

1)

Grant a national waiver of all federally mandated tests required under the Every Student Succeeds Act until Congress has an opportunity to amend the law. This will save billions of dollars and allow us to refocus resources on assessments that illuminate student growth and learning, are delivered locally, and are aligned to requirements that are properly situated at the state or local level, not the federal government. The USDOE should review and approve each state's education assessment framework, but it is time to put the evaluation of learning back in the classroom with meaningful standards, trained professionals, and culturally responsive instructional practices.

2)

Deliver legislation to Congress to scale up the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – a far more cost-effective method of actually determining the overall education progress of states with a real opportunity to finally understand performance differences between the states. This assessment is already funded and supported by the USDOE. It is inefficient and costly to have a federally funded assessment of student progress and have 50 states and territories maintaining their own costly assessments. This proposal would save billions from the current system, and with robust sample sizes, can identify critical supports needed to close opportunity gaps for students furthest from educational justice.

3)

Invest in the teaching profession by diversifying the workforce, including establishing high-quality residencies for teacher candidates and early career teachers, and providing funds for ongoing meaningful educator training. Additionally, building educator capacity should focus on integration of social-emotional learning into instruction, anti-racist and student-centered teaching practices, and authentic family engagement. It is past time to shift away from destructive federal policies that force schools and educators to dwell on student deficits, as defined by federally mandated tests, instead of lifting up the unique contribution of every learner and every educator.

4)

Immediately deliver a budget request to Congress that triples the federal budget for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) from \$13 billion to \$40 billion. Congress and the USDOE have never fulfilled their obligation to this essential civil rights policy. One in seven students has a qualifying disability and these students deserve every accommodation necessary to fully engage in inclusive and least restrictive learning environments.

5)

By Executive Order, immediately suspend any federal dollars used to support school voucher programs. Require the USDOE to undertake a national examination of voucher systems, and require each state that uses vouchers to conduct third-party evaluation, with a USDOE review, that examines the effects of school voucher systems on school segregation, specifically the segregation of students of color and students with disabilities.

6)

Affirm that all federal funds are eligible to support DACA students and all migrant students. Make clear through executive order and USDOE rule that basic education rights for ALL students is a function of their residency, not their citizenship status. U.S. schools should focus on teaching and learning for ALL students, and the administration should ensure authorities overseeing immigration policy and citizenship status are upholding support of DACA and migrant students' rights.

7)

Immediately reverse the USDOE's recent rule change related to Title IX. This rule, promoted by Betsy DeVos, weakens protections for victims of sexual assault and retraumatizes them with forced cross-examinations by their perpetrators.

8)

Create a 10-year on-ramp with federal financial support to allow every school district in the United States to develop, implement, and evaluate dual-language programs for each of their students. The U.S. is linguistically diverse – this is an asset that should be celebrated, rather than viewed as a deficit! Every dollar spent on assessments for English language proficiency should be invested in high-quality dual language programs. We are losing a global battle for talent, and our students do not compete effectively in a global labor market because they lack bilingualism. Every student in the U.S. should learn two or more languages – as most of the world does – and this begins most effectively in early learning programs and early elementary school.

9)

Deliver an initial budget request to Congress of \$100 billion to close the digital divide and invest in tribal lands by building out broadband connectivity in rural and remote communities. Make K-12 schools, indigenous communities, and reservation lands the highest priorities for “last mile” infrastructure. Our tribal communities are sovereign nations trapped by our failed national infrastructure. Tribal youth experience one of the largest opportunity gaps in the nation, and broadband can play a massive role in this powerful opportunity for equity.

10)

Provide every United States high school graduate two years of equivalent tuition to a public community or technical college through an education savings account. Students can use these funds for full associate degrees or industry recognized credentials, or use the funds as a universal baseline of financial assistance as they attend four-year colleges and universities.

Strengthening America’s education system should be the top priority for a Biden/Harris Administration. It does not mean expanding the control or scope of the USDOE, but rather putting the proper budget and policy levers in place that empower states and local school districts to close opportunity gaps, develop diverse pathways to graduation, and once again recognize the needs of individual students, employers, and the larger economy.

America's future rests on its commitment to each and every learner in a high-quality accessible public education system that sees race, language, and individual student interests as strengths and assets upon which we develop the greatest and most innovative nation the world has ever known.

Chris Reykdal, Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction