- K. Develop district-based licensure programs, similar to the Cambridge Licensure In-district Program, jointly planned and implemented by the district and the Association, that allow new teachers to embed their own learning in their daily practice.
- L. Develop incentives to recruit and retain licensed teachers through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Teacher Next Door program, which is designed to encourage teachers to buy homes in the community.⁶⁹

School Superintendents should

- A. Develop, through a collaborative process, three-year district improvement plans and submit them to the Commissioner of Education. Develop annual action plans that enumerate the specific activities related to the district plans.
- B. Align and update the scope and sequence to the learning standards of the most recent Curriculum Frameworks.
- C. Identify specific program-evaluation protocols and practices to be used to determine the impact of professional development on educator practice and student achievement. Train instructional leaders in these protocols and practices to enable implementation at the school level.
- D. Provide the resources to each school to support sustained, high-quality, job-embedded school-based professional development directly related to improvement objectives.
- E. Provide effective instructional leaders and school managers with three-year to six-year employment contracts.
- F. Develop an instructional-leadership pipeline by identifying highly effective teachers, respected by their peers, and provide them with training to increase their knowledge and skills in areas needed by the district.
- G. Develop district internship programs for potential school managers and instructional leaders.
- H. Identify the instructional leaders in each school and provide them with the time and resources necessary to create the teaching and learning conditions to improve student achievement. Identify areas where instructional leaders should focus their skills and time as a means of improving teaching and learning.



- I. Develop teacher-pipeline programs by identifying and recruiting high-performing paraprofessionals and providing incentives for them to enroll in teacher-preparation programs.

School Principals and Teacher Leaders should

- A. Develop, in a collaborative manner, annual school improvement plans and submit them to the school superintendents.
- B. Identify the knowledge and skill needs of administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals in relation to school-improvement objectives.
- C. Provide school-based professional development to address identified areas of improvement.
- D. Create a school climate focused on teaching and learning so that professional learning communities will develop among educators.
- E. Create supportive professional environments for new teachers in which they learn from their veteran colleagues. Designate new teacher-support teams that include mentors and evaluating administrators. Provide time for mentors and new teachers to observe each other during the academic day.

Higher Education Institutions should

- A. Develop graduate-level programs for teacher-instructional leaders. Such programs should include district-based internships.
- B. Develop graduate-level programs for school managers. Such programs should include district-based internships.
- C. Work collaboratively with school districts to create licensure programs, similar to the Cambridge Licensure In-district Program, that provide veteran educators with instructional leadership opportunities.



Recommendations for Reducing the Funding Gaps

9 As a first step, the Legislature should

- increase Chapter 70 funding by a minimum of \$610 million over a three-year period. In addition, the Legislature should seek to restore funding to grant programs that were cut during the recent recession—such as class-size reduction, full-day kindergarten, and early childhood education – and to identify additional revenue to be earmarked for pre-kindergarten-through-grade 12 public education.

Foundation Budget: The foundation budget must be increased to include funding for several key areas that educators, based on their experience and solid research, know are essential to enable schools to narrow the achievement gaps and close the staffing gaps. School resources would be directed toward reducing class sizes in grades K-3, and providing academic support services and alternative education either through regular day or extended-day programs. Funding would also be used to increase special education services and to allow for more technology-based teaching and learning. The increased funding would be phased in over a three-year period.

Increase Chapter 70 Funding: Schools that serve poor, disadvantaged, and minority students are more often underfunded. Urban schools especially suffer because of the lack of

resources located in poor communities. Harvard University’s Mark Warren found, “Compared to more affluent suburban schools, inner-city schools typically are underfunded. As a result, they often have less-qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, older buildings in need of serious repair and upgrading, inadequate textbooks, and outdated facilities.”⁷⁰

The research is clear that investments in schooling save taxpayers money in the long run. “Overwhelmingly, the academic literature and the court holdings have debunked the methodology of nay-sayers and strongly concluded that money spent on qualified teachers, smaller class sizes, preschool initiatives, and academic intervention programs does make a substantial difference in student achievement – especially for poor and minority students.”⁷¹

Since 2000, the public has identified the lack of financial support as the major problem facing the public schools.⁷²

An overwhelming majority of voters (77 percent) report that the primary reason to adequately fund public schools is that the majority of Americans see education as the “way out of poverty.” Three-quarters of voters agree that the primary reason to adequately fund our public schools is that without “free public schools, problems such as crime and welfare dependency would get worse.”⁷³

According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics, Massachusetts ranks 38th out of 50 states in the percentage of personal income that is spent on K-12 public education.

Progress in Jeopardy, a report released in 2004 by groups representing teachers, administrators, and school committees, found that recent budget cuts have caused many districts to increase class sizes and reduce or eliminate programs critical to teaching students the state standards. Programs that have been harmed by these cuts include MCAS remediation, health, guidance, art, library services, and more. Communities highlighted included such relatively well-off districts as Arlington, Braintree, and Melrose, as well as disadvantaged districts such as Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester.⁷⁴

However, just spending money without purpose will not narrow the achievement gaps or close the staffing gaps. Funding must be spent on strategies that have been proven successful by research.

The research is clear that investments in schooling save taxpayers money in the long run. Since 2000, the public has identified the lack of financial support as the major problem facing the public schools.



10. The Legislature should create and fund an Education Reform Study Commission for the purpose of determining the resources needed and making recommendations to the Legislature that should then be implemented so that all schools may successfully implement the Education Reform Act of 1993.

An Education Reform Study Commission should be established for the purpose of determining the necessary resources for all students to achieve the stated educational standards and to narrow the achievement gaps. Although more resources *alone* are not sufficient for a quality education, they are a necessary component: money does matter.

This commission would conduct much of the work envisioned by Judge Margot Botsford. In the *Hancock v. Driscoll* school-finance case, she concluded that the plaintiff districts do not have adequate resources to provide students with the level of education to which they are constitutionally entitled.

The commission would consist of legislative, administration, education, and state policy representatives who would hold public hearings and conduct research to determine what is necessary to provide the programs and services that students and schools need to fully implement the Education Reform Act of 1993.

In *Hancock v. Driscoll*, Judge Botsford decided to hear detailed evidence on four “focus districts” that typified the 19 districts in the suit: Brockton, Lowell, Springfield, and Winchendon. Some of the deficiencies highlighted during the trial are illustrative of the conditions found in disadvantaged schools.

- **Brockton:** 37 percent of all science classes have more than 30 students, yet science labs can only accommodate 24 students at a time.
- **Lowell:** 708 English students and 1,493 mathematics students are in classes with 30 or more students.
- **Springfield:** The mathematics curriculum framework cannot be implemented effectively due to lack of resources such as current textbooks, graphing calculators, overhead projectors, geometry models, manipulatives, and computer software.
- **Winchendon:** teachers have not been provided with professional development devoted to science instruction, even though only one out of three middle school science teachers is certified.

All four focus districts have

- Early childhood education programs that can accommodate only 10 to 33 percent of the eligible students.

- Facilities problems that negatively impact their special education programs and services, lab sciences, health classes, and the arts.
- A higher percentage of unlicensed teachers and out-of-field teaching in mathematics, science, and foreign languages than the state average.
- A higher percentage of unlicensed administrators than the state average.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 holds all students to the same standard: mastering the knowledge and skills defined by the seven Curriculum Frameworks. Student mastery is measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in four subjects: English, mathematics, history, and science. To date, the Grade 10 English and mathematics exams are the only *high stakes tests* for students.

In *Hancock v. Driscoll*, the four focus districts were compared to high-performing districts (Brookline, Concord-Carlisle, Wellesley) on a variety of factors. In looking at the 2005 Grade 10 English MCAS results from these districts, it is clear that the four poor districts have significantly higher percentages of students failing to achieve the graduation requirement of a passing score (19, 20, 30, and 9 percent) when compared to the high performing districts (5, 1, and 2 percent).

The same results – only far more pronounced – are true for the 2005 mathematics MCAS results. Here, the poor districts had significantly higher student failure (32, 28, 46, and 14 percent) than the comparison districts (9, 2, and 2 percent).

All schools, however, are judged by all MCAS performance. The seeds of academic achievement are sown in early childhood. In looking at the 2005 Grade 4 mathematics MCAS results, it is clear that disadvantaged students are not narrowing the gaps with their more advantaged peers.

Not only do the focus schools have a higher percentage of students in the failure category (26, 38, 29, and 33 percent versus 9, 5, and 4 percent), but a lower percentage of students in the proficient/advanced categories (20, 15, 21,

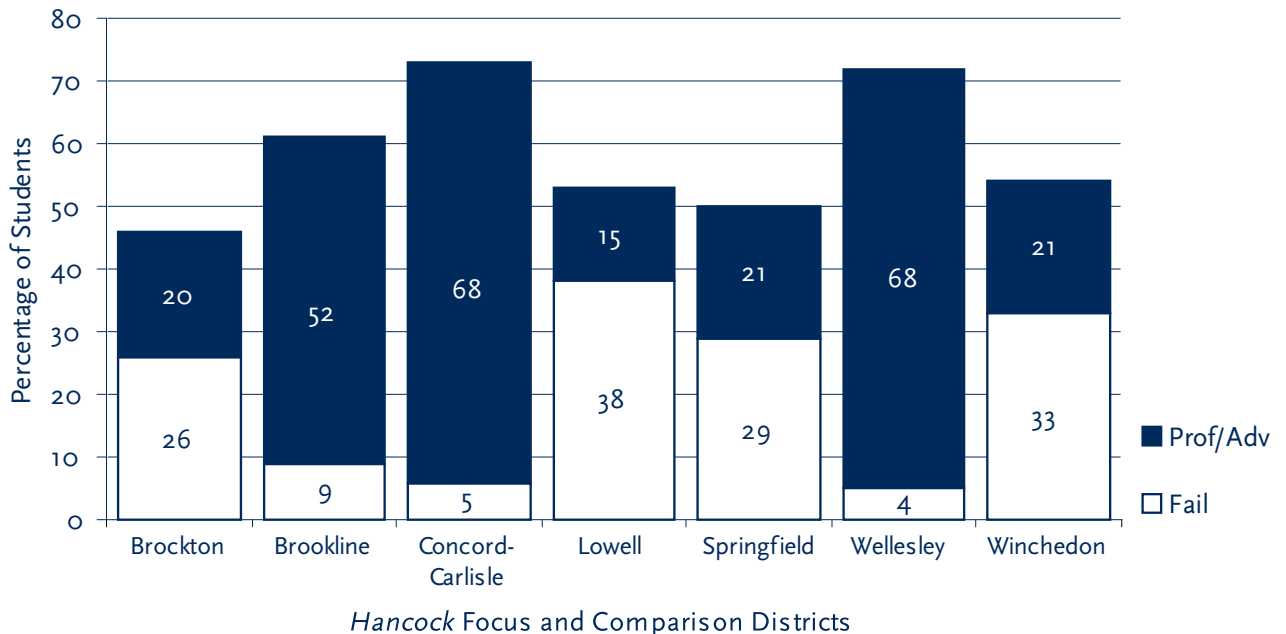
An Education Reform Study Commission should be established for the purpose of determining the resources needed for all students to achieve the stated educational standards and to narrow the achievement gaps. The Commission would evaluate the costs of a quality public education, including school facilities, class size, salaries, special and early childhood education, textbooks and materials, and professional development.

and 21 percent versus 52, 68, and 68 percent). It is clear from these results that the schools in Brockton, Lowell, Springfield and Winchendon – which represent poor urban and rural districts – have significant gaps that must be narrowed if their students are to compete in the same real world as those who attend the Brookline, Concord-Carlisle and Wellesley schools.

In reviewing these test scores, the gaps that exist between high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools became clear. What is not known is the actual amount of resources needed to ensure that all of the students represented by the four focus districts receive the education to which they are constitutionally entitled.

The commission would be provided with the necessary funding to conduct a thorough, research-based study of the resources needed to do the job required by MERA. The commission would be required to consider and evaluate all of the cost elements of a quality public education, including school and classroom facilities, class size, salaries, special education, early childhood education, textbooks and instructional materials, and professional development. The commission’s report and recommendations would be sent to the Legislature for approval and funding.

Grade 4 Mathematics Aggregate MCAS Results: 2005



11 • The Legislature should build a reserve fund through existing and new revenue sources as a means of protecting public schools and children from inevitable economic downturns.

The Education Trust found that an infusion of money into Massachusetts schools between 1993 and 2003 resulted in increased student achievement as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.⁷⁵ This report goes on to state that we still have significant work to do and that achievement gaps persist. More significantly, our fiscal commitment to public education has declined since 2003, which “has meant that many jurisdictions have lost the capacity to provide tutoring to students who need help to pass the MCAS.” The Education Trust quotes Commissioner David Driscoll as stating, “I don’t think money is the answer, but the lack of money is a heck of a problem.”

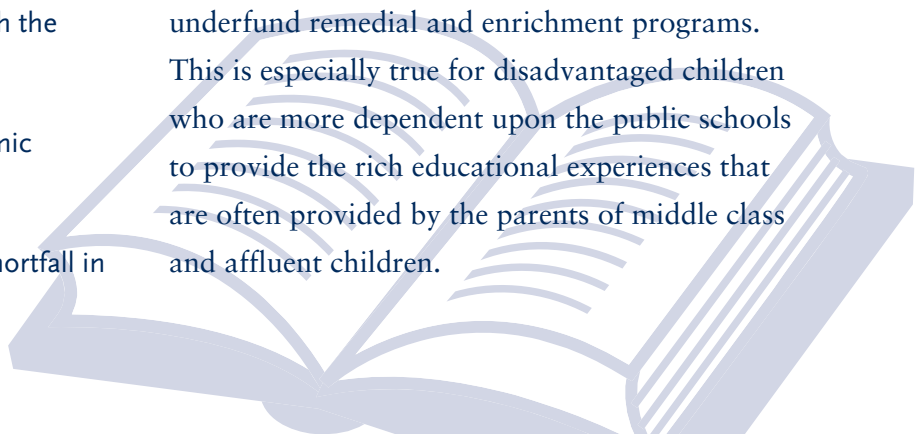
Reducing public school funding inevitably harms children. Since Chapter 70 was first established, our schools have been the victims of three massive budget cuts:

- The first came in the early 1980s with the passage of Proposition 2^{1/2}.
- The second came during the economic downturn in the early 1990s.
- The third came during the budget shortfall in the early 2000s.

In some districts, these budgetary cutbacks have resulted in crumbling school buildings, crowded classrooms, cuts in arts programs, cuts in student services, older textbooks, outdated curriculum, and inadequate professional development. All these cuts have negatively affected students by contributing to the achievement and staffing gaps. The promises of education reform were adequate, stable funding and a commitment that would not allow such devastation to happen.

The children harmed the most by budget cuts are the ones who need public schools the most. Poor and minority students – who on average have \$900 less spent on them educationally than do white and affluent students – lose when budgetary cuts are imposed on schools and districts.⁷⁶

School districts need stability of funding in order to sustain programs that are needed to improve student achievement. By creating a reserve fund during economic good times, we prevent educational funding from being lowered during economic hard times. The American dream that public schools are the great equalizers that allow all of our children to succeed to the best of their abilities is undermined when we defund or underfund remedial and enrichment programs. This is especially true for disadvantaged children who are more dependent upon the public schools to provide the rich educational experiences that are often provided by the parents of middle class and affluent children.



Recommended Actions for Reducing the Funding Gaps

The Legislature should

A. Increase Chapter 70 by \$610 million over a three-year period.

B. Seek additional revenue to be earmarked for pre-kindergarten through grade 12.

C. Create and fund an Education Reform Study Commission for the purpose of determining the resources needed and make recommendations to allow all schools to successfully implement the Education Reform Act of 1993.

D. Build a reserve fund through existing and new revenue sources as a means of protecting public schools and children from inevitable economic downturns.

School districts need stable funding to sustain programs needed to improve student achievement.

A reserve fund prevents educational funding from being lowered during economic hard times. The American dream that public schools are the great equalizers that allow all of our children to succeed is undermined when we defund or underfund remedial and enrichment programs.

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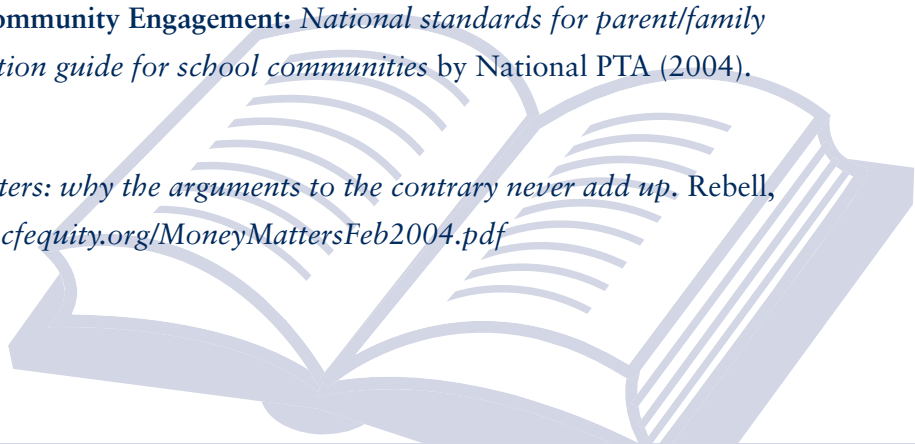
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NARROWING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

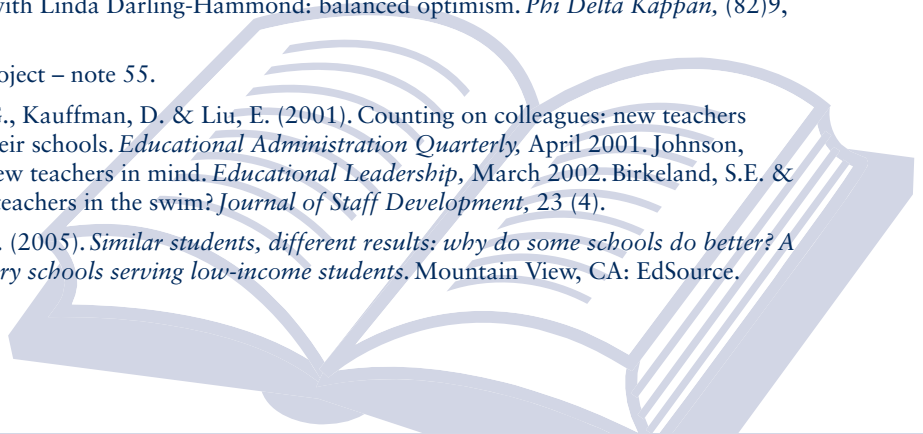
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