NEW GOVERNING MODELS TO INCREASE LOCAL EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY

Conceptual Framework

Problem/Opportunity

- Local school and district governance is a weak link in education accountability. This is evidenced by low engagement in school councils and school committee elections, lack of diverse representation on these bodies, DESE district reviews that consistently report weak strategic planning processes, lack of transparency around strategic priorities and spending toward them, lack of objective measurement in principal and superintendent evaluations, and high superintendent turnover.

- 21st century funding models should be accompanied by strategies to help communities transition to 21st century governance structures. Compelling evidence from the charter sector and school turnaround suggest strong collaborative governance models improve organizational effectiveness.

District-Level Governance Solution

- Create enabling legislation allowing school committees to appoint up to five additional voting members. Elected school committee members would have all appointing authority. Appointees would need support from a supermajority of elected members in order to be seated.

- Section criteria for additional voting members should focus on broadening the skills and perspective of the school committee as a body. Specifically, appointed members should bring professional experience in early education, workforce development, higher education, healthcare and social services—sectors that are increasingly interwoven in K-12 schools. Appointments should also increase diversity and student and parent voice.

- Appointments should be made with staggered terms in order to increase stability.

School-Level Governance Solution

- Amend current law so that schools serving the same neighborhoods or with common design features could have the option to operate under one school council and share a common strategic plan. (This flexibility might be limited to schools that operate with instructional principals for each school and an executive principal leading the network of schools).

- School council terms extend to two years and schools improvement plans are produced on two-year cycles rather than every year.

- Principal evaluations explicitly include an objective measure of school council management.