

Greater Waco Community Superintendents' Shared Vision for Public Education in the Greater Waco Area

Presented at the 2011 Education Summit

Motivated by goals of children attending school eager and ready to learn, students graduating from high school ready for careers and post-secondary education, and school completers engaging in our community and beyond as productive citizens, we share the following vision for public education in Central Texas:

“Greater Waco Area School Districts will be a national model of public schools and community coming together around the education of its children--

schools understanding their unique role in the academic, social and cultural preparation of future citizens, and

the community understanding and organizing its unique strengths and assets to support children, their families and schools to provide the best of what a public education can be for all learners”

Specifically, this vision is characterized by:

1. Schools and School Districts that recognize the vital role of the community in a child's education as well as seriously address their educational responsibilities to
 - provide a nurturing and safe learning environment that acts out of a belief that all children can learn, achieve excellence and contribute to the stability and advancement of society,
 - help children understand the social norms and appreciate the cultural values of the community and beyond,
 - cultivate an expectation for learning as a life-long enterprise as well as prepare and guide children toward appropriate career or post-secondary education decisions, and
 - provide opportunities to develop future leaders for society.

Where

- teachers and administrators are prepared, informed and dedicated to promoting the success of every student, modeling best practices, and learning from their practice ever to increase their effectiveness, and
 - districts strive and advocate for greater equity of resources and access for all students to a high quality education.
2. A Community that goes beyond platitudes about the importance of schooling to:
 - Support and value the education process and PreK-12 educators as key figures in the lives and education of the community's children and youth,

- Support families with having their children physically, mentally and socially/emotionally prepared and ready for the academic process (especially those in poverty), and with understanding their role as critical partners with schools and the community in developing these children as well-educated future greater Waco area citizens,
- Provide critical informal learning environments for children (like public libraries, museums, zoos, theaters) and adult-led social network supports (like business/neighborhood-focused child-care centers, character-building groups—sports, scouting etc., and vocation-related clubs) that extend the learning process beyond school walls,
- Promote formal education beyond secondary school as well as life-long learning as a habit of mind, and
- Partner with schools and school districts in advocating for increased local control of education for the purpose of enhancing schools’ ability to create and deliver “life-literate” instruction.

--in short, a Community that works to level the playing field for learning, where family income does not predict the quality or duration of a child’s education and education remains the engine for socioeconomic advancement.

3. An Environment of “Hope” where youth (a) see their futures as better than the present and (b) believe they have the power and means through education to make it happen—an environment fostered by educators who are “inspiring” and believe that all children can prosper and by a community that helps young people pursue their own ideas for making the world a better place.