CHOOSING OUR FUTURE

A refreshed and renewed community call to action to transform Fresno’s public schools
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“We can choose to engage constructively and collaboratively to build a strong educational foundation for our children and our community or we can sit on the sidelines and point fingers while the problems remain unsolved. Either way, we are Choosing our Future.”

Authors of Choosing Our Future, Fresno, CA, 2005

As our city’s largest education system emerges from a time of transition, it is time to refresh and renew our commitment to our students in Fresno Unified, and to once again “Choose our Future.”

Since 2005, when the original Choosing Our Future was written, there have been significant improvements in Fresno Unified’s financial health and operations capacity. While some promising academic gains were made - notably in graduation rates and A-G completion rates - strong concerns remain.

There are still too many students, especially students from our most historically underserved communities, who are far from prepared to succeed and thrive. All the while, the world that our graduates are walking into is changing rapidly and in ways that require us to rethink how one is prepared to succeed in this new world.

Over the past year, GO Public Schools Fresno has led a community-driven process to facilitate a refresh of Choosing Our Future, in order to:

1. Provide a robust and transparent accounting of how we have grown, where we still need to grow and what has changed about the world our graduates are entering.
2. Engage our community (families, educators, and community allies) in setting a vision for what our schools need to look like in the future.
3. Create policy recommendations that help guide the district’s work to transform our public schools and dramatically improve student outcomes and readiness for the 21st century.

On the following pages you will find our updated Choosing Our Future report, with the VISION for where we want to go, the STATUS of where we are, and the PROPOSALS to get us there.
OVER THE PAST 9 MONTHS...

500+ Choosing Our Future participants across the city

30+ house parties across all 7 high school regions

100+ one-to-one conversations

4 public convenings with 200+ attendees

53 Family Leadership parent fellows representing 34 schools

19 Transformers educator fellows from 13 schools

...SHAPED A VISION AND PATH FORWARD FOR FRESNO’S LEARNERS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WE HOLD A VISION WHERE EVERY YOUNG PERSON IN FRESNO IS ABLE TO LEAD A HAPPY AND FULFILLING LIFE…

- Academically prepared with 21st century skills
- Able to make a variety of choices about their future
- Allowed to discover and follow their passions
- Healthy and joyful
- Connected and engaged with their communities
- Loved and able to love others
IN FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, ON THIS DAY, WE DECLARE
OUR VISION FOR EDUCATION

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. Despite best efforts, 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
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.

Hundreds of Fresnans have already pledged their support as champions for this vision.

Add your name and join the movement at gopublicschools.fresno.org/join-choosing-our-future
THREE BIG CHALLENGES

1. Too few of our students are ready to thrive.

2. The future will require new skills and even more education.

3. The core school model has not changed in over 100 years.
We have done our best to ground our analysis in humility and honesty about the challenges we face as a community.

At the same time, we are fiercely committed to tackling these challenges head on, and believe that if we do so together, there is no challenge we cannot overcome.

With this in mind, our community must begin the journey toward our vision for Fresno learners in the only place we can, that is, where we are today.
Too few of our students are ready to succeed and thrive

Graduation does not equal college and career readiness

Over the last few years, our community has celebrated our improved graduation rates, and rightfully so. The growth in Fresno Unified’s graduation rates is almost double the state average over the last five years. Despite these gains, however, we still have huge portions of our high school graduates who are not graduating with the skills they need to be successful in college or career.

The story of Fresno Unified’s graduation rates over the last six years is one of strong and steady improvement. Overall, our schools have increased their graduation rates by 16.2%, far outpacing the state. The results are even more dramatic among a number of historically underserved student groups, in which graduation rates increased by:

- 17.8% for economically disadvantaged students.
- 24.4% for English Language Learners.
- 22.9% for students with special needs.

Although work remains to ensure we are closing the gaps for our English Language Learners and students with special needs, we can still be proud of our growth to date in Fresno Unified.

While graduation rates have improved in Fresno Unified, we must dig deeper to look at other data that helps us better understand whether our young people are prepared to thrive—whether they choose to pursue a college education or directly enter the workforce. Defining what it truly takes to be successful in college or in a career is difficult, but almost everyone agrees that to be successful in either, a young person must possess basic readiness in English and Math.

Graduation does not equal college and career readiness.
STUDENT GROUP DEFINITIONS

Throughout this report, we reference particular student subgroups and have provided these definitions for clarity.

- **Economically disadvantaged:**
  Students who meet the eligibility requirements for the Free and Reduced Priced Meals program.

- **English Learner:**
  Students who have a primary home language other than English and have been identified through a state approved assessment to lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in the school’s regular instructional programs.

- **Students with special needs:**
  Students who have been identified as having an eligible disability and needing special education and related services.

- **LCFF targeted subgroups:**
  Students classified as English learners (EL), meet income requirements to receive a free or reduced-price meal (FRPM), foster youth, or any combination of these factors (unduplicated count).

- **Historically underserved:**
  This broad category includes students who are from an LCFF targeted subgroup as well as from other subgroups such as Latino, African-American, Southeast Asian and students with special needs.
Preparing our students for the college and the career of their choice starts in the early grades. If our children are not reading and doing math on grade level in the 3rd and 8th grades, they will face an uphill battle to reach grade level by the time they finish high school.

Despite so much of the dedicated and positive work of Fresno Unified staff members and teachers, Fresno Unified continues to lag peers from across the state, often by large margins. Despite averaging roughly 3% gains each of the last two years, we still have huge numbers of our young people who are off grade level and will not be prepared for the next grade, or to thrive beyond high school.

Our students are behind and not growing quickly enough

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When we look at graduation rates and 11th grade test scores together we see a troubling theme: There is a huge gap (65.3%) between the percent of students who are graduating and those who are graduating with the basic readiness to succeed in college or career.
The stark reality is that 2 out of every 3 students in Fresno Unified are not on grade level in English and more than 3 out of every 4 students in Fresno Unified are not on grade level in Math.

Of particular note:

- 4% of English Language Learners are on grade level in English. For 2017, an English Language Learner in California was 3x more likely to be proficient than an English Language Learner in Fresno Unified.

- 5% of students with an identified special need are on grade level in English and Math. For 2017, a Special Education student in California was 2x more likely to be proficient than a Special Education student in Fresno Unified.

- 8.5% of African-American students and 12% of Latino students were deemed “ready” or “conditionally ready” for college math in 2017.
These math scores impact real students today. From the senior class of 2018:

- 2,408 (of 2,752) Latino seniors are not ready for college.
- 424 (of 537) Asian seniors are not ready for college.
- 370 (of 400) African-American seniors are not ready for college.
- 300 (of 417) White seniors are not ready for college.

The vast majority of Fresno Unified seniors apply to college with over half of graduates enrolling in an institute of higher education. Research has shown that students who enter college unprepared for college-level classes pay an extra $3,000 on average for remedial coursework and are 74% more likely to dropout. This does not just affect low-income students - 45% of first-year college students taking remediation are from middle and upper income families.16

Our students are being outperformed by students in similar districts

Almost all of our peer districts – most of which are similarly sized school districts with high proportions of vulnerable student subgroups – outperform our students in reading and math.

While some other districts have similar rates to those of Fresno Unified, a handful of districts show what is possible. The chart below shows some promising results from other large California districts, most notably Garden Grove, San Francisco, and Long Beach.

When 2 out of 3 students are not on grade level in English and 3 out of 4 students are not on grade level in Math, we cannot stay in the same cycle and expect different results.
In fact, for students who had been enrolled in the district for over a decade, over 83% were not on grade level in math and 60% in English, highlighting that even after 10 years, despite the best efforts of many educators, the system had still not come up with a way to grow those students enough to reach proficiency.

As Albert Einstein said: “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” Changes that will improve these outcomes must happen school by school and classroom by classroom.

From 2016 to 2017, 34 schools saw declines in test scores in either English or Math. During that same time frame we saw some shining examples at individual school sites that leave us hopeful. In almost every one of these examples educators were provided with an ability to create a unique learning environment to better meet the needs of individual students.

- More than 70% of students at Phillip J. Patiño School of Entrepreneurship were deemed “ready” or “conditionally ready” for college English.

- Two elementary schools – Burroughs Elementary and McCardle Elementary – increased test scores by more than 10% in English and Math from 2016 to 2017. More than two dozen schools increased test scores by more than 10% over a two-year timeline.

- Dailey Elementary Charter School was the only public school without entrance requirements to ensure that more than 3 out of every 4 students were on grade level in Math (78.5%) and English (85.3%).

In fact, for students who had been enrolled in the district for over a decade, over 83% were not on grade level in math and 60% in English, highlighting that even after 10 years, despite the best efforts of many educators, the system had still not come up with a way to grow those students enough to reach proficiency.
In 2013, California began a transition to a new education funding system called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), with the expressed goal to provide more equitable funding to districts that were serving large populations of students from targeted subgroups. For every student who is low-income, an English Language Learner and/or a foster youth, the district receives additional money. This has meant a significant increase in per student funding for Fresno Unified, which serves a high concentration of students in one or more LCFF targeted subgroups.

We conducted an analysis to identify Fresno Unified schools that were serving high concentrations of students in LCFF targeted subgroups and were outperforming schools with similar students across the state. We found several bright spots where local schools had proficiency rates above their expected performance, given the number of students they had in an LCFF targeted subgroup.

We know that many of our Fresno Unified students and their families struggle with the very real and complex challenges associated with living in a city with some of the highest rates of concentrated poverty in the nation. A growing body of research on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on a young person’s development and readiness makes clear that this work is of critical importance. Much work has already begun to address the issues facing our community through strong investments in the work of the district’s Department of Prevention and Intervention, and cross-sector initiatives such as the Cradle to Career Partnership (C2C) and the Fresno County Health Improvement Program (FCHIP), to name a few. In order to change outcomes for kids, this work must continue.

What this demonstrates is that while even these schools still have a long way to go to ensure every student is growing towards proficiency, our local schools are fully capable of changing the odds for our students, no matter what background they come from.

We hold no illusions about the difficulties we face; if solving this issue were easy, we would have done it long ago. However, we know it is possible.
The future will require new skills and even more education.

Job markets are dramatically shifting

There is a growing fear that robots and automation will decimate millions of jobs across the country. The graph below, adapted from a 2013 study by Carl Benedikt Fray and Michael A. Osborne, shows just how dramatic those shifts could be in the next 10-20 years.

The Future Will Require New Skills and Even More Education

Notes: Job categories shown are the ten highest by expected job loss of the 702 job categories assigned a probability of computerization in the Future of Employment (2013). Computerization estimated to occur within "a decade or two".

While some disagree on the scope of the problem, what everyone does agree on is that computerization and automation will lead a growing number of jobs to be replaced with different types of jobs requiring different skills. The jobs of yesterday could be filled by high school graduates with minimal advanced skills, while the jobs of tomorrow will require that prospective employees have significantly more advanced skills to find success in the job market. As the graph above shows, automation and other developments will reduce the number of jobs that just require a high school degree – cashiers, waiters, drivers – while jobs that require a college degree and advanced skills will be mostly intact, if not more abundant.
More complex skills will be needed to compete for future jobs

The graph below shows trends in the types of tasks that workers in the United States perform on a day-to-day basis. Jobs that require non-routine analytic skills (forming and testing a hypothesis, for instance) or non-routine interpersonal skills (working on teams, for instance) have risen in importance from 1960 to 2009, and all indications point to those skills being even more important today. Jobs that require routine skills or manual skills are being automated, and thus are less demanded by today’s workplace.

This means Fresno students don’t just need to be proficient in reading, writing, and math, but in a whole new set of skills, too. The McKinsey Global Institute asserts that “workers of the future will spend more time on activities that machines are less capable of, such as managing people, applying expertise, and communicating with others. They will spend less time on predictable physical activities, and on collecting and processing data, where machines already exceed human performance. The skills and capabilities required will also shift, requiring more social and emotional skills, and more advanced cognitive capabilities, such as logical reasoning and creativity.”

80% of future U.S. jobs are estimated to be middle- or high-skilled roles requiring post-secondary training. 6

65% of children entering school today will eventually be employed in jobs that haven't yet been created.18

Our schools today are not preparing every child in English and in Math. Even if they were, though, we would still have much work to do.

There are strong examples of schools moving to build stronger base skills and new skills across the country, and right here in our own city. The question for all of us to consider is, “how do we ensure that all of our students are not just prepared for the jobs available today, but the jobs of tomorrow?”
Schools were designed for a purpose that is no longer relevant

As we enter a new age – one littered with new challenges for so many young people and flush with new opportunities for all of our graduates – it is imperative that we continue to determine how to best use the 15,000 hours our children spend in school to help each student unlock their full potential.

The 20th century education

Schooling of the 20th century served to help young people adjust to accelerating industrialization and to build skills to meet the workforce demands of the time. The United States experienced a surge in manufacturing and production in the early part of the 20th century, and schools were expected to prepare students for employment opportunities in the growing number of factories that were part of new urban living. As such, education followed a simple formula: a group of closely-aged students followed a standardized curriculum paired with matching assessments. While this model served its purpose to meet 20th century needs, it has remained virtually unchanged over the past 100 years. When we look at our schools of today - while some things may look different at first glance - underneath the hood we still see the same underlying pattern, that can be described as “one teacher, teaching one subject to one class of one age using one curriculum at one pace, in one classroom for one hour.”
The 21st century education

Our students are part of a rapidly changing world. For our students to be successful in college, in their careers, and in life, their education and skills must stay relevant. Yet, while some schools and/or classrooms have begun to see changes, far too many remain tied to the “paradigm of one.” As shown here, many modern classrooms may have new technology - tablets, computers, digital projections - but remain stuck in many of the paradigms of more traditional schooling.

Technology has created new social and economic conditions that require our students to be able to communicate and function on a local and global level, as well as “absorb, analyze and apply content.” In the forty years from 1960-2000, the number of “computer specialist” jobs increased from 12,000 to 2,496,000. In just the last 15 years - from 2000 to 2015 - another 1.375 million computer-related jobs in have been created.

Beyond changes in the labor market and economy, we are also in a time of rapid acceleration in social interconnectedness and changes in the natural environment. Our students will be grappling with increasingly complex social, technological, environmental and political challenges that will require increasingly complex skills that go beyond the current basics. In this new world, an inherited, factory school model will not help our students learn the skills needed to succeed in the quickly approaching future.
THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Redefine what success looks like in the 21st century and commit to every child graduating prepared to succeed.

2. Empower students and educators with individualized data to ensure every child is making adequate annual progress toward graduating prepared to succeed.

3. Create an Innovation Zone to design and support transformational school models.
A bold vision - and the stark reality of how students are doing today and how the world of tomorrow is changing - call for courageous action.

To realize our vision, we must reimagine the purpose and structure of school and design new public systems that put students at the center of schooling.

We must be willing to move forward in ways that allow educators and our community to develop innovative practices and beliefs in every classroom, school building, district office, and neighborhood across the city.

“\nWe cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.  

Albert Einstein\n"
WHY WE CHOSE TO START WITH THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

These three recommendations are just the beginning of a long-term district-wide transformation. As we developed our three policy recommendations, we worked hard to stay true to some key guiding principles.

Do fewer things. Do them excellently.
Our intention was never to create a comprehensive list of all things that should and could be done, but instead our charge has been to give the most high-leverage ideas. We worked hard to keep our recommendations high-level and straight-forward so we could be focused and work to pursue these policy goals with excellence.

There is no need to recreate the wheel.
We worked hard to understand what the district is already doing well so we didn’t suggest policies already in place. We also wanted to learn from what some great districts and thought-leaders from across the country are doing. In all of our recommendations we have based the recommendation on smart work happening in schools in other parts of the country.

Work to empower educators and students to innovate across the district.
We know that to truly change the system we had to ensure every student and teacher was empowered to innovate and thrive. While only one policy recommendation includes the word “innovation,” each policy recommendation was developed to encourage and support innovative practices and work. Each of our policy recommendations creates opportunities for meaningful innovation: innovation around our end-goals, around how to meet individual students’ needs and about how to structure a school to better meet the needs of all students.

Schools aren’t broken. They’re doing exactly what they were designed to do.
For months we have heard talk of broken schools or a broken school system. We don’t believe that our schools are broken. As a guiding principle, we believe that every system is perfectly designed for the results it gets. If we want different results, then, we need to redesign the system itself. We worked hard to develop policy recommendations that recognized this principle.

We should not build schools - or school systems - to meet the average, since there is no such thing as an “average” student.
Todd Rose’s book, The End of Average, deeply influenced our understanding of how individuals are each unique, and how our efforts to create schools for a hypothetical “average” student actually limits the potential of all students. We agree with Rose that there is no such thing as “average” when it comes to individual students or schools. Each child is unique in their strengths, passions and path. With this in mind, we worked to develop policy recommendations that focused on individual students and individual needs and did not mandate one way to solve problems for all students or for all schools.
Our definition of success must change. What is needed to be successful in college and the workplace is changing rapidly, as is our societal definition of what success even means.

It used to be enough to graduate from high school. With a high school diploma and strong work-ethic a young person could get a job and provide for their family. Our schools were built for this economic system, in which many people went to work in factories or other jobs that did not require higher-level skills beyond high school.

Today, our economy looks very different, and only continues to change more rapidly. With a new workforce, a more interconnected world and increasingly fast-paced change, what it means to thrive and be successful must also change.

We must ensure more students are prepared for the workforce of tomorrow, which means more advanced skills, different skills, and the ability to learn new skills on their own. We must set a new bar for success for the 21st century - one that prepares every child to be college and career-ready and one that prepares them to live happy and fulfilling lives in this brave new world.

Adding to this is the growing awareness that our previous definition of success - one built on getting money and power - is also changing. Fresnans made clear that preparing more students to graduate college and have choices in the workforce is but one area that our community values, although a critical one. We also want our graduates to be passionate, connected, loved, healthy and ready to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.
NEXT STEPS
AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

To drive toward this policy...

1. The Fresno Unified Board of Education directs the Superintendent and staff to refine a graduate profile that defines 21st century success and will describe the ideal outcomes for all Fresno Unified graduates.
   a. Strong initial work has been done with the 2016 Graduate Profile, but more work is needed to strengthen stakeholder engagement, specifically parents, students and educators.
   b. This graduate profile should include many of the features included in the community vision from this report. See the call-out box on the next page for some strong initial thinking and research.

2. The Board adopts this Graduate Profile, and in so doing, publicly commits to ensuring all Fresno Unified graduates meet the outcomes identified in the Graduate Profile.

3. The Board directs the Superintendent and staff to create a set of clear metrics that will be used to report on whether students are graduating exhibiting the outcomes identified in the graduate profile.
   a. These metrics should be prioritized for clarity and simplicity.
   b. There will most likely be some areas we value and believe are key measures of 21st century success, but we cannot yet measure.

4. The Superintendent and staff create a reporting plan for how to share this information with students, parents, schools and the Board.
   a. Individual reports should be shared with families, students and schools, and aggregated summaries should be shared publicly with the Board, on at least an annual basis.

5. Preparing Fresno Unified graduates for 21st century success is only one piece of the puzzle. The Board should direct the Superintendent to continue working with our local higher education partners - State Center Community College District, CSU Fresno and UC Merced - to ensure that more students who show up are graduating in a timely fashion. For examples of what this entails, see below.
Additionally, Fresnans want their children to be happy, to be passionate about what they do, to have ample choices, to be financially secure, to be surrounded by people who cared for them and to be a part of something bigger.

Their responses aligned with the 2010 findings of Tom Rath and Jim Harter, laid out clearly in their book *Wellbeing*. 28

In thinking about the opportunities of tomorrow, many Fresnans were dismayed about the shifting workforce that will require a multitude of new and changing skills. A new set of 21st century skills and behaviors are required – such as the ability to work in teams, to ask questions rather than simply answering the questions of others, or to understand and manage their emotions.

This feedback from Fresnans is aligned to some great new reports that detail new skills, behaviors and dispositions needed for success:

- The *Graduate Profile* shown here outlines some of these same measures of success.
- The *Partnership for 21st Century Skills* framework shows the importance of “soft skills” like collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking.
To drive toward more college graduates and preparedness for 21st century success, our higher education partners have a critical role in ensuring more students are prepared to graduate from their institutions in a timely fashion. Below are critical issues and key steps to help increase the number of college graduates.

**Course Placement**

Remedial course placement has a severe and negative consequence on a student’s progress toward graduation. K-12 institutions must ensure most students show up ready, but higher education has a role to play too.

1. All higher education partners should use multiple measures to assess a student’s readiness for entry-level courses, ensuring no students are improperly placed in non-credit bearing math or English courses if they could succeed in a credit-bearing course.

**Academic and Social Supports for Historically Underserved Student Populations**

All of our local higher education partners are serving large populations of historically underserved students. For instance, nearly 7 out of 10 Fresno State students are first-generation college-going students. Historically underserved groups - first-generation college-going, African-American, Southeast Asian, Latino and low-income students - are less likely to graduate.

2. All higher education partners should create more evidence-based counseling and academic supports targeted toward historically underserved populations in order to support students to succeed academically in rigorous college courses and to increase students’ sense of belonging.

**Community College Transfers**

Students who successfully transfer from community college to a four-year college graduate at incredibly high rates. At Fresno State, more than 80% of transfer students graduated, versus just 55% of students who enrolled as freshmen. But, too few community college students are able to earn the appropriate credits to transfer.

3. The State Center Community College District should identify and address the barrier(s) to students being transfer eligible.

**Capacity at 4-Year Institutions**

Fresno State no longer has the capacity to enroll every eligible applicant. This means they are turning away prepared transfer students and incoming freshman each year. If we intend to help more students graduate from 4-year colleges, we must increase Fresno State’s capacity to serve more students.

4. We must work collectively to identify state funding to increase Fresno State’s capacity to serve every qualified student who applies.
Each Fresno Unified student has unique strengths, needs, passions, and interests and each has a unique starting place based on their current readiness. Yet, the end goal is common - we want them all to graduate prepared for 21st century success. In a world where 80% of future US jobs are estimated to be middle- or high-skilled roles requiring post-secondary training, our vision for 21st century success must include that all students are ready to pursue higher education, whether they go to college or directly into a career.

As of now, the clearest way to know whether a student is prepared to pursue higher education is to measure whether they are deemed college ready on 11th grade state tests. On the 11th grade test, students who are deemed “college ready” or “conditionally ready” have the skills required to take entry-level college courses. The work to ensure students are college ready does not start in 11th grade; it must happen throughout every year of school. It require that students, parents and educators have a clear sense of whether each individual student is making adequate progress toward being college ready. Measuring progress toward being college ready cannot be trusted to grades and report cards, as almost 50% of students who are earning an “A” in math class in Fresno Unified aren’t actually ready for the next grade. We must create individualized data and annual goals that truly measure a student’s progress toward being deemed college ready. We know that this type of individualized data will empower students and educators to make the changes necessary to ensure more students are graduating ready for 21st century success.

We believe in the capacity of every child. While there are many things standing in the way of success for many Fresno students, the best path to success is growing an adequate amount each year.
To drive toward this policy...

1. The Board directs the Superintendent and staff to create a new data tool (the “trajectory tool”) and expectations for how this data will be used to support increased student achievement to leverage the power of this tool.
   a. A strong trajectory tool must be socialized and vetted with all relevant stakeholders - students, parents, teachers and school leaders - to make sure it is understandable, useful, and valid.
   b. A strong trajectory tool must include, at a minimum:
      i. A student’s current readiness
      ii. The end goal of college readiness
      iii. An annual goal, that if met, would ensure the student is on pace to meet or exceed their end goal
      iv. Interim benchmark goals, if possible

2. The Board publicly commits to 100 percent of students meeting their individual annual goal and directs the Superintendent and staff to measure, and report, our progress toward this goal.
   a. For students and families, provide updates on individual goals and progress along with report cards and/or other relevant updates on student progress and performance.
   b. For educators, provide updates on individual goals and progress prior to the beginning of each school year, and if applicable, after interim assessments.
   c. For the Board, provide aggregated summaries alongside overall proficiency data to measure both total proficiency and growth toward proficiency. Provide this information annually, and if applicable and appropriate, after interim assessments.

3. The Superintendent and staff identify how to best collect and share learning from “bright spots” - schools and classrooms showing strong performance in students meeting their individual annual goals.
   a. Work with existing “bright spot” teachers and school leaders to document and share best practices with their colleagues.
   b. Work with teachers to identify additional actionable data needed to ensure more students are meeting individual annual goals.
With the fierce urgency that comes from understanding where our students are today and what the world will demand of them tomorrow, many teachers and schools will work to innovate on existing practices to better prepare students for 21st century success.

Some will inevitably come up against the fact that what they most want is the ability to innovate on the entire system, not just their individual work in the classroom. Whether they are driven to this by a desire to revamp a master schedule, or to prioritize and use time differently, or merely because they know that a whole school moving together could move much faster, there will be those who are excited about changing not just their individual classroom practice, but their entire school model.

For these teachers and school leaders, we must create a pilot Innovation Zone, where educators are allowed to develop reinvisioned school models so that we can further accelerate student growth towards 21st century success. In a large system, the best way to create bottom-up innovation is by empowering those closest to the problem and supporting them to think and act in new ways. A pilot Innovation Zone will do this by providing academic and financial flexibility to school sites, paired with higher levels of accountability.

This work will require explicitly student-centered design approaches, and will require undertaking considerable effort to rethink the purpose and structure of schools. The principals and teachers who must lead this work already exist in our schools. While we do not want to be prescriptive about what an Innovation Zone is, we do have clarity that it is not necessarily: a specific feeder pattern, a way to mandate change at our neediest schools, a way to address our most successful schools, an exclusive magnet option, nor an experiment only deemed worthwhile for a particular type of student.
While there is no one type of Innovation Zone school, examples of transformed school models exist around the country. Each has made great leaps in learning from a traditional model to a 21st century model. Transcend, a national non-profit dedicated to accelerating innovation in the core model of school, has created the 8 Great Leaps for Learning that provide a high-level overview of how a transformed school model might leap forward.

Some schools in Fresno have already begun this work, with Patino Entrepreneurship High School, Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART), Design Science Middle College High School and Dailey Charter as shining examples.

Across the country, schools have begun this transformation. For examples of what transformed school models look like, visit Education Reimagined's Profiles or Transcend's Collection of Transformed School Models.

No two Innovation Zone schools will look exactly alike, but they will remain district-run schools subject to state law and Fresno Unified’s collective bargaining agreements.

8 GREAT LEAPs FOR LEARNING

We believe that to prepare all children to thrive in and transform the 21st century, Eight Great Leaps are needed to move from old school models to what the 21st century demands of education. These leaps serve not as prescriptions. Rather, they are provocations for communities to consider and ever-evolving hypotheses that animate our approach to design.

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To drive toward this policy...

1. The Superintendent and Board create a pilot Innovation Zone and provide initial funding for the creation of an Innovation Zone team.
   a. Innovation Zone schools will gain academic and financial flexibility in exchange for more accountability for improved outcomes, with a focus on supporting transformational school models.
   b. The Innovation Zone team should have a direct report to the Superintendent with a Cabinet-level position and other appropriate staff.
   c. Each major department should have an Innovation Zone team liaison, who is freed up to meet regularly with the Innovation Zone team.
   d. The Superintendent should direct all staff to support their work, even when it challenges established operational practices.

2. The Superintendent and Innovation Zone team work with appropriate staff to negotiate the specific flexibilities to be provided to Innovation Zone schools.
   a. Work with the academics and technology teams to determine flexibility around curriculum, assessments, scheduling, professional learning, coaching, support, use of time for teachers and principals, and technology.
   b. Work with the finance team to determine how additional site-level flexibility can be provided. This must be balanced with the need to be fiscally responsible and operate a school within a district setting that has some shared costs.
   c. Work with HR and other teams to ensure appropriate control over hiring for all staff at Innovation Zone sites.

3. The Superintendent and Innovation Zone team determine a process by which schools are selected for the Innovation Zone.
   a. The best practice of other districts suggests that the main factor to consider is the strength and readiness of staff (principals and teachers) to create an innovative school model.
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

Chinese Proverb

If the Board of Education wants to move toward these policy recommendations, there are some clear and immediate next steps. We have attempted to identify initial actions below.

**SPRING & SUMMER 2018**

- Embrace the vision and adopt a resolution supporting the recommendations of Choosing Our Future.
- Approve a budget that includes funding for an Innovation Zone team.
- Staff time allocated for Policy Recommendations 1, 2 and 3.
- Develop and present a plan on implementing all three recommendations.

There will continue to be many additional steps next school year and beyond. GO Fresno - and our network of families, educators and community allies - stands at the ready to continue to support District leaders to make these bold changes a reality for our students, families and educators.
There are so many people to thank for their tireless work and effort over the last nine months that we certainly can’t thank everyone and will no doubt unintentionally leave some people out. We are so grateful to the people who have made our work this year possible and want to spend some time personally thanking them.

We must start with the tireless work of the GO Staff and Leadership Council, who have driven the work and the direction for months on end. Thank you to GO Fresno staff members Diego Arambula, MaryJane Skjellerup, Karina Reyes, and Ray Gonzalez. Thank you as well to our Local Leadership Council members, who provide leadership, guidance and wisdom: Danielle Bergstrom, Lindsay Callahan, Coreen Campos, Nicole Jones, Jesse Molina, Yammilette Rodriguez, Corrie Spees Sands, Vincent Harris.

We also owe so much to the original authors of Choosing Our Future from 2005, but especially to those who have engaged with us so meaningfully as we have taken on this endeavor this past year. Thank you to Pete Weber, Deborah Nankivell, Nancy Richardson, and Sarah Woolf.

To the district leaders and staff who have engaged with us, participated in our events and helped us to better understand the current realities and work being done, we’re deeply thankful. A special thank you to Superintendent Bob Nelson for seeing the need for this important work and being a constant champion for children. Thank you also to members of Cabinet and staff who supported us throughout the process, including: Adam Bonilla, Kim Mecum, Ruthie Quinto, Melissa Dutra, and Kurt Madden.

To the individuals and organizations who helped us host house parties throughout the fall, we could not have engaged more than 500 Fresnans in such individual and personal conversations without your support. Thank you to: Barrios Unidos, Californians for Justice, Youth Leadership Institute, Every Neighborhood Partnership, Kevin and Stacey Williams, Juan and Amy Arambula, Stone Soup Fresno, Chandelier Arambula, Focus Forward, Alan and Judie Pierrot, Abel Ruiz, Michele Darchuck, Nasreen and Dominic Johnson, Taylor Skjellerup, Andrew Fell, Estela Acebedo Gonzalez, Francisca Damaso, Adela Moreno, Araceli Sanabria, Maria Martinez, Silvia Gonzalez, Miriam Perez, Isabel Martinez, Lila Becerril, Ilda Villa, and each of our Leadership Council members.

Our parent leaders who have completed a GO Family Leadership Fellowship have been instrumental in helping to grow the movement and bring more engaged families into the conversation throughout Fresno. Thank you to: Artemia Arredondo, Fabiola Felix, Juana Iris Meza, Fabiola Garcia, Francisca Torres, Yasmin Qwfan, Arcelida Meza, Magdalena Barrios, Hilda Lopez, Benita Vasquez, Maricela Sagrero, Gloria Gonzalez, Rosa Rosales, Rosemilia Suarez de Arguello, Rosemary Soto, Nelly Cruz Alanis, Juan Ortiz, Zina Brown Jenkins, Yesenia Nava, Maria Pena, Adriana Figueroa, Benita Perez Lopez, Lorena Moreno, Daisy Flores, Jorge Flores, Luisa Solis, Irma Reyes, Florencia Santiago, Lucila Osorio, Angelina Pelayo, Bianca Barajas, Maria Perez, Maria Lopez, Carmen Zamora, Claudia Silvia, Florencia Santiago, Marco Zamora, Maria Alvarado, Esmeralda Salcedo, Estela Ortega, Sergio Bautista, Edith Monroy.

A group of committed principals, teachers and counselors joined us as GO School Transformers, and their amazing work to reinvent what school could look like has inspired our policy recommendations and our belief that it is possible here. Thank you to: Kimberly Hendricks-Brown, Rachel Kuhtz, Jill Blanks, Monica Bravo, Genevieve Nunez, Timothy Yeager, Carlanda Williams, Magdelena Segovia Garcia, Rosemary Velasco, Linda Ramirez, Kevin Evangelinos, Rithy Som, Michele Darchuck, Abel Ruiz, Aron Walker, and Ashley De Medio-Meroth.

And last, but certainly not least, thank you to the organizations and individuals who have helped support GO Fresno’s work this year and in past years. Thank you to the The California Endowment - Building Healthy Communities, College Futures Foundation, Central Valley Community Foundation, Wells Fargo Foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and numerous individual donors.
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Our Mission
GO Public Schools Fresno builds and supports a local network of families, educators and community allies working to expand access to quality education in Fresno’s most historically underserved communities.

Our North Star Vision
We envision a day when all schools prepare every single one of our children to find success and fulfillment in our rapidly evolving world, and provide an equitable path to opportunity, hope, and social justice in our communities.

We work with families, educators, and community members to create schools driven by the needs of kids today – not by practices and structures designed for schools of a past and different era.

We aim to equip all our children for a world none of us can fully envision. That means schools that prize not just knowledge and order, but the creativity and habits of mind and heart to solve new problems in new ways – and that recognize we do not have a single child to lose.

Our Leadership Council
Danielle Bergstrom
Lindsay Callahan
Coreen Campos
Nicole Jones
Jesse Molina
Yammilette Rodriguez
Corrie Spees Sands

Our Staff
Diego Arambula
MaryJane Skjellerup
Karina Reyes
Raymundo Gonzalez

GO Public Schools Fresno is part of GO Public Schools, a statewide network committed to building and supporting a multi-city network of local coalitions, whose members – parents, educators, and community allies – work together to expand access to quality education in California’s most historically underserved communities.
THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING!

In order to ensure the vision outlined in these pages becomes a reality, our network of families, educators, business and community leaders must continue to stay informed and engaged!

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