Municipal Leadership in Supporting High School Alternatives: **Setting the Stage for New High Schools**

2007 | T. L. Hill Group

T. L. HILL GROUP

p: (781) 485-9979 | www.tlhillgroup.org

Setting the Stage for New High Schools

MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORTING HIGH SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES

National League of Cities'
Institute for Youth, Families, and
Eductation

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC).

NLC is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal government throughout the United States. Its mission is strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.

The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

Through the YEF Institute, municipal officials and other community leaders have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools, including:

- Action kits that offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- Technical assistance projects in selected communities.
- Issue-based peer networks to support cross-city learning.
- The National Summit on Your City's Families and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-site meetings.
- Targeted research and periodic surveys of local officials.
- The YEF Institute's web site, audioconferences, and e-mail listservs.

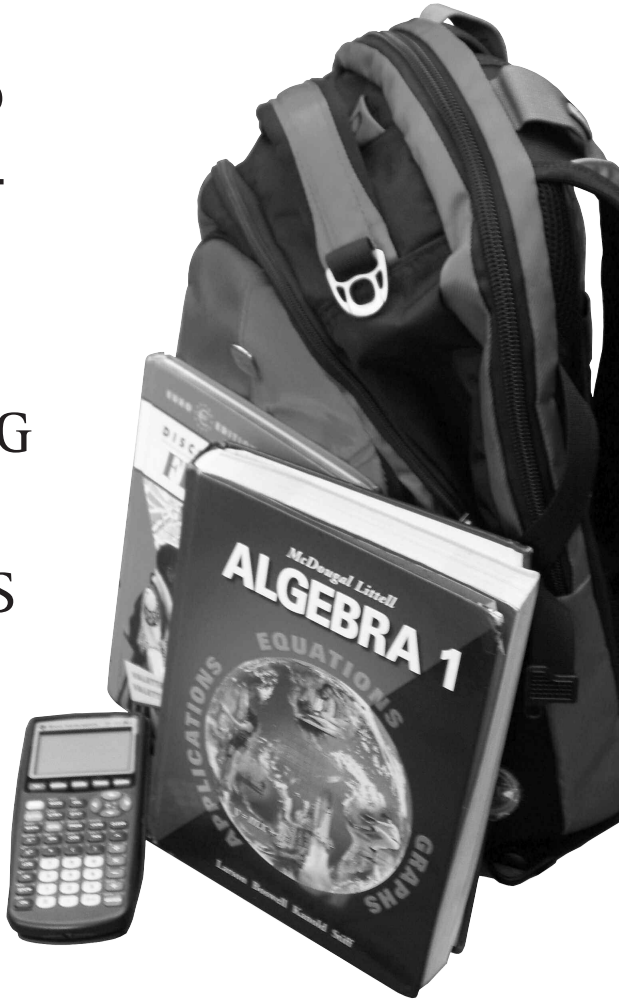
To learn more about these tools and other aspects of the YEF Institute's work, go to www.nlc.org/iyef or leave a message on the YEF Institute's information line at (202) 626-3014.

National League of Cities

Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Setting the Stage for New High Schools

MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORTING HIGH SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES



by Talmira L. Hill

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) would like to thank the mayors, school superintendents, and leaders of alternative high school initiatives whose work inspired this publication.

We acknowledge the leadership of mayors in seven cities who are helping create a policy climate that will support the expansion of alternatives for high school: Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta, Ga.; Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, Mass.; Mayor Henry Garrett and former Mayor Samuel L. Neal, Jr., of Corpus Christi, Texas; Mayor Eddie A. Perez of Hartford, Conn.; Mayor Phil Gordon of Phoenix, Ariz.; Mayor Chuck Reed and former Mayor Ron Gonzalez of San Jose, Calif.; and Mayor Greg Nickels of Seattle, Wash.

In each city, well-informed members of the mayors' and city managers' staffs, several of whom belong to the YEF Institute's Mayors Education Policy Advisors' Network, provided invaluable information for this report and thoughtful responses to our inquiries. These individuals and offices include Deborah Lum, executive director of workforce development in the Office of the Mayor, in Atlanta; Martha Pierce, mayor's education policy advisor, in Boston; City Manager George K. (Skip) Noe in Corpus Christi; Kelvin Roldan, former special assistant to the mayor and director of community initiatives, in Hartford; Deborah Dillon, director of youth and education programs in the Office of the City Manager, in Phoenix; Avo Makdessian, former deputy director of neighborhood and community services in the Office of the Mayor, and Javier Quezada, former education aide to the mayor, in San Jose; and Jessica DeBarros, policy advisor and project manager, in Seattle. In addition, we thank Sandra Cardenas, education policy advisor to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, for her helpful observations.

The school district superintendents and staff members whose cities are featured in this report were equally forthcoming with information and perspectives. We thank Dr. Beverly Hall, superintendent of Atlanta

Public Schools; Ted Dooley, Office of the Superintendent, Boston Public Schools; D. Scott Elliff, superintendent of schools, Corpus Christi Independent School District; Conrado Garcia, principal, Moody High School in Corpus Christi; Mary Giuliano, coordinator, smaller learning communities, Hartford Public Schools; George Sanchez, East Side Union High School District, San José; Bill Erlendson, assistant superintendent, educational accountability, San Jose Unified School District; and Steve Wilson, chief academic officer, Seattle Public Schools. We also thank Dr. Gene Harris, superintendent of schools in Columbus, Ohio, for her leadership and contributions which informed this report.

At the heart of present efforts to design and sustain high-quality alternatives for high school are a group of leaders participating in the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI), a network of youth development organizations supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that is committed to creating educational opportunities for young people for whom traditional school settings have not been successful. We thank Elliot Washor, Dennis Littky, Charlie Mojkowski, David Lemmel, Sam Seidel, and Lynda Armstrong of The Big Picture Company, co-convener of AHSI with the YEF Institute. We especially thank members of the AHSI Policy Group who contributed firsthand expertise: Elliot Washor and Jass Stewart of The Big Picture Company; Isaac Ewell of Black Alliance for Educational Options; Louise Reaves, Neil Shorthouse, and Reginald Beaty of Communities in Schools; Ephraim Weisstein, William Diehl, and Renee Graef of Diploma Plus; Steven J. Rippe, Ron Newell, and Doug Thomas of EdVisions Schools; Laurel Dukehart, Linda Huddle, and Nickolas Mathern of Gateway to College; Jamie Prijatel of Good Shepherd Services; Todd Goble of National Association of Street Schools; Cynthia Robbins and David Domenici of the See Forever Foundation and Maya Angelou Public Charter School; and Sangeeta Tyagi, Marc Saunders, and Ira Thomas of YouthBuild USA.

Clifford M. Johnson, the YEF Institute's executive director, and Audrey M. Hutchinson, the Institute's program director for education and afterschool initiatives, provided overall direction and guidance for this report. Andrew O. Moore, senior consultant for disconnected youth and high school reform, and Lucinda M. Dugger, research associate for education, of the YEF Institute contributed valuable information and

support. Michael Karpman provided additional editorial support, and Susan Gamble was responsible for the report's design and layout.

Generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation made this publication possible, and we thank several program officers for their guidance and encouragement. We thank Kyle Miller, whose dedication to expanding alternatives for high school led to the formation of the Alternative High School Initiative and whose ideas informed the framework for this report. Finally, we are grateful for the ongoing support of Yee-Ann Cho, senior program officer, education; Joe Scantlebury, senior policy officer; and Anh M. Nguyen, program officer, education.

About the Author

Talmira L. Hill is founder of the T. L. Hill Group, an independent firm that designs innovative, partnership-driven initiatives to improve education, workforce development, and youth development outcomes in low-income and underrepresented communities. She is a graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her expertise spans international education and community economic development, federal education policy and advocacy, high school reform, youth development, and workforce development. A program officer with the Annie E. Casey Foundation from 1995-2001, Hill initiated investments to improve results among young adults making critical transitions in life. Prior to joining the foundation, Hill served as a Special Assistant to the Under Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education during the Clinton Administration. Since January 2005, she has consulted with the YEF Institute to develop the policy component of the Alternative High School Initiative. Contact her at thill@tlhillgroup.org or visit www.tlhillgroup.org.

Executive Summary

Mayors and other municipal leaders in cities across the nation are helping expand alternatives for students who struggle in traditional high school settings. Alternatives for high school are new alternative secondary school initiatives that prepare young people to graduate from high school and achieve college and career success through programs characterized by rigor, relevance, and relationships. Progress is evident among high-quality alternatives for high school based on such indicators as increases in high school graduation rates among students participating in these programs, decreases in dropout rates, higher rates of college entry, and preliminary indications that young people will succeed in and complete postsecondary education. This report examines the leadership of mayors, school superintendents, and program innovators as these three types of leaders work together to advance system-wide education reforms and address policy conditions that facilitate the expansion of alternatives for high school.

Mayors are carving new roles for contributing to education at a timely moment. A national debate is raging about overall high school graduation rates and their close counterpart, dropout rates. It is a dispute among researchers that threatens to spill out of the schoolyard and into the communities of America. A report released in November 2006 by the National Center on Education Statistics indicates that in October 2004, approximately 3.8 million 16- through 24-year olds were not enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma or alternative credential such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, accounting for 10.3 percent of the 36.5 million 16- through 24-year olds in the United States in 2004.[1] Graduation rates vary by state, with New Jersey graduating 88 percent of its students in 2003, while South Carolina, Georgia, and New York have graduation

1 Laird, Jennifer, Matthew DeBell, and Chris Chapman, "Dropout Rates in the United States: 2004," U.S. Department of Education, November 2006 (NCES 2007-024), p. 1.

rates below 60 percent.[2] According to some estimates, nearly one third of high school students nationwide do not graduate on time, and among African American, Latino, and Native American students, the proportion may be almost half.[3]

The problem is most acute in urban areas, and particularly in central cities. In each of the nation's ten largest high school districts, accounting for more than 8 percent of the country's public school students, less than 60 percent of students graduated in 2003.[4] Recent studies of dropout rates in New York City and Philadelphia highlight the severity of the crisis in central city high schools.[5] According to the Center for Social Organization of Schools in its report, "Unfulfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005," only 45 to 52 percent of Philadelphia students who entered ninth grade and formed the classes of 2003-2005 earned a high school diploma in four years, and only about 40 percent of Latino young men earned a diploma in six years; only half of African American and white young men in the classes of 2000-2003 ever finished high school.[6] Similarly, a report issued by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University credits New York State with having the worst overall graduation rates for African American and Latino students – only 35 percent graduate, a rate largely attributed to New York City schools; given potential discrepancies in reporting, the actual rate might be even higher.[7]

Whether it is true that 82 percent of the nation's students graduate having earned a regular diploma, with rates for black and Hispanic

---

2 Greene, Jay P. and Marcus A. Winters, "Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates," *Civic Report*, The Manhattan Institute, No. 48, April 2006. (http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_48.htm).

3 Paulsen, Amanda. "Dropout Rates High, but Fixes Under Way," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 3, 2006 (http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0303/p01s02-legn.html).

4 Greene and Winters, April 2006.

5 Robelen, Erik W. "Detailed Dropout Studies Guide Policy in City Schools," *Education Week*, Vol. 26, Issue 12, pages 8-9, November 15, 2006.

6 Neild, Ruth Curran and Robert Balfanz. "Unfulfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005," October 19, 2006.

7 Grodin, Jaclyn. "In New York, Rising Teen Drop-out and Incarceration Rates," *Washington Square Review*, Spring 2005.

students of about 75 percent,[8] or whether reality is more dismal with one in three students dropping out of school nationally and just above 50 percent of black and Latino young people not graduating from high school at all,[9] municipalities and their leaders are all too familiar with the consequences. In an increasingly competitive global economy, when students drop out of school and are less than gainfully employed, their fates quickly become entangled with those of their communities – the cities, suburbs, and small towns that make up the world beyond school hallways and doors.

The Pew Partnership for Civic Change identifies the dropout crisis as "a nationwide epidemic" that results in costs of $200-$300 billion to communities and the nation as a whole.[10] America's young people between the ages of 16 and 24, particularly those who do not graduate from high school, suffer higher levels of joblessness, lower incomes, decreased spending power, reduced work experience and on the job training, and higher rates of criminal activity, idleness, and aimlessness than any other segment of the labor force.[11] In 2000, even during the peak of a national economic boom, only one in five high school students living in poor families was able to obtain any type of job, and among young high school dropouts (16-24 years old), only 55 percent were working. That year's employment rate fell to 44 percent for poor high school dropouts and one in three for poor African American dropouts.[12] As the mayor of one urban East Coast city put it, "I am

---

8 Economic Policy Institute news release, http://www.epi.org/newsroom/releases/2006/04/060420-highschoolpr-final.pdf.

9 Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, "Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates," *Civic Report*, The Manhattan Institute, No. 48, April 2006. (http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_48.htm). See also Education Week, June 20, 2006, Press Release indicating that about 30 percent of the class of 2006 will fail to graduate with their peers, according to a new analysis by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.

10 Pew Partnership for Civic Change, http://www.pewpartnership.org/resources/dropout_crisis.html.

11 Sum, Andrew, Garth Mangum and Robert Taggart, "The Young, the Restless, and the Jobless: The Case for a National Jobs Stimulus Program Targeted on America's Young Adults," Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies, Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Monograph 02-01, June 2002, p. 1.

12 Ibid, pp. 1-2.

tired of seeing kids hanging out on street corners," and thus he began working with the school superintendent to create positive, supportive opportunities for young people in school and out-of-school to become civically, academically, and recreationally engaged in activities of the city.

In 2003, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Big Picture Company launched the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) as a response to the growing national trend of diminishing graduation rates affecting the country's low-income African American and Latino youth.[13] The initiative enables a growing network of ten youth development organizations to expand their alternative educational programs nationwide and engages municipal leaders through the National League of Cities' (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute). With additional Gates Foundation support, the YEF Institute launched an initiative to support municipal leadership in education, which led to the formation of the Mayors' Education Policy Advisors' Network, and provided teams of municipal and school district leaders in five cities with technical assistance in advancing alternatives for high school.[14] Philanthropic and civic leadership to address this issue is increasingly visible and widespread.

- Early and ongoing efforts of Achieve, Inc., and other organizations prominently leading the charge to promote high school graduation in the U.S. have evolved into recent activity involving a wide array of institutions.
- The Pew Partnership for Civic Change has invested with a similar aim in the Learning to Finish™ Campaign – a national community-based effort to devise effective solutions in response to the dropout crisis.[15]

---

13 For information on the Alternative High School Initiative, visit http://www.ahsi.info.

14 The Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School is one of several education and youth programs offered through the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. Cities receiving technical assistance for expanding high school alternatives include Corpus Christi, Texas; Hartford, Conn.; Phoenix, Ariz.; San Antonio, Texas; and San José, Calif. See www.nlc.org/iyef for details.

15 Visit http://www.learningtofinish.org.

- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has started a venture capital investment strategy with its New Options for Youth Initiative, which supports innovations to create a new credential that would offer a valued alternative to the high school diploma and the associate degree.[16]
- The Youth Transition Funders Group has formed partnerships of intermediaries to address the needs of out-of-school youth in several cities, including Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Portland, Ore., and San José, Calif.[17]
- The National Governors Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices launched an Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools following the 2005 National Education Summit on High School, and through the NGA Honor States Grant Program, governors are moving states toward using a standard calculation for measuring high school graduation rates.
- Most recently, the Center for American Progress and Jobs for the Future released a report, "Addressing America's Dropout Challenge: State Efforts to Boost Graduation Rates Require Federal Support," which calls upon Congress to pass the proposed Graduation Promise Act of 2007, establishing a federal commitment to partner with states, districts, and schools to raise graduation rates.[18] An initiative of nationwide scale engaging municipal, state, and federal leadership in promoting high school graduation has the potential to succeed.

Every investment is essential. In a recent survey conducted by Civic Enterprises with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, high school students discussed their perspectives on dropping out of school.[19] Among students surveyed, nearly 90 percent had passing

16 Visit http://www.wkkf.org and locate the New Options for Youth Initiative.

17 Visit http://www.ytfg.org for information on the Out of School Youth/Struggling Students Work Group.

18 Steinberg, Adria, Cassius Johnson, and Hilary Pennington. "Addressing America's Dropout Challenge: State Efforts to Boost Graduation Rates Require Federal Support," November 2006.

19 Bridgeland, John M., John J. Dilulio, Jr., and Karen Burke Morison, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts," March 2006.

grades when they left school, and the top reason cited for not completing high school was boredom.[20] A concerted, nationwide effort to engage high school students in learning is underway, and the commitment of civic and community leaders as well as educators will be necessary to sustain it.

Alternatives for High School

State education agencies define "alternative education," "alternative schools," and related terms referring to non-traditional academic programs differently.[21] Throughout this report, the term "alternatives for high school" will be used to refer to a broad range of emerging interventions that are characterized by high levels of student academic achievement and personal success. The findings of this report were informed largely by the practice and policy efforts of AHSI. While all of the AHSI models serve young people who are struggling academically and otherwise in traditional high schools, and in some instances reach those who have dropped out of school, these programs are characterized by several key features that distinguish them from more common alternative programs. These five AHSI "distinguishers" include the following:

- Authentic learning, teaching, and performance assessment;
- Personalized school culture;
- Shared leadership and responsibility;
- Supportive partnerships; and
- A focus on the future for students.

Alternatives to traditional high school settings are critical for ensuring that all students have a range of opportunities for earning a high school diploma and preparing for college and careers. As alternatives for high school expand to respond to a growing need, the oppor-

20 Ibid.

21 State education agencies use varying terms to define alternative education. See Mala Thakur and Kristen Henry (2005). "Financing Alternative Education Pathways: Profiles and Policy," (Washington, D.C.: National Youth Employment Coalition, 2005), p. 10.

tunity arises to enhance the policy environment by removing barriers that hinder their effectiveness and advancing policies that promote their large-scale success.

Mayoral Leadership

To examine the roles of mayors and other municipal leaders, this report features efforts by mayors and other key city officials to promote reforms that will help support the expansion of alternatives for high school in seven cities – Atlanta, Boston, Corpus Christi, Texas, Hartford, Conn., Phoenix, San José, and Seattle. In each city, mayors are taking action to promote high-quality education, including alternatives for high school by working both independently and in collaboration with school superintendents. In these cities, young people who had not fulfilled their academic potential in traditional high school settings are engaged in alternatives for high school that are enabling them to thrive academically and personally.

- In Atlanta, Mayor Shirley Franklin launched the Mayor's Youth Program to ensure that every high school student enrolled in Atlanta Public Schools would have a post-high school graduation plan that included earning a high school diploma and achieving college success.
- In Boston, the mayor works consistently alongside the school superintendent to realize a shared vision for system-wide high school reform that embraces alternatives for high school. *Education Week* recently named Boston and Chicago among a growing number of school districts taking a more centrally managed approach to high school curricula, one tactic contributing to a broader, district-wide strategy for high school reform.[22] Mayor Thomas M. Menino, along with former Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant, and the Boston School Committee successfully created the

22 Gewertz, Catherine. "Getting Down to the Core: The Chicago school district takes an 'intentional' approach to high school courses," *Education Week*, Vol. 26, Issue 13, pp. 26-29, November 29, 2006. See also Judy Wurtzel, "Transforming High School Teaching and Learning: A District-Wide Design," posted by Aspen Institute's Education and Society Program, May 2006 (http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

Boston Public Schools Office of High School Renewal with support from private national foundations.

- The mayor of Corpus Christi, Henry Garrett, has continued the efforts initiated by Mayor Samuel L. Neal, Jr., to create a system of "All American City" high schools to help all students achieve high standards and graduate ready to continue their education and enter the world of work. Mayor Garrett consistently engages parents and others by convening a community forum series called "Even One Dropout is Too Many."

- In Hartford, Mayor Eddie A. Perez is helping construct city magnet schools, including the Noah Webster MicroSociety Magnet School – one of seven Hartford schools targeted for completion in 2005 or 2006, with $286 million of state bond money.[23] "This is another example of the Hartford school building program ensuring that we have 21st century facilities for our students," says Mayor Perez.[24]

- In Phoenix, Mayor Phil Gordon is using funds from a recently launched City of Phoenix Bond Program to create new, small high schools and to restructure large existing high schools into smaller learning communities.[25] Through Mayor Gordon's Small Schools Initiative, Phoenix will make $6.8 million in bond funds available in fiscal year 2008-09 to build small high schools.[26]

- Former San José Mayor Ron Gonzalez mounted "San José High Schools Achieve!" which aims to have no high school dropouts in the city by 2010 and to increase graduation rates by 10 percent by 2010. While in office, Mayor Gonzalez assisted Franklin McKinley High School in building a new school on land leased for one dollar

---

23 Office of Mayor Eddie Perez. (2004). Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez Announces Substantial Progress in Constructing City Magnet Schools. Press Release, October 26, 2004.

24 Ibid.

25 City of Phoenix. (2005). City of Phoenix 2006 Bond Program Fact Sheet, November 16, 2005, page 2.

26 City of Phoenix. (2006). "Phoenix Small Schools Initiative," presentation during NLC Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006, slide 6.

from the City of San José for the next 100 years. In an effort to address teacher retention throughout the district, the mayor launched a Teacher Homebuyer Program that assists public school teachers in purchasing first homes in the city. Newly elected Mayor Chuck Reed is attentive to the importance of addressing education issues in San José.

- Finally, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels is upholding the legacy of former Mayor Norm Rice who first instituted Seattle's Families and Education Levy in 1990. Today, Mayor Nickels has expanded the tax levy, thereby generating additional revenue, and has established an Accountability and Evaluation Framework that links expenditures for programs funded under the tax levy to provisions for measuring academic results among students. In addition, there is a formal partnership agreement between the city and Seattle Public School District to reduce the achievement gap among students.

To achieve these positive results, mayors and other municipal leaders are playing eight key roles to create a conducive policy climate that supports the expansion of alternatives for high school:

1. Using the "bully pulpit" to raise awareness of the issue and to help shift perceptions of alternative education;
2. Convening and partnering with key community leaders;
3. Using access to facilities, buildings, and funding for construction;
4. Creating incentives for programmatic reform;
5. Promoting the use of data, research, and evaluation to manage based on such results as increasing graduation rates and reducing dropout rates;
6. Employing financial incentives, such as tax levies or bond measures;
7. Participating in school district planning and decision-making processes; and
8. Implementing policies and programs within the city that support positive reforms at the state and local levels.

These roles were identified through a 2004 survey of members of the Mayors' Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) conducted by the YEF Institute.[27] Subsequent interviews with a select group of municipal leaders affirmed these types of activities and interventions as being instrumental. Based on these roles, it is possible to identify three primary leadership keys mayors are using to facilitate the expansion of alternatives for high school:

- Making and fulfilling commitments to enhance education for all students through initiatives that promote alternatives for high school;
- Utilizing city, county, and/or town resources to invest in alternatives for high school and to leverage additional resources for these innovations; and
- Partnering with school superintendents and leaders of alternatives for high school to achieve positive results.

School Governance Structures

Each profile of mayoral leadership featured in this report presents information about how mayors collaborate with school superintendents to create a more favorable policy environment for expanding alternatives for high school. The characteristics of the local policy environment often help determine which strategies will be most effective in promoting these alternatives. A list of Top Ten Factors relevant for analyzing the policy environment for expanding alternatives for high school appears in Appendix C.

Perhaps the number one factor to consider is the nature of formal and informal roles and relationships among the mayor, school superintendent, and school board/committee. In cities in which mayors have formal roles with regard to oversight and management of the school district, often appointing members of the school board who in turn hire a school superintendent, their leadership helps define a

27 National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. EPAN Survey Results, 2004.

vision and influences implementation. In successful instances in which mayors exercise a great deal of formal control over the school district, as in Boston, the mayor and school superintendent share a common vision and carefully leverage all resources at their collective disposal to achieve it.

In cities in which the mayor does not directly oversee the governance of the school system, the opportunities for collaboration on high school reform are somewhat different, but not necessarily more limited. In these cities, school board members usually are elected locally, and the school superintendent is hired by the school board. In Atlanta, Corpus Christi, Hartford, Phoenix, San José, and Seattle, the mayors and school superintendents work together to expand educational options and alternatives for high school students despite the absence of any formal oversight role in education by the mayor. They exercise leadership independently and in partnership with school leaders. Whatever the policy environment, effective mayors and other municipal leaders find ways to work with school superintendents to achieve positive results.

Leadership by Program Innovators

This report is also informed by NLC's work with the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI). The AHSI network's high-quality alternatives for high school are expanding their models by opening new sites across the nation. AHSI organizations are led by highly regarded innovators whose alternatives for high school provide students with rigor, relevance, and relationships, preparing them to graduate from high school and achieve college and career success. Since the perspectives of program innovators are essential for understanding the policy environment affecting alternatives for high school – both barriers and opportunities – the report provides examples of "what works" based on the experiences and successful policy interventions implemented by AHSI organizations in its discussion of municipal leadership to support high school reform.

Just as mayors are encouraged to exercise leadership in expanding alternatives for high school, program innovators are urged to do the

same. Specifically, there are three types of activities that program innovators can pursue to strengthen their efforts:

- Making connections with mayors and other municipal leaders to inform them about local alternatives for high school and to forge relationships that enable these alternatives to capitalize on resources cities have to offer;
- Engaging in policy advocacy as a component of ongoing program development; and
- Selectively participating in partnerships and collaborating with a variety of relevant stakeholders to broaden the audiences and bases of support for alternatives for high school.

The report concludes with observations about how and why the mayors, school superintendents, and program innovators featured have been able to create opportunities for progress in expanding alternatives for high school. Finally, the report offers recommendations for mayors and other municipal leaders, and for program innovators as well. Several of these recommendations do not require changes in policy at the local, state, or federal level, or any form of policy advocacy. On the contrary, several recommendations highlight the critical roles of visionary leadership, committed partnerships, and political will at the local level to take action that will improve practice.

To achieve large-scale success with young people who are not yet succeeding in traditional high schools, mayors and other municipal leaders are encouraged to take thoughtful action in promoting and advancing policies that expand alternatives for high school. In so doing, it will be beneficial for municipal leaders to work together with school district leaders and program innovators. Ideally, three-way collaboration fostered among these leaders will go a long way toward expanding alternatives for high school and ensuring that young people stay in and graduate from the high schools they attend.

I

Seven Key Policy Conditions for Large-Scale Success

When her cell phone rang, the mayor of Atlanta reached gingerly but urgently into her shoulder bag to answer it. Walking back to her office from a meeting at City Hall, the mayor knew this call might bring any manner of news. As with other mayors and county executives, calls on this phone arrive from staff members, attorneys, fellow public officials, a few trusted journalists, family members, and in the case of Mayor Shirley Franklin – high school seniors. "Hello?" answered the mayor who was prepared for anything. A halting, barely audible young woman's voice replied, "Mayor Franklin?" Wondering what to say, Tasha Greene[28] hesitantly told the mayor that she was not sure what she would be doing after graduating from high school in two months, but she knew she was supposed to talk with Mayor Franklin about it – and talk Tasha did.

In those few minutes, Mayor Franklin and Tasha talked about it all – how Tasha, always a straight-A student, almost dropped out of school in the ninth grade when she became pregnant with her son Davon, and how an alternative high school initiative, Communities in Schools of Georgia (CISGA),[29] had enabled her to complete her high school education on time. Mayor Franklin listened as Tasha talked about how her family, including little Davon, would cheer her on as she walked across the stage

28 Names of young people in this report are fictional and do not intentionally refer to any person who may be affiliated with actual programs, organizations, or institutions. The stories are based on true events.

29 Communities in Schools of Georgia (CISGA) is a member of the Alternative High School Initiative supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. http://www.cisga.org.

to receive her diploma. Mayor Franklin then mentioned a few post-graduation options Tasha might want to consider based on her interests, several of which CISGA had helped Tasha identify as part of assisting her to plan beyond high school. By the end of the conversation, Tasha said she felt as excited about the day ***after*** graduation as the day itself. Mayor Franklin congratulated the high school senior and asked if she would give her another call once she figured out whether or not she would apply to one of several associate degree programs offered by Atlanta Technical College or Atlanta Metropolitan College; attending either would enable Tasha to work full-time. As Mayor Franklin ended the call, she sighed with pride that Tasha was pressing onward and hoped the rest of her own day would leave her feeling as fulfilled as she did in this moment.

The personal attention Mayor Franklin devotes to high school seniors through the Mayor's Youth Program[30] – an initiative that assists high school graduates in achieving their postsecondary plans – is unique to the City of Atlanta, but the attention municipal leaders are paying to high schools and their ability to graduate students is becoming more common. A growing cadre of mayors and other city leaders recognize that the time has arrived for tending to America's high schools. High school students, whether they graduate or drop out of school, are becoming adult citizens, parents, community leaders, and the workforce of today and tomorrow. They either bolster a city's or town's ability to thrive and grow or leave it with lackluster prospects for nurturing its neighborhoods and expanding the local economy. In addition, mayors and other municipal leaders are not alone in their activity. Governors are involved too, as are private foundations, national nonprofit organizations, and a host of others working locally, statewide, and regionally.[31]

---

30 The Mayor's Youth Program is an initiative of Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta. Information may be found by visiting the city's website http://www.mayorsyouthprogram.org/.

31 A number of initiatives are underway to address high school reform, examine high school graduation and dropout rates, improve access to college, and related topics. Among them are the National Governors' Association's Honor States Grant Program; Jobs for the Future's Early College High School Initiative; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative, which supports work by the American Youth Policy Forum, the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, and others; research by the Economic Policy Institute, the Manhattan Institute, the Urban Institute, and others examining high school dropout and graduation rates; and media coverage of the high school graduation/dropout rate debate.

Far-sighted municipal leaders who get involved in high school reform efforts discover that they are well-positioned to collaborate with school district leaders and innovative educators in expanding alternatives for high school. Neither standing idly to watch the fate of their cities go the way of struggling public school systems, nor rushing to judgment and attempting to reform public education from their executive seats in local government, these leaders often find innovative ways to contribute to the well-being of public high schools by moving beyond the extremes of school "takeover" or "hands-off" approaches that historically seemed to characterize interventions by mayors.[32] Instead, municipal efforts to support high school reform increasingly fall along a new continuum of approaches that engage the entire community and critical segments within it in improving high schools.

To demonstrate the integral roles of mayors, school superintendents, and practitioners, particularly when they align efforts, this report features examples of municipal leadership complemented by that of school and program leaders. City leaders interviewed for this report are making progress in creating a conducive climate that promotes

32 Michael W. Kirst, "Mayoral Influence, New Regimes, and Public School Governance," Consortium for Policy Research in Education Research Report Series RR-049, May 2002.

Photo Courtesy of AHSI/Big Picture

alternatives for high school. Members of leadership teams from each city describe how their commitments are resulting in success for young people. In every instance, city leaders are working alongside school leaders to highlight, enhance, and contribute in concrete ways to efforts that strengthen education, particularly at the high school level. Of the cities featured in this report, four – Corpus Christi, Hartford, Phoenix, and San José – participated in the YEF Institute technical assistance initiative to assist municipal leaders in expanding alternatives for high school. School superintendents interviewed for this report commented on the intricate ways in which they work with city leaders to advance their common interests in improving education for all children, youth and families. Finally, innovations in teaching and learning are emerging as practitioners lead the way in creating new alternative high school models and refining existing ones. Program models presented in this report belong to the Alternative High School Initiative.[33] *See Appendix A for brief descriptions of each program model.*

The interviews with leaders of selected cities, school districts, and AHSI network organizations, as well as other information gathered for this report,[34] revealed **seven key policy conditions** necessary for alternatives for high school to achieve large-scale success:

- Increased college access;
- Need-based, adequacy approach to funding;
- Rigorous, reasonable academic standards and assessments;
- Strong accountability;
- Expanded options for parents and students;
- Open sector/readiness to open alternative high schools; and
- Coordination with city and other public agencies and community organizations.

---

33 The Alternative High School Initiative is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Please visit the website at http://www.ahsi.info for general information.

34 See Appendix B for a discussion of the methodology used to gather information for this report.

This report defines and explores these seven policy conditions and the key roles municipal leaders can play to help advance them. Each policy condition is explained from the perspective of alternative for high school models in the AHSI network. Commentary by the leaders of the seven cities and school districts interviewed for this report affirms the significance of these policy conditions. In each instance, barriers are discussed, and specific examples of solutions are provided by leaders of AHSI network organizations, cities, and school districts. In addition, to maintain the focus on individual young people and how city leadership can have implications for their ability to graduate from high school and succeed in college, stories are interwoven to help illustrate the relevance of each of the seven policy conditions. The report concludes with a list of informational resources for leaders of other cities, school districts, and promising programs to tap when heeding the call to expand options and alternatives for high school.

Not surprisingly, most policy barriers identified by program innovators reside in federal, state, or local education policies. However, municipal policies generally are not problematic in hindering the development of alternatives for high school. This is good news because it presents new opportunities for municipal leaders to get involved in supportive efforts to help expand innovative options and alternatives.

Seven Policy Conditions for Large-Scale Success

1. Increased College Access

AHSI program models enable students to complete high school by earning a regular diploma or an equivalent credential, and they prepare young people to pursue postsecondary education.

2. Need-based, Adequacy Approach to Funding

Adequate funding at levels above per pupil funding allotments for traditional high school programs is essential if alternatives for high school are to reach a sustainable, nationwide scale.

Continued on next page

3. Rigorous, Reasonable Academic Standards and Assessments

Alternatives for high school are committed to ensuring that students achieve requisite academic standards and competencies for high school completion and readiness for entry into postsecondary education. To do this, AHSI models measure student mastery of content with various instruments along a continuum that includes state-required tests, as well as authentic assessments of performance through tasks, projects, and portfolios.

4. Strong Accountability

Alternatives for high school are dedicated to being held accountable for students' academic achievement. Students who have not fulfilled their academic potential in traditional K-12 settings often require additional supports. An alternative model's accountability must be aligned with access to the necessary resources and flexibility for innovation in programming that will enable students to succeed.

5. Expanded Options for Parents and Students

Parents and students would benefit from a wider range of alternatives for high school, preferably with the ability to choose a learning environment likely to be effective at enabling a young person to achieve success.

6. Open Sector/Readiness to Open Alternative High Schools

Launching and expanding alternatives for high school requires a healthy "open sector" in education that is receptive to education programs that expand, enhance, and recalibrate the premises and structure of the existing public school system.

7. Coordination with City and Other Public Agencies and Community Organizations

Alternatives for high school recognize the need to offer students supports and services that are beyond the purview of the school system to provide. To do this, many alternatives for high school coordinate with other public agencies and with community organizations to create options for students to tap into a range of appropriate resources.

II

Increased College Access

MetWest graduate Juan Carlos Rodriguez was ecstatic! Grinning, he held his high school diploma in one hand and hugged his mother with the other arm as a bright flash from the camera blinded them. He was eager to hurry and finish the photos because he had to say farewell to a few of his friends who would attend college out-of-state in the fall, and he didn't know when he might see them again. Juan Carlos had been accepted and was already enrolled to begin his freshman year in the fall at the University of California, Irvine. While his family crowded together, he slipped out and called to his classmate who would attend Howard University in Washington, D.C., this fall. "EAST COAST!" he yelled! Ever since news of his friend's acceptance spread, they had been calling him "East Coast" and reminding him to "represent" – not forget that he's a West Coast boy at heart. "Man, you'd better bring your 'ole burrito-eatin' self over here!" his friend yelled back. They hugged. They joked. They laughed. They had made history. It would be hard to believe that four years earlier, they were failing ninth grade with GPAs below 1.0, barely attending their regular high schools.

To their credit, all 25 seniors who completed MetWest High School in Oakland graduated that year, receiving their diplomas on June 15, 2006, and all 25 have been accepted into four-year colleges.[35] MetWest is one of 34 innovative high schools affiliated with The Big Picture

35 Sebastien, Simone. (June 15, 2006). "Small, Unorthodox School has Big Results," *San Francisco Chronicle* (Front Page).
See http://www.bigpicture.org/publications/2006archives/SFChronicle06.pdf.

Company, a national nonprofit educational change organization and a coordinating member of the Alternative High School Initiative. The Big Picture Company espouses the belief that effective schools are personalized to educate every student equally, one student at a time.[36] Not only did 100 percent of MetWest seniors graduate, but every one was prepared to enter college in the fall, demonstrating the ability of alternatives for high school to increase college access for all students – one student at a time.

Alternatives for high school aim to **increase college access** for young people by addressing three tiers that lead to college readiness. The first tier involves raising college awareness and widening students' expectations of going to college. By exposing young people to college early in their academic careers and making them aware of the range of postsecondary options available, alternatives for high school encourage students to envision themselves attending college. The second tier addresses students' eligibility for college by assessing critical academic proficiencies and informing students of college admission requirements, including courses and exams. Students use this information to plan which high school courses to take and other activities likely to enhance their competitiveness for college. The third tier involves preparing students academically and otherwise to apply to and succeed in college. Preparation for college involves ensuring not only that students are competent academically but that they have the resources they need within themselves and among caring networks of support to thrive in college.[37] In their efforts to promote young people's readiness for college, alternatives for high school often are challenged by policies within the school system and in higher education institutions that do not easily accommodate innovation.

---

36 The Big Picture Company Philosophy, see http://www.bigpicture.org/aboutus/philosophy.htm.

37 The Big Picture Company, (April 2006). "3 Tiers to College Ready: A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool," developed from two Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting (BERC) Group documents and from the AHSI Distinguishers.

What makes it tough?

Challenges to increasing college access arise at each tier of assisting students with college readiness. First, students' expectations for attending college often are inhibited by two main policy barriers: insufficient financial aid to help make college affordable for young people from families with limited financial resources and inadequate funding for academic and social programming to support students attending college. Second, efforts to address college eligibility and preparation are met with policy barriers that stem from a lack of alignment between high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements.

One second-tier strategy adopted by a few alternatives for high school is to dually enroll students in high school and college courses, enabling them to simultaneously earn certain secondary and postsecondary course credits. This strategy helps make the transition from high school to college relatively seamless. However, impediments to this strategy include difficulty securing dual enrollment status for students enrolled in alternatives for high school; funding shortfalls because state education agencies do not consistently allot funds for students dually enrolled, and often per pupil funding is unable to be blended for these students; challenges in ensuring that students comply with high school course-taking requirements; and adherence to strict laws, policies, and regulations defining the length of the school day and location of high school course-taking.

What makes it work?

AHSI network organizations identified three critical policies that facilitate large-scale success in increasing college access. These are dual enrollment and dual credit, school-college autonomy, and supports that assist young people to stay in and finish college.

- **Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit** are part of a larger effort to create a significant college experience for students while they are in high school. Features of this broader college exposure in high school might include (but are not limited to) being enrolled concurrently in both a high school alternative and a postsecondary

education program; participating in a bridge program that links high school and college experiences; enrolling in courses that are co-taught by high school and college instructors; and taking pre-remedial courses. States have different policies regarding dual enrollment and dual credit. North Carolina, for example, allows dual enrollment and dual credit, but students must spend at least half of the day in a high school building to be considered enrolled in high school.

- **School-College Autonomy** is important because school districts and postsecondary institutions operate independently of one another, each with their own laws, policies, and regulations. These institutions need to coordinate effectively to ensure that students are able to meet the requirements of alternatives for high school and postsecondary programs. Students' coursework, credits, and exams need to be completed as a priority. In some instances, policies regarding logistics and seat time requirements, for example, need adjustment to increase flexibility for students as they pursue their academic goals.

  One AHSI model challenged by this issue is Diploma Plus®. Diploma Plus® is an AHSI model that offers an engaging, student-centered curriculum designed to enable young people at risk of not completing high school and those who have dropped out to fulfill key competencies within a high school setting.[38] In the Plus Phase of this program, students take college classes – 81 percent of students in the program between 2002 and 2004 passed at least one course, and most (71 percent) earned a "C" or better in at least one course.[39] Students taking these courses are required to adhere to two academic calendars – those of the school district and college. This requirement leads to uneven availability of resources and transportation, and it creates some teachers' union issues for staff members who may not be required to teach on a given date based on the school district's calendar but who may be willing to

38 Please visit http://www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus for additional information on Diploma Plus®.

39 Ibid, Outcomes – http://www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus/dp-outcomes.html.

supervise, monitor, or otherwise support students preparing for college exams, for example, on those days.

- **Supports to Stay In and Finish College** are required of alternatives for high school as well as higher education institutions. Increasing college access is an ongoing process that begins within an alternative for high school and continues in college. While alternatives for high school address three tiers to college readiness, higher education institutions need to engage in outreach and active partnerships to deliberately connect with students. Higher education institutions might benefit from incentives that encourage them to work harder at attracting and retaining "non-traditional" students. For example, two- and four-year colleges might work toward aligning course credits so that students would be able to pursue the transition from a two- to four-year college. Another priority would be to target resources for services bridging high school and programs at the college level. Financial aid for postsecondary education is decreasing at all levels (federal, state, and private) despite the increasing cost of higher education, a condition that merits reversal if lower-income students are to complete postsecondary degree programs.

What are the innovators doing?

- The Gateway to College® program led by Portland Community College (PCC) in Portland, Ore., serves at-risk youth ages 16 to 20 years old who have dropped out of school and gives them the opportunity to earn a high school diploma while achieving college success. Students simultaneously accumulate high school and college credits, earning their high school diploma while progressing toward an associate degree or certificate.[40] Gateway to College is an AHSI model, and it participates in the Early College High School Initiative managed by Jobs for the Future.[41] As a

40 Please visit The Gateway to College website for more information – http://www.gatewaytocollege.org.

41 The Early College High School Initiative (ECHS) has a website – http://www.earlycolleges.org, and more information is available at the Jobs for the Future website as well – http://www.jff.org.

result of the Gateway to College national replication project, PCC is grappling with several of these policy issues in localities across the U.S. In North Carolina, for example, PCC is seeking a waiver of the half-day residency provision to enable students in Gateway to College to be awarded high school credit without having to spend half-days physically in a traditional high school building.

- In California, Rhode Island, and Indiana, the Big Picture Company is working on a project to raise graduation rates at two- and four-year colleges by creating community-wide supports. Students will enroll in college while maintaining enrollment in their Big Picture Company programs. As students make the transition to college, they are able to access supports and services through Big Picture's community-wide network.
- Communities in Schools of Georgia (CISGA) offers a secondary school alternative for students who are not succeeding in traditional school settings. Through CISGA, students enroll in Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) which provide another road to high school graduation by creating business-like learning environments for academic innovation where students undertake and complete assignments with assistance from one or more learning facilitators.[42] CISGA enables students whose academic success may be threatened to become successful students prepared to move to the next level educationally, vocationally, and as citizens of Georgia.[43] CISGA's network includes 48 locally managed programs serving students in 52 counties and 29 school systems throughout Georgia.

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

As innovative educators find solutions to help expand options and alternatives for high school, municipal leaders are taking a look at these policy conditions within their cities, counties, and towns, and they are contributing in multiple ways.

---

42 See http://www.cisga.org/PLCinfo.html.

43 Ibid.

Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta launched the Mayor's Youth Program with the class of 2005 in conjunction with the Atlanta Public School system. The mayor is taking a personal interest in ensuring that every high school senior has a plan for what happens after graduation, and through the mayor's initiative, the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency is offering hands-on assistance to every high school student. The mayor visited ten high schools in Atlanta during pep rallies and told students about the program designed to provide mentoring, counseling about post-graduation options, and informational resources for securing financial aid for postsecondary education, applying to college, and exploring technical schools, the military, or careers.

In 2005, more than 600 Atlanta public school graduates were helped with tuition, laptops, and other assistance through the Mayor's Youth Program.[44] That year, 411 students were accepted into college after completing their senior year, and they now attend 91 different colleges and universities throughout the U.S., including the University of Miami, Tennessee State University, The Julliard School, and the Berklee College of Music. The mayor meets one-on-one with high school seniors on scheduled Saturdays at the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency. In 2005, she personally interviewed 800 students to find out what they needed and wanted to happen after high school and to find out the problems and obstacles they faced. One student called Mayor Franklin at 2:00 a.m., and she talked with him about his uncertainty about what to do next.

Mayor Franklin taps multiple funding streams to support this initiative. Housed in the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (AWDA) with active leadership and involvement by Mayor Franklin, Mayor's Youth Program staff members who assist with services are partially supported under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). A U.S. Department of Education grant supports a fellowship for one colleague to assist students with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The mayor has raised additional funds through a campaign that garnered $2 million in 45 days from throughout the Atlanta community

44 See http://www.mayorsyouthprogram.org/.

to assist the graduating class of 2005 with senior activity fees and fees for taking the PSAT and SAT. Private corporations, individuals, foundations, and others responded to personal phone calls from Mayor Franklin.

In many cases, the Mayor's Youth Program simply connects students with existing resources, like the Hope Scholarship, a statewide program funded by the state of Georgia lottery. The Hope Scholarship pays full tuition for students with a 3.0 GPA or better, and it covers mandatory fees and a $300 book allowance for state supported institutions. Students attending a private institution receive $3,000 and a state award of $900. One Atlanta inner-city student had no idea he could even go to college. Mayor's Youth Program mentors encouraged him to take the SAT, and he earned a cumulative score of 1310, enabling him to earn a scholarship and financial aid to attend Savannah State University. The mayor is running the program without changing any local policies.

Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools (APS) Dr. Beverly Hall avidly endorses the Mayor's Youth Program, and schools welcome Mayor Franklin's involvement. Dr. Hall recalls that when the mayor approached her about how the City of Atlanta might be supportive of the school district, the focus on high schools made sense. "APS is doing very well with our elementary schools, and we want to focus on high schools," explained Dr. Hall. Dr. Hall is leading a broad, district-wide reform of high schools that includes:

- Opening The New Schools at Carver, a campus offering four theme-based academies and flexible scheduling;
- Continuing to improve alternative high schools for a small percentage of students including juvenile offenders who have not had success in traditional settings;
- Implementing Project GRAD to increase high school graduation rates; and
- Launching an initiative to open alternative models in all traditional schools that would enable students to earn a diploma in four years and attend two summer institutes on a college campus.

The mayor promotes APS school reforms and was visibly helpful when APS released its report on the first five years of school reform.

Atlanta Public Schools is an independent school district. Members of the Atlanta Board of Education are independently elected for four-year terms, representing six geographic districts and three at-large districts. The Board appoints the APS superintendent and determines the level of local property tax revenue it will levy each year – the millage rate – to fund public education. Although the mayor has no official role in shaping education policy, Mayor Franklin's Mayor's Youth Program contributes to the broader district-wide reform of high schools led by Dr. Hall. Together, City of Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin and Atlanta Public School Superintendent Dr. Beverly Hall are making it more feasible for students to pursue alternatives for high school and to continue beyond graduation to postsecondary education and careers.

Leadership Roles Exercised by Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin

- ✓ Using the "bully pulpit" to establish and fund a mayoral initiative that helps students become aware of post-high school graduation opportunities and supports their ability to access them;
- ✓ Convening and partnering with Atlanta Public Schools and the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency to provide high school students with counseling, mentoring, and ready access to informational resources;
- ✓ Creating incentives for programmatic reform by creating the Mayor's Youth Program to increase awareness of students' post-high school needs and interests and to support students in post-graduation planning;
- ✓ Employing financial incentives by leading a fundraising campaign that engaged the business community and other private donors in leveraging additional dollars for expanding scholarships and other opportunities for students interested in pursuing college; and
- ✓ Creatively blending resources from multiple public funding streams to support essential staffing and oversight of the Mayor's Youth Program.

III

Need-Based, Adequacy Approach to Funding

Slamming the alarm clock at 4:30 a.m., Mark Price rolled over and forced himself from bed despite the darkness outside. At twenty years old, Mark was wise to life. A father of two children, a two year-old daughter and a one year-old son, Mark was a responsible and loving parent who diligently strived to meet his monthly child support payments since he no longer was with either child's mother and had never married. He dressed and glanced at the photos of Ashley and Mark Jr., saying a little prayer that their mothers were taking good care of them until he would see each one every other weekend. By 5:20 a.m., Mark had made his way through the Los Angeles highway smog in his rickety hatch-back and arrived on time to begin working promptly at 5:30 a.m. at the YouthBuild residential construction job site.

YouthBuild was giving Mark the opportunity he almost missed when he was a teenager to complete high school and pursue postsecondary education. At age 15, Mark had stolen cars, experimented with drugs, and ended up in a juvenile offender program for two years, after which he was released and returned to his old buddies, old habits, and familiar problems. When his best friend was arrested a year ago and convicted as an adult for auto theft, Mark realized his life was headed in the same direction. His cousin told him about YouthBuild and the opportunity to learn how to build homes while earning his high school diploma or a GED. Mark applied and now was completing the construction program with the aim of becoming an AmeriCorps volunteer, a position that would assist with college tuition. His goal would be to work full-time to pay the bills, including rent in the apartment YouthBuild helped him find, and to attend college part-time the following year after earning his diploma.

Mark entered YouthBuild at age nineteen, just days before his twentieth birthday. In the state of California, only a few programs are eligible to receive average daily attendance (ADA) apportionments for older students who drop out of school and seek to re-enroll. As long as young people enroll by age nineteen in a charter school program that partners with one of four categories of programs – Workforce Investment Act, Job Corps, California Association of Local Service and Conservation Corps, or YouthBuild – the state education agency's ADA funding allocation follows students until they complete the program, regardless of their age or intermittent interruptions in attendance, a critical provision for young adults.[45]

A second policy condition for large-scale success of alternatives for high school is that federal, state, and local policies reflect a **need-based, adequacy approach to funding**. Alternative high school models need to be funded at higher levels than regular programs offered within the K-12 school system. Many alternatives serve higher proportions of students whose reading or mathematics proficiencies are below grade level, special education students, English language learners, and/or students with other special needs than do traditional high schools. To provide high quality, competency-based learning experiences for students with greater needs, both academically and in other aspects of their lives, alternatives for high school operate at a higher per pupil cost than traditional programs. In addition, alternatives generally offer a more personalized learning environment with lower teacher-student ratios than regular classrooms and specialized support services. As a result, regular per pupil allotments for these students are insufficient for providing high-quality programming.

What makes it tough?

A few structural barriers may prevent alternatives for high school from receiving adequate per pupil funding. According to a recent report by the National Youth Employment Coalition, *Financing*

45 A California Assembly Bill passed in 1994 to create California Education Code 47612.1, which exempts WIA programs, Job Corps, Service and Conservation Corps, and YouthBuild programs from the law that prohibits students age 20 or older from re-enrolling in school, provided a student enrolls by age 19.

Alternative Education Pathways: Profiles and Policy 2005, alternative education schools and programs confront complex processes when attempting to tap into state and local education funds.[46] Challenges discussed in the report include a lack of sustainable funding, difficulty securing private funding, local school district inequities in funding, delays in funding, and differences in methodology used to calculate average daily attendance.[47]

In many instances, state education agencies (SEAs) and/or local school districts apply "zero sum" approaches to per pupil funding such as limiting the number of slots for students in alternative programs or setting a "cap" on the amount of funding to be spent on alternative school students, thereby restricting access to per pupil funding for those programs. State legislatures and SEAs determine the laws, policies, and regulations that apply for allocating public education resources, and they observe federal requirements for federally funded programs. Local school district policies are relevant for determining certain provisions, such as the age at which individuals are eligible to participate in particular programs. As education funding is competitive among programs, alternatives for high school often are not adequately funded to provide high-quality programming and instruction for students with above average needs.

What makes it work?

Alternatives for high school are funded in various ways depending upon their models. A number of AHSI programs operate within the public school system either within high schools or as charters offering alternative programming. By making charter school funding flexible and adopting a formula for allocating per pupil funds that does not restrict the total number of students served in alternative education programs in a given year, state and local education agencies are in a position to assist in expanding options and alternatives for high school.

---

46 Mala Thakur and Kristen Henry (2005). "Financing Alternative Education Pathways: Profiles and Policy," (Washington, DC: National Youth Employment Coalition, 2005), p. 11.

47 Ibid.

However, programs such as those in the National Association of Street Schools (NASS) network are fully independent, private schools serving at-risk students and do not receive public education funding. A faith-based network, NASS raises its own funds through private contributions as well as corporate and foundation grants. Each faith-based school is independently operated but espouses the core values and basic tenets of all NASS member schools: personalized academic development, social skills development, career development, and spiritual development. By examining federal, state, and local laws regarding private schools and recent programs targeted to support faith-based organizations, it may be possible to increase public support for community-based alternatives such as those offered by NASS. Mayors and other municipal leaders are well-positioned to create opportunities for these alternatives for high school that seek to operate in local neighborhoods alongside district-run schools. By assisting with facilities and building construction, for example, mayors can help meet programs' needs for space as well as better connect these alternatives with other existing community youth programs.

- **Per Pupil Funding Allotments** are critical for ensuring that each student participating in an alternative for high school receives sufficient support for the program to offer high-quality teaching and learning experiences. Unfortunately, students attending alternatives for high school are not always able to benefit from regular or increased per pupil funding. An effective policy strategy adopted by most states is to allow per pupil funding to follow students into approved alternative high school programs. Under No Child Left Behind, charter schools offering alternative education programs are eligible to receive per pupil funding, though they may not receive the full allotment per student.

  In states such as Ohio, Oregon, and New York, other types of alternatives for high school are funded using such innovative mechanisms as changing a school's designation to that of "Local Education Agency" as Ohio has done with community schools, or to "program" as Oregon and New York State have done, enabling these schools to receive per pupil funding from the state.[48]

48 Ibid, p. 12.

Funding needs to be redirected, particularly to allow more flexible funding at the school district (in addition to state) level, if alternatives for high school are to receive equitable funding.

- **Student Eligibility and Placement** guidelines are important factors affecting the ability of alternatives for high school to receive funding. State Education Agencies (SEAs) are able to define a student's eligibility for high school enrollment, per pupil funding, and other benefits of public school attendance. Students attending alternative high school programs need to be eligible for all public school benefits, regardless of their age while enrolled. In addition, alternative programs need flexibility in determining student eligibility for enrollment. Alternatives offer options not otherwise available in the traditional school system. Often students arrive in these programs because other learning environments have failed to provide them with a quality education. In an effort to promote positive experiences for students, alternatives for high school may apply eligibility criteria. It is important that alternatives not discriminate against students in need. It is equally important that alternatives offer high-quality programs that are well matched to the unique needs of individual learners.

What are the innovators doing?

- In California, students are eligible for enrollment in alternative high school programs as older young adults provided they enroll as full-time students by age 19. A provision of the California Education Code enables charter schools which partner with one of four programs, including AHSI network member YouthBuild, to continue to receive ADA funding for older youth through their completion of the program, regardless of their age.
- In Georgia, the state funds school districts based on Full Time Equivalent (FTE) counts. One full-time student generates an FTE allotment – say $4,000 – meaning the state will send that amount of funding to the local education agency (LEA) for each full-time student enrolled. Some FTEs earn more than the

regular allotment because these students have needs that require additional support. The state "weighs" these students higher than the 1.0 weight of other students based on the nature and severity of a student's needs. Georgia funds alternative education on a formula basis and assigns a 1.3 weight for each alternative student enrolled, meaning that CISGA, for example, is able to generate the higher FTE allotment for serving its students in Performance Learning Centers. The higher FTE is essential to enable CISGA to meet the higher costs of providing high-quality learning.

- In Portland, Ore., the state education agency, Portland Public Schools, and several alternative education providers including community-based organizations and Portland Community College, have formed the Coalition for Metro Area Community-Based Schools to enhance student access to an array of alternative models and to support members of the group.[49] The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) allows per pupil student funding to follow individuals into school district programs and "alternative education programs," which may be run by community-based organizations.[50] The amount of per pupil funding which ODE passes along to districts for students in alternative programs is 100 percent, of which 80 percent or actual program costs (whichever is lower) is paid to alternative programs.[51] Alternative programs supplement per pupil funds with other sources of support to fully cover costs, but the assurance that per pupil funding is available for students attending alternative programs is invaluable and contributes to the sustainability of Portland's array of models.

---

49 American Youth Policy Forum, "Coordinated Efforts in Portland, Oregon Focused on Workforce Development for Out-of-School Youth," Forum held October 21, 2005. See http://www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2005/fb102105.htm.

50 Martin, Nancy and Samuel Halperin. (2006). *Whatever it Takes: How Twelve Communities are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth*. Washington, D.C.: American Youth Policy Forum, p. 47. See also http://www.ode.state.or.us/stateboard/meetings/102005/2005oct20alted.doc.

51 Ibid.

Photo Courtesy of AHSI/Big Picture

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

In Seattle, the Families and Education Levy is an exemplary funding initiative that enables the mayor of Seattle to contribute to education – not only with ideas and added visibility but with fiscal resources. Launched in 1990 by former Mayor Norm Rice, the seven-year tax levy has been renewed by voters in 1997 and again in 2004. In September 2004, the most recent levy raised $116.8 million over seven years for school programs and services. Mayor Greg Nickels and the City Council expanded the levy in 2004 from $69 million raised in the previous levy by increasing the levy's proportion of the property tax bill for the owner of a $350,000 home from $37 to $65 a year.[52] Most families are glad to contribute and are eager for vulnerable children, youth, and families to benefit from its programs.

The City of Seattle's Office for Education within the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods manages the Families and Education Levy to provide funding support to five types of activities: (1) early childhood development, (2) school-based student and family services,

52 Deborah Bach, "Education Levy: Cheers Greet Passage of School Measure," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Wednesday, September 15, 2004. See http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/190818_edulevy15.html.

(3) out-of-school activities and middle school support, (4) student health services, and (5) high-risk youth. By instituting an "Accountability and Evaluation Framework" for programs and activities funded under the tax levy, the mayor has included provisions for measuring results generated by the levy's investments. One result is dropout reduction, and it will be measured by collecting data on the number of students who stay in school and graduate.[53]

The levy continues to support investments in high school services, particularly school-based health centers. In Seattle, health clinics operate in all ten comprehensive high schools and four middle schools. Recently, Mayor Nickels re-focused the new levy program for health clinics to assist clinics in making the link between helping students stay healthy and helping them achieve academically.[54] Although these clinics have existed for the past fourteen years, the mayor's recent emphasis on academic achievement has strengthened the focus of health centers, for example, to include goals for reaching all students. For example, when a student uses a school health clinic, clinic staff members conduct an academic screen to determine whether the student is academically at-risk (e.g., has low attendance or low credits, or has not passed the state standardized test). Clinics have also put special emphasis in the new levy on helping students who have chronic health conditions, such as asthma or depression. Staff from the Mayor's Office for Education believe these chronic health conditions can lead to chronic academic problems, and by treating these health conditions directly, the levy can help students academically.[55]

Supporting the mayor's initiative is a formal partnership agreement between the mayor and superintendent of Seattle Public Schools to reduce the achievement gap by investing in programs with the highest likelihood of helping underperforming students achieve at higher

53 City of Seattle, "Families and Education Levy Investment Area: Accountability and Evaluation Framework," May 23, 2005. See http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/education/implementation&evaluation.pdf#page=19.

54 Interview with Jessica DeBarros, Education Policy Advisor to Mayor Greg Nickels (July 22, 2005).

55 Ibid.

levels, and to make program changes and course corrections along the way based on data, in order to have the greatest possible impact on the gap.[56] A resolution approving collaboration between the City of Seattle and Seattle School District specifies their commitment "to significantly increase the number of children ready for school, achieving academically once in school, and staying in school through graduation."[57] All results will be measured with data, and decisions about how to improve progress will be data-driven.

This partnership symbolizes a larger commitment from the city and school system to collaborate in improving public schools. The Board of Directors for Seattle Public Schools is an elected body representing seven geographical regions, known as Districts, within the City of Seattle.[58] The superintendent of Seattle Public Schools is appointed by the School Board. Seattle Public Schools operate independently of the mayor's office and City Council.

The mayor and his staff in the Office of Education would like the City of Seattle to become one of the nation's prime high tech/biotech centers. In their view, if more than 40 percent of high school students in Seattle schools do not meet the required high school state standards as currently projected, then it is likely that city residents will not be competitive candidates for employment in these technology centers. Mayor Nickels aims to increase high school graduation rates by leveraging the resources available to him through the Families and Education Levy.

The Families and Education Levy and the City of Seattle/Seattle School District Partnership Agreement are policy levers broadly defined to ensure support for a wide range of K-12 education and related programs. While they do not focus solely on promoting alternatives for high school, they are levers that create a receptive policy

---

56 City of Seattle Resolution Number 30768, "A Resolution Approving a City of Seattle/Seattle School District Partnership Agreement as required by Ordinance 121529 (Date Adopted: May 23, 2005). See http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/education/PartnershipAgreement.pdf.

57 Ibid, Preamble.

58 Seattle Public Schools. School Board News. See http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/index.xml.

environment for expanding high school options. By supporting activities that reduce the dropout rate and increase high school graduation rates, the Levy is a policy instrument that improves the likelihood that options for high school will expand in Seattle. If bond measures and tax levies are feasible to pursue within a local policy environment, then the mayor and other municipal leaders are well-positioned to tap this policy lever by including provisions that support alternatives for high school.

Leadership Roles Exercised by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels

- ✓ Convening and partnering with Seattle Public Schools through the City of Seattle/Seattle School District Partnership Agreement regarding use of the Families and Education Tax Levy;
- ✓ Pursuing financial measures, in this instance the Families and Education Tax Levy most recently approved by voters on September 14, 2004, for a seven-year period and an amount of $116.8 million;
- ✓ Creating incentives for programmatic reform through the city/school district partnership agreement and content guidelines for administering tax levy funds;
- ✓ Supporting strategies with a high likelihood of significantly improving academic achievement; and
- ✓ Using the "bully pulpit" to focus on improving results in public schools (e.g., increasing the number of children who are ready for school, achieving academically once in school, and staying in school through graduation), as well as putting in place necessary supports for sustaining the tax levy.

IV

Rigorous, Reasonable Academic Standards and Assessments

Wei Ling Lee was excited about entering the Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA) located at Madison Park High School in the fall. Last spring on her 18th birthday, Wei Ling's friends and family in Chinatown had organized a big dinner to celebrate, and everyone was there! A close family friend, Paul Yoon, was on the Board of Directors of the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC),[59] and he mentioned to Wei Ling and her parents that she might be interested in a program called Diploma Plus®[60] offered at BATA. Diploma Plus® would enable Wei Ling to earn her high school diploma in the afternoon and evening while she continued working daily in the family-owned restaurant. Wei Ling and her family had arrived from China only three years earlier, and despite her best efforts at learning English while attending a regular high school, Wei Ling found it difficult to catch up with all the coursework. At home and in her neighborhood only she and her peers spoke English, and even they preferred to speak Cantonese, Toisanese, or Mandarin among themselves. At Paul's encouragement, Wei Ling had become involved with the Young Leaders Network of the ACDC and was actively developing her leadership skills.

When visiting BATA for an orientation session, Wei Ling felt that she would succeed in this program. Among the 300 or so students attending BATA, many young people were also newcomers to the

59 Asian Community Development Association website is located at http://www.asiancdc.org.

60 Diploma Plus is an initiative of the Center for Youth Development and Education at the Commonwealth Corporation and is a member of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative. Visit http://www.cyde.us/diplomaplus/about.html.

United States, though most came from Central and South American countries and spoke Spanish. Based on her English language proficiency, Wei Ling would be assigned to a cluster that would complete coursework across the core subjects and would emphasize English literacy. The curriculum would include the Diploma Plus® competencies, portfolios, project-based learning, and career exploration. Assessment in all classes at BATA would be competency-based. Wei Ling was informed that she may also be able to join a subset of students with higher levels of English language skills who would complete the Plus Phase, which features a senior seminar, internships, and either college coursework or post-secondary technical training. Wei Ling was determined to take full advantage of this opportunity to fulfill her aspirations, make her family proud, and contribute to the ongoing advancement of forward-looking initiatives for Boston's Chinatown.

It is essential that alternatives for high school provide **rigorous, reasonable academic standards and assessments** that prepare students to compete academically in and upon completion of high school. Like traditional high schools, many alternatives for high school prepare young people to achieve academic standards required by the state education agency (SEA) for graduation with a diploma. Some models also prepare students for taking the GED. In order to respect students' unique learning styles and backgrounds, student learning and talents in alternative programs need to be measured along a continuum that includes authentic assessments of performance as demonstrated through tasks, projects, exhibits, and portfolios, as well as state tests and requirements. These assessments often engage students in creatively expressing their knowledge and understanding of academic content through hands-on displays, oral presentations, and other interactive formats.

Alternative high schools in the AHSI network implement rigorous and appropriate alternative curricula and instruction that enable students to meet state standards. In addition, students in these high school alternatives engage in learning which enables them to "know and be able to do" what is required academically for them to achieve their goals, including graduation from high school and successful pursuit of a two- or four-year college degree.

What makes it tough?

In preparing students academically and otherwise, alternatives for high school utilize instructional methods and assessments that differ from those administered in traditional school settings. Too often the standards and assessments administered in alternatives for high school, despite their rigor, are not readily acknowledged and approved by local school districts and state education agencies as being valid for determining how well a student is progressing. Ironically, students in alternative programs often learn relevant non-academic and non-vocational/technical skills and competencies not addressed in traditional schools. They may also acquire proficiency in such content and assessment areas as financial literacy, leadership development, interpersonal skills/teamwork, portfolio and project-based presentation, workplace literacy, community service, and life skills, which are not typically addressed in traditional high schools. When the standards and assessments used in alternatives for high school are not accepted by the LEA and/or SEA, or if there is no ability to indicate how the alternative standards and assessments align with those of the LEA and/or SEA, it becomes challenging for students to earn their credentials for high school graduation.

What makes it work?

Alternatives for high school need to ensure that they offer students rigorous, reasonable academic standards and assessments that are acknowledged and approved as valid by the LEA and SEA in order for students to earn high school credentials. Three areas in this regard are critical to addressing whether alternative high school models will achieve large-scale success: standards and competencies, alternative proficiency exams or arrangements, and SEA approval of an alternative curriculum. State policies on academic standards and seat-time requirements need to be examined and made more flexible while maintaining rigor, so that students in alternative programs are able to compete using the same standards but based on terms that fit their learning styles and needs.

- **Standards and Competencies: Performance and Project-based Education vs. Carnegie Units.** Alternatives for high school prepare students to demonstrate mastery of academic and related compe-

tencies. In these programs, students may master content over varying periods of time and often in settings outside the traditional classroom. Performance and project-based instruction and assessment are optimal for focusing on mastery of content. Carnegie units, in contrast, measure seat time as indicated by the number of courses and credit hours completed within four years of high school, perhaps with some summer school. Alternative high school models challenge the merit of seat time by focusing instead on the need to ensure a student's ability to master requisite competencies, irrespective of the length of time or learning environment necessary to attain mastery. The AHSI network endorses a national policy of student mastery of content instead of seat-time requirements.

- **Alternative Proficiency Exams or Arrangements.** All high schools struggle with the need to ensure that students are able to pass high school exit exams mandated in a growing number of states. Students in alternative programs often are reading, writing, and performing mathematical skills below grade level. AHSI programs enable students to overcome academic setbacks, achieve proficiencies, and demonstrate their mastery of academic and other subject matter, often by designing exams and assessments that measure but go beyond the competencies addressed by "high stakes" tests. To use alternative proficiency exams instead of traditional ones, programs may seek to secure waivers for their students from traditional testing requirements or to make different arrangements. These arrangements are aimed not at "dumbing down" the test or lowering expectations but doing the opposite – enabling students to take authentic assessments that measure mastery of content.

- **State Education Agency Approval of an Alternative Curriculum.** Alternative models usually offer required high school subject matter in innovative ways using curricula specially tailored to engage students who have not thrived in traditional learning settings. As a result of this approach, AHSI programs often need to "map" or translate how their curricula prepare students to achieve the same standards and competencies all students are expected to achieve under No Child Left Behind.

What are the innovators doing?

- In Georgia, CISGA has secured a blanket waiver from seat-time requirements for students enrolled in Performance Learning Centers (PLCs). Seat-time rules allow a student to earn only the requisite course credits per semester. A PLC student, however, is able to advance to the next course level at any time performance is attained rather than being prevented from advancing until the end of a semester or school term. As a result of this waiver, students enrolled in a PLC who were behind grade level in credits earned are able to move more quickly through required high school courses. Many students have graduated high school on time while enrolled in PLCs because they earned additional credits in a semester, thereby catching up and fulfilling their high school graduation requirements within the same time frame as their peers.
- The Big Picture Company (BP) secured approval of its alternative courses from the University of California in December 2005. To illustrate how coursework in BP programs aligns with course requirements for freshman admission to the University of California system, BP high schools completed an A-G Course Matrix.[61] The approved A-G Course Matrix validates that coursework credit earned in these alternative high schools meets requirements for students entering first year programs at any University of California or California State University campus. The course descriptions prepared by BP provide information on how students master content and skills in a variety of contexts, including internships, projects, lectures, workshops, and seminars.

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez is investing in an education strategy based on a simple equation that has forever changed his life: Education

61 University of California (2006). "2006 Guide to 'a-g' Requirements and Instructions for Updating Your School's a-g Course List." For information, please visit http://www.ucop.edu/doorways/guide.

= Empowerment.[62] The first in his family to graduate from high school and college, Mayor Perez knows personally what it is like to balance a first language and culture at home with the demands of school in the U.S. Born in Puerto Rico, Mayor Perez was 12 years old when his family moved to Hartford in 1969.[63] In 1976, Mayor Perez graduated from Hartford Public High School, and he later earned an Associate's Degree from Capital Community Technical College.[64]

Determined to ensure that residents of Hartford are able to earn a high-quality education in public schools, Mayor Perez also currently serves as chairman of the Board of Education. In his role as board chair, the mayor worked diligently to bring Dr. Steven Adamowski to Hartford as Superintendent in November 2006.[65] Mayor Perez set a straightforward goal: to increase the number of Hartford students who graduate from a four-year college by 25 percent. According to his staff, "He shares the vision that we must raise the academic expectations and standards of Hartford students and expect them to go to college."[66]

In accordance with other efforts to reach this goal, the City of Hartford was one of five cities to receive technical assistance from the YEF Institute to engage municipal leaders in helping expand alternatives for high school. As part of the project, Hartford developed a plan to increase high school achievement based on three initiatives already underway locally: the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education, Hartford Public Schools' Smaller Learning Communities Initiative, and the Future Workforce Investment System. Specifically, Hartford developed an implementation plan based on setting rigorous, reasonable academic standards and assessments for students in grades pre-K through 12.

---

62 Office of Mayor Eddie A. Perez. (2007). "Mayor Perez's Education Strategy." See http://www.hartford.gov/government/mayor/Education.htm.

63 Office of Mayor Eddie A. Perez. (2007). "Biography of Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez." See http://www.hartford.gov/government/mayor/biography.htm.

64 Ibid.

65 Office of Mayor Eddie A. Perez. (2007). "Mayor Perez's Education Strategy."

66 Ibid.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education produced a report in June 2004 which offered recommendations for achieving the following three desired outcomes: By the year 2009, increase by 25 percent the number of Hartford students who go on to higher education, increase the graduation rate of Hartford residents attending four-year colleges, and attract more of these graduates from four-year programs to live and work in Hartford.[67] As of December 2006, Hartford estimated progress in several areas, including a 15 percent increase in the number of students applying and accepted to four-year colleges; a 3 percent increase in the number of students completing the algebra/geometry/algebra II math sequence; a 10 percent increase in the number of students taking the SAT; a 28 percent increase in the number of 11th graders taking the PSAT; and 64 percent of eligible 10th graders taking the PSAT (up from 0 to 665 students).[68]

With support from the Hartford Board of Education, Hartford Public Schools adopted a policy in 2002 to create smaller learning environments at the high school level by stating the following:

> All Hartford high schools shall be restructured into Smaller Learning Communities by the year 2005 and all newly established high schools will exemplify the Smaller Learning Community model.[69]

In the Hartford Public Schools Program of Studies for 2007-08, the programs of study for all three Hartford high schools, including Bulkeley High School, Hartford Public High School, and Weaver High School, reflect "wall-to-wall" smaller learning communities.[70] Defined as "separate, individualized learning units within the larger high school

---

67 Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education. (2004). Report to the Mayor of Hartford, Eddie A. Perez, June 25, 2004, p. 3.

68 Hartford Consortium for Higher Education, City of Hartford. (December 2006). Presentation by Mayor Eddie A. Perez and Mayor's Education Advisor Kelvin Roldan, slide 2.

69 Hartford Board of Education. (2005). "Policy for Hartford Public Schools," Policy Number 6116. Policy adopted November 6, 2002. Policy updated November 1, 2005. See http://www.hartfordschools.org/downloads/boe_docs/6000_instruction.pdf.

70 Hartford Public Schools. (2007). "Hartford Public Schools Program of Studies, 2007-2008." See http://www.hartfordschools.org/downloads/documents/ProgramofStudies2007-2008.pdf.

setting," these communities are designed to improve student achievement, reduce student dropout rates, reduce incidents requiring disciplinary action, create a personalized and respectful learning environment, and build partnerships with families, the community, businesses, and higher education. In addition to comprehensive high schools, the city's five magnet schools (i.e., Greater Hartford Classical Magnet School, Pathways to Technology Magnet School, Sport and Medical Science Academy, University High of Science and Engineering, and Capital Preparatory Magnet School) operate according to these same principles.[71]

The Future Workforce Investment System (FWIS) was created in 2004 as an initiative of Mayor Perez in partnership with Hartford Public Schools, Capital Workforce Partners, Hartford's Department of Health and Human Services, and several other key stakeholders.[72] Managed by the mayor's FWIS Leadership Committee, the system "provides an innovative framework for a dual-customer approach to workforce and career development designed to meet the needs of both employers and prospective employees."[73] The system aims "to ensure that the city's 14 to 24 year-olds acquire the academic and employment skills they need to be productive member of the workforce and meet the needs of the region's employers."[74] Specifically, FWIS goals include increasing (a) the number and percentage of high school completions, (b) college attendance and completion, (c) youth who engage in long-term career-focused training, and (d) youth who acquire living wage jobs."[75]

Taken together, these efforts form a system-wide foundation upon which the mayor's office, with assistance from the YEF Institute, began to expand alternatives for high school. As a result of focusing on alter-

---

71 Ibid.

72 Capitol Workforce Partners. (2006). "Future Workforce Investment System/Hartford: Executive Summary," p. 1. See http://www.capitalworkforce.org/youth_jobs/documents/ExecutiveSummary106sbr3.pdf.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Capital Workforce Partners. (2005). Future Workforce Investment System. See http://www.capitalworkforce.org/youth_jobs/future_workforce_investment_system.shtml.

natives for high school within this systemic reform effort, the mayor's office is collaborating with the newly appointed superintendent of Hartford Public Schools to reorganize the school system. By engaging directly with Hartford Public Schools and other partners, the mayor's office is helping implement multiple strategies, among them enhancing opportunities for professional development, making curriculum and instruction changes to promote college preparatory learning, and hiring of new staff positions such as senior director of mathematics and senior director of science.

Finally, the City of Hartford partnered with Hartford Public Schools and the state of Connecticut to embark upon "one of the most ambitious school construction plans in the city's history in an effort to achieve greater racial, ethnic, and economic integration."[76] As the result of a lawsuit, Sheff v. O'Neill, the plaintiffs and state of Connecticut reached an agreement in January 2003 calling for eight new magnet schools to open in Hartford over four years. After taking the reins of the state-mandated Hartford School Building Committee in 2002, Mayor Perez announced that new facilities would be built for three magnet programs that would "promote new opportunities for learning."[77] According to the mayor's office, the school construction process in Hartford "utilizes state bonding money earmarked for the improvement of city schools. Approximately $800 million will be spent on renovating and constructing a total of 20 schools; the money is bonded by the city, with a substantial reimbursement from the state ranging from 70-100 percent."[78]

With these commitments and carefully articulated goals, objectives, and milestones, Mayor Perez and his staff members are demonstrating leadership strategies that improve the quality of high schools in Hartford by raising expectations for students to complete high school and enter college. As of October 2006, Hartford estimated that 24,000 students were receiving Early College Awareness; additional Advanced Placement classes

76 Office of Mayor Eddie A. Perez. (2004). "Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez Announces Substantial Progress in Constructing City Magnet Schools." Press Release October 26, 2004. See http://www.hartford.gov/News/MAYORPEREZANNOUNCESPROGRESSINCONSTRUCTION.pdf.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

were being offered in Hartford's high schools; and the number of schools in Hartford partnering with the Foundation for Excellent Schools increased from four to ten.[79] To achieve goals set forth by Mayor Perez, Hartford Public Schools, with leadership from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education and the Future Workforce Investment System, is partnering well with the mayor's office. The re-creation of a Youth Services Bureau within the City of Hartford[80] provides yet one more example of the mayor's commitment to raise academic standards and to provide supports that enable teachers and students to achieve them.

Leadership Roles Exercised by Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez

- ✓ Using the "bully pulpit" to raise awareness of the student achievement issue and to help shift perceptions of alternative education;
- ✓ Convening and partnering key community leaders with the Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education and the Future Workforce Investment System;
- ✓ Creating incentives for programmatic reform by creating the Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education and the Future Workforce Investment System, as well as by managing an Office of Education within the Office of the Mayor;
- ✓ Employing financial incentives, including state bond funding for school construction totaling an investment of approximately $800 million, with reimbursement to the city ranging from 70-100 percent.
- ✓ Increasing access to facilities, buildings, and funding for construction by using city and state bond funds; and
- ✓ Facilitating coordination among local government agencies to help promote data-driven accountability for raising academic expectations and addressing the myriad needs of students and their families to fulfill those expectations.

79 Moore, Andrew O. (2006). Interview with Kelvin Roldan, Education Policy Advisor to Mayor Eddie A. Perez, October 30, 2006.

80 Ibid.

V

Strong Accountability

Reginald Jenkins is a competitive candidate for the dwindling number of college freshman admission slots at Fisk University in Nashville. In her decade of reviewing applications and serving as an admissions officer at Fisk, Nona Shepherd rarely encountered an applicant whose portfolio was as compelling as Reginald's – including his high school grades, the essay indicating his interest in attending this renowned historically black institution of higher learning, and the extreme obstacles in his life he had to overcome to make his way to the door of the university. In determining whether or not to recommend admission, Nona knew that she and other admissions staff would help choose the course of Reginald's future.

In considering Reginald's application, Nona decided to learn more about the Maya Angelou Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., where he earned his high school diploma. A growing number of students were applying to Fisk after completing charter schools, but few of these high schools were accredited. The lack of accreditation was a factor that made it more difficult for Nona and fellow admissions officers to assign the same value to the credentials for these students as they might for a student who attended a traditional high school. After all, the college admissions office aimed to accept students likely to succeed in completing their undergraduate programs within four years.

Nona's brief search for details about Maya Angelou Public Charter School (MAPCS) proved rewarding. First, MAPCS was accredited in 2006 by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Secondary Schools. Therefore, the diploma issued by

MAPCS was as valid as one issued by any other accredited high school. Second, MAPCS had been collecting data and tracking the progress of their students after graduation from high school, accumulating valuable information about its alumni. A report provided by MAPCS indicated that 80 percent of graduates had gone to college, and of those attending postsecondary institutions, more than 2.5 times as many students from MAPCS went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree than their peers.[81] MAPCS based its findings on postsecondary enrollment data from 90 students who graduated between 1998 and June 2005. Postsecondary attainment data were obtained from 29 MAPCS graduates from 1998 through 2002.[82] Students attending MAPCS were compared with two other cohorts – a cohort of students tracked by the National Center for Education Statistics in its 12-year national study from 1988 to 2000, and students in the Alternative High School Cohort, a group of alternative schools from around the country who target similar students.[83] By all accounts, Nona felt reassured that her instincts were right. Reginald Jenkins had earned an invitation for admission to Fisk University, one she hoped he would accept.

Alternatives for high school are committed to being held accountable for their students' academic achievement. Proponents of these models support the need for **strong accountability** by schools. Organizations in the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) affirm and subscribe to the same accountability standards required by all schools under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). It is important that alternative high schools demonstrate a commitment to meeting the same accountability standards required of all schools because these models are designed to be credible, high-quality alternatives to traditional schools, and their credibility must be acknowledged within and beyond academic institutions at all levels, including higher education.

---

81 See Forever Foundation (June 2006). "How are Maya Angelou Public Charter School Students Doing When They Graduate?" Information available on the web at http://www.seeforever.org.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

AHSI models ensure that their programs meet local, state, and federal accountability standards so that their students' academic achievements are respected and well regarded.

What makes it tough?

While alternative high school models are eager to be held accountable for high-quality results, these programs accept students who generally have not fulfilled their potential for academic success while attending traditional K-12 schools. When these students enter alternatives for high school, often they are behind grade level in academic achievement and may need additional time to make substantial progress. As a result, it may take longer for alternative schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) as required by NCLB. To enable this to happen, an alternative model's accountability for achieving positive academic results with students needs to be aligned with access to the necessary resources (financial, human, social, and other) and flexibility for innovation that will enable these approaches to succeed. The U.S. Department of Education's Growth-Based Accountability model, which engages select states that have applied and received approval for demonstrating "fair, reliable, and innovative methods to measure school and student achievement," is a step in the right direction.[84]

What makes it work?

In attempting to ensure strong accountability for students' academic achievement, AHSI network organizations have identified three factors to examine. These include accountability standards under NCLB, performance measures, and flexibility.

- **Accountability Standards under NCLB**. AHSI organizations acknowledge that the AYP requirement under NCLB might prove challenging to fulfill because students who enroll in alternatives for high school generally are striving to achieve academic profi-

84 See U.S. Department of Education, "Peer Review Guidance for the NCLB Growth Model Pilot Applications," January 25, 2006, and related documents available at http://www.us.ed.gov and www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/04/04072005.html.

ciency at grade level after having fallen behind in coursework and credits while attending traditional high schools. AHSI organizations are gathering data individually and measuring progress of their models in enabling young people to attain a well-rounded set of proficiencies that include academics but also encompass other skills and competencies.

- **Performance Measures.** AHSI organizations pride themselves on holding their programs to a more comprehensive and rigorous set of accountability standards than required of schools under NCLB, though programs are just beginning to compile and track data that will provide evidence of success in this area. NCLB accountability standards focus exclusively on academic proficiency. Alternatives for high school measure accountability using a broader range of skill sets and competencies for students that include but go beyond academics. Additional proficiencies addressed by alternative high schools include critical thinking, problem solving, financial literacy, and personal, interpersonal/social, and career development, among others. Due to the breadth of competencies addressed by alternative high school models, these programs integrate additional performance measures and collect data on a wide range of student proficiencies and school service/infrastructure factors that are essential for addressing those areas with students.

- **Flexibility**. Alternatives for high school often seek flexibility to implement school district or state policies related to accountability, not in an effort to avoid strong accountability, but in an effort to implement innovative strategies that assist students in achieving even higher quality standards for accountability than required under NCLB. These requests for flexibility often are misinterpreted as efforts by programs not to be held fully accountable for academic proficiency. Some AHSI organizations utilize accountability standards to establish a quid pro quo with SEAs and school districts. The program commits to meeting NCLB standards, but its leaders are extended a level of autonomy and decision-making authority other schools do not have. The added flexibility enables alternative models to assist students in reaching the standards.

What are the innovators doing?

- See Forever Foundation and the Maya Angelou Public Charter School (MAPCS) in Washington, D.C.,[85] officially became accredited in June 2006 by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Secondary Schools.[86] According to an article by See Forever announcing this news, "All D.C. public charter schools are required to pursue accreditation, and MAPCS was one of the first D.C. charter schools accepted for candidacy by the Middle States evaluation team."[87] MAPCS joins Middle States for a seven year accreditation period under an Accreditation for Growth Protocol, which anticipates that the school will continue to work toward improvement as an organization.[88] Diplomas issued by MAPCS are viewed with a higher level of validity because an accredited institution is awarding them, a benefit students are proud to claim. See Forever's mission is to create learning communities in lower income urban areas where all students, particularly those who have not succeeded in traditional schools, can reach their potential. Accreditation is yet another strategy that enables See Forever to demonstrate its commitment to strong accountability for their students' achievement.

- The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (The Met) in Providence, R.I., has for the past five years consistently ranked among the state's top high schools for attendance, graduation rates, parent involvement, academic climate, and quality of instruction, according to Rhode Island's 2005 *School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Surveys*.[89] The Met has achieved global acclaim since it opened in September 1996 as an innovative

85 See Forever Foundation and Maya Angelou Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. are part of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative. For more information, please visit their website located at http://www.seeforever.org.

86 See Forever Foundation (June 2006). "It's Official: MAPCS Formally Accepted for Middle States Accreditation," Seeing Forever: The See Forever Foundation's E-Newsletter.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 The Met School - About Us: Facts & Data, p.1. See http://www.themetschool.org/about_facts.

high school in South Providence. In 1993, Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Peter McWalters asked Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor to design and implement this "school for the 21st century" that would involve "hands and minds."[90] The Met educates one student at a time by blending school-based learning with real world experiences that heighten a student's interest.

According to federal No Child Left Behind goals set for Rhode Island to achieve by 2007, The Met is an "improving" school and scored just shy of being named a "high performing" school.[91] Moreover, on average, The Met had 18 percent more students proficient in math and 14 percent more students proficient in English/Language Arts than the three largest Providence high schools.[92] The Met is in good company among other Big Picture Schools. In a 2005 assessment of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as mandated by NCLB, Big Picture found that among schools with AYP data, "In contrast to most district averages, 12 Big Picture schools met all AYP goals while one school met every AYP goal except one."[93]

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

One major urban public school system addressing the need for strong accountability is that of Boston Public Schools. Characterized by close working relationships among recently retired Boston Public School Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant, members of the Boston School Committee, and Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Boston Public Schools has advanced along a steady 12-year course of stable, highly regarded leadership. Even the Boston Teachers Union negotiated a ground-breaking three-year contract in 2003, with assistance from Mayor Menino, which supports pilot schools, high school restruc-

90 The Met School - About Us: History, p. 1. See http://www.themetschool.org/about_history.

91 Ibid, p. 2.

92 Ibid.

93 Big Picture Company (June 2006). "The Big Picture: In Focus," p. 2. See http://www.bigpicture.org/schools/Profiles/BPInFocusJune06.pdf

turing, and improved teacher accountability and evaluation.[94] The strong accountability structure in Boston Public Schools (BPS) is attributed by many involved to the fact that the mayor appoints members of the Boston School Committee, and the committee hires the BPS superintendent. Under the leadership of Superintendent Payzant, BPS incorporated high school reform as part of its five-year reform plans – Focus on Children I and II – to improve student achievement in all schools.

The BPS Office of High School Renewal, in collaboration with its partner organizations and with generous financial backing from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, supports the creation of small, dynamic learning environments that promote student engagement, positive relationships among adults and students, and a love of learning.[95] While it may seem counterintuitive, these reforms increase autonomy and flexibility at the school level to promote strong accountability. By subdividing large high schools into smaller schools, some of which are district-operated separate schools within their own school buildings, and introducing

94 Boston Public Schools School Committee (2006). Goals and Accomplishments. http://boston.k12.ma.us/schcom/goals.asp.

95 Boston Public Schools. For more information, visit http://www.highschoolrenewal.org.

Photo Courtesy of AHSI/Big Picture

pilot schools which have fewer restrictions imposed upon them by central administration and teachers' unions, these efforts are expanding small learning environments.

Alternatives for high school have been part of the BPS since the 1970s, leading to the formation of an alternative education network in the 1980s. Alternatives for high school have gained acceptance among parents and students over the years, and now are considered solid options. BPS opened eleven in-district charter schools providing laboratories for innovative education programs, two of which are Horace Mann Charter Schools and nine of which are Pilot Schools, including the Boston Arts Academy – the first public high school for visual and performing arts.[96] Another achievement has been the development of a plan to make sure all high schools meet requirements for accreditation.[97] Pilot schools with greater autonomy for innovation, such as the Boston Arts Academy, the Health Careers Academy, and two in-district Horace Mann Charter Schools, attract high levels of interest.

When examining the role of Mayor Menino in expanding options and alternatives for high school, it is clear that his leadership and vision complemented those of Superintendent Payzant. Together, they worked seamlessly with the Boston School Committee to advance their goals. The mayor's role is formal and highly visible because his appointment of the School Committee makes him ultimately responsible for the district's success or failure. Mayor Menino is an avid supporter of investing in education, and he is accountable for school performance. Similarly, Superintendent Payzant took seriously his partnership with the mayor. Payzant attended weekly meetings of the mayor's city cabinet, participated in cabinet retreats, and was in constant contact with senior officers responsible for facilities, police, and other city departments. The chief legal counsel for BPS reports to the mayor's chief legal person. As one official described it, "there is a sense of oneness, not separateness," when considering the city and local school system.

---

96 Boston School Committee (2004). "Goals and Accomplishments." See http://boston.k12.ma.us/schcom/goals.asp

97 Ibid.

Mayor Menino assists BPS with school renovation through the Department of Neighborhood Development, which has made additions and renovations to Hyde Park High School.[98] In addition, Mayor Menino launched the Boston Community Learning Centers & School Sites Initiative.[99] According to the mayor's office, this initiative strives to establish or expand school- or community-based centers that coordinate out-of-school time programs for students and families.[100] The School Sites Initiative (SSI) strives to expand quality school-based afterschool programs to at least 75 students or by a minimum of 25 students (whichever is greater) in the first year of funding.[101]

Beyond expansion, SSI's goals are to enhance opportunities for learning and academic enrichment, improve partnerships between host schools and afterschool programs (where relevant), and strengthen the financial sustainability of afterschool programs.[102] These investments are critical given a hold on school construction in the state since 2003[103] as the newly created Massachusetts School Building Authority, an independent public entity, assumed control in 2004 of oversight and approval of all school facilities planning, school building construction, and school design in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.[104]

The results affirm that symbiotic collaboration between Mayor Menino, Superintendent Payzant, and members of the Boston School Committee was effective. According to a report issued by the Massachusetts Department of Education in June 2006, "an unprecedented 91 percent of the class of 2007 has already passed both the state

---

98 City of Boston, Department of Neighborhood Development. See http://www.cityofboston.gov/basiccityservices/capitalconstruction/J_P_Hyde_Park_High_School.asp

99 City of Boston. See http://www.cityofboston.gov/funding.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Maria Sacchetti, "Many schools grew beyond state size limits; Officials fault lax oversight," *Boston Globe*, April 26, 2006. See http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/04.

104 Commonwealth of Massachusetts. An Act Relative to School Building Assistance. Chapter 208 of the Acts of 2004. See http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw04/s1040208.htm.

mandated Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams in English and math, outpacing the performance of all previous classes prior to their final year in high school."[105] The class of 2003 was the first required to earn a passing score on both the English and math MCAS exams as a requirement for earning a high school diploma.[106] Although urban districts are not quite keeping pace with non-urban districts (88 percent of students in the class of 2006 have earned their competency determination as compared with 97 percent of non-urban students),[107] Boston Public Schools are being held accountable by a tripartite leadership team that won't settle for less than excellence.

Leadership Roles Exercised by Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino

- ✓ Using the "bully pulpit" to raise awareness of the need for smaller, more innovative high schools and to help shift perceptions of alternative education;
- ✓ Convening and partnering with key community leaders, including weekly mayoral cabinet meetings, retreats, and ongoing community sessions;
- ✓ Creating incentives for programmatic reform by working closely with the BPS Superintendent and Boston School Committee;
- ✓ Employing financial incentives, including BPS receipt of the largest increases in funding of any city department;
- ✓ Participating in school district planning and decision-making processes by working closely with the BPS Superintendent and Boston School Committee; and
- ✓ Increasing access to facilities, buildings, and funding for construction.

---

105 Massachusetts Department of Education (June 19, 2006). "New Report Shows More Students Meeting Graduation Requirement Before Senior Year," by Heidi B. Perlman. http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=2950.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

VI

Expanded Options for Parents and Students

Paula Rivera hurriedly boarded a crowded SEPTA train to make her way to the New Media Technology Charter School[108] on Ogontz Avenue in Philadelphia. How could she contain her excitement today, possibly the most incredible day of her life? As a tenth-grader attending New Media High, Paula contributed to the WNMT news radio show and had broadcasted her ninth-grade biology project digitally using screen and video capture software. Today, however, Diego Castellanos, a published author who has worked as a print reporter, columnist, and editor in both Spanish and English publications and has hosted his own radio show in Spanish, would offer a workshop. Dr. Castellanos hosts Puerto Rican Panorama,[109] a television show that deals exclusively with Hispanic issues and Latin culture but is broadcast in English to encourage viewing by mainstream audiences. Paula was especially interested because Dr. Castellanos is a native of Puerto Rico who has lived most of his life in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area, and her family and friends all listen to his radio broadcasts in Spanish. Paula's African-American mother and Puerto Rican father always encouraged Paula and her younger siblings to value all aspects of their heritage and cultural identity. Paula was thankful for their love and guidance.

---

108 The New Media Technology Charter School is one of four schools opened by the Black Alliance for Educational Options. For more information, please visit http://www.newmediatech.net.

109 A news announcement on 7/8/2006 by Channel 6 ABC News in Philadelphia describes a topic to be discussed on *Puerto Rican Panorama*. http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=ontv&id=3298323.

An active member of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)[110], Paula's mother had learned of New Media High before it opened in 2004. Mrs. Alberta Rivera was determined that every child of hers, beginning with Paula, would attend a high-quality secondary school that would prepare them for college. Mrs. Rivera joined BAEO because she supported its policy advocacy and community-driven efforts to increase parental involvement in education. Alberta enjoyed meeting the other parents, most of whom lived in working class neighborhoods like her own, and she actively engaged in BAEO's political activism to promote school choice. The small class sizes (16:1 student to teacher ratio) and interactive teacher leadership combined with creative, project-based learning attracted Paula and her mother to this school. Most importantly, Alberta was proud that Paula was developing her interest in communication and the arts. Paula planned to use her talents to promote multicultural media events and wanted to create a television show featuring young people engaged in cultural celebrations and sharing their perspectives, which reflect the rich and diverse ethnic diasporas in Philadelphia.

Nearly 3,000 miles west of Philadelphia, in Portland, Ore., Lynne Holmes was as excited as Paula, but for a different reason. Lynne had been accepted to the Portland Community College Gateway to College program. After leaving high school at age 16 simply because she was bored, not attending school regularly, and hanging out with her friends, Lynne had worked several entry-level jobs in local fast food restaurants and retail stores. Not only was the work a drag, but she now found herself even less challenged academically and personally than when she was in school. Though her high school friends stayed in touch, Lynne accepted the fact that they all seemed to be parting ways. Turning 17 felt like a watershed in her life that she hoped would wash away the old and flood her with new options. Timing could not have been better for Lynne to learn about Gateway to College through a trusted teacher at Beaverton High School who tracked down Lynne by leaving a phone message at her parents' home. Now that Lynne was living on her own in a studio apartment, when she visited her parents,

110 BAEO is a member of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Alternative High School Initiative. http://www.baeo.org. Also visit http://www.ahsi.info.

she returned the call and later picked up information about how to apply for Gateway to College.

Despite a high school grade point average of only 1.3, Lynne tested just above an eighth grade reading level and successfully passed the Gateway to College math placement assessment. While attending the Gateway to College orientation, Lynne enjoyed meeting the other student candidates, all of whom seemed focused on completing the requirements for earning high school diplomas while simultaneously earning associate's degrees at Portland Community College. A scholarship program, Gateway to College would provide college tuition and books, so Lynne would pay only fees. Lynne recently was promoted to floor manager at a local sporting goods store, and she would be able to maintain her day shift while taking Portland Community College courses in the evening. Attending class on campus and interacting with fellow students who took pride in their academic careers was inspiring. Life was looking up for Lynne, and she was grateful for this new opportunity to take hold of her future.

Parents and students have the potential to benefit from a wider range of alternatives for high school. Ideally, **expanded options for parents and students** would enable young people and their families to choose a learning environment likely to be effective at enabling a young person to achieve success. Alternatives for high school often engage young people in decision-making through project-based learning, community- and work-based placements, service learning, and other innovative instructional methods. Parents are often more engaged when students are placed in alternative settings than they might have been if their teens attended traditional high schools. At the same time, there is a need for the education system as a whole to expand options for high school learning and for all programs to be more assertive in engaging parents and students.

What makes it tough?

Alternatives for high school are gaining acceptance nationwide, as exemplified by a growing number of programs in the Alternative High School Initiative, Early College High School network, and other inno-

vations. However, expanding these options requires considerable effort, politically and practically. Politically, the idea of expanding options and alternatives for high school may at times fall victim to the perception that this notion implies an entryway to "school choice" – a contentious issue because of the potential some believe it has to divert public resources from use solely in publicly funded schools to use in private and parochial schools, thereby draining much needed public funding from the poorest and most vulnerable schools.

In practical terms, alternatives for high school often need new locations, creative designs for external and internal space, different scheduling to accommodate instruction in the classroom and in other venues, and various other creative elements. Many of these innovations require the local school district and state department of education to examine existing laws, policies, and regulations, with the aim of increasing flexibility and making it more possible for them to operate well.

What makes it work?

In attempting to ensure expanded options for parents and students, AHSI network organizations have identified two critical factors to examine, namely approval by the state education agency of alternative high school curricula and programming, and the ability of parents and students to exercise choice in determining where young people will attend high school.

- **SEA Approval of "High School" Curricula/Programming**. In the U.S., state education agencies (SEAs) use definitions in state laws, policies, and regulations that determine eligibility for secondary school programs to receive per pupil funding and other public school benefits. These definitions have implications for the extent to which alternatives for high school are able to receive SEA resources. Similarly, local school district and municipal laws, such as building code regulations, might restrict the ability of alternative programs to experiment.
- **Parental and Student Choice**. The ability of parents and young people to exercise choice in selecting schools is relevant throughout K-12 education, including at the high school level.

Alternative choices for high school need to include such options as vouchers or allowing some per pupil funding to follow students into private, non-public schools.

What are the innovators doing?

- The Big Picture Company succeeded in negotiating approval from the State Board of Regents in Rhode Island for The Met in Providence[111] to operate as a "high school" but in a different way. Big Picture was exempted from meeting traditional requirements specified for "high schools" when it opened The Met. In a 1994 public referendum, a South Providence citizens' group along with the Board of Regents, the Governor's Office, and the General Assembly, brought to voters the question of starting a new innovative high school and an accompanying bond issue for its creation. The public voted "yes" on both.[112] The Met is officially designated as a state-operated school district – not a school – allowing it to exercise additional flexibility in defining all aspects of structure and implementation.

  Any other school in Rhode Island is able to take advantage of this opportunity to define "high school" or other relevant terms differently. Since The Met first acquired this designation, other schools including Rhode Island School for the Deaf, Rhode Island Training Center, and William M. Davies Career and Technical Center, have taken advantage of this opportunity to operate with greater autonomy.[113] The Met began in 1996 as a ground-breaking new school with a student-teacher ratio of 15:1; ten years later, the Met has expanded to include six small public high schools throughout Providence.

---

111 For information on The Met Center, please visit http://www.metcenter.org. Information on the Big Picture Company is located at http://www.bigpicture.org.

112 The Met School - About Us - History. See http://www.themetschool.org/about_history, p. 1.

113 See a list of State-Operated Districts on the Information Works! website which lists data about Rhode Island Department of Education schools on http://www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2005/reports/schlist.asp.

- One of the Performance Learning Centers run by Communities in Schools of Georgia is a charter school located on the campus of a technical college as part of a K-14 approach to curriculum. The placement of this PLC on campus expands its ability to offer an experience that reaches beyond the traditional high school setting to include linkages with postsecondary education.
- The Black Alliance for Educational Options,[114] another AHSI network member, has an explicit policy advocacy agenda aimed at expanding all educational options so that parents and students have high-quality, diverse choices for K-12 education. BAEO believes that school choice is essential to help ensure that low-income and working class parents have the ability to choose where their sons or daughters attend school. Protecting existing parental choice policies is BAEO's highest priority.
- The National Association of Street Schools (NASS)[115] is a network of private schools which operate outside of the public school system. NASS reaches young people and their families in the communities and neighborhoods where they live, and offers a faith-based alternative to traditional high schools. NASS programs complement traditional high school programs by offering a quality option for students who may be at risk of dropping out of high school or who already may have dropped out of school and seek to earn a high school diploma. NASS works to identify community leaders across the country who are passionate about intercepting troubled youth through education and spiritual intervention, and to provide them with the guidance, resources, and accountability they need to successfully serve dropouts in their schools and communities.
- The Street School model, originally developed at the Denver Street School, has been replicated across the country.[116] During the 2004-

114 The Black Alliance for Educational Options is a member of AHSI. Please visit http://www.baeo.org.

115 National Association of Street Schools is a member of the AHSI network, and more information may be found at http://www.streetschools.com.

116 See http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Education/TransformingHighSchools/Schools/ModelSchools/NASS.htm.

05 school year alone, NASS schools served more than 2,315 at-risk students, of whom 76 percent were minorities and 59 percent students living in poverty; awarded 173 high school diplomas; retained 84 percent of students; and helped students raise their grade point averages by more than 1.1 (out of 4.0) as compared with their previous school academic experiences.[117]

- YouthBuild USA[118] is a national network of programs that offer an alternative for students who have dropped out of school and are striving to return to complete their high school education and earn either a diploma or a GED. YouthBuild participants engage in competency-based, personalized learning while they acquire job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people.[119] Additionally, YouthBuild programs emphasize leadership development, college readiness, community service, career development, and positive youth-adult relationships.[120]

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

Former San José Mayor Ron Gonzales took education seriously. Although San José's city government has no formal direct authority over schools and education, the City of San José has made a clear public commitment to providing leadership and opportunities that expand options for parents and students, a factor Mayor Gonzales emphasized during his 1998 election campaign.

Composed of 18 independent school districts, San José Unified School District has 239 elementary and secondary schools, and three separate high school systems. Under the leadership of Mayor Gonzales, the City of San José helped make better high schools a top

117 National Association of Street Schools (2005). Annual Report 2004-2005. http://www.gates-foundation.org/Education/TransformingHighSchools/Schools/ModelSchools/NASS.htm

118 YouthBuild USA is an AHSI organization. More information is available at http://www.youthbuild.org.

119 Taken from the YouthBuild USA description in the 2006 Alternative High School Initiative brochure.

120 Ibid.

priority.[121] San José participated in the YEF Institute technical assistance initiative to facilitate municipal leadership in promoting new alternatives for high school. As part of this effort, Mayor Gonzales, along with his education advisor and staff members, implemented "San José High Schools Achieve!" San José generated a plan for continuous improvement of its high schools to achieve two desired results, namely: (1) San José will have no high school dropouts by 2010, and (2) graduation rates will increase by 10 percent by 2010.[122] To achieve these goals, the city and school district are working jointly to create additional high school options and to encourage comprehensive high schools to operate as smaller learning communities. The following five objectives comprised San José High Schools Achieve in 2005:

- **Objective 1 – Alternatives for High School**: Create more alternative high school spaces in San José.
- **Objective 2 – Student Tracking**: Create methods to report movement of high school students in and out of school.
- **Objective 3 – Alternative School Information**: Create a citywide web site focused on high school options in San José.
- **Objective 4 – Parent Engagement**: Develop and implement a comprehensive plan that recruits parents and volunteers to assist high school students.
- **Objective 5 – Truancy Programming**: Work with high school districts to develop a coordinated, citywide anti-truancy program.[123]

As a result of San José High Schools Achieve, progress has occurred in several areas. The Santa Clara County Office of Education is

121 Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004). "Mayors Must Make Better High Schools a Top Priority: Mayor Ron Gonzales, City of San José," *Profiles in Leadership*, p. 81.

122 San José Action Plan Team (December 2004). "San José's Hope in Great High Schools (HIGHS) Initiative: A Collaborative Plan for Continuous Improvement of San José High Schools – Confidential Draft."

123 Mayor's Office - City of San José. (2006). "San José High Schools Achieve!" presentation during National League of Cities' Cross-Site Meeting on Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School, December 6, 2006, slide 5.

currently evaluating best practices among alternatives for high school as a first step toward creating additional alternative education slots.[124] To act on the recommendation that the school district identify and create methods of reporting on the movement of high school students into and out of school and between school districts, the City of San José is working with nonprofit organizations like the United Way to create a citywide database with information on students who are outside of the school system. A comprehensive state system for tracking students is slated to be operational by December 2008, and the city has been invited to be a partner in its development.[125]

In January 2005, the United Way of Silicon Valley led an effort to create the Greater San José Alternative Education Collaborative which receives funding in part from the Youth Transition Funders Group.[126] The City of San José is a partner organization and helped launch a website, http://www.getbacktoschool.org, that provides information on alternative education options in Santa Clara County and enables students and parents to re-enroll in high school.[127] As of June 2006, the highest priority objective for school year 2006-07 was parent engagement.

On September 23, 2006, the City of San José convened the Mayor's High School Parent Summit: Parents Putting Education First, hosted in collaboration with nine other organizations, including The National Hispanic University, San José State University, and AT&T, among others.[128] The parent summit was well-attended and affirmed the mayor's commitment to ensuring that parents are active leaders in helping improve and expand high school options in San José. Another part of the plan is to create San José Youth Connections, an action team of youth service providers who will serve as a support network for high school students in need of intervention or other options for education.

---

124 Ibid, slide 6.

125 Ibid.

126 See http://uwsv.org, Greater San José Alternative Education Collaborative.

127 Ibid. See also City of San José Mayor's Office presentation, December 6, 2006, slide 6.

128 City of San José. (2006). "Mayor's High School Parent Summit" Flier.

To ensure that San José attracts and retains highly-qualified, experienced, enthusiastic teachers able to offer high-quality teaching and learning, Mayor Gonzales launched the Mayor's Teacher Homebuyer Program in 1999 to provide teachers with a deferred payment loan of up to $65,000 (or $40,000 depending upon the teacher's income) to help them purchase their first homes.[129] To qualify for the program, a teacher must be employed full-time at a K-12 school that is either located within the City of San José municipal boundaries or other public schools where the majority of students served are San José residents.[130] As of February 2006, the city had helped more than 500 teachers buy their first homes in the communities where they teach.[131]

Through the Safe School Campus Initiative and the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, the City of San José is helping reduce crime in schools.[132] Mayor Gonzales created the "Progress to Excellence Award" to recognize San José schools that show the greatest gains in student achievement.[133] To help parents become more involved, the city is working with high school districts to host citywide parent summits, and the mayor met quarterly to maintain effective communication with Superintendent of Schools Don Iglesias.[134]

The mayor fast-tracked necessary permits for schools in need of them for facility upgrades and changes and supported school district bond measures to generate resources for improving school facilities. In December 2005, Downtown College Preparatory School, a premier charter school – the first in Silicon Valley and the only one that explicitly prepares underachieving students for college success – was able to move to a new campus located in a renovated San José Unified School District (SJUSD) elementary school with funds secured by a $4 million

---

129 San José Department of Housing, "Teacher Homebuyer Program." http://www.sjhousing.org/program/thp.html.

130 Ibid.

131 Office of Mayor Ron Gonzales, "10 Positive Ways San José has Helped Improve Public Education." http://www.sjmayor.org.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

SJUSD facilities bond.[135] Founded by Jennifer Andaluz and Gregg Lippman, who were teachers in the SJUSD, Downtown College Prep opened in September 2000 with a ceremony led by Father Mateo Sheehy and Mayor Ron Gonzales declaring an "unambiguous mission: to prepare underachieving students who will be the first in their family to go to college to thrive at four-year universities."[136] Mayor Gonzales is a founding board member of Downtown College Prep.

In 2000, the City Council approved a recommendation by Mayor Gonzales for a Line of Credit Agreement between the City of San José and Across the Bridge Foundation, Inc., the nonprofit corporation that governs and operates Downtown College Prep. The agreement provided a series of annual gap financing loans in the amount of $150,000 each for four years, beginning in 2000-01 "to assist the school with its establishment and operations during its initial few years of existence."[137] As of fall 2005, Downtown College Prep had graduated 94 students – 100 percent of whom were accepted to four-year colleges or universities and 89 percent of whom are currently on track toward earning a four-year postsecondary degree.[138]

Working independently but with congenial support from the mayor, the Superintendent of San José Unified Public Schools, Don Iglesias and his staff managed several alternative high schools which they referred to as Small But Necessary (SBN) schools. These schools began opening about ten years ago and are geared primarily toward meeting the needs of juniors and seniors in high school who have struggled in traditional high schools and have fallen behind in earning credits toward graduation. SBNs have their own buildings and administrative operations on a high school campus or community college if dual enrollment programs are offered. The mayor and school system

---

135 See Downtown College Prep Timeline at http://www.downtowncollegeprep.org/dcp_timeline.php.

136 Ibid. See also Downtown College Preparatory High School Charter Petition, October 7, 2004.

137 San José, Calif., City Government. Approval of the Second Amendment to the Agreement with Across the Bridge Foundation, Inc. Increasing the Line of Credit to Support Gap Financing Needs of the Downtown College Prep Charter School by $150,000, p. 1. See http://www.sanjoseca.gov/cty_clk/9_17_02docs/9_17_02_2.7.htm.

138 Ibid, Student Achievement.

partnered to fund homework centers throughout San José using 80 percent city funding and 20 percent school funding. School Board members in Santa Clara County are elected, and the School Board appoints the superintendent of San José Unified School District. With citywide leadership and engagement, San José parents and students are becoming more aware of alternatives for high school and are receiving encouragement and supports to take advantage of those options.

Leadership Roles Exercised by Former San José Mayor Ron Gonzales

- ✓ Using the "bully pulpit" to host a dropout awareness conference and help shift perceptions of alternative education;
- ✓ Convening and partnering with key community leaders, particularly People Acting in Community Together (PACT), to ensure that communities are actively engaged in education reform;
- ✓ Creating incentives for programmatic reform through partnerships with businesses;
- ✓ Employing financial incentives, including bond measures, especially for funding school construction;
- ✓ Implementing policies within the city that support positive reforms at the state and local levels, particularly gang prevention, homework centers, child care centers, and health programs for young children; and
- ✓ Using access to facilities, buildings, and funding for construction of community youth centers on school campuses; the Franklin McKinley School District is building a new school on land leased for one dollar from the City of San José for the next 100 years.

VII

Open Sector / Readiness to Open Alternative High Schools

Until joining the staff of Minnesota New Country School (MNCS) in the rural town of Henderson, Minn., Barbara Finn had no idea that all aspects of the teaching experience could be as rewarding, affirming, and uplifting as watching a student progress from fearing algebra to grasping it. How could she possibly explain to her colleagues still bound by the typical high school day – 40-minute classes, bells ringing, regimented schedules, overcrowded rooms, lack of computer access, not to mention feeling undervalued and underpaid as the teachers' union contract was hotly contested every few years – that teaching at MNCS was nothing like teaching as they knew it? A seven-year veteran of MNCS, Barbara was proud of the school's achievements because she and fellow teachers were responsible for them!

A charter high school belonging to the EdVisions Cooperative,[139] Minnesota New Country School[140] is a unique learning environment without courses or bells or a formal principal. Teachers run the school as part of a Teacher Professional Practice. Through the EdVisions Cooperative, a new model for "educational entrepreneurship" was set up to "provide employment and income to its members in a manner that would permit them, individually and in concert with one another, in a

139 EdVisions offers a nationally recognized model for secondary education that provides a new blueprint for 21st century learning. http://www.edvisions.com. EdVisions is a member of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's AHSI network. http://www.ahsi.info.

140 Minnesota New Country School is a member of the EdVisions Cooperative. http://mncs.k12.mn.us.

cooperative structure, to employ their skills, talents, and resources for the development and implementation of quality instructional programs."[141]

In 1994, Barbara was not among the original 13 members of EdVisions Cooperative, but a year after its inception, she felt honored to join the first education workers cooperative to operate in the public sector. The Cooperative essentially replaces union arrangements by creating a professional association of teacher/owners that contract with a school board to supply a learning program. It is based upon true site-based management and dynamic and flexible decision-making. The cooperative provides continuing growth for educators in a professional association of like-minded educators.[142] Teachers own their practice and assume responsibility for all services, including payroll processing, marketing, human resources consulting, benefits, and workers compensation. In the Cooperative, teachers are empowered to model democracy for themselves and their students.

In 2005, Minnesota New Country School surpassed adequate yearly progress and boasted aggregate ACT scores higher than the national average, with student and parent satisfaction rates exceeding 90 percent.[143] Standardized and other measures are positive and student and parent satisfaction are always tremendous. The combination of technology and self-directed learning is very popular and works with all ability levels.[144] About 70 percent of MNCS graduates go on to further schooling. About a quarter of the students attend some college while in high school through Minnesota's post-secondary enrollment program.[145] A building project in 1998 that relocated MNCS from its original location at Henderson High School in farm country along the Minnesota River Valley, to the current location on Main Street was a unique partnership between a local development group, the City of Henderson, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, and a

141 http://www.edvisions.com/aboutus.html.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 http://www.edvisions.com/aboutus.html.

145 Ibid.

Photo Courtesy of AHSI/Big Picture

local bank. MNCS has become an economic development success story. It attracts more than 500 visitors from around the world each year and the Cooperative has created several jobs for this small community of one thousand residents.[146] In so many ways, Barbara was proud to be part of this revolutionary movement.

Alternatives for high school are expanding nationwide, but achieving large-scale success will require a more **open educational sector with readiness to open alternative high schools**. A project called Education/Evolving, a Minnesota-based initiative committed to helping K-12 education evolve and meet the challenges, demands, and opportunities of the 21st century, promotes the need for an "Open Sector" in public education.[147] According to Education/Evolving, school systems need to be "open" in the following respects:

146 Ibid.

147 Education Evolving, "Open Sector: Creating a Positive Environment for Creating New Schools New." Please visit http://www.educationevolving.org to read this paper in its entirety and for more information.

- Open to **new "entrants"** – schools started from scratch by teachers, parents, community organizations and multi-school networks;
- Open to **new authorizers or sponsors** – entities other than school districts that oversee schools;
- Open to **new learning programs**, and new ways of governing and managing schools;
- And, as part of "public education," open to all students who choose to attend schools in the sector.[148]

Launching and expanding alternatives for high school requires a healthy open sector in education that is receptive to programs that expand, enhance, and recalibrate the premises and structure of the existing public school system. The climate achieved by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) seems to have increased the nation's receptivity to alternative programs. NCLB identifies "four pillars" upholding its approach to education reform, namely stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, encouraging proven education methods, and offering more choices for parents.[149] Proponents of NCLB may observe that these elements are raising public awareness about school choice and creating a positive, more competitive marketplace in which high-quality alternative education programs would be expected to thrive. Conversely, critics of NCLB comment that "high stakes" tests, increasingly mandated by state education agencies to comply with federal accountability requirements, may lead to higher dropout rates, thereby forcing parents, schools, and communities to seek alternatives for high school that might better enable young people to succeed academically. In both instances, the result has been to increase public awareness of and attention to the need for sufficient high-quality alternatives for high school that enable young people to achieve academic proficiency, earn a high school diploma, and be prepared to pursue postsecondary education.

---

148 Ibid.

149 U.S. Department of Education. Overview of No Child Left Behind Act. See http://www.ed.gov/nclb.

What makes it tough?

Though committed leaders in education are working toward creating a healthier open sector, structural barriers are difficult to overcome. Specifically, school systems tend to observe longstanding laws, policies, and regulations regarding teacher certification, principal/administrator certification, funding for capital projects, and facilities design. In working to encourage a more open sector, the issues that make it tough far outweigh emerging innovations. By identifying specific topics that are proving difficult to address without a more open sector, the Alternative High School Initiative is helping define the issues a healthy open sector must take into account. The four areas that follow are in need of serious attention in order for the education sector to operate more openly, thereby creating space for school systems to integrate alternatives for high school.

- **Teacher Certification**. Alternatives for high school generally integrate diverse types of learning experiences and offer interdisciplinary courses. As a result, many find it helpful to hire teachers with credentials who are able to apply their skills more expansively than required under discipline-specific certification rules and regulations. Teachers in alternative education programs need to meet state certification requirements. In addition, qualified teachers in alternative programs also often exceed certification requirements. They must do so to effectively implement innovations in teaching and learning.

  Under NCLB, for example, the requirement that K-12 school teachers must be "highly qualified" means that they must be certified in particular academic and vocational disciplines in order to teach particular courses. While teacher certification is necessary and valued, teachers in alternative programs often provide instruction in ways that reach beyond teacher certification guidelines. To assist teachers in cultivating multidisciplinary skills, alternative programs enhance teacher preparation through professional development that addresses such topics as culturally responsive teaching/learning and constructive student engagement.

- **Principal/Administrator Certification**. Alternatives for high school are best managed by school leaders who are highly qualified and able to manage implementation of innovative program models. Strong candidates for these positions may or may not be certified for public school administration. Principal certification requirements often serve to narrow the pool of potential candidates for leading alternative high schools, making the competition more difficult for individuals from the private sector, higher education, or other sectors who might otherwise be qualified to lead schools.

- **Funding Standards and Capital Funding**. Public education is underfunded at all levels. At the high school level, public funding for alternatives for high school is extremely limited. State education agencies do not provide equitable funding of alternatives for high school. Since these alternatives often operate beyond the confines of traditional school buildings, or offer innovative classroom settings within schools, capital funding is critical for securing and modifying physical space. Alternatives for high school often experience difficulty finding affordable, well-located buildings and usually lack sufficient resources to renovate or otherwise refurbish the buildings to make creative spaces for teaching and learning.

- **Facilities Design Standards**. In many instances, alternatives for high school are designed to use space differently than it is used in traditional school settings. Since students often engage in hands-on, project-based learning experiences in small groups with teachers as "coaches" and mentors, typical four-walled classrooms seem confining. Even if funds are secured to alter the space, facilities design standards can be prohibitive. Restrictive building codes, rules, and regulations for school facilities often restrict the ability of an alternative school to enhance physical aspects of the learning environment. In Rhode Island, for example, The Met Center schools have been able to secure approval for facilities designs that would not have been authorized had they been traditional high schools. As state-operated districts, The Met Center schools have been able to create spaces that are not bound by measurements for classroom footage and related specifications.

What are the innovators doing?

Programs in the AHSI network have identified several solutions that contribute to a more open sector in public education.

- The Portland Community College (PCC) Gateway to College program found itself challenged by the "highly qualified" teacher requirement under NCLB. Students dually enrolled in high school and college were fulfilling some high school course requirements by taking college courses. Despite the fact that professors with Ph.D.s in the relevant subjects were providing instruction, the California state education agency would not recognize core academic courses taught by college professors as fulfilling the high school graduation requirement because they were not taught by K-12 certified teachers.

  PCC Gateway to College and others advocated at the federal level regarding this NCLB provision, and the U.S. Department of Education subsequently issued non-regulatory guidance clarifying the meaning and intent of this provision regarding teachers entering the classroom through alternative routes.[150] Faculty members at higher education institutions who may not be K-12 certified are considered "highly qualified" to provide instruction in areas of study for which they offer postsecondary instruction encompassing relevant K-12 course matter.

- EdVisions[151] and many small schools in Minnesota currently secure waivers for staff licensing requirements under NCLB. The waivers allow staff to work as interdisciplinary educators. Schools comment that these waivers are a tremendous asset, but EdVisions is engaged in state legislative efforts to develop an interdisciplinary teacher license that would sustain this approach to teacher certification.

- Teachers in CISGA's Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) are called "learning facilitators" (LFs) because PLCs do not use tradi-

150 U.S. Department of Education (December 2002). "Education Department Releases Guidance Update on Highly Qualified Teachers." See http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2002/12/12202002.html.

151 EdVisions is a member of the AHSI network, and information is available at http://www.edvisions.com as well as at www.ahsi.info.

tional methods of instruction. The LFs work within an online instruction system that covers the entire state curriculum. Many students can work simultaneously on different aspects of a course while the LF assists each student at her/his individual level of need. LFs master course work at various levels but have more time to assist groups or individual students with project-based, experiential, and service learning.

- The Big Picture Company is addressing principal certification with support from The Wallace Foundation. Big Picture created the Principals Residency Network in Rhode Island, which supplements existing standards by adding such competencies as family and community engagement and navigating state and district regulations through learning in actual school settings with mentors.
- A Minnesota state "lease aid" program provides up to $1,600 per student each year on top of the regular per pupil funding allocation to assist schools in leasing adequate facilities to house EdVisions schools.

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

The City of Phoenix is quietly cultivating an open sector in education that will help expand high school options. Guided by the vision of Mayor Phil Gordon, the city and its thirty school districts housing over 325 public schools are working together to develop small, theme-based high schools through the Phoenix Small Schools Initiative.[152] According to information compiled by the Small Schools Committee formed to manage this initiative, Phoenix has 71 high schools with fewer than 500 students; 51 are charter schools, nine are private schools, and small schools in districts usually address students with special needs or offer alternative programs.[153] The mayor's effort will provide funding for new schools or break down large high schools into smaller learning

152 City of Phoenix. (2006) "Phoenix Small Schools Initiative," presentation during NLC Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006.

153 Ibid, slide 4.

communities.[154] Selected to participate in the YEF Institute initiative on expanding alternatives for high school, Phoenix received technical assistance in the design and implementation of its plan.

To support the Small Schools Initiative, Mayor Gordon set a precedent by including education funding in the City of Phoenix 2006 Bond Program which raised $878.5 million during a Special Bond Election held on March 14, 2006.[155] More than 700 Phoenix residents were appointed by the mayor and City Council as volunteers and were organized into 17 bond subcommittees to develop the bond program.[156] The City of Phoenix Bond Program named seven propositions, including *Proposition Number 3*, Building Small High Schools, Higher Education, and Health Science Facilities, and *Proposition Number 5*, Serving Our Community with Libraries and Youth, Senior, and Cultural Centers, both aimed at improving outcomes among young people. A total of $6.8 million in bond funds was raised to build small high schools, and these funds will be available in fiscal year 2008-09.[157]

The Small Schools Committee has identified eight school districts in Phoenix eligible to apply for funding under this initiative. Eligible districts interested in creating small high schools were invited to submit letters of interest early in the process. Meanwhile, the Small Schools Committee will conduct focus groups, set priorities, engage businesses, and ultimately issue a request for proposals. Throughout this process, the mayor's office will continue to play a lead role.

In addition to implementing the Phoenix Small Schools Initiative and the bond program, the mayor appoints a 35-member Phoenix Youth and Education Commission composed of youth and adult citizens to advise city leaders on important youth and education issues.[158] The commission

---

154 Ibid, slide 5.

155 City of Phoenix. (2006). Ordinance S-32498: An Ordinance Establishing the Form of the Ballot for the City of Phoenix Special Bond Election to be held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006.

156 City of Phoenix. (2005). City of Phoenix 2006 Bond Program Fact Sheet, p. 1.

157 City of Phoenix. (2006) "Phoenix Small Schools Initiative," presentation during NLC Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006, slide 6.

158 City of Phoenix. (2006). See http://phoenix.gov/EDUCATN/educcomm.html.

is "dedicated to improving the education and enhancing the development of Phoenix youth," and includes an Education Committee and a Youth Committee, both of which meet quarterly.[159]

As the City of Phoenix continues to identify new ways to partner with the K-12 school system and with higher education institutions to open the education sector, Mayor Gordon's leadership offers examples of ways to expand alternatives for high school.

Leadership Roles Exercised by Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon

- ✓ Using the "bully pulpit" to raise awareness of the need for small high school learning environments;
- ✓ Convening and partnering with key community leaders, including the Small Schools Committee, the executive committee that designed Phoenix's 2006 Bond Program, and the Phoenix Youth and Education Commission;
- ✓ Creating incentives for programmatic reform by forming the Small Schools Committee and developing the Bond Program;
- ✓ Employing financial incentives, in particular the Bond Program which raised $6.8 million in bond funds to build small high schools;
- ✓ Participating in school district planning and decision-making processes by regularly convening the Education Committee of the Phoenix Youth and Education Commission;
- ✓ Implementing programs within the city that support positive reforms at the state and local levels, in particular the Bond Program, which will issue funds competitively among eight eligible school districts; and
- ✓ Using access to facilities, buildings, and funding for construction to transform large high schools into smaller, more autonomous learning environments and ensure that investments are made in renovating buildings.

159 Ibid.

VIII

Coordination with City and Other Public Agencies and Community Organizations

Hope and faith – mysterious words for Dara Twinheart until Lighthouse Academy unraveled those mysteries forever. A vague recollection of feeling loved and comforted came to Dara whenever she recalled her childhood before her grandmother passed away, when Dara and her family still lived on a reservation in the closely knit community of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. So much had happened since then. When her father found work near Grand Rapids, Mich., and moved the family there, Dara had missed celebrating her 13th birthday with the usual tribal rituals and recognition. Instead, she was thrust into a mostly white middle school where she felt awkward and alone, even among the Latina and African American girls who admired her olive complexion and straight black hair. Dara did all she could to feel a sense of belonging, including drinking excessively, smoking, skipping classes almost daily, and ultimately being expelled from Central High School for possession and use of marijuana.

Ironically, the juvenile court hearing turned everything on its head. Appearing before the judge, Dara felt nothing, neither remorse nor fear. Her judicial court representative pointed out that Dara had not been arrested prior to this incident. Dara recalled that something was said about "a light" because she remembered thinking that there was supposed to be one at the end of every tunnel – every one it seemed, except hers. Now, three years later, Dara shudders, recalling that

moment with utter terror, wondering what might have happened had she not ended up at Lighthouse Academy.[160]

Lighthouse Academy is an innovative street school offered for expelled teens and is a member of the National Association of Street Schools.[161] This collaborative, community-based program is located within the United Methodist Community House in downtown Grand Rapids. The Lighthouse model emphasizes academic, social, career, and spiritual development through personalized, experiential learning, counseling, life-skills training, and individualized computer-based training offered in a state-of-the-art computer lab.[162] Classes have no more than 15 students, and the program's core values of integrity, compassion, and excellence permeate instruction and interaction. Lighthouse is a private school serving students within Kent County, and students may be referred by school superintendents, Family Independence Agency case workers, judicial court representatives, and by students' families.[163] After opening in January 2005, all students enrolled in the Lighthouse Academy, including Dara, had made the Honor Roll. As a class, the collective grade point averages soared.[164]

Dara brought herself back from reminiscing. After all, mornings were her favorite time at Lighthouse Academy. To start each day, everyone gathered in a large circle, much the way her family and friends in the Native American community did, to share reflections, revelations, and testimonies of how they took hold of a spirit greater than their own to transform their lives. Dara loved the caring and the camaraderie. Her new friends genuinely accepted her for who she is, and they appreciated learning of the values passed down by her grandmother and other elders. Dara not only is succeeding academically, but

---

160 Lighthouse Academy is a program of Wedgwood Christian Services and a member of the National Association of Street Schools. http://www.wedgwood.org/slighthouse.html.

161 NASS belongs to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's AHSI network. http://www.streetschools.com. See also http://www.ahsi.info.

162 See http://www.wedgwood.org/slighthouse.html.

163 Wedgwood Christian Services. "Lighthouse Academy Q&A." http://www.wedgwood.org/alighthousepr.html.

164 See http://www.wedgwood.org/alighthousepr.html.

she is also able to see herself as a whole person, one who has walked into a bright light shining from the Academy.

Alternatives for high school recognize the need to offer students some supports and services that are beyond the purview of the school system to provide. To do this, many alternatives for high school **coordinate with city and other public agencies and with community organizations** to make available appropriate services and supports. While many traditional high schools address such needs as health care by partnering with outside organizations, alternatives for high school find ways of assisting students with transportation, housing, child care, employment, substance abuse treatment, mental health and wellness supports, legal aid, and a variety of other issues. Often alternatives for high school interface with other agencies in the course of offering instruction because students may be in the custody of the child welfare system or may be young offenders connected with the juvenile justice system. Identifying the resources students need and coordinating with other entities to make them more readily accessible to students are critical roles played by alternatives for high school.

What makes it tough?

Although alternatives for high school strive to offer supports and services to students, providing them at sufficient scale and in a seamless way is challenging. Again, the issues that compel these programs to coordinate with others beyond the school system outweigh current evidence of success in doing so. Many supports are not available within the school system, meaning that alternative programs must serve as hubs for information about a variety of resources and often must establish their own relationships with other organizations. In addition, because many alternatives for high school are small, independently run schools, they often are unable to offer some standard extracurricular experiences, such as organized sports and recreational programs. Specifically, two areas are essential: supports and services typically managed by city agencies and institutional linkages to federal programs managed under agencies with state and/or local jurisdiction.

- **Supports and Services Typically Managed by City Agencies.** Alternatives for high school find it challenging fiscally, and at times programmatically, to offer a full array of services and supports, such as regular visits by school nurses, for example, unless they create cost-effective partnerships with other schools. Often it is difficult to negotiate with outside organizations and agencies to share the cost of services and supports due to actual or perceived agency regulations. Unfortunately, there is a lack of significant demand for additional services and supports from low-income parents and students. Alternatives for high school take special efforts to raise awareness of these needs and to coordinate with city agencies and community-based organizations to address them.
- **Institutional Linkages to Federal Programs Managed by State and/or Local Agencies.** Alternatives for high school often accept students who are or may have been involved with such other public sector agencies as the child welfare system or juvenile and criminal justice system. When students are connected with programs managed under other laws, policies, and regulations, including special education, alternative high schools often find it difficult to share data and information about students that might ease students' ability to receive services while making transitions. There is a general lack of coordination among agencies when it comes to delivering high-quality, effective youth transition services.

What are the innovators doing?

Alternatives for high school recognize the potential benefits of coordinating with municipal leaders, community partners, and other governmental agencies to overcome barriers and improve access for students to high quality supports and services. However, leaders of several AHSI organizations acknowledge that they would like to be more intentional about pursuing these relationships as they expand their networks. A few AHSI organizations coordinate effectively with municipal agencies.

- Good Shepherd Services, a nonprofit social service and youth development agency in New York City,[165] has a true partnership with the New York City Department of Education, Department of Social Services, and the mayor's office to provide youth development and support services in their alternative high schools. Good Shepherd high schools are part of a much larger network throughout Brooklyn and the Bronx which offers counseling, foster care services, domestic violence supports, young adult borough centers, evening school taught by Department of Education teachers with Good Shepherd supports, and other activities using a "wrap-around" model that keeps each young person at the center and surrounds her/him with appropriate resources.
- CISGA sites each have a Communities in Schools (CIS) Services Coordinator whose role it is to connect students with day care, mental health services, transportation, and other services necessary for students to succeed in school. CIS Service Coordinators traditionally operate by linking resources of cities with those of the education system. In Atlanta, the Mayor's Youth Program launched by Mayor Franklin gives high school graduates attending Performance Learning Centers an incentive to develop post-graduation plans.
- The National Association of Street Schools (NASS) has been able to work locally with juvenile court judges to have NASS programs recognized as viable placement options for youthful offenders. The Lighthouse Academy in Grand Rapids is working with the juvenile justice system and school district locally and regionally. It receives per pupil funding through the intermediate school district.
- YouthBuild schools have worked out arrangements with local court judges and probation officers to have their schools recognized as viable placement options as well. Approximately 46 percent of students in YouthBuild schools in the alternative high school initiative had been adjudicated as of 2005-06. YouthBuild USA has a major grant from the U.S. Department of Labor for a

165 See http://www.goodshepherds.org.

30-program demonstration project to address criminal justice diversion and reentry of young people into meaningful education and careers.

What leadership roles are municipal leaders playing?

Leaders of the City of Corpus Christi place a high value on engaging the entire community in building commitments to achieve citywide goals – high school reform in particular. Mayor Henry Garrett and City Manager George K. "Skip" Noe are working to implement the vision of former Mayor Samuel L. Neal, Jr., for Corpus Christi to have a system of "All American City" high schools.[166] The mission statement for achieving this vision indicates that Corpus Christi wants the entire community to have confidence in their high schools' ability to help all students achieve high standards and graduate ready to continue their education and enter the world of work. This confidence will be the result of three factors – demonstrated academic performance, high completion rates, and collaboration among all stakeholders to improve high school performance.

The mayor is exercising visible leadership and commitment in focusing on reducing the dropout rate as a priority for the city. The mayor's office has taken several steps to act on this commitment, including convening a community forum series, "Even One Dropout is Too Many," which has raised public awareness of the issue and mobilized citizens to become involved in helping reduce the dropout rate. The YEF Institute assists Corpus Christi as another of the five cities participating in the technical assistance initiative supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to facilitate municipal leadership in promoting new alternative secondary schools.[167]

By continuing to collaborate with the mayor and his staff, the Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD), under the

166 City of Corpus Christi Public Information Office, 2004 Annual Report. http://www.cctexas.com.

167 National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, "Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School." The five technical assistance project cities include Phoenix, San José, Hartford, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio. See http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program_areas/education/4128.aspx.

leadership of Superintendent Scott Elliff, is promoting a few alternatives for high school. One that has received attention is Moody High School, which is implementing career-based, small learning communities – a total of five thematic academies, the first of which focuses on health sciences. Moody High School is responsible for its own administration and does not have a principal. Students receive core content instruction and participate in electives aligned by the academy to provide outside resources and partnerships with 80 businesses that work with the school. The mayor's office participates in the Moody Internship Program, enabling students to intern with various city departments, including planning, building, and code enforcement. Communities in Schools[168] operates within Moody High School and is the primary external provider of services and supports for students.

Corpus Christi is also revamping the Alternative High School Center, a 25-year old program that students are able to select if they are not doing well in the traditional high school setting. Every student works at his or her individual pace and all are required to work while in the program. A design team is working to co-locate a Teenage Mothers Schools with the Alternative High School Center that would offer an optional nursery and other options, including a drop-in program for students who want to return to school, programs for English language learners, an accelerated program for over-aged middle school students to catch up on basic academic proficiencies, and a re-engineered transitions program slated to start in 2007.

Corpus Christi offers an early college high school in coordination with Del Mar College that enables students to complete the program with dual credit for earning a high school diploma and a 2-year associate degree. The Collegiate High School Initiative began in fall 2006, and a new class of 100 ninth grade students will be added each year to create a four-year campus by fall 2009.[169] Corpus Christi also operates

168 Communities in Schools – http://www.cisnet.org.

169 Moore, Andrew O. (2006). Interview with Corpus Christi on November 20, 2006, to debrief the high school technical assistance project team.

two charter high schools. Finally, the Local Education Fund, an affiliate of the Public Education Network[170] in Corpus Christi, received a grant in 2005 from CHRISTUS Health System, a national Catholic charity that operates hospitals and facilities in six American states and Mexico,[171] to convene partners in the Miller High School feeder pattern to open a full-service community school model that would be open evenings and weekends to provide health care, workforce development services for parents, and other supports.

The CCISD operates independently of municipal government, and CCISD Board of Trustee members are elected by the over 267,000 residents who live within the district's 68 square mile area.[172] The Board of Trustees appoints the superintendent of CCISD. Positive relationships exist among the city, school district, and CCISD Board of Trustees, resulting in district-wide cooperation for afterschool programs, joint use of facilities (including a swimming complex shared by the city and school district), and other coordinated activities.

Collegial relationships among school and city leaders enable local elected officials to contribute to education in several ways. A task force representing school districts, the City of Corpus Christi, higher education, businesses, community, and nonprofit organizations helps guide joint efforts.[173] In addition, Corpus Christi has created a City Council Youth Advisory Committee that tackles issues affecting youth and the community.[174] Perhaps most importantly, the city has consistently convened community forums to engage the widest possible range of citizens and stakeholders in participating in the "Even One Dropout is Too Many" initiative. More than 400 attendees have participated in these gatherings convened since November

---

170 Public Education Network. http://www.publiceducation.org.

171 For information on CHRISTUS Health, visit http://www.christushealth.org.

172 Corpus Christi Independent School District, "CCISD Administration: Board of Trustees." http://www.corpuschristiisd.org/index.cfm?page=1561.

173 Noe, George K. "Skip" and Conrado Garcia. (2006). "Celebrating Success: Sharing and Learning (Corpus Christi)," presented during NLC Cross-Site Meeting in Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006, slide 9.

174 Ibid.

2003.[175] On September 13, 2006, Corpus Christi hosted a High School Transformation Forum Dialogue with an audience of approximately 200 individuals, including 12-member teams from the city's nine high schools, as well as business and community leaders and education advocates from the private and public sectors.[176] This was one of two community-wide forums in 2006 focusing on high school reform.

As a result of community outreach and full engagement of diverse stakeholders throughout Corpus Christi, the city recently received a $400,000 Gates Foundation grant to support its Early College High School Program and a competitive grant of $750,000 for a Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Academy, one of a set of initiatives within the Texas High School Project, a $261 million public-private initiative by the Texas Education Agency, Office of the Governor, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Wallace Foundation, and other partners that is committed to increasing graduation and college enrollment rates in every Texas community.[177] Both of these grants will impact 1,400 students annually over the coming years.[178]

Leadership Roles Exercised by Corpus Christi Mayor Henry Garrett

- ✓ Building on former Mayor Neal's use of the "bully pulpit" to raise awareness of the dropout issue by creating "All American City" high schools and to help shift perceptions of alternative education;

---

175 Steering Committee, Even One Dropout is Too Many. (2004). "Even One Dropout is Too Many: Results of Corpus Christi's Community Forums (November 17, 2003; January 14, 2004; and February 18, 2004). See also NLC presentation, "Analyzing the Experience: What You Told Us," December 6, 2006.

176 Garcia, Chris Davis. (2006). "Summary of High School Transformation Forum Dialogue, September 13, 2006, in Corpus, Christi, Texas," prepared October 2006.

177 For more on the Texas High School Project, visit http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/sec/thsp.

178 Moore, Andrew O. (2006). Interview with Corpus Christi on November 20, 2006, to debrief the NLC high school technical assistance project team.

- ✓ Continuing to convene and partner with key business and community leaders by hosting the "Even One Dropout is Too Many" community-wide forum series, and two forums on high school transformation;
- ✓ Participating in a statewide initiative – the Texas High Schools Project – which has strong linkages with private sector businesses; and
- ✓ Using access to facilities, buildings, and funding for construction, including shared recreational facilities and community school centers.

IX

Conclusion

City leaders, school district officials, and leaders of innovative alternatives for high school across the United States are addressing policy barriers that might inhibit the expansion of alternatives for high school. Not surprisingly, most policy challenges confronted by alternatives for high school are ***not*** the result of policies that fall under the jurisdiction of municipal governments. The fact that municipal policy barriers to expanding alternatives for high school are minimal, if they exist at all, is good news. This finding means that mayors and other municipal leaders can explore a broad range of opportunities to create a policy environment that will help expand alternatives for high school.

Most mayors featured in this report are promoting and achieving positive results through new initiatives that change the context in which educational alternatives operate, as in the case of Seattle's Families and Education Levy initiated by Mayor Norm Rice in 1990 and continued today by Mayor Greg Nickels, the Mayor's Youth Program created by Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, and the "Even One Dropout is Too Many" parent and community summits convened by Mayor Henry Garrett of Corpus Christi. In Boston, system-wide high school reform efforts integrate alternatives for high school, and the mayor and school superintendent ensure that expanding these options is a priority within and beyond the school district. In every instance, these mayors are generating wide public interest in education, often highlighting the need to expand alternatives for high school. In several instance, mayors are taking concrete actions to support these innovations.

One apparent reason why alternatives for high school are gaining broader support among policymakers, school district leaders and business and community members is that quality alternative secondary school options complement existing programs of the school district. Alternatives for high school offer new hope for students who have not thrived academically in traditional high school settings. Rather than undermine or compete against existing high school programs, many successful alternatives for high school enter the scene as fresh actors able to offer a new option for students who otherwise might drop out of school or complete high school without having fulfilled their academic and social potential.

The mayors and other municipal leaders featured in this report have made an impact on the development of alternatives for high school for another important reason – their leadership is sufficient to "get the ball rolling" locally. To achieve progress, mayors and their staff members engage in targeted policy advocacy – to secure bond measures, for example – and in a few instances create new authority, as Mayor Perez did in establishing the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education and the Future Workforce Investment System. However, the strategies they are pursuing did not necessitate their investing extensive time and energy in policy advocacy aimed at undoing or significantly altering existing statutes. Instead, mayoral initiatives that will improve education and help create new alternatives for high school students have garnered support from voters and other local city and school officials. This positive response is evident in the passage of bond measures and the adoption of city partnership agreements with school districts. In the case of Boston, the mayor and school superintendent share a steady single vision for implementing system-wide high school reform, and alternatives for high school feature prominently among the types of innovations (e.g., small schools, mastery of content, portfolio-based assessment) advanced within their reform efforts.

Fortunately, mayors and other municipal leaders interested in expanding alternatives for high school are able to forge new ground and explore new territory by partnering with school district leaders. These efforts may not demand addressing contentious policy issues, but they do require serious commitment and a sound investment of

human and fiscal resources to be effective. In the examples featured in this report, mayors have invested local resources in new ways that will support the expansion of alternatives for high school. Resources are essential to:

- Develop thoughtful, well-informed plans of action that complement ongoing efforts of the school district;
- Assign staff members and appoint cabinet-level positions for the purpose of managing an education agenda within the purview of the mayor's office;
- Support the use of buildings and facilities for innovative programs;
- Leverage programmatic reform by using city funding to assist programs in achieving and tracking student-centered results; and
- Convene community-wide partners for the two-fold purpose of improving information and communication about high school graduation and college success, and securing commitments of resources from others in the public and private sector to improve education, particularly high school outcomes.

In no way would these success stories have occurred without the efforts of mayors to pursue and use resources that will help alternatives for high school expand.

Although promising efforts are underway, they are not yet enough to create large-scale success nationwide. Alternatives for high school need to become an integral part of and a complement to the current K-12 education system. High-quality alternatives for high school like those funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to expand their networks are accumulating expertise and information. The Alternative High School Initiative's Seven Policy Conditions for Large-Scale Success, for example, enable any high school reform effort to consider factors affecting alternatives for high school. AHSI innovators are collectively developing and seeking opportunities to engage with mayors, school district leaders, and other program innovators in the effort to expand alternatives for high school. To achieve large-scale success, local leaders in cities and school districts are well-positioned to

take thoughtful action in promoting and advancing policies that enable alternatives for high school to operate effectively. Moreover, leaders of promising alternatives for high school are equally well-positioned to reach out to city and school district leaders in an effort to foster three-way collaboration that expands alternatives for high school.

X

Recommendations

To foster more widespread expansion of alternatives for high school, leaders of cities, school districts, and innovative alternatives for high school have the opportunity to take the initiative in connecting with one another to enhance communication and to discover together ways of advancing shared interests. In the charts which follow, several "leadership keys" are identified for mayors and other municipal leaders as well as for innovative youth development practitioners and educators. These "leadership keys" are offered as a guide to specific strategies and actions municipal leaders and program innovators might take to promote the expansion of alternatives for high school. By creating compelling learning opportunities at the secondary school level, schools and their supporters throughout the community will succeed in helping reduce the numbers of young people who are bored and drop out of school, and increase the numbers of young people who engage or reengage in high-quality learning.

Leadership Keys for Mayors and Other Municipal Leaders

What can mayors do to expand alternatives for high school? Mayors and other municipal leaders are well-positioned to promote and expand alternatives for high school. Mayors have implemented an array of strategies that vary depending upon unique characteristics of the local policy environment. Effective local policies take into account such factors as the formal and informal roles of the mayor, school board, and school superintendent, and the relationship between the state education agency and the school district, among others. A list of

the Top 10 Policy Factors for analyzing characteristics of the policy environment relevant for expanding alternatives for high school appears in Appendix C. In any policy environment, well-informed municipal leaders will be able to identify strategies likely to succeed in their cities, counties, and towns.

Leadership Keys and Types of Strategies

Make and fulfill commitments to enhance education for all students by promoting and expanding alternatives for high school.

Strategy 1: Use the "bully pulpit" to raise awareness of the need for alternatives for high school and to promote positive perceptions of these alternatives.

- Include high school graduation and college success as mayoral priorities when education is a component of the mayor's agenda.
- Feature local alternatives for high school when citing success stories about students and programs.
- Identify and recognize local students, school district leaders, and program leaders engaged in alternatives for high school.

Strategy 2: Implement policies and programs within the city that support positive high school reforms at the state and local levels.

- Identify municipal policies that might impede alternatives for high school (i.e., zoning restrictions for school buildings, transportation access, etc.), by searching the city charter, local ordinances, city/county/town council resolutions and legislative records, and work with local elected officials to change them.
- Use municipal leadership to launch pilot programs that implement strategies relevant for alternatives for high school, such as Mayor Franklin's Mayor's Youth Program in Atlanta, and former Mayor Gonzalez' support of Downtown College Prep in San José.

Continued on next page

Strategy 3: Promote the use of data, research, and evaluation to manage by results, particularly increasing high school graduation rates and reducing dropout rates.

- Articulate measurable results for student achievement and program improvement for alternatives for high school as Mayor Nickels of Seattle and Mayor Perez of Hartford have done.
- Support independent evaluations of alternatives for high school to help ensure strong accountability and document evidence of success.

Utilize city, county, and/or town resources to invest in alternatives for high school and to leverage additional resources for these innovations.

Strategy 1: Identify and offer space (i.e., buildings and facilities) for alternatives for high school to locate their programs in local communities and neighborhoods.

- Identify and offer existing space within the city/county/town for use by programs to operate independently or in conjunction with other activities.

Strategy 2: Pursue financial incentives to expand alternatives for high school.

- Work with local elected officials and advocates to introduce bond measures that raise money to support alternatives for high school, as former Mayor Gonzalez of San José was able to do in securing a $4 million bond to support San José Unified School District's use of an elementary school building to house Downtown College Preparatory School.
- Propose and garner public support for voters to pass a tax levy that would generate independent funds that can be used by the mayor to support alternatives for high school and to leverage broad education reforms, as did former Mayor Norm Rice of Seattle in establishing the Families and Education Tax Levy.

Continued on next page

- Raise funds independently of the school district that can be used to leverage state, federal, and private sector matching grant funds. Mayor Gordon of Phoenix spearheaded the city's 2006 Bond Program, which raised $6.8 million in bond funds to build small high schools. The Phoenix Union Bond totaled $878.5 million, of which a significant amount will support a competitive process for small school development.

Partner with school superintendents and leaders of alternatives for high school to achieve positive results.

Stategy 1: Convene and partner formally and informally with key community leaders to expand local alternatives for high school.

- Host education summits with parents, teachers, and community members to inform constituents of the progress of alternatives for high school and to generate ongoing support for them. Mayor Henry Garrett and City Manager George (Skip) Noe of Corpus Christi continue to convene "Even One Dropout is Too Many," a community forum series launched by former Mayor Samuel L. Neal, Jr., to galvanize the entire community in support of alternatives for high school.
- Convene a conference or institute on alternatives for high school in partnership with the school district and other interested audiences. Invite the AHSI network to present information on their efforts. Consider hosting representatives of the AHSI network in conjunction with ongoing professional development activities led by the school district. Consider the potential for inviting these alternatives for high school to expand their networks by opening sites in new cities, counties, and towns.
- Identify nationally acclaimed alternatives for high school, including those supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the Alternative High School Initiative, and learn about how they might share knowledge and expertise with local alternatives for high school.

Continued on next page

Stategy 2: Create incentives for programmatic reform, particularly when the school district and mayor's office operate independently of one another.

- Create an Office of Education within the city, county, or town (or appoint capable individuals to lead an existing municipal department) that assumes responsibility for promoting incentives for alternatives for high school, similar to action taken by Mayor Gordon in establishing the Phoenix Youth and Education Commission. Ensure that the office is led by someone appointed to a cabinet-level position, and provide support for a staff liaison who is able to engage regularly with the school superintendent.
- Launch new programs that heighten awareness of and attention to existing programs. Mayor Franklin's Mayor's Youth Program in Atlanta highlighted the Hope Scholarship as an existing statewide program funded by the state of Georgia lottery to pay full college tuition for students graduating from high school with a 3.0 grade point average or better. As a result, high-achieving students from lower-income families who otherwise were unaware of the program have now taken advantage of it to pursue postsecondary education.

Stategy 3: Participate in school district planning and decision-making processes that promote alternatives for high school, particularly when the mayor exercises an official role in providing oversight of the school district.

- In cities with close collaboration between the mayor and school superintendent, it is highly possible for these leaders to maximize effectiveness in promoting programmatic reform. In Boston, for example, the mayor and school superintendent developed and implemented a common vision for education that embraces and expands alternatives for high school.
- Collaborate with leaders of State Education Agencies and school districts to implement policies and practices that enable students attending alternatives for high school to secure state and/or local shares of per pupil funding.

Leadership Keys for Program Innovators

What can leaders of innovative programs do to encourage mayors and other municipal leaders to expand alternatives for high school? Leaders of innovative programs like those belonging to the Alternative High School Initiative stand to benefit from reaching out to mayors and other municipal leaders to promote and expand alternatives for high school. While mayors have the authority to implement strategies independently and in partnership with school superintendents and other members of the private and public sector, program innovators have the expertise to demonstrate how to achieve results through quality alternatives for high school. It is not safe to presume that local leaders are aware of alternatives for high school or that they are familiar with recent innovations in programming that have enhanced the academic competitiveness of some of these programs. Local program innovators are particularly well-positioned to engage with mayors and other municipal leaders to pursue shared interests in contributing to better outcomes for students not well served in traditional high school settings.

Leadership Keys and Types of Strategies

Make connections with mayors and other municipal leaders to inform them of local alternatives for high school.

Stategy: Inform members of the mayor's staff and other municipal leaders of progress made and results achieved by local alternatives for high school.

- Arrange briefings with the mayor or county/town executive and her/his staff members to provide information on alternatives for high school (i.e., program model(s), locations, evidence of success, and future directions).
- Include the mayor or county/town executive and staff members when issuing press releases, circulating news articles, and sharing success stories about students and programs.

Continued on next page

- Identify and recognize local elected and appointed officials, school district leaders, and other champions of alternatives for high school. Acknowledgement by constituents is valuable to local leaders.
- Inform the mayor or county/town executive and staff members of awards, grants, and other recognition bestowed upon local programs. Often, those outside the local area are first to acknowledge and commend program innovators for achieving success.

Engage in policy advocacy as a component of ongoing program development.

Stategy: Identify policy priorities for local alternatives for high school and incorporate a policy advocacy agenda, as needed, into the overall program plan.

- Identify and document any policy barriers the program addressed and how they were handled to ensure innovators would be able to implement a high-quality program.
- Reflect upon and articulate in writing the broader policy implications (for high school, K-12, and/or higher education reform) of successfully implementing an innovative program model.
- Identify allies in the field who support alternatives for high school and/or share common policy interests. Work together to develop and implement local and statewide policy advocacy.
- Convene briefings with local city councilmembers and other elected officials to provide them with information on how alternatives for high school contribute to the community at-large. Determine potential policy levers, such as bond measures or changes to regulations governing building and facilities, likely to create win-win opportunities for both parties.
- Identify other leaders in the community, city, and state who have an influence on local and/or state policy. Provide them

Continued on next page

with information about policy priorities that would help expand alternatives for high school locally.

Selectively participate in partnerships and collaborate with a variety of relevant stakeholders to broaden the audiences and bases of support for alternatives for high school.

Stategy: Actively (but selectively) participate with city, school, and community leaders in partnerships and other formal or informal collaborative efforts that might benefit alternatives for high school.

- Consider leading or joining community mobilization, parent organizing, and other local efforts that stimulate public engagement in education and civic life. These efforts often are the underlying reason for success with such policy strategies as bond measures. Voters are more likely to support efforts that are familiar to them.
- When partnering with others, consider the value of formal partnership agreements for heightening accountability for partners to deliver on stated commitments.
- Participate in statewide, regional, or national networks of innovators who share a commitment to expanding alternatives for high school. Often these networks provide information, new connections, and assistance from peers for improving local program efforts.

References and Resources

"10 Positive Ways San José has Helped Improve Public Education." Office of (former) Mayor Ron Gonzalez. http://www.sjmayor.org.

"2004 Annual Report." City of Corpus Christi Public Information Office. http://www.cctexas.com.

"2006 Guide to 'a-g' Requirements and Instructions for Updating Your School's a-g Course list." University of California, 2006. http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/content/Guidetoa-gRegs.pdf.

"Addressing America's Dropout Challenge: State Efforts to Boost Graduation Rates Require Federal Support." Adria Steinberg, Cassius Johnson, and Hilary Pennington. Center for American Progress and Jobs for the Future, November 2006. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/graduation.html.

Alternative High School Initiative, an initiative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. http://www.ahsi.info.

"America's High School Crisis: Policy Reforms That Will Make a Difference." Tom Vander Ark. *Education Week*, Vol. 22, Number 29, April 2, 2003.

American Diploma Project. Achieve, Inc. http://www.achieve.org.

Asian Community Development Association, Boston, Massachusetts. http://asiancdc.org.

Big Picture Company. http://www.bigpicture.org.

Black Alliance for Educational Options. http://www.baeo.org.

Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education: Report to the Mayor of Hartford, Eddie A. Perez. June 25, 2004.

Boston Public Schools School Committee. Goals and Accomplishments, 2006. http://boston.k12.ma.us/schcom/goals.asp.

Boston Public Schools High School Renewal and Boston Small Schools Network. http://www.highschoolrenewal.org.

California Education Code 47612.1. http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate?WAISdocID=52224211100+4+0+0&WAISaction=retrieve.

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Options for Students not Passing the Exam. California Department of Education. http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/documents/options.doc.

"CCISD Administration: Board of Trustees." Corpus Christi Independent School District. http://www.corpuschristiisd.org/index.cfm?page=1561.

Celebrating Success: Sharing and Learning (Corpus Christi). George K. "Skip" Noe, City Manager and Conrado Garcia, Principal, Moody High School. Presentation during NLC Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006.

"Characteristics of the Largest 25 U.S. School Districts." *Proximity*, July 2006. http://www.proximityone.com/sdstop25.htm.

CHRISTUS Health. http://www.christushealth.org.

City of Atlanta, Office of the Mayor. http://www.atlantaga.gov.

City of Hartford, Office of the Mayor. http://www.hartford.gov/government/mayor.

City of Phoenix and Arizona State University. (2006). "New Alliance for Innovation in Local Government will be headquartered at ASU's School of Public Affairs at the Downtown Phoenix Campus," Press Release, August 18, 2006.

City of Phoenix. http://www.phoenix.gov/education.

City of Phoenix 2006 Bond Program Fact Sheet. City of Phoenix, AZ. Revised November 16, 2005.

City of Seattle Resolution Number 30768, "A Resolution Approving a City of Seattle/Seattle School District Partnership Agreement as required by Ordinance 121529 (Date Adopted: May 23, 2005). http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/education/PartnershipAgreement.pdf.

Communities in Schools. http://www.cisnet.org.

Communities in Schools of Georgia. http://www.cisga.org.

Council of the City of Phoenix. (2006). Ordinance S-32498: An Ordinance Establishing the Form of the Ballot for the City of Phoenix Special Bond Election to be held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006.

"Detailed Dropout Studies Guide Policy in City Schools." Erik W. Robelen. *Education Week*, Vol. 26, Issue 12, November 15, 2006.

Diploma Plus®, an initiative of the Commonwealth Corporation, Center for Youth Development and Education. http://www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus.

Diplomas Count: An Essential Guide to Graduation Policy and Rates. *Education Week* Press Conference Presentation. June 2006.

"Dropout Rates High, but Fixes Under Way." Amanda Paulsen. *Christian Science Monitor*, March 3, 2006.

"Dropout Rates in the United States: 2004." Jennifer Laird, Matthew DeBell, and Chris Chapman. U.S. Department of Education, November 2006 (NCES 2007-024).

The Early College High School Initiative (ECHS), an initiative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. http://www.earlycolleges.org.

"Education Levy: Cheers Greet Passage of School Measure." Deborah Bach. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 15, 2004.

Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) Survey Results (Internal Document), National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, 2004.

EdVisions Cooperative. http://edvisions.com.

Even One Dropout is Too Many: Community Strategies to Help More Students Graduate from High School, Ready to Continue Their Education and Enter the World of Work. Results of Corpus Christi's Community Forums. September 7, 2004.

"Families and Education Levy Investment Area: Accountability and Evaluation Framework." City of Seattle, Washington, May 23, 2005. http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/education/implementation&evaluation.pdf#page=19.

Financing Alternative Education Pathways: Profiles and Policy 2005. Mala B. Thakur and Kristen Henry. Washington, D.C.: National Youth Employment Coalition, 2005.

Future Workforce Investment System, Hartford, Conn. http://www.capitalworkforce.org/youth_jobs/future_workforce_investment_system.shtml.

Gateway to College, an initiative of Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon. http://wwwgatewaytocollege.org.

Greater San José Alternative Education Initiative. United Way of Silicon Valley. http://uwsv.org. See also http://www.getbacktoschool.org.

Hartford Consortium for Higher Education, City of Hartford. Mayor Eddie A. Perez and Kelvin Roldan. December 2006.

Hartford Public Schools – Higher Education Initiative: Implementation Plan for Blue Ribbon Commission Recommendations. September 2005. http://www.hartfordschools.org.

"Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School." National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program_areas/education/4128.aspx.

"How are Maya Angelou Public Charter School Students Doing When They Graduate?" See Forever Foundation, June 2006. http://www.seeforever.org.

"In New York City, Rising Teen Drop-out and Incarceration Rates." Jaclyn Grodin. *Washington Square Review*, Spring 2005.

"It's Official: MAPCS Formally Accepted for Middle States Accreditation." *Seeing Forever: The See Forever Foundation's E-Newsletter*, June 2006. http://www.seeforever.org/newsletters/06jun/index.htm.

Learning to Finish. http://www.learningtofinish.org.

"Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates." Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters. The Manhattan Institute. *Civic Report*, No. 48, April 2006. http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_48.htm.

Lighthouse Academy, a program of Wedgwood Christian Services and a member of the National Association of Street Schools. http://www.wedgwood.org/lighthouse.html.

"Local Property Taxes: Families and Education Levy (Seattle, Washington)." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC). http://www.nccic.org/pubs/financing-cc/child008.html.

"Mayoral Influence, New Regimes, and Public School Governance." Michael W. Kirst. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Research Report Series RR-049, May 2002.

Mayors Much Make Better High Schools a Top Priority: Mayor Ron Gonzales, City of San José. *Profiles in Leadership*, pp. 81-86. 2004.

The Met Center, Providence, Rhode Island, a school belonging to the Big Picture Company network. http://metcenter.org.

Moore, Andrew O. (2006). "Analyzing the Experience: What You Told Us," Presentation at the Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School Final Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006.

Moore, Andrew O. (2006). Interviews conducted with leaders of the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School Technical Assistance Initiative, October – November 2006.

National Association of Street Schools. http://www.streetschools.org.

National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices. Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools. Honor States Grants Program. Graduation Counts: A Report of the NGA Task Force on State High School Graduation Data. NGA's Redesigning the American High School Initiative. http://www.nga.org.

"New Alliance for Innovation in Local Government will be headquartered at ASU's School of Public Affairs at the Downtown Phoenix Campus," Press Release. City of Phoenix and Arizona State University. August 18, 2006.

New Options for Youth Initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. http://www.wkkf.org.

"New Report Shows More Students Meeting Graduation Requirements." Heidi B. Perlman. Massachusetts Department of Education, June 19, 2006. http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=2950.

"Mayor's Youth Program," an initiative of Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta, Georgia. http://www.mayorsyouthprogram.org/.

The New Media Technology Charter School, a school opened by the Black Alliance for Educational Options. http://www.newmediatech.net.

"Open Sector: Creating a Positive Environment for Creating New Schools New." *Education Evolving*. http://www.educationevolving.org.

Pew Partnership for Civic Change. http://www.pew-partnership.org/resources/dropout_crisis.html.

"Phoenix Small Schools Initiative," Presentation during the NLC Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada. City of Phoenix Youth and Education Office. December 6, 2006.

Public Education Network. http://www.publiceducation.org.

Puerto Rican Panorama. Channel 6 ABC News in Philadelphia. http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=ontv&id=3298323.

Rethinking High School Graduation Rates and Trends. Lawrence Mishel and Joydeep Roy. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2006.

San José High Schools Achieve! A plan for continuous improvement of San José's high schools. Mayor's Office – City of San José. Presented during NLC Cross-Site Meeting, Reno, Nevada, December 6, 2006.

"San José's Hope in Great High Schools (HIGHS) Initiative: A Collaborative Plan for Continuous Improvement of San José High Schools – Confidential Draft." San José Action Plan Team, December 2004.

School Board News. Seattle Public Schools. http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/index.xml.

"The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts." John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and Karen Burke Morison. March 2006.

Summary of High School Transformation Forum Dialogue, September 13, 2006, in Corpus Christi, Texas. Chris Davis Garcia, Citizens for Educational Excellence. October 2006.

"Small, Unorthodox School has Big Results." Simone Sebastien. *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 15, 2006, Front Page. http://www.bigpicture.org/publications/2006archives/SFChronicle06.pdf.

Striving for Student Success: The Effect of Project GRAD on High School Student Outcomes in Three Urban School Districts. Jason C. Snipes, Glee Ivory Holton, Fred Doolittle, and Laura Sztejnberg. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, July 2006.

Stronger Schools, Stronger Cities. Audrey M. Hutchinson and Denise Van Wyngaardt. Washington, DC: National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families, 2004.

"Teacher Homebuyer Program." San José Department of Housing. http://www.sjhousing.org/program/thp.html.

"Three Tiers to College Ready: A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool." The BERC Group and Big Picture Company (Internal Document), April 2006.

"Transforming High School Teaching and Learning: A District-Wide Design." Judy Wurtzel. Aspen Institute's Education and Society Program, May 2006.

"Unfulfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005." Ruth Curran Neild and Robert Balfanz. October 19, 2006.

"The Young, the Restless, and the Jobless: The Case for a National Job Stimulus Program Targeted on America's Young Adults." Andrew Sum, Garth Mangum, and Robert Taggert. Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies, Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Monograph 02-01, June 2002.

YouthBuild USA. http://www.youthbuild.org.

Appendix A

Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) Profiles of AHSI Network Organizations

The Alternative High School Initiative was launched in 2003 by The Big Picture Company as a response to the growing national trend of diminishing graduation rates affecting this country's youth. AHSI supports the collaboration of organizations working with local communities to sustain safe, top-quality high schools for vulnerable youth. Together these organizations present families, districts, and policy stakeholders with a portfolio of small, alternative high school options. The schools are student-centered and strive to have youth voice, project-based learning, and leadership development drive the learning process. Web site: www.ahsi.info

The Big Picture Company

The Big Picture Company's mission is to catalyze vital changes in American education by generating and sustaining small, innovative, personalized schools that work in tandem with the real world of their greater communities. Big Picture designs breakthrough public schools, researches and replicates new designs for education, trains educators to serve as leaders in their schools and communities, and actively engages the public as participants and decision makers in the education of our youth. Big Picture has received international attention for the Met schools, which it founded. Every year, new communities around the country and globe open Big Picture schools. Web site: www.bigpicture.org

Black Alliance for Educational Options

BAEO offers educational options that enrich the academic, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual development of healthy black children, and implement the Big Picture design and the EdVisions Coop model, both of which feature project-based learning. Web site: www.baeo.org

Communities in Schools of Georgia

Performance Learning Centers offer self-paced, student-driven courses that encourage project- and community-based learning with practical applications through workplace experiences. Web site: www.cisga.org

Diploma Plus

Diploma Plus combines a competency-based approach (in which students progress at their own pace), a small, personalized learning environment, and numerous opportunities to make connections between what is learned in school and the world outside. Web site: www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus

EdVisions Schools

The EdVisions model focuses on highly personalized learning in a strong advisory-based democratic learning community. Students meet state standards and earn graduation credits through rigorous, engaging projects that are driven by student interest and connect to the real world. Teachers organize as an "educational professional practice" with real control over decisions that affect learning outcomes. Web site: www.edvisions.coop

Gateway to College (Portland Community College, Portland, Ore.)

Students complete a high school diploma while simultaneously earning college credits, progressing toward an associate's degree or certificate. Beginning in a small learning community on a college campus and quickly transitioning to classes with adult learners, students receive intensive support from faculty and counselors, learning how to succeed in college. Web site: www.gatewaytocollege.org

Good Shepherd Services

Quality education that will prepare students for post-secondary education, meaningful employment, healthy personal and family relationships, and participation in the life of their communities. Web site: www.goodshepherds.org

National Association of Street Schools

Each faith-based school is independently operated but espouses the core values and basic tenets of all NASS member schools: personalized

academic development, social skills development, career development, and spiritual development. Web site: www.streetschools.com

National League of Cities (NLC)

NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC collaborates with the Big Picture Company to convene the AHSI network and to facilitate the policy component of the AHSI network's efforts. Web site: www.nlc.org/iyef

See Forever Foundation and Maya Angelou Public Charter School

At Maya Angelou Public Charter School and other See Forever schools, students develop the academic, social, and employment skills that they need to build rewarding lives and promote positive change in their communities. Web site: www.seeforever.org

YouthBuild USA

Students engage in competency based, personalized learning while they acquire job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. Additionally, leadership development, college readiness, community service, career development, and positive youth-adult relationships are emphasized. Web site: www.youthbuild.org

Appendix B
Methodology for Report

Information for this report was gathered largely through a series of interviews with city and school district leaders and through a facilitated process with representatives of the Alternative High School Initiative. In all, the following sources were tapped to inform this report:

- Literature Review, including a review of relevant reports written by fellow AHSI grantees;
- NLC Education Policy Advisors' Network (EPAN) Survey Results (2004);
- NLC policy paper drafted by J.D. LaRock (July 2004);
- Interviews conducted with seven pairs of city and school district leaders representing Atlanta, Boston, Corpus Christi, Hartford, Phoenix, San José, and Seattle between June and December 2005;
- Interviews conducted with AHSI network organizations and coordinaries between April 2005 and March 2006;
- Information gathered during and between AHSI conferences held in Cambridge, Mass., October 2005 and in Philadelphia, February 2006;
- Conference calls with a small group of AHSI volunteers in March, April, and May 2006 to refine the AHSI policy tools and identify joint policy strategies;
- Conference calls with AHSI coordinary organizations in 2005 and 2006; and
- Information compiled by Andrew O. Moore and select city leaders participating in NLC's Helping Municipal Leaders Expand Options and Alternatives for High School technical assistance project.

Interviews with Members of the Alternative High School Initiative Network (AHSI)

Interviews with coordinary organizations and members of the AHSI network were conducted between April 26, 2005, and July 7, 2005. These interviews served different purposes. Interviews were conducted with AHSI coordinaries to inform them of the NLC policy assessment, exchange relevant information, and consider opportunities for coordination. AHSI interviews enabled NLC to gain the perspectives of front-line practitioners with innovations in the alternative high school field. Their expertise will enable NLC to examine policy levers as policymakers and practitioners experience them. An interview with the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) was added because of a report NYEC is writing about state-level financing options and policies affecting alternative education. Interviews were conducted with the following organizations (listed in alphabetical order):

- American Youth Policy Forum – April 27, 2005
- Big Picture Company – May 27, 2005, June 14, 2005, and January 20, 2006
- Black Alliance for Educational Options – June 1, 2005, and January 19, 2006
- Communities in Schools of Georgia – July 7, 2005, and December 21, 2005
- Diploma Plus – June 2, 2005, and December 16, 2005
- Gates EdVisions Schools – June 7, 2005, December 22, 2005, and January 6, 2006
- Good Shepherd Services – March 29, 2006
- Jobs for the Future – April 26, 2005
- Maya Angelou Public Charter School/See Forever Foundation – June 29, 2005, and January 10, 2006
- National Association of Street Schools – June 28, 2005, and December 21, 2005

- National Youth Employment Coalition – July 27, 2005
- Portland Community College Gateway to College Sites – June 23, 2005, and January 4, 2006
- Youth Transition Funders Group (Chris Sturgis and J.D. Hoye) – May 17, 2005
- YouthBuild USA – June 27, 2005, and January 19, 2006

Interviews with Mayors' Education Policy Advisors and School District Representatives

Information was also gathered through interviews with the mayors' education policy advisors and school district representatives they recommended in seven cities selected by NLC. The seven cities included Atlanta, Boston, Corpus Christi, Hartford, Phoenix, San José, and Seattle. Below is a table indicating city and school district representatives interviewed for this report. Information was also gathered from the individuals in the table below through questionnaires and joint presentations.

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Assessment of Local Policies
Interviews with City and School District Leaders
Conducted June 2005 through December 2006

City	Mayor's Office	School District
Atlanta	Deborah Lum Executive Director, Workforce Development Office of the Mayor Interviewed workforce development staff members September 1, 2005.	Dr. Beverly Hall Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools Interviewed December 19, 2005.

Continued on next page

City	Mayor's Office	School District
Boston	Martha Pierce Mayor's Education Policy Advisor Interviewed July 13, 2005.	Ted Dooley Office of the Superintendent Interviewed August 31, 2005.
Corpus Christi	George K. (Skip) Noe City Manager Interviewed June 22, 2005.	D. Scott Elliff Superintendent Corpus Christi Independent School District Interviewed September 1, 2005
Hartford	Kevin Roldan Mayor's Office Interviewed October 30, 2006.	Leah O'Neill-Fichtner Hartford Public Schools
Phoenix	Deborah Dillon Director, Youth and Education Programs Office of the City Manager Responded to November 2006 questionnaire. Joint presentation with Bill Scheel, Assistant to the Mayor, December 2006.	

Continued on next page

City	Mayor's Office	School District
San José	Avo Makdessian Mayor's Office Interviewed June 22, 2005 and November 9, 2006. Javier Quezada Mayor's Office Interviewed November 9, 2006.	George Sanchez East Side Union High School District Interviewed July 29, 2005. Bill Erlendson, Assistant Superintendent San José Unified School District, joint presentation with Avo Makdessian, November 9, 2006.
Seattle	Jessica DeBarros Policy Advisor/Project Manager City of Seattle Interviewed July 22, 2005.	Steve Wilson Chief Academic Officer Seattle Public Schools Interviewed September 6, 2005.

Appendix C

Top 10 Factors for Analyzing the Policy Environment for Expanding Alternatives for High School

#10: State Education Agency (SEA) Policies

SEA policies include state education funding, Average Daily Attendance or per-pupil funding allocations, high school credentialing guidelines, dual enrollment, definitions of alternative education, postsecondary tuition waivers, dropout re-enrollment, and in some instances special reporting requirements if the state has assumed oversight or control of a school district.

#9: Governors' or State Legislatures' Initiatives

The National Governors Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices is implementing the Honor States Grant Program, a $23.6 million, governor-led initiative to improve high school and college-ready graduation rates in 26 states. Many of the changes being undertaken by states are outlined in *An Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools and Getting it Done: Ten Steps to a State Action Agenda,* which provide a framework for states to continue restructuring efforts begun during NGA's *Redesigning the American High School* initiative.[179] Similarly, state legislatures often have the authority to pass important policy measures affecting alternatives for high school. A report by the National Conference of State Legislatures entitled, "Redesigning High Schools: State Legislation and High School Reform," by Christine Walton (July

Continued on next page

179 See http://www.nga.org.

2005), examines state legislative policy reform on high school issues during the last several years.[180]

#8: Charter School Legislation/Chartering Authority

The authority to grant a charter to new schools under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 may reside with the SEA, local education agency (LEA), or other entity. In May 2001, Indiana became the 37th state to pass charter school legislation.[181] The mayor of Indianapolis exercises school chartering authority alongside other entities in the state of Indiana.[182] Mayor Bart Peterson, a "vocal proponent" of charter schools, often testified before the state legislature and garnered support from Indianapolis' eleven public school superintendents and other community leaders.[183]

#7: Postsecondary Education Legislation/Initiatives

Are scholarships, financial aid, or other incentives available that might encourage all students to pursue higher education? The Mayor's Youth Program, launched by Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta offers an example of how municipal leaders can support students' post-high school graduation aspirations and plans with a range of fiscal and informational resources.

#6: Statewide or Citywide High School Reform and/or Alternative Education Legislation/Initiatives

High school reforms that are statewide or citywide in scope, particularly those that include attention to alternative education, often provide a receptive environment for launching alternatives for high

Continued on next page

180 See http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/HSStateLeg.htm.

181 See http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/home.htm.

182 Ibid.

183 See http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/home.htm.

school. In Oregon, for example, the Certificate of Initial Mastery/CIM and Certificate of Advanced Mastery/CAM, created a broader, accountability-driven context for newer reforms.

#5: Teachers' Union Policies

How does the teachers' union influence education policy and politics? What strategies can effectively engage teachers' unions in finding and implementing effective solutions as partners? In a 2002 report by Robert M. Carini of Indiana University-Bloomington, entitled "School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence: Teachers Unions and Student Achievement," summarizes findings that appear in a chapter of the book *School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence* (Information Age Publishing, 2002), edited by Alex Molnar.

#4: Municipal (City or County) Policies and Legislative Initiatives

Local policies and legislative initiatives can offer critical support to alternatives for high school. In Sacramento, Calif., for example, a city ordinance allows flexible school hours to accommodate students in overcrowded schools. Seattle voters continue to support a Families and Education Levy. The levy generates fiscal resources the mayor can use in promoting K-12 school reform. How flexible are facility, land use, and building code requirements?

#3: Municipal or County Agency Relationships

What relationships exist among municipal agencies, such as health and human services, juvenile justice, housing, transportation, recreation and parks, and youth-serving organizations? How might coordination enhance the ability of alternatives for high school to provide services and informational resources for young people who attend these schools, many of whom have distinctive needs for affordable housing, child care, health care, and related components of a basic support system?

Continued on next page

#2: Local Education Agency (LEA)/School District Policies
What school district laws, policies, and regulations are relevant for expanding options and alternatives for high school?
#1: Mayor/Superintendent/School Board (Committee) Roles and Relationships – Official and Unofficial
What roles does the mayor exercise in influencing education? What is the relationship between the mayor and school superintendent? Who appoints or elects the School Board members and school superintendent? What formal and informal linkages exist among these three sets of local leaders? Does the mayor appoint members of the School Board who then select a school superintendent, or are School Board members independently elected? Is the mayor's involvement with the School Board and school superintendent instrumental in promoting alternatives for high school?



Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

National League of Cities

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1763
202-626-3000
www.nlc.org