

Position Statement on Principles Underlying Education, Prekindergarten Through Grade 12

Adopted April 6, 2005

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that there are guiding principles which form the foundation for educating all students in Connecticut's public schools, regardless of a student's age, grade level or school configuration. These principles are:

1. Schools must provide challenging and rigorous programs of study to all students to prepare them to become fully educated, responsible citizens.

Educators must take into account Connecticut's Common Core of Learning (CCL)* and the Connecticut Frameworks as they develop and implement curriculum standards, so that all students have the same knowledge and skills in critical subject areas and develop necessary aspects of character. Schools that offer challenging and rigorous programs of study to all students have a greater likelihood of their graduates attaining gainful employment, higher earnings, as well as the skills and social competencies necessary to function responsibly and successfully in a global economy. The CCL and Frameworks set forth a set of skills, competencies, discipline-based understanding and applications, as well as positive character traits, that are necessary for Connecticut's students to achieve high academic standards and to become productive members of society.

2. Schools must be places where important and relevant learning takes place.

Students must see the value of their education through a direct connection between what they learn in school and the world outside the classroom. Learning experiences must be linked to students' own lives and be seen as purposeful in order for students to apply their knowledge to other personal and social contexts. Educational technology must be integrated into learning experiences to allow students to analyze data, solve problems and communicate their knowledge to others in a variety of ways. Students must be prepared to use technology in an ethical and responsible manner. All educational experiences must be designed to increase all students' motivation to learn, ultimately ensuring the development of lifelong learners.

3. Students must be taught in the ways that are most effective for them.

Teachers must be responsive to diversity in students' learning rates and styles and offer instructional experiences designed to meet those needs. Students should be provided with opportunities to learn not only through classroom experiences but also through applied experiences beyond the school walls. Creating learning environments that are more personalized and responsive to a wide range of student needs can be accomplished by reducing class size in the early grades and creating smaller learning communities in middle and secondary schools. Additionally, schools should explore options that maximize academic learning time, such as providing flexible timeframes for instruction in certain subject areas, adding before- and after-school supplemental programs, and adjusting school schedules for students at various ages.

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* The CCL will be revised to include preschool.

4. Schools must link curriculum and instruction to ongoing assessment.

Assessment of student progress must have an impact on both teaching and learning. Frequent, high-quality assessment of student progress must be used not only to track student growth, but also to inform instruction. Students must be provided with opportunities to self-assess, monitor their own progress, and set their own personal and academic goals.

5. Schools must recognize every student as a unique and contributing member of the school community.

Students must be given opportunities to show that they are contributing, valued and trusted members of the school community. Staff members must model and encourage students to display ethical and moral behaviors that have visible and positive results for the school community. Students should be encouraged to participate in service learning at all grade levels. Also, there must be a collective sense of responsibility among staff members, so that each student is connected to at least one committed adult who guides his or her development. Caring relationships between and among students and staff members must be the norm, not the exception. Students' needs, interests and aspirations must be valued and dealt with appropriately as students mature. No student should be allowed to "slip through the cracks."

6. Schools must engage families and community members to be active and committed partners in the education of all children.

Education is a shared responsibility. The best results come when all school staff, students, parents, board members and members of the community at large work together in a true partnership based upon trust and mutual respect.

- Students play an important role in partnerships and must take responsibility for their own learning. They must have a strong desire to learn as well as a willingness to work hard to achieve their educational goals.
- Parents must foster an appreciation for learning and convey the importance of education to their children.
- All school staff must actively support students in the learning process and ensure that they meet high academic, moral and ethical standards.
- Board members and the community at large must insist that schools have the human and financial resources necessary to provide high-quality educational opportunities for all students.

Recognizing that all stakeholders are essential in closing achievement gaps, schools must provide a broad array of opportunities for families and community members to interact on behalf of students. Partnerships among all stakeholders must have as their mission success for all students and must be tailored to all stages and settings of a student's educational career.

All of Connecticut's school communities must function with a unity of purpose toward the growth, development and achievement of all students. The principles described here, derived from the CCL and Connecticut Frameworks, should be reflected in the education our students receive in all our schools.