

IN FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, ON THIS DAY, WE DECLARE OUR VISION FOR EDUCATION

*** Borrowing ideas, language, and structures from the United States Declaration of Independence ***

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to recognize the crippling effect that the current model of education has had on generations of students in Fresno and around this nation, a decent respect to the opinions of humankind requires that they should declare the beliefs and expectations which impel them to call for the reformation and restructuring of the way education is viewed and supported.

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT EVERY CHILD IS...

- ✧ Capable of learning, curious, creative, and wondrous
- ✧ Unique in their interests, experiences, talents, passions, and goals
- ✧ Striving to live – and deserving of – a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life
- ✧ On the imperfect path towards wisdom, a process strengthened by failure and persistence
- ✧ Essential to the future of our democracy
- ✧ Moving toward a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life on their own individual and unique path.

Despite this, our educational history in Fresno and around the country suggests a patient suffering of millions of young people for whom our system is not set up to honor their capacity, their goals, and their individuality. Our current system is not working for far too many young people. These young people, and by extension, our city and nation, suffer because of it. Each day our schools are not working for young people is opportunity lost.

CONSIDER THE FACTS...

- ✧ In Fresno Unified, more than 75 percent of students are not ready for the next grade in math and nearly 2 out of every 3 students are off track in English.¹
- ✧ These readiness rates – as is also true across the nation – are worse for traditionally disadvantaged groups, including: African-American, Latino, Southeast Asian, low-income, special education, and English Learner students.²
- ✧ California will have a shortfall of 1.1 million college graduates by 2030 if trends in schooling do not change.³
- ✧ Only 11 percent of Americans report that they are thriving in all aspects of their well-being. More than 1 out of every 6 report they are thriving in none.⁴
- ✧ Students top three words to describe their high school experience in 2016 were “tired”, “stressed” and “bored”.⁵
- ✧ A growing body of research recognizes the critical need for a whole new set of academic skills and critical skills to succeed in work and in life that are not currently addressed in school.⁶
- ✧ Between 400 million and 800 million workers worldwide may be displaced by automation by 2030, requiring the addition of whole new skills for new kinds of employment.⁷
- ✧ The core “factory model” of school was created more than 100 years ago and remains largely unchanged in its core components.⁸

WITH HOPE AND OPTIMISM FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CITY, WE PLEDGE TO EACH OTHER OUR SUPPORT FOR A BOLD VISION FOR FRESNO SCHOOLS.

We have a vision where every young person in Fresno is able to lead a happy and fulfilling life...

- ✧ Academically prepared with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to thrive in the 21st century and to be able to make a variety of choices about their future
- ✧ Allowed to discover, and follow, their passions
- ✧ Loved and able to love others
- ✧ Connected to a community and engaged in our democratic process
- ✧ Healthy and joyful

If this vision is to become a reality, it calls for a complete re-thinking of the purpose and structure of school, one that puts learners at the center of schooling. We, together as a community of educators, students, parents, and community allies, must design new public systems, schools, and learning environments organized around new principles that:

- ✧ Hold, and deliver on, high expectations for all students
- ✧ Develop academic, social-emotional, and other skills critical for success in work and in life, with access to a depth and breadth of academic and extracurricular experiences
- ✧ Develop active, empowered learners rather than passive recipients of knowledge
- ✧ Develop flexible and personalized learning environments where learning can happen in different places, at different times, and in different ways, inside and outside of school
- ✧ Cultivate engaged and informed citizens, ready to actively participate in our democracy
- ✧ Empower educators who drive solutions and craft coherent school designs to best meet the needs of their students
- ✧ Include families and caregivers as essential partners in the work

This will require a mindset shift away from factory-model schools, which were built for a different era, a different purpose, a different nation. No longer can we afford traditional schools that treat most teachers and students like replaceable cogs in a wheel. No longer can we tolerate structures that replicate and perpetuate, rather than interrupt, inequity. No longer can we afford a one-size-fits-most approach. No longer can we afford to wait.

Our hope is that the Board of Education and other leaders will embrace this community vision for Fresno public schools as their own and collaborate with our community to lead all of our schools toward this vision. We hope you will pledge your support to ours as we all move forward together for our students, our city, and our future.

¹ California Department of Education: <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2017/Search>

² The Education Trust: <https://edtrust.org/resource/the-state-of-education-for-african-american-students/> and <https://edtrust.org/resource/the-state-of-education-for-latino-students/>

³ PPIC Report: <http://www.ppic.org/publication/will-california-run-out-of-college-graduates/>

⁴ Gallup Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/HobsonsInc/aiming-higher-education-at-great-jobs-great-lives>

⁵ Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence: <http://ei.yale.edu/what-we-do/emotion-revolution-student/>

⁶ National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine: <https://www.nap.edu/read/13398/chapter/1>

⁷ McKinsey Global Institute: <https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/future-of-organizations-and-work/what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages>

⁸ Sir Ken Robinson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U&feature=youtu.be>