

# NextEd

TRANSFORMING CONNECTICUT'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Continuous Improvement Plan from The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents

Our children are precious. Every single one, regardless of ethnic background, economic situation or cognitive condition, deserves an equal chance to learn at a high standard—through vibrant, flexible, standards-based public education.

For more than 150 years, the public school system in Connecticut has been successful at providing children with access to a quality education. But that's no longer enough. Thanks to the dawn of the Information Age, the transition from a manufacturing economy to a service economy and the development of a global economy, a new system is needed to best prepare our children to succeed in 2011 and beyond.

Going forward, public education must integrate services to children and raise community expectations for higher learning standards. Family structure must be reinforced on an equitable and consistent basis. And all students must be educated to be college or career ready with internationally competitive skills and knowledge.

In short, our public education must be transformed. With effective leadership and the help of every citizen in Connecticut, CAPSS truly believes that's possible. This report recommends exactly how we can benefit all students in our state.



## Connecticut, we've got a set of complex problems.

Just like many communities across the nation, Connecticut's public education system faces a series of complex problems—a mass of challenges that have multiple causes and cannot be solved in a set time period by using standard techniques and conventional processes. These complex problems include:

- International and racial achievement gaps
- Low level of student engagement in their education and motivation for learning
- Limited measures of assessment and accountability
- Inadequate preparation for today's higher education and workforce
- Changing U.S. demographics
- Little emphasis on modern skills to meet the needs of a global economy
- Impact of disruptive innovations

Obviously, solving these problems is not easy. Traditional solutions are inadequate. And to complicate things even further, many people disagree about the right approach to address them.

The fact is, the only way to work on these problems is to redesign. The public school system must change. It must embrace creativity, challenge assumptions and tap the ingenuity of those dedicated to success. Only then will we find the solutions that these problems demand—and that our students deserve.

## So what can be done?

As the leaders of public schools in Connecticut, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) suggests that the system, which has served children well in the past, must be transformed so that it is able to meet the needs of students in the future. With a new model that places the “learner” at the center of all strategy and action, CAPSS has developed a set of action-oriented recommendations that will address the complex problems we face today, transform learning and ensure that Connecticut's children receive the best possible education.

### Typical Current Practices

VS

### Examples of Transformative Practices

Goal is universal access to education	Goal is to educate all students with high standards
Age-based cohorts	Learning/progress-based groupings
Standardized solutions	Customized learning plans and processes
Begins at different ages	Begins at three years of age for all students
Limited choices and options	Many choices and pathways to learning
Patchwork of standards drives educational organization and processes	Coherent, flexible, research-based, innovation-focused teaching and learning processes
Highly structured, traditional staffing models	Student-centered, relational staffing featuring professional partnerships with experts, certified staff, community resources and mentors
Technology used to make teaching more efficient	Technology used to transform teaching and learning
Educational progress measured by seat time and credits	Progress toward graduation measured by authentic learning, using direct measures
Traditional annual school calendar and schedule	Instruction and learning delivered anytime, anywhere, whenever students are ready to learn
Learning almost exclusively based in schools	Learning occurs where students are; schools serve as the base from which students and teachers work

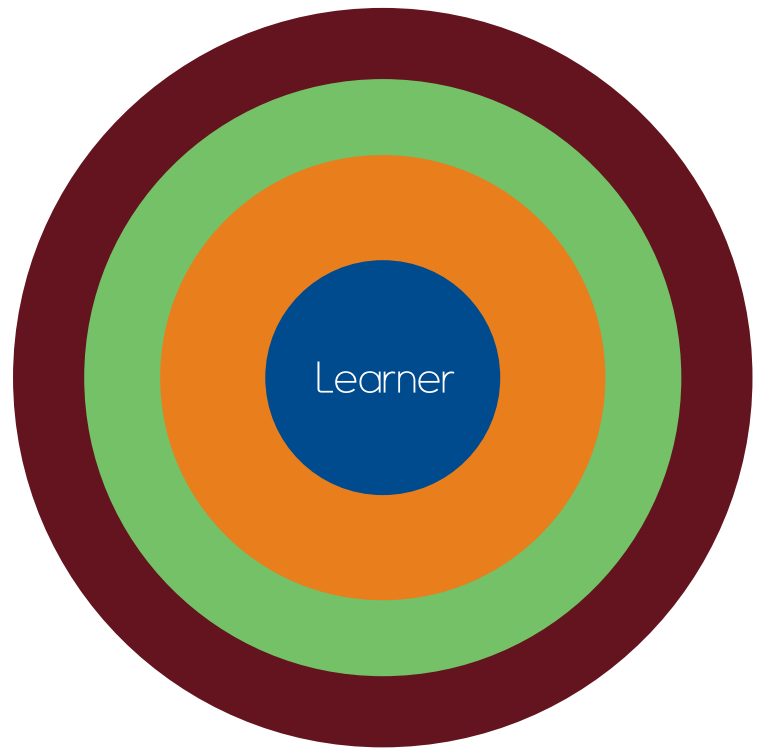
We invite you to learn more about these recommendations on the following pages.

For more details, download the full report at [www.ctnexted.org](http://www.ctnexted.org).

## Recommendations for Transformation

In order to transform Connecticut's current pre-K to 12 public school system and address today's challenges, CAPSS has developed a series of action-oriented recommendations that all revolve around the learner.

This executive summary contains the key recommendations. To learn more about the full set of recommendations, please visit [www.ctnexted.org](http://www.ctnexted.org).



### Raise the Bar.

Establish globally competitive, internationally benchmarked standards in language arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening) science, social studies, world languages and the arts.

- || **Establish** ambitious, focused and coherent education standards in all major education disciplines.
- || **Ensure** that our children will be globally competitive by benchmarking Connecticut's educational standards to established international standards.
- || **Measure** child progress on college and career readiness standards and get public school systems and postsecondary institutions to agree on those standards.

### Make it Personal.

Personalize learning to give all students the opportunity to learn at high levels.

- || **Build** instructional program on student learning needs, styles and interests.
- || **Create** multiple learning pathways that enable children to master essential standards, content and skills, and offer diversity and choice in the school system.
- || **Allow** children to advance through school and ultimately graduate based on their own demonstration of essential knowledge, skills and dispositions—not on the amount of time they've spent in the classroom.
- || **Redefine** the use of time (Carnegie unit/calendar) in order to support a personalized learning system; make achievement the constant and time the variable. Allow students to learn anytime, anywhere.



## Start with Early Childhood.

Make quality early childhood experiences available to all three- and four-year-olds in order to get all children ready to learn as they enter kindergarten.

- || **Make** quality preschool education universally available in Connecticut.
- || **Reallocate** state funding and alter educational policy so that programs are positioned for measurable success at raising oral language, reading and numeracy skills.
- || **Establish** a structural relationship between preschool and the K-12 system.
- || **Provide** a challenging all-day kindergarten program to all children.

## Retool Assessments and Accountability.

De-emphasize standardized tests and create new methods of assessments to give students choices for how and when they demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

- || **Adopt** a more varied system of assessment to account for the fact that students not only learn best in different ways, they also demonstrate their mastery of information in a variety of ways.
- || **Make** accountability transparent, tailored to different uses and able to communicate student progress.
- || **Replace** instructional state mandates—focused on inputs—with student learning outcomes.
- || **Include** rewards/incentives in accountability system.
- || **Base** accountability on the four core disciplines—language arts, science, mathematics and social studies.

## Offer More Options and Choices.

Increase diversity, flexibility and autonomy in school districts to maximize resources and better address the needs and interests of all students.

- || **Review** existing district structures based on 1) the capacity to provide different options for children to meet education standards; 2) economic, social and geographic factors.
- || **Provide** students and their parents with a menu of options, including magnet schools, charter schools and vocational-technical schools as well as different schedules and curriculums.
- || **Increase** capacity for educators to provide options and choices for children.
- || **Structure** school districts so that they're fiscally independent.



## Reform Leadership.

Realign Connecticut's education system for success by making authority and responsibility equal.

- || **Define** the role and responsibilities of the Superintendent of Education (formerly Superintendent of Schools) in state statutes; make authority commensurate with responsibilities and eliminate ambiguity.
- || **Change** the state statutes so that:
  - The Governor appoints the Commissioner of Education with the statutory authority and responsibility to provide educational leadership.
  - The position of the Superintendent of Education provides leadership to the Board of Education.
  - The District Board of Education makes decisions only on policy matters, the annual budget and the hiring, supervision and evaluation of the Superintendent.
  - The contract between the District Board of Education and the Superintendent of Education can be for a five-year period and is renewable.
- || **Restrict** authority of the Board of Education to its role as a representative body for the community it serves.

## Boost Quality.

Attract, develop, support and retain teachers and principals of the highest quality.

- || **Recruit** and retain the best and brightest in the education profession.
- || **Require** first-year teachers to have extensive clinical experience, supported by strong coaching from experienced teachers as well as content knowledge and teaching skills.
- || **Support** exemplary teacher and school district leadership development programs and publicize key achievements.
- || **Revise** tenure law to include a rigorous, standards-based review process more closely tied to student learning. After educators show outstanding performance in student learning, they will receive five-year contracts, which districts may or may not renew.

## Involve Students and Parents.

Engage parents, caregivers and community organizations as partners in a child's education.

- || **Foster** a partnership for success among parents, schools and communities.
- || **Help** parents and caregivers understand how they make a difference in a child's education.
- || **Provide** parents with choices for educating their children.
- || **Work** with parents and adults to support high expectations for learning.
- || **Utilize** community organizations to help families foster reading skills and produce literate children by grade three.



## Leverage Technology.

Use technology to transform teaching and learning.

- || **Provide** educators and students with equal access to technology.
- || **Personalize** learning with technology-based systems.
- || **Ensure** broadband access to Internet and wireless connections.
- || **Provide** on-demand access to learning resources, information and services 24/7.
- || **Integrate** technology throughout school districts, facilities, leadership and management to increase efficiency and safety.

## Continue Transformation.

Ensure that transformation is a continuous process, not a one-time event.

- || **Keep** the educational system flexible to meet changing needs and expectations.
- || **Support** innovation in the public school systems. Change state regulations to promote and reward continued transformation.
- || **Create** mechanisms for teachers and administrators to propose and obtain approval for innovative practices that lead to improved student outcomes.

## Learn more.

You can make a difference in transforming Connecticut's education system. Consider all these ways to get involved:

- || **Download the full CAPSS report** and sign up to get more information at [www.ctnexted.org](http://www.ctnexted.org).
- || **Call or write your legislators** to find out how they're addressing the complex problems facing schools today.
- || **Talk to the members of your local Board of Education** about what they're doing to transform education.
- || **Meet with community leaders or your parent/teacher association**, and talk about what can be done at your school and in your district.

## What is CAPSS?

The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) is an organization that represents all of the superintendents and leaders of public schools in Connecticut. Its mission is to lead the continuous improvement of public education for all students by advocating public policy, and developing and supporting executive school leaders. In short, it is committed to making sure schools in Connecticut are all they can be for our children.

## Project Partners

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DELL

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## The Core Group

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