

Leading Matters Los Angeles
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Session Notes

California Schools: Restructuring for Success

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Deborah Stipek

There are ways to reform schools. The most important recommendation is to invest in teachers and teaching, to invest in the brightest teachers. It's all about the quality of teaching. Just three years with a good teacher can completely close the gap.

We are no longer attracting the best and the brightest because teaching no longer has a captive audience in women. We actually have to pay people: The salary gap between college graduates who are teachers and college graduates who aren't teachers is huge.

Relative to other countries, the United States is not at the top in paying teachers. We need to pay more to get the very best. We also need to pay more for teacher preparation.

Time and time again, Stanford undergraduates say they would like to go into teaching, but they say, "My parents would kill me if I wasted my Stanford education on teaching."

In Singapore, they select the best high school students and then pay for four years of training.

Other recommendations for the teaching profession include a career ladder so people can grow and make more money. We also need to change the work day so teachers teach fewer hours each day. Our good teachers work on lesson plans at night and on weekends.

There is a fundamental need to reorganize schools. We need to change the day's schedule—there's no need for 50-minute chunks. We need block scheduling, which leads to smaller classes so teachers can know their kids.

We should get rid of grades.

Why take four years? Every student is different. We should organize the timing based on strength.

We should create a culture of learning for everyone in the school.

Tests really tell us what kids know and what they have remembered. (But most of what they know will be out of date.) We have learned that tests really matter. What you test is what you get.

We often reinvent the wheel: What is working in San Francisco is not shared with schools in Mississippi. The United States spends \$300 billion a year on education, and only 0.01 percent is spent on research. Mattel, for example, spends 5 percent on R&D. Pharmaceuticals invest 20 percent on research. We don't invest in knowledge in the most important enterprise in the country. We need a knowledge base.

So what is Stanford up to? We're focusing on the effectiveness of teachers. We have a new center for supporting excellence in teaching. We're working with a number of schools in the Bay Area, and now we're reaching beyond the area.

Because people tend to listen to Stanford, we can make a difference. Ninety percent of our charter school students go on to two- or four-year colleges. Charter schools have the ultimate accountability. They develop models that can be shared.

Ted Mitchell

We need to completely change our approach to accomplish non-incremental goals. We need to try to sponsor innovation in education. We need to improve education standards for low-income kids. Intersections between policy and innovation are important.

Charter schools give innovation a home. One study that compared kids in charter schools versus those in regular schools showed that the charter kids outperformed their peers by 13 percent in reading and 23 percent in math. They scored 25 points higher on average in the API. Ninety-five percent of the students are college bound as opposed to 50 percent. Clearly, the charter schools are doing something right.

Other ideas from charter schools that work are an extended school day, paying teachers for 12 months, a focus on planning and training, and leadership.

Charter schools are growing in number. They outperform the other schools in their districts. Chicago and Los Angeles have 100 schools with the same freedom as charter schools.

We need to invest in pre-kindergarten schooling for kids who are way behind in language, social and mathematical development. Students in the program are less likely to be in special ed and 30 percent less likely to repeat a class. For return on investment, there is nothing better we can do than invest in pre-kindergarten education.

We must eliminate our addiction to categorical progress. We should send money to districts so they can make decisions about what is best for learning and combine it with rigorous, robust data systems that can give real analysis on results. That way, the schools learn and have a continuous improvement system. A concern about this is that it can be too narrowly defined, making it impossible for people who know the kids the best to do what they need to do to close the gap.

Civics education should be required for every school.

We need to differentiate pay for teachers. We pay way too much on administration support for programs we don't need in the first place.

What we need is an intense focus on human capital. We must develop the people who will develop the people who will develop the people more.