

Public Agenda for College and Career Success

Reactions to Goal #1: Increase educational attainment to match best-performing U.S. states and world countries.

The NCHEM report has left us with a valuable set of observations and a framework for addressing challenging 21st Century educational issues. It has provided us with sets of potential state performance measures, however progress in achieving state performance measures can only be realized in concert with performance measures that target and are helpful to specific organizations, institutions, and groups within each region of the state. The educational attainment issue, which has been endemic in education for many decades, can only be solved if the unique abilities of each student are recognized, appreciated, and appropriately responded to.

The details of any effective action plan must include different levels of participation – students, teachers, administrators, and appropriate representatives from government, private, and not for profit sectors. They must target at least one well defined community, generate creative dialogue among participants concerning educational concepts that are effective, and utilize dedicated professionals and community volunteers in implementing plan. The acquisition of adequate financial resources and the provision of effective communication must be an integral part of the entire process, reinforcing effective educational practice with sound educational policy. It is crucial that we place great emphasis on Illinois' ten regions and the institutions within and/or serving those regions in defining performance measures that are comprehensive, relevant, and useful. Relevant institutions and groups must be rewarded for: 1.) focusing existing resources, 2.) establishing conditions for successful implementation, and 3.) maintaining continuous improvement. **Operational leadership must come from relevant institutions within or serving each region.**

Existing Resources

- Identify educational parameters and educational potential of regions
- Make known relevant and available community organizations and structures to support education
- Identify committed teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community leaders
- Establish network of consulting professionals within and outside of each region
- Establish protocol for meaningful dialogue among participants
- Identify most meaningful and useful educational and management concepts

Implementation

- Establish working relationship among all participants
- Identify and enhance assessment processes with comprehensive educational feedback loops
- Conduct relevant professional workshops around effective educational concepts
- Increase volunteer, professional, and other resource availability
- Establish effective mentoring networks
- Establish useful political alignments
- Establish vehicles for internal and external communications to appropriately inform all constituents

Improvement

- Monitor impact of program changes on all participants focusing on educational and learning outcomes
- Institutionalize a culture and practice of continuous learning with emphasis on individual and professional growth
- Sustain ongoing feedback loops along with effective internal and external communications
- Identify and utilize additional human and financial resources to expand student opportunities

Each leadership institution must recognize the critical characteristics of effective education at every level of the interconnected educational hierarchy – P through 16. These connections throughout the educational pipeline are very tenuous without proper curricular alignment, educational rigor, or meaningful learning outcomes. To improve our systems, strong community participation with substantial local, state, federal, and private support must be generated and the most current understanding of what it takes to be successful must be implemented. Without such support and the application of current knowledge, an alarmingly high student attrition rate will continue to grow and be particularly pronounced for African Americans, Hispanics, and students from low income families. It is clear that the 21st Century viability of our American society is intertwined with the success of African Americans, Hispanics and other Americans from economically depressed areas. In solving this critical challenge, a high quality of life will be ensured for all Americans. Unfortunately, all institutions will not be able to overcome existing inertia in many educational systems.

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