

SEPTEMBER 2017 – DECEMBER 2020



NGA CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES

Education Division STRATEGIC PLAN

Recognizing that governors are uniquely positioned to drive state policy across the education and workforce pipeline, the NGA Center for Best Practices Education Division will help strengthen the capacity of governors and their staff to develop and implement effective policies from early learning through college and career.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 55 states, territories and commonwealths that make up the United States.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) develops innovative solutions to today's most pressing public policy challenges and is the only policy research and development organization that directly serves the nation's governors. Governors rely on the NGA Center to provide tailored technical assistance for challenges facing their states, to identify and share best practices from across the country and to serve as an information clearinghouse for an array of gubernatorial initiatives.

The NGA Center is organized into five divisions: Education; Economic Opportunity; Environment, Energy & Transportation; Health; and Homeland Security & Public Safety. The divisions provide consultation directly to governors and their advisors, who are uniquely positioned to frame and promote a state policy agenda.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The NGA Center's Education Division ('the division') provides information, research synthesis, policy analysis, technical assistance and resources to governors and their staff on education topics spanning early childhood through college and career. With 39 gubernatorial elections by the year 2018, the next three years are a pivotal time to support governors. The division has the ability to establish strong working relationships with these newly elected governors and to continue to build on relationships with governors who remain in office.

To support governors and help advance their education agendas, the division convened an advisory committee to aid in the development of a three-year strategic plan. Comprising experts and leaders in the field of education policy, the advisory committee was charged with guiding the division's scope of work through the year 2020.

The advisory committee convened monthly from February 2017 through May 2017 to provide detailed input on the development of the division's strategic plan. The committee was essential in formulating the core principles and five initiatives discussed below, which will inform the division's work.

COMPREHENSIVE WRAPAROUND SUPPORT

The division taps into the expertise of other NGA divisions to provide policy support, messaging development and coalition-building strategies to garner support for governors' agendas. Ongoing coordination is especially strong with the NGA Office of Government Relations, the Economic Opportunity Division (which includes both workforce development and human services) and the Health Division. The division also recognizes that the work outlined in this plan must be done in collaboration with key external national and state partners and stakeholders.

GOVERNORS' RESPONSE TEAM

The division provides a rapid response system for governors and their staff through the Governors' Response Team (GRT). The GRT supports the needs and answers the urgent questions of governors and their staff by drawing on the expertise of NGA staff and national partners.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

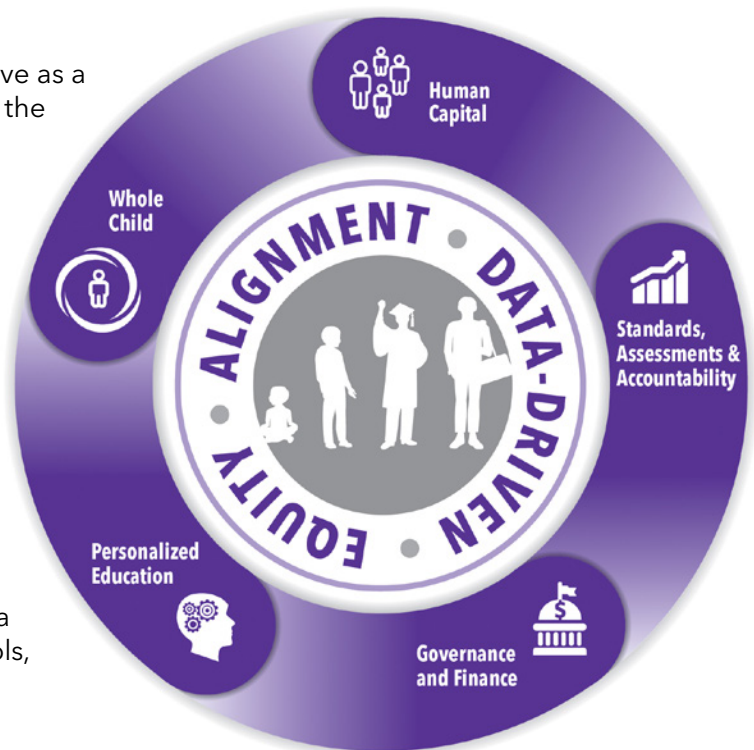
Through a variety of outlets, the division customizes technical assistance to best meet the needs and requests of governors and their staff. Each initiative may involve a combination of the following methods of support:

Intensive Technical Assistance	Other Technical Assistance	Cross-state Convening	Ongoing Learning Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Advisory groups ▶ Experts roundtables ▶ Site visits ▶ Workshops ▶ Policy academies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Technical assistance memos ▶ Connections to experts in the field ▶ Learning labs ▶ Access to division staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Monthly support calls ▶ Multi-state meetings ▶ State retreats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Webinars ▶ Podcasts ▶ Road maps ▶ White papers

CORE PRINCIPLES

Three cross-cutting core principles will serve as a foundation for the division’s work through the year 2020:

- (1) **Equity:** Ensure every child, from birth through college and career, receives a high-quality education and has access to the tools and resources they need to succeed.
- (2) **Alignment:** Create coherence across disparate systems and connect education to economic opportunity to ensure a seamless pipeline from birth through college and career; and
- (3) **Data-Driven:** Harness high-quality data to support students and improve schools, programs and educator quality.



INITIATIVES

The strategic plan consists of five key initiatives, each representing an area of education from birth through college and career. Each initiative includes a range of focus areas that align with the needs of governors and their education policy advisors. As the individual responsible for the entire education and workforce pipeline, governors have the unique ability to lead this work.

These overarching initiatives are meant to encompass all the division’s work through the year 2020. Over the course of the three-year strategic plan, several specific areas of focus spanning early learning and K-12 will be added to the division’s portfolio of work.

(1) GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

State-level systems are complex, vary in structure and are multifaceted. Governors play a critical role in building, strengthening and coordinating the broad vision for education within their states. The right infrastructure must be in place to enhance coordination at the state level among the agencies that support early learning and education through college and career.



The division will advise and assist governors in the following areas related to governance and finance:

- Developing statewide strategic plans for education;
- Convening policymakers, administrators and stakeholders to identify gaps and address issues critical to education;
- Redesigning state funding formulas to improve the distribution of state resources while aligning disparate funding streams across the system;
- Improving the relationship between states and local governments to blend and braid funding; and
- Targeting resources to the areas, schools and children most in need of assistance.

(2) STANDARDS, ASSESSMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

High-quality standards, assessments and accountability systems are central to equity, alignment and data. Governors can use these critical elements to ensure that education in their state reflects their priorities and overall vision, as well as emphasizing cohesion and accountability from birth through college and career.



The division will advise and assist governors in the following areas related to standards, assessments and accountability in education:

- Developing and maintaining clear, rigorous expectations that provide a pathway to college or career;
- Advancing the field of assessment and accountability for children in the first five years of life;
- Aligning assessments to standards that effectively measure progress and improve student outcomes;
- Collecting, analyzing and disseminating data to ensure children are developing and learning, and communicate their progress to stakeholders;
- Incorporating indicators that connect child development and education to the workforce; and
- Providing and fostering opportunities for state and local innovation.

KEY TERMS

The division defines the following terms used throughout this document:

- **Student:** Any individual from birth through college and/or career who is a part of a state's education system.
- **Educator:** Any individual teaching or providing early care and education within the state's education system.
- **Early Childhood Education:** The education of any individual from birth through age eight.
- **K-12 Education:** The education of any individual from kindergarten through college and career.
- **State Education System:** Any institution within the state in which individuals are learning.

(3) HUMAN CAPITAL

Research has consistently shown that educator quality is the most important in-school factor affecting student learning.¹ State efforts to improve student outcomes must focus on education workforce policies, practices and funding mechanisms that improve quality from early learning through college and career. Recent national consensus reports and projects have emphasized the importance of building and strengthening educator development and support systems.²



The division will advise and assist governors in the following areas related to human capital:

- Building a cohesive, comprehensive statewide system for recruiting, preparing, developing and supporting educators and leaders;
- Identifying effective approaches and investments for building comprehensive educator development systems; and
- Addressing educator shortages and providing more opportunities for educators to serve in policy and instructional leadership roles.

(4) WHOLE CHILD

Decades of research have demonstrated that student prospects improve when schools and providers support greater family involvement, health development, attendance and overall wellness.³ State education agencies can seek to ensure that every student receives a well-rounded, whole-child education and that parents, families and communities support their children's education, including at critical transition points.



The division will advise and assist governors in the following areas related to whole child education:

- Providing comprehensive services to support the health and well-being of students and families;
- Establishing services that ensure the social-emotional learning needs of children are met; and
- Fostering collaboration between state agencies, communities, early learning providers and schools to ensure that children and families have access to social services and supports.

(5) PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

U.S. students were outperformed on math by more than half of the countries participating in the 2015 Program for International Student Assessment.⁴ As international peers continue to increase rigor and align instructional practices to student needs; the United States lags behind. Over 90 percent of Business Roundtable CEOs believe that the gap in skills of today's workers presents a challenge for growing and strengthening the U.S. economy.⁵ Today's global economy requires the development of innovative, student-centered practices that expand educational experiences and instructional approaches to meet the direct learning needs of all students.



The division will advise and assist governors in the following areas related to personalized education:

- Redesigning high school with a greater emphasis on digital learning and other new opportunities;
- Shifting away from credit-based systems and toward competency-based systems;
- Improving access to high-quality charter schools; and
- Developing new relationships with institutions of higher education and key industry leaders.

- ¹ Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012. https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP693z1-2012-09.html.
- ² Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2015/Birth-To-Eight.aspx>; Ronald Thorpe, Sustaining the Teaching Profession, *New England Journal of Public Policy*, <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol26/iss1/5/>; Coalition for Teaching Quality, *Excellent Educators for Each and Every Child* (2014). http://coalitionforteachingquality.org/images/upload/Wheel_Doc.pdf; Teach Strong Coalition (2015). <https://teachstrong.org/?gclid=CK7Y3YGRkNMCFZKFswodRc4NiA>; National Conference of State Legislatures; *No Time to Lose: How to Build a World-Class Education System State by State*. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/no-time-to-lose-how-to-build-a-world-class-education-system-state-by-state.aspx>; Harvard Transforming Teaching Project, <http://www.totransformteaching.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/From-Quicksand-to-Solid-Ground-Building-a-Foundation-to-Support-Quality-Teaching.pdf>; National Education Association, https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/122096_NEA_V01_LowRes.pdf.
- ³ A. T. Henderson and K. L. Mapp,. *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2002). K. Mapp. *Making the connection between families and schools*. *Harvard Education Letter*, 13(5), 1-3 (1997); A. T. Henderson, *The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement*. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education (1987).
- ⁴ *Performance of U.S. 15-Year-Old Students in Science, Reading, and Mathematics Literacy in an International Context First Look at PISA 2015*. OECD, 2016. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017048.pdf>.
- ⁵ *Why Reading Matters and What to do about it: CEO Action Plan. Business Roundtable Report*. http://businessroundtable.org/sites/default/files/BRT_Why_Reading_Matters_12192016.pdf



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