

Education Working Group

The PBLN Education Working Group will present a case study on Paul Sagan, CEO, Akamai Technologies, and his involvement with the Governor's Readiness Project along with other Readiness Project leaders

Chair: Tom Dretler, President & CEO, Eduventures, Inc.

Coordinator: Sean Gallagher, Director & Senior Analyst, Eduventures, Inc.

Presenters: Governor Deval Patrick,

Paul Sagan, CEO, Akamai Technologies

Gloria Larson, President, Bentley University

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The Commonwealth Readiness Project: Bringing Together Business, Education, Government, and Community Leaders to Strategically Shape Education Policy

Education is a key driver of economic development, a major component of the state budget, and a critical foundation for a prosperous society.

During the past year, business leaders and others across Massachusetts had a unique opportunity to help shape education policy through Governor Deval Patrick's "Commonwealth Readiness Project," a 10-year strategic plan to reform and improve public education.

The Readiness Project was launched in June 2007 with the goal of implementing a strategic vision for public education in the Commonwealth, including designing specific actions, timelines, and cost estimates. The project is a critical step in assuring Massachusetts' competitiveness on the global stage and reducing the costs associated with a lack of educational access and opportunity. At its core, the Readiness Project is about preparing students to succeed in a more competitive and global economic landscape. Its recommendations represent a potential major overhaul for one of the leading public education systems in any state in the union.

The Readiness Project was unique in its involvement of business, education, local community, government leaders, and everyday citizens, who shaped its recommendations. More than 200 educational academic experts, practitioners, and business leaders provided input into the project's recommendations as part of the project's 13 subcommittees, each of which focused on specific issues such as *Assessment and Accountability, Early Education and Child Care, Expanded Teaching and Learning Time, and UMass and Public Higher Education.*

Profiled Executive Bio: Paul Sagan

Paul Sagan is President and CEO of Akamai Technologies. Mr. Sagan joined the company in October 1998, was elected to the Akamai Board of Directors in January 2005, and became CEO in April 2005. Prior to Akamai, Mr. Sagan served as senior advisor to the World Economic Forum from 1997 to 1998, and worked in executive leadership roles at Time Warner from 1991 to 1997, including serving as the president and editor of new media at Time, Inc. from 1995 to 1997. Mr. Sagan's career began in broadcast television news – he joined WCBS-TV in 1981 as a news writer and was named news director in 1987 at age 28, the youngest person to hold the position in the network's history. Mr. Sagan, a three-time Emmy Award winner for broadcast news, was inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in October 2008 and named a Global Leader for Tomorrow in 1996 by the World Economic Forum. Mr. Sagan is a director of EMC Corp.

Mr. Sagan is a trustee of Northwestern University and a graduate of the school's Medill School of Journalism. He is co-chairman of the Medill Board of Advisors, a member of the Dean's Council at the Kennedy School at Harvard, an advisor to the MATCH charter public high school in Boston, and a member of the Presidential Advisory Council at the Berklee College of Music.

The Readiness Project employed a grassroots approach to seeking input, considering research, and deliberating educational policy issues, and included a number of town hall meetings around the state with the governor, as well as smaller meetings with stakeholders such as parents, students, and teachers.

Akamai Technologies, Inc.

Founded in 1998 and with headquarters in Cambridge, MA, Akamai pioneered the Internet content delivery market. An MIT spin-out company, Akamai has more than 2,700 customers worldwide. The company's solutions help businesses to distribute and accelerate their Web content, applications, and processes, improving revenue generation and reducing costs by maximizing the performance of online initiatives. Akamai employs approximately 1,500 people and operates its vast network of tens of thousands of computer servers in more than 70 countries worldwide.

The Leadership Council and Paul Sagan

Paul Sagan, President and CEO of Akamai Technologies and a founding board member of PBLN, played a key role in the Readiness Project as a member of the project's Leadership Council. The Leadership Council was a group of approximately 20 individuals, including civic leaders, education policy experts, and business executives, who steered the project and synthesized the work of the subcommittees to create the project's final recommendations. The Leadership Council members also participated in the work of, and served as co-chairs and liaisons to, the subcommittees, in addition to working with the governor's staff to direct the project.

Mr. Sagan has a long history of involvement in education policy issues and a deep personal commitment to improving

education. He is a member of Massachusetts Business Leaders for Charter Public Schools, and has engaged often with legislators on education policy issues. He also served as a member of a transition task force on education before Governor Deval Patrick's inauguration. Mr. Sagan has written a number of op-ed pieces on education policy in publications such as *The Boston Globe*. He is a trustee, board member, and advisor to a number of educational institutions in various capacities, including Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, the Berklee College of Music, and the MATCH charter public high school locally, and Northwestern University in Illinois where he attended college.

Mr. Sagan is a major supporter of charter public schools, and one of the Readiness Project's final recommendations is to *bring the proven benefits of the charter school movement into mainstream schools and classrooms*. Although the Readiness Project does not include a proposal to raise the number of charter schools in the Commonwealth (which is currently capped), it does propose a related model for Readiness Schools, which would operate under performance contracts, and be launched and managed by teams authorized by and accountable to local school districts. According to Sagan, "The formula for charter public schools – innovation, autonomy, and responsiveness to student and family needs – has the potential to revolutionize public education. And make no mistake – a revolution is exactly what the Commonwealth needs not only to ensure that students are prepared for higher education, work, and life in the 21st century, but to ensure that the economy of Massachusetts is strong and competitive." Sagan noted, "Patrick's Readiness proposal provides a game-changing opportunity to inject innovation into the mainstream. We should seize this opportunity to import the best features of high-performing, autonomous schools into the existing system of public schools."

Although Mr. Sagan was disappointed that the final report did not recommend lifting the cap on charter public schools, he was pleased that it acknowledged the important role charter schools play in the Commonwealth today. Further, he believes the involvement of several business leaders on the Project's Leadership Council ensured that the best attributes of charter schools would be represented in the development of Readiness Schools.

Lessons Learned, The Readiness Project’s Recommendations, and Next Steps

Because the Readiness Project was driven by a participatory process based on committees and creating consensus, business leaders who get involved in this type of initiative should be prepared to work in a different style from what they may be used to as executives.

Additionally, the Readiness Project brought many stakeholders with diverse viewpoints and differing opinions to the table to attempt to forge a common vision. On this dynamic project, participants and leaders needed to be prepared to compromise on some issues; one key aspect of the Readiness Project is the synthesis of differing viewpoints.

Ultimately, the Readiness Project delivered a plan intended to extend to the year 2020, and span pre-kindergarten and early childhood education to college. The final report, titled *Ready for 21st Century Success: The New Promise for Public Education*, was released in June 2008. The Readiness Project’s final report included four final goals and 24 specific recommendations. The four key goals and examples of the recommendations associated with each follow:

Goal	Sample Recommendations
1. Meet the learning needs of each student and provide the understanding, encouragement, support, knowledge, and skills each requires to exceed the state’s high expectations and rigorous academic standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a fully integrated and adequately funded state system of early education and care that begins at birth. • Increase adult learning opportunities to help families engage in their children’s education.
2. Ensure that every student in the Commonwealth is taught by highly competent, well-educated, strongly supported, and effective educators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate the entry of highly qualified teachers into public schools, particularly in high-needs districts and high-priority disciplines such as science, technology, engineering and math. • Maintain the current MCAS test as a graduation requirement and strengthen the system to include measures of individual student growth and college readiness, which would complement but not replace the current measures.
3. Prepare every student for postsecondary education, career and lifelong economic, social and civic success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align the Commonwealth’s standards, frameworks, and curriculum with the demands of 21st century life, work, and citizenship • Provide two years of postsecondary education or the equivalent in a professional trade as the new baseline of our state education system.
4. Unleash innovation and systemic change throughout the Commonwealth’s schools, school districts, colleges, and universities as well as in the partnerships and collaborations among education institutions, communities, businesses, and non-profits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure the school day and school year to match the needs of students, teachers, and families. • Bring the proven benefits of the charter school movement into mainstream schools and classrooms throughout the Commonwealth.

Source: Ready for 21st Century Success: A New Promise for Public Education, The Final Report of The Readiness Project

At a headline level, many of the Readiness Project’s most cited and far-reaching proposals include universal early childhood education, a longer school day, free community college, and a statewide contract for teachers. The Readiness Project’s recommendations were well-received by many groups of educators, policy-makers, citizens, and business leaders around the state.

One critical issue left unanswered in the final report is how to finance the proposed initiatives, which represent a significant expansion in education spending. Implementing and funding the project's vision is estimated to cost \$1 billion or more annually in additional state spending on public education.

To look at this question, Governor Patrick named a Readiness Finance Commission in late June 2008 to explore a major overhaul of the state's education finance system, including the consideration of new revenue sources and identifying potential cost savings. PBLN Leaders including Gloria Larson, President of Bentley University, and Jeffrey Bussgang, General Partner of Flybridge Capital Partners, are members of the Finance Commission, along with a small group of other top education, business, and policy leaders.

In a challenging economic landscape that most likely features declining tax revenue and low credit availability, exactly how to finance an initiative such as the Readiness Project has taken on acute importance. The Readiness Project is, after all, about the economic future of the Commonwealth. Working together with policy-makers and legislators, business leaders can have an important impact on this dialogue.

Summary

Paul Sagan suggests that to contribute to education reform, business leaders must be prepared to work to form coalitions and to find compromise solutions among a myriad of stakeholders, including teachers and their unions, administrators, academics, politicians, parents, and many others. Further, business leaders need to be ready to work in an environment that is used to incremental, not dramatic, change.

Although the details of implementing the Readiness Project's recommendations are still being worked out, it is clear that business leaders such as Mr. Sagan and others have had a significant impact on the future of education in the Commonwealth through their voluntary involvement in this unique initiative. The Readiness Project may serve as a model for developing other state policy frameworks, particularly to the extent that it can become a powerful model for leveraging the ideas and leadership of business and civic leaders, and in giving all stakeholders a voice in the discussion.