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**THE FIRST ANNUAL  
GATHERING OF EDUCATION  
ENTREPRENEURS:  
CREATING THE VISION  
FOR 2030**

August 2005  
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Convened in partnership with The Aspen Institute  
with support from E\*Trade



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**ABOUT NEW SCHOOLS VENTURE FUND**



NewSchools Venture Fund is a venture philanthropy firm working to transform public education for underserved children by supporting education entrepreneurs and by providing thought leadership across traditional education boundaries. Founded in 1998, NewSchools has raised about \$60 million for investment in both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. The

organization’s current investment strategy focuses on increasing the supply of high-quality public schools for underserved students and on supporting entrepreneurial solutions that enable traditional and charter schools to become performance-driven. NewSchools also works with a bipartisan network of education, nonprofit, policy, and business leaders to accelerate the process of education reform.

**ABOUT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE**



The mission of the Aspen Institute is to foster enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue. Through seminars, policy programs, conferences and leadership development initiatives, the Institute and its international partners seek to promote nonpartisan inquiry and an appreciation for timeless values.

## BACKGROUND

In August 2005, NewSchools Venture Fund and the Aspen Institute invited a group of about 50 leaders in educational entrepreneurship, philanthropy, policy making and research for the first Annual Gathering of Education Entrepreneurs in Aspen, Colorado with funding from E-Trade.

By convening this network of leaders over five years, the partners aimed to:

- **rejuvenate** this group of entrepreneurial change agents to sustain their effort over the long haul
- **connect** people on a human and professional level, in order to encourage collaborative efforts and creative thinking
- **define** new ways to make sure the “whole is greater than the sum of the parts,”
- **create** the long-term agenda for change.

From the outset, the organizers wanted each year’s gathering to have its own theme and focus. Befitting its status as the first convening, the 2005 gathering’s theme was: *Creating the Vision for 2030*. By getting away from the day-to-day, participants would have a chance to take the long view, envisioning a future for the nation’s education system. In the process, they could sort out whether there was a need for collective action to achieve that vision — as a supplement to all of the individual and organizational efforts in which they were each engaged.

Thirty education entrepreneurs attended the 2005 gathering. Together, they represented the wide array of roles that make up the world of education entrepreneurship. Some were launching new **networks** of schools aiming to transform public education. Others were building organizations to support the diverse array of schools now emerging across the country, by cultivating **leaders**, or providing **technical assistance**, or developing **technological tools**. Some were **scholars and policy analysts**, on the cutting edge of research and development in education. Still others represented **philanthropy** — the funders underwriting the work of education entrepreneurship across the country.

The group was not as diverse as the organizers had intended — in the ethnicity of the participants, but also in their roles. Specifically, there was a shortage of individuals involved in the critical work of parent and community organizing for better schools. Also under-represented were “tool-builders” and technology entrepreneurs aiming to revolutionize the delivery of education. But within those limits, the group brought a wide range of perspectives to the table, and a rich base of experience in an array of settings.

The Aspen Institute offered an ideal environment for the three days of intensive discussion that ensued. What exactly *is* our vision for education in 2030, participants asked? And what will it take in the shorter-term to make that vision a reality? Through a combination of whole-group conversations, small working group activity, and downtime for connection and rejuvenation, the gathering yielded a number of important results:

- A set of **emergent principles** to guide the community of education entrepreneurs
- A set of **priorities** for short and medium-term **collective action**:
  - building next-generation research and development (R&D) capacity;
  - creating more effective political and advocacy organizations to advance the vision; and,
  - focusing collective resources on cities with extraordinary potential for real transformation.

This report is not a transcript of the gathering. Instead, it describes the key themes and ideas discussed and provides more detail about the highest priority topics selected by the group.

## STARTING POINT: A WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION OF A VISION FOR EDUCATION IN 2030

Before the gathering, the meeting's facilitator interviewed about half of the participants about their own visions for education in the year 2030. The interviews produced a framing document, setting out some of the key themes that were central to the entrepreneurs' picture of education's future. The document served as a launching point for the meeting's opening session — an all-group discussion of the vision for 2030. Here are some of the central themes and ideas that emerged:

***Seismic shifts will continue to rock public education in the coming years.*** Participants agreed widely that we were in the midst of a period of great transformation — one likely to continue for the foreseeable future. “We’re in a period of massive change, much like the period that brought into being the [school] system we’re now trying to change,” remarked one participant. Part of the revolution is technological, with the dizzying pace of improvement in computing power and the still-emerging possibilities of bio- and nano-technology. Part of it is generational — at both ends of the age spectrum. The new generation of adults, one attendee noted, is change-ready: more comfortable with competition, more impatient with hierarchy, more eager to create something new and better. At the same time, we’re seeing a “graying” of the population. As an increasing share of the electorate is comprised of people with no school-age children, what will happen to public support for school funding? And part of the change is economic. Thomas Friedman’s “flat world” loomed large in the conversation. One participant worried aloud: “Even if we ratchet up basic skills, that’s not good enough. Will we have an education system that supports the American vision — or are we at the end of that vision?”

***In light of rapid change, it is difficult — and arguably futile — to envision a specific future for 2030.*** In pre-gathering interviews with the facilitator, many participants struggled to articulate a particular vision for 2030. The ideas that emerged tended to have more of a three- to five-year time-horizon. As one attendee noted, the technologies and educational approaches that will drive education in 2030 have yet to be invented today and therefore cannot fully be foreseen. “There was no plan behind the big things that have transformed the economy, like software. The key was creating a whole lot of opportunity,” remarked the participant, adding that to the group should get away from “the notion that we want to pick the right ‘horses’ now and drive them to 2030.”

***What’s needed is to create a dynamic system with the capacity to meet evolving challenges.*** The impossibility of painting a specific picture of 2030, however, does not mean that thinking long-term is not helpful. Instead, attendees generally agreed that we need to focus our attention on creating an education system that is dynamic and flexible enough to respond well to the unpredictable changes ahead — and that is attractive enough to talented people and risk-tolerant capital. Though we cannot imagine exactly what K-12 education should look like in 2030, we know that dynamism, talent, and capital will be essential to any successful future. “We can’t figure out what the next ‘stirrups’ will be,” said one member of the gathering, alluding to the transformation made possible by one relatively simple invention. “The most important thing is understanding we’ll have that transformation and building the capacity to be ready when the change comes.”

But what kinds of capacity? One clear priority for the group was *human capital*— attracting the best and brightest to contribute their considerable talent to educating our youth. From classroom teachers to school leaders, from entrepreneurs to scholars to policymakers, participants widely agreed on the need to make education much more of a magnet for talent and ingenuity. Part of the challenge is attracting more people with the right competencies into the whole range of educational roles. One participant asked: “What set of conditions would bring in the talent we need?” Another part is unleashing all of the talent already in the system. As one attendee noted: “Lots of people already in the system are potential change agents, but they have no route.”

Creating these “conditions” and “routes,” participants generally agreed, involved transforming the *systems and structures* that define K-12 education. “We’re looking for a critical mass of great leaders in cities,” said one entrepreneur involved in building the supply of excellent school leaders, “but we’re putting them out there without a lot of support. How far will they take it — and how long will they last — without system change?” System-change is also vital, one participant argued, to leverage what will always be a limited talent pool: “If we can’t introduce efficiencies, and it all hinges on getting better people into the system, then we can’t solve the problem.”

Among the systemic challenges mentioned by participants:

- *Structures of monopoly and oligopoly* that limit dynamism and choice. Monopoly and oligopoly run at cross-purposes with the kind of innovative, constantly improving system the gathering's participants were envisioning. As one member of the gathering put it: "The structural constraint is the co-monopoly of districts and unions." But participants named other restrictive structures as well, from teacher preparation programs to providers of materials and technologies.
- *Lack of capital investment* that is needed for transformation. While participants noted a great influx of transformative philanthropic capital in recent years, the flow is still much too small relative to the need. The overwhelming bulk of public education funding simply fuels operations-as-they-are, leaving few resources for investments with the potential to generate substantial leaps in performance.
- Related, *a lack of tools, practices, and R&D needed* to reach the next level of outcomes, in which all students graduate ready for college and for the knowledge economy in which they will work. One scholar worried: "It seems impossible to get there without reinventing the whole research and development infrastructure."

System-change of this magnitude, however, will be tough to bring about without a much *wider circle of advocates* supporting it. These ideas, one member of the gathering suggested, are "not too radical in the context of this group. And you could probably share them with double this number of people" who would also accept them. "But beyond that, it would seem pretty radical." Argued another: "We need to figure out how to bleed this out to a larger base so we're not marginalized."

Different ideas emerged about this need for mobilizing additional advocates. One was deeper and richer involvement by the people who stand to benefit the most from a transformed education system. Without that, one community organizer commented, "it's the few making the decisions for the many. If we don't open that conversation, in 2030 we'll still be having the same conversation." Limiting this outreach to urban low-income neighborhoods, though, worried some participants. "Can you pursue a school reform strategy that's [solely] about urban and poor," asked one, "or do you need a broader strategy?" One potential target for outreach nominated by an attendee: new communities that are springing up in fast-growing areas. "They're dynamic places, and their residents vote."

Whatever the focus of outreach, participants keyed on the *need for "proof points"* — *clear, compelling examples* that new approaches work for kids. "Research needs to surface more results on the things we're saying need to be done," remarked one attendee. Lack of evidence, for example, has made it hard to stop the eroding support for school choice and school-based autonomy in the large urban district where this participant lives. One attendee drew an analogy to the start-up technology world. "You can't just be better than the big competition. You have to be ten times better. You have to do something completely differently. Whatever bar's been set, we need to be way above that bar." Proof points also make abstract ideas real for people: "Ideas matter, but most people can't take action until you tell them concretely where they're going."

While vital, proof points are not sufficient. All agreed on the need for *more well-organized collective action in support of change*. "Opponents of these ideas are very well-organized," stated one long-time observer of education politics. By contrast, "[education entrepreneurs] are all over the place. That's our greatest strength but also our greatest liability." Others agreed. "The thing about entrepreneurial people is that they are, by definition, not good at collective action," said one. Another echoed: "Entrepreneurs are not good joiners." Finding a way to mobilize common effort, then, emerged as a central challenge for the gathering.

Participants mostly coalesced around the ideas described here, but some tensions emerged on the particulars. Here are some examples:

- How much emphasis should be placed on "fixing the district system" by improving how well it is managed, versus creating something totally new? Or does the right approach lie somewhere in between, such as a "portfolio" model in which local leaders manage a range of school providers including, but not limited to, the district?
- What's the relative importance of a focus on human capital improvement vs. a focus on system-change? For some, "getting the right people on the bus" seemed the top priority. Others worried that just bring better people into the field would be insufficient to achieve transformation.

- The question of scale elicited different reactions. Some participants noted the enthusiasm among some funders for the proliferation of new schools, including stand-alone schools and smallish networks. Tool-builders, however, expressed concern that these relatively small players wouldn't be attractive customers for scale-minded tool-creators. Will the next generation of tools be built, then, for large districts rather than for a new wave of users?
- No discussion of education can escape age-old tensions around content and pedagogy. With the focus here on human capital and system change, this tension was muted, but the inevitable question of “what kinds of schools are we trying to create” did arise — not surprisingly without resolution! Advocates of different content and pedagogical approaches have managed to find common cause in a set of institutional reforms that all agree are needed, but their hopes for what will emerge in the new institutional space diverge.
- Participants also seemed to disagree about how optimistic to be about the prospects for change. For some, the efforts discussed at the gathering still seemed marginal. One argued: “We're on the fringe. Districts have a remarkable capacity to make incremental changes and declare victory, to co-opt choice and competition.” In the meantime, entrepreneurial organizations “are still too young and under-developed.... There needs to be a lot more emphasis on capacity-building.” Others were more bullish, seeing “coalescing forces” behind this work and citing alternative governance arrangements taking hold in many of the nation's largest cities. In their eyes, we are approaching a “tipping point” in which things may begin to change very rapidly.

Despite these tensions, the conversation did converge around a set of “*principles*” to guide the development of an “entrepreneurial school system.” A subset of participants continued to refine these principles after the gathering (see appendix).

Participants also agreed on the need for more concerted, collective action in support of these principles. In the next phase of the gathering, they turned to setting priorities for joint action in the coming years.

## SETTING PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The gathering divided into four working groups, each of which tackled the same pair of questions:

- What are the critical barriers to achieving the vision discussed in the opening session?
- What strategies and capacities are needed to overcome those barriers?

The groups identified a wide range of *barriers* to achieving the vision of an entrepreneurial school system. These barriers largely fell under two broad headings: demand and supply.

On the *demand* side, the groups were alarmed by the lack of significant demand among public for dramatically better school performance. Part of the problem, one group concluded, was simply ignorance — lack of information and knowledge on the part of most people about the severe performance gaps in our schools. Without wide-ranging demand for change, entrenched interests tend to dominate education politics, making it difficult for even reform-minded leaders to press for significant change.

On the *supply* side, the groups again pointed to monopolistic and oligopolistic provision as a central barrier to progress. There are signs of change on that front; in fact, many of the participants in the gathering lead organizations that are beginning to serve as alternate suppliers of school management, human capital, technology, and other critical resources. But there was also frank acknowledgement of the infancy of these developments. Even if someone waved a magic wand and eliminated all of the monopolistic arrangements that now constrain entry, alternate providers would not yet have the capacity to step in at a significant level of scale. Lack of human capital emerged as a central theme — from classroom teachers, to school leaders, to individuals who can manage the growing organizations needed to run schools, develop leadership, and create tools to improve teaching and learning.

Each group also generated ideas about *strategies* that could address these daunting challenges. On the demand side, one group called for the creation of a widely publicized “education index” that would make clear to the public the state of our schools

and the need for improvement. The same group also recommended a massive media campaign — about both our current performance problems and the potential to do better. On the potential to do better, a different group suggested a concerted effort to expose media to success stories: schools and systems that are getting the job done against the odds. Other ideas related to more direct political action: building the capacity of parent and community organizing groups to demand better schools, and creating political organizations with sufficient capacity to achieve real wins in state legislatures.

On the supply side, the real strategy focus was on building the human and organizational capacity needed to deliver results. Under that general heading, numerous ideas emerged including better recruitment and selection of individuals to teach and lead; new career paths that make the profession more attractive to high performers; new sources of financial capital to build organizations with the capacity to do transformative work; and new institutions dedicated to research and development work concentrated on the issues that are truly critical to enhancing school performance.

With all of these ideas collected and shared, discussion turned to prioritizing. Among all of the possible strategies, which ones had the most promise for collective action over the next three to five years? After a rich conversation that generated a short list, participants voted, and three strategies stood out:

- Building the next generation of research and development capacity
- Creating more effective political and advocacy organizations
- Focusing collective resources on cities with extraordinary potential

The gathering then divided into working groups to tackle each of those strategies in more detail. The next three sections outline what each group developed.

### **Building the Next Generation of Research and Development Capacity**

By definition, entrepreneurs are doing something new. Whether they are starting new schools, building networks of schools, or creating new technologies or programs to support schools and school systems, they face a constant, steep learning curve as they try out new approaches, learn and adapt in their quest to succeed. For this entrepreneurial activity to be successful, it needs the support of research and development (R&D) to move up that continuous learning curve. In other industries, such as medicine and telecommunications, there is a robust R&D infrastructure made up of universities, corporations and public agencies to translate applied research into new or modified products and processes.

However, there are great barriers to harnessing the traditional sources of R&D in service of education entrepreneurship. To begin with, unlike businesses, the traditional “customers” of R&D in public education – districts and states – are generally focused on current activities and have few incentives to consider their future needs. However, these are the customers targeted by commercial for-profit organizations that seek to develop new technologies and approaches; these profit-minded R&D organizations may consider entrepreneurial education organizations too small to provide attractive revenue. The result is a disconnect: entrepreneurial organizations may have the greatest appetite for new ideas, but only the traditional education players have the resources and scale to pay for them. And philanthropic funders, who could overcome this challenge, are often uncomfortable with for-profit providers.

The other hurdle in education R&D is that while much of the sector’s R&D comes from universities and development organizations, this process often focuses on basic research and long-term knowledge development – rather than the current problems of practice faced by entrepreneurs on the cutting edge of change. This is a stark contrast to R&D within other sectors, where input from practitioners is often incorporated into the process. What’s more, this process rarely includes development activity to translate learning into action. As one participant put it, research in the academy tends to be “project-based” or “researcher-based” rather than “problem-based,” favoring individual scholarly contributions above the team-based, collaborative, practice-focused R&D that the entrepreneurial sector needs.

Meanwhile, entrepreneurs themselves are producing innovations-in-practice as they work. Yet there are few mechanisms to “productize” these new approaches, making them widely available for schools to use.

Together, these hurdles mean that the three-legged stool of R&D that feeds innovation in other fields – commercial R&D, university-based scholarship and practitioners – is unsteady in education. What’s needed, the working group concluded, is a new set of “hybrid” institutions dedicated to the kind of R&D needed to propel this field. These institutions may well be linked to universities and take advantage of the human capital and other resources of the academy, but must also be forged in new settings where the mission of sustained learning from practice disciplines the work, forcing everyone involved to focus on what matters most for helping practitioners succeed and improve. This will require additional investments in R&D (with a particular focus on entrepreneurs who are already testing next-generation approaches and solutions), more attention to problem-based research that includes both academics and practitioners, and more attention to the cycle of educational development itself.

### **Creating More Effective Political and Advocacy Organizations**

Since so many of the changes envisioned by the Gathering’s participants involve policy changes, it was only natural that one group tackle the question of how to build political and advocacy organizations capable of pressing the agenda. Opponents of major changes in K-12 education tend to be well-organized, the group noted, and so any effort to provide a counter-weight would need to be well-thought-out and well-funded. The current array of organizations working in this area tends to be long on ideas and operational capacity, but short on real political muscle when it comes to legislative battles, public referenda, and winning the hearts and minds of the general public on these issues. A strong set of political and advocacy organizations could serve a number of critical functions, including:

- conducting research on a range of leading K-12 policy issues, not just a single issue
- educating legislators and legislative candidates on the issues
- disseminating information to the general public about the state of education and the importance of change
- contributing to (and raising contributions for) candidates who share the reform agenda
- developing model legislation
- lobbying legislatures and other decision-making bodies on high-priority issues
- generating fast responses to the media as controversial issues arise.

Inspired by the success of EdVoice, a California-based education policy advocacy organization, the group focused on the question of how to generate similar organizations in other high-priority states: states with pressing issues on the agenda, a willing funder base, and an existing set of allies that could help launch the effort well. One issue the group discussed, without resolution, was whether to place a higher priority on states where major victories seemed likelier in the short-run, due to existing momentum or political alignments, or an opposite set of states that were arguably more in need of change and assistance.

Ultimately, generating state-level organizations like this is something that will have to happen within states, with local actors leading the charge. The national discussion started at the Gathering, though, could help focus the attention of nationally minded funders and strategies on the importance of providing more assistance to such nascent state-based efforts.

### **Focusing Collective Resources on Cities with Extraordinary Potential**

The entrepreneurs at the Gathering shared a vision of an education future that is very different from the present reality in most cities. For that reason, many said they faced a challenge even in explaining the vision to policymakers and the public – let alone persuading them to back it. Bringing the vision to life in one or two cities or states could help paint the picture more clearly, and prove the value of a new kind of education system.

Making that happen, though, would require concentrating the resources of a diverse set of entrepreneurial actors on some high-priority places; as one participant said, “massing our strengths in order to achieve breakthrough.” As much impact as an individual entrepreneurial effort can have, there is great potential for complementary action that magnifies the effect of all these players. What if, for example, organizations starting new schools had strong local partnerships with organizations that were recruiting top-notch leadership and teaching talent? What if the most promising new technological tool-builders worked hand in hand with leading-edge school providers? The whole could be much greater than the sum of the parts.

To some extent, the collective resources of entrepreneurs at the Gathering were already focused on similar cities, places where local leadership had cracked the door to reform just wide enough to be inviting to entrepreneurial change agents. But the working group envisioned an even more focused and deliberate effort.

What attributes would make a city ripe for this kind of concentration? The group generated a list that included:

- A favorable policy environment, including a district governance system (like mayoral control) that enables bold action and a strong charter school law
- Local support for substantial change from political, business, and community leaders
- District leadership committed to reinventing the system
- A strong flow of human capital (entrepreneurs, principals, and teachers)
- Adequate funding, both public and philanthropic
- An existing base of entrepreneurial operators already working in the city
- A scale large enough to attract talented people and media attention, but manageable enough to make significant change possible.

The group also generated a list of potential cities where the existing conditions may be ripe for this kind of action. Of course no city would have all these ingredients; if one did, there would be no need for this strategy. At the same time, a city with a good start on these elements would not be a good candidate for success. NewSchools Venture Fund agreed to support further thinking by developing a “map” of existing entrepreneurial activity in key geographies. With that information, this working group is planning to reconvene in 2006 to continue the conversation and move toward action.

## CONCLUSION

The organizers of the Aspen Gathering of Education Entrepreneurs plans to continue convening the group for the next four years, with each Gathering focusing on a different specific topic. An Advisory Group of participants formed to plan the following year’s activities and to lay the groundwork for the series.

What kinds of new ideas, collective action, and other consequences result from these gatherings remains to be seen. What’s clear is what won’t change even as the Gatherings move from one topic to the next: the focus on the future, the challenging conversations, the willingness to think outside the box, and the irrepressible tendency of entrepreneurs to move from thought to action.

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## Appendix: Principles for Educational Excellence in 2030

### Introduction

Public education is in crisis. Too many efforts to reform the current system begin with that system as a starting point and then seek ways to make incremental improvements. In August 2005, a group of educational entrepreneurs met with another idea in mind, to start with a blank slate and ask, given the opportunities and the needs we can see currently, what should an excellent public education system look like in 2030? With a bold twenty-five year vision in mind, the group then began to identify steps that can be taken now to build toward a new paradigm for schooling in America.

The early conversations surfaced some critical assumptions that framed our collective thinking on the topic. These are:

- **All children need advanced skills.** That we are committed to an uncompromised goal of educational excellence for each and every one of our children, and that the current trend toward ratcheting up basics skills is important, but woefully insufficient in this knowledge age and in the increasingly competitive global marketplace.
- **Drastic change is necessary.** That the system as currently designed will not get us there; that it is so structure-bound and resistant to change that it cannot respond to and keep pace with the rapidly changing world around it; and that as such, any sustainable solution requires wholesale rethinking of the core systems necessary to prepare the nation's young people for the economy and society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- **Flexibility is essential.** That it was impossible, if not counter-productive, for this group to articulate a prescriptive set of structural solutions for 2030 because it might put the visionaries of 2030 in a similar box to the one we face today.
- **The time is now.** Finally, that this issue of redesigning our education system must be addressed with a sense of urgency to preserve our democratic ideals and global competitiveness.

### Guiding Principles

With these assumptions in mind, we set out to define what “holds us together” and on what we might collaborate in order to achieve educational excellence. The following are a draft set of guiding principles generated in this group's early conversations. Once refined, they could serve as a framework for identifying short- and long-term strategies for how public and private resources could be dedicated toward redefining the delivery of education in this country.

Our public education systems in 2030 should strive toward the following characteristics:

1. **Performance-Driven.** The system must move from one driven by inputs and institutional needs to one that is designed around individuals and student outcomes. This implies:
  - That the child is the organizing principle and that one size does not fit all.
  - That a portfolio of educational options makes sense because a diversity of needs requires a diversity of supply; and
  - That among these options, parents should be able to choose the most appropriate learning environment for their child.
  - That the need for more customization can, and should be, coupled with a valid and reliable set of competency-based standards and achievement measures that are readily understood and accessible.
2. **Responsive.** The system should be more dynamic, allowing it to respond nimbly to the demands of the world around it and the children, families and communities it serves. This implies:
  - The dissolution of monopolies: A movement toward systems that are open, not closed; flexible, not rigid.
  - Systems engaging in constant learning cycles around increased performance, i.e., clear and measurable goals, alignment of resources accordingly, continuous assessment of progress toward goals, and course-corrections based on those results.
  - Creating a professional culture that is open to both the inflow of great ideas and the abandonment of those that are not yielding positive results; and
  - Rigorous models of research and development supported by private and public capital markets, similar to those in medicine and technology.

3. **Merit-based.** It should attract and retain teachers and leaders that are committed to, prepared for, and rewarded for excellence. This implies:
  - Creating a culture of meritocracy.
  - A system in which school leaders have the capacities, opportunities and responsibilities associated with effective leadership.
  - A training pipeline that is focused on selecting quality candidates, based in practice and held accountable for the performance of its graduates; and
  - Tying rich data to our school human resource systems so that educational professionals can continually refine their craft, be rewarded for getting results, or be transitioned out if they are not benefiting the kids they serve.
4. **Adequate, aligned resources.** The education funds provided should enable all kids to excel, no matter where they start. This implies:
  - Creating a system that reflects the fact that the needs of children vary and therefore, that *equal* funding does not necessarily equate to *adequate* and *equitable* funding.
  - Alignment in the allocation of resources based on sound analysis of what is needed to elevate student performance and productivity.
5. **Customer-driven.** Parents and community members have the tools and information to be effectively engaged in the system. This implies:
  - That parents become informed about their child's school and about the educational options available to them.
  - That they are active participants in the life of their school and/or education system.
  - That they are seen as advocates and resources for enhancing the quality of learning.
  - That business and community leaders are important allies in maintaining a commitment to high performance through the inevitable transitions in leadership.
6. **Transparency of information.** Functional transparency will pervade the system such that good data will drive all decisions. This implies:
  - That student outcome data is not only accessible, but usable to those stakeholders looking to make good decisions; and
  - That the inputs to the system – money, people, and other assets – are easily tracked and aligned toward improving the quality of service to students.

Thus, the vision of public education in 2030 is a system that nurtures individuals, the community, and civil society by its focus on establishing high outcome goals for all students, creating diverse and flexible means for achieving those goals within and across schools, aligning human and financial resources to those goals, monitoring progress and refining practice in a continuous and transparent way to better achieve the goals, and finally, creating a culture of meritocracy throughout the system, one that supports good work at all levels and by all participants in the system. To do this, we will need to reject old practices, invent new ways to monitor and track student progress along different educational pathways, and create new structures of school governance, and finance that are focused on the child rather than on the school system. Most of all, though, to achieve this vision of education in 2030, we will need to abandon old ways of thinking about schools and schooling. In particular, we need to reject the industrial-age notion that schools, like factories, ought to create a standard “education” that fits all students and that serves in all circumstances. In the future, an excellent education will be one that is rigorous and responsive, dynamic and accountable. There will be no place in that future for ossified monopolies or self-satisfied bureaucracies.

Our times demand that, and more; our children deserve nothing less.