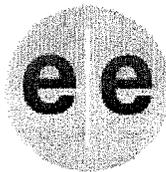


How District Leaders Can Support the New Schools Strategy



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August 2003

DRAFT For COMMENT

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I. Why district-led education reform should include the new schools strategy

Introduction

School districts nationwide are taking bold, progressive action to open up opportunities for the creating different and better schools *new* as a strategy for education reform. With growing public and private demands to educate an increasing number of students well, many districts have found that relying solely on conventional approaches to fix existing schools is not enough. Spurred by the innovations being introduced by charter schools and other schooling options independent of school districts, district leaders are rethinking their past approaches and are beginning to create a "space" in which schools can form new.

What are "new schools"

New schools – or schools created *anew* – are the assortment of high-quality, innovative public schools that are being created to serve the diverse educational needs of public school students. The word *new* refers to how these schools are designed and operated, not when they were built. A new school could be a true start-up, a school that just came into existence. Or it could be a long-standing institution that is reinventing itself anew, building a completely new program within its old walls.

The best among the country's new schools are characterized as offering...

- **Autonomy:** Being autonomous enough to be innovative and responsive;
- **Choice:** Serving as schools for choice for both students and staff;
- **Equity:** Receiving a fair share of resources;
- **Contracts:** Retaining protection from shifting political winds via enforceable contracts; and
- **Results:** Focusing on results and producing outcomes that demonstrate student's educational growth and academic achievements.

Operating under these principles, new schools need not be "new" in the sense of being a kind of school never seen before. In fact, identifying and replicating school models that are working is an important part of a new schools strategy. New schools, because they have the flexibility to build their programs and cultures from scratch, are in a much better position than existing schools to execute successful research-based approaches.

New schools can take the form of alternative schools, contract schools, magnet schools, community schools, schools-within-a-school, charter and charter-like schools. No matter the name, a new school is a public school with the flexibility to adapt to the students it serves and the responsibility to produce results. This balance of accountability and autonomy is timely, as

greater emphasis is placed on having *all* students achieve at high levels and as student populations grow more diverse.

There is no prescribed, uniform learning program presumed by the new school strategy. To the contrary, the premise behind creating a space for new schools is the need to better understand and address the individual differences in students. While most successful new schools tend to be smaller than conventional public schools, the most notable common denominator is ability to start fresh, developing a school program and culture designed to meet the needs of their students. But, the curriculum, the role of students and teachers, and other key factors vary from school to school.

Why new schools matter

The critical challenge before school districts today is embodied in the widely held belief that public education must bring *every child* up to ambitious levels of achievement. The latest federal legislation on education, "No Child Left Behind," was developed on this premise. Though a relatively new concept in the history of the American public education, the bold aspiration of all students achieving at high levels has been building for some time — as states, business leaders, community activists, parents and students themselves have begun to demand it. Yet, as a broadening cross-section of the public embraces the ideal and as more leaders espouse its merit, too few schools are changing sufficiently to achieve it.

Nationwide, attempts at fixing existing schools are producing mixed results. When a school or set of schools does turnaround for the better, districts are hard pressed to sustain that success or replicate it elsewhere. Since the "Nation at Risk" report in 1983, and long before that, public schools have been awash in efforts to reform what already exists. Districts have created and raised standards; instituted assessments; reduced class sizes; raised teacher pay; changed certification requirements; increased spending — all in the hope these strategies would *cause* schools to improve. While this litany of measures to reform schools has advanced public education, all told, the change has yet to approach the kind of success schools want to achieve — bringing *every child* up to a high standard.

Decades of slow-going and lackluster results have left district leaders wrestling with what strategy to try next to fix ailing schools. Faced with mounting pressure to produce results, many leaders are acknowledging that no one approach to teaching and learning will achieve the same high-level results for a student population that is so diverse. Neither will depending only on existing, often large and homogeneous schools. Creating new, smaller and more diverse teaching and learning environments is emerging as a necessary means to meet the growing challenges.

Reasons districts are creating space for the development new, smaller schools include:

- Mounting pressure to bring all kids up to standard;
- Understanding of diversity of needs; and
- Recognition that “fixing” strategies have their limits.

A small, but growing number of school districts across the country is recognizing the value of starting with a blank slate in the design and operation of a school. These districts are finding that *new* schools can accelerate their efforts to produce high-level academic results among a wide range of students. Going far beyond standards-based reforms and other “fixing” strategies, schools built anew – under dramatically different arrangements – are fulfilling the promise of lasting systemic change being called for by from families, students, educators and civic leaders.

Schools built *new* are also proving successful in responding to the rich diversity among public school students. This diversity is partly reflected in the growing number of languages and cultures and ethnic and racial backgrounds represented in schools. It also is observed in the diversity of students’ aptitude, interest, motivation, maturity, mobility, income, home support and other factors that influence learning.

How districts are creating the space to build schools *new*

Nationally, school districts are applying the new school strategy as they plan for new construction, reconstitute low performing schools, design magnet and schools-within-schools programs, collaborate on community schools, establish contracts for alternative schools, and authorize charter schools. Even if a school existed before, districts are changing their policies and granting autonomy to school administrators, parents and community-based organizations to introduce new approaches and to inspire new school cultures.

The foray to creating space for new schools varies, revealing that there is no single path for pursuing the strategy. While the many of the approaches used by districts differ, there are common threads. Case examples from four communities that are supporting the new schools strategy (profiled in the following section) illuminate both the differences and prevailing elements in their approaches.

Among the districts cited, the community context drove the differences in how district leaders chose to implement the strategy. In some cities, the district superintendent emerged as an ardent advocate for the new schools strategy, making it central to the district’s reform agenda. In other cities, business leaders were first to champion the cause and invest in the strategy. Parents and community-based organizations have also been powerful forces in pushing to the forefront the need and the models for creating schools new.

In many communities, the emergence of charter schools prompted district leaders to reexamine their ideas about schooling. Some districts have opted for a slower, incremental pace, while others have adopted a more aggressive agenda for creating multiple new schools. No matter the path or pace, districts are recognizing that the creation, proliferation and longevity of new schools are playing a vital role in changing the educational landscape and enhancing the range of schooling options for students.

Observed differences in how districts approached the new schools strategy include:

- Source of impetus (e.g., vision of district officials, pressure from the business community, and expressed desires of parents and community members);
- Legal / institutional vehicles (e.g., charter schools, magnet schools, and pilot schools);
- Use of start-ups vs. conversions (e.g., creating wholly new schools and reinventing existing schools); and
- Pace / scale of effort (e.g., granting autonomy to one or a few selected schools and initiating large-scale reform in a cluster of schools)

While differences exist, several common elements in their approaches also emerged. In each community, new schools were created when district leaders demonstrated the will to suspend long-held assumptions about schooling and acknowledge where past reforms have fallen short. These leaders also conceded the intrinsic limitations of implementing reform strategies under the same arrangements that have historically governed public schools. Opportunities to create schools anew flourished when district leaders cleared identified barriers, invested a fair share of resources, and valued new school designs and methods for producing academic results.

Common lessons learned and advice for other school districts on opening up a space, creating an opportunities for the creation of new schools.

- Take a proactive approach to implementing a new schools strategy and make it an integral part of the district's reform agenda. Laura Weeldreyer of Baltimore states that creating new schools works best when a district introduces the strategy as a proactive measure and as an integral element of the its reform philosophy and beliefs. A court order was the impetus for the Baltimore New Schools Initiative; and thus Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) had the strategy imposed upon an existing framework, rather than having it arise from the organization's core beliefs, culture and structure. As a result, systems that could readily support school innovations and the overall strategy were not always in

place. The Baltimore's initiative has struggled to overcome this systemic challenge.

- Ensure new schools are autonomous enough to be innovative and responsive. District and community leaders must stay focused on their rationale and guiding principles for creating new schools. "If you are going to create new schools, be clear about your rationale. It's too easy to create schools that look like the ones you already have," cautions Jonathan Gyurko, director of the New York City school district's charter program. Gyurko emphasizes the need to re-examine assumptions about what's a school and what's a good school, then start from scratch about what must be in place to create a new and successful school. He adds, "It's not enough to re-shuffle old schools." It is important ground a new school strategy with a strong plan, good resources, and specific school design characteristics.

In San Diego, charter schools like High Tech High benefit from unique community partnerships, a small environment, customized learning plans and real-world assignments.

- Learn from innovations that already exist in the district. If there are schools in the district that have tried something different (e.g., innovations in curriculum and instruction), it's important to talk with people in those schools about the problems, pressures and successes they have experienced. Districts can use these lessons to examine how the system works to support and suppress innovation. Weeldreyer says, "its important to look at past experiences," and to anticipate how people feel pressured to avoid doing things differently and to maintain the status quo in schools.

Ginger Hovenic, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation (The Chamber Foundation), found that it's important to create records of best practices and to share them. Her organization produced a couple of books on the good things that are happening in San Diego's public schools and distributed them locally and nationally.

- Allot a fair share of resources. The New Vision for Secondary Education in Milwaukee brings considerable public and private funds and resources to transform the district's high schools. In New York City, the superintendent has established the Office of New School Development, which will dedicate resources to ensure the start-up and operation of high-quality new schools. Charter schools in New York also benefiting from the superintendent's policies that provide for start-up funds, special education funds, and use of public buildings for school facilities.
- Retain protection from shifting political winds by establishing enforceable contracts between the district and the new schools. Baltimore's school

board established contracts with new school operators, under which schools are evaluated every five years to determine whether the contract will be renewed. As with many large, urban districts, changes in Baltimore school leadership are constant and can result in a loss of institutional memory. A legally binding document, such a contract or memorandum of understanding, provide a written guidelines and a historical account of the initiative's rationale and key decisions. The contract serves as a crucial point of reference when individuals change.

Weeldreyer advises that once a written agreement is established it is equally important to review and modify it yearly. She says, "you can't envision every scenario, but you can capture the spirit of the intentions in an initial contract."

- Engage key stakeholders, in particular parents and teachers, in the decision-making process. In San Diego, Hovenic found that local people – from within a district and in the community – are the best resources. She says it's simply take time to ask about and examine the needs of the people, and then addressing them.

Libia Gil, formerly of Chula Vista, California, says that public engagement is critical to sustaining improvements district-wide. It is important to include the community's vision and goals in process of converting existing district schools to charter status and selecting school models.

The value of public engagement played was evident, when Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD) became California's first district to contract with Edison Schools, Inc. Gil states that there were concerns that the national, for-profit company would come and take over local schools. "The district was adamant that it was not about a takeover, but a partnership. The district never gave up its responsibility for serving students," a point Gil says was emphasized to community members.

Gil also states that teachers must be committed to proposed changes before the new schools strategy can work. "Be very honest. Give the pros and cons and the risks involved up front," advises Gil. CVESD had to negotiate many nuts and bolts issues with teachers for them to buy into district plans. The negotiations take time but are crucial.

- Promote new schools as "schools for choice" for both students and staff. The Baltimore New School Initiative offers a variety of schooling options for children and their parents and teachers who seek educational approaches that are not uniform and centralized. In Chula Vista, the district negotiated with teachers unions to devise a policy where charter school teachers are free to transfer to and from the district's other schools without jeopardizing their employee benefits.

- Collaborate with local community-based education organizations. Based on his city's experience, Gyurko believes districts of all sizes can benefit from partnership with organizations like New York City's New Visions for Public Schools. These organizations bring a broad base of support and resources and are often more nimble than a school district in responding to opportunities and school needs. New Visions is serving as manager of the New Century High School Initiative and provides an array of resources that benefit the district's charter schools.
- Create diverse advisory boards and staff – including both district and community leaders – for district-led new schools initiatives. Weeldreyer states that her advisory board has been critical to the success of the Baltimore New Schools Initiative. The board benefits from civic leadership from the mayor's office, local education funders, and community-based nonprofit organizations. The involvement of these leaders has influenced the district to act differently in instances when a school's autonomy and innovations are in jeopardy.

Hovenic has found that forming a consortium of businesses, education groups, community organizations and school districts helps individuals share ideas and helps each organization to do its work well.

Weeldreyer also recommends that, when possible, the staff responsible for directing a new schools initiative should include a team of district and non-district employees, for the same reasons an advisory board should include both internal and external stakeholders.

II. Case examples of how districts have integrated the new schools strategy into their overall reform strategy

CASE EXAMPLE FROM BALTIMORE

Educational climate and rationale

The Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) introduced its New Schools Initiative after a longstanding special education lawsuit. In 1995, a judge ordered the initiative as a potential remedy for improving education and as a means of encouraging inclusionary practices for students receiving special education services. While many public school districts have instituted comparable new schools programs, the federal court action has been a central and distinctive aspect of the Baltimore New Schools Initiative.

New school strategy and descriptions

Greater autonomy and authority in exchange for stricter accountability is the core concept behind New Schools in Baltimore. The 10 schools are a mix of wholly new schools and previously existing schools that converted to New School status (refer to p. 11 for a listing of the Baltimore New Schools). All New Schools have authority in four important areas: staffing, budget, curriculum, and governance.

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners launched the initiative by releasing requests for proposal to "not-for-profit institutions seeking to operate innovative public schools in such a way as to address the needs of all students attending said schools, including students with educational disabilities, and in so doing, to make an enormous difference in the lives of students attending said schools and their families." The school board established contracts with selected applicants and granted the schools five years to show significant progress towards meeting state standards and individually established performance standards. Operators of New Schools vary and include community-based organizations, local and national education reform groups, an organization serving adjudicated youth, and a college.

The New Schools are monitored for attendance, parent involvement, special education compliance, and test scores (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, and Maryland Functional Tests). At the end of five years, each New School will be evaluated, and the school board will decide whether to renew its contract.

The schools receive funding through the same budget allocation process used for other Baltimore City Public Schools. New Schools housed in buildings not

owned by BCPSS hold responsibility maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and receive no funds from the City related to their space.

District investments and leadership

BCPSS collaborated with a community-based advisory board to create the Office of the New Schools Initiative and hire the program coordinator. The office and staff for the initiative were first funded through a local grant and later received permanent district funding. The coordinator of the New Schools Initiative is a district employee and serves as the liaison between the 10 New Schools and the school system. The coordinator works closely with schools to troubleshoot and advocate on their behalf, and monitor the implementation of the New Schools plans and the contracts with BCPSS.

Community partnerships and collaboration

The advisory board that leads The New Schools Initiative includes representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Disability Law Center, the Baltimore Urban League, Citizens Planning and Housing Association, the Abell Foundation, the Baltimore Teachers Union, the Mayor's office, and the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. The advisory board's role is "to provide a vehicle for leadership and vision around the creation and conversion of schools as part of an effort to identify innovations – in instruction, in curriculum, in management and structure – that positively impact student achievement."

The New Schools Advisory Board developed the process and timeline to solicit and evaluate proposals for New Schools and then provide assistance and support to the New Schools during implementation. The advisory board recommended that the school board issue a request for proposals, to seek non-profit operators interested in operating an existing public school or starting a new public school.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, based in Baltimore, lent its financial support to help New Song Urban Ministries create one of the city's New Schools. New Song Urban Ministries, which leads a community revitalization effort, operates New Song Academy, a K-8 school created anew in a low-income West Baltimore neighborhood. Implementing the Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound curriculum, the small school focuses on helping neighborhood children and their parents achieve self-sufficiency and serve in community leadership roles.

Outcomes and impact

Program Coordinator Laura Weeldreyer has observed that the initiative serves a "pressure release valve for the system." "There will also be parents, teachers and students who you'll lose if you don't do something different. Some don't believe in uniform, centralized models; they want options in approaches," says Weeldreyer. When a district offers a broad selection of

schools, it is not just about the schools and schooling, but also about the health and future of communities. Weeldreyer believes the Baltimore New Schools Initiative has introduced a new way to keep good teachers and vital parental support in the system, which otherwise might have lost the talent of innovative educators and the involvement of families, communities and organizations.

2002 – 2003 Baltimore New Schools Listing

Wholly New Schools

School: Midtown Academy #321 (K-8)
Operator: Midtown Academy, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Core Knowledge, Civic Responsibility, Arts

School: New Song Academy #322 (K-8)
Operator: New Song Community Learning Center, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Calvert Curriculum, Expeditionary Learning, year-round school

School: The Crossroads School #323 (Grade 6)
Operator: The Living Classroom Foundation
Curriculum Focus: interdisciplinary, Expeditionary Learning

School: KIPP Ujima Village Academy #324 (Grade 5)
Operator: KIPP Baltimore, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: college preparatory, extended day and year

School: ConneXions Community Leadership Academy #325 (Grade 6)
Operator: Baltimore Teacher Network, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Expeditionary Learning, Community leadership development

Conversion Schools

School: Rosemont Elementary #63 (PreK-5)
Operator: Coppin State College
Curriculum Focus: Baltimore City's Curriculum/Thinking Skills Curriculum

School: City Springs Elementary #8 (Pre K – 5)
Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Direct Instruction

School: Barclay School #54 (K-8)
Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Calvert Curriculum

School: Collington Square Elementary School #97 (K-6)
Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Direct Instruction

School: Hampstead Hill Elementary School #47 (K-5)
Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc.
Curriculum Focus: Direct Instruction

A CASE EXAMPLE FROM CHULA VISTA, CA

Educational climate and rationale

The Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD) is located between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico. The growing district currently enrolls approximately 25,000 students across 40 public schools. The student demographics reflect the community's social, cultural, economic diversity. Roughly 60% of students are Hispanic, and many students are non-English speaking or bilingual. Nearly half of students are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

In the mid-1990s, district leaders devised a decentralized system, with a focus on instituting a variety of school models to address the diversity of student needs. The CVESD premise for its reform strategy was simple: The goals are non-negotiable, but how schools achieve those goals is negotiable. While CVESD held fast to its high expectations for learning and literacy among students, individual schools gained the flexibility to choose their own strategies to meet district expectations. The strategies they chose were aimed at meeting the schooling needs of students and the community.

New school strategy and descriptions

The new school strategy in CVESD was founded on the belief that ownership in schools is linked to having both autonomy and responsibility for achieving goals. The district encouraged schools to look at different models, such as Comer schools, direct instruction schools, and other whole school models. A natural extension of the district's philosophy was the creation charter schools and building schools anew. As each school engaged in the process of choosing a model, teachers and parents played critical roles in deciding the school's new direction.

The result of CVESD's district-wide reorganization was the development of a continuum of educational choice for students, families and educators. Schools choices include magnet schools, charter schools and other schools with their own themes and distinctive models. The district has also developed five schools with "wrap-around" services that provide a range of resources for families, including healthcare and ESL instruction.

Supporting charter schools as a vehicle for system-wide change, CVESD opened its first charter school in the mid-1990s and now operates six. Charter schools serve as test sites for hypotheses on learning and producing outcomes. Five of the district's six charters converted from conventional schools to new school status. Many of these conversion schools were among the district's largest schools. As a result the charter schools serve a large share of the district's students – approximately 22%.

District investments and leadership

In 1993, the school board hired Superintendent Libia Gil as part of its move to site-based schools and decentralization. The board was united in its search for a "facilitator" who could collaborate with school staff, parents and community members to make significant changes and improvements in schools. Gil had come from Seattle Public Schools, which was well known for its restructuring and decision-making models. During its reorganization, CVESD was a pioneer in creating a process of oversight and delineating roles and responsibility for school board and the central office.

Community partnerships and collaboration

With the solid support of school board members, Gil led the district and community through an 18-month process of community engagement as an integral part of the educational change process. While the district took the lead, the process was inclusive and collaborative. Gil organized a series of listening forums to engage community members in discussions about their vision and desired changes in schools. Participants in the process included parents, senior citizens, the faith community, political groups, and former students, who helped write vision statements, identify shared values and goals, and ultimately create a belief system under which the district and schools would operate. Gil states that while the process was lengthy – even longer than expected – it was a crucial and well worth the time and effort.

Building schools anew has underscored the importance of collaboration and the use of inclusive processes to improve public education. Charter schools in Chula Vista have been a strong vehicle for creating family involvement and empowerment. Opportunities to design school programs and have a powerful voice in the educational process have been appealing for many parents. Charters have also created choice for staff. All CVESD charter schools include options for teachers and administrators to transfer to and from charter schools and the district's other schools.

Outcomes and impact

Leaving her position as superintendent in Chula Vista to become chief academic officer for New American Schools, Gil states that instituting the new schools strategy has had lots of implications for CVESD. Overall, the district has made gains in student achievement and sustained them. Community-wide polls indicate a high level of satisfaction among teachers, students, and parents. To sustain continuous improvement, the district regularly collects and analyzes longitudinal data and examines patterns in the data.

Gil believes that charter schools brought public accountability to the district. While the district had moved in that direction, charter schools advanced the concept, and the heightened accountability is having an impact on all schools in the district. Impressed by the charter schools' annual data presentations to the school board, school board members now ask all schools to make

PowerPoint presentations with a team of school staff, parents and students. "This is not a dog-and-pony show but data-driven. They present what the school is doing well, where there are gaps and what needs to be done next," Gil emphasizes. "It's about accountability to the public."

The agreements negotiated between charters and the district gave the district reason to pause and reflect on its practices and to make systemic changes. CVESD began to ponder the value-added services it was offering to all its schools. Gil adds that it was "not just from the fiscal point of view, but also other practices."

CASE EXAMPLE FROM MILWAUKEE

Educational climate and rationale

For over two decades, educators, parents and civic leaders in Milwaukee have continually challenged the notion of "one best system" and advanced the definition of public education by creating an extensive range of school options for the diverse needs of students, families and educators. Two public bodies other than the school system — the city council and the board of a state university — can issue charters for new public schools within Milwaukee. And low-income parents can receive publicly funded scholarships to attend private schools.

The school district has responded to this environment by creating space for the development of new schools under its jurisdiction as well. Today Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) includes an assortment of innovative new school models including charter schools and community-based partnership schools. Many Milwaukee schools blur education's traditional lines between the district and the community and public and private.

New school strategy and descriptions

As part of its mix of approaches to creating new schools, MPS is presently introducing innovative high school models. This change is part of the "New Vision for Secondary Education in Milwaukee," a community collaboration to improve learning outcomes for nearly 15% of the district's 105,000 students. A five-year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, announced July 2003, will support a district and community-wide effort to redesign seven large high schools and create 40 new small high schools. The large-scale initiative seeks "to improve achievement and graduation rates, and increase the percentage of graduates who are prepared for college by creating stronger, more personalized schools."

Thirty of the 40 new schools will be operated by MPS or in partnership with MPS. Charter school authorizers and private school operators will gain the opportunity to create 10 additional schools, outside of MPS operations. MPS plans to convert seven high schools to multiplexes, where existing high school facilities will house several new small, autonomous schools. While co-habiting with other small high schools, each school will offer distinctive an educational option that meets the expressed needs of students, teachers and parents in the community. The multiplex model is based on the Julia Richmond Complex in New York City, where academic results have vastly improved since introducing this new school model.

District investments and leadership

Dismayed by a dropout rate approaching 50% and persuaded by compelling research on small schools, MPS Superintendent William Andrekopoulos began his tenure by advocating for the reorganization of high schools. He soon

assembled a school re-design team comprised of community residents and civic powerbrokers to build broad-based support for his vision.

The superintendent has clearly articulated his plans for improving graduation rates. He states that high schools created under the New Vision initiative will be designed to give "students personal attention; rigorous courses, and close relationships with their teachers and fellow students." And while the grant-funded initiative will focus on MPS's lowest-performing high schools, the superintendent expects innovations in the new schools will drive change in all types of schools. The school board has demonstrated its support of the superintendent's vision and strategies by unanimously renewing his contract for two additional years.

Community partnerships and collaboration

The New Vision initiative represents a shared vision and commitment to collaboration between MPS and a host of community organizations. The Gates Foundation has served a catalyst for Milwaukee's newest new school strategy by facilitating connections across the city and awarding the five-year grant. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, through its "Making Connections" initiative, has also invested heavily in local efforts to increase the both range and quality of educational options for student and families in Milwaukee.

A key community collaborator on Milwaukee's New Vision is Daniel Grego, executive director of Trans-Center for Youth, a local nonprofit that operates three charter schools. Years of work on the frontline of pioneering reforms in Milwaukee, Grego has gained insights on the value of the new schools strategy in changing the educational outcomes of youth. His initial conversations with Superintendent Andrekopoulos revealed the two men shared concerns about high school education in Milwaukee. Their talks eventually led to the creation of the community's proposal for New Vision.

Other crucial partners in creating the new vision have been the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Alliance for Choices in Education and the Milwaukee Partnership Academy. Together, these organizations have brought the collective interests, resources and influence of Milwaukee's families, educators, business leaders, and reform advocates to transform high school education.

Outcomes and impact

In Milwaukee, a proliferation of new schools – with a variety of founders, operators, supporters and authorizers – has produced an educational climate where innovation in schools can flourish. There is continuous, competitive pressure for improvement, and MPS has grown more responsive to public demands and flexible in options for delivering education.

Cindy Zautcke, assistant director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning in Milwaukee, believes there has been "real change since the early

days." She has observed that while other districts in the state that could apply the new school strategy, they have failed to pursue it. "There's not the pressure, as is the case in Milwaukee," says Zautcke. She notes that too many superintendents dismiss good ideas for creating schools anew with the statement that 'it's not part of my plan.' "Communities are wed to the idea that 'the superintendent knows best.' This (mindset) fails. They can't possibly know all the options and what's best for all local children. Part of the reason I like to start school new is because community people know best. In Milwaukee we can do that."

While some opposition to aggressive reforms still exists in Milwaukee, the community as a whole is constantly pushing for change and improvement in public schools. Grego believes that the New Vision initiative will ultimately bring the community even closer together.

CASE EXAMPLE FROM NEW YORK CITY

Educational climate and rationale

The New York City public school community has a long history of supporting innovation in schools. For decades, community-based organizations throughout the city have been ardent advocates for new schools. Through past large-scale school reform initiatives, like the Annenberg Challenge in the 1990s, New York has cultivated a large cadre of people who are passionate about public school reform and who have vast experience in founding new schools, organizing parents and mobilizing neighborhoods.

New York's charter school law, which has empowered multiple school authorizers, has also contributed to a climate that supports new school innovations. The city's charter schools, approximately 20 in all, have expanded school choice and demonstrated how the new schools can significantly improve student outcomes.

New school strategy and descriptions

The New York public schools offer a "portfolio" of new school products, which represent a range of innovations in schooling that includes charter schools, college partnership schools, a program-to-school incubator model, and now the New Century High Schools Initiative. The New Century High Schools Initiative is collaborative effort to provide greater school choice for parents and students and to develop small schools of excellence that promote supportive relationships between students and adults in these schools. The initiative is led by a consortium comprised of New York City Department of Education, New Visions for Public Schools, Council of Supervisors and Administrators, United Federation of Teachers, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of NYC, and The Open Society Institute.

The \$30 million high school initiative focuses on historically and chronically low-performing high schools and aims to create up to 60 new, better and smaller high schools. The initiative rolled out in the Bronx two years ago and has now expanded to Brooklyn (refer to p. 20 for the "Guiding Principles for New Small Schools in Brooklyn"). Planning teams of educators, parents, students, and community-based organizations in the city participate in a competitive process. In response to an RFP, the teams design their schools each with an innovative theme and focus. Partnerships with educational organizations, higher education, business and technical industries, cultural institutions and community groups are required.

Under the initiative, existing high schools will not take in a new ninth grade class, but begin a conversion where the high school facility will house several small schools. Through a phased process, the newly created small high schools will begin serving ninth graders and then add subsequent grades annually. Each small school has its own classrooms, teachers and administra-

tors but can share spaces such as labs, libraries and gymnasiums with other small schools in the facility. These new high schools are marketed through high school fairs and orientations for students and families, who can choose from among a wide selection of educational themes and specialties.

District investments and leadership

Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein have supported the creation of new schools in New York City by instituting policies that contribute to an inviting educational climate. They recognize that the new school strategy has the potential to turn around low-performing schools, attract human and financial resources to public education, and set dramatic examples for change desired across the district.

In 2003, Chancellor Klein established an Office of New Schools Development to coordinate coherent approaches to designing new schools and to ensure those approaches play an integral role in district-wide reform. Using a set of design characteristics supported by the Chancellor, the new office will apply consistent, results-based elements in requests for proposals and in assessments of charter schools, New Century high schools and other new school models in the district's portfolio.

The Office of New Schools Development includes the district's Charter Schools Program, which works to realize the Chancellor's vision of authorizing a significant number of newly chartered schools. He has not only supported growth among district-authorized charters, but also schools created by other authorizers in the city. As a result, New York City's charter schools are benefiting from district policies that provide for start-up funds, special education funds, and use of public buildings for school facilities.

Community partnerships and collaboration

A significant driver of New York's new school movement has New Visions for Public Schools. Founded in 1989 as a critical partner in education reform, New Visions is "the largest education reform organization dedicated to improving the quality of education children receive in New York City's public schools." The organization works with both the public and private sectors to develop programs and policies that "energize teaching and learning and to raise the level of student achievement." Its board includes leading advocates for public school reform, neighborhood development and children's issues, including the Chancellor and union representatives.

In 1992, New Visions led efforts to create small schools as a key strategy to improve teaching and learning in New York City. Since then, it has created 35 theme-oriented, small school environments that boast high rates of attendance, retention and graduation among enrollees. To promote the creation and operation of high-quality new schools, New Visions dedicates resources to assist charter schools, coordinates programs that support school goals, and currently manages the New Century High School Initiative.

Guiding Principles for New Small Schools in Brooklyn

1. Structures will be put in place in every new school that ensure that every student is known well by an adult in order for us to teach these young men and women to use their minds well.
2. School communities need to be small to allow powerful distinct cultures to emerge and take root that support rigorous teaching and learning. Small school communities are more flexible and more able to evolve in the face of a rapidly changing society, new understandings and challenges and ever increasing expectations.
3. The goal of creating thoughtful, compassionate citizens is best accomplished through focused curriculum that utilizes meaningful, real life (authentic) contexts to deeply engage students. External learning experiences (internships, service learning placements, service learning projects, intergenerational exchanges and job shadowing) are expected.
4. The famous African saying states that, "It takes a village to raise a child." Likewise it takes multiple partners to educate a child. Community Based Organization's, Institutes of Higher Education, faith-based organizations and private businesses will be sought as key partners to small schools.
5. Parents will be collaborators and vital members of school communities.
6. In return for more autonomy and flexibility, within legal parameters and principles of equity and fairness, new schools will have heightened expectations of accountability.
7. The measurement of student achievement should use multiple forms, but it should always include performance assessments that are demonstrably valid, reliable and public, as well as quantitative measures. These assessments serve as diagnostic tools that enable teachers to effectively identify student's strengths and weaknesses and tailor instruction accordingly.
8. Leadership of the school should reflect the understanding that a 'flattened hierarchy' has the potential of involving more constituents into ownership roles, and, hence, more active involvement in the whole school enterprise. In new small schools principals and other school leaders are involved in the lives of teachers and students. Leaders have a direct impact on improving the school culture and promoting improved teaching and learning.
9. Student-centered, project based curriculum and authentic assessment (see Newman and Wehlage) brings learning to life and allows students to actively investigate and construct ideas in a manner that gives them ownership over what they learn. The governing metaphor of the new schools is "student as worker, teacher as coach," rather than the more typical, "teacher as imparter of information, student as receptacle."
10. The mission of the school should be to develop habits of mind and habits of work. The goal is to teach students to use their minds well, not to 'cover' content.
11. Resource allocation for optimal student achievement needs to be re-conceptualized. These resources include the yearly calendar, daily schedules, staffing and budgeting. "If we always do what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always got." (Adam Urbanski, President of the Rochester Teacher's Association.)
12. The re-structuring of priority Brooklyn High Schools will be most successful if the teams of developers and the eventual school staff and constituents work together as a collaborative network creating synergistic energy.
13. Effective small schools use on-site professional development to promote continuous assessment, reflection and involvement by the entire school community.
14. Both professional unions, The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and The Council for Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) will be full partners in all phases of this initiative.

CASE EXAMPLE FROM SAN DIEGO

Educational climate and rationale

When San Diego City Schools (SDCS) introduced a comprehensive instructional framework, called the "Blueprint for Student Success," in 2000, some community members advocated for a few district schools to operate outside of the plan's standardized approaches. Parents and community leaders expressed concern about potential negative affects of the plan for some low-performing schools as well as the highest-performing schools. In one instance, a local philanthropist offered \$50 million to support innovations, outside the Blueprint, that would raise student achievement in schools that serve low-income neighborhoods.

To respond to public demand, the Superintendent Alan Bersin invited community and education leaders to join district efforts to create pilot schools and other new schools with the freedom of being exempt from Blueprint requirements. The district attracted support from local civic leaders and national funders to implement the community's new school strategy. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, an advocate for San Diego's new school strategy, invested resources to support the creation of charter schools in selected neighborhoods.

New school strategy and descriptions

SDCS offers a variety of educational options for its approximately 145,000 students, including 20 charter schools that it sponsors and six pilot schools that operate outside the Blueprint.

One the district's charter schools, High Tech High School, has garnered national attention and financial support because of its innovative approaches. Serving 400 students, the small school is the brainchild of San Diego's high tech business community and the Business Roundtable for Education, a part of the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce. It is not a technical school. It offers a full high school curriculum and emphasizes project-based learning and immersion in real-world experiences through academic internships in industry.

District investments and leadership

Veteran educator Ginger Hovenic, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation (The Chamber Foundation), states that Superintendent Bersin frequently expresses his belief in addressing the needs of kids and that his leadership and support of new school strategies demonstrate his belief. "He sees different models as being able to motivate change and address individual needs. He strives for the whole (district) administration to see that education can look different," says Hovenic.

The school board is supportive of the district's implementation of a variety of models. Hovenic observes that they often speak more highly of charters than some of their conventional district schools. Hovenic says that, across the community, there is strong support for the superintendent's vision and approaches.

Community partnerships and collaboration

SDCS has relied on the active support of civic leaders to help introduce new schools to the district. While developing its charter school policy two years ago, the district invited the Chamber Foundation to facilitate the process and collaborated with the Business Roundtable for Education and Charter School Consortium. Bringing the strong involvement of corporate CEO and businesses, these organizations had a reputation for being a help to public schools through research, communication, networks and programs.

These community partners helped the district secure the expertise of San Diego State University and the University of California-San Diego in developing instructional methods, curriculum and other essential elements for the district's pilot schools. They also lent support to the district in creating a memorandum of understanding regarding the financial obligations of the district and the new schools.

The Chamber Foundation has organized networking and support groups for charters and other new schools in the San Diego region. It has helped form groups such as the Education Roundtable, Charter School Business Managers Group and the Accountability Group. These groups address a variety of school issues, including legislation, charter authorizers, fiscal management, grant funding, data collection and reporting.

The district also benefited from the involvement of national advocates for new schools. With assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education, it developed a template for detailed contracts to govern relations with charter schools in the city.

Outcomes and impact

Superintendent Bersin sees innovative schools, like High Tech High, as vehicles for informing the district's school reform efforts. Exemplary new schools that are small and offer personalized learning hold promise for influencing change in other district schools.

Hovenic states that San Diego's charter school movement has a good reputation because of investment of district and community-wide resources in their early development and operations. "There are lot of solid charter schools here," emphasizes Hovenic. The school operators who are most

active in efforts sponsored by the district and business and community groups have healthy schools and are not at risk of closure.

The presence of new schools, modeling best practices and producing results among students, has reorganized the business services system of San Diego's schools. Hovenic says that how new schools operate has changed how the district's accountability department looks at data. "It's totally reorganized it. Now they are beginning to use longitudinal match data and success factors."

The new schools in San Diego are putting a spotlight on the need to look at student data. People inside and outside the community are beginning to apply the practice of the looking at individual student performance over time, rather than only examining whole school data annually. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has awarded a multi-million dollar grant to expand the High Tech High model to additional schools in San Diego and other communities.

Hovenic has observed that both new schools and conventional schools in San Diego are becoming empowered to be financially and academically accountable.

Chicago, IL

[Note: Profile to be added]

1. Educational climate and rationale
2. New school strategy and descriptions
3. Community partnerships and collaboration
4. District investments and leadership
5. Outcomes and impact
6. Lessons learned

Oakland, CA

[Note: Profile to be added]

1. Educational climate and rationale
 2. New school strategy and descriptions
 3. Community partnerships and collaboration
 4. District investments and leadership
 5. Outcomes and impact
- Lessons learned

Notes:

"In Oakland, the school district seeks to improve education by forming new small schools and transforming existing large schools. The Oakland Unified School District works in partnership with the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BayCES), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement and greater equity of student outcomes through California's Bay Area, and with Oakland Community (OCO), a church-based community organizing group that organizes parents to advocate for smaller, more personalized schools." (Making Connections in Education)

Lower San Antonio community is a focus.

III. Resources for learning more about the new schools strategy

An array of resources is available from the 10-year charter and new schools experience to guide district leaders who want to pursue the new schools strategy. The National Charter School Alliance (NCSA) with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has assembled a collection of new school resources. While based on the charter school experience, these resources transcend any single classification and offer insights on how all new schools can confront common challenges, create effective systems, and advance local efforts to improve educational opportunities for children. NCSA, through its predecessor, Charter Friends National Network, has published a number of resource guides that are available upon request and online at www.charterfriends.org.

NCSA is comprised of a network of the state-level charter school technical assistance organizations. The network serves as a resource for quality charter school development. These organizations also recognize the vital role that all new schools play in the overall strategy for educational improvement. Path-breaking new schools – whether charters or charter-like schools – complement and accelerate ongoing reform efforts in traditional public schools.

NCSA Technical Assistance Publications [Note: Will attempt to make all titles hyperlinks for electronic version.]

- **A Guide for Developing a Business Plan for Charter Schools** (February 1998). This publication offers practical suggestions, and outline and sample budgets that can be used by charter developers in preparing a business plan to be included with a charter application and with grant and loan requests.
- **Accountability for Student Performance – An Annotated Resource Guide for Shaping an Accountability Plan for Your Charter School** (June 1998). This resource guide offers dozens of resources grouped under six key questions schools need to ask and answer as they develop accountability plans that match their unique missions and goals.
- **Charter School Facilities: A Resource Guide on Development and Financing** (April 2000). CFNN and the National Cooperative Bank Development Corporation have collaborated on this guide that walks charter school operators through all the major steps of facility planning, development and financing.
- **Charter Schools and Special Education: A Guide for Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of Serving Students with Disabilities** (April 2001). The second edition of a pioneering work on special education and charter schools that was originally produced in 1997 by

Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

- **Charting a Clear Course: A Resource Guide for Charter Schools Contracting with School Management Organizations** (Second edition, April 2001). This publication raises common issues that have arisen in contracting arrangements, noting important considerations and options for both parties. It includes examples from existing contracts on key issues like roles and responsibilities of charter boards, performance evaluation and compensation.
- **Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide offers strategic advice for meeting twelve critical challenges that charter school governing boards must meet.
- **Creating and Sustaining Family Friendly Charter Schools** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide helps charter founders develop schools that are connected to their communities and involve and serve families whose children attend them.
- **Employer-Linked Charter Schools: An Introduction** (June 2000). Produced jointly by Public Policy Associates, CFNN and the National Alliance, this guide includes profiles on employer-linked charters as well as experience and advice from successfully operating schools on how to form employer-charter school partnerships.
- **How Community-Based Organizations Can Start Charter Schools** (2001). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide focuses on lessons learned and best practices in starting and operating charter schools in partnership with established community-based organizations.
- **If the Shoe Fits! A Guide for Charter Schools Thinking About a Pre-existing Comprehensive School Design** (August 1998). This resource guide is designed for charters to use in deciding whether a partnership with a school design group could be in their interest and offers some helpful hints for evaluating individual school designs to determine if there might be a mutually beneficial "fit."
- **Mobilizing and Motivating Staff to Get Results** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide is designed to help charters think creatively about their use of compensation and benefits, recruitment, selection, professional development, staff organization and performance evaluation to best serve their schools.
- **Out of the Box: An Idea Book on Charter School Facilities Financing** (June 1999). This publication aims to help charter school leaders identify creative ways to finance facilities, drawing on the real-life experiences of dozens of charter schools.
- **Paying for the Charter Schoolhouse: Policy Options for Charter School Facilities Financing** (February 1999). This 22-page resource

guide contains both policy options and examples of current initiatives to use public financing and public-private partnerships to help meet the facilities needs of charter schools.

- **Personnel Policies and Practices: Understanding Employment Law** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide is designed to help charters develop basic personnel policies that meet all federal, state and local regulations and law.

Other helpful publications

Below are additional resources for creating opportunities for school districts and the broader community to collaboration on developing new schools that can help every student to achieve.

Blank, Martin, Atelia Melaville, and Bela Shah. *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*. Prepared for The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2003. (Available online at www.communityschools.org)

Brown, Prudence, and Leila Fiester. *New Song Academy: Linking Education and Community Development to Build Stronger Families and Neighborhoods*. Prepared for The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2003

Cahill, Michele. *Schools and Community Partnerships: Reforming Schools, Revitalizing Communities*. Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. 1996.

Clinchy, Evans, ed. *Creating New Schools: How Small Schools Are Changing American Education*. Teachers College Press. 2000.

Easton, Lois Brown. *The Other Side of Curriculum: Lessons from Learners*. Heinemann. 2002.

Finn, Chester E., Bruno V. Manno, and Gregg Vanourek. *Charter Schools In Action: Renewing Public Education*. Princeton University Press. 2000.

Connected Learning Communities: A Toolkit for Reinventing High School. Website: Jobs for the Future at www.jff.org/whatsnew.html#toolkit.

Conzemius, A. "Framework: System Builds Change Efforts Beyond Hopes, Hunches, Guesses." *Journal of Staff Development*, vol 21, no. 1. National Staff Development Council, Winter 2000. (Available for purchase at the Nation Staff Development Council website.)

Darling Hammond, Linda. *A Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work*. Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Implementing Schoolwide Projects: An Idea Book for Educators. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education by Policy Studies Associates available at www.ed.gov/pubs/SchlProjapp-b1.html

Improving Community School Connections: Moving Toward a System of Community Schools. Prepared for The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 1999

Jehl, Jeanne. *Making Connections to Improve Education: A Snapshot of School-Based Education investments in Seven Making Connections Sites.* Prepared for The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2002.

Lake, Robin, Abigail Winger and Jeff Petty. *The New Schools Handbook: Strategic Advice for Successful School Start-up in Partnership with School District Officials, Staff and Community Members.* Prepared for The Annie E. Casey Foundation by the Center on Reinventing Public Education. 2002.

Levine, Eliot, Ted Sizer, and Elliot Washor. *One Kid at a Time: Big Lessons from a Small School* (series on school reform). Teachers College Press. 2002.

Meier, Deborah. *Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem.* Beacon Press. 1995.

Newmann, F., and G. Wehlage. *Successful School Restructuring: A Report to the Public and Educators.* Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, October 1995. (Available online at <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/cds.htm>.)

Spark, D. "Results are the Reason." *Journal of Staff Development*, vol 21, no. 1. National Staff Development Council, Winter 2000.