The NAACP, in confronting the myriad debilitating issues facing public education nationwide, has released a report that contained four core areas in which the education sector should concentrate its efforts.

Those four areas are pre-kindergarten preparation, increased effective teaching, longer school days and school years and, finally, targeted education spending, where the proceeds from smart investments would go to the neediest students.

NAACP leadership and members of the greater education community publicized the report during a press conference and call-in on Thursday.

“This report is a resource and roadmap for grassroots activists who want education reform in their community; our status as world leader in education is slipping,” said NAACP Education Director Beth Glenn, noting that America has steadily slid down the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s list, in regard to math, reading and science. “We want to improve the education system. If the United States is to remain competitive in the global marketplace, we must have a strong and innovative workforce. To attain that workforce, we need to educate students at a higher level than in the past.”

The NAACP further explained the four-pronged approach in the report. The first element, “Prekindergarten Prep for Achievement,” suggests that higher quality, universal prekindergarten programs that better prepare students for school; the second, “Effective Teaching,” seeks to better prepare teachers and make ensures that only the most qualified teachers lead classrooms.

“More Time, More Learning,” points to both a longer school day and an extended school year, while “Targeted Spending for Widespread Success” points to the better usage of the limited resources schools and school district have.

“If America is going to lead the world in this century the way we did the last, we must lead the world again in education,” said NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous. “’Finding our Way Back To First’ is the road map for our activists, the communities they serve, and the nation as a whole. Our proposition is simple: if every public school does what the best schools do, every child will be able to get a great education. The NAACP has pushed America toward greatness before, and with this plan as our guide our army of advocates will do it again.”

United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan hailed the department’s longstanding relationship with the civil rights organization, and said it is now beyond the time to act for the sake of children in the public school system.

“We need to approach this with a tremendous sense of urgency. While there are many individual success stories, we really have a crisis on our hands,” Duncan said, adding that the NAACP can play a unique role in advocacy. “A 25 percent drop-rate means a million students leave school for the streets every year, and in the African-American and Latino communities, the rate is 50, 60 percent. It devastates entire communities.

“Folks aren’t going to agree on everything, but our common enemy is academic failure,” Duncan continued. “We have to do this with a sense of urgency, and I am looking forward to a continued partnership with the NAACP.”