ASCD Positions

Background

Since its beginning in 1943, ASCD has been a strong voice in the debate about educational issues that affect learning and teaching. As a nonpartisan education association, ASCD continues to advocate for policies and practices that ensure each child has access to educational excellence and equity.

Last update: September 1, 2021. For inquiries about ASCD Positions, please contact us.

Position Development Process

Professional educators need to provide leadership in creating the conditions necessary for all children to have access to high-quality education and to find their places in an increasingly complex world. Educators must promote the creation of education policy that supports best practice, as well as a modern accountability system that uses a variety of methods when making judgments about student achievement and learning.

ASCD's position adoption process is one example of how the association fosters public and policy support for its beliefs, values, goals, and immediate policy concerns.

ASCD Forum

In March 2012, the ASCD Board of Directors approved a new process for considering potential positions of the association:

- A member-led Position Advisory Committee identifies issues of interest to the education community through surveys, staff resources, and other policy-scanning information.

- The Position Advisory Committee submits relevant topics for consideration to the ASCD Board of Directors.

- The ASCD Board of Directors considers the topic submissions and determines whether to convene an ASCD Forum, as well as what topic(s) the forum will discuss.

- The ASCD Forum is convened when the ASCD Board of Directors considers a topic worthy of discussion among the education community.

- The ASCD Forum consists of online discussion over several weeks on the topic determined by the Board of Directors. The forum includes a face-to-face meeting (for 2013, at the ASCD Annual Conference), with the opportunity for online participants to engage virtually as well.

- The ASCD Forum discussion is taken into consideration by the ASCD Board of Directors when determining the adoption of a new position.

ASCD Positions

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Ability Grouping and Tracking (1980)

Students should not be permanently grouped for instruction according to assumptions about their learning abilities. Grouping should be for particular instructional purposes.

Accountability (2001)

Students, parents, and the public appropriately hold educators accountable for providing equitable, high-quality learning experiences for all students. Historical funding inequities, flawed staffing patterns, and episodic professional development are barriers to ensuring that each student learns. Holding educators accountable for results requires providing clearly articulated expectations, sufficient resources, access to data from multiple assessments, and appropriate professional development to learn the new skills and knowledge required.

Previous Interpretation (1970, 1974, 1998)
Professional educators are accountable to parents, students, and the public for the quality of their performance. In cooperation with representatives of these groups, educators should develop criteria by which to determine professional accountability.

Achievement Gap, The (2001) and Closing the Achievement Gap (2004)

For all students to excel academically and thrive as individuals, we must raise the bar and close the achievement gap. Educators, policymakers, and the public must understand the grave consequences of persistent gaps in student achievement and demand that addressing these gaps becomes a policy and funding priority. ASCD believes that all underserved populations—high-poverty students, students with special learning needs, students of different cultural backgrounds, nonnative speakers, and urban and rural students—must have access to

- Innovative, engaging, and challenging coursework (with academic support) that builds on the strengths of each learner and enables students to develop to their full potential;

- High-quality teachers supported by ongoing professional development; and

- Additional resources for strengthening schools, families, and communities.

Advertising in Schools (1990)

Schools should be cautious in their use of any materials designed to promote commercial products or containing commercial advertising because students are required to attend school and are therefore a captive audience.

Schools should have guidelines for use of materials provided by special-interest groups or by businesses that have a financial interest in advancing a particular point of view. Specifically, district policies should ensure that any commercial materials used in schools (1) are consistent with the district's values, goals, and objectives; (2) respond to a clearly defined educational need; (3) support the adopted curriculum; and (4) do not promote a brand-name product.

If educators use business-sponsored materials in the classroom, they should help students identify any biases the materials may contain. If students are too young to understand the bias, the materials should not be used.

With reasonable exceptions, such as newspapers and magazines, materials containing advertising should not be used for instruction except when the purpose is to analyze the advertising itself.

Affirmative Action (1962, 1991)

Policies governing the employment and assignment of students and staff should provide for decisions to be made primarily on the basis of professional qualifications and personal qualities. When candidates are equally qualified and it is necessary to attain or maintain balance, applicants' race and gender may also be considered.

Alternative Programs (1978)

Public school systems should provide alternative programs geared to the needs, interests, and aspirations of students at both elementary and secondary levels. Students learn, and teachers teach, in different ways. Alternative programs of choice are in accord with the values of a democratic society.

Alternative Scheduling (1978)

School time should be seen as a major resource to support student achievement. Rather than being restricted by artificial constraints (Carnegie units, a fixed number of periods in a day), schools should be able to adjust the length and configuration of the school day and year, as well as plan for alternative uses of time within the school day, to meet the needs of all students.

Arts in the Curriculum (1993)

Education in the arts is an essential element of a balanced curriculum. Study of music, dance, drama, and visual arts, including their history and cultural influence, should be part of every student's education.

Assessment and Goals (1971, 1975, 1979, 1987, 1990, 1998)

External tests should not determine the goals and content of curriculum. Educators and citizens should set curricular goals first, and teachers should have access to a variety of teaching materials and strategies by which to accomplish the goals. To evaluate results, school should use strategies and instruments designed to assess the goals.

Assessment: Uses and Misuses (1998)

Policy decisions for determining what assessments will measure and when to administer them should be guided by knowing who may use the assessment data and how. Assessment is valuable when educators use it to guide programs, determine instruction, influence resource allocations, and authentically make judgments about student learning. The history of assessment reminds us that tests and their results can be misused, leading to the potential harmful classification and tracking of students and ranking of schools and school systems. This history should always inform policy decisions relating to student assessment. Assessments might include norm- or criterion-referenced tests and performance tasks to evaluate students, schools, and programs. Assessments need to clearly reflect curriculum goals, and their use should be guided by the involvement of all those affected by or who have a stake in the assessment process. The general public also needs to be fully engaged in the purposes and uses of assessment data.

Basic Skills (1982, 1991)

All students should master basic academic skills, including reading, writing, and computation. However, life in our complex modern society also requires a broad range of knowledge and skills, including the ability to reason and solve problems. Development of reasoning abilities should not be postponed until students have mastered basic skills: both can and should be taught together as part of a balanced curriculum.

Bilingual Education (U.S.) (1978)

Schools should teach English as a second language to students who have not yet developed proficiency in English. Where feasible (e.g., if there are enough non-English speaking students who speak the same language), schools should also provide essential academic instruction in the student's first language until they are linguistically qualified to learn similar content in English. Moreover, because knowledge of languages is an advantage in the modern world, schools should help speakers of other languages develop and maintain academic fluency in their first language as well as in English.

Breakfast Programs (1990)

Schools should offer breakfast programs in circumstances where children will benefit and funding is available.

Career Education (1969, 1993)

Preparation for employment is a legitimate purpose of schooling. Schools should offer programs to help students learn about and prepare for careers. Career education programs should serve all types of students, including those who have traditionally gone to college. The programs should avoid complete separation of college preparatory and vocational students, enabling both groups to learn how academic and technical knowledge is used in the adult world and helping them make informed plans for their own careers.

Background
Preparation for employment has always been considered one of the major purposes of public education, but the particular ingredients of current career-oriented programs were specified in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1994. With funds provided under the act, states and local school systems have taken steps to incorporate school-to-work provisions in their educational programs.

Critics charge that school-to-work programs displace basic skills and academic instruction, are impractical and wasteful, invade family privacy, narrow student options, promote societal change (by reducing ability grouping, integrating reshaping traditional gender roles, etc.), and allow the national government to shape school curricula and children's futures.

Rationale
Occupational preparation is a lifelong task, requiring cooperation and articulation among schools, higher education institutions, the business community, and the individuals involved. Because of the rapidly changing nature of modern society, it is difficult for students to find a satisfying adult role and make decisions to prepare for it. Public schools must help them understand the nature of society and relationships between their studies and the outside world.

Critics of federally-sponsored school-to-work programs serve a useful purpose by pointing to possible problems. We recognize that any good idea may be implemented badly, but agree with the professed intent of such programs, which is primarily to help students make sound, informed decisions so that the nation has a well-qualified workforce. This is critically important now that having a general high school diploma is no longer enough for most entry-level jobs and many college graduates are unable to find professional employment.

Educators must be sure that school-to-career programs in their local schools do not squander precious instructional time or emphasize vocational preparation over intellectual development. They should also try to make sure that students are not required to take part in such programs against their parents' wishes.

We agree with critics' concerns that some of the language of the Work Opportunities Act of 1994 seems excessive when it speaks of all students and calls for integration of all academic and vocational curriculum. References to "all students" may cause misunderstanding. Educators may intend to declare that students of differing backgrounds and abilities should have equal opportunities, but to others, "all"

means that students and parents are required to participate. School-to-work programs should expand student opportunities, not compel participation.

Character Development (1954, 1989, 1993)

Students must be prepared to address moral issues in their own lives and to fulfill the moral responsibilities of citizenship. Schools should make basic moral values—including justice, altruism, diligence, and respect for human dignity—a strong unifying theme. All schools should work in partnership with families and other community members to develop and implement character and citizenship education programs.

Rationale

While the development of character is not solely a school responsibility, schools historically have viewed character development and citizenship education as central to their mission. Indeed, one of public education's great goals is to help learners possess, and act from, a positive set of values (i.e., standards used in making judgments) and to become active, responsible citizens. This is part of the foundation for success in life's various roles, including those of learner, family member, worker, and community member; it is integral to the process through which young people come to accept responsibility for the next generation, the health of the environment, and the improvement of human relationships at all levels. Today, many communities are experiencing significant signs of moral decline and deficiencies of personal ethics, from government and business scandals, to substance abuse, to increasing violence. Young people are playing a significant part in this trend, as evidenced by increasing rates of murder, assault, theft, cruelty, bigotry, and sexual abuse among them. Moreover, so many of these negative behaviors are occurring in schools that the public now ranks safety as a primary education-related concern.

Character education is important to both individual students and to society. The maintenance of democracy depends on people respecting one another, on civility, and on personal ethics. A primary function of public education is to prepare students for their roles as citizens. We cannot expect them to obey the law, be responsible, and act with civility if we fail to give them necessary instruction.

A number of communities have developed character and citizenship programs involving faculty, parents, and the community at large in identifying the aspects of character appropriate for the school to promote. Many of these efforts (as well as a 1994 PDK/Gallup Poll and an October '94 Public Agenda survey) indicate that it is indeed possible to reach a consensus on such matters. ASCD envisions character education as the teaching of community-shared values that are guided by the principles of democracy.

Child Abuse and Neglect (1986)

Educators should protect children by identifying and reporting cases of apparent child abuse or neglect.

Choice of Schools (1972, 1976, 1978)

When considering choice programs, authorizing agencies must balance concern for individual benefit with concern for the community as a whole. In accord with democratic principles, schools of choice must provide equal access to students. (Also see Alternative Programs.)

Church and State (U.S.) (1970, 1984)

In the United States, public funds should not be used to support religious schools because the U.S. Constitution requires separation of church and state.

Civics, Geography, and History (1988)

Schools should teach civics, geography, and history content thoroughly, accurately, and in a meaningful way.

Classroom Climate (1960, 1963, 1981)

Schools at all levels should strive to have an intellectually stimulating and psychologically supportive classroom climate. There should be

- Primary emphasis by the teacher on each learner as a person.

- Concern for the continuity and wholeness of each learner's educational experiences.

- A balanced emphasis on the learner's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development.

Community Involvement (1954, 1957, 1967, 1969, 1981, 1992)

For the well-being of children and youth, educators should participate in organized efforts to solve community problems that lie outside classrooms and schools.

Community Support Services (1987, 1991, 1993)

Public schools, especially those neighborhoods with high levels of poverty, should collaborate with community agencies to make support services—such as child care, health, and dental services—available to students and their families.

Controversial Issues (1986)

A central purpose of schooling in a democracy is to educate citizens so that they can make informed decisions about controversial issues. To learn to analyze and discuss controversial issues, students need

to examine a wide array of political and social opinions. Still, schools must not needlessly undermine children's values, religious beliefs, or political convictions. Educators must ensure that controversial issues are treated in a balanced and fair way.

Curriculum Balance (1959, 1973, 1975, 1978, 1989, 1991)

Schools should give students a general education, which includes basic skills but goes beyond a narrow interpretation of "the basics." A balanced curriculum includes music and fine arts, the humanities, vocational education, and student activities. The curriculum should be broad enough to serve students with differing academic, social, psychological, and health needs and abilities. (Also see Basic Skills.)

Curriculum Design (1991, 1997)

Curriculum should be standards-based, integrated, and flexible. It should be grounded in authentic experiences meaningful to learners and should emphasize problem solving, reasoning, conceptualization, and analysis.

Curriculum Leadership (1951, 1961, 1971, 1981)

The essential functions of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation should be led by professionals with the necessary training and experience.

Department of Education (U.S.) (1974, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1983, 1985)

The Department of Education should continue to have cabinet-level status in the United States government. The Secretary of Education should be a highly qualified professional educator.

Discipline (1980, 1984, 1991)

Discipline in schools is directly related to the social environment of the school and the surrounding community. Educators should resist calls for a return to "old-fashioned" discipline and instead use more constructive approaches. Rather than use corporal punishment, which is dehumanizing and ineffective, educators should use practices more likely to foster self-control and desirable student attitudes and behaviors. Rather than use suspension, which excludes students from classroom instruction, schools should use alternatives that allow students to continue to learn.

Dropouts (1987, 1991)

Schools should encourage students to continue their education through graduation, and should make an effort to address the needs of prospective dropouts.

Early Childhood Education (1959, 1960, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1997)

Public school systems should offer, at public expense, high-quality care and education programs for all young children whose parents want them to have it. Children with specific risk factors should have highest priority, and parents should always have a variety of options from which to choose.

Rationale
We support early childhood programs because recent research in neuroscience has revealed the learning potential of very young children, the plasticity of the young brain, and the astounding mental growth that ordinarily takes place in the first few years of life. Unfortunately, many children are not getting the nutrition, encouragement, and mental stimulation they need to become healthy, motivated learners. Sound early childhood programs can prevent problems that would otherwise be the object of expensive and less effective remediation later.

The need for preschool programs is particularly acute for children with disabilities or whose socioeconomic status and social history decrease their likelihood of school success. However, in today's world, the parents of many other children also seek to place them in early childhood programs, often because both parents are employed outside the home or they want their children to have the benefits of early schooling.

We recognize that extending the availability of such programs would substantially increase the cost of public schooling, at least temporarily. On the basis of research documenting the contribution of high-quality early education programs to prevention of learning and behavior problems, however, we believe such programs are cost-effective in the long term. (High-quality refers to student-teacher ratios, curriculum and instruction, staff development, and family and community relationships.)

Background
Early childhood education ranked among the highest priority concerns of ASCD members in the annual Issues Survey conducted in the fall of 1996. Many ASCD members have been committed to greater emphasis on early education for years, but the need is increasingly urgent because of changing demographic and employment patterns, as well as evidence from neuroscience that the first few years of life are crucially important.

Educating Students in a Changing World (2008)

As educators in the 21st century, we are charged with educating students to be successful in a complex, interconnected world. This responsibility requires schools to prepare students for technological, cultural, economic, informational, and demographic changes.

ASCD supports changes in teaching, learning, and leadership that adequately prepare students for the 21st century and graduate students who:

- Acquire and apply core knowledge and critical-thinking skill sets that are essential in an information age;

- Demonstrate creativity, innovation, and flexibility when partnering with business and community members to advance common goals;

- Make decisions and solve problems ethically and collaboratively;

- Utilize technology to gather, analyze, and synthesize information for application in a global economy;

- Exhibit positive interpersonal relationships that value multiple languages, cultures, and all persons; and

- Display leadership skills that inspire others to achieve, serve, and work together.

Educator Quality and Responsibility (1999)

ASCD supports policies and practices that hold educators responsible for providing a quality education to all students and for continuously improving the education profession and all public schools. These responsibilities require a systemic approach in which the entire education community works together to promote the highest-quality classroom teaching and learning.

Context
This position expands on the 1997 position advocating improvements in preservice and in the continuing education of teachers and other educators. A perception is growing in many places that educators are resigned to accept marginal teaching and even incompetence in the profession. In an age calling for increased accountability, the education profession teachers, school leaders, higher education faculty, and other education professionals must acknowledge and accept responsibility for developing and monitoring an ethic of excellence, providing a high quality education to students, and leading renewal efforts.

Supporting New Teachers
Educators at all levels must take the lead in the induction and mentoring of new teachers. Sustained apprenticeships, professional networks, school-university partnerships, and other such measures should be developed. In cases where uncredentialed teachers are granted an emergency permit to teach, policymakers, schools, and educators must commit to ensuring appropriate and timely development for these new teachers.

Strengthening Experienced Teachers
Teachers must take personal responsibility for continued growth and improvement. As the 1997 position states, teachers must be provided the time and other resources necessary to reflect on their experiences, investigate new approaches, learn new skills, and plan with their colleagues. In addition, schools should conduct appropriate reviews of veteran teachers by trained professionals to evaluate levels of effectiveness leading to decisions regarding continued employment.

Educators' Political Activity (1951, 1959)

Teachers, supervisors, and administrators have the same civic rights and responsibilities as other citizens. They should participate in civic activities, including working for or against candidates for election and discussing public issues at all levels of government. As educators, however, they have a special responsibility to treat ideas, issues, groups, and individuals fairly.

Energy Conservation (1981)

The school curriculum should foster understanding of the need for energy conservation and prudent use of energy resources.

Environmental Education (1970, 1993)

Because people in developing nations are rapidly consuming Earth's natural resources and because the world population is increasing rapidly, human beings must take individual and social responsibility for the environment. Schools should provide environmental education.

Equal Access to Excellence (1999)

ASCD supports policies that provide adequate funding for all learners and recognizes that the different abilities, backgrounds, and needs of students require diverse resources and multiple approaches to high-quality teaching and learning.

Context
In its previous statement on equity in education, ASCD had supported equal allocation of education funding. However, it is crucial that educators and policymakers realize that equal funding is not necessarily adequate funding for equal opportunity. To achieve equal access to knowledge and skill development for all students, regardless of background, race, or gender, resources must be adequate for the specific needs and circumstances of students and their families.

Equity and Standards
Standards must serve as targets for student learning, not as obstacles to student success. The implementation of standards must be accompanied by policies that guarantee adequate resources for less well-funded communities to implement mandated standards.

Equity and Funding
Due to different abilities, backgrounds, and preparation, some students require additional educational resources to achieve comparable standards and to develop the skills necessary for success. Adequate funding for some schools may mean additional funding to meet some students' learning needs. Further, spending must be linked to specific, measurable outcomes.

Equity in Education (1959, 1982, 1984, 1991, 1997)

In accord with democratic principles and basic fairness, ASCD supports policies and practices necessary to achieve equity in education. Public policies should ensure equity in education. All children, including those from low-income families, are entitled to safe, healthy, and comfortable school facilities; well-qualified teachers and other staff members; high-quality curriculum and learning materials; and adequate supplies and equipment, including computers and other technology. Funding for education should be allocated equally except for the reasonable extra cost of educating students with special needs.

Equity also depends on organizational and instructional factors, including teacher expectations, grouping, testing, and grading. Educators should support efforts to ensure that all students learn well, including initiatives to reduce long-term ability grouping and make classrooms more inclusive. In this information era, it is especially important that students have equal access to computers, and that they learn to use them for composition, investigation, and problem solving.

Equity in schools is closely related to adequate housing and economic development in the surrounding community. To support teaching and learning, parents and other adults must have jobs, safe streets and homes, and stable living conditions.

Evaluation of Educator Performance (1947, 1949, 1985, 2013)

High quality classroom teachers and school administrators are essential to positive student achievement. The primary purpose of professional performance appraisals and/or reviews for teachers and administrators is to support student outcomes. The evaluation procedures should be comprehensive and reflect a wide range of competencies, use multiple measures, and lead to professional development opportunities that build the systemic capacity of schools and the expertise of educators.

Facilities (1990)

Inadequate and inappropriate school facilities and equipment impede learning. School facilities should be adaptable to students' needs; help teachers function as professionals; foster communication among teachers, students, and others; offer a positive, receptive setting; and accommodate a variety of teaching and learning styles.

Foreign Languages (1980)

Students should study foreign languages to develop an understanding of and sensitivity to other cultures and to be able to communicate with speakers of other languages.

Funding (2001)

Policymakers, sensitive to the changing school population, are introducing new initiatives to ensure that each student's needs are met. Although it is appropriate for schools to explore reallocating resources to fund new programs, they still require consistent funding over time for ongoing, successful initiatives. Funding for new accountability mandates and programs should not detract from funding that already supports student learning.

Previous Interpretation (1959, 1960, 1970, 1973, 1978, 1984, 1987, 1993)
Because education is essential for the full development of individuals and nations, governments at all levels should make funding for education a high priority. Funding for schools should be broadly based and should not depend on the wealth of the student's parents or neighbors or on the location of taxable business or industry. Funding should be provided in such a way that local schools can make important program decisions.

Gender Equity (1972, 1978, 1983, 1987)

Educational institutions should treat all persons equally and should not permit discrimination on the basis of gender.

Goals (U.S.) (1959, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1991)

Schools should set goals that go beyond the current national goals of education to address the broader growth and development of students, preparing them to assume responsible roles in the work force and society.

Governance Structure (1979, 1990, 1991)

The governance structure of educational organizations should provide open communication and involve all constituencies in developing and attaining the organization's mission and goals.

Health and Learning (2004)

Successful learners are not only knowledgeable and productive but also emotionally and physically healthy, motivated, civically engaged, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond their own borders.

Because emotional and physical health are critical to the development of the whole child, ASCD believes that health should be fully embedded into the educational environment for all students. Health and learning

- Is a multifaceted concept that includes the intellectual, physical, civic, and mental health of students.

- Provides coordinated and comprehensive health efforts that give students and staff effective teacher, school, family, community, and policy resources.

- Supports the development of a child who is healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, engaged, and connected.

- Is the reciprocal responsibility of communities, families, schools, teachers, and policymakers.

Health Education (1970, 1986, 1987)

Schools should offer comprehensive health education programs that include instruction about the human body, nutrition, AIDS prevention, and substance abuse prevention.

In addition, schools should encourage a healthy lifestyle by serving nutritious school lunches, providing appropriate physical education programs, maintaining safe environments, and offering students the emotional support necessary to reduce stress and prevent substance abuse.

Prevention education is best carried out in partnerships with parents, the community, and state and national agencies.

Rationale
Many deaths and serious illnesses are caused by unwise lifestyles and self-inflicted hazards. The leading risk factors in lifestyles are smoking, poor diet, substance abuse, high blood pressure, inactivity, stress, and late detection of illness. School health programs can help students understand and prevent these problems.

High-Stakes Testing (2001) and Multiple Measures of Assessment (2004)

Decision makers in education—students, parents, educators, community members, and policymakers— all need timely access to information from many sources. Judgments about student learning and

education program success need to be informed by multiple measures. Using a single achievement test to sanction students, educators, schools, districts, states/provinces, or countries is an inappropriate use of assessment. ASCD supports the use of multiple measures in assessment systems that are

- Fair, balanced, and grounded in the art and science of learning and teaching;

- Reflective of curricular and developmental goals and representative of content that students have had an opportunity to learn;

- Used to inform and improve instruction;

- Designed to accommodate nonnative speakers and special needs students; and

- Valid, reliable, and supported by professional, scientific, and ethical standards designed to fairly assess the unique and diverse abilities and knowledge base of all students.

Immigrants (1978)

Children of illegal immigrants should not be denied access to equal educational opportunities in public schools.

Inclusion (1976, 1978, 1979)

Young people should learn to live with and respect others different from themselves, therefore, many students with special needs should be assigned to regular classrooms for part or all of the school day. When students with severe disabilities are assigned to teachers without specialized training, the teachers should have smaller classes along with support services, continuing professional development, and special equipment when necessary.

Although inclusion is a desirable goal, some students, because of their specialized needs or because their behavior interferes too much with the learning of others, may need to be educated in separate facilities at least part of the time.

Information Literacy (1987, 1989, 1991)

Information literacy—the ability to locate, process, and use information effectively—should be part of every student's educational experience.

Information Technology (1987, 1989, 1991)

In the global information society, educators need to understand not only the mechanics of how to use computers, video equipment, and other technology, but also how to use the technology to achieve particular educational purposes.

Institutionalized Persons (1973, 1978, 1980, 1986)

Institutionalized persons should have access to adequate educational programs.

Intergenerational Understanding (1987)

Schools should teach about aging and develop programs designed to foster intergenerational understanding.

Leadership Development (1967, 1969, 1975, 1980)

School systems and other educational organizations should provide staff development for those in leadership positions. Educational leaders need to gain expertise in planning, implementing, and evaluating instructional and staff development programs.

Learning Materials and Textbooks (1951, 1954, 1962, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1987)

Textbooks and other learning materials should be selected in accord with adopted policies. Selection criteria should include positive portrayal of racial and ethnic groups.

Learning, Need for Knowledge About (1979, 1980, 1993)

To foster student learning, educators need a knowledge base drawn from research on thought processes, brain functioning, emotional development, and other related studies. Educators should learn to use approaches that accommodate students' individual learning styles and capabilities.

Legislation (1961, 1962, 1980, 1984, 1987)

Educators should inform and work with legislative bodies as legislation affecting education is developed. Legislative bodies should not prescribe curriculum. Design and content of school curriculum should be the responsibility of state and local boards of education and professional educators.

Living with and Educating About Our Deepest Differences (2003)

Educational systems, including schools, must develop and foster practices that respect diversity in civil cultures and democratic communities. To achieve such practices, school systems must make a commitment to

- Using educational practices that prepare students for the responsibilities of citizenship.

- Promoting and modeling diversity and respect that extends to all people in school communities, including efforts to align staff diversity with the diversity of students.

- Developing educators and citizens to meet the specific, contextual needs of learning communities.

- Teaching and learning that honors, values, and applies the voices of students through the development of educational practices and policies.

- Applying pedagogy and knowledge that embrace an international and global context.

Previous Interpretation (2002)

Schools must use education to bridge the divides caused by the deepest differences between groups of people. This requires serious attention to teaching about differences such as language, culture, and religion, as well as exploring areas of shared understanding. Schools must develop and foster civil cultures, democratic communities, and practices that respect diversity in all its forms.

Rationale

The events of September 11, 2001, remind us of the role of education in creating a future in which people reject prejudice and discrimination. We must respect and understand the range of worldviews, ideas, people, and places that are unfamiliar to us in hope of lessening the tensions that divide us. School curricula should be examined to ensure a pedagogy of understanding humanity's differences and commonalities.

Low-Performing Schools (2003)

Clear expectations and appropriate support should accompany accountability policies that identify and label schools as low performing. Before the implementation of rewards, sanctions, penalties, or similar accountability policies, schools need adequate support for

- Professional development that ensures the capacity of teachers to teach all children well.

- Highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

- Data-driven and research-based improvement efforts that focus on raising student achievement.

- Assessment systems that are fair, balanced, and grounded in pedagogy that provides for special needs, high poverty, and language-minority students. Such systems should use multiple indicators that inform fair and just educational decisions on behalf of students. This includes taking into account the diversity of students and the need for timely data and formative assessment practices.

Previous Interpretation (2002)

Every student has the right to attend a high-performing school. School performance and resulting "high" or "low" designations must be determined by multiple indicators that extend beyond the use of tests. Identification and intervention strategies should focus on improving, not penalizing, schools. Interventions in "low-performing" schools should include coherent strategies that include understanding each school's unique context, strengths, and needs; ongoing professional development for staff; research-based practices; parent, student, and community involvement; and the necessary financial resources to support school transformations from low-performing to high-performing.

Rationale

The identification and labeling of schools as low-performing, now part of many state and federal accountability policies in the United States, pose serious challenges to educators and affected communities. Declaring a school to be low-performing creates tension among faculty, students, and

other stakeholders. Responsible interventions are required in a school when many students are not succeeding. However, the inappropriate use of rewards and sanctions connected to single measures is likely to further disagreement and controversy.

Media Relations (1993)

Educators should encourage the media to help the public understand the changing mission of schools, the conditions under which they operate, and the complexities of teaching and learning.

Multicultural Curriculum (1953, 1980, 1991, 1992, 1993)

In a pluralistic society, and at a time of increasing interaction among cultural and ethnic groups, students need to know about and understand the cultural heritages of others. Multicultural curriculum should emphasize a "mosaic" approach, focusing on the whole but recognizing the contributions of each group.

Native American Schools (U.S.) (1975)

Schools attended solely by Native American children should be controlled by Native Americans.

Parent Education (1977)

Public school systems should offer voluntary parent education programs to help parents and guardians—especially those with very young children who do not yet attend school—to provide a supportive and stimulating home environment.

Peace Education (1986, 1993)

Schools should foster world peace by teaching ways to resolve individual and group conflict through nonviolent means.

Personalization (Know the Learner: Making Education Personal) (1998)

School renewal efforts should help match individual learner strengths and needs with appropriate pedagogy to increase student achievement. Efforts to personalize learning should celebrate each learner's identity and sense of belonging.

Physical Education (1970, 1987)

Physical education can be a major factor in the mental, emotional, social, and physical development of students. Schools should have high-quality, sequentially planned physical education programs with class sizes that are educationally appropriate.

Principals, Preparation of (1986)

University preparation programs and staff development efforts should enhance the role of the principal as an effective instructional leader.

Principal's Role (1986)

The principal's instructional leadership is crucial for high-quality education. In cooperation with others, the principal should ensure student learning by leading development of the vision and mission of the school, keeping a focus on learning, creating a strong culture of continuous improvement, using available resources appropriately, and having a strong human resource development program.

Professional Self-Governance (1986, 1990)

Educators should be responsible for the preparation, appraisal, and career advancement of those within their ranks. Standards for educators should be developed and monitored by members of the profession.

Professionalism in an Era of Accountability (2000)

To enhance the professional and cultural status of educators, we need policies, practices, and resources to support the following:

- The creation of educational environments that bear witness to continuous growth and that empower educators to contribute their own knowledge and apply current research and inquiry to their work.

- Inclusion of all teachers in a professional learning community that stands for equity and quality and that incorporates collaboration and mutual support.

- Professional development that includes opportunities to examine research and engage in inquiry that directly relates to creative problem solving around the constraints impeding improvement efforts. Such constraints include time, curriculum, family and community expectations, externally imposed standards and mandates, and necessary resources needed to respond to such constraints.

- Greater attention to the moral and ethical grounding of the education profession. Moral and ethical imperatives, not simply economic utility, pervade the education profession. These imperatives arise out of the responsibility of enculturating young people into democratic societies, ensuring access to knowledge for all students, and improving teaching and learning, which is the key role of all educators.

Rationale

This position arose out of a deep concern about the role of professionals in the current climate of accountability in school improvement worldwide. In almost every state in the United States, and in many countries around the world, there is serious policy and political focus on standards-based reform and the use of increasingly "high-stakes" assessments for students and, in turn, for educators responsible for student performance. The position also articulates the central role of professional development and gives specific ideas about what constitutes quality professional development. Connected to the importance of professional development is the goal of enhancing the status of educators as stewards of their own renewal, and educators' dedication to directing their professional growth to student achievement and performance.

Public Education in a Democracy (1996)

The maintenance and enrichment of public education is critical to sustaining democracy. Democracies depend on public schools for the education of active citizens through equal access to a free, high-quality public education.

Rationale

Democracies depend on public schools for the education of active citizens through equal access to a free, high-quality public education. Schools are critical public sites for nurturing the hope of democracy by preparing students to participate fully in civic life and in the building of a better society.

The reduction of resources at the federal, state/provincial, and local levels and the potential of public funding for private schools underscores the importance of reconnecting democratic purposes to the functions of schools. Policy leaders are responsible for maintaining the resources for equal access to commonly good schools for all children. In return, educators are responsible for creating the best possible conditions for teaching and learning. This process requires ongoing inquiry into the aims of education. In the discourse on school reform, teachers and students, in combination with families and community members, must have a voice in how decisions are made that affect the educational lives of children and educators.

Public Support (1991)

Dramatic changes in family patterns, economic demands, lifestyles, priorities, and values have placed new demands on schools. Schools have assumed many responsibilities once met by the extended family, religious institutions, and the community. If schools are to perform their central task of educating students, members of the public must understand the challenges schools are trying to meet, the services they are providing, and their need for support and increased resources.

Racial Desegregation (1962, 1978, 1991)

Mistrust and antagonism between the races is a major social problem. Racial and socioeconomic isolation is harmful to all concerned. Educators should support school desegregation as a means to a more just and harmonious society.

Reading Instruction (1998)

Legislative bodies and regulatory agencies should not prescribe particular educational methods and materials. Instead, they should recognize that if educators are to be held accountable, they must be able to exercise professional judgment. In controversial areas such as reading, where it is tempting to require that things be done a particular way, policymakers should provide to be determined by teachers and principals in consultation with families.

Policymakers should support the teaching of reading by

- Approving procedures for selection of high-quality instructional materials and making sure the procedures are followed.

- Providing time and resources for relevant, thorough professional development.

- Insisting on open communication and cooperation between families and schools, which includes participation by parents in decisions about the education of their own children.

We advise those responsible for making decisions about reading instruction to

- Use practices that are supported by reliable research findings (admittedly difficult because the experts differ on what research is applicable).

- Build students' interest in reading by having them use language in meaningful ways, read good literature, and read and write about their own experiences.

- Focus on the interests and needs of individual students.

- Group students flexibly rather than tracking them permanently.

- Identify students having difficulty early and give them intensive help.

- Ensure that all students master sound-symbol relationships within a reasonable time.

Religion in Public Schools (U.S.) (1954, 1989, 1993)

The role of religion in U.S. public schools is made clear in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States: Schools may not inculcate religious beliefs nor inhibit them. Schools should teach about religion where relevant in the school curriculum, but educators may not impose their religious beliefs on

others or engage students in worship or other religious practices. Schools must respect students' freedom of conscience, permitting religious expression if it does not intrude on the rights of others.

The United States Congress should not adopt an additional amendment to the Constitution concerning school prayer or other religious practices. Prayer in public schools could contribute to conflicts among people who differ in their religious observances.

Research (1973, 1981, 1984, 1987)

Governments should support research in education to provide a knowledge base to guide educators' decision making. Educators and policymakers should consult research findings when choosing programs and practices.

Restructuring of Schools (1989)

Regulatory agencies should encourage school restructuring by revising restrictive policies and statutes. Local schools should have maximum flexibility and be held responsible for results.

Salaries of Teachers (1984)

In general, teachers' salaries are inadequate for the complexity and importance of their work. Low salaries make it difficult to attract and retain able and qualified people; harm morale; and cause teachers to take part-time jobs, reducing the time they can devote to professional activities. Teachers' compensation should be comparable to that of other trained professionals.

School Responsibilities (U.S.) (1982, 1986)

Public schools in the United States are expected, and frequently required, to deal with numerous societal problems, including substance abuse, infant mortality, crime, disease, and poverty. Although it is true that serious societal problems severely limit the ability of schools to perform their primary function, most schools are ill prepared to meet these demands. If schools are to deal with such problems—for example, by collaborating with other community agencies—they must have adequate funding and other resources.

Science Education (1984, 1987)

In the modern world, schools must help students become scientifically literate. To make informed decisions, both as individuals and as citizens, students need to develop scientific habits of mind and have knowledge about both the natural environment and how it is transformed through technology.

Service Learning (1987, 1993)

Students have much to learn from participation in the community. Schools should require all students to participate in service learning and other experiences that develop good character and effective citizenship.

Rationale
Service learning is a recognized means of addressing the alarming lack of tolerance and compassion demonstrated by many of today's students. Students need ways of making a demonstrable, positive difference in the lives of others. Coupled with preparation and reflection, service learning contributes to academic learning as well as character development.

Sex and Family Life Education (1970, 1986, 1987)

Sex and family life is the responsibility of families, religious institutions, and schools. Schools should develop programs in cooperation with community groups, including family members, and representatives of the health professions.

Sexual Orientation, Student (1990)

Educators should prevent harassment of and discrimination against students because of sexual orientation. School policies, curriculum materials, and instructional practices should not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Social and Emotional Learning (1989, 1993)

Schools should collaborate with parents and community agencies to foster students' social and emotional health.

Staff Development Funding (1979)

Governments at all levels should place a high priority on funding for staff development. Staff development programs require comprehensive planning and adequate financing.

Standards and Accountability (1999)

Public policymakers, families, schools, and communities bear the responsibility for creating the conditions and providing opportunities and resources necessary for the success of all learners. Student success in standards-based programs requires that all educational stakeholders contribute to setting standards and creating conditions for meeting them. School systems must be held publicly accountable for all students meeting standards. Educators must use multiple approaches to teaching and learning and varied methods to assess student achievement.

Context
Accountability systems are often disconnected from what educators and researchers know actually works to improve student achievement. Many educators agree that there is an urgent need to redesign these systems. The standards movement is a good example. High standards for all students is a worthy goal, but often assessments and evaluation based on the standards are not congruent with how students learn, even when aligned with what students are taught. Student assessment for the 21st century must use diverse approaches to measure and to value multiple approaches to teaching and learning and have as an expectation that all students will improve. Further, the standards movement must not limit learning by narrowing curricula, nor inhibit creative teaching and learning that is grounded in effective practice and sound research and inquiry.

Improvement, Not Sorting
Accountability systems should be designed to provide useful and appropriate information for educators, policymakers, and the public. Further, standards for learning and performance and their accompanying assessments should serve as targets for inspiring and improving student learning, not as a means to sort and to rank students.

Standards Development and Implementation (2010)

ASCD supports high standards for student learning and achievement that are the result of a development process that is state-led, transparent, and implemented under the following principles:

- Educates the whole child through a broad and rich curriculum;

- Contains global competencies that develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to work effectively in an increasingly interdependent world;

- Provides equity in learning conditions for all students;

- Ensures effective instruction that results in increased learning for all students;

- Expands assessment options in measuring progress toward attaining the standards while maintaining accountability for results;

- Relies on multiple indicators for assessing student performance and achievement;

- Develops coherent policies that support and align teacher preparation, licensure, and ongoing professional development requirements and activities;

- Includes representation of educators at all levels and incorporates their input throughout the development, implementation, and evaluation process; and

- Maintains ongoing support among policymakers, educators, parents, and communities to secure necessary resources for the standards and their successful implementation.

Students at Risk (1980, 1988, 1991)

Schools should address the social and educational conditions that contribute to children being at risk for failing in school.

Supervisors and Curriculum Leaders (1986, 1990)

Educators should be certified as instructional supervisors and curriculum leaders only if they have demonstrated achievement of recognized professional standards.

Teacher Education and Professional Development (1997)

Standards for admission to preservice teacher education programs should be comparable to those for other respected professions, and coursework in education and related fields should be of the highest quality. Preservice programs should teach pedagogical skills as well as knowledge and understanding, and initial certification should be based on performance, which means demonstrating mastery of a body of pedagogical knowledge and skills.

No person should be assigned to a regular teaching position (rather than an internship or other limited position) until demonstrating initial teaching competence, despite completion of an approved course of study. Educators and government officials should support efforts of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to enforce high-quality standards, and substandard programs should be closed.

Teachers and other educators should be expected to learn and grow throughout their careers. Teachers in all schools should be provided the time and other resources necessary to reflect on their experiences, investigate new approaches, learn new skills and content, and plan with their colleagues. In most schools, this would require redefining financial priorities as well as rethinking organization of the school day and year.

Certification to teach should be for a limited period, and recertification, like initial certification, should be based on content mastery and teaching competence. Continued employment should depend on demonstrated teaching ability and professional growth.

Responsibility for both preservice and continuing professional development should be shared among school systems, institutions of higher education, and the professionals themselves. ASCD endorses the concept of professional development centers: public elementary and secondary schools at which professional training and development is a major focus.

Rationale
Provisions for the preservice preparation and continuing education of teachers and other educators must be substantially improved. Teaching is a complex and highly demanding occupation, requiring thorough knowledge of academic content as well as mastery of a professional knowledge base that includes human growth and development, teaching strategies, counseling, and communication skills.

Teacher Quality amid Educator Shortages (2003)

Preservice and inservice education must provide teachers, support staff, and administrators with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the needs of all students including special needs students, language-minority students, and students living in poverty. To this end, both preservice and practicing educators need

- Professional development that addresses the needs of all learners and that is job-embedded, ongoing, reflective, aligned to state standards and expectations, research-based and results-driven, and that uses multiple assessments and indicators to assess educator performance.

- The necessary resources of time and money to sustain professional growth, achievement, and recognition.

- The establishment of clear and rigorous standards for ongoing professional performance.

- Strong linkages among primary, secondary, and higher education.

Previous Interpretation (2002)

Every child has the right to be taught by quality, fully licensed and certified teachers. To maintain quality in the wake of teacher and educator shortages, pathways into the education professions must prepare future teachers with the knowledge and tools for successful practice in teaching disciplines. Prospective educators must demonstrate competency, including the ability to implement innovations in teaching and learning and an understanding of the role of schools in a democratic society.

Rationale

Attracting, retaining, and developing quality teachers is essential in the current era of high-stakes accountability. Recent research suggests that having a quality teacher is a central factor in student success. Against the backdrop of educator shortages, particularly shortages in certain geographic locations and subject areas, the attraction and retention of quality teachers and educators becomes more complex and difficult. While salaries and benefits are important, the professional and policy contexts in which educators work also influence the attraction and retention of teachers and educators.

Teaching as Artistry (1989)

Teacher preparation, induction, and professional development should attend not only to the craft elements of teaching, but also to the artistic aspects, including intuition, inventiveness, spontaneity, and a sense of timing.

Teaching Children with Special Needs (2003)

Preservice and inservice education must provide all teachers, support staff, and administrators with the necessary skills and knowledge to educate all students, regardless of their needs. Resources must provide adequate support for personnel preparation systems (both preservice and inservice) to ensure that all students with special needs have access to highly qualified teachers. Such support should

- Make available appropriate funding that allows state, provincial, and local systems to provide an adequate education for all children, including those with special needs.

- Offer professional development that ensures the ability of all teachers to teach all children well.

- Provide teachers with the opportunities to develop skills and knowledge they need to accurately identify students who may have special needs, educate those students within an inclusive

classroom setting, and work with families and community members to meet those students' needs.

- Offer all educators access to high-quality, research-based professional development experiences that are job-embedded, ongoing, and reflective; that are aligned to standards and expectations; and that address the needs of all students.

Teaching Strategies (1989)

Teachers should use approaches that are theoretically sound and supported by research.

Teenage Parents (1986)

Teenage pregnancy often limits the future of the child as well as the parents. Schools should teach parenting skills and provide other support for teenage parents.

Television (1977, 1981)

Children spend many hours watching television at an age when they are highly impressionable. Schools should teach good viewing practices and encourage other ways to use leisure time.

Testing (1976, 1978, 1979, 1983, 1990)

Most tests each have a useful purpose, but some tests have been misused in the United States in recent years. Results from machine-scored, norm-referenced test scores should not be the only information used to evaluate schools or school programs because such tests measure only part of what schools are trying to teach. Moreover, they are intended primarily to compare individual scores rather than to measure mastery of particular standards. Criterion-referenced tests are a better tool for measuring mastery, and well-designed and scored performance tasks can yield even richer assessment data.

Thinking Skills (1985, 1993)

In our complex society people must be able to process information and operate effectively in ambiguous and unstructured situations. Schools should plan for the systematic, regular teaching of thinking skills.

Time for Professional Work (1948, 1950)

The school day and year should include sufficient time for teachers to plan, learn new skills, and engage in other professional activities.

Tobacco in Schools (1988)

Schools should prohibit use of tobacco on school premises by students, staff members, and the general public.

United Nations (1989)

Because of the increasing need for international cooperation, schools should teach about the United Nations, including the principles embodied in the United Nations charter.

Urban Schools (1969, 1981)

School systems in large cities must deal with complex financial and educational problems. Policymakers and members of the public must support educators in their efforts to resolve these problems.

Values Promoted in the Media (1991)

Some television shows and advertisements reinforce stereotypes, glamorize ignorance and substance abuse, promote violence, and ridicule educators and parents. Because the media exert a powerful influence on young people, they and businesses that finance them should accept greater responsibility for promoting positive values and attitudes.

Violence Prevention (1979, 1990)

Violent acts, intruders, and weapons in school threaten the safety of students and school personnel, who have a right to a safe school environment. School and public officials should take steps to protect all school personnel and students from violence. Schools should develop plans for improving school safety, teach staff members how to deal with violent behavior, and arrange for exchange of relevant information with community agencies. When schools are unsafe, however, it is usually not because of educator permissiveness but because violence is endemic in the surrounding community. When that is the case, violence reduction efforts will be most successful if they involve families, citizens, and community agencies.

In addition, educators can help curtail violence by making schools stimulating emotional and intellectual centers of their communities. Teachers and administrators should develop positive, trusting relationships with students; use engaging teaching strategies; and teach students how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Volunteers (1983)

Community volunteers can enrich learning opportunities for students. Schools should prepare volunteers to assist with appropriate services and should train educators to use those services.

Vouchers (U.S.) (1986, 1991)

Governments should not give public funds to parents, directly or indirectly, to pay for nonpublic schooling because

- It takes badly needed money away from public schools.

- It violates separation of church and state if religious schools are included.

- It increases inequity by encouraging the most active parents to leave the public schools.

- It does not provide accountability for use of public funds.

Whole Child, The (2004)

The current direction in educational practice and policy focuses overwhelmingly on academic achievement. However, academic achievement is but one element of student learning and development and only a part of any complete system of educational accountability. ASCD believes a comprehensive approach to learning recognizes that successful young people are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, motivated, civically inspired, engaged in the arts, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond their own borders.

Together, these elements support the development of a child who is healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, and engaged. To develop the whole child requires the following contributions:

Communities provide

- Family support and involvement.

- Government, civic, and business support and resources.

- Volunteers and advocates.

- Support for their districts' coordinated school health councils or other collaborative structures.

Schools provide

- Challenging and engaging curriculum.

- Adequate professional development with collaborative planning time embedded within the school day.

- A safe, healthy, orderly, and trusting environment.

- High-quality teachers and administrators.

- A climate that supports strong relationships between adults and students.

- Support for coordinated school health councils or other collaborative structures that are active in the school.

Teachers provide

- Evidence-based assessment and instructional practices.

- Rich content and an engaging learning climate.

- Student and family connectedness.

- Effective classroom management.

- Modeling of healthy behaviors.