AAPF 18

ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY FORUM
PROCEEDINGS

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Colorado State Senator Rhonda Fields

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The 7th annual Alternative Accountability Policy Forum (AAPF) convened 285 educators, advocates and policymakers that work with at-promise students. Forum presenters and attendees from 20 states emphasized that despite obstacles, all students can succeed.

These resilient young people, celebrated at the AAPF as at-promise students, are overage and under-credited; have dropped out or returned to school for another chance to earn a diploma; and/or face homelessness, family abuse, incarceration, gang involvement, or other personal circumstances that make regular attendance and academic learning exceptionally difficult.

This year's AAPF was timely due to the adoption of a one-year graduation by the State of California. This approach has been discussed at the AAPF several times among policy experts and attendees. Staff and advisors to the California Department of Education have been among those evaluating the concept and on May 9, 2018, California's State Board of Education adopted it for alternative schools. The value and power of a forum for bringing at promise advocates together has never been more apparent. California's legislature was notable for it's focus on at-promise youth as well. The legislature recognized the term "at-promise" as a designation for challenged youth in place of the term "at-risk". ACR 197 was unanimously approved by both houses of the State Legislature and commences the hard work of changing both statutes and visions.

The importance of education and community leaders serving at-promise students to advocate for their students and programs was highlighted by the presence of Colorado State Senator Rhonda Fields and California Assembly Member Dr. Shirley Weber. Senator Fields provided a deeply personal and motivational keynote address about the power of transformation and expressed her commitment to advancing the policies discussed at the Forum. Assembly Member Weber was awarded this year's Vision Award for her outstanding work supporting at promise students and introducing measures to ensure their dignity in school.

The Reaching At-Promise Students Association Board released it's membership plan to continue to build RAPSA into a platform for high quality professional development including tools for influencing the broader community about the need for laws and policies that support at-promise students. We encourage you to become a full member of RAPSA at our website - https://rapsa.org/ AAPF participants are leaders in advocating that the education of at-promise students' needs to be the focus of attention at the national, state, and local levels. As a group, they called for a rethinking of policies, practices, and partnerships for building instructional and alternative accountability approaches that support excellence and equity in schools as well as account for the difficult circumstances of at promise students. What follows is a summary of key points presented in the sessions. You'll hear familiar but critical themes expressed with a range of strategies for their implementation. Past proceedings have highlighted 19 policy initiatives. Those remain critical to the success of at-promise youth and the programs that serve them. The RAPSA Board has consolidated these objectives into 5 major objectives.

POLICY SESSION SUMMARIES

DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO ESSA LEGISLATION

Dr. Sara Asmussen, Founding Executive Director, New Dawn Charter High School
Dr. Lisa DiGaudio, Ph.D., Founding Principal, New Dawn Charter High School
Ed Peterman, Assistant Principal, JVL Wildcat Academy Charter School

New Dawn Charter High School is a transfer charter school which opened its doors in the Fall of 2012. Now in the sixth year of operation, the school has learned a key piece in supporting the Key Design Elements of it's charter: relationships are everything. While advising is an integral part of our instructional program, leadership realized that developing a building wide mentoring program would bridge the gap of relationships students are seeking during their time at New Dawn.

New Dawn operates completely outside of the box. Students attend classes for one week at a time, alternating with internship and research during the other week. Students need to feel rooted to the school community, and by developing special relationships with their mentors, they can talk about personal matters, and get refocused on their studies. Our performance data, specific to persistence and achievement, is higher than other New York City transfer schools in our cohort (by 35%). Perhaps the most telling on the effectiveness of our mentoring program, is that 95% of our students and staff trust school leadership.

In this session, the presenters outlined the benefits of establishing a mentoring program to students at a building-wide level, and shared their best practices at making the most of the mentoring relationship. Participants had the opportunity to share their own best practices from their schools with at-promise students, as well as trouble shoot areas of resistance within the organization.

The presenters also shared the process in building self-awareness and reflection among the students through an audit of their journey towards earning a NYS High School Diploma and provided several opportunities to model the conversation between mentor and student. Participants also received a Mentoring Tool Kit, with sample documents, scholarly article, and sample conversation starters to begin or enhance the mentoring program in place at their own organizations.

USING DATA TO ASSESS AND TEACH NUMERACY AND LITERACY

Dr. Sally Brown, Assistant Professor of Education, College of Idaho
Dr. Nicole Pyle, Associate Professor of Adolescent Literacy and Secondary Education, Utah State University

During the session, the panel discussed relevant data for literacy and numeracy, how to use that data to drive instruction and policy, and how to personalize teaching and learning through the use of data. Panelists began by responding to two prescribed questions:

1. What is the data we often use in Alternative Education Settings to help us evaluate the program(s)?
2. How do we gather literacy/numeracy data?

Then, the presenters responded to assessment questions from the audience. Examples from panelist's sites and models were offered. Main points included:

More sensitive assessment measures are needed (not only standardized, high stakes assessments) to demonstrate growth in specific academic areas.

Professional development and monthly data follow-up meetings are needed site-wide to increase the use of data to inform instruction.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS ACROSS AMERICA

Jody Ernst and Jim Griffin, Momentum Strategy & Research

Momentum Strategy & Research provided a summary of the alternative options available to high-risk and opportunity youth across the country, as well as an early look at results from analysis of alternative schools' average proficiency and graduating rates.

Momentum found that 3,262 alternative schools operated in 2017-2018 across the country, as well as 1,900 operated as alternative programs. The majority of alternative schools are run as traditional schools, with 684 identified as public charter schools. Eighty-two percent of alternative options in America serve middle and/or high school student populations—with 48.5 percent serving high school students only.

Using publicly available data, Momentum found that, on average, 52 percent of alternative schools' students achieve grade level proficiency on statewide assessments of reading, and 42 percent achieve grade level proficiency in math. However, proficiency rates varied between states. While a number of factors likely impact average alternative school proficiency rates, Momentum explored the relationship between states' graduation requirements and states' average proficiency rates. Momentum found that states requiring students to pass multiple end of course exams to receive a diploma showed higher average proficiency rates than states that required passage of few or no statewide exams—noting that students that must pass are able to re-test a number of times, while those without the requirement test only once.

Momentum also reviewed the relationship between components of states' accountability policies and their respective cohort graduation outcomes. While no clear relationship was found between the specific policies investigated and the average states' alternative school cohort grad rates, it was made clear that 1) Education policies do have an impact on individual state outcomes for alternative schools and should be considered when targets for accountability are being set, and 2) More research is needed to tease out other potential reasons for state to state differences.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS FOR ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

Laura Jimenez, Center for American Progress
Michael Rothman, Founder, Eskolta

According to a recent paper from the Center for American Progress (CAP) and Eskolta School Research and Design, alternative schools account for 25 percent of all school closures, Blueprint for Accountability Systems for Alternative High Schools, Jimenez et al. But this number hides a critical question: Are these schools truly low performing or do traditional accountability systems simply not measure alternative school progress accurately?

This paper focuses in particularly on alternative high schools. Students in these schools have experienced failure repeatedly in the past and have followed educational paths that are definitionally atypical. As a result, alternative high schools often fail to meet traditional measures of progress required by federal law. To cite one data point: Students of the same profile who had a 13.2% graduation rate in traditional high schools graduated at a rate of 29.9% from alternative high schools; but in most accountability structures, both show up similarly as not meeting standard.

Traditional accountability measures that fail to measure accurately can over-identify failure and under-identify success. Lacking accurate information on alternative high schools can provide an incentive for traditional school districts to push struggling students into low-quality alternative schools.

The discussion uses data from New York City transfer schools to make the case for using alternative accountability systems. It argues that indicators must align with the purpose of these schools and the pathways into, through, and out of these schools, guided by the following questions:

- What counts as an alternative high school?
- How to determine appropriate and rigorous outcomes?
- Which students' data will be attributed to which schools?
- Which students are considered part of the same cohort?
- Against what benchmark will schools' results be compared?

The paper reviews possible metrics for graduation, academic proficiency, and school quality and success to better assess effectiveness of alternative high schools.

L. Jimenez, M. Rothman, E. Roth, and S. Sargad. Blueprint for Accountability Systems for Alternative High Schools. Center for American Progress: June 15, 2018.

https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/06/15/452011/blueprint-accountability-systems-alternative-high-schools/

EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Dr. Christopher Mazzeo, Director, Center for Research, Evaluation and Analysis (CREA), Education Northwest and Director, REL Northwest
Dr. Nicole Pyle, Associate Professor of Adolescent Literacy and Secondary Education, Utah State University

The roughly 2,700 alternative schools in the United States make up a highly diverse group that serves a wide range of students with diverse needs, experiences in school, and academic and social skill levels. While alternative education represents a highly diverse group of settings, we know very little about what works in alternative education, for whom and in what contexts.

This session was conceptualized after finding that there is limited available research conducted in alternative education to inform educators, researchers, and policy makers of the best practices for at-promise youth. The presenters proposed that AAPF participants contribute to the research base by evaluating their own practices. A three-part workshop was developed to build the capacity of alternative education providers to evaluate their programs, either internally or in partnership with external research. During the session, the presenters focused on the first step in making an evaluation meaningful, i.e., make evaluation clear by setting useful evaluation goals. An application activity and discussion of activity responses made the presentation highly interactive. Participants identified their program goals, the evaluation type of each goal, and the evaluation questions aligned to each goal. Several sample evaluation questions were reviewed from present research and evaluation projects in alternative education. The presenters concluded that evaluation should include identifying measurable evaluation goals and outcomes and underscored that a combination of evaluation types may be best to achieve the evaluation goals. Lastly, evaluators must consider the diversity of alternative education settings and students when developing the multiple and different evaluation questions that reflect the evaluation goals, which may require realignment in response to changes over time.

SCALING, SPREADING, EVALUATING REENGAGEMENT

Andrew Moore, Director, National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families

Over the past seven years, the National League of Cities Reengagement Network has grown to include 21 local sites focused on comprehensive back-to-school-and-beyond efforts, as well as two statewide networks in Colorado and Washington. Much of this growth has occurred organically, emerging from related local policy discussions, and abetted by some informal policy transfer through the Network. The rising tide of attention to Opportunity Youth, establishment of a network of sites in the Aspen Opportunity Youth Forum, and continuing discussions of alternative accountability all contributed to growth to date.

The search for a path from informal to formal policy transfer, and to pursue strategic growth of reengagement approaches, prompts questions about the best means to scale and spread effectively. For instance, given nascent state policy discussions about reengagement in Oregon and California, as well as potential interest in multi-site development in Texas and continuous quality improvement in Washington – should the Network turn its attention and energy to the state level? Also, how best to meet needs within the "empty geographies" on the national map lacking systematic reengagement efforts? And, what about populations such as juvenile-justice involved youth who need even more supports to make successful returns to school?

Interrelatedly, informal policy transfer has relied primarily on bold experimentation based on anecdotal evidence. This brings the Network and a recently formed collaborative of evaluators to ask, how best to strengthen the knowledge and evidence base for the effectiveness of physical and virtual reengagement centers, as factors within local reengagement ecosystems that include dedicated alternative education options?

An open discussion about spreading and scaling strategies holds great potential to contribute new, focused energy to determine paths forward for growth and evaluation – all in the framework of environmental factors such as low unemployment and the finalization of the Every Student Succeeds Act plans silent on alternative accountability.

TRAUMA INFORMED SYSTEMS: STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH TRAUMA EXPOSED AND 'HIGH-RISK' STUDENTS

Amy E. Lansing, PhD, Director, Cognitive and Neurobehavioral Studies in Aggression, Coping, Trauma and Stress, University of California, San Diego

Alternative Education youth experience extreme exposure to adverse childhood experiences [ACEs], including homelessness (87%), parental incarceration (79%), residential instability (50%) and foster care (11%) (DePaoli, et al., 2015). ACEs are linked to lower school engagement (Bethell, et al., 2014), and violence exposure is related to lower GPA and decreased high school graduation rates (Hurt, Malmud, Brodsky, & Giannetta, 2001). Our data suggest that system-involved youth – a group likely to be reengaged through Alternative Education - experience, ≥10 different trauma and loss types in addition to poverty (Lansing, Plante,& Beck, 2017; Lansing, Plante, Beck, & Ellenberg, 2018). Cumulative trauma, adversity and grief symptoms are associated with fronto-temporal regions among delinquent youth (Lansing, Virk, et al., 2016) and these regions support language, verbal learning/memory and executive functions. Thus, the brain regions disrupted by stress during development are those subserving the cognitive abilities that Alternative Education students struggle with the most. Cumulative adversity (including poverty) and cognitive deficits, diminish school readiness, delay milestones, interfere with "on-time" graduation and create significant challenges for students, teachers and schools.

Trauma informed strategies provide the interpersonal tools needed to promote student engagement, growth and healthy development, and improve job satisfaction and retention among teachers. Effectively translating 'trauma-informed' knowledge into best practices requires: 1) a common language among educators and policy makers about the neurodevelopmental impact of adversity; 2) recognition that language, executive and emotion regulation skills are primary areas negatively impacted by trauma but are amenable to improvement across the lifespan with greater focused support for adversity-exposed students; 3) an authentic, relational approach that is not punitive/shaming in nature and does not 'personalize' students' behavior or emotional state is essential for engagement; and 4) trauma informed systems, with strong buy-in and ongoing professional development, create healthy schools that promote academic engagement and performance for all students.

MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING: THE "HOW TO" FOR COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING

Jan K. Bryan, Ed. D., VP, National Education Officer, Renaissance

Education has been described as an industry existing in a world that requires a profession (Schwahn, C. & McGarvey, B., 2012). Mass customized learning (MCL), places profession and achievement above tradition, norms, convenience, and habit. MCL is an educational approach focused on mastery. The concept of "mass customization" may seem an oxymoron; however, we live in a mass customized world. Each of us customizes our smart phones, yet there are specific sets of competencies that must be mastered and implemented uniformly by each user.

Similarly, education includes specific sets of competencies that must be mastered, and used uniformly, such as decoding, multiplication, content vocabulary, and the periodic table. These competencies are established and—until new discoveries are made—remain constant, therefore not available for customization. How much time it takes us to learn these competencies, the types of learning experiences required to achieve mastery, and how learners demonstrate mastery are customized by the learner and teacher.

MCL challenges the traditional "seat-time" structure of American education by removing artificial time constraints on learning. Instruction is guided by a learning progression in each discipline rather than governed by a set of a standards rigidly aligned to an 18-week semester or 180-day academic year. Standards exist in the MCL model to identify the competencies across each discipline. A learning progression, however, details incremental steps between the standards—the focus of day-to-day instruction (Heritage, M. 2017).

In the MCL model, educators and learners design learning experiences. Remarkably, many of these experiences are time-honored instructional techniques, such as mini-lessons filled with built-in checks for understanding, interactive lecture, and whole-group demonstration. MCL allows for additional instructional methods, such as a seminar with a "keynote" introducing the concept followed by specific study of the content, or a workshop where students share the responsibility for guiding their peers to mastery.

For full implementation impact, policies focused on the use of standards alone—rather than standards as a guide and a learning progression as the focus of day-to-day instruction—should be reconsidered. Further, time to mastery should be explored, and the artificial constraints, i.e., seat time, should be set aside. Demonstration of mastery, rather than time invested, is the acceptable metric in the MCL model. These policies require a reconsideration of assessment. Observational data, curriculum-based measures, student artifacts, and interim assessment data provide evidence of incremental growth on the road toward mastery in the impactful MCL model.

ACCENTURE'S ONLINE CAREER READINESS PROGRAM FOR YOUTH – THE SKILLS TO SUCCEED ACADEMY

Esther Kim, Accenture U.S. Corporate Citizenship Program

The Accenture Skills to Succeed Academy is a free, highly interactive online program that helps young people build their futures. Through a gamified, learn-by-doing approach, the Academy helps students gain the skills and confidence to make career decisions, find and get a job, and be successful in their jobs. The Skills to Succeed Academy was created in consultation with subject-matter experts and job seekers themselves to understand the job-seeking process – from unemployment to employment – and how to address barriers along the way. It features young characters from a variety of backgrounds and situations to make it realistic, relevant, and engaging for youth.

Accenture is a global professional services firm specializing in communications, media & technology, financial services, health & public services, products, and resources. With almost half a million employees worldwide, Accenture serves more than 4,000 clients, including 95 of the Fortune Global 100 and more than 75% of the Fortune Global 500. The Skills to Succeed Academy is an outgrowth of Accenture's strong commitment to Corporate Citizenship, leveraging its global capabilities and digital experience help close unemployment gaps through our Skills to Succeed initiatives. As of January 2019, Accenture has equipped more than 100,000 learners with the skills to succeed through the Skills to Succeed Academy.

Accenture offers access to the Skills to Succeed Academy for free. Once you have access to the Academy, staff and learners/students can access the Academy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to brush up on key career readiness skills. Organizations/schools can use the Academy very flexibly with their students – choose just the modules (e.g., interview preparation, resume-writing, etc.) that fit your students' needs – and deliver the Academy in a classroom-setting, as independent study, or both.

Watch a brief, 90-second overview video at s2sacademy.org. To learn more and to become a Skills to Succeed Academy partner, reach out to esther.a.kim@accenturefederal.com or krista.a.tracy@accenture.com.

CULTURE: CREATING INTEGRATED ACADEMIC & SOCIO-EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR AT-PROMISE EDUCATION

Dr. Laura Hernandez-Flores, Ed.D., Senior Director of Partnerships, New Teacher Center

Educational theorists have long held that learning is a social endeavor and that understanding is constructed through social interactions with others. Accordingly, students need to feel as though they belong to a community of learners and that their academic self is a "true" self. New Teacher Center encourages teachers to create Optimal Learning Environments by creating the conditions that meet the needs of their learners. The framework for creating these conditions can be utilized for self-reflection: Are these characteristics reflected in my classroom? In what ways? How can I build upon what is already in place? How can I do even better to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of every student? How can policy makers develop initiatives that invest in teacher development and school climate to address the whole child in alternative school settings? The Optimal Learning Environment is also equity centered as it emphasizes the need to address culturally relevant teaching and diverse learners, mainly the most vulnerable population that makes up the at-promise youth we serve. Developing teachers via mentoring and coaching along this framework offers an opportunity to address the multi-faceted complex classroom and whole child.

INTEGRATING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC LEARNING (S.E.A.L.) INTO SCHOOL CULTURE: IT STARTS WITH ALL OF THE ADULTS

Dr. Joelle Hood, Ed.D., Energy Alchemist

Research is clear that social-emotional learning (SEL) is critical for student success in school, college, work, and life. An ever-increasing number of schools and districts across the globe are realizing the importance of SEL, but many are not sure where it fits in-- whether it is a behavioral intervention or something extra to add into already jam-packed academic content. The truth is, successful and sustainable SEL isn't focused on a program. It's focused on the people who deliver it, from top to bottom.

Adults in education are usually pretty good at the education part. After all, we're familiar with academic content – we learned it in school ourselves. The difference with SEL is that most adults haven't taken courses in emotional intelligence or engaged in activities intentionally designed to strengthen their own SEL skills. This produces a disconnect and makes it much harder to implement, as many teachers and leaders do not feel efficacious about the content themselves, let alone their capacity to model it, encourage it, deliver it to others. If schools and districts are truly in favor of prioritizing SEL in the classroom, they will need to learn how to intentionally and consistently prioritize it in the boardroom, staff room and throughout the organization. SEL is NOT something that we just give to kids, to be successful and sustainable, SEL has to start with the adults.

In this session, participants were introduced to the ABCDs of S.E.A.L. -- Academic Integration, Building Belonging, Capacity Building of All Adults, and Dedicated Support and Accountability.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CHALLENGING COURSES

Phil Morales, Principal, Opportunity Youth Academy of Santa Clara County Office of Education
Dr. Nicole Pyle, Associate Professor of Adolescent Literacy and Secondary Education, Utah State University

The presenters shared two different perspectives about equitable access to challenging courses. Dr. Nicole Pyle began with an overview of effective instructional practices, including High Leverage Practices (Ball, 2015; McLeskey & Brownell, 2015) to help students with and without disabilities access challenging curriculum. Mr. Phil Morales shared several examples of services and practices to support diverse learners to access challenging courses at Opportunity Youth Academy of Santa Clara County Office of Education.

The majority of audience members were administrators of alternative education. Dr. Pyle explained that teachers should be able to identify effective instructional practices as a result of high-quality pre-service teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development activities. To ensure that teachers design and deliver lesson plans that reflect effective instructional practices, Dr. Pyle asked administrators to consider the following questions (1) Which effective instructional practices are observed in your setting?, (2) Which effective instructional practices are not observed that you expect to be delivered?, and (3) How will you support educators to deliver expected effective instructional practices? Dr. Pyle offered that educators may need targeted professional development to transport effective instructional practices in our unique alternative education settings to create equitable access to challenging courses for our diverse students who often require intensive implementation of effective instructional practices.

EDUCATORS AS ADVOCATES FOR AT-PROMISE STUDENTS

Dr. Elisha Smith Arrillaga, Ph.D., Co-Director Education Trust-West
Pamela Gibbs, Legislative Director, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Ernie Silva, JD, Executive Director, Reaching At-Promise Students Association

Dr. Elisha Smith Arrillaga, Co-Director Education Trust-West, Pamela Gibbs, LACOE Legislative Director and Ernie Silva, JD, RAPSA Executive Director explored how to work with policymakers to develop state laws and policies that support at-promise students and programs. Dr. Arrillaga spoke to the importance of a multidisciplinary approach including policy research, coalition building and legislative advocacy. Elisha Smith Arrillaga's works with the Education Trust–West, a research and advocacy organization focused on educational justice and the high achievement for all students. Dr. Smith Arrillaga leads the organization's work around racial justice and has extensive expertise in leading initiatives using multiple strategies for impacting state policy – leveraging research, media, direct action, and policymaker engagement.

Pam Gibbs has worked in multiple roles in the California government. She's been a legislative staff member, worked for Governor Gray Davis, served with legislative counsel and is now the lead lobbyist for the County Office of Education representing the most students in California. Ms. Gibbs spoke about the need for a detailed understanding of the legislative process in order to maximize effective strategies by understanding timelines and budget procedures. She spoke about the nuanced procedures and importance of personal relationships and high integrity involved in successfully working with the legislature.

Ernie Silva shared successful examples of legislation concerning at-promise youth that he's managed at the California Legislature. His work included input from RAPSA attendees which helped inform his work on ACR 102 (Opportunity Youth Reengagement Month); ACR 197 (From At Risk to At Promise), and legislative briefings on Trauma Informed Schools.

Collectively the panelists encourage educators to be the voice advocating for at-promise students across the country.

KEEPING STANDARDS HIGH FOR AT-PROMISE STUDENTS IN DC: THE STORY OF ONE AUTHORIZER AND TWO SCHOOLS

Naomi Rubin DeVeaux, Shannon Hodge, Colleen Paletta

This session focused on how public charter school authorizers and alternative public charter schools can continue to raise the bar for academic performance for at-promise students. The authorizer from the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB), Naomi Rubin DeVeaux, set the context around authorizing and public charter schools in DC, shared DC PCSB's philosophy around alternative accountability, and demonstrated how DC PCSB uses its alternative accountability performance management framework to evaluate the success of alternative public charter schools. DeVeaux noted that it is an authorizer's job to keep pushing back on schools' performance without squashing schools' efforts to innovate and try new strategies.

Colleen Paletta and Shannon Hodge – both of whom head successful alternative schools in Washington, DC – shared their approaches to engaging and working with at-promise youth. Both have seen impressive results with their students as noted in their 2018 School Quality Report (or, Alternative Accountability Framework). Paletta is the Chief Mission Officer for Goodwill Excel Center Public Charter School, which educates students starting at age 14 into adulthood. Hodge is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Kingsman Academy Public Charter School, which educates students in grades 6-12. Both schools focus on students who are two or more years behind and may have been involved in the justice system.

The session culminated in a group discussion around questions that focused on:

- Measuring student attendance and satisfaction;
- The benefits and challenges of assessments;
- Strategies for engaging students;
- How to know when a school has created the right model for its students; and,
- Understanding how the location of a school impacts students.

THE RAPSA
BOARD POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS

RAPSA's past three summaries of proceedings, contained a series of recommendations based upon review of the Alternative Accountability Policy Forum sessions by researchers from WestEd in 2014, PACE in 2016 and four Policy Advisors in 2017 – Jessica Cardichon, Learning Policy Institute; Alexia Everett, Stuart Foundation; Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Gardner Center, Stanford; and Jonathan Zaff, Boston University. Those recommendations provide a platform for keeping policy makers informed and accountable. This year, the RAPSA Board has consolidated those recommendations into five key recommendations to serve practitioners and policy makers at the local, state and federal levels. While the Board sees much commonality among past recommendations in order to consolidate them, readers of this summary are invited to review the past Summaries for more detail.

Berliner, Beth Ann and Van Houten, Lori. Policy Forum Proceedings, Alternative Accountability Policy Forum, 2014, (2015) WestEd.
https://issuu.com/siatech/docs/aapf_proceedings-2015-v6_update

Gonzales, Daisy and Ruiz de Velasco, Jorge. Policy Forum Proceedings, 5th Annual Alternative Accountability Policy Forum (2017), Policy Analysis for California Education.
https://www.alternativeaccountabilityforum.org/pace-proceedings.htmlAlternative Accountability

Policy Forum Proceedings, RAPSA and SIATech (2018)
https://www.alternativeaccountabilityforum.org/aapf17-proceedings.html

1. ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY METRICS FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AT THE LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL LEVELS

From the school level up, measures of student and school success should be tailored to fit the needs of at-promise students and flexible enough to measure the characteristics of students in alternative programs. At the local level this means the use of multiple metrics to measure individual student progress. At the state level appropriate assessment and accountability means that there is clear identification of the schools and students eligible for alternative assessments and metrics along with the use of measures that fit the status of the students such as a one-year graduation rate rather than the four year cohort. At the federal level the standards must allow for alternative metrics to demonstrate success. For example, the federal graduate rate should allow alternative cohorts and reengagement rates in the demonstration of graduation rate success.

2. ENSURE SCHOOLS PROVIDE TRAUMA INFORMED SUPPORT TO FOSTER SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

At-Promise students bring histories of trauma, poverty and abandonment. Another experience in school to try to achieve a diploma is seldom the complete solution. At the local level, it is crucial to prepare staff to address trauma and whole child needs including the provision of wrap around supports to meet student needs. Supporting strong positive relationships with school staff provide opportunities for youth to build their social competencies, set and maintain high academic expectations, and be more engaged learners. At the state level metrics for assessing trauma and fostering social/emotional health should be provided. At the federal level flexibility should be provided among programs to support braiding of resources to serve the individual needs of at promise students.

3. ENGAGE AT-PROMISE STUDENTS WITH PERSONALIZED LEARNING

At promise students, whether reengaged or struggling to hang on, enter classrooms below grade level and with credit deficits. They are the quintessential candidate for personalized learning. At the local level, schools should deliver a curriculum relevant to a broad range of student experiences and offer differentiated and individualized instruction with a competency based growth mindset. At the state level, assessments and metrics should recognize both competency based instruction and individual student learning gains as well as permitting flexible school days and calendars. At the federal level, flexibility should be included in ESSA metrics to include competency-based instruction and recognition of the value of individualized instruction.

4. ENHANCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Serving at-promise students requires a robust set of strategies that may differ from traditional schools. At the local level, Teachers and administrators need a foundation to recognize the traumatic life experiences that these youth bring with them to school. Local educational agencies should expand their offerings to teachers and other staff to address trauma care, individualized instruction, connecting with at-promise students, and working with local organizations to address wrap around needs. At the state level, Schools of Education should provide course work and practical experiences to their students on how to most effectively work with this unique population. Placement experiences should enable current and future teachers to engage with and understand the lives of at-promise youth. Universities should provide a strengths-based underlying theoretical (and philosophical) foundation. States could provide schools with well-validated tools for measuring SEL and school climate. At the federal level, funding should support well-designed and well-implemented measurement tools to help educators make strategic decisions about needed investments in student services, programs, and professional development.

5. EQUITABLY INVEST IN AT-PROMISE STUDENTS

At the local level, education agencies should invest in information, data systems and technology to recognize and enhance progress made by at-promise students. Investing in professional development and pre-service training on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on educational outcomes, career preparation, and emotional well-being can be one of the more consequential non-academic actions a school can take. At the state level, alternative schools serving at-promise students should be equitably funded to meet the needs of smaller class sizes, longer class periods, inclusion of navigators and other staff that support student success. At the federal level, career development programs should be adequately funded and recognize reengagement and support of at promise students as eligible within existing WIOA and Performance Partnership Pilot programs.

SAVE
THE
DATE

November 13-15, 2019

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