Our Mission
To drive the transformation of education systems and accelerate the advancement of breakthrough policies and practices to ensure high-quality learning for all.

Our Vision
We envision a world where all people are empowered to attain the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to achieve success, contribute to their communities and advance society.
Our Theory of Action

POLICY AND ADVOCACY
Advancing enabling policies by providing technical assistance, expertise, briefings and support to partner organizations and to policymakers at the federal, state and local level.

FIELD-BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION
Activating feedback loops within our network, analyzing field data and the latest learning science research to produce and communicate insights to move the field forward.

CONVENING AND CONNECTING
Facilitating networks of practitioners, researchers and service providers developing new models through field coordination, collaborative writing, technical advisory groups and in-person convenings.
“Often, the most striking and innovative solutions come from realizing that your concept of the problem was wrong.”

"The Cathedral and the Bazaar" by Eric Raymond
The Paradigm of One: One teacher, teaching one subject, to one class of one age, using one curriculum at one pace, in one classroom for one hour.

David Hood
Summary

Aligning Education Policy with the Science of Learning and Development
Aurora conducted a literature review on the science of learning and development and consulted with experts in the fields of the science of learning and education policy. In the report, we:

- Highlight nine valuable resources from the research
- Summarize the findings on how students learn and grow
- Offer recommendations on how leaders can align policy with the learning sciences
Does Education Policy Support and Align to How Students Learn Best?

- With advancements in neuroscience, psychology, brain science, and other disciplines, there is more evidence of how dynamic learning is.
- A focus on educating the whole child is necessary to maximize learning opportunities to ensure every student has mastered the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive and succeed.
- The traditional K-12 education policy environment is often predicated on outdated models of teaching and learning that were designed for the industrial age.
- The one-size-fits-all education model does not support what we know from the learning sciences on motivation theory, brain research, or whole child development.
Takeaways from the Learning Sciences research:

- Brain science tells us that learning is malleable, extending from childhood through adulthood;
- Contexts, such as environments and relationships, affects and informs development;
- Student learning is diverse, varied, and does not occur in straight and narrow ways. Instead, students learn “jaggedly” through interconnected webs (Cantor, Rose, et. al. 2018);
- Individuality is a facet of the science of learning. Students learn and develop along unique pathways;
- Students’ cognitive functions are activated when they feel they belong and can connect meaningfully; and,
- Learning is connected to memory, motivation, and builds on prior knowledge.
Where is policy at odds with the learning sciences?

- Narrow definition of student success
- Accountability and instruction systems built around grade-level proficiency and aged-based cohorts
- Seat-time restrictions focused on time spent in a course instead of student mastery
- Single-summative rating systems in measuring school quality
- Test-based accountability
Nine Recommendations for Policymakers to Transform the K-12 Education System

1. Redefine student success for the whole child
2. Focus on supporting inclusive and safe learning environments
3. Create meaningful credentials that certify mastery of knowledge and skills
4. Provide diverse learning pathways
5. Meet students where they are
Nine Recommendations for Policymakers to Transform the K-12 Education System

6. Build educator capacity and professional judgement to support whole child learning
7. Build balanced systems of assessments that better align with student-centered learning
8. Support innovative student-centered learning environments
9. Additionally, support bridging the domains of policy, practice, and research
Supporting Whole Child learning in education

Source: Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative

October 28, 2019 | Brooke Stafford-Brizard, Director of Whole Child Development at CZI, presenting as the keynote speaker at this year’s iNACOL conference in Palm Springs, CA. Photograph by Dakarai Aarons.
Featured Resources
The revised 2019 definition of competency-based education is:

1. Students are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning.

2. Assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence.

3. Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.

4. Students progress based on evidence of mastery, not seat time.

5. Students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing.

6. Strategies to ensure equity for all students are embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy of schools and education systems.

7. Rigorous, common expectations for learning (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable.
We Believe...

• Equity is a central goal of advancing competency-based education systems.
• Communities that aspire to achieve equity must work toward implementing a competency-based education system.
1. Redefine student success
2. Create innovation zones
3. Build balanced systems of assessments
4. Redesign accountability systems for continuous improvement
5. Modernize the educator workforce
6. Increase educator workforce diversity
7. Launch competency-based education pilots
8. Offer seat-time waivers and credit flexibility
9. Create meaningful credentials
10. Align systems from pre-K, K-12 education, higher education into employment
Moving Toward Mastery: Growing, Developing, and Sustaining Educators for Competency-Based Education
1. Elevate Learners, Educators and Communities as Partners
2. Mitigate Individual and Institutional Barriers to Equity
3. Develop Cultures of Learning and Inclusion
4. Promote Culturally Responsive Instruction
5. Increase Flexibility for Learner Centered Practice
6. Articulate Competency Based Pathways
7. Facilitate Learning that Improves Practice
8. Develop Meaningful Systems of Assessments and Evaluations
9. Establish Structures for Distributed Leadership and Collaboration
10. Innovate with Focused Experimentation and Learning
Teaching as a Lifelong Profession

11. Diversify Pathways Into The Profession
12. Redesign Educator Preparation
13. Diversify Pathways Through The Profession
14. Redesign Credentialing and Certification
15. Redesign Accountability for Reciprocity