


MEMORANDUM

April 10, 2015

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: TRANSMITTAL OF INFORMATION CAPSULE: *WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION SYSTEMS*

Attached please find a copy of the Information Capsule: *World-Class Education Systems*. World-class education systems ensure that all students receive a high-quality education and a solid foundation for engaging in lifelong learning. This Information Capsule provides a summary of the components most educators agree comprise a world-class education system, such as rigorous academic standards, a challenging but flexible curriculum, a focus on global learning, multiple measures of student achievement, highly effective principals and teachers, rigorous staff evaluations, and engagement with families and community members.

If you need further information, please contact Ms. Marie Izquierdo, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Academics and Transformation, at 305 995-1451, or Ms. Gisela Feild, Administrative Director, Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis, at 305 995-2943.

AMC:cb
M837

Attachment

cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Ms. Deborah Karcher
Ms. Gisela Feild
Dr. Aleksandr Shneyderman



INFORMATION CAPSULE

Research Services

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Christie Blazer, Supervisor

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION SYSTEMS

At a Glance

World-class education systems ensure that all students receive a high-quality education and a solid foundation for engaging in lifelong learning. This Information Capsule provides a summary of the components most educators agree comprise a world-class education system.

The term “world-class education” has recently been the topic of much discussion among educators and policymakers. According to a national telephone survey conducted by Rasmussen Reports (2014), 68% of likely U.S. voters agreed with President Obama’s statement that a “world-class education is the single most important factor in determining whether our kids can compete for the best jobs and whether America can out-compete countries around the world.”

The United Kingdom’s Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) stated that “now more than at any time in the past, a changing society and economy place great demands on our school system. The future will require more of today’s young people to have higher-level skills and qualifications than ever before. It will require more of them to be equipped to cope with risk, uncertainty and change; and all of them to be able to make a positive contribution to an increasingly diverse society.”

A world-class education system provides students with a high-quality learning experience from preschool to higher education. World-class school districts ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet their full potential and prepare them to compete for the college or career of their choice (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; Douglas County School District, 2014a; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; Danish Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Following is a summary of the components most educators agree comprise a world-class education system.

World-class systems are based on each school district’s local strengths. The Curriculum Foundation (n.d.) concluded that there is not a single version of a world-class curriculum that can be bought “off the shelf” and used effectively in every school. The Foundation noted that a truly world-class curriculum is rooted in its own locality and context in order to meet the needs of its own learners. According to Robinson (2012), “A world-class education system capitalizes on the local strengths of its students [and] teachers. A world-class education system takes advantage of the locale of its schools, and it effectively taps into community resources. The schools’ teaching reflects the strengths of its teaching staff. The system provides ways for both teachers and students to exploit their own talents and interests.”

Rigorous academic standards are in place. World-class school districts have college- and career-readiness standards that encompass not only reading and mathematics, but other critical core academic subjects such as social science, the arts, foreign languages, and physical education. Rather than emphasizing lower level thinking skills and learning methods, such as rote repetition and simple problem solving, the standards define higher order thinking skills, such as synthesizing, analyzing, reasoning, comprehending, and applying principles to solve complex problems (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2011; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

The curriculum is challenging, but flexible. A world-class curriculum focuses on the core subject areas, but also includes creative content, such as art and music, physical well-being, and foreign languages. Students engage in their own learning instead of waiting for the content to be delivered to them. The learning styles, interests, and aptitudes of each student drive instruction and learning activities at every school. In a world-class curriculum, students:

- Engage in authentic and personally meaningful learning tasks;
- Participate in the development and construction of their own learning;
- Evaluate, revise, and promote their learning products;
- Work collaboratively with other students;
- Incorporate higher-order thinking skills and think creatively;
- Solve complex problems;
- Analyze all forms of information, including current media and technology;
- Learn to evaluate the significance of world events and global dynamics; and
- Develop the ability to transfer their learning to new and unique situations (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Douglas County School District, 2014b; Howard County Public School System, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; Robinson, 2012; The Curriculum Foundation, n.d.).

At the high school level, world-class school districts offer career and technical preparation programs to provide students with multiple pathways to success. Students are also given higher education options, such as dual enrollment programs, internships, and community-based or project-based learning initiatives (Methow Valley School District, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Pell, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013).

All students have access to a high-quality education. A world-class education system provides every child, regardless of background, income, or zip code, access to high-quality learning opportunities (Expect More Arizona, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, & Achieve, Inc., 2008; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Global learning is emphasized. High-performing education systems prepare students for life in a global, digitized community while continuing to equip them with core skills. Since 95% of the world's population is outside of the U.S. and 75% of the global economy is outside of the U.S.,

school districts should include international information and context in their coursework. They should also ensure that students are prepared to connect with individuals from other countries in engaging and relevant ways (Cruddas, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Pell, 2014; Robinson, 2012; Jackson, 2009).

In addition, world-class education systems promote multilingual education. To prepare students for postsecondary education and 21st century careers, it is important that they acquire proficiency in languages other than English and an understanding of the cultures that speak those languages (Methow Valley School District, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Howard County Public School System, 2013; Robinson, 2012).

Early learning programs are widely available. World-class school districts provide every child with access to pre-K education. Research supports the value of investing in high-quality pre-K education. Through early education, cognitive and social skills are instilled and the foundation for academic learning is constructed (American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Results Washington, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Kottkamp, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013).

Schools focus on the needs of the whole child. World-class education systems make a variety of services available to students, especially those in low-income neighborhoods, including nutritional meals, district-wide counseling services, reliable transportation, quality after-school enrichment, and connection to health care and social services (Methow Valley School District, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2011; United Kingdom's Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

At-risk students are provided with interventions at all grade levels. High-performing school districts provide students at risk of failure with appropriate interventions at all grade levels. Academic support focuses on student performance in the classroom and on standardized assessment and may include tutoring and remediation. Nonacademic support addresses social, physical, and behavioral challenges. This type of support might include behavioral interventions, medical screenings, drug prevention programs, or assistance with home issues. Research-based dropout prevention and intervention programs should be implemented beginning in elementary and middle schools (American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Pell, 2014; Results Washington, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; United Kingdom's Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007). Robinson (2012) stated that world-class education systems provide personal support for every student and recommended that all students be connected to at least one significant adult in the school building.

Students are enrolled in character education. World-class education systems consider interpersonal skills as well as cognitive skills. Character education helps students to develop behavioral and social skills, such as self-discipline, attentiveness, persistence, cooperation, self-presentation, tolerance, and respect. The development of these skills plays a role in the formation of healthy character and contributes to productive relations in schools, workplaces, communities, and the home (Charlton, 2014; Levin, 2012).

Technology is used effectively. World-class schools use technological resources to advance teaching and learning. New technologies make a more customized and creative learning experience possible and help districts transform into world-class education systems (Cruddas, 2015; Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; Johansson et al., 2014; Crossley, 2013; Howard

County Public School System, 2013). The Vermont School Boards Association and Vermont Superintendents Association (2013) stated, “Every student needs readily available, up-to-date and equitable access to digital learning devices. Every student, family and school must have access to reliable, high-speed broadband connectivity. All teachers must be fully capable of teaching students how to use digital learning devices to enhance their learning.”

Multiple types of student assessments are administered. Researchers have concluded that a defining feature of any high-performing education system is “rigorous assessments that allow demonstration of true mastery of the standards, provide useful feedback to students and teachers, and ultimately help students transition to college and/or work” (Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007). World-class education systems realize that students learn and express their mastery of content in different ways. They utilize multiple measures of student achievement, such as formative classroom assessments, exhibitions, demonstrations, performances, portfolios, and self-assessment, along with standardized tests that are truly aligned with state or national standards. Assessments emphasize knowledge, not recitation, and are calibrated to measure student growth (Methow Valley School District, 2015; Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2011; National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, & Achieve, Inc., 2008).

Researchers strongly caution that world-class education systems are defined by more than just “having the best standardized test scores in the world.” Experts agree that school districts should require much more of students than cognitive proficiency as measured by standardized test scores (American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Robinson, 2012; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007). According to Levin (2012), for example, “tests rarely assess the capacity to formulate and solve problems, or valuable interpersonal behaviours such as collaboration, listening skills, and the ability to communicate, and intrapersonal behaviours such as time management and impulse control.” He continued, “This is not to dismiss measures of student achievement, but they should be viewed as one of many indicators of the potential productivity of a school system rather than the only important outcome.”

There are high expectations for students and staff. World-class education systems have high expectations for students and staff, both academically and behaviorally. High-performing school districts increase teachers’ expectations of what students can learn and develop teachers’ abilities to understand and teach to these higher expectations (The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; United Kingdom’s Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007; Gwinnett County Public Schools, n.d.).

School leaders promote a culture of continuous improvement. A world-class education supports and develops students’ natural curiosity and helps them become lifelong learners (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012). According to Crossley (2013), a world-class education system creates “a positive culture that is receptive to change and in which people – staff, students and others – feel supported.”

Principals function primarily as instructional leaders. Principals are central to a school district’s ability to create environments where students can excel. In exchange for being held accountable for improving student performance, principals at world-class schools are given control over the operation of their schools, including budgetary and personnel autonomies. Empowerment has been found to build ownership and stimulate innovation, and when balanced with accountability, create a performance culture (Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007;

Gwinnett County Public Schools, n.d.).

In order to be truly effective, principals must be able to function as instructional leaders and spend less time focused on administrative tasks. World-class school districts give principals the tools and resources to free up time by streamlining reporting requirements, providing additional back-office services, and/or allocating funds to hire additional school-level personnel, such as administrative assistants or school operations managers. Principals should also have access to high-quality professional development, focused on instructional leadership, and be rewarded with financial incentives, recognition, or opportunities for advancement when their schools are successful (Kottkamp, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; Minnesota Business Partnership & Itasca Project, 2009; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Teachers' professional growth is supported. Opportunities for professional growth and development are key to a world-class education system. Teachers must be given time to engage in collaborative ongoing, job-embedded professional development that is relevant to the challenges educators face in the classroom (Methow Valley School District, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Freedberg & Rice, 2014; Johansson et al., 2014; Tucker, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2011).

Researchers from Achieve, Inc. and McKinsey & Company (2007) suggested that teachers be given flexibility to determine the types of professional development activities that would be of greatest benefit to them both in terms of interest and relevance. They noted, "Numerous national studies have found that too many professional development programs are disconnected from actual classroom practice, resulting in little change to instructional practices or student engagement."

Policymakers have also emphasized the need for teacher collaboration within and across grade levels. They maintain that world-class schools strongly encourage partnerships among teachers (Cruddas, 2015; Crossley, 2013; Idaho Education Association, 2013; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012). According to Tucker (2014), "In most of the top performing countries, teachers have much more time to work together to improve their own performance and the performance of the students. They work in teams to design, field test, revise and then implement highly effective lessons."

The teaching force is comprised of high-quality personnel. World-class schools have high-performing and inspiring teachers who are committed to professional development, training, and lifelong learning (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, & Achieve, Inc., 2008; United Kingdom's Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

World-class education systems attract, develop, and retain teachers who consistently match the quality seen in the world's leading education systems. Experts agree that attracting highly qualified teachers will require the adoption of a professional pay scale. In addition, schools must create working conditions that support creativity, innovation, and collaboration. Best-practice education systems also offer high-performing teachers the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities, such as coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development, while remaining in the classroom (Lightman, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014;

Freedberg & Rice, 2014; Tucker, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Kottkamp, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; Minnesota Business Partnership & Itasca Project, 2009; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

A study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the National Center on Education, and other education leaders found that high-performing countries, such as Singapore and Finland, have a high regard for teachers as professionals and a culture of respect within their schools. In these countries, teachers receive professional wages, are trusted to approach the curriculum with a great deal of autonomy, and are provided with opportunities for career advancement (American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014).

The Institute for Emerging Issues (n.d.) identified six characteristics of world-class teachers:

1. Collaborator. The teacher understands the need to collaborate with his or her colleagues, parents, and the community to maximize student learning. He or she understands how global forces impact students' lives and seeks resources and collaboration beyond the boundaries of his or her own classroom.
2. Advocate. The teacher recognizes the impact of risk factors, such as hunger, and their role in a student's cognitive functioning. He or she is aware of how family and out-of-school circumstances affect a student's ability to learn.
3. Innovator. The teacher continually adapts his or her teaching style as technologies and approaches evolve. He or she is at the cutting edge of innovation, drawing from all available technologies.
4. Driver. The teacher identifies learning pathways for students and tailors the curriculum to students' individual needs and talents. He or she uses assessments not only to measure students' progress but to take remedial action and guide students' learning.
5. Learner. The teacher constantly seeks to improve his or her own content knowledge and skills through professional development. He or she searches for areas of professional development beyond the school environment by interacting with private businesses, teachers' colleges, and public partners.
6. Facilitator. The teacher makes connections between the curriculum and aspects of a student's life. He or she explores and experiments with instructional methods to discover best practices, identifying learning patterns and gaps before students become discouraged.

Staff are held accountable for their own and their students' performance. Accountability is the obligation of an individual and an organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and disclose the results in a transparent manner (Cruddas, 2015). A common characteristic of high-performing education systems is a fair evaluation system for all educators responsible for student achievement, including principals. Components of evaluation systems in world-class education systems include:

- Evaluations take place at regular intervals.
- Multiple measures are incorporated into evaluations, including student test scores, classroom observations, analyses of classroom artifacts, self-reports, student and staff evaluations, and parent surveys.
- Rewards and penalties are linked to evaluations, including differential pay and recognition.
- Staff are provided with detailed feedback against a set of clearly articulated expectations.
- Evaluations are tied to high-quality professional development.
- Evaluation-based supports are provided to address under-performance (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Kottkamp, 2013; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Teachers have access to data analysis tools. World-class school districts have the tools needed to analyze student data. To assess student progress and the impact of different instructional approaches, teachers must have easy access to real-time data. Without such information, teachers are limited in their capacity to improve student progress – they do not know the extent to which students have mastered concepts, which efforts are improving achievement, and which need to be changed (Cruddas, 2015; Minnesota Business Partnership & Itasca Project, 2009; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Schools are safe and secure learning environments. World-class school districts ensure that schools are safe and secure learning environments for students, teachers, and staff (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; Pell, 2014; Idaho Education Association, 2013).

Schools engage families and community members. World-class school districts provide opportunities for family engagement in children’s learning and communicate frequently with families to provide clear information about student growth and progress toward goals. World-class schools are a resource for the entire community, opening up their facilities for community use so that residents can take part in recreational, athletic, cultural, and educational activities (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2015; Methow Valley School District, 2015; Idaho Education Association, 2013; Vermont School Boards Association & Vermont Superintendents Association, 2013; United Kingdom’s Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Schools are provided with sufficient funding. A world-class education system depends upon the allocation of sufficient funds for educational programs. However, experts note that heavy regulation and the need to comply with underfunded mandates have driven up school districts’ costs and limited instructional spending (American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, 2014; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; Minnesota Business Partnership & Itasca Project, 2009; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007). Most experts agree that additional funding should be provided to schools that consistently struggle (Idaho Education Association, 2013; The Chicago Community Trust, 2012; Achieve, Inc. & McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Summary

This Information Capsule provided a summary of the components most educators agree comprise a world-class education system, such as rigorous academic standards, a challenging

but flexible curriculum, a focus on global learning, multiple measures of student achievement, highly effective principals and teachers, rigorous staff evaluations, and engagement with families and community members.

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