

Governing Change? Considerations for Education Policymakers

Introduction

For our nation to stay economically competitive in today's knowledge-driven economy, all citizens will need to attain higher levels of education than were expected in the past. The standard end point of a student's education is rapidly moving from a high school diploma to a postsecondary degree. While states continue to promote policies designed to elevate academic achievement among students in kindergarten through grade twelve, they are also broadening their view of the education continuum. Efforts to expand access to higher education and promote college success are occurring simultaneously with efforts to improve access to and the quality of pre-K services.

There is growing consensus that students need a formal education that begins before and ends after the boundaries of the traditional K-12 system. Further, there is growing concern that the current education system—at all levels—is not functioning well enough to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Given the dual challenges of improving and expanding the system, a variety of change strategies are being examined, including reforming education governance.

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Massachusetts currently has three divisions within the public education sector: the Department of Early Education and Care, the Department of Education, and the Board of Higher Education.¹ The question of how to increase alignment among these three independent units is currently the subject of policy discussions. There is growing interest in creating an overarching governance structure to connect them. The theory of action for such a change is straightforward: If education is to be a seamless process that starts in pre-school and terminates at the postsecondary level, the system might be more efficiently and effectively governed by a single, unified structure. However appealing the benefits, the challenges of dismantling the current bureaucracy and assembling a new system are significant.

As the commonwealth embarks on serious consideration of possible changes in education governance, there are lessons to be learned from

¹ Each of these divisions and the connections between them will be explained in depth on page 3.

states that have undertaken the process of designing and enacting P-20 systems—systems that extend from early childhood through higher education and promote access, standards, and accountability at all levels.² The P-20 strategy is to build an integrated system with institutionalized cross-sector coordination. Its goal is to yield a more bureaucratically efficient and educationally effective system.

Purpose and Methods

This brief has been designed for use in the policy dialogue on P-20 education systems and governance structures. It includes four features:

1. A framework for considering governance change;
2. Case studies of four states' efforts to develop P-20 education systems;
3. Lessons from the cases; and
4. Implications for Massachusetts.

Research for this brief involved: a literature review of P-20 systems, web research and document analysis, and interviews with experts in Massachusetts and California. The states highlighted herein were selected because of the progress they have made in integrating P-20 education governance. The elements of the framework and the case examples in this brief draw heavily on the work of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.³

An Inquiry-Oriented Framework

A shift in the governance of units that have long-existed independent of one another must be planned carefully. Clarity of purpose is essential as political, logistical and financial hurdles to implementation abound. As policymakers contemplate changing the way education is governed in Massachusetts, they would do well to bear in mind the following questions:⁴

- What does the commonwealth hope to accomplish by changing to a P-20 governance structure?
- Who will be responsible for what? What will collaboration look like? How will the governance structure support collaboration and coordination between sectors?
- How will the commonwealth determine whether its new governance system has led to improvements in the quality of education in the early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary sectors?

In determining how to respond to the challenges presented by the questions above, it is important to identify the specific areas of education policy that would require reform. This brief considers four: (1) alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment; (2) data systems; (3) finance; and (4) accountability. Using these four policy areas as illustrations, one can envision the potential of an integrated system and what ideal practices might look like in each.

Alignment of standards, curriculum and assessments: High schools' and postsecondary institutions' coursework and assessments would be aligned. Students who successfully complete a college prep curriculum and pass the high school exit exam would be admitted to and prepared to succeed at a public postsecondary

2 Education Commission of the States. (2006). *P-16 Collaboration in the States*. www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/69/26/6926.pdf

3 The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education collaborates closely with the Institute for Education Leadership and the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research.

4 These are based on a set of questions laid out in the publication, Education Commission of the States. (2002) *What is P-16 Education? A Primer for Legislators*. www.ecs.org/clearinghouse.

institution. In addition, alignment of age-appropriate standards and curriculum between pre-school and the early elementary grades would be in place.

Data Systems: States would be able to track students across all levels of education throughout the state. In addition to demographic information, the database would include information on students' course work, test scores, and institutional enrollment and completion. Access to the data system would be readily available to staff at all levels.

Finance: States would develop finance systems with incentives to improve student achievement that foster collaboration between all education sectors. Funding streams would be integrated and frequently span across sectors from pre-K into K-12 or high school into college.

Accountability: Each sector would publicly report on student progress and be evaluated based on clear performance standards. These performance standards would be vertically integrated and benchmarked with reasonable expectations of annual growth.

It is important to note that alignment, data, finance and accountability are not merely relevant to cross-sector issues. Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of an education system will involve ensuring that within each sector, there are sound policies related to these issues. For example, in terms of alignment, K-12 schools would have teachers who can and do teach curriculum that is aligned with state standards and assessments. Postsecondary institutions would have articulation agreements making it possible for students not only to transfer their course credits to another institution, but to have those credits count toward degree requirements. An integrated finance system within the early childhood sector would have pre-schools solicit program funds from one state agency, rather than from several.

The next section presents cases of P-20 governance reform in other states, analyzed in terms of the progress they have made on these four dimensions of policy. To set the stage, we begin with a brief description of Massachusetts' current governance structure.

The Education Governance Structure in Massachusetts

Massachusetts, like most states, does not have a P-20 governance structure, but rather has multiple separate statewide education boards that oversee public education institutions and agencies at the different levels of the system. The Board of Early Education and Care (EEC) oversees the provider system for ages zero to five. The Board of Education (BOE)

Minding your P's and K's

There are several terms used to refer to an integrated system of education. Often, they are used interchangeably, though they con- note differences.

- K-16 refers to an integrated system of education from kindergarten through a four-year college.
- P-16 expands the system downward to include pre-kindergarten or pre-school (as early as age 3).
- P-20 expands the system upward to include graduate school education.

oversees kindergarten to grade 12, while each district has its own school committee. The higher education system is more fragmented. The Board of Higher Education (BHE) oversees state and community colleges, while the University of Massachusetts operates under a separate board. In addition, each of the colleges and universities has its own board of trustees. (See Appendix A.)

While Massachusetts does not have a P-20 governance structure, it does have elements of a P-20 system. Executive heads from each sector sit on one another's boards. In addition, there are a number of state-run programs involving cross-sector collaboration. For example, EEC and BHE jointly administer the Early Educator Scholarship fund. The BHE manages the state's GEAR-UP program (a middle and high school based college preparation and success program) as well as the teacher quality state grant program.

In addition, there are already structures that exist that could be used to promote greater coordination. For example, Chapter 15A Section 2 of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 includes language for an advisory committee on education policy issues, which would span K-20 education and be led by the board chairs of the K-12 and higher education systems respectively. In general, this opportunity has not been acted upon, but it has the potential to bring about greater cooperation with only modest statutory change to include early education.

As touched on above, one element of an effective integrated P-20 education system is within sector alignment and integration. This pertains especially to the traditionally fragmented sectors of early childhood and higher education. Both of these sectors in Massachusetts have strived to increase student achievement and bureaucratic efficiency through developing more coherent systems within their level. Formed in 2005, the EEC brought the early childhood functions of several state agencies under one roof. In most states, early childhood programs are scattered among several departments. In higher education, the BHE includes all postsecondary institutions and there are articulation agreements between two- and four-year degree granting institutions. In other states, it is not unusual for community college systems to sit within a K-12 structure, while the university system has its own autonomous board.

State-Level Strategies for Increasing Achievement for All

The minimal formal connection between Massachusetts' governance structures is quite common among states. When these governance systems were set up, neither higher education nor pre-school were universal. Now, however, as states are moving toward universal postsecondary education, state policymakers are attempting to address issues of P-20 education in various ways. A couple of states have an overarching governance structure where all education sectors from pre-K through graduate school are under the governance of one board and commissioner. A number of states have addressed these governance issues through legislated statewide P-20 boards or councils. The councils are given a mission, mandated to meet, and must include leaders from each education sector. Other states have not addressed P-20 issues through governance structures, but rather have formed voluntary councils or other kinds of collaborations to increase student achievement across the education spectrum. Finally, there remain many states not yet focused on these issues in any systematic way.

Education Governance Models:

- One Board and Commissioner for P-20
New York, Florida, Montana, Idaho
- Legislated P-16 (or 20) Councils (separate boards for each sector)
Georgia, Maryland, Indiana, Kentucky
- Voluntary (Agency Driven) Councils (separate boards for each sector).
Oregon
- Little focus on a P-20 System
Twenty states (including Massachusetts) do not have P-20 governance initiatives.

This section examines four states—New York, Florida, Georgia, and Oregon—each of which has addressed P-20 issues in a different way. For each state, we describe the current governance structures, discuss the state's accomplishments and shortcomings in P-20 reform, and finally point out a key lesson learned from each state's experience.

Overarching P-20 Governance Structures

New York and Florida are two states with overarching structures.⁷ They have one board with one commissioner with legal responsibility for all the state's public education entities. Their missions aim high. Florida seeks to “increase the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system.”⁸ New York purports that it “...is the most complete, interconnected system of educational services in the United States.”⁹ Nevertheless, while their mission statements and organizational charts show an integrated system of education governance, these states' education sectors are not nearly as well integrated in practice. An overarching governance structure has not guaranteed cross-sector cooperation. In fact, other elements in their governance structures have led to considerable competition and conflict between and within education levels.

New York

Governance Structure

Created in 1784, the University of the State of New York (USNY)¹⁰ is governed by a Board of Regents who has legal responsibility for all of the state's public pre-K, K-12, and postsecondary institutions as well as many public cultural institutions.^{11,12} Despite the legal structure, while the Regents oversee PK-12 education, they play only a minimal role in higher education. The state's two higher education entities—the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY)—operate nearly independently from the Regents.

Progress: Alignment

New York is ahead of most states in assessment and curriculum alignment as well as articulation agreements between K-12 and postsecondary institutions. For over a century, the Regents exams have been used for college admissions. High schools in the state tailor their college prep curriculum to the Regents exams and students can graduate with a “Regents diploma” ensuring them admission to a state public higher education institution. Currently, the Regents exam is also used as a high school exit exam, although a passing score for high school graduation is considerably lower than the cut-off for college admissions.¹³

7 Montana and Idaho also have an overarching board, but do not have any current P-20 collaboration. See publications by Education Commission of the States. (2006). *P-16 Collaboration in the States*. www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/69/26/6926.pdf

8 Florida Department of Education web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/board/mission.asp>

9 University of the State of New York, State Education Department web site: <http://usny.nysed.gov/aboutusny>

10 Not to be confused with SUNY (State University of New York). USNY is the overarching entity, while SUNY is one of the state's public university systems.

11 Venezia, A., Callan, P.M., Finney, J.E., Kirst, M.W., Usdan, M.D. (2005). *The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p. 1. Cultural institutions include libraries, museums, education technologies, public television and radio, and other education-related areas. It should also be noted that New York's governance structure was not designed to improve broad college access or success to New Yorkers of the 19th century.

12 The Board of Regents is appointed by the legislature and the Regents appoint the Commissioner of Education. Each member of the Assembly and Senate has one vote, thus the (traditionally Democratic) Assembly controls Regent membership. Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p.17.

13 To place into courses, CUNY requires a Regents exam score of 75 or better in reading and writing and math. See www1.cuny.edu/academics/oaa/testing/skills-assessment/faqs.html#1. For a Regents Diploma or Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation a score of 65 or better is required. See www.emsc.nysed.gov/parents/gradreqtsfs.shtml. SUNY's admission policy seems to vary by campus.

New York also has a universal pre-kindergarten program that is housed with K-12 education.¹⁴ It is not clear if the state's governance structure encouraged the implementation of this program. However, the placement of pre-K in the USNY system (as opposed to Family and Children Services department) is no doubt related to the integrated governance structure.

Shortcomings: Data, Finance and Accountability

Aside from these assessments and articulation policies, New York has had few state-level policies or programs that connect education sectors.¹⁵ A P-20 statewide data system is still in the initial planning phase. Until recently, it did not even have a K-12 statewide data system. The record systems of SUNY and CUNY are not connected to each other. Moreover, there is no evidence of education reforms aimed at building a P-20 finance or accountability system.¹⁶

One of the obstacles to reform in New York is the state's education finance process. There is a disjuncture between New York's education policymaking process and its budget process. Since the governor doesn't appoint the Regents or commissioner, he has a limited role in the development of education policies. Nevertheless, the governor is able to yield significant power over education policy through his hold on the budget. The budget process is incremental in New York. Thus, the governor presents the budget to the legislature, who then can change it. While the governor may veto any changes, the legislature can overturn his veto. This process can—and has—put the governor and education commissioner at loggerheads, such that the whole state budgetary process is often held up by the education budget.¹⁷

Key Lesson

From New York, we learn that a governance structure is only one element in a complex education system. An overarching structure can lend itself to building connections between education levels. Undoubtedly, New York's alignment of high school and college assessment and placement standards is related to the long-standing formal connection between secondary and higher education agencies. Nevertheless, other elements in the New York system have created disconnection and stagnation. Despite its claims to be a "complete, interconnected system," there are structural conflicts between the governor, the Board of Regents and the legislature that result in political infighting and stalled reform.

Florida

Governance Structure

Florida has a similar governance structure to New York. However, unlike New York's longstanding model, Florida's structure has only been in place since 2001, when the legislature passed the K-20 education initiative instating a single education "super board." While the Department of Education (DOE) has legal responsibility for all K-20 educational institutions, in reality, it has little involvement with the state's universities. A Board of Governors oversees the university system, though each university, through its Board of Trustees, has considerable local autonomy.

14 University of the State of New York, State Education Department web site: <http://usny.nysed.gov/aboutusny>

15 New York State does have some regional K-16 activity focused on broad college access and success. College NOW, a program of New York City's schools and CUNY is the most prominent example of this. Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for New York*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p.14-15.

16 Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for New York*, p. 13-14.

17 Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for New York*, p. 7.

Progress: Alignment and Data Systems

While they pre-date the current governance structure, Florida has statewide alignment and articulation policies and programs. A standard Florida high school diploma guarantees admission to a community college.

Mechanisms are in place to accelerate a high school student's progress to a bachelor's degree through such programs as dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate. In addition, between postsecondary institutions, there are statewide articulation agreements, common course numbering and common prerequisites. This allows community college graduates to transfer easily to a four-year institution.¹⁸

Since the implementation of the K-20 Initiative, the most significant progress has been made in Florida's data system. In place for about a year, the K-20 data warehouse is an integrated cross-sector system that tracks students over time and across delivery systems. In addition, it includes information on factors such as test scores, enrollment, courses, financial aid, and demographics.¹⁹

Shortcomings: Finance

Florida's education super board did not connect sectors' financing processes. The legislative budgets remain divided along K-12 and higher education lines.²⁰ Moreover, it appears as if the new structure, at least as originally conceived, disconnected the budget process within the higher education sector.

Originally, the K-20 Initiative did not include a university governing board. It seems that the impetus for this initiative was Governor Bush's desire to eliminate Florida's higher education governing board, then called the Board of Regents. Indeed, the new structure had the K-20 Board of Education overseeing higher education institutions while each university was managed by its own Board of Trustees. Without an overarching higher education board, individual universities lobbied the legislature for new facilities and funds, without any regard for other institutions' needs or activities. To control the level of infighting within the higher education sector, a state referendum was passed in 2002 re-instating a higher education governing board (now called the Board of Governors). After some initial reluctance (the governor appoints the board and so wields considerable power over it), the board has begun to assert the governing authority granted to it and acted to curb 'pet projects' of individual institutions or their local legislators. Nevertheless, competition rather than cooperation continues to mark relationships between universities.²¹

Key Lesson

From Florida, we learn that while changing a governance structure will make a difference, it is hard to predict what that difference will be. Florida's effort to build a "seamless system" has produced a robust cross-level data system. Yet, by eliminating a structure designed to ensure coordination within a sector, the K-20 Initiative caused a spike in competition and turmoil for funds within that sector, no doubt taking time and energy away from efforts to increase student achievement.

18 Venezia, A. and Finney, J. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Florida*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p. 6-7.

19 <http://edwapp.doe.state.fl.us/doe/main.htm>. See also Venezia, A. and Finney, J. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Florida*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p. 9 and <http://www.fldoe.org/arm/default.asp>.

20 Venezia, A. et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Florida*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p. 16.

21 Marcus, J. (2006). "The 'Seamless System': Florida's Flurry of Dramatic Changes in the Governance of Public Education." *National Cross Talk*. San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

Other Governance Options: P-16 Councils

P-16 councils are another example of how states are moving in the direction of more streamlined education systems. These councils typically include executive heads from all education boards, senior agency staff and representatives from business and community. They have been created through legislation, executive order or agency initiation (voluntary). Most of the councils have neither sustained funding nor staff.²² For the most part, these councils are housed in the offices of higher education boards. Below, we look at two examples—Georgia with a legislated council, and Oregon, which has several agency-initiated boards.

Georgia

Governance Structure

Georgia's major governance structures are more typical than either New York's or Florida's. Georgia has separate entities overseeing three education levels: the Department of Early Care and Learning (0-5 years), the Department of Education (K-12), the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) and the University System of Georgia (USG).

Georgia has the oldest standing legislated P-16 state council, called the Alliance of Education Agency Heads (AEAH). Its members include commissioners from every state education agency as well as workforce development and business leaders.²³ The council's work is carried out by the P-16 office and housed in USG's Board of Regents. In addition, Georgia has a network of fifteen local P-16 councils, each of which focuses on the needs of its regions. The larger network meets several times a year to address statewide issues.²⁴

Progress: Alignment and Data

Though Georgia continues to lag behind many states (it does not even have alignment or articulation agreements), the state has made great strides in education reform since the inception of the P-16 council. In particular, it has made steady progress in improving policies for college access and success as well as teacher quality. The state has done this through small but real change in its education governance structure and the collaborative efforts of senior staff in education agencies.²⁵

The work of Georgia's P-16 state council is centered in the University's Office of P-16 Initiatives. In stark contrast to many states' under-funded, under-staffed P-16 councils, this office has a budget of over \$12 million, a staff of 50, and a plethora of cross-sector programs.²⁶

With the long-term goal of alignment of standards and assessments between high schools and higher education, most of the P-16 initiative programs are focused on teacher quality and college preparation, access and success. Teacher quality initiatives include Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics, Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement, and Double the Number and Double the Diversity of Teachers. Examples of programs centered on college preparation, access, and success include Early College, Gateway to College, the HOPE scholarship, and dual enrollment.²⁷

22 Education Commission of the States. (2006). *P-16 Collaboration in the States*. www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/69/26/6926.pdf

23 Report on Alliance of Education Heads. www.doe.k16.ga.us

24 Report on Alliance of Education Heads. www.doe.k16.ga.us

25 Venezia, A., Callan, P.M., Kirst, M.W., Usdan, M.D. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Georgia*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p. 8, 16.

26 Krueger, C. (2006). *The Progress of P-16 Collaboration in the States*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

27 See P-16 Initiative Summary on www.usg.edu/p16/Resources as well as www.usg.edu/p16/initiatives. See also Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Georgia*, p. 14-18.

The P-16 office is also working to develop an integrated P-16 database. It is working slowly—and collaboratively—on this issue to ensure the data system will have credibility with each sector.²⁸

The programmatic accomplishments discussed above are the result of the collaborative work of many people, including a supportive chancellor. However, the efforts of the Associate Vice Chancellor of P-16 Initiatives, Jan Kettlewell, have been pivotal. In Georgia, she has been referred to as “the queen of P-16.”²⁹ Even as the support of successive governors has ebbed and flowed, Kettlewell has continued to institutionalize P-16 reforms through garnering respect from all education sectors, developing her staff’s capacity, and viewing program implementation as a means to systemic change.³⁰

Shortcomings: Inconsistent Support of Governors

While some sort of P-16 state council has been in existence for well over a decade, its level of activity has varied depending on the governor’s interest. The first council, called the Education Coordinating Council, was formed by executive order in the early nineties and legislated into law in 2000. It survived and even thrived through one change in administration, but faltered with a third. In 2004, newly inaugurated Governor Perdue did not have the P-16 state council meet, despite its statutory status. However, the Office of P-16 Initiatives’ staff, along with others, continued their work and lobbied for the continuation of the state-level council. Finally, in 2006, Perdue resurrected the council, renaming it the Alliance of Education Agency Heads.³¹ Nevertheless, this inconsistent support from governors has surely slowed progress.

Key Lesson

From Georgia, we learn that a small governance change can make a difference. But like overarching changes, it does not guarantee results. For a structural change to result in systemic reforms, it must be supported by people with a clear vision, a commitment to collaboration, and a willingness to weather changes in the political climate.

Oregon

Governance Structure

Like many states, Oregon’s education entities are quite disjointed. The Department of Education oversees K-12 schools and community colleges. The Board of Higher Education governs the state’s universities. Oregon does not have a universal pre-K program and state childcare funds are distributed through the Commission on Children and Families.

To add to this fragmentation, Oregon’s K-16 work is not overseen by one council, but rather by several councils or boards. While their missions may be broad, in practice, each of these entities has a particular policy focus aimed at streamlining the state’s education system. They include the Joint Boards Working Group on Curriculum Integration (alignment), the Quality Education Commission (finance), and Interagency Integration of Data Systems (data) among others. In addition, the Oregon Business Council, a collaboration between the state’s major business organizations and elected officials, has been involved with K-16 finance and accountability systems.³²

Progress: Collaborations on All Four Policy Dimensions

Of all the states examined here, Oregon’s education governance structure is the least integrated. Yet, since the

28 See *P-16 Data Analysis and Systems* on www.usg.edu/p16/initiatives.

29 Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Georgia*, p. 9.

30 Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Georgia*, p. 16.

31 Personal communication with Michael Kirst.

32 Oregon Education Roundtable. (2006). *Survey of Effort: Oregon Education Improvement*. www.oregonroundtable.org/PDF%20Folder/Survey%20of%20Ed%20Reform%20Effort3.pdf

early nineties, policymakers in Oregon have worked together to bridge the high school and college divide, in each of the four policy dimensions.

Alignment: While not yet fully implemented, the Proficiency-Based Admissions Standards System (PASS) is a system of educational standards designed to align the Oregon University System's admission standards with their high school standards and performance measures.³³

Data: Scheduled to launch this year, the state's "Integrated Data Transfer System" is designed so that student transcripts (including information on state and national assessments) can be shared across high schools, community colleges, and universities.³⁴

Finance: The Oregon Business Council is spearheading work on the development of a new model for education finance and accountability with the goal of a "unified, transparent budget that connects all education sectors."³⁵ The Council's model analyzes all state education spending and breaks it out by cost per student by grade-level and program.

Accountability: The Oregon Business Council's model also has performance expectations for every education level and service. For example, for K-12 regular education, the performance expectation includes percent proficient as well as size of test score gains. For higher education, it includes percent completing degrees and the average employment earnings of graduates.^{36, 37}

While none of these policies is fully implemented, they provide solid evidence that K-20 integration is not just a passing fad in Oregon. These innovations have been accomplished through the voluntary collaboration of executive leaders and staff members from higher education, K-12 and the business community.³⁸ Similar to Georgia, much of the impetus for the K-16 initiatives comes from the university system through its office of K-16 alignment.³⁹

While support from the governor's office has waxed and waned, the state superintendent, the university chancellor and the commissioner of the community colleges have created a culture of collaboration. They have all agreed that the focus on aligning proficiency-based standards should continue. They have met regularly and testified on each other's behalf before the Legislature.⁴⁰

Shortcomings

Much of Oregon's efforts are still in the implementation stage and have been there for many years. It is not clear if Oregon would benefit from a change in governance structure, a more supportive governor, or some other adjustments.

33 The 10th grade standard is called the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and the 12th grade standard, the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). Neither one is currently required for graduation. However, the CIM, CAM, and PASS standards are aligned. For an overview of the content of standards and how they align, see <http://pass.ous.edu/>. For more discussion on the implementation process of Oregon's state standard, see Venezia, A. and Kirst, M. W. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Oregon*. San Jose, CA: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, p.11-13.

34 Promoting Access and Success for Students web site: <http://pass.ous.edu>

35 Note that Oregon is one of the few states looking at systemic financial reform. Other states that are often held up for their innovative financial innovations, tend to have programs aimed at helping individual students afford college—for example, Indiana's 21st Century Scholar, or dual enrollment programs.

36 Callan, P. M., et al. (2006). *Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improving College Readiness and Success*, p.11-13. Also see p. 24-25 of this report, *A Sample Unified Performance-Based Budget Preschool to Grade 20*, for an example of Oregon's plan.

37 For more on Oregon's current plans, see their Pk-20 workplan <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=85> or <http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/specialty/pre-post/k20redesignworkplan.pdf>.

38 Oregon has a Joint Board of Education, created through executive order. But it has traditionally been understaffed and rarely meets. Venezia, A. and Kirst, M. W. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Oregon*, p.6-7. See also www.ous.edu/state_board/jointb.

39 Venezia, A. and Kirst, M. W. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Oregon*, p. 24. Also see www.ous.edu/dept/k16align.

40 Venezia, A. and Kirst, M. W. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Oregon*, p. 9-10 and 17.

Key Lesson

From Oregon, we learn that progress on education reforms can be accomplished without any change in governance structure. Like Georgia, Oregon has had dedicated people with a clear vision, a commitment to collaboration, and a willingness to weather changes in the political climate. Indeed, it is possible that the fragmented education system helped create a more entrepreneurial, project-based environment where innovation thrived.⁴¹

Considerations from Case Study States

New York, Florida, Oregon and Georgia have accomplished much, yet they are also a reminder of how complex and unpredictable system change can be. As policymakers in Massachusetts consider the best strategies to advance a P-20 education system, they would be wise to bear in mind the following:

- 1. Changing governance structure alone is unlikely to increase educational achievement or access.** States known for their high student achievement and high percentage of college graduates are no more likely to have overarching governance structures, or even P-16 councils, than states with low-levels of performance. Moreover, none of the states examined here have student achievement levels—either overall or for low-income or minority students—as high as Massachusetts.⁴²
- 2. Efforts to create alignment across levels cannot come at the expense of a focus on improving performance within levels.** Each of the three state agencies that comprise the education sector in Massachusetts could operate more efficiently and effectively than they currently do. It is important that each continues to develop its own capacity to serve the children and young adults of the commonwealth as the governance debate evolves. Further, it is difficult to build alliances across levels until roles and responsibilities among same-level institutions are coherent and clear.
- 3. Significant work can begin prior to statutory change in governance.** Relationships and alliances are at least as important as governance structures. P-20 governance structures can help further reform but they are neither necessary nor sufficient for a state to make strides in education reform. Florida and New York, with their overarching structures, do not appear to be making more progress on P-20 reforms than Oregon, with its lack of P-20 governance structures, but wealth of informal collaboration.
- 4. Leadership at multiple levels is necessary for deep and sustainable reform.** Governors can serve as key catalysts in initiating a restructuring effort, but it will likely take several administrations before the goals of integration are fully realized. Hence, senior agency staff will ultimately need to serve as long-term champions of the efforts and take responsibility for enacting policy change at the ground level. Due to long standing collaborative relationships between education sectors' leaders, Georgia and Oregon continued to make progress towards their P-20 goals, even as governors turned their attention to other issues.

The states profiled in this brief provide both lessons for innovations and warnings of potential pitfalls as policymakers consider the next steps to building a P-20 education system in Massachusetts.

Implications for Massachusetts

To conclude this brief, we return to our framework, which suggests four key areas for aligning governance. In each of these areas, there is work that could be done in Massachusetts that would represent a high-leverage entry point in building system integration. Whereas the preceding section offered considerations regarding the process of change, we now indicate several areas in which the content of alignment might begin.

41 Venezia, A., et al. (2006). *The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*, p. 39. See also Venezia, A. and Kirst, M. (2006). *The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Oregon*, p. 21.

42 Education Report Card of U.S. Chamber of Commerce on www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard.

- **Alignment of High School and Post-Secondary Assessments:** Currently, passing standards for high school graduation, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), are considerably different from college standards for entering non-remedial classes. Higher education institutions most commonly require students to pass the Accuplacer exam to enter a regular course of study. Yet, nearly 60% of entering community college students need remedial coursework—and that percentage is higher for students graduating from urban public schools.⁴³ Better alignment between high school graduation and college matriculation standards is an essential starting point in an integrated system.
- **Integration of Data Systems:** In recent years, there has been progress in integrating the K-12 and higher education data systems. Students can now be tracked from the public elementary and secondary system through their attendance at a Massachusetts public college or university, using their unique student identification number (SASID). However, other fundamentals of an integrated data system have not been attempted. For example, MCAS scores do not appear on transcripts submitted as part of the college admissions process. Data collection at the early childhood level is minimal and unconnected to the K-12 system.
- **Coordination of Funding Streams:** Each state agency takes in funding from a variety of sources and distributes it to an even larger number of locales. Where possible, the state should examine points of overlap and junctures where bureaucratic processes lead to added expense and time. For example, the formation of the Department of Early Education and Care did much to align the funding streams that flow to early childhood facilities. This recent, within-state example certainly has parallels at the K-12 and postsecondary levels that should be explored.
- **P-20 Accountability:** A first step in a P-20 accountability system is mandatory public reporting of performance. Currently, all K-12 schools are required to distribute annual reports to all parents. Postsecondary institutions might be expected to conform to a similar expectation—reporting in such areas as student retention rates, job placement, and performance on graduate school admissions exams. Early childhood facilities might report on program features such as student-teacher ratios. Finally, to build a more robust accountability system, Massachusetts may want to explore a model similar to Oregon’s and develop an integrated P-20 budget with performance measures for each grade and program.

The concept of P-20 education is nascent, and research into the practices of such systems is even less established. As the commonwealth begins a dialogue on governance alignment, it should also pursue additional research into the operation of the current system. Better information on such issues as where the MCAS and the Accuplacer diverge and how K-12 and higher education funding overlap is certain to produce a better overall system.

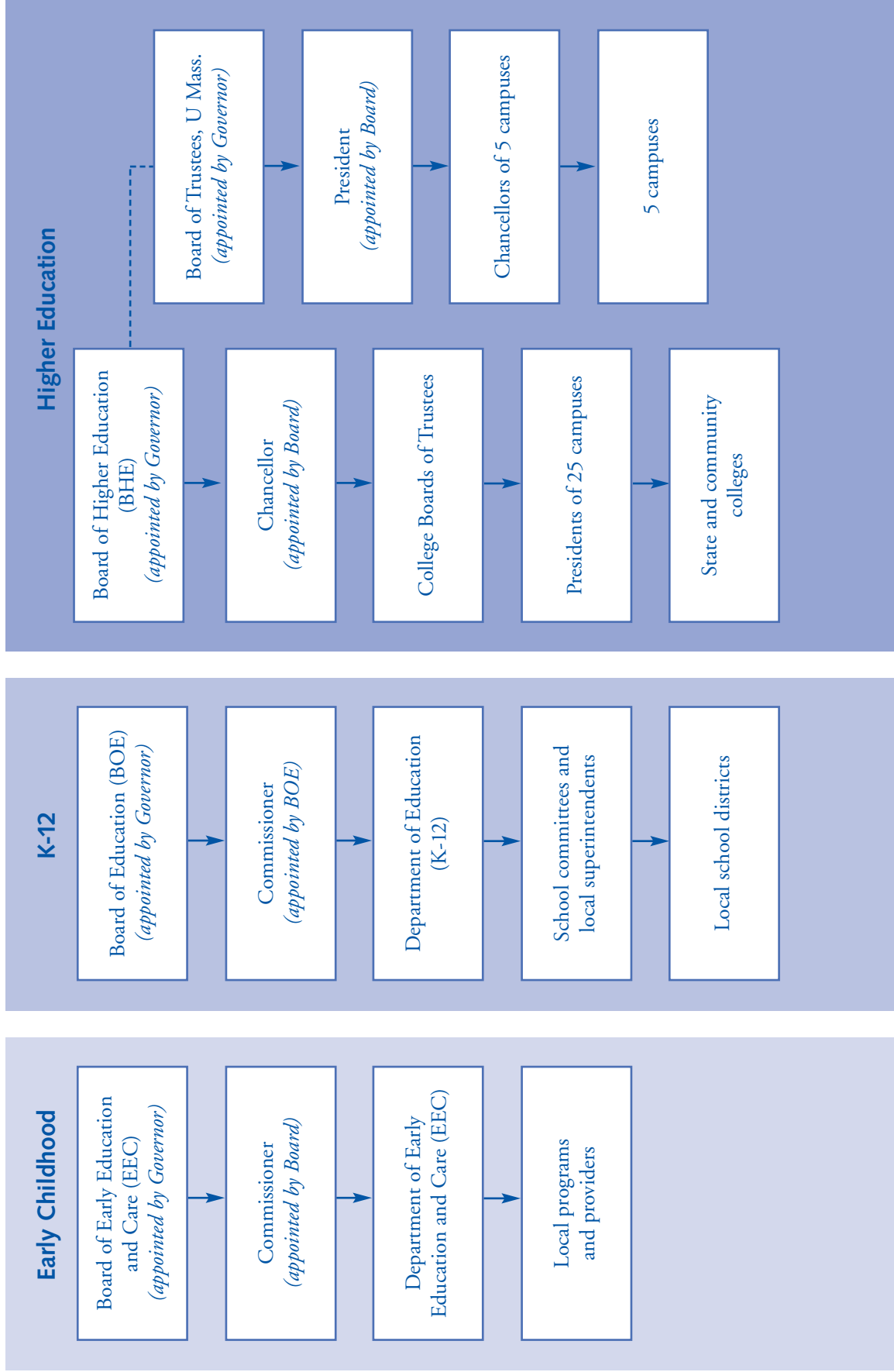
As state leaders gain clarity around the purpose and goals of systems alignment, we urge that collaboration begin in the areas most likely to generate results in the classroom. Much of the work of aligning systems within the education sector can be done through informal mechanisms. To move forward with structural reform, the state must make as much of an investment in building cross-sector relationships as it does in creating statutory changes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON P-20 ALIGNMENT

National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education	www.highereducation.org
Education Commission of the States	www.ecs.org
The Education Trust	www.edtrust.org
State Higher Education Executive Officers	www.shceo.org

⁴³ Plummer, P. F. Preparing students for college. *Boston Globe*, March 14, 2007.

Appendix A: Massachusetts' Education Governance Structure



Produced by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

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The Rennie Center's mission is to develop a public agenda that informs and promotes significant improvement of public education in Massachusetts. Our work is motivated by a vision of an education system that creates the opportunity to educate every child to be successful in life, citizenship, employment and life-long learning. Applying nonpartisan, independent research, journalism and civic engagement, the Rennie Center is creating a civil space to foster thoughtful public discourse to inform and shape effective policy. For more information, please visit: www.renniecenter.org.

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