



“Closing Our Educational Achievement Gaps and Investing in America’s Future”

An Overview of Hope Street Group’s Work on Education

Hope Street Group Policy Overview | March 2009



About Hope Street Group

Hope Street Group is a bipartisan non-profit public policy organization that believes that a thriving national economy exists when economic opportunity is available to the greatest possible number of Americans. We work to strengthen the drivers of opportunity – primarily education, health care, and labor market dynamism – by convening business, political, and civic leaders online and in person to formulate policy proposals and build bipartisan coalitions; educating policymakers about the foundations of economic opportunity; building support for our [American Dream Agenda](#); and providing a platform for social entrepreneurs to be heard and to engage on economic opportunity issues.

About Our Education Work

Following our first Opportunity Economics Colloquium in February 2007, Hope Street Group's first Bipartisan Working Group Dinner Series was organized around education because of its central role as an economic engine. These dinners brought together leaders in school reform with political, business, and civic leaders to find consensus on policy recommendations and implementation strategies for a federal catalyst role to help close the achievement gaps in the U.S. education system. One result was our white paper on education reform, "[Closing our Educational Achievement Gaps: Fostering Innovation in K-12 Education](#)."

We expanded the discussion to a larger group of leaders during our 2008 Opportunity Economics Colloquium, which focused on creating a bipartisan, opportunity-oriented [agenda](#) to serve as a blueprint for the next President's first days in office. The education working group focused on how to transform our K-12 system into one that provides a true 21st-century education, and agreed that the next President should commit to the principles outlined below.

During the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), we highlighted the reform principles in the legislation that mirror our education platform; now we are finalizing a strategy for following implementation of the ARRA as we continue to promote reform.

Hope Street Group's Pre-K and K-12 Policy Recommendations

Targets, Talent, Tools, Responsibility, and Innovation

Hope Street Group believes the following are the most important components for transforming the education system, and the President's role in these five inter-linked areas includes working closely with Congress, the Department of Education, and the National Governors Association (NGA) to invest in education and foster innovation by funding R&D and pilots, highlighting success, and providing incentives for bold reforms:

TARGETS

- **Pre-K: Every child should enter school equipped to embark upon a lifetime of learning.** The President should call for federal funding linked to national standards for states that expand access to high-quality Pre-K programs. Numerous studies demonstrate that children who attend such programs are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and achieve higher lifetime earnings. Too many children without access to appropriate early educational activities are behind the curve as soon as they start school. As a result, they are more likely to need special education programs or be held back a grade in elementary school. Education policymakers must recognize that young minds are receptive minds, and that a child's education starts long before his first day of kindergarten. The younger the age at which a child's positive learning experiences can be nurtured, the better it is for that child and for society as a whole.

K-12: A high school diploma must be a genuine passport to college and/or 21st-century careers for everyone. The President should work with the NGA to encourage all 50 states to work toward common American standards and assessments voluntarily agreed on by states, and based on real-world and global demands and benchmarks. Reviewed by peers, including educators, employers, the military, and institutions of higher education, these standards should be consistent with multi-state initiatives (as, for example, in the [American Diploma Project](#)). As an incentive, the President can allocate funding to create and renew internationally-benchmarked assessments aligned to 21st-century standards and incentives for progress, in addition to exploring new timelines to reach proficiency levels.

TALENT

- **Pre-K: Pre-K teaching should be treated as a profession, and every Pre-K teacher should have in-depth training in early childhood education methodology.** Teacher quality is a significant success factor in Pre-K classrooms, and there is a growing body of research describing the skills and qualities that optimize teacher effectiveness. Excellent Pre-K teachers, for example: 1) demonstrate the ability to engage each child in individualized play-based learning; 2) adhere to evidence-based practices; 3) include parents as educators outside the classroom; and 4) participate in ongoing professional development opportunities.

K-12: We need an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective principal in every school. Backed by the President and driven by Congress, a National Teaching and School Leadership Fund should be set up to support state/system level reforms, including the termination of bumping rights/seniority; linking tenure to effectiveness; and tying some compensation to student success. These steps would help to attract, retain, and develop excellent teachers in our most challenging schools and actively develop principals as instructional leaders. In addition, the Department of Education, in collaboration with the President,

should support innovation to elevate the teaching profession through the establishment of U.S. Teacher and School Leadership Academies that produce outstanding teachers and principals based on a “gold standard,” a National Campaign for Teaching Excellence, and the development and promotion of portable pension options for teachers and school leaders.

TOOLS

- **Pre-K: Performance tracking should begin when children enter Pre-K programs and should be followed by assessments of cognitive and social skills at the start and end of the kindergarten year.** Even the most modern, flexible data system will not provide an accurate picture of educational effectiveness if it does not include information about Pre-K programs and attendance. Pre-K data tracking will enable policymakers, parents, and educators to 1) compare early learning and later performance between the children who attend preschool versus those who don't; 2) track the effectiveness of specific educational approaches; and 3) prioritize standards and fine-tune curricula.

K-12: Every parent, educator, and policymaker should know whether a student is on track to meeting standards-based proficiency. In collaboration with Congress, the President should launch federal funding for RFPs targeted to implementing state comprehensive data systems, allowing states to measure progress in student achievement (“growth model”) in combination with absolute standards. Using the recommendations from the [Data Quality Campaign](#) and diagnostic assessments, states should be able to link data across their education and accountability systems, with a particular emphasis on informing the strategies of education leaders in chronically under-performing schools.

RESPONSIBILITY

- **Pre-K: Dramatic positive results from a revitalized American education system will be far more likely to ensue when every child is entering that system with an adequate foundation of social and cognitive capabilities.** The President's call for responsibility should therefore include incentives for states to make access to high-quality Pre-K programs a reality for every child. In addition, Americans should demand that their Pre-K programs include standards for such proven success factors as small class sizes; low student-to-teacher ratios; teachers with early childhood education credentials; and ongoing efforts to engage parents as co-educators.

K-12: The President should encourage families, communities, retirees, businesses, social entrepreneurs, and all institutions of society to take personal responsibility in making sure that all students are succeeding in living up to the standards of the 21st-century workplace by challenging the American public to take on this commitment.

INNOVATION

- **Pre-K: A research-focused Department of Education should augment the usefulness of the substantial body of existing Pre-K research with an age-appropriate tracking model that begins when children are in Pre-K programs and continues through kindergarten, elementary school, and beyond.** The primary research objective should be to ensure that all students enter kindergarten ready-to-learn, and that the elements of school readiness are predictors of continued educational achievement. In addition, lessons can be learned from the effective private, non-profit, and state-funded Pre-K programs that are already in place so that their successes can be replicated.

K-12: The President should support the reinvention of the Department of Education to a research engine based on the National Institutes of Health model. The Department of Education should be transformed to enable states to scale successful programs through R&D, the generation and distribution of research and best practices, and the implementation of systems that put it all together. Driven by a Department of Education that serves as a research engine, states will be empowered to enact more comprehensive and integrated system reform, facilitating the allocation of more prevalent performance-based funding that addresses high-poverty schools.

Accomplishments

Open-Source Development of Education Reform Ideas

Hope Street Group first convened in April 2001 to discuss the need for a new approach to public policy, and education was a key topic in this discussion. In the summer and fall of 2002, we interviewed policymakers, think tankers, and political operatives – Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike – and solicited their ideas about how a new generation of leaders could inform the debate. HSG has spent the past several years deepening our relationships and engaging with a diverse group of leaders across the political, business, and civic fields on the importance and necessity of opportunity economics.

HSG has offered new avenues for leaders to collaborate and develop innovative frameworks for change embedded in an opportunity economics mindset. Over the past year, we have increased the numbers of members, volunteers, and foundations that support our work. We currently have over 500 members, with over 100 actively involved on committees, advisory boards, and policy teams. In the next six months, we will launch a mobilization campaign to raise awareness among young business professionals about the imperative for education reform by using web 2.0 technologies. Our goal is to transform these professionals into advocates for education reform who dialogue with their elected officials, contribute ideas to HSG policymaking, volunteer in their communities/schools, and engage their companies in the movement for reform. We hope to solicit cutting-edge “ideas that work” at a local level and bring them to national



leaders, thereby establishing a “proof of concept” that we can roll into other policy areas to promote opportunity economics.

Buy-in from top leaders through Opportunity Economics Colloquia

Our Opportunity Economics Colloquia explore new ideas and approaches and aim to create uncommon coalitions and consensus around some of the most important drivers of economic opportunity: education, savings, health care, and business competitiveness. Through these events, we have expanded our institutional collaborations with various foundations, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and other political and business leaders.

During our first Opportunity Economics Colloquium in 2007, participants identified two goals in education policy: 1) restructuring our education system for a 21st-century economy, and 2) the need for a loving and responsible adult in the life of every child. In 2008, education break-out session participants expanded on these imperatives, adapting and integrating the BWG’s recommendations to create our first bipartisan education platform.

Our second Colloquium, “Building the Opportunity Economy: An American Dream Agenda for the First 100 Days,” was held in April 2008. The 43 participants who attended developed a bipartisan agenda of opportunity-enhancing initiatives for our next president. Over 95% of the participants who attended the second Colloquium have endorsed this agenda, which was also shared with both Presidential campaigns. We are currently planning for our third annual Colloquium, to be held on April 20th, 2009. This year’s session will focus on developing and implementing action-oriented solutions for building an Opportunity Economy.

Creation of Bipartisan Working Groups to Build Momentum for Reform

The Bipartisan Working Groups (BWG) on Education and Healthcare reform are two compelling examples of our collaborative model in action. Recognizing the diverse nature of the Hope Street Group coalition, in July 2007 core members initiated a regular strategy session in which CEOs, politicians, and leaders of civil society could collaborate on solving some of the most pressing domestic policy issues affecting economic opportunity. The first three BWG dinners focused on creating a bipartisan agenda for education reform in collaboration with education experts, which was shared with the Presidential nominees. The BWG drafted an education whitepaper entitled “[Closing Our Educational Achievement Gaps: Fostering Innovation in K-12 Education](#),” which served as the centerpiece for future consensus-building. Both series of dinners have been attended by a mix of high-level political and civil society leaders, as well as experts and stakeholders in the fields of education policy and the healthcare industry.

Economic Opportunity Index (EOI) to Support Reform Measures

In 2008, we launched the [EOI](#), an online interactive tool that quantitatively measures economic opportunity in the United States. The EOI shows that education is the single most important driver in economic opportunity – making up almost one-third of the total



weight of the Index. We are now working to integrate key findings from the index into our education policy platform and priorities.

2008 Presidential Candidate Outreach

Hope Street Group staff and Board members accompanied BWG participants in reaching out to and conversing with presidential campaigns and policy advisors on both sides of the aisle in order to present the Hope Street Group platform and seek ways to put it into action. We shared many of our policy recommendations in the areas of K-12 education, early childhood education, corporate taxation, trade, healthcare, and savings to six Presidential campaigns during the 2008 Idea Primary.

Our [American Dream Agenda](#) (including recommendations in the policy areas of education, healthcare, savings, and small business), developed and endorsed by BWG participants, was shared with the top campaign policy advisors for Senator Clinton, Senator McCain, and Senator Obama. According to top policy advisors to President Obama, a number of our ideas on education reform were integrated into his platform. With the help of our core conveners and network, we are continuing to build relationships within the new administration and President to further the adoption of Opportunity Economic enhancing policies.

Adoption of Reforms in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

As discussions began around an economic recovery package, it became clear that education would play a significant role in the bill. We went to work identifying proposed education funding and reform measures in both the House and Senate versions of the legislation and identifying clear links to our education platform. Specifically, we:

- Shared perspectives with transition team members on how the federal catalyst role in education reform might apply in the ARRA context;
- Briefed Board Members, volunteers, and conveners with information on proposed measures and their connection to education reform;
- Published a detailed analysis comparing the House and Senate versions and matching key reform opportunities to our education platform;
- Received public recognition from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for our published analysis;
- Established new media contacts and shared with them our view of education reform opportunities stemming from ARRA; and
- Published an analysis of the final passed legislation detailing actual funding and reform in the bill and highlighting reform opportunities.

We are now planning how to use our unique bipartisan team members and networks as the nation enters the implementation stage. We are examining ways to track reform-linked spending and to support on-the-ground reform efforts.

Hope Street Group has demonstrated that our model of convening bipartisan groups to promote key public policy opportunities works—especially in today’s new and dynamic political environment. Our effort to promote an education reform platform based on bipartisan consensus has contributed to a national dialogue about the changes we need to



improve the education system. Our commitment to building an Opportunity Economy for all Americans remains at the core of our work; clearly, this notion resonates across the political spectrum and can lead to significant reform.

Plans for the Future

We continue to organize, leverage, and amplify a broad network of supporters as we launch our education strategy. We have also identified many potential partnerships that would augment our membership numbers, volunteer opportunities, and expert contributors to our foremost policy areas, including the Economic Opportunity Index. Additionally, we are in discussions with other civil service organizations to create partnerships to leverage networks, develop new content distribution channels, bring practitioners together with young professionals and policy makers, and increase the value-add for members. A successful coalition for school transformation will catalyze and support promising programs and entrepreneurs that are working with states, districts, and schools to drive student achievement, emphasizing the central role of teachers as “informed professionals,” and providing them with the guidance and tools they need.

Young professionals, who make up Hope Street Group’s main membership base, are a vital part of our growing coalition because they represent a new generation of technology-savvy, results-oriented, well-networked individuals who are the leaders-designate of the private sector – roles and attributes that deeply motivate this constituency to invest in the next generation’s human capital development. We are eager to activate and expand our networks in order to reach the enormous numbers of private sector professionals and individual educators who would embrace the opportunity to drive improvements to our education system. Too often we find that noteworthy local education efforts and activities do not have a voice on a national level; at the same time, there are a number of high-level efforts that absolutely need grassroots support in order to be effective.

Hope Street Group believes that the best way to mobilize a coalition for change is to provide a platform on which current and future leaders in the private and public spheres can work together to find innovative ways to galvanize the American public behind crucial education policy reforms. To this end, Hope Street Group plans to launch a web-based policy platform in 2009 to mobilize the public at large so that a national agenda can be linked to a grassroots movement and vice versa. By providing a space where bottom-up and top-down movements can come together and support each others’ goals to improve education for every child in the United States, we can continue to translate words into action.



CURRENT COMMITTED BIPARTISAN WORKING GROUP CONVENERS

Donna Brazile | Founder and Managing Director, Brazile and Associates

Ray Chambers | Co-founder and Chairman, Malaria No More, U.S. Envoy for Malaria

Roger Ferguson | Chairman, Swiss Re America Holding Corporation

Michael Gerson | Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

Allan Golston | President, U.S. Programs, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Senator Lindsey Graham | Republican - South Carolina

Representative Kay Granger | Republican – Texas

Ken Mehlman | Managing Partner and Head of Global Public Affairs, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co.

Janet Murguia | President and CEO, National Council of La Raza

Bill Novelli | CEO, AARP

Governor Tim Pawlenty | Republican - Minnesota

John Podesta | CEO, Center for American Progress

Senator Debbie Stabenow | Democrat – Michigan

Andy Stern | President, SEIU

Todd Stottlemeyer | President, National Federation of Independent Business

EDUCATION EXPERTS SUPPORTING BIPARTISAN WORKING GROUP DIALOGUE

Russlynn Ali | Vice President, Education Trust; Founding Director, Education Trust-West

Mike Cohen | President, Achieve

John Deasy | Deputy Director, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Jean Desravines | Chief Officer for Cities and Policy, New Leaders for New Schools

Marc Lampkin | Executive Director, Strong American Schools

Roy Romer | Former Governor of Colorado

Jon Schnur | CEO and Co-Founder, New Leaders for New Schools

HOPE STREET GROUP'S PRE-SCHOOL POLICY TEAM MEMBERS

Karen Alden | Karen Alden Consulting

Dmitri Mehlhorn | Managing Director of New Markets, Gerson Lehrman Group

Dr. Rahil Briggs | Director, Healthy Steps at Montefiore Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Montefiore Medical Group – CFCC