

# A call to US educators: Learn from Canada

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As states and the federal government in the U.S. continue to clash on the best ways to improve American education, Canada's Province of Ontario manages successful education reform initiatives that are equal parts cooperation and experimentation, according to a Boston College professor and authority on educational change.

"Although there have been battles in the past, the hallmarks of Ontario's [education](#) reform efforts are cooperation and experimentation - with an emphasis on cooperation," said Lynch School of Education Professor Dennis Shirley. "Ontario has struck the right balance. Unfortunately, in the U.S., we squander a lot of energy by fighting with each other. Instead, we should be pulling together to do the real work of improving teaching and learning."

Shirley, editor of the Journal of Educational Change, will discuss Ontario's efforts today at the American Educational Research Association's annual meeting.

Joining Shirley will be officials from Ontario's Ministry of Education, whose research points to reasons the province's students have placed among the top performers on international assessments. Among the lessons:

- Ask people what they think: Feedback from an eight-region, three-month Ministry of Education fact-finding tour underpins education policymaking.
- Include everyone: The new First Nation, Metis, and Inuit

Education Policy Framework endeavors to embrace the province's native peoples and culture.

- Home life counts: The Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy builds a culture of education among families of at-risk students.
- Solve out-of-school problems: The Open Minds, Healthy Minds initiative addresses mental health and wellness of children and adults.

"Educators and policymakers in Ontario are very good at thinking about how you can uplift an entire system," said Shirley. "In contrast to high-performing countries with very different cultures, Americans share a lot of common educational ground with Ontario."

Provided by Boston College

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