

2009



# LEAP

## Communications Tool Kit



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Alexandria, Virginia USA



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Founded in 1943, **ASCD** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that develops programs, products, and services essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead. We provide expert and innovative solutions in professional development, capacity building, and educational leadership. ASCD's membership comprises more than 175,000 principals, teachers, superintendents, professors of education, and other educators from 119 countries.

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# LEAP Communications Tool Kit

## Sample News Release..... 4

This news release is designed for educators who participated in ASCD's 2009 LEAP Legislative Institute, but it can also serve as a model or template for informing the media about other education news. See the ASCD Advocacy Guide ([www.ascd.org/advocacyguide](http://www.ascd.org/advocacyguide)) for tips on writing and submitting news releases.



## Sample Opinion Editorial ..... 6

This opinion editorial, or op-ed, is designed for educators who participated in ASCD's 2009 LEAP Legislative Institute, but it can also serve as a model or template for writing an op-ed about other education issues or topics. See the ASCD Advocacy Guide ([www.ascd.org/advocacyguide](http://www.ascd.org/advocacyguide)) for tips on writing and submitting op-eds.



## Backgrounders and Frequently Asked Questions

The backgrounders provide information about ASCD's four key legislative priorities for 2009. Each describes an education problem, outlines a solution, and highlights key messages. In addition, you'll find the answers to tough questions for each legislative priority. Use these backgrounders and frequently asked questions to arm yourself with essential information and data that will help you advocate for education change and communicate your messages to various audiences.



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## PowerPoint Presentation..... 22

You can use this PowerPoint presentation to advocate for critical education reforms, encourage other educators to become advocates, and introduce others to ASCD.

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Dear Educator Advocate,

As an educator, you have the opportunity to speak out in support of policies that afford our children not only success in school but also the likelihood for better lives. For the past 65 years, ASCD has been dedicated to advancing best practices and policies. Together, we are raising awareness about specific education policies and practices that benefit all our children.

This school year brings significant challenges for education leaders. We've witnessed firsthand the devastating effects this economic recession has had on our colleagues, families, friends—and especially our children. Meanwhile, the H1N1 flu pandemic threatens to disrupt the education we provide our students and make children and staff sick. But opportunities for great education change are rife. We have a new president and administration poised to revise the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Schools and districts across the country are using stimulus dollars to advance education programs, and states will soon be competing for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's Race to the Top funds to implement innovative education reform. Meanwhile, a coalition of governors and chief state school officers are working to establish common standards that could influence what we teach.

It is not enough for you to know about these impending changes; you also need to become an active participant, proactively helping shape the policies affecting you. ASCD's legislative agenda addresses four important education policy priorities: equitable educational opportunities, highly effective educators, multiple indicators of school success, and innovative educational redesign. To help you communicate about these priorities to policymakers, the media, parents, and business and community leaders in your area, we've created this communications tool kit.

This kit contains a sample press release, sample opinion editorial, one-page backgrounders with key messages for ASCD's four legislative priorities, frequently asked questions related to each priority, and a PowerPoint presentation. We encourage you to customize these tools to meet your specific advocacy and communications needs. It's our hope that this tool kit—as well as the ASCD Advocacy Guide ([www.ascd.org/advocacyguide](http://www.ascd.org/advocacyguide))—will provide you with the resources you need to advocate for education practices that are sound, sustainable, and centered on the whole child.

Thank you for your help in promoting the success of each learner.

Sincerely,



Gene R. Carter  
Executive Director and CEO, ASCD



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# Sample News Release

To download this sample news release in editable Word format, go to [www.ascd.org/ASCD/docs/worddocs/leap/leap\\_newsrelease.docx](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/docs/worddocs/leap/leap_newsrelease.docx)

## Local Educator Advises Members of Congress on Improving National Education Policy

*ASCD's Annual Event Connects the Classroom to the Capitol*

Washington, D.C. (September [insert date], 2009)—[Insert name], of [insert affiliation], attended the LEAP Legislative Institute, September 13 to 15, in Arlington, Va. The LEAP Institute, which is sponsored by the nonprofit educational leadership association ASCD, brings educators from across the United States to the nation's capital to advocate for sound education policy.

The goal of the annual event is to prepare educators from all levels and subject areas—superintendents, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members—to advocate on Capitol Hill and at the local and state levels for policies that are best for students. This year's event also provided participants with critical federal education policy updates on the status of education stimulus funding and pending changes to the No Child Left Behind Act.

LEAP participants visited Capitol Hill to meet with their members of Congress and address education policy issues, including those highlighted in ASCD's 2009 Legislative Agenda. The priorities raised with elected officials focused on the need for

- Equitable access to educational options and experiences—regardless of geography, socioeconomic status, race, or gender.
- Highly effective teachers who elicit growth in student achievement and receive comprehensive support at all stages of their careers, from preparation and induction to ongoing professional development.
- A comprehensive assessment system that incorporates multiple and varied indicators and analyzes student growth over time.
- An accountability system that discerns varying levels of performance in schools and districts and targets improvement assistance where it is needed most.
- Innovative, research-based redesign that ensures that young children are well-prepared for school, students successfully transition from the elementary to



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secondary grades, and high school graduates are ready for success in a global society.

[Insert a quote that captures your personal experience at LEAP. Mention by name which representatives you met with on Capitol Hill. Your quote could address how LEAP helped you build relationships with members of Congress and their staffs, influence public policy that directly affects schools and kids, or make your voice heard on Capitol Hill.]

The LEAP Institute’s speakers included author and journalist Gwen Ifill, who shared her observations and analysis of the political situation in Washington, her impression of the new administration’s first nine months in office, and the looming challenges national leaders will have to address. In addition, the White House education policy advisor and senior members of the U.S. Department of Education outlined President Barack Obama’s vision and the department’s plans to transform the country’s education system.

### Contact Information

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- Barbara Michelman, communications director, at 703-575-5764, or [bmichelman@ascd.org](mailto:bmichelman@ascd.org).

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# Sample Opinion Editorial



To download this sample op-ed in editable Word format, go to [www.ascd.org/ASCD/docs/worddocs/leap/LEAP\\_oped.docx](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/docs/worddocs/leap/LEAP_oped.docx)

## Connecting Our Local Classrooms to the Capitol

By [insert your name here]

[Insert name of your local district/school] might seem far removed from Capitol Hill, but decisions made in Washington, D.C., influence how we define achievement, attract and retain highly effective educators, assess student progress, implement academic interventions, and ultimately ensure that our graduates are ready for success in a global society.

Now is the time for educators to shape the policy that affects our districts, schools, and classrooms: We have a new president and administration poised to revise the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Schools and districts across the country are using stimulus dollars to advance education programs, and states are competing for Race to the Top funds to implement innovative education reform. Meanwhile, a coalition of governors and chief state school officers are working to establish common standards that could influence what we teach. Together these developments make this a critical time for educators to mobilize to share what is best for students.

Recently I traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for sound education policies with other educators from across the United States at the LEAP Institute. This annual event sponsored by ASCD, a nonprofit educational leadership association, helps educators leverage their knowledge of learning and teaching to affect policy.

While in D.C., I met with [include names and background on the House and/or Senate members with whom you met]. Here's what I told them:

### **1. We need policies that expand educational opportunities for all learners.**

NCLB has highlighted the achievement gaps that exist in too many of our schools and districts. It's time to address those gaps by ensuring that all students have access to highly effective teachers; engaging and rigorous coursework; cutting-edge education technology and relevant career and technical programs; and resources for strengthening schools, families, and communities.

### **2. Each student needs highly effective teachers who elicit growth in student achievement and receive comprehensive support at all stages of their careers.**

States, districts, and schools must be afforded the resources and support to recruit effective educators through school-university partnerships and strategies



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that address shortages in high-needs geographic and subject areas. They also need resources to keep effective educators in the profession through professional development; opportunities that allow teachers to assume differentiated roles, such as instructional leaders, coaches, and mentors; and recognition programs, including locally determined incentive and merit pay programs tied to educator effectiveness.

**3. Students and schools should be measured by a comprehensive assessment system that incorporates multiple and varied indicators and analyzes student growth over time.** Accurately assessing the performance of our students requires more than standardized tests in the two or three subjects currently required by NCLB. Student achievement should be measured with a variety of evaluations, such as student grades, portfolios and exhibitions, teacher evaluations, and progress over time. Likewise, evaluations of school and district performance should include multiple indicators, such as student growth, attendance records, and advancement and graduation rates.

**4. Our accountability system must discern varying levels of performance in schools and districts and target assistance where it is needed most.** When a school is identified as needing improvement, it should have access to a full complement of improvement strategies and the flexibility to choose the strategies best suited to its unique needs. Schools should be able to provide assistance directly to the groups in need, without broad sanctions to the entire school or district.

**5. States and districts need support for research-based, innovative redesign that prepares all children for the next steps in their education.** This comprehensive redesign should make certain that young children are well-prepared for school, students successfully transition from the elementary to secondary grades, and high school graduates are equipped for success as active and engaged citizens.



Education policy crafted without the input of practitioners will be flawed. At [insert name of your local district/school], we strive to ensure that each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. That includes working with policymakers at all levels to build education policies that do not, in the words of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, serve the interests of adults better than those of students.

[Insert a brief sentence that includes your name, your occupation, and the name of your school or district.]

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# Backgrounder

## Equitable Educational Opportunities



It is well documented that the kids who would most benefit from a quality education often end up getting the short end of the stick when it comes to highly qualified teachers, a rich curriculum, varied learning experiences, and access to the latest technological tools and resources. It's time to address the achievement gaps that exist in too many of our schools and districts, which were highlighted by No Child Left Behind, by expanding educational opportunities for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds.

Equitable access to educational options and experiences—regardless of geography, socioeconomic status, race, or gender—requires adequate resources. It also demands creativity, varied organizational structures, diverse instructional expertise, unbiased expectations, and proactive and meaningful community engagement.

### Key Messages

- All too often quality of education is linked to socioeconomic status, race, and other background characteristics. This must change. Talents and interests—not personal circumstances—should determine a child's education, career, and life outcomes.
- Students' different abilities, circumstances, and needs require variable and adequate resources and multiple approaches to highly effective learning and teaching.
- All students must have access to highly effective teachers; engaging and rigorous coursework; cutting-edge educational technology and relevant career and technical programs; and resources for strengthening schools, families, and communities.



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## Frequently Asked Questions Equitable Educational Opportunities

**1. There are many cases in which a state or district that spends more per pupil than its counterparts has lower student performance. Given this, is money the answer? Do we know that providing high-needs schools or districts with more dollars will work?**

Providing schools and districts that have significant populations of high-needs students with adequate funds to address those students' needs is a necessary first step, but alone it is insufficient to increase performance. Next, schools and districts need to smartly and efficiently use the money on the areas best promoting achievement.

Schools and districts also need to ensure equity by making sure that all students—regardless of their backgrounds—benefit from highly effective educators, varied learning opportunities, unbiased expectations, and supportive community engagement. Moreover, we need ongoing support for educators who teach in challenging settings.

By thinking creatively and leveraging partnerships, we can facilitate community involvement, raise expectations, and provide all students with engaging learning experiences.

**2. What is the federal government's role in ensuring equity? Given that its contribution is less than 10 percent of education funding, shouldn't states and local governments be the leaders in ensuring equity?**

States and local governments have critical roles in ensuring educational equity, but it requires more than adequate resources. The federal government can be a role model for changing behaviors and expectations, affirming that all children have the ability to learn to high standards and should be provided equitable opportunities to do so.

For example, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) focuses on disaggregating achievement data. Its efforts to hold states, districts, and schools accountable for achievement gaps have compelled educators to take steps in reducing inequities, and its provision for highly qualified teachers helps ensure that all students have teachers who meet basic education qualifications.

The federal government can build on this work by providing further guidance and funding that expands equitable educational opportunities for all students. (See the next question for more details.)



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**3. Isn't No Child Left Behind already ensuring equity through its provisions for accountability and highly qualified teachers?**

NCLB is a good first step to ensuring equity; it has thrown a light on the achievement gaps that persist in many schools, including schools that have solid performance when scores are averaged but are shortchanging certain groups of students. NCLB's accountability model, however, isn't as flexible and targeted as it could be. Instead of giving schools the ability to choose the resources and interventions necessary to address their students' unique learning needs, the system imposes broad sanctions that often fail to help schools meet their achievement goals.

Moreover, ensuring equity isn't just about spending extra time on test preparation and core subjects so that achievement gaps on state tests close. Equity includes access to educational technology, advanced placement and dual-enrollment courses, internships and real-world learning experiences, highly effective teachers, and engaging after-school programs.

And although NCLB's requirement for highly qualified teachers ensures that all teachers have met the minimum requirements for state licensure and have demonstrated knowledge of their subjects, our education system needs to do more to guarantee that all students have highly effective teachers who promote learning. (For more on this, see the "Highly Effective Educators" section on page 11.)



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## Backgrounder

# Highly Effective Educators

Research has consistently shown that the two most important school-based factors affecting a child's academic success are the classroom teacher and the school principal, yet many students still lack effective educators. No Child Left Behind's provision for *highly qualified* teachers ensures that all students have teachers who have met the most basic qualifications to enter the classroom. Now we need to guarantee that each student has *highly effective* teachers who elicit growth in student achievement and receive comprehensive support at all stages of their careers—from preparation and induction to ongoing professional development.

States, districts, and schools must be afforded the resources and support to recruit effective educators through school-university partnerships and strategies that address shortages in high-needs geographic and subject areas. They also need resources to keep effective educators in the profession through ongoing capacity-building professional development; opportunities that allow teachers to assume differentiated roles, such as instructional and curriculum leaders, coaches, and mentors; and recognition programs, including locally determined incentive and merit pay programs tied to educator effectiveness.

### Key Messages

- Teachers and school leaders matter. School leadership ranks second only to teacher quality among school-related factors that affect student learning.
- Our definition of educator effectiveness must include, but should not be limited to, indicators related to student growth and proficiency.
- From the early childhood center to the university campus, we must build the capacity to support educators in gaining and sustaining the professional knowledge, skills, and training to address the evolving needs of students.
- Capacity-building professional development is essential to sustainable school improvement and educator retention because it develops local expertise in instructional and leadership practices, enabling teacher leaders to guide collaboration among instructional staff.
- Capacity-building professional development establishes research-based, long-term professional development practices for all teachers and administrators to address academic achievement and includes evaluation to determine the effect on teacher practice and student learning.



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# Frequently Asked Questions Highly Effective Educators



## 1. What's the difference between highly qualified teachers and highly effective teachers?

The No Child Left Behind Act calls for *highly qualified teachers* for every classroom and defines highly qualified teachers as those who have met basic state licensure requirements and have demonstrated knowledge of their subject, either through college coursework or passing an exam.

ASCD defines *highly effective teachers* as those who have met the requirements for highly qualified teachers but also elicit demonstrable growth in student achievement. For teachers to be highly effective, they must receive comprehensive support at all stages of their careers—from preparation and induction to ongoing professional development.

## 2. Isn't it unfair to evaluate or financially compensate teachers based on student performance outcomes when learning is influenced by so many external factors?

It's not unfair to evaluate or pay teachers based on student achievement outcomes if the merit or incentive pay system is designed so that it takes into account multiple measures of student performance. Using multiple measures for evaluations is important for a few reasons:

- It provides a clearer, more complete picture of student achievement.
- It avoids reliance on a single test to determine student achievement.
- It allows supervisors to recognize effective teacher behaviors that cannot be reflected in test scores.

Evaluation and merit pay systems should also take into account student growth throughout the year when determining educators' effectiveness and rewards. This ensures that the deck isn't stacked against teachers who have their share of struggling learners or students below grade level. Fair and balanced approaches will evaluate and reward teachers who, as determined through multiple measures, help their students improve over the course of the year.

## 3. Will investing in professional development for teachers and leaders help improve student achievement?

Research shows that teacher effectiveness is the school-related factor most likely to affect student achievement, and it can be an even bigger influence than a student's



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socioeconomic background. School leadership is the second most influential school-related factor that affects student learning, and studies have shown correlations between effective leadership by school principals and test score increases of up to 10 percentage points. Thus, investing in professional development that improves teacher and leader effectiveness is a direct service to students that will improve their achievement.

It's important to note that not all professional development is alike. One-time workshops and keynote addresses that aren't grounded in improvement goals and don't focus on building local expertise won't move the needle on student achievement. The key is investing in sustained, high-quality professional development that builds local capacity, emphasizes collaborative learning and classroom application, and takes into account student achievement outcomes.

#### **4. What is capacity-building professional development, and why is it important?**

Capacity-building professional development is customized, ongoing professional development that builds local capacity for improved instruction and leadership. It establishes research-based, long-term professional development practices for all teachers and administrators to address academic achievement and includes evaluation to determine the effect on teacher practice and student learning.

Capacity-building professional development is important because it promotes continuous school improvement by empowering local educators to address the specific learning needs of students in their districts or schools. It also engages educators in ongoing collaborative learning, which contributes to positive working conditions. This is critical because one-third of all new teachers leave the profession within three years and almost half leave within five years, with many citing poor working conditions as a contributing factor for leaving. Most important, the link between educator quality and student learning is undeniable; effective capacity-building professional development helps improve student learning.



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# Backgrounder

## Multiple Indicators of School Success



No Child Left Behind requires standardized reading and math tests in grades 3 to 8 and a science assessment during elementary, middle, and high school. Schools and districts are judged on the results of these tests and face broad sanctions if their students or subgroups of students don't perform well.

This assessment system is much too limited to provide a complete appraisal of students' skills or overall school quality. Students and schools should be measured by a comprehensive assessment system that incorporates multiple and varied indicators and analyzes student growth over time. Similarly, our accountability system must discern varying levels of school and district performance and target improvement assistance where it is needed most.

### Key Messages

- Accurately assessing the performance of students and schools requires more than standardized tests in two or three subjects. Student achievement should be measured with a variety of evaluations such as state assessments, teacher-developed tests, portfolios, and performance assessments. Additional indicators, such as grade point averages and the number of students taking advanced placement and dual-enrollment courses, can help measure performance at the building or district level.
- We need a differentiated system of school improvement that distinguishes among schools or districts with dramatically disparate performance results, better targets assistance where it is needed most, and gives greater discretion to local educators—in partnership with parents, businesses, and community entities—to determine appropriate interventions for the unique needs of their students.
- We need to give special consideration to how we can best measure the growth of English language learners and students with disabilities while maintaining school and district accountability for their performance.
  - English language learners should be given a minimum of three years, and up to five years, to make adequate yearly progress. During this time, states should be free to use state language proficiency assessments instead of state reading tests until students meet proficiency.
  - The individualized education program teams for students with disabilities should develop benchmarks for reading and mathematics that align with standards measured in state assessments. Students must make annual progress under the state's growth model.



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## Frequently Asked Questions

# Multiple Indicators of School Success

### 1. What are multiple indicators of achievement?

Multiple indicators can best be described as a variety of measures and data that assess the performance of students, schools, school districts, and states. Measures for assessing student achievement could include student grades, classroom tests, portfolios and exhibitions, and progress toward proficiency over time. Measures for assessing schools and school districts could include student growth, attendance records, advancement and graduation rates, college entrance exam data, and advanced placement and dual-enrollment data.

### 2. Why do we need multiple indicators of achievement?

The primary purpose of assessment is to inform instruction and improve student learning. The best assessment systems are those that use a variety of indicators to provide a complete diagnosis of learning so that educators can adjust their teaching methods accordingly. A parent who takes her child to the doctor won't be satisfied with a diagnosis based on her child's temperature alone. She wants the doctor to also check blood pressure, measure height and weight, determine heart health, and assess vision and hearing. Similarly, a child's learning should be diagnosed using multiple indicators that together provide a more nuanced and accurate picture of achievement.

School and district performance should also be measured using a battery of indicators that address the full depth and breadth of their efforts. No Child Left Behind's (NCLB's) accountability system relies heavily on standardized tests that provide a snapshot of student knowledge and ability at a single moment in time. But successful schools teach more than math and reading: they develop critical thinking and oral and written communication skills, encourage collaboration, expose children to the arts, and teach students how to live healthily. Such learning isn't easily measured by standardized tests. This means our current accountability system is based on only a fraction of the learning that should be happening in schools.

### 3. How can we be sure that the use of multiple indicators of achievement won't water down accountability and allow schools and educators to hide or soften low standardized test scores with increases in other, more subjective assessments?

It's important to note that standardized tests can be an important part of our assessment and accountability system. However, schools and districts also should be held accountable for the other learning that is happening in schools.



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Most of us have heard the adage, “What is tested is what is taught.” Ironically, the standardized tests under NCLB have been most unfortunate for the very students they were most intended to help. Studies have found that students placed in the lowest tracks or in remedial programs—disproportionately low-income and minority students—are most apt to experience instruction geared only toward test-oriented tasks that are disconnected from the skills they need to learn. Rarely are they given the opportunity to talk about what they know, to read books other than textbooks, to write, or to construct and solve problems.

Broadening the indicators within our assessment and accountability system will do the opposite of watering down instruction and accountability: it will encourage schools to improve all students’ higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, complex problem solving, and written and oral expression.

**4. In calling for changes to how we test English language learners and students with disabilities, are you excusing educators from teaching these students according to the standards?**

Absolutely not. It’s critical to teach all students according to high standards and to hold educators accountable for the performance of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. However, NCLB’s assessment system is impractical in its evaluation of these students, and it doesn’t take into account their unique needs.

Under current rules, ELLs take state reading tests in English, and thus these tests are less a measure of reading mastery than of English comprehension. Increasing the length of time before which ELLs’ reading test scores are included in adequate yearly progress (AYP) calculations will give the students time to acquire the necessary English language skills and schools the time to properly evaluate their reading proficiency.

Incorporating benchmarks aligned to state reading and math standards into the IEP of a student with disabilities—and then measuring progress toward these goals via state assessments and a growth model—is an especially sophisticated accountability tool. It provides a personal and consistent evaluation of a student’s academic proficiency and gains over time, well beyond the existing NCLB testing regimen in which some students with disabilities are held to general proficiency standards, modified achievement standards, or alternate achievement standards.

**5. What’s wrong with our current school improvement model?**

The current NCLB school improvement model is compliance-driven rather than education-centered. It’s also inflexible and overly broad. First, NCLB’s model doesn’t distinguish between schools that barely miss one AYP goal and chronic



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low-performers that miss many AYP goals. Next, schools aren't given support and interventions until they enter their second year of "in need of improvement" status. Once they qualify for interventions, schools are subject to prescriptive improvement requirements that dictate a specific order of approaches, as opposed to being able to choose the improvement strategies that will best meet their needs and holding them accountable for those choices.

What's more, the improvement model applies broad sanctions to the entire building or district instead of targeting support directly to the groups in need. Finally, the current interventions required by NCLB might be acceptable options for some schools, but the law does not allow for some research-based interventions, such as the provision of school-based extended learning opportunities, in its list of allowable improvement strategies. Such strategies might be more appropriate and effective for particular schools compared with those currently prescribed by the law.

### **6. Why should schools be given a choice of improvement strategies if they are labeled as "failing"? How can we trust them to make the best decisions?**

Educators at the local level are invested in helping children succeed. They know why their students are struggling and are better positioned than far-removed legislators in Washington, D.C., to determine the specific strategies that will best support their students. What local educators need is guidance, flexibility, and the resources to support their students, not a predetermined set of interventions that may or may not raise their students' achievement levels.

It's also important to remember that NCLB is structured so that accountability measures are ratcheted up every year a school fails to meet its achievement goals. Thus, it's in the best interest of a school labeled "in need of improvement" to use the right tools to help its students improve as quickly as possible.



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# Backgrounder

## Innovative Educational Redesign



Too many children are entering kindergarten without essential skills for school readiness, less than 35 percent of 8th graders are reading at a proficient level, and every 26 seconds one student in the United States drops out of high school. A closer look at these statistics reveals alarming gaps between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds and races. Our current education model too often attempts to improve student outcomes in a piecemeal fashion, expecting schools to work in isolation and failing to consider the full continuum of education, from prekindergarten to postsecondary.

States and local education agencies need support establishing and sustaining innovative, research-based approaches that ensure young children are well-prepared for school, students successfully transition from the elementary to secondary grades, and high school graduates are ready for success in a global society. All children should have access to and funding for high-quality prekindergarten programs. Elementary students should learn in an intellectually challenging and engaging environment that provides the foundation for future achievement. Middle school curriculum should keep students engaged in learning and prepare them for high school. High school curriculum should be rich and rigorous, and students should have meaningful learning experiences and relationships with caring adults who know them well.

### Key Messages

- Ongoing educational redesign to meet the lifelong learning needs of today's students must include continuous supports, from crib to commencement.
- At every stage of their education careers, students should learn in school settings that are physically and emotionally safe and be provided with personalized learning opportunities that are relevant and challenging.
- States and school districts need support for innovative high school design that could include
  - Mentoring programs in which every student is supported and encouraged by an adult mentor in the school building.
  - Flexible use of time that allows schools to provide students with tailored and multiple approaches to fulfilling graduation requirements.
  - Business, community, and family engagement that provide students with expanded learning opportunities and innovative programs for earning credit.



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- School-university partnerships that articulate and align curriculum between secondary and postsecondary education to increase college readiness.
- Alternative opportunities for students who are not succeeding in traditional high schools.
- The Secondary School Innovation Fund Act (formerly the GRADUATES Act) and the Graduation Promise Act provide the support, flexibility, accountability, and innovation needed to redesign our high schools.





## Frequently Asked Questions

# Innovative Educational Redesign



### **1. Why do we need to redesign our schools? What's wrong with the current model?**

Data show that we're losing kids at various points in the education pipeline. Too many children are entering kindergarten without essential school readiness skills and already lag behind their peers. Just over 40 percent of 4th graders and less than 35 percent of 8th graders are reading at a proficient level. And every 26 seconds one student in the United States drops out of high school. A closer look at these statistics reveals alarming gaps between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds and races.

Our current education model too often attempts to improve student outcomes in a piecemeal fashion, expecting schools to work in isolation and failing to consider the full continuum of education, from prekindergarten to postsecondary. Schools and communities need resources and models for working together to provide students with comprehensive and continuous support throughout their education careers.

The job prospects of students who don't graduate and their projected quality of life are grim compared to their peers who graduate. But even many of the students who make it through their senior year are unprepared for college and the workforce. In short, if we don't redesign our schools now, we risk setting up students for failure in today's increasingly competitive and global economy.

### **2. What's the point of redesigning our high schools? If we support our students earlier through strong prekindergarten and elementary programs, aren't we eliminating the need for high school redesign?**

We're losing kids at all stages of the education pipeline, and we need to remain vigilant about keeping students engaged in learning. It doesn't make sense to pour resources into prekindergarten and elementary education if we ignore those students once they reach middle and high school.

Data from surveys of dropouts indicate that many students are dropping out not because high school is too hard, but because they're bored, unchallenged, and aren't receiving personal attention and support. High schools need to be redesigned so that we receive a return on all of our education investments. That return is a high school graduate who is well-equipped for success in the 21st century.



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**3. Won't comprehensive educational redesign cost a significant amount of money? Is it worth the investment?**

Redesigning our schools is an investment in our future. Like any investment, up-front costs are necessary to reap future benefits. We ask, instead, What is the cost of maintaining the status quo? What is the cost of inaction?

The United States has a high school dropout rate of nearly 30 percent, and the rate is significantly higher among African American and Hispanic students. Research shows that dropouts are far more likely than high school graduates to become incarcerated and have poorer health and shorter life spans. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that if the 1.2 million high school dropouts from the class of 2007 had earned their diplomas instead of dropping out, the U.S. economy would have seen an additional \$329 billion in wages over these students' lifetimes. And that's for only one class. If this annual pattern is allowed to continue, more than 12 million students will drop out of school during the next decade at a cost to the nation of more than \$3 trillion.

Furthermore, innovative redesign that is planned and coordinated across grade spans—and also across service agencies and community stakeholders—is more efficient and economical than multiple, isolated attempts at redesign that can duplicate efforts or, worse, allow certain children to fall through the cracks.



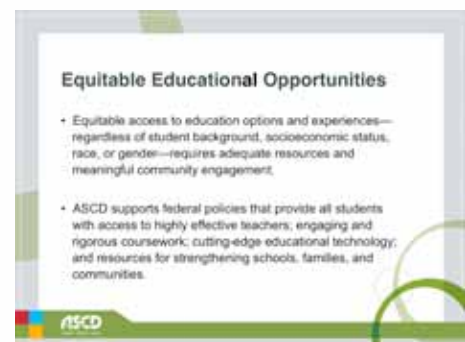
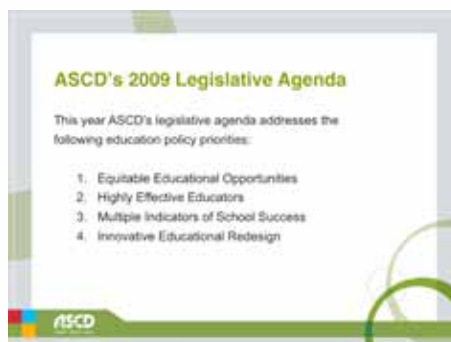
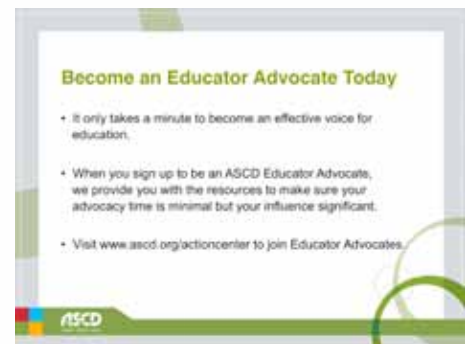
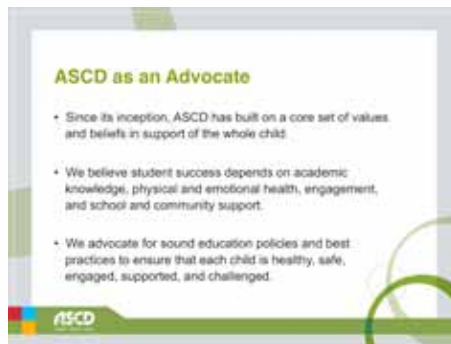
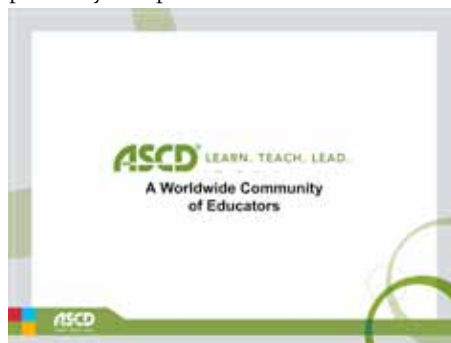
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# PowerPoint Presentation

PowerPoint presentations can be an effective way to highlight key talking points. If you want to advocate for critical education reforms, introduce stakeholders to ASCD and help them understand ASCD's legislative priorities, or encourage your audience to become education advocates, you can download the full, customizable PowerPoint presentation at [www.ascd.org/ASCD/docs/worddocs/leap/LEAPtoolkit\\_PowerPoint.pptx](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/docs/worddocs/leap/LEAPtoolkit_PowerPoint.pptx).

You can simply customize the first and last slides, or you're welcome to add, delete, and edit the slides to suit your needs. We encourage you to include local examples as part of your presentation. Below are example slides from the PowerPoint presentation.



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## About ASCD

Founded in 1943, ASCD is an educational leadership organization dedicated to advancing best practices and policies for the success of each learner. Our 175,000 members in 119 countries are professional educators from all levels and subject areas—superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members. Our nonprofit, nonpartisan membership association provides expert and innovative solutions in professional development, capacity building, and educational leadership essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead.

## ASCD as an Advocate

Since its inception, ASCD has built on a core set of values and beliefs in support of the whole child. We believe student success is dependent on academic knowledge, physical and emotional health, engagement, and school and community support. We advocate for sound education policies and best practices to ensure that each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Because we represent a broad spectrum of educators, we are able to focus on policies and professional practice within the context: “Is it good for the children?”

## ASCD as an Expert Source and Content Provider

ASCD is known throughout the profession for identifying education trends and translating research into practice. We are an award-winning publisher of books, periodicals, and a variety of online and multimedia products. ASCD’s flagship, award-winning publication, *Educational Leadership*, is recognized as a balanced and reliable source of information on trends, research, and professional practices in education.

ASCD’s professional development resources, programs, and conferences focus on specific issues, such as differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and health and learning, that show promise in improving student achievement. We provide educators with the tools they need to implement best practices at the district, school, and classroom levels.

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