

DEFINING SUCCESS: UNDERSTANDING OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR STUDENTS.

2016 Sessions

ACHIEVING EQUITABLE FUNDING: FIXING CONNECTICUT'S SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM

Connecticut has long been known as one of the wealthiest states in the country, but it is quickly becoming one of the most inequitable, in part due to how public schools are funded. The state currently uses 11 different funding formulas to distribute resources to public schools, none of which truly take into consideration the learning needs of students or the needs of the schools that serve them. As Connecticut finds itself funding public schools inequitably through a complicated school finance system, this session explores the impacts of unfair school funding on students, schools, and communities, and discusses possible paths to equity.

AN UNFINISHED VISION: EXAMINING DESEGREGATION AND DIVERSITY IN K-12 SCHOOLING

The post-Brown movement toward racial integration has been fraught with legal, political, and social barriers to change. In recent decades, cities and suburbs alike have been experiencing a trend toward school re-segregation. However, some schools and districts have been able to achieve diversity through a variety of means in order to raise achievement and prepare students for a workplace and country that is increasingly diverse. This panel will explore those means and ends, as well as the benefits and challenges of teaching a diverse student body.

ASSESSING PARCC AND SBAC: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EARLY RETURNS

Compared to most previous standardized tests, PARCC and SBAC are more rigorous and require deeper levels of critical thinking. Thus, it is unsurprising that results in many states highlight significant room for improvement in getting students college and career ready. As we meet in April, many states will be gearing up for their second year of PARCC and SBAC. This panel will explore what these new data tell us about student success that we didn't know with previous assessments. It will also consider the major challenges in implementation and ways that districts can better prepare teachers to meet these new goals.

BEYOND BLENDED: UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF PERSONALIZED LEARNING

The rise of blended learning has focused attention in US schools on tailoring the instructional environment to the individual needs, skills, and interests of each student. Although technology

has been a powerful tool in making helping teachers customize education for each student, school models such as Montessori have been personalizing instruction for decades. This panel will explore strategies and lessons that we can learn from both of these models. It will also consider how to design blended learning environments that have rich peer engagement and peer learning opportunities.

BREAKING THE COLLEGE CEILING: STRATEGIES FOR GETTING STUDENTS TO TOP COLLEGES

When it comes to providing underserved students access to economic opportunity, all colleges are not created equal. In this panel we will hear from several high schools and college preparation programs that have had exceptional success in sending their students to highly competitive colleges, and find out what game-changing resources, opportunities, and supports they are offering to their students that are leading to such impressive college placement outcomes.

BUILDING BRIDGES: PARENT ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

Although many schools have traditionally focused on strategies for improving parent engagement as a means to increase student achievement, many schools and organizations are currently shifting the conversation from parent engagement to parent empowerment. Rather than simply increasing opportunities for parents to learn about the school, they are leveraging parents to make active choices to transform communities and schools. This panel will explore the theory of action that underlies these efforts and examine the successes and challenges that organizations have faced in developing parent advocates.

CAPTURING ADDITIONAL IMPACT: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS OF COLOR ON THEIR STUDENTS

Holding all students to high expectations provides access to higher quality educational opportunities. However, a recent study from researchers at American University and Johns Hopkins found that teachers with similar ethnic backgrounds as their students maintain higher expectations for them. How are schools and districts recognizing and addressing this discrepancy? How can districts effectively build cultural competence? What strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers of color have been successful? What new initiatives and innovations are most promising?

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND CAREER READINESS: GETTING STUDENTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE AND BEYOND

Community colleges play an important role in providing a pathway to economic opportunities, especially those for whom four-year colleges are not the best option. However, completion rates for community college students are historically very low, and many students who enroll never see significant benefits from their studies. This panel will present innovations to raise

completion rates and will highlight successful examples of career technical education programs and high school to college career pathways programs.

DEFINING SCHOOL READINESS: CREATING LASTING GAINS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood educators and advocates have a broad range of definitions of success for students. Many advocates recognize the importance of social-emotional development through play-based learning. However, given there is an achievement gap before students even enter kindergarten, some advocate for prioritizing literacy skills and number sense during those early years. This panel will examine the tensions between these priorities and look to different models of early childhood education that actualize those goals.

ENRICHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS: MOVING BEYOND CORE SKILLS

Most of the world's elite schools have robust STEAM offerings, because research shows that hands-on science and arts play a pivotal role in cognitive development. Furthermore, creative problem solving skills are becoming ever more important in the modern job market. However, in the era of NCLB accountability, some of the neediest schools have had to prioritize math and literacy, leaving little time for enriching STEAM curricula. How do we ensure all students develop foundational skills without sacrificing other opportunities that further students' overall development? This panel will explore the tension between these priorities.

FUELING CHANGE: ACHIEVING IMPROVED OUTCOMES THROUGH PHILANTHROPIC GIVING

As public resource constraints lead to underfunded schools, public and charter schools are seeking alternative, private funding sources. Whether the money is from foundations, education non-profits, or individual donors, issues of equity and sustainability persist. How can donors, districts, and policy makers work together to make sure this money has the maximum impact for the maximum number of students? Can this funding successfully improve outcomes and reduce disparities?

NCLB LEFT BEHIND: THE FUTURE OF FEDERAL EDUCATION REFORM

The role of the federal government in public education is changing as "No Child Left Behind" is replaced by the "Every Student Succeeds Act." As accountability shifts from the federal to the state and local level, what are the future implications for federal involvement in public education? How will it impact educational equity? Ultimately, what will it mean for what we expect of all of our children?

NO EXCUSES 2.0? REVISITING THE MODEL AS NEW CHALLENGES COME TO LIGHT

The term “No Excuses Charter School” has been in the national conversation for the past 20 years, but does anyone really know what it means to be a “No Excuses” school? This panel will explore how different charter schools define this model and how they address the tensions created by working with students in poverty. How do these schools ensure that students are successful when they transition to college? How do their choices affect the communities within the schools and without? What have we learned over the past 20 years, and where are we headed?

REDESIGNING EDUCATION: BUILDING NEW MODELS OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

Clarifying the goals we have for students is only the first step toward realizing our vision for student success. The design and implementation process for new classroom and school models can be complex and challenging. What does the design and change management process look like, and what best practices are emerging? Though there are certainly common themes driving many of the school design and redesign efforts across the country, this period of educational change is marked by a diversity of approaches. Given that, to what degree is each process of design/school design unique and to what degree can we scale and/or share these processes? How is school design and redesign shaping the broader educational landscape?

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE: USING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS TO REFORM SCHOOLS

Concerned about the long term impact of overly punitive behavioral interventions, many schools are reforming their discipline strategies. This session explores how restorative justice and alternative positive behavior techniques affect the way that teachers, students, school administrators, and other stakeholders engage with each other and how the new patterns of interaction impact the overall school culture and climate. Additionally, the session highlights schools and districts that have successfully incorporated these models into their culture and examines the challenges they faced during the change process and how they overcame them.

SUCCESS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: ACCELERATING THE PATH TO PROFICIENCY

Multilingualism can be an advantage for cognitive and social development. However, English Language Learners (ELLs) can miss out on these growth opportunities when schools lack the necessary support for these students. As the proportion of English Language Learners in the US continues to grow, it is becoming ever more important to improve instruction for ELL students. This panel will look to examples of schools and districts that are achieving success in supporting ELL students and enabling them to engage fully in grade level academic content. It will also

discuss the benefits and pitfalls of keeping children in bilingual classes versus moving them as rapidly as possible to English only environments.

SUCCESS FOR THE WHOLE CHILD: LINKING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND MENTAL HEALTH

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as many as 1 in 5 children struggles with a mental disorder in a given year. Poor mental health can affect a child's ability to focus in school and to develop positive relationships with peers and family members. At the same time, a growing body of evidence suggests that social-emotional learning is critical to long-term academic success. If we accept that learning and non-academic factors are linked, are schools then responsible for students' social-emotional development and mental health? If so, what policies and resources need to be in place to accomplish this? And how can we better coordinate efforts to promote SEL and mental health resources within schools and school communities?