VUE

The Next Four Years

Recommendations for Federal Education Policy

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Teachers Unions as Partners, Not Adversaries

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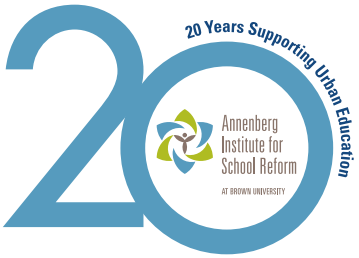

2013: AISR's 20th Anniversary Year

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University proudly celebrates its 20th anniversary and reaffirms its commitment to urban public education reform and our mission to ensure equitable, high-quality learning opportunities for all children and communities.

The Next Four Years:
Recommendations for Federal Education Policy
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VUE

The Next Four Years: Recommendations for Federal Education Policy

Learning from the Past, Looking toward the Future: The Next Four Years of Federal Education Policy 2

Warren Simmons and Sheryl Petty

The standards-based, market-driven reforms favored by federal education policy address important needs – but to achieve meaningful reform at scale, a broader, more equitable approach is needed.

Developing College Readiness within and across School Districts: The Federal Role 7

Ellen Foley, Jacob Mishook, and Jaein Lee

The federal government can support college readiness by fostering organizational partnerships that coordinate services, share data, and smooth the transition from high school to college.

Democratic School Turnarounds: Pursuing Equity and Learning from Evidence 18

Tina Trujillo and Michelle Renée

Current federal school turnaround policy has not achieved the desired results – more emphasis is needed on investment in teaching and learning, supports to struggling schools, community engagement, and broader assessments.

Expanding Equity through More and Better Learning Time 27

Jaime L. Del Razo and Michelle Renée

College readiness calls for tapping the resources of the whole community – higher education, community organizations, businesses, funders, and civic organizations – to support and align learning inside and outside schools.

Why Community Engagement Matters in School Turnaround 35

Sara McAlister

Research shows that an authentically engaged community improves schools – not just by participating in school events, but also by helping to shape reform.

How Can Authentic Community Engagement Be Fostered through Federal Policy? 43

Richard Gray

A robust body of research shows that authentic community involvement in improving schools is key to sustainable and successful reform; how can that goal be translated into federal policy?

Teachers Unions as Partners, Not Adversaries 52

Keith Catone

The work of teachers unions in Chicago and nationwide offers a promising model of teacher and community engagement.

Learning from the Past, Looking toward the Future: The Next Four Years of Federal Education Policy

Warren Simmons and Sheryl Petty

The standards-based, market-driven reforms favored over the last four years by federal education policy address important needs – but to achieve meaningful reform at scale, a broader, more equitable approach is needed.

January 2013, as this issue of *VUE* goes to press, marks the beginning of a new presidential term – a good opportunity to gather ideas, reflect on what's working and what needs improvement, and rethink policies. The year 2013 also marks the Annenberg Institute's twentieth anniversary of research and capacity building in support of equity and excellence in urban public education, working side by side with a broad range of partners across the nation. We have learned a great deal in those two decades – both from our successes and from our disappointments. Informed by those experiences, my AISR colleagues and I present the thirty-sixth issue of *VUE* – featuring, for the first time, AISR authors for all the articles – to share our recommendations for the next four years of federal education policy.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S FIRST TERM: STANDARDS-BASED, MARKET-DRIVEN EDUCATION REFORM

When President Barack Obama was first elected in 2008, the policies that were instituted during the education transition process mainly reflected views held by proponents of two approaches to school improvement: standards-based and market-based reforms. In the early days of the administration, major funders committed not only funding but also staff support for policy development and implementation efforts (e.g., Race to the Top and the development of the Common Core State Standards). The proponents of these theories also supported state efforts to develop proposals in response to the administration's signature initiatives.

Many of the elements of standards- and market-based reforms address important gaps in public education, such as the need for human resource systems focused on teaching and learning and aligned with national standards, as well as the need for schools with more flexibility to array their curricular and human resources in ways that suit the needs and aspirations of the students and communities they serve.

Warren Simmons is executive director and Sheryl Petty is a principal associate in district redesign and leadership at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

These needs must be addressed.

But the successful transformation of public schools – especially in urban communities – requires a more robust and comprehensive approach to reform that attends to equity as well as excellence; that is grounded in the needs and aspirations of communities and families, as well as the economy; and that doesn't leave behind the great majority of students, families, schools, and districts. The nation is unlikely to achieve this more robust and comprehensive approach if the policy choices are limited to purely technical and structural solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SECOND TERM: A BROADER VISION

In his second inaugural address, President Barack Obama forcefully stressed the need for collective action to meet the many challenges our nation faces. He also stressed that "our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do well and a growing many barely make it." But as Arthur Camins (2013) pointed out in a recent *Washington Post* article, current federal education policy forces individual stakeholders to act on their own and compete against each other for scarce resources. Policies based on market-driven philosophies virtually guarantee that at every level – families, teachers, schools, districts, and states – there will be a few winners who will be supported in their efforts to do well, and a great many losers who are barely making it but must fend for themselves.

Over our years of work with districts and communities on educational improvement, the Annenberg Institute has seen that addressing persistent achievement gaps and developing sustainable education reform at scale requires the combined commitment, efforts, and investment of an entire community. We envision a high-functioning district or other local education system that provides, along with a range of civic and community partners, a broad network of opportunities and supports to young people inside and outside of school. We call this vision a "smart education system" (SES).

Addressing persistent achievement gaps and developing sustainable education reform at scale requires the combined commitment, efforts, and investment of an entire community.

While no community has yet achieved a fully functioning SES, around the country forward-thinking sites are working toward this vision; some of these sites and programs are described in this issue of *VUE*. Out of necessity and with a spirit of innovation and collaboration, people in cities such as Boston, Cincinnati, Providence, and Nashville are moving much faster toward building smart education systems than some partners that operate at the state and national levels. Although the Twenty-First Century Schools and Community Schools initiatives recognize how schools must work with multiple partners to ensure broader success, these approaches pay less attention to developing platforms that redefine the work of larger school systems, and these initiatives don't fully address the systemic through-line that has to be developed at the state and federal

levels to sustain effective school-centered collaboration and take it to scale. Simply saying "pre-K to 16" doesn't create a system across layers of institutions, organizations, and agencies sharing responsibility for the learning and development of all of our nation's children and youth.

AISR proposes the following principles to guide education policy, based on the same core values – equity, results, community, and learning – that inform our own work (see sidebar).

- Education reform must be viewed as part of the *larger revitalization of communities* that enables entire neighborhoods to support the academic, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being of children and youth.

AISR'S CORE VALUES

A sustained commitment to the following core values drives how we partner with school districts, communities, policymakers, and other change agents who share our mission, goals, and values.

Equity – and a belief in all students – matters.

Nearly sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, large disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes exist, especially in low-income communities and for children of color. Remedying this requires an unflinching commitment to reducing inequities in learning opportunities and results and to cultivating and rekindling educators' and communities' belief in the capacity of all students – with the proper resources – to excel.

Results (and good measures) matter.

Schools must support students in becoming critical thinkers, compassionate citizens, and full participants in our nation's democratic process, as well as preparing them to succeed in their postsecondary pursuits. The metrics we use to measure success must be comprehensive enough to help us know to what degree we are supporting students to develop their full capabilities and where we need to strengthen our efforts.

Community matters.

To catalyze and sustain effective school reform efforts, communities must build expertise about how schools and school systems work, as well as the collective power to bring about needed reform. School districts should also work to foster the investment, ownership, and authentic participation of communities. Parents and students have vital knowledge about what is needed to improve public education, and their energy, leadership, and insights are essential in school reform efforts.

Adult learning and supports matter.

Education is, of course, about learning, and adults as well as children need to learn continually. Student achievement increases when educators participate in ongoing, significant, high-quality professional learning. Teachers, school and district leaders, and community leaders committing to their own lifelong learning, evidence-based reflection and practice, and collaborative working relationships are essential to build supportive and effective school systems.

For more on AISR's core values, see http://annenberginstitute.org/mission-and-core-principles.

- School systems must *distribute resources equitably and adequately* (funding, materials, educators, and other supports) to schools, based on the collective needs of students and families and in amounts sufficient to support their collective aspirations.
- School systems must have a *coherent long-term strategy* based on a strong theory of change and commit to building system capacity based on *well-balanced qualitative and quantitative data*.
- *Curriculum and teaching strategies should be research based, developmentally appropriate, and culturally relevant and develop twenty-first-century skills* such as critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity to ensure that all students graduate high school ready for college and careers.
- Fundamental issues of *power, race, class, and diversity must be systematically addressed* in developing strategies to transform local schools and systems. Community, culture, and diversity are assets to student and adult learning and should be interwoven throughout planning, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and evaluation.
- For students to learn to their full capacity, *schools must be places where students and adults feel safe, valued, respected, and nurtured*.
- *Communities, parents, and youth are essential partners* in school improvement. Schools and communities must invest in the development of parents and youth (particularly those most affected by the system) to become effective leaders of organizing groups, powerful public spokespeople, and strategic collaborators on school system functioning and improvement efforts.
- Smart education systems build *broad-based education alliances* made up of parents, teachers unions, civil rights organizations, municipal agencies, youth leaders, community-based organizations, research institutes, and higher education.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE OF *VUE*

In this issue of *VUE*, AISR staff from all our strands of work – district redesign and leadership, community organizing and engagement, and research and policy – draw on our work at the national, regional, and local levels to present recommendations for federal policy. We examine the intersection of key partners in education reform – community, districts, and teachers and teachers unions – and argue that no education reform is likely to succeed without the full engagement of all of these partners. We look more closely at three areas, in particular, that have garnered attention across reform sectors, from districts to communities to policymakers: making sure all students graduate high school ready for college; turning around struggling schools; and expanding learning time beyond the limited time of our traditional school day and year. We see these three crucial, highly visible issues as drivers of education reform today – what we refer to as our *lines of inquiry*. The three are interrelated. Low-performing schools must be transformed – with the goal of making sure all students are ready for college and citizenship. The only way to achieve this is through expanded learning opportunities, which aim to provide all students with the same access to academic and social supports that affluent parents provide their children.

We open with articles on each of our three lines of inquiry, grounded in our work in these areas. First, an analysis by AISR district redesign staff – associate director Ellen

Foley, associate Jacob Mishook, and analyst Jaein Lee – of what our work with districts and their partners has shown us about college readiness and how federal policy could support these efforts. Then we move to excerpts from a paper co-authored by Tina Trujillo of the University of California Berkeley and AISR researcher Michelle Renée with recommendations for how federal school turnaround policy could better support equity and strengthen democracy. Third, we turn to the theme of expanded learning time (ELT) with an article by AISR researchers Jaime Del Razo and Michelle Renée. Drawing on their work on the Ford Foundation's More and Better Learning Time initiative, they discuss the development of a set of indicators – beyond test scores and beyond individual students and schools to include system-level supports – to measure the effectiveness of ELT programs.

The final three articles address two other crucial components of smart education systems: the meaningful engagement of family and community and the consolidation of partnerships among all stakeholders in public education, including teachers and their unions. AISR researcher Sara McAlister reviews the research supporting involvement of families and the community in decision making about improving their neighborhood schools. Richard Gray, AISR's national director of community organizing and engagement work, further develops the significance of community involvement and answers four key questions about how to translate what we know into federal policy. Closing the issue, AISR community organizing and engagement researcher Keith Catone challenges the prevailing national education reform discourse that sees teachers unions as obstacles to reform. Building on lessons from the recent teachers' strike in Chicago, he argues that organized parents and teachers unions are a powerful force for improvement when they work together.

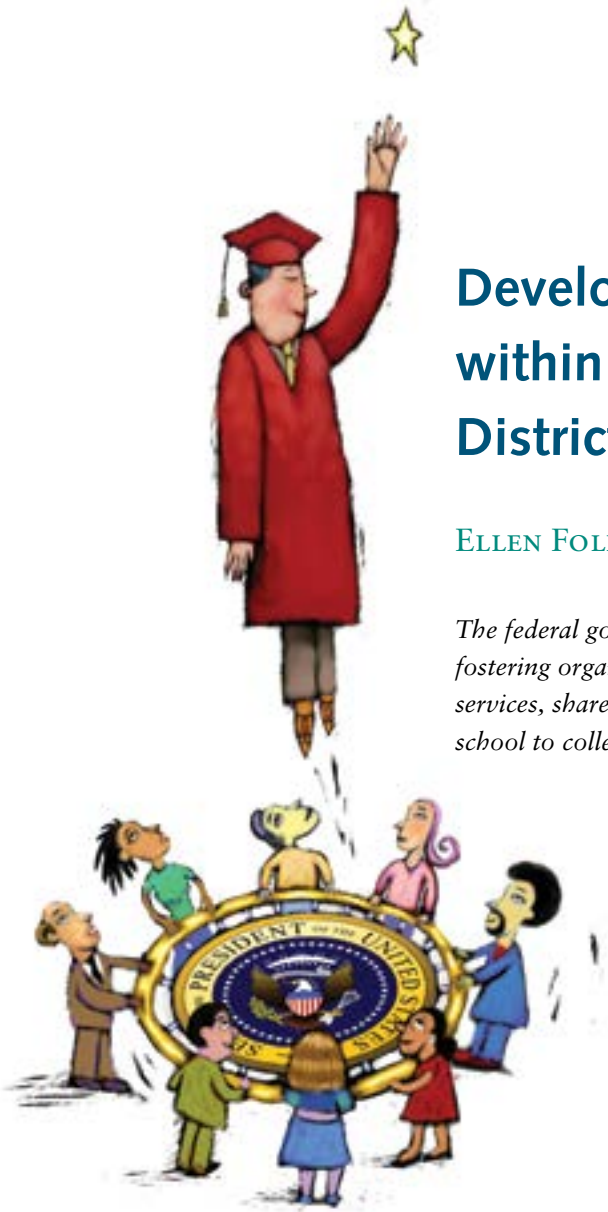
LOOKING AHEAD

An increasing number of education stakeholders hold views that resonate with ours. AISR is now working with a group of colleagues – scholars, advocates, and practitioners committed to equity, culture, community, and excellence – to develop a richer, more comprehensive, and, ultimately, more effective education reform agenda. Over the next few months, we aim to share our perspectives broadly on what's working in federal policy and what's missing. We are committed to foregoing our differences and focusing on our shared beliefs, values, and evidence-based strategies.

Much of what the Obama administration's education policy has sought to do is commendable, such as its emphasis on providing extra resources and support for the lowest-performing schools and its commitment – in principle – to family engagement. But for reform to be sustainable at scale, these goals should not be pursued solely through market-driven, standards-based reforms. And while the immediate goal is to close intractable achievement gaps between White, affluent students and their low-income peers of color, ultimately, this broader approach to student, school, and community success will create a public education system that serves *all* students well – and one that is worthy of our great democratic values.

REFERENCE

Camins, A. H. 2013. "Where's the 'Collective Action' in Obama Education Policy?" *Washington Post* (January 22), www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/22/wheres-the-collective-action-in-obama-education-policy/?wprss=rss_answer-sheet.



Developing College Readiness within and across School Districts: The Federal Role

Ellen Foley, Jacob Mishook, and Jaein Lee

The federal government can support college readiness by fostering organizational partnerships that coordinate services, share data, and smooth the transition from high school to college.

In his first term, President Barack Obama regularly promoted college and career readiness as a national goal. In 2009, he challenged the country to regain its status as first in the world in college completion by 2020. He also asked every American to commit at least one year to postsecondary training. He regularly advocates the development and adoption of the Common Core State Standards and has made college affordability a platform issue for his party.

Education policy has generally followed suit. Despite some cuts to the nation's oldest Federal College Access Programs, known as the TRIO programs (e.g., Upward Bound), new education policies have emphasized college and career readiness. In 2010, Congress approved the College Access Challenge Grant Program, which aims to increase the number of low-income students who are ready for college. Waivers of No Child Left Behind Act requirements have been granted to thirty-four states and the District of Columbia in exchange for adopting College and Career Ready standards, among other policies. Race to the Top applicants, which included forty-six states and more then 1,000 local education agencies, were also required to show that they had adopted those standards, and two consortia won Race to the Top grants to develop assessments, scheduled to premiere across the nation in 2014-2015, based on the Common Core State Standards.

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These are important developments. But unfortunately, they are not enough to ensure that all students graduate high school ready for college. In this article, we make suggestions about how to reframe current federal policy to promote a community-wide college readiness agenda, using lessons from U.S. school districts and their local communities. Our recommendations focus on developing incentives and supports so that schools can learn from each other, build social ties across schools, and engage and sustain stakeholders in building a community-wide culture of college readiness.

> Increasing the readiness and college success rates for currently under-represented populations means challenging decades of historical inequities and systemic disadvantages.

THE COLLEGE READINESS PROBLEM

Equitable access to and preparation for success in postsecondary education has become increasingly important in response to the new demands of the economy. More than 80 percent of high school seniors aspire to four-year degrees (Roderick, Nagaoka & Coca 2009). Yet only a fraction enroll in a degree-bearing program within a year of high school graduation, and among those who do enter degree-bearing programs, approximately 36 percent are unprepared for college-level coursework and require remediation; at each step on the pathway that starts with college aspiration and continues with graduation from high school, college enrollment, and college graduation, substantial gaps in readiness exist by race, income, and parents' education level (Aud et al. 2011).

College readiness has been the focus of a major strand of the current work of the Annenberg Institute for school reform (AISR). We have been working since 2010 on the College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) project, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with our partners – five large urban school systems that serve thousands of low-income students of color,[1] the Consortium on Chicago School Research, and the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University – to develop, test, and disseminate effective tools and resources that provide early diagnostic indications of what students need to become college ready. By our definition, students are "college ready" when they can successfully enroll in and complete credit-bearing (nonremedial) coursework in a postsecondary degree program.

Some of the challenges to college readiness took center stage at a December 2012 CRIS convening,[2] when two students from Lincoln High School in the San Jose (California) Unified School District described the barriers to college they faced. One student described her family's recent immigration from Ethiopia, her struggles learning English, and her lack of knowledge of course requirements and Advanced Placement

1 The five CRIS sites are: Dallas Independent School District, New Visions for Public Schools (New York City), Pittsburgh Public Schools, the School District of Philadelphia, and San Jose (CA) Unified School District.

2 The CRIS work has included two convenings a year in which the sites and the partner organizations share knowledge.

opportunities. A Latino student cited the death of his mother and his abandonment by his father as challenges on his path to college.

In 2013, both these students will be the first in their families to attend college. But their outcomes are not typical. Nearly 39 percent of Black and 37 percent of Latino teenagers do not graduate from high school on time (Lee et al. 2011), and about 14 percent of Blacks and 12 percent of Latinos enroll in college (NCES 2011). Of those Black and Latino students who do enroll in a two- or four-year college, more than 45 percent must take at least one remedial (non-credit) course (Lee et al. 2011). In the CRIS work, we aim to identify how educators and other stakeholders can know whether all students – but especially those historically under-represented in college – are on track to be college ready and what opportunities schools, systems, and communities are providing so students will be college ready.

A TECHNICAL, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL CHALLENGE

Developing the systems and strategies that enable all students to be college ready is an enormous challenge. It's a technical challenge that involves creating standards and assessments, developing indicators, collecting and analyzing data, and making valid inferences about their implications for policy and practice within and across school districts. But it's also a social, cultural, and political challenge. Increasing the readiness and college success rates for currently under-represented populations – low-income students, students of color, immigrants, and first-generation students, for example – means challenging decades of historical inequities and systemic disadvantages. Urban school districts came of age at a time when middle-class comforts could be attained in jobs that did not require advanced skills or education. K–12 schools and school systems still contain structures, policies, and practices rooted in the belief that some are destined for college, while a larger majority of students are not. The structure of the old, large comprehensive high school with its curricular tracks and programs unfortunately pays homage to this outdated belief.

In addition to these antiquated notions of student potential, there are other barriers to achieving the goal of college readiness for all. While there is a vibrant community-based college readiness support sector in many communities, historically, the coordination of these activities with in-school supports has been limited and haphazard, at best. Few interventions have been evaluated effectively or even well documented. And there is a disconnect between K–12 and higher education systems in terms of both data systems and supports for college readiness.

SYSTEMIC APPROACHES TO COLLEGE READINESS

To ensure that all students are college ready, communities and school districts need to foster cultures, attitudes, and beliefs that reinforce the need to provide for all what was once reserved for only some – and districts cannot do this work alone. As outlined in AISR's "smart district" concept, changing cultures and the policies and practices they reinforce requires building partnerships that engage stakeholders around the imperatives of setting new goals and using data aligned with the system's current needs rather than historical ones (Ucelli & Foley 2004). In an AISR study of thirteen New York City high schools that were "beating the odds" in preparing their students for college, the researchers discovered a pervasive 9–12 "college-going culture" in beat-the-odds schools, whose

graduates show a higher-than-expected rate of college enrollment (Ascher & Maguire 2007). School systems must have the willingness and resources to include students and families, educators, unions, the business community, reform support organizations, and higher education partners in developing a community vision for college readiness and a strategic plan that aligns infrastructure and incorporates college readiness policies and practices. These efforts must be coupled with initiatives to develop the capacity of teachers, counselors, instructional coaches, and building administrators and a shared accountability that involves multiple organizations and multiple outcomes.

Efforts like the Strive partnership, begun in Cincinnati and now a multi-city consortium; Say Yes to Education, founded in Syracuse and with its own multi-city network;[3] and the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet (see sidebar on pages 12–13), founded by former mayor David Cicilline and expanded by current mayor Angel Taveras to include more than sixty agencies and institutions, exemplify this systemic approach. The CRIS sites are adapting these principles; for example:

- With input from community and family partners, San Jose Unified School District has developed a strategic plan that identifies key performance metrics on the path to college readiness and has developed pilot college readiness programs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels that incorporate data and aim to build a seamless K–12 college-going culture.[4]
- In Philadelphia, the school district, the local education fund, and the mayor's office all play key roles in a citywide mayor's committee on postsecondary readiness that has developed cross-sector collaboration around college readiness data, mission, and vision for the city.
- The Dallas Independent School District and Dallas County Community College District (where 60 percent of Dallas ISD graduates matriculate) have entered into a data-sharing agreement to monitor student outcomes longitudinally and inform the development of supports and interventions for students to be successful in college.
- New Visions for Public Schools in New York City has worked with teams of teachers to develop curriculum modules aligned to the Common Core and built in strategies to support students' academic tenacity. They use teacher and student focus groups to understand the impact of this "Common Core for College and Career Readiness" initiative.

These college readiness efforts not only rely on the technical expertise of districts, but also include the knowledge that outside partners – higher education institutions, city governments, community-based organizations, and civic umbrella organizations – can provide about the students they serve outside of the K–12 system. These partnerships are critical to building support for college readiness beyond the public schools. School systems cannot and should not be approaching the goal of college readiness alone. Reform support organizations, colleges, businesses, families, city leadership, and agencies all play a role in supporting college readiness – and need to be involved through visioning, sharing data, and advocacy.[5]

3 For information on Strive, see www.strivetogether.org. For information on Say Yes to Education, see www.sayyestoeducation.org.

4 For more on the K–12 college readiness pipeline in San Jose, see Hewitson, Martinez, and McGinnis (2012).

5 For a national scan of college readiness models, see McAlister and Mevs (2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FEDERAL ROLE

The federal government is currently making key investments in college readiness through higher standards, better assessments that are aligned with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in higher education, and support for states to develop data systems that can easily track students longitudinally through the P–16 system. These are necessary (and overdue) building blocks to developing greater numbers of college-ready young people. However, we believe these mostly technical approaches will not ultimately be sufficient to the task. Addressing the myriad political, social, and cultural barriers to "college readiness for all" in our communities, particularly our large urban communities, requires a broader set of federal policies and incentives. Below we outline several possible ways that the U.S. Department of Education can encourage a community-wide approach to college readiness.

Develop incentives for creating and supporting umbrella organizations committed to college readiness.

As described above, ensuring that all students are college ready is a massive undertaking that requires the buy-in and collaboration of K–12 districts and schools, early childhood education providers, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, business, and local political institutions. The large number of partners and lack of centralized hub for discussion and action around college readiness means that too often, responsibility for college readiness falls to already overburdened K–12 school districts.

However, an increasing number of grassroots and local umbrella organizations are providing the space and resources to discuss new governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and community-side demand around college readiness. The Strive partnership and Say Yes to Education are models for bringing multiple community stakeholders to the table around college readiness. These models could provide a blueprint for a set of federal incentives to create and support these kinds of umbrella organizations, especially in cities and communities without a long history of multi-agency and multi-organization collaboration.

Promote state data systems that not only connect K–12 student outcomes with enrollment, remediation, and graduation data in postsecondary education but also encourage collaborative action based on those data.

As noted earlier, states and the federal government are investing heavily in the development of educational data systems. The twelve state Race to the Top (RttT) winners all are working toward the goal of developing "early warning" indicators of high school dropout.

> School systems cannot and should not be approaching the goal of college readiness alone.

Forty-one states have received State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grants at some point since 2006, and some states received multiple grants. Both the SLDS and the RttT grants focus on developing the twelve elements outlined in the America Competes Act, such as developing a unique statewide

student identifier.[6] States have made considerable progress on developing these data elements, but there is very little among the elements that explicitly connects them to college readiness – with the exception of Data Element 7, student-level college readiness test scores (PSAT, Plan & Explore, etc.).

Yet, the CRIS sites have received limited support from their state departments and are working very hard at

6 For more detail, see www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/America_COMPETES_two-pager.pdf.

IN THE FIELD | THE PROVIDENCE CHILDREN AND YOUTH CABINET

The Providence [Rhode Island] Children and Youth Cabinet (CYC) was convened in 2010 by then-mayor David Cicilline and expanded by current mayor Angel Taveras. It aims to improve collaboration and coordination of services across a variety of education stakeholders and foster better educational, social, economic, physical, and behavioral health outcomes for Providence's children and youth – in and out of school and from "cradle to career." The CYC is led by co-chairs from three sectors: city government, the school district, and community-based organizations. Its members include more than 60 agencies and institutions, with more than 140 active participants.

The CYC has adopted a Social Ecology Model, which posits that there are many factors that contribute to the success of children and youth, including the school system, community conditions, family conditions, and larger economic and social forces. Its work is guided by a framework of *collective impact*, which is:

> the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different. Unlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants. (*Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011)

After significant quantitative and qualitative assessment of the state of education in Providence, the 2011 *Educate Providence* report was released, outlining five goals, along with eleven indicators to measure progress toward those goals. CYC Strategy Working Groups were formed in 2012 to translate the goals of *Educate Providence* into strategies that join the strengths of schools, higher education, community organizations, businesses, city and state agencies, and families to support children from cradle to career. One of the Working Groups, High School to College, focuses on high school graduation, transitions to college, and transitions to career.

The CYC is committed to using data to understand the programs and strategies that contribute to success for children and youth, as well as to evaluate program outcomes and re-engineer systems when necessary. The CYC seeks communication with and input from the community on its work through community forums, an annual report to update the community on progress toward the goals of *Educate Providence*, and a website for continuous communication and feedback.

The CYC is part of the Strive national network of organizations working in thirty-five states and four

developing their own data systems, making individual connections with higher education institutions to exchange information and generally acting independently of these state efforts. State department leaders who are developing these systems also tell us they have little to no interaction with other states. They need a place to exchange information about what they are learning and more advocacy by local districts for more data about college readiness.

These disconnections may stem from the limited progress on developing

countries to create civic infrastructure in support of better student outcomes. Since October 2012, CYC and its director, Rebecca Boxx, have been affiliated with and housed at AISR, with support from several national foundations.

CYC Goals and Indicators from the Educate Providence *Report*

Goal 1: All children will enter kindergarten ready to learn and prepared for school.

- INDICATOR 1: Percentage of three- and four-year-olds enrolled in a high-quality preschool experience
- INDICATOR 2: DIBELS Next benchmark scores for incoming kindergarten students

Goal 2: All children will have access to a portfolio of high-quality schools, teachers, and district supports.

- INDICATOR 3: Number and percentage of district and charter schools serving Providence students that rank in the top three categories of Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Goal 3: All children will be supported intellectually, socially, and emotionally in and out of school.

- INDICATOR 4: Percentage of students entering grades 1 through 3 participating in quality summer learning activities
- INDICATOR 5: Rate of chronic absence at each level of school

Goal 4: All children will succeed academically and graduate from high school ready for college, career and/or credential.

- INDICATOR 6: 4th-grade reading proficiency scores
- INDICATOR 7: 9th-grade promotion rate
- INDICATOR 8: 11th-grade reading and math proficiency scores
- INDICATOR 9: High school graduation rate

Goal 5: All youth will obtain a postsecondary degree or credential and enter a career.

- INDICATOR 10: FAFSA completion rate
- INDICATOR 11: Percentage of graduates who enroll in a higher education institution (within one and two years of graduation)

For more information see www.cycprovidence.org.

> Students need support in the K–12 system to become college ready – but their needs don't end at high school graduation.

actions that ensure effective data use (Data Quality Campaign 2011). Given their role in administering both K–12 and higher education, states could play a huge role in providing the data that link these two systems and fulfilling the shared need for understanding the outcomes for graduates from different high schools and in different higher education institutions.

The federal government should continue to provide incentives for states to link secondary and postsecondary data sets. But federal policy should also bolster these incentives with incentives to make the data accessible and useful to large urban districts, city agencies, and community-based organizations. Federal policy, through either the reauthorization of ESEA or continuation of the state longitudinal data system grants or other competitive grants, could favor states that demonstrate a close working relationship with their largest urban school districts and city/state college access programs and that have data showing that the information they are producing is useful in those partnerships.

Encourage partnerships among local education agencies (LEAs) and higher education to smooth the transition from high school to college.

Students need support in the K–12 system to become college ready – but their needs don't end at high school graduation. Smooth transitions from high school to the higher education system are critical, analogous to transitions from elementary to middle school and middle to high school. However, unlike those earlier transitions, the high school to college transition involves multiple, often-disconnected institutions and supports. Data-sharing agreements between LEAs and higher education institutions, which we have seen in several CRIS sites such as Dallas and New York City, are an important first step (for examples, see the sidebar on page 15 and Wilkes et al. 2012).

The federal government should continue to encourage these partnerships. It should also focus resources on helping higher education institutions use the data they have to connect incoming students to resources and supports – academic counseling, "college knowledge," mentorships, etc. – to address "summer melt,"[7] smooth the transition to college, and increase the chances that students will have a successful college experience. Since most urban districts send the majority of their graduates to a small number of institutions (Nagaoka, Roderick & Coca 2009), this would require a manageable number of partnerships in each district. Among the CRIS sites, the Pittsburgh Promise has hired two counselors and one facilitator to support Promise students' transition to college at Community College of Allegheny County.

7 *Summer melt* refers to the tendency for some students to commit to a postsecondary institution in the spring, but then not enroll in the fall semester.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-WIDE CULTURES OF COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS

Supporting college readiness is not just a technical endeavor. The Obama administration's emphasis on college readiness and college completion is admirable, but federal policy must go beyond standards, assessments, and data systems to develop community-wide sharing of cultures and practices that support young people inside and outside of school and help their transition from high school to college. Several communities, including sites participating in the CRIS network, are building citywide alliances and partnerships among districts, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, businesses, and civic agencies centered on college readiness and success. The federal government has supported the important first steps in developing a college-going system, and it can build on that infrastructure by providing additional incentives for umbrella organizations, data sharing, support for high school to college transitions, and better alignment of existing federal programs with new standards and assessments.

IN THE FIELD | STATE-SUPPORTED DATA SHARING BETWEEN K–12 AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IN TEXAS

The college readiness data distributed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), a state-level agency, has allowed Texas school districts to bridge the data gap between K–12 and post-secondary institutions. In collaboration with colleges and universities in Texas, THECB developed ApplyTexas, a centralized system that allows students to apply to Texas's post-secondary institutions using a common application. From this state-level data, THECB collects the number of applications completed by in-state students and shares this information with school districts in the state on a regular basis (usually monthly). These data have allowed some districts to develop college readiness measures by connecting with their high school data. While these data are currently distributed only through THECB's monthly reports, THECB is developing an online database from which Texas's school districts can access and run the data as needed.

Dallas Independent School District has developed a college readiness indicator on college knowledge by connecting the ApplyTexas completion rates and senior enrollment in its high schools. These data have allowed the district and its high schools to be better informed about the college application completion status of their students. This information is updated monthly by the district and is available on the district's online database, where counselors can access their students' application status and contact information from their respective campuses. The ApplyTexas data have become an important college readiness indicator for Dallas ISD's counselors to identify students who need help and provide timely support to them.

THECB also collects other statewide post-secondary data (e.g., college GPAs, remedial courses), but they are not as readily available to districts as the ApplyTexas completion rates. Interested school districts can obtain these college readiness data by submitting written requests or applications.

For more information on THECB, see www.thecb.state.tx.us.

PERSPECTIVES

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO THE WORLD IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Alethea Frazier Raynor

Alethea Frazier Raynor is a principal associate in district redesign and leadership at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and co-founder and community liaison of the Risers Academy for Young Men in Savannah, Georgia.

The Risers Academy for Young Men, located within Hubert Middle School on the east side of Savannah, Georgia, has a vision to address the needs of thousands and is poised to move its students successfully from school to the world. The Academy enrolls just under 100 young men, almost all of whom were born in Savannah and many of whom have never been more than one state away from home. But they are introduced to languages from countries around the world when they venture just a few miles from school to downtown River Street.

Savannah is dubbed "the Hostess City" – majestic, southern, and deeply steeped in American history. It regularly takes on that role with tourists – but also when huge container ships navigate the narrow waters along River Street to make their way to the Savannah Port Authority. The boys at the Risers Academy have all been to River Street and waved as the freightliners pass by with foreign crews. But what they do not know is that the colorful containers these ships carry are part of an enormous industry of international trade and that *their* city is a hub for this commerce – Savannah is the fourth-largest and fastest-growing port in the nation. And international trade can be the passport for these young men in their journey from school to the world.

At the Risers Academy, the principal and staff encourage strong community ties and participation, believing that young men, particularly in urban areas, need to know there are positive role models in their local community who will embrace them and help them to learn the life and career skills they need. They also believe it's important to give back through the service projects that the students do in their communities. But to prepare them as productive global citizens, the staff has launched the development of a curriculum focused on international trade and entrepreneurship that will provide learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom. They will study international trade and understand that in the new millennium they must become what Yong Zhao (2012) calls "world class learners" who are able to create their own jobs.

They will visit the Port of Savannah, the airport, the Savannah Economic Development Authority, and the Target distribution center. They will begin to connect their classroom knowledge with their real-world experiences, so they understand that commerce is far bigger than Savannah and that there was a long journey, perhaps halfway around the world, for the cargo on those ships as it gets moved from producer to consumers beyond the city of Savannah. If we want education to become a tool that can transform the lives of young people, we must use what we have in the midst of our communities to develop our students with the twenty-first-century skills and competencies they need for the future. The Risers are only in grades six through eight, but their teachers want to be sure that when these young people leave the Academy they are ready and empowered to engage in the world beyond school.

For more information on the Risers Academy, see http://internet.savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us/schools/hms/risers/default.aspx.

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Democratic School Turnarounds: Pursuing Equity and Learning from Evidence

Tina Trujillo and Michelle Renée

Current federal school turnaround policy has not achieved the desired results – more emphasis is needed on investment in teaching and learning, supports to struggling schools, community engagement, and broader assessments.

Excerpts reprinted with permission from Trujillo, T. & Renée, M. (2012). *Democratic School Turnarounds: Pursuing Equity and Learning from Evidence*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center, available at http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/democratic-school-turnarounds.

The report *Democratic School Turnarounds* considers the democratic tensions inherent in the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) policy's market-based school reforms and critiques the research base that many of these reforms are based on. It concludes with a set of recom-

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mendations that re-center the purposes of public education for low-income students, students of color, and local communities and that are intended to guide federal, state, and local policymakers toward more equitable, democratic turnaround processes. Each recommendation stems from the provisional lessons that are emerging from current SIG-inspired turnarounds, from research on earlier efforts to improve school and district effectiveness, and from pockets of promising community-based practices that are developing at local and national levels.

In this article, we present a selection of key points from the report, along with the complete recommendations. For the complete literature review and analysis, please see the full report at http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/democratic-school-turnarounds.

THE FEDERAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The School Improvement Grant program was established in 2002 as part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act to provide financial support for the development and implementation of NCLB's corrective actions, but was not funded until 2007 (GAO 2011). In 2009, the SIG program was transformed in size and scope by the passage of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The SIG budget increased from $125 million in 2007 to $3.5 billion in the 2010-2011 school year.

After this one-time ARRA infusion of funding, the SIG program was funded at $546 million for the 2011-2012 school year and $535 million for the 2012-2013 school year (USDOE 2011). The administration's explanation for reinventing the SIG program was that dramatically turning around schools requires financial investment alongside significant structural changes.

Currently, each SIG school can receive up to $2 million per year for three years. For impoverished schools already struggling to meet students' needs during local and state fiscal crises, the amount of money is significant.

However, under the SIG program grant recipients revert to their original funding levels after the three-year federal commitment expires. In this way, the one-time spending increase does not fundamentally alter basic federal spending structures – structures whose inequitable, inadequate distribution across lines of poverty and race have been well documented (Oakes 2002). Along with the infusion of money came a mandate to prioritize the bottom five percent of each state's schools and to adopt one of four prescriptive federal models of school improvement (USDOE 2009).

Unlike the testing and accountability policies that came before, the 2009 reinvention of the SIG program includes more funding for implementation. Nevertheless, the SIG policy remains grounded squarely in market-based ideas. It assumes that strong external threats motivate teachers and principals to improve, that standardized test scores are reliable measures of student performance, that meaningful, sustainable changes can be spurred by competition, and that outcome-oriented accountability reforms can effectively interrupt historical patterns of low performance (Trujillo 2012).

THE SIG PROGRAM RESEARCH BASE

While the present-day concept of school turnaround rose to prominence seemingly overnight with the rollout of the SIG program, the roots of these dramatic reforms run deep in the literature on educational effectiveness and improvement.

Issues in Methodologies

School and district effectiveness studies of the late 1970s and 1980s did much to focus the attention of scholars, policymakers, and practitioners on the aspects of schools and districts that might be strengthened to improve the performance of children of color and children from low-income families. However, critics pointed to several methodological and conceptual limitations of these studies (Rutter 1983; Good & Brophy 1986; Creemers 1991; Scheerens 1992; Teddlie & Stringfield 1993; Sammons 1999; Bowers 2010).[1] The methodologies of both the school and district research traditions relied on small, skewed samples, usually based on unusually high student test scores.[2] The studies were also often conducted on samples of convenience or samples based on anecdotal reports rather than on systematically selected cases. This selection process meant that the results of the studies did not represent the range of experiences across the nation's schools. Likewise, much of this research was based on short-term, snapshot evidence, not on data collected over the entire length of the reform. Such designs incorrectly assumed that the test score gains would be sustained (Bowers 2010). Further, while later studies expanded the sources of data used to explain effectiveness (Teddlie & Reynolds 2000), the bulk of this research drew conclusions about the factors that influenced student performance based largely on self-reports from administrators or small, unrepresentative samples of teacher interviews (Teddlie & Stringfield 1993; Trujillo, forthcoming). This severely limited how much the lessons from these studies could be applied to schools or districts with different characteristics. The limited data sources also led researchers to produce somewhat fragmented, incomplete interpretations of the classroom, school, and community dynamics that shaped – and were shaped by – the reforms.

Over-Reliance on Standardized Test Scores

Conceptually, one of the most frequent critiques of these studies was that they relied on a single measure of effectiveness – standardized test scores. While relying on standardized test scores was methodologically problematic because it falsely assumed that the assessments were valid and reliable, doing so as the sole measure of effectiveness also led to narrow conceptions of student success and the purposes of education – ignoring the social, civic, and broader academic aspects of schooling. This narrow, test-based definition of effectiveness is characteristic of market-based arguments that assume that education's primary functions are economic. From this viewpoint, test scores are often employed as the only indicator that schools are preparing students for competition in the workplace (Rose 1995; Ball 1998). This perspective contrasts with arguments that focus on the democratic purposes of schooling, which frame schools as vehicles for fostering the values and skills necessary for collective, democratic participation and civic engagement (Orr & Rogers 2011). Student scores on standardized tests are far too narrow to be the sole indicators of school success in the democratic model of schooling.

The Impact of Socio-political Contexts

Finally, these research traditions were critiqued for their inadequate treatment of the socio-political and normative contexts of schooling

1 For critical challenges to the "pedagogy of poverty" that arose from this tradition, see Haberman (1991) and Kohn (2011).

2 The school effectiveness studies eventually incorporated more rigorous designs, but did not do so initially. See Klitgaard & Hall (1974); Brookover (1979); and Teddlie & Stringfield (1993).

(Welner 2001; Oakes & Lipton 2003; Thrupp & Willmott 2003; Oakes & Rogers 2006). The studies discounted the inherently political nature of schools, as seen in issues of who has access to power and resources, who can make decisions, and how resources are allocated. They also overlooked the ways in which norms and beliefs about what quality schooling looks like, and to whom it should be directed, shaped educators' and communities' support or rejection of certain reforms. Instead, studies of effectiveness were limited to questions about curriculum, time on task, monitoring, and the like – the technical dimensions of schooling. As a result, the research overestimated the relationship between schools' technical changes and student learning. It also discounted the ideological opposition certain school reforms may provoke, the influence of resources like funding and stable staffing, and the vulnerability of even those schools deemed "effective" to the structural effects of poverty and racism (Coleman 1966).

RESULTS: LIMITED IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

In the educational literature, a sizeable body of rigorous, systematic research on early reconstitution reforms shows that firing and replacing school staffs has usually failed to achieve the intended effects. One meta-analysis showed that reconstituted schools in San Francisco continued to show up on lists of low-performing schools (Mathis 2009). In Chicago, longitudinal research on reconstitution revealed that staff replacements were no higher in quality than their predecessors and that teacher morale deteriorated under these reforms (Hess 2003). And a comprehensive, long-term study in Maryland demonstrated that reconstitution inadvertently reduced the social stability and climate of schools and was not associated with either organizational improvements or heightened student performance (Malen et al. 2002).

Also implicit in the claims about the efficacy of reconstitution is the assumption that the benefits accrued from replacing the bulk of a school's staff will outweigh the unintended consequences. Yet, retrospective analyses of such dramatic interventions have concluded that the resulting logistical challenges, political fallout, and loss of organizational culture make such interventions prohibitive (Mathis 2009; Dowdall 2011). Finding enough qualified personnel to refill vacant slots in reconstituted or turnaround schools has proven difficult. In some cities, for example, districts found themselves swapping principals from one SIG-funded school to another. In Louisville, more than 40 percent of the teachers hired to work in turnaround schools were completely new to teaching.[3] Another study showed how hiring difficulties forced many reconstituted schools to begin the school year with high numbers of substitutes (CEP 2008).

A sizeable body of rigorous, systematic research on early reconstitution reforms shows that firing and replacing school staffs has usually failed to achieve the intended effects.

3 See http://fcir.org/2012/04/20/in-expensive-school-turnaround-project-questions-about-effectiveness for a summary of personnel challenges experienced by SIG schools.

Like many district-specific studies of effectiveness, turnaround studies advocate for schools to focus on the technical dimensions of reform that are presumed to yield quick boosts in test scores: curriculum alignment, test preparation, and a sharp focus on test-based student achievement goals. But the presumed boost from such reforms is only weakly supported by rigorous, long-term empirical research (Trujillo, forthcoming). These recommendations echo those of the earlier school and district effectiveness studies almost word for word. One possible exception to these patterns might be found in the current IES Turning Around Low-Performing Schools studies, whose preliminary results suggest these conventional technical strategies are most helpful when implemented in conjunction with multiple interventions, including strategic teacher recruitment and intensive professional development (Sparks 2012). Nevertheless, the overall similarity across the literature raises questions about the degree to which the knowledge base on turnarounds has evolved conceptually and theoretically in the years since those studies were conducted.

Our review of the research on turnarounds revealed that authors continue to focus primarily on the within-school factors that may shape the potential of schools to turn around test performance, in place of research that situates schools within their broader socio-political and normative contexts.[4] By concentrating primarily on technical issues around hiring and firing, curricular changes, and the like, this emerging field seems to be developing along the same lines as the previous generations of school and district effectiveness research. It also appears to be perpetuating the same narrowly framed debates about public education that consider changes inside of schools in isolation from schools' broader institutional conditions – federal and state funding arrangements, etc.

One minor exception to this pattern of de-contextualization can be seen in the literature's treatment of community engagement with the reforms. Most analyses advise leaders to solicit community input. Yet they recommend doing so *in order to* generate support for the turnaround. Most analysts are silent on the potential broader purposes of community engagement (Johnson et al. 2011).[5] This literature generally fails to recommend soliciting input into the specifics of the turnaround process, facilitating more democratic decision making in public schools, or advancing notions of the public good. The result, as in the school and district effectiveness literature, is a set of proposals that discount the powerful influence of social, political, and other contexts in shaping school reforms.[6]

RECOMMENDATIONS

We outline six recommendations that are intended to guide federal, state, and local policymakers toward more equitable, democratic turnaround processes. Each recommendation stems from the provisional lessons that are emerging from current SIG-inspired turnarounds, from research on earlier efforts to improve school and district effectiveness, and from pockets of promising community-based practices that are developing at local and national levels.

Recommendation 1. Increase current federal and state spending for public education, particularly as it is allocated for turnaround-style reforms.

- Increase and equitably distribute

4 For examples of literature that frames school change in terms of these broader school contexts, see Berliner 2009 and Hirsch 2007.

5 For a critique of this report's treatment of community engagement, see Mathis (2012).

6 For more on community engagement to support school reform, see Sara McAlister's and Richard Gray's articles in this issue of *VUE*.

federal and state education funding based on districts' and schools' demonstrated needs (based on poverty levels, communities' economic and racial isolation, etc.).

- Maintain these spending arrangements in order to ensure that basic levels of financial capacity exist across all schools and districts. Federal accountability outcomes, regardless of local capacity.

Recommendation 2. Focus school turnaround policies on improving the quality of teaching and learning rather than on technical-structural changes.

- Outline a set of options for schools and districts focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning through efforts to systematically recruit and retain qualified teachers in turnaround schools, which historically tend to be difficult to staff.
- Provide guidelines for ongoing, cumulative professional development that deepens teachers' knowledge of pedagogy and of the community in which their schools are embedded.
- Grant schools and districts greater autonomy to determine the details of each school's turnaround plans.

Provisions such as these would give schools and districts the authority to implement intense, dramatic improvements without undercutting the democratic nature of their efforts.

Recommendation 3. Engage a broad cross-section of schools' communities – teachers, students, parents, and community organizations – in planning and implementing turnaround strategies that are tailored to each school and district context.

- Require school and district leaders to solicit and incorporate teachers' professional expertise as well as parent, student, and community input into decisions.
- Specify the required timelines, financial and non-financial resources, and accountability structures for meaningful community engagement.
- Offer school, district, and state leaders training on authentic community engagement and models of best engagement practices at the federal, state, and district levels.
- At the school level, develop a representative oversight body that can solicit teachers' professional judgments and the community's ideas, concerns, and shared values and vision about what they want their schools to look like.
- Use parent surveys and hold multiple, accessible meetings (i.e., meetings held at times and locations that parents can attend and that provide free childcare and simultaneous translations) for community input.
- At the district level, establish a SIG advisory committee for stakeholders from multiple school sites to share experience and wisdom on school turnaround.

Recommendation 4. Surround struggling schools with comprehensive, wrap-around supports that stabilize schools and communities.

- Help struggling schools and districts sort through the SIG guidance by identifying existing community resources that can be integrated into the improvement process. For instance, provide specific examples of community-based organizations that can partner with districts and schools to provide non-academic supports related to health, nutrition, and other social services.

Recommendation 5. Incorporate multiple indicators of effectiveness – apart from test scores – that reflect the multiple purposes of schools.

- Develop indicators of schools' progress in setting and working toward other academic, social, and democratic goals for their students.
- Measure students' preparation for long-term academic success by tracking access to highly credentialed teachers and college-preparatory and/or advanced courses. Track English Learner re-classification, graduation and college-enrollment rates. Disaggregate these indicators by race, family income, and language status, as well as by students' access to highly credentialed, experienced teachers.
- Measure schools' development of students' social skills and awareness by assessing students' work in group-based learning tasks, problem-based projects, and curricula that relate directly to students' communities. Track suspension and expulsion rates. Disaggregate these indicators by race, family income, and language status, and access to highly credentialed, experienced teachers.
- Measure schools' democratic effectiveness by tracking the degree to which schools engage members of the public in school governance and improvement planning. Also examine whether schools make transparent certain information and decisions about schools' budget, resources, and programs.
- Track these indicators longitudinally to assess whether outcomes and conditions for particular groups of students and schools are improving over time.
- Commission a diverse panel, composed of educational experts and practitioners from SIG sites, to select and define these broader indicators.
- Support SIG schools to track their progress toward non-test-based goals in order to bring energy and resources to bear on those student and community outcomes that are not easily monitored through standardized tests but that nonetheless represent meaningful goals for public education and equity-oriented reform.

Incorporating these other conceptualizations of effectiveness is another means by which the federal policy can promote more democratic norms and processes in turnaround schools, in place of narrowly market-oriented ones.

Recommendation 6. Support ongoing, systematic research, evaluation, and dissemination examining all aspects of turnaround processes in schools and districts.

- Solicit and fund research and evaluations that incorporate multiple points of view – teachers, students, and parents – to better understand what schools gained and where they experienced challenges when attempting to turn themselves around.
- Complement these more complete perspectives with information from classroom observations that reveals how these reforms are associated with different forms of instructional quality – beyond those reflected in standardized test scores.
- Support long-term research that illuminates the evolution of school and district turnarounds, including the rich historical and social legacies that aid successful turnarounds or thwart them, and that considers how such patterns unfold at the state, district, school, and community levels.
- Disseminate research and evaluation findings in formats useful to those leading turnaround efforts (e.g. accessible reports, guides, case studies, webinars, clearinghouses, and presentations).

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Expanding Equity through More and Better Learning Time

Jaime L. Del Razo and Michelle Renée

College readiness calls for tapping the resources of the whole community – higher education, community organizations, businesses, funders, and civic organizations – to support and align learning inside and outside of schools.

At the start of the New Year and the second Obama administration, a national dialogue about extending and improving the school year for *all* students – especially those students who face limited resources within and outside their schools – should be a national priority. Students from affluent families already make up for the short school day and year by counting on their parents to fill these crucial, and sometimes dangerous, afterschool hours with a cornucopia of rich learning experiences. Middle-class families use their own resources to fill their children's afternoons, summers, and vacations with private tutoring for academic enrichment, music and art lessons, science camp, and sports activities. Parents know and research proves that these activities are not "extra" – they are essential to rounding out their children's education and giving them the skills and experiences that prepare them for college and successful careers.

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Expanding learning time is as much about improving the quality of the actual amount of time a child learns as it is about expanding the quality and diversity of a child's learning. Many parents cannot provide such activities for their children. They may not have the money to pay for extra classes and care, and they are often the same parents who work longer hours – including those crucial afterschool and school vacation hours. Similarly, due to the systemic inequities of America's public school system, these families' children attend schools that have fewer educational resources: less-qualified teachers; fewer educational materials; fewer science, arts, and sports opportunities on campus; and unsafe schools and neighborhoods. This is why creating quality schools, with more resources and better teaching and learning, becomes just as important as extending the actual time. Without addressing the growing divide between these two groups of students in cities across the nation, we continue to impede opportunities for many of our students based on conditions beyond their control.

EFFECTIVE TIME – NOT JUST *MORE* TIME

It's widely recognized that high school graduation is no longer sufficient – all students must now be prepared to succeed in college or workforce pursuits and empowered to engage their world. But our current system – a six-hour school day and 180-day school year, based primarily on a nineteenth-century agrarian calendar and using a business model of education – is inadequate to achieve that goal. Ensuring college readiness extends beyond the reach of schools and districts. It calls for tapping into the resources of the community – higher education, community organizations, businesses, funders, recreation programs, and civic organizations – to support learning outside of schools and align it with what happens inside schools.1 Without that alignment, the new national goal of transforming schools for college readiness will be impossible.

Yet, the expansion of the school day is no simple matter of just adding minutes to the existing school structure. To increase the equity of the school system, time needs to be thought of as a strategic tool – a tool that can give teachers more time to collaborate and plan, students more opportunities to access meaningful new learning environments, and school systems the opportunity to benefit from new community resources. Meaningful expansion of learning time also means that existing out-of-school programs, community and business partners, teachers, principals, and district leaders need to collaborate across their existing divides to restructure resources and align opportunities.

AISR believes that expanded learning must be rigorous and engaging, and it should not simply provide longer time for ineffective practices. We are currently working with the Ford Foundation on documenting evidence of such expanded learning reforms that are being developed with support from the Foundation in cities across the nation. We are working with other national partners, including the National Center for Time and Learning (NCTL) and UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), to systemically gather evidence of these new and creative reforms using measures that extend beyond standardized testing.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Expanded learning time (ELT) can involve increasing the time for learning

1 AISR calls such a system of cross-sector partnerships a "smart education system": see the section Ecosystem-Level Indicators in this article. For more on AISR's work on college readiness, see Foley, Mishook, and Lee's article in this issue of *VUE*.

at schools by adding days to the school year, hours to the school day, or both – but must ensure that all time provides for valuable teaching and learning. Schools using evidence-based ELT practices and supporting programs have improved student achievement across several student subgroups (Bodilly & Beckett 2005; Duffett et al. 2004; AYP Forum 2006).

It may be obvious that spending more time in school can produce better academic results. But what may not be as obvious is that not all students have equal access to more and better learning time. This is especially true when addressing the loss in learning that occurs over the summer vacation. Summer learning is important for all students, especially for low-income families, since they and their schools tend to have the fewest resources available to them (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson 2007; McCombs, Rand Education Institute & Wallace Foundation 2011). Yet despite the importance that summer learning has for low-income students, they are less likely to participate in out-of-school-time programs than high-income students (Wimer et al. 2006). This serves to widen the growing academic gap between those who can afford extra learning and those who cannot. So as a national discussion continues to develop, we see that "extending learning time has gained traction as a strategy for improving equity and narrowing achievement gap" (McAlister 2013).

More time in school also lessens idle time for students. For those students who live in underserved communities, this idle time can transform itself into dangerous choices that often result in further limiting future opportunities already hindered by social inequality. Hence, providing more time for students to learn in a welcoming environment across a range of subjects with a diverse set of caring adults can provide students with an opportunity for greater equality and social mobility.

For some examples emerging around the nation of using time to create equitable changes in schools, see the sidebar on pages 30 – 31.

FORD FOUNDATION'S MORE AND BETTER LEARNING TIME INITIATIVE: NEW WAYS TO MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS

AISR is proud to be a partner in the Ford Foundation's More and Better Learning Time (MBLT) initiative, which aims to make effective expanded learning time (ELT) practices the "new normal" across American schools, especially in underserved communities. The Foundation's multilayered approach includes deep investments in six large cities – Rochester (NY), Newark, Chicago, Detroit, Denver, and Los Angeles, as well as state-level and national ELT efforts.

Like AISR's "smart education system" theory,[2] the Ford Foundation's theory of change includes the idea that transforming education systems requires multiple stakeholders. Grantees are involved in developing ideas and evidence compellingly communicated to shape public and policy discussions; scalable school designs that are effective and operating in the "regular" public school system; support and advocacy from grass-tops and grassroots – including those in affected communities – creating the public support and political will to adopt MBLT reforms; and policy changes and increased capacity to bring systemwide changes needed to implement sustainable MBLT at scale.

Ford has charged AISR, UCLA IDEA, and NCTL with developing a system of indicators that will bring a deeper understanding of how expanded

2 For more in the concept of smart education systems, see Warren Simmons's article in this issue of *VUE* and http://annenberginstitute.org/about/smart-education-systems.

learning is changing the lives of students, the quality and rigor of schools, and the strength of the district systems and community supports that surround schools.

The goal of creating a multilevel indicator system is to document the current work on MBLT in Ford grantee sites and use that knowledge to create a national system of indicators that can both measure and inform the MBLT initiative going forward and the ELT field in general. Grounding development of the indicators in the real work of MBLT grantees, as well as the research, will produce a reliable and useful indicator system for the field.

ECOSYSTEM-LEVEL INDICATORS

The idea of the reform ecosystem begins with the assumption that schools do not operate in a vacuum but rather exist and coexist within the local, state, and national policies that impact how their students learn and grow. As one example, it has been documented that out-of-school programs can positively affect students, especially low

IN THE FIELD | USING EXPANDED TIME TO INCREASE EQUITY

Generation Schools

The Generation Schools model has been successfully implemented in Brooklyn and Denver. The first school was launched in 2004 using practices tested by more than a decade of pilot program–driven research and evaluation. Generation Schools expand learning time by up to 30 percent for all students without increasing teachers' time in the classroom. In fact, by staggering teacher schedules and leveraging cutting-edge instructional technology, Generation Schools provides its teachers with increased professional development and daily common planning time. Students are in school for 200 days per year, but teachers work the same number of days as they would in a school following a traditional calendar. This additional time is high quality; students enjoy personalized instruction in studio classes, where they have the chance to engage in arts, music, foreign language, and counseling, among other options. Furthermore, students engage in month-long intensive classes twice a year, where college guidance intersects with reading and math instruction and students have the chance to explore colleges, boardrooms, community organizations, and public service opportunities around the city.

The Generation Schools model has garnered national praise because it offers expanded learning time and highly effective instruction without significantly increasing schools' per-pupil expenditures. A report from the University of Pennsylvania showed significant growth by Generation Schools students, noting that the program is relatively new, but that "early performance indicators are promising" (Barrett et al. 2011, p. 56). While only 20 percent of the Brooklyn school's students were on grade level when they matriculated, they passed the 2010 New York State exams at nearly four times that rate.

For more on Generation Schools, see www.generationschools.org.

Citizen Schools

Citizen Schools Massachusetts has developed an expanded learning time model that has inspired New York City and Chicago, among other cities, to expand the school day. Their schedule for sixth-graders includes an expanded day that lasts for an additional three hours on Monday to Thursday afternoons. Students participate in apprenticeships in fields such as architecture and journalism, academic support

socio-economic students (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson 2007; AYP Forum 2006; Wallace Foundation 2008; Wimer, et al. 2006). Yet, in an ailing economy, funding for schools and out-of-school programs is often cut. To ensure that all students are being given equal opportunities to access out-of-school programs, especially low socio-economic status students, outside resources are necessary. Understanding who makes up an ecosystem and how they must work together to increase equity is a key part of understanding a reform strategy like MBLT.

Ideally, in a reform like MBLT, partners will work to form what AISR calls a smart education system (SES) – that is, a system of cross-sector partnerships collaborating to increase opportunities and outcomes for low-income students and students of color, including English language learners. AISR developed an SES framework based on years of work in the practice of school reform combined with education research (Simmons 2007). An SES addresses persistent achievement gaps and developing sustainable education reforms through the combined commitment,

sessions that emphasize enrichment and quality homework, college-to-career connections focusing on college exposure and study habits, and culture of achievement sessions.

Results show that students enrolled in Citizen Schools or who participate in the programs they run are more engaged and successful than their peers, even years later. An external study conducted by Policy Studies Associates found that the program impacted chronic absenteeism, as Citizen Schools alumni attended high school for seven more weeks on average than their peers (Arcaira, Vile & Reisner 2010). Furthermore, Citizen Schools students passed state exams at a higher rate and showed greater enthusiasm for school. Citizen Schools convened an expanded learning time summit in July 2012 for school leaders who were planning to implement a longer school day.

For more on Citizen Schools, see www.citizenschools.org/about/results.

Linked Learning

Linked Learning is a system that integrates a rigorous academic program with exposure to professional experiences. It offers students a significant amount of choice in their expanded school day, and students who participate graduate at a higher rate than their peers. Its design features an academic program with rigorous instruction in the core subjects, a technical component where students take three or more classes in a field, work-based learning opportunities that start with mentoring and shadowing and turn into apprenticeships or internships, and support services such as counseling and supplemental academic instruction. Los Angeles's Linked Learning sites are partnering with organizations such as ConnectEd, the Alliance for a Better Community, UCLA Center X, UNITE-LA, and the LA Small Schools Center (LASCC) to make these opportunities available for its students.

For more on Linked Learning, see www.linkedlearning.org.

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efforts, and investment of an entire community (National Commission on Civic Investment in Public Education 2011; Warren 2005).

SES reforms assume that technical solutions alone will not improve the conditions and outcomes of schooling. Effective solutions should involve building social, cultural, and political capital of impacted communities (Hubbard & Stein 2006; Oakes et al. 1998; Welner 2001). Working *with* the community is just as important as working *for* the community. Ensuring that the system leads to learning and development on a broad set of positive outcomes, including but not limited to academic achievement, and developing indicators and measures that foster shared accountability across partner organizations and groups are important to an SES (Foley et al. 2008; Mishook 2012). Thus, all stakeholders in the education system must deal candidly with cultural, racial, and political factors and build the trust they need to develop productive and equitable partnerships.

We recognize that there is no one solution. Rather, a multitude of solutions must be levied onto schools, especially those located in areas of poverty, aimed at reducing the opportunity gap between affluent and non-affluent families. Therefore, ecosystems that successfully provide school resources to reduce this gap must be documented and possibly replicated in other areas. It is an ecosystem that supports learning and development, with insiders and outsiders working together to influence education reform.

THE VISION GOING FORWARD

The More and Better Learning Time initiative moves toward education equity by recognizing that though we all value extended and improved learning time, not all students have the resources to make it possible. The national dialogue around this issue is important. But even more important is the action needed to create an educational system that recognizes its limitations in solving all social inequalities, but does not shy away from what is possible within our school classrooms and walls.

By bringing together AISR, UCLA IDEA, and NCTL, the Ford Foundation's MBLT initiative is taking the next step in a national strategy of making More and Better Learning Time the new normal. This partnership of educational researchers seeks to document the existing work on the ground, policies in place and those being drafted, and a new pedagogical approach to public education that leaves behind class time limitations of the past and propels us into a new twenty-first century education for all.

There are many organizations, school districts, union leaders, educators, and community leaders joining the effort to expand the amount and improve the quality of learning time. The new national Time to Succeed coalition is one example of the growing momentum.[3] Other evidence that this idea is taking hold is that the United States Department of Education requires expanded learning to be a component of reforms funded with federal School Improvement Grants, and it created a process allowing states applying for ESEA waivers new opportunities to spend federal money on expanded time. But as with any large policy, the devil is in the details – how expanded learning time will be developed and implemented is being decided in schools and districts around the nation.

3 See www.timetosucceed.com and http://annenberginstitute.org/commentary/2012/06/time-succeed-coalition-making-expanded-learning-time-priority.

As an institute working to advance educational equity, we believe that there are some core principles that must be in place to ensure that the equity intent of expanded learning time is met and sustained.

- Equity must remain at the center of how expanded learning time is developed, transformed into policy, implemented, and sustained. The promise of expanded learning time is to bring needed educational resources to children in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Teachers and high-quality teaching must be at the heart of this reform – staggered schedules, collaborative work time, and data-informed instruction are all examples.
- The additional time must be significant in amount and must be used to restructure the entire school day. This reform cannot be limited to tacking on a few minutes of more of the same for some students – it means using time to shift the content and style of teaching, create new kinds of learning opportunities, and increase access to and quality of learning.
- Expanded learning time reforms need to engage the entire community within and outside of the school. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents should help shape, implement, and monitor various details of the reform along with traditional school, afterschool, community, business, and government leaders engaged in creating the reform at the local, state, and national levels.
- The reform must be comprehensive and integrated into the school to reach equity: this means *all* students attending a school must be included in the high quality.
- Success must be defined and measured on multiple dimensions – increasing test scores is not the sole goal of the education system, nor should it be the sole goal of an expanded learning time reform.
- The goal of an expanded learning time reform should be creating rich, high-quality personalized educational journeys for all students, especially in low-income communities of color. We will know the reforms are succeeding when students in the nation's lowest-performing schools are growing academically, physically, and psychologically and meet ambitious educational and career goals.

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Why Community Engagement Matters in School Turnaround

Sara McAlister

Research shows that an authentically engaged community improves schools – not just by participating in school events, but also by helping to shape reform.

A substantial body of evidence demonstrates that family and community participation is a crucial resource not only for individual student achievement, but also for catalyzing and sustaining school improvement and for building school cultures that support all students (Comer & Haynes, 1992; Epstein 1995; Henderson & Mapp 2002; Sebring et al. 2006; Henderson et al. 2007). There is also ample evidence that schools serving large populations of students of color and students living in poverty have historically been the least successful at such engagement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Bryk & Schneider 2002; Epstein & Sanders 2006, Olivos 2012). These schools – often, the lowest-performing public schools – are precisely the ones that the Obama administration has targeted for turnaround over the past four years through Title I school improvement grants, the Race to the Top Competition, and state-by-state waivers of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act accountability provisions.[1] Because of this, the administration has a special respon-

1 For a review of the research base and implementation evidence of the Administration's approach to turning around low-performing schools, see Trujillo and Renée's article in this issue of *VUE*.

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sibility to ensure that its turnaround initiatives treat family and community engagement thoughtfully.

While federal policy has expressed a commitment, in principle, to engagement, in practice, current policy is insufficient to produce the benefits demonstrated by research. The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program was rolled out in the winter of 2010, but the complex application process left little room for families and communities to participate in selecting a model and shaping their schools' plans. The SIG program required funded models to be in place by the start of the school year. But states could only receive applications from districts after the state application was approved, and many states were still waiting for approval in July – leaving inadequate time for meaningful community involvement.

The SIG program also mandated a choice among four prescribed improvement options for struggling schools. These options themselves, at best, make no provision for family and community engagement – and, at worst, can actually actively inhibit it. Closing schools, or firing half their staffs, as required by the "turnaround" model, disrupts existing relationships between teachers and families, and students from closed schools often have to travel to new schools outside their neighborhoods. The "restart" model has almost exclusively been used to transfer schools to charter management organizations and away from direct public oversight – potentially alienating families and communities.

Theoretically, the drastic interventions required by these models could disrupt the most entrenched toxic school cultures and pave the way for better relations with families.[2] But the models – including "transformation," which has been used most often – make no provision for the sort of capacity building and investment that would help schools build meaningful engagement. For community groups that had already built relationships with struggling schools to help turn them around, the rigidity of the federal models and the absence of any formal role for family and community constituencies was especially troubling.

Across the country, parents and community members have pressed school boards and district leadership for more transparency and broader participation in decisions about school turnaround. There are signs that the Obama administration has begun to heed calls for more thoughtfulness about how to create space for family and community engagement. The second round of guidance to states and districts on implementing SIG, issued in late 2010, reiterated the importance of community input in shaping school turnarounds and created a "pre-implementation" period in which districts could spend SIG funds on community engagement activities (U.S. Department of Education 2010). In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) began issuing waivers to release states from the accountability provision in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, currently known as No Child Left Behind).

Among other requirements, states receiving waivers promised to implement one of the four federal models or a similar model of their own design in their lowest-performing schools each year. The ESEA waiver applications specified "ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement" as one of the guiding principles for school turnaround and described a more robust (and research-based) set of community engagement strategies than had the SIG guidance – including community-wide needs assessments and community asset mapping, establishing organized parent groups, holding public meetings to en-

2 Though, as Trujillo and Renée note in their article in this issue of *VUE*, there is little empirical evidence for such impacts.

gage parents and community members in shaping school improvement plans, and providing wraparound supports for students and families (U.S. Department of Education 2012). But most states essentially ignored this principle and received their waivers regardless.

WHY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATTERS IN SCHOOL TURNAROUND

A substantial body of literature documents the positive impact of parent, family, and community engagement on student achievement. In 2002, Henderson and Mapp reviewed the existing literature on family engagement and found that there was convincing evidence across studies that family engagement positively impacted a range of student outcomes, including grades, course rigor, test scores, social skills, and behavior. Henderson and Mapp also found that the relationship between family engagement and achievement exists across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups and persists across levels of schooling. Other researchers have found similar relationships (Comer & Haynes 1992; Epstein et al. 1997).

In addition to benefiting individual students, family and community engagement is a core resource for whole-school improvement. A longitudinal study of school improvement in Title I schools found that schools in which teachers were "especially active" in meeting with and telephoning parents, and in sharing instructional materials to reinforce learning at home, had larger gains in student achievement (Westat & Policy Studies Associates 2001). A major longitudinal study of school performance in Chicago identified parent-teacher ties as one of the five "essential supports" common to schools that made gains in student achievement (Sebring et al. 2006). Other studies have identified social trust in schools – among teachers, between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents – as a basic building block for schools that continually improve instructional practice to support all students' achievement (Payne & Kaba 2001; Bryk & Schneider 2002). Crucially, for family engagement to support whole-school improvement, rather than just individual students, schools must structure important decisions to include family participation (Moore 1998; Mapp 2003; Sebring et al. 2006) and must treat family and community engagement as an integral part of how they function.

Creating opportunities to draw on community resources and connect school and community experiences also holds promise for school improvement. The community schools model, which brings together wraparound services and a range of arts, music, academic, cultural, and other programming for students and parents during and beyond the school day, has improved family engagement and increased student well-being and achievement (Blank, Melaville & Shah 2003). Schools that have partnered with community organizing groups to train parents in organizing and advocacy skills, devise strategies for broadening family and community engagement, and develop teams of parents and teachers to lead school improvement activities have seen improvements in school climate, social capital, teacher-parent ties, and teacher professional capacity, as well as growth in student performance (Murnane & Levy 1996; Mediratta, Shah & McAlister 2009). Studies of organizing have found that one of the central resources organizing groups bring to school reform is a deep knowledge of community context and history – which helps schools shape their work to respond to families' needs and values (Shirley 1997, 2002; Warren 2001, 2005; Gold, Simon & Brown 2002; Warren & Mapp 2011).

BUILDING CAPACITY AND TIME FOR REAL ENGAGEMENT

Despite the growing awareness of family and community engagement as a strategy for raising achievement and improving schools, many teachers and schools struggle to build and maintain broad engagement. This is especially true for schools that serve large proportions of students of color and low-income students. Effective engagement rests on relational trust between families and school staff (Payne & Kaba 2001; Bryk & Schneider 2002; Mapp 2003), and building such trust depends on mutually valuing each party's contribution to student learning. Yet teachers sometimes discount or misconstrue the beliefs and practices about home-school relationships rooted in cultures other than their own (Auerbach 2012; Lareau & Horvat 1999). School-family relationships in low-income communities are often shaped by teachers' "deficit" assumptions that low-income parents place a low value on education (Delgado-Gaitan 2001; Olivos 2012). These are often exacerbated by parents' own negative schooling experiences (Lareau & Horvat 1999). Accountability regimes that hold school-level educators almost solely responsible for student achievement, ignoring the influences of funding, policy, poverty, and segregation, further strain teachers' and principals' relationships with families and communities (Mintrop & Sunderman 2009; McAlister et al. 2012).

Thoughtful attention to family and community engagement is even more crucial in turnaround schools. Besides being populated almost exclusively by the low-income families and families of color whom schools have traditionally had the least success in engaging, the schools targeted by SIG and other turnaround initiatives, by definition, are in dire straits. They are often plagued by high teacher and student turnover, disrupting the teacher-parent relationships that are the basis for effective engagement. The lowest-performing schools are overwhelmingly located in communities facing high poverty, years of marginalization, and a whole host of stresses that distract families and educators from a focus on achievement.

Further, turnaround policies have been structured in such a way that they often interfere with family and community engagement. Turnaround is designed to be a major disruption to how schools operate, in the hopes of generating quick changes and dramatic improvement. All four federal models require the dismissal of at least the school leader, and often teachers as well. Schools with very limited capacity must implement a whole host of changes very quickly, with enormous pressure to raise standardized test scores. Faced with these challenges, there is a very real chance that family and community engagement will fall far down schools' lists of priorities during the turnaround process, especially in schools where it has never been strong.

Deliberate and sustained attention to family and community engagement, supported by capacity building and resources, is crucial to successful turnaround. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) identified three interrelated factors that shape parents' motivation to become involved: how they understand their role as parents vis-à-vis the school; their sense of efficacy in positively influencing their children's success; and the invitations, opportunities, and demands for engagement they receive from school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's findings resonate broadly with research on strategies that build effective engagement and point to promising entry points for impacting engagement, such as professional development for teachers and parent skill building.

Professional development that builds the cultural competency of teachers helps them understand and value how parents from various cultures define their roles in supporting their chil-

dren's education (Olivos 2012). Several comprehensive school reform models, including James Comer's School Development Program and the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, help schools create appropriate invitations and opportunities for family and community engagement and shift to a shared decision-making model with families.

Skill building for parents, especially when focused on specific skills for supporting their children's academic progress and advocating for their children, enhances their sense of efficacy and in turn reinforces more active roles (Westat & Policy Studies Associates 2001; Epstein, Simon & Salinas 1997). Structured programs that train parents to navigate the public school system, understand academic standards, and effectively advocate for their children support effective parent engagement centered on academic achievement (Westat & Policy Studies Associates, 2001; Henderson 2010).

In addition to these entry points, schools that draw effectively on community organizations and community resources increase their odds of sustaining improvement. For effective community engagement that is responsive to local needs and makes full use of community assets, though, community organizations must be engaged in designing initiatives and shaping reforms from the beginning, with shared decision-making structures and continuous learning between partners (Blank, Melaville & Shah 2003). Organized community groups like those that have pressed the Obama administration for more transparency and more flexibility – many of which have long track records of supporting improvement in local schools – are ready to support turnaround schools in their communities. But they have too often been shut out of the process by its hastiness and the rigidity of federal models.

PRIORITIZING ENGAGEMENT IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

As noted above, there are hopeful signs that the DOE is developing a stronger appreciation for the role of families and community in supporting school improvement. Most recently, in December 2012 the DOE released a new framework for family engagement drafted by Karen Mapp (2012), a prominent family engagement expert. This framework is solidly grounded in research and practice and emphasizes capacity building for districts, schools, and families. It calls for sustained investment in strengthening home-school partnerships and for schools and districts to treat engagement as a core strategy for school improvement. It emphasizes helping families take an active role in schools, building families' and educators' sense of efficacy through skill development, and creating multiple opportunities and invitations for engagement. Mapp grounds home-school partnership in relational trust and shared decision-making.

This new framework would provide an excellent basis for re-casting family and community engagement as a core priority in federal school turnaround policies. The DOE is poised to move beyond lip service to true engagement. Once the framework has been finalized, the DOE can use it to revisit SIG, ESEA waivers, and other policies governing school turnarounds. Dedicated funding for programs to build educators' and families' knowledge and skills, coupled with real expectations of states and districts to treat engagement seriously, would go a long way toward rooting federal turnaround policy in research.

The DOE should also take care to avoid undermining its own forward progress on valuing engagement. The SIG and ESEA waiver guidance makes reasonable and useful demands on states and districts to engage families in shaping school turnaround. But those demands are rendered moot when states and

districts are held to frantic timelines for implementing rigidly defined models. Community needs assessment and asset mapping, building organized parent groups, and drawing on community organizations to provide wraparound services, as the DOE has called for in its guidance, are excellent strategies for sparking broader community engagement. But they are hollow when communities have neither the time, nor the space, to help shape turnarounds.

Family and community engagement is a proven strategy for strengthening schools. The U.S. Department of Education would do well to approach community engagement with as much thoughtfulness and investment as compliance with turnaround models (which have more tenuous connections to research on school improvement). Mapp's new framework is an excellent model for a fresh start.

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IN THE FIELD | THE LOGAN SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Since 1962, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) has convened and organized local residents, institutions, faith communities, businesses, and social service agencies to strengthen and empower the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago. In the early 1990s, LSNA formed an education committee to support and strengthen local public schools and organized families, teachers, and principals around a campaign that opened five elementary school annexes and two new middle schools to relieve severe overcrowding in local schools.

With the principal and bilingual coordinator at one elementary school, LSNA created a parent mentor program that trains mothers, mainly immigrants, as paid classroom assistants, while also providing leadership development training and a welcoming community. The parent mentor program has spread to seven additional schools, and more than 1,300 parents have graduated from the program. Drawing on their relationships with school staff, knowledge of schools' and families' needs, and leadership training, parent mentors lead family engagement activities and have launched many new programs to deepen home-school connections, including the creation of six Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs). LSNA's CLCs provide academics, social activities, and arts and sports classes to children and adults alike, many taught by parents and community members. The CLCs draw families into school buildings, provide a sense of ownership and community connection, and help transform schools into centers of community life.

LSNA continues to develop new ways of forging connections between families, communities, and schools. They have trained parents as literacy ambassadors, who team up with teachers to conduct home visits; launched an extended-day and wraparound service model at a local middle school; and developed a university partnership that allows parents and residents to pursue full certification as bilingual teachers and that was the model for statewide teacher pipeline legislation. LSNA's work has transformed schools into hubs of community activity and laid a foundation for meaningful family partnership.

For more on the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, see www.lsna.net.

How Can Authentic Community Engagement be Fostered Through Federal Policy?

Richard Gray

A robust body of research shows that authentic community involvement in improving schools is key to sustainable and successful reform; how can that goal be translated into federal policy?

Sara McAlister, in her article in this issue of *VUE*, lays out the strong research base showing that "family and community participation is a crucial resource not only for individual student achievement, but also for catalyzing and sustaining school improvement and for building school cultures that support all students." In this article, *VUE* editors sat down with Richard Gray, AISR's director of national community organizing and engagement,[1] to ask a few key questions about the implications of this research for identifying best practices and suggesting how federal policy can support them.

1 For more on the Center for Education Organizing, a major project of AISR's national community organizing and engagement work, see the sidebar on page 44.

Q Why is community engagement essential in education?

A Because of the perceived lack of political power and social capital in low-income communities and communities of color, there are often no consequences for the continued provision of poor educational services and resources to children in those neighborhoods. However, we believe the democratic engagement of parents and residents in collective action focused on school improvement can build the power and public will necessary to improve and sustain the quality of public schools in low-income urban communities as well as hold public institutions accountable for responsive and better-quality services.

Richard Gray is director of national community organizing and engagement at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

To build this support, districts and schools have to enter into new forms of public collaboration and partnership with structures that encourage and support the active participation and ownership of parents, students, and community residents in the public education process. We define *community engagement to improve student achievement* as the capacities and strategies to gain public support and create partnerships with communities to generate and sustain the necessary resources to improve public schools.

AISR has developed a framework – the "smart education system" – to describe this type of collaboration among different institutional and community sectors to mobilize support and demand for an effective and accountable school system. A smart education system is most effective in addressing the needs of students when there are ongoing opportunities for a range of stakeholders and constituency groupings to debate, negotiate, and articulate the education goals or purposes they share, and to build relationships and structures that link the capacity of those various players to the pursuit of common purposes. Those include opportunities for the following:

- Creating a shared space for educators, families, community members, and organizations to identify, research, analyze, and address common issues on teaching and learning. This shared space allows parents and the community to learn more about issues of teaching and learning from a practitioner's perspective.
- Building trust relationships between educators, families, and communities that allow a more sophisticated analysis of what is needed to improve schools. When time and space is devoted to having families and communities actively engage in problem solving with educators and these conversations are informed by research and data, not misperceptions and ideology, it creates an ideal community engagement setting with collaboration, active and accountable relationships, and a focus on addressing a common purpose – improving schools and increasing student achievement.
- Encouraging and supporting collaborative efforts *within* communities as well as *between* communities and the school system to support sustained student achievement. Getting one parent to engage with

AISR'S CENTER FOR EDUCATION ORGANIZING

The Center for Education Organizing (CEO), a project of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, supports groups organizing for educational justice in underserved communities. CEO staff provide research, policy analysis, and training to support individual groups and national networks to meaningfully engage in education reform. The CEO also facilitates alliance building among education organizing groups, and between those groups and other stakeholders such as civil rights and advocacy organizations, teachers unions, academics, and education researchers.

For more information and to download free publications, go to http://annenberginstitute.org/project/center-education-organizing.

the school is good, but getting a group of parents working together is better. Getting a group of parents is good, but connecting with an organization with roots, resources, and relationships in that community to support those parents is better. Connection with one organization is good, but helping to build a coalition of organizations with a range of resources and relationships with parents and a community constituency is better. Families, communities, and educators each have some power individually, but none have the requisite power alone to support sustained, long-term reforms that can turn around schools, close the achievement gap, and help students build comprehensive skills for success in college, work, and civic life.

Q What assets and capacities do communities have to support improvement in their schools?

A Traditionally, urban districts have obtained assistance through partnerships with large, influential organizations – members of the corporate sector, major media outlets, and the large-budget non-profit sector. While these organizations provided important resources to school improvement efforts, they often lack the understanding, capacity, and commitment to address critical issues of equity, race, class, and power that confront low-income communities, communities of color, and the schools in their neighborhoods.

Beyond a Deficit View: Using the Ideas, Energy, and Resources of the Entire Community

Just as there are necessary resources and capacities for school from universities, hospitals, and large-scale service organizations, there are equally important capacities and perspectives present within communities that are essential to the teaching and learning process. They know the children and families in the communities, they know the community context, and they often provide services to them. Community and family engagement also helps ensure a focus on issues of inequity that often plague low-income communities and communities of color.

Effective community engagement seeks to create structures and practices and structures that fully utilizes the ideas, energy and resources of the entire community and makes all of us who participate in a process of accountability produce the best for our children. For example, the label of "parent" or "community member" does not fully capture the full aspect of person's capacity or potential contribution to the education process. The "parent" may also be a trustee in a local church or a person pursuing a master's degree. The "community member" may also be a retired teacher or an officer in a civic or cultural organization. Each role represents a connection to a potential asset for the education process. Effective community engagement structure should not assume individual limitations of family and community members, but rather attempt to mine every opportunity for access, capacity, and expertise the schools may desperately need.

Community Organizations: Vehicles for Leadership Development and Direct Action

An effective community engagement framework for education should not be limited to connecting with individual parents or community members. It should look at building engagement with organizations and institutions that have relationships with groups of organized parents, families, and community members. Over the last twenty-five years, a growing number of community-based organizations across the country have provided that infrastructure and leadership for

parent/community engagement and organizing efforts to improve their schools. Such grassroots organizations have been a vehicle for leadership development and direct action for parents, youth, and neighborhood residents who have a direct stake in creating effective, accessible, and accountable neighborhood schools.

Many of these organizations run programs and workshops attended by the same families and community members the schools are trying to engage. In these settings, parents and community members are having meaningful conversations about school issues with friends, family members, or staff members of the community organization. Moving education engagement events and activities to where these conversations are already taking place can help bridge the gap between school improvement activities and the everyday lives of parents and community members.

Community organizations with paid (often professional and trained) staff, stable funding streams, and a demonstrated long-term commitment to the revitalization of their communities can provide the platforms for parent/community efforts to improve their local schools, as well as help support the vitality and long-term viability of local school improvement efforts. Given frequently changing school leadership, these organizations are often the keepers of the community history of struggle for educational improvement and the link to connecting current community organizing struggles with past campaigns.

To do this engagement work effectively, organizations need to be:

- willing to be responsible and accountable to a defined constituency;
- willing to assign staff time and resources to build that constituency's capacity through leadership development activities;
- focused on bringing people together to address issues through collective action;
- driven by a democratic decision-making process that allows membership concerns to define and direct the organization's activities.

The Power of Community-Based Coalitions and Partnerships

Some organizations are exploring the idea of building an education reform infrastructure within communities by linking together the capacity, resources, and constituencies of several local groups around a shared educational reform agenda. This collaborative structure supports the concepts of mutual investment and accountability between schools and community. Each participating group is clear about the time and resources they are prepared to invest to enable the collaborative to achieve its goals. Member groups dedicate staff to carry out the work of the collaborative, participate in fundraising, and mobilize their organization's constituency for collaborative meetings and events.

These collaborative structures have been instrumental in helping to change the culture of mutual distrust and animosity that often taints the communication between educators, parents, and communities. The regular and consistent gatherings of the collaboratives creates opportunities for open and honest conversation, identifying what they have in common, and deciding how they might work together toward a common goal of improving schools. Grounded in conversation, study, collaboration, and collective action, these collaboratives have cultivated new forms of interactions, rituals, and practices among educators, parents, unions, school district staff, and community groups.

These activities combine the traditional element of organizing – building power and demand for school improvement within communities – with a deliberate effort to forge accountable, outcome-driven relationships with key public education stakeholders. This new combination of practices has shifted the demand, attention, and action of community engagement efforts to addressing students' instructional needs at both the school and district level simultaneously and employ a new set of strategies and tactics that allows groups to work together with educators on core instructional needs and concerns in schools. Their success offers hope for others seeking to build a powerful force rooted in parent and resident leadership, anchored by community organizations, and inclusive of other powerful stakeholders.

Q What are the challenges to authentic community engagement, and what do communities need to help sustain and build their capacity to support improving schools?

A Despite compelling evidence of the positive impact of family and community involvement,[2] barriers of power, culture, perceptions, and communication block the opportunity for a productive exchange of ideas, information, and resources between school systems and communities.

Hierarchy of Knowledge

Cultural mismatches can easily divide schools and communities. Traditional school culture pigeonholes the relationship between schools and the communities in a "hierarchy of knowledge" where the schools and the educators possess all the valued capability and expertise, and parents and communities are relegated limited support roles. This perceived gap of capacity between school and communities is made even greater when factoring in issues of race, class, and ethnicity.

Not the "Real Work" of Educators

School staff have very little time, resources, professional development, or support in the area of building collaborations with families or community organizations outside the school setting. Engaging community and parents is seen as taking educators away from the "real" work of educators and those who want to develop effective partnerships with parents and community groups must often do so on their own time and through their own personally established relationships.

Even when schools dedicate staff for community and family engagement, it is usually one or two people with limited resources. School systems tend to identify individuals with community engagement capacity rather than creating and supporting a community engagement infrastructure that supports student achievement.

"Informing" vs. "Partnership"

Schools, districts, and even PTAs commonly complain about how it is difficult to get parents and community members to attend school-sponsored meetings, and their lack of participation is often cited as evidence that the community simply doesn't value education. However, these school-based meetings lean heavily toward "informing" or "educating" people about decisions others have made about their children's education. While these meetings can provide relevant and useful information, they rarely provide an opportunity for families and communities to examine the strengths and weakness of their school, nor do they create a

2 See Sara McAlister's article in this issue of *VUE*.

setting where parents and communities become active participants in creating the kind of schooling they want for their children.

Transforming schools in low-income and working-class communities requires a dramatic shift in the character, nature, and conditions of the education system to support and sustain relationships between public school practitioners, stakeholders, and policymakers that are informed, active, mutually accountable and focused on the pursuit of a common purpose: the goal of making better schools for all of our children. This type of change faces a daunting obstacle in the prevailing culture that exists for schools and districts. This process involves not only changing systems and roles of parent and communities within them, but also changing attitudes about and attachments to those traditional system values. In public education, attitudes and attachments change slowly and often with strong opposition.

Q How can authentic community engagement be fostered in federal policy?

A The Obama administration has increased the role and level of investment by the federal government in public education. President Obama's "Blueprint for Reform" outlines the administration's plan for reauthorizing No Child Left Behind and provides a number of resources intended to improve both the quality of education and supports for families and communities. However, the values and approaches taken by the administration are not aligned with many of those expressed by communities, particularly low-income communities of color.

Investments and Supports vs. Changing Structures

The four federally prescribed models for improving schools (Turnaround; Restart; School Closure; Transformation) emphasize the use of charters,[3] school closures, and dismissals of teachers and principals as the means to improving school outcomes for students. Creating charters, closing schools, and removing educators may be necessary elements within a school improvement plan. But these strategies should not be the primary drivers of public education policy. Changing school structures and the people in them should be part of a broader vision that defines what investments and supports are needed to improve the instructional core within schools. These policies must also be designed so they can operate equitably in the current political, social, cultural, and fiscal environments that characterize many communities and schools.

A Shift from Fostering Competition Back to Ensuring Equity

Current federal education policy demonstrates a shift in the role of federal government from ensuring equity in public education to a focus on creating competition among schools, particularly between traditional and charter schools. Competition – a contest between rivals – implies that market forces in public education will spark innovation and result in better education services. However, in spite of years of widespread reliance on market forces for improvement, inequities not only stubbornly persist in education, as in our society as a whole, but often deepen.

Creating equitable access to high-quality education has been a fundamental, defining, and often elusive value of the American public school system. For

3 While evidence is mixed on the performance of individual charters, they remain an unproven model for school improvement at scale.

many years, people have fought and challenged schools across the country to provide equity and excellence for all children. Historically, the federal government has played a critical role in that struggle by pushing public schools and school systems to expand access to fairness in educational opportunity as well as confronting racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers to quality public education. No other entity has the power and public mandate to rectify these injustices on a national scale. It's important that the federal government reaffirm its commitment to the value of equity and shape its policy approaches accordingly.

Collaboration vs. a Top-Down Approach

The current federal education transformation policy impacting schools across the country was developed and implemented with little input from community stakeholders. This top-down approach impeded the development of a sense of ownership and sustained support from key stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, business leaders, and other community members for the transformation process.

An example of a more collaborative school improvement approach is the Sustainable School Transformation model created by the Communities for Excellent Public Schools (CEPS) and currently the foundation of a campaign for federal adoption by the Journey for Justice Coalition (J4J).[4] Both CEPS and J4J are national coalitions of community and youth organizations with demonstrated capacity and experience in creating successful and innovative school improvement models with parent, youth, and community support and participation. "Sustainable School Transformation," has the follow core elements:

- Strong focus on school culture, curriculum, and staffing.
- Using education reform models that are research based and have a demonstrated record of success in the field.
- Collaboration with families, communities, and local stakeholders to foster shared ownership and accountability.

President Obama in his recent inaugural address stated that "you and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course" and "have the obligation to shape the debates of our time, not only with the votes we cast, but the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideas." This statement of the value and importance of democratic participation, power, and responsibility has helped shape changes in his polices on gay marriage and immigration. We urge the president to listen to the voices of parents, students, and communities raised in defense of important and enduring values and ideas of educational equity, opportunity, and justice.

4 For more information about Communities for Excellent Public Schools, see www.excellentpublicschools.org. For more information about the Journey for Justice Coalition, see www.journeyforjustice.org.

IN THE FIELD | PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE CENTRAL FALLS HIGH SCHOOL TURNAROUND

Central Falls, Rhode Island, was thrown into turmoil in 2010 after its high school was designated as a lowest-performing school and the district chose the "turnaround" option of the federal School Improvement Grant program. The decision drew national attention after a breakdown in negotiations between the district and the teachers union ended in the firing of all teachers, the principal, and other staff, setting off an acrimonious debate on how to turn around struggling schools.

The national spotlight quickly turned elsewhere, but Central Falls High School was left to deal with the major disruption of its basic functioning and widespread discord and frustration among the district, teachers, families, and students. Over time, the school community has worked hard to pull together around improving student achievement and has achieved some success despite the challenges of working in a difficult reform environment. In particular, the school has benefited from working towards making family engagement an essential element of the turnaround. School improvement efforts would benefit greatly if federal policy placed family engagement at the forefront, rather than being touched on in the background.

Engaging Families in the Turnaround Process

Central Falls High School set out to accomplish three overarching goals as part of their school transformation – increase mathematics proficiency, increase graduation rates, improve climate and culture. To achieve these goals, the school has implemented a number of strategies including setting up alternative programs, implementing a new teaching evaluation system, student behavior protocols, and teaching and learning supports.

Central to these efforts has been the hiring of an executive director for family assistance and student supports in early 2011 as part of the school leadership team to facilitate engaging the Central Falls community to support the high school's improvement goals. Throughout the progress of the transformation, the school community has begun efforts to build the infrastructure necessary for continued and sustained improvement. A few of those efforts are described in this sidebar.

Supporting Families

Central Falls has directly co-located services at the school to connect families with service providers. This was done with the goal of helping to reduce the social and economic barriers that may prevent them from effectively engaging with the school community. Available services range from case management assistance for teenage mothers to having a 2-1-1 representative at the school weekly to provide information and assistance.[5] The school has also sought out a partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to provide youth academic and job readiness programming and activities for students and their families. By making available an array of services, the school hopes to be able to tap into the strengths and skills families have and engage them more directly and effectively at the school. In addition, students may also be more engaged and focused on school when some of the stressors faced by their families are, at least in part, alleviated.

5 2-1-1 is a free and confidential information and referral service that helps people connect to social services offered by health and human service providers, government agencies, and community-based organizations (see www.211ri.org).

Parent Meetings

Parents are given numerous opportunities to engage with school leadership around the school transformation goals. These include bimonthly board of trustees meetings, monthly superintendent meetings, parent-teacher-student organization (PTSO) meetings, and various committee meetings. Monthly meetings with the superintendent include presentations on school related topics such as Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements (PBGR), discipline policies, and programs. Families are also invited to join the School Improvement Team (SIT) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process committees. At PTSO meetings, families have the opportunity to discuss issues related to their child's education, remain informed about school happenings, and plan events. These meetings occur once a month, with sessions held during both the morning and afternoon to accommodate parents' work schedules. Weekly parent meetings, open to all families across the district, were set up in Year 3 of the transformation as an additional opportunity for families to engage with the school, but also among each other and the larger community. The meeting format typically has a social/mingle hour, followed by either a meeting with a community partner (e.g., researchers at Bradley Hospital discussing HIV/AIDS curriculum), information sessions with school leadership, or a workshop/activity session (topics generating by participant interests).

Training and Advocacy

The district, in collaboration with different community partners, has been able to provide training opportunities for parents. A collaboration between the district and a community-based organization, Fuerza Laboral, yielded the Parent Leadership Institute. The twice-per-year, three-day intensive training program developed participants' leadership skills and built knowledge about district policies. Themes explored during the training included parent rights, the role of parents in education, identifying leadership structures in schools, and effective communication. Another partnership between the district and RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN) offered Family Leadership Trainings focused on building parents' leadership, meeting facilitation, and advocacy skills while increasing general policy knowledge. The goal of these and future trainings is to build a system for parents to help other parents navigate the education system and share knowledge. Building on these training efforts, the district is currently creating "agents of transformation" at the middle and high school levels. The agents will be parents volunteering about thirty hours per week to help support various school transformation goals, including making home visits, daily calls to other families, and helping to implement schoolwide attendance and behavior strategies.

The Long Road Ahead

While parent engagement has improved markedly over the past few years of the transformation, in large part due to some of the efforts describe above, engagement remains a challenge. Reaching out to all families and maintaining consistent communication within a highly mobile community continues to be difficult. Despite these challenges, there is an acknowledgement among school leadership and the community that families are crucial to the success of the transformation. As such, they continue to establish new opportunities to involve and engage families in supporting schoolwide initiatives.

Teachers Unions as Partners, Not Adversaries

Keith Catone

The work of teachers unions in Chicago and nationwide offers a promising model of teacher and community engagement.

Chicago has long been one of the national epicenters for public school reform. In many ways the reform efforts of the past decade in the Windy City have served as the blueprint for the current focus of federal education priorities. In particular, federal policy for school turnaround and transformation takes clear cues from the efforts that current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan oversaw in Chicago when he was CEO of Chicago Public Schools from 2001 to 2009. Shuttering low-performing schools (as measured by test scores), facilitating the restructuring of schools (often resulting in major shifts in personnel and student population), and promoting the growth of charter schools have all been strategies for Chicago reform and are now centerpieces of federal school turnaround guidelines.

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However, for such technical approaches to school turnaround to be successful, they must be accompanied by close consideration of the social, political, and cultural dimensions of school change. Without attending to these other dimensions, Chicago has experienced the alienation of its professional teacher corps and the disillusionment of many parents and grassroots community leaders with regard to public school reform, outcomes that undermine the social capital and trust that ensure broad local support for public school systems.

Scores of underperforming and, yes, failing schools across the country are in severe need of turnaround and transformation. However, federal policies that introduce technical change and innovation without careful attention toward how to create change collaboratively with teachers, parents, and other community leaders miss crucial opportunities to engage those for whom the change matters most. The work of the Chicago Teachers Union provides a promising model of teacher and community engagement that the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) can look to as they seek to create policies and guidelines that will support sustainable reform, particularly in urban areas.

TEACHERS MATTER

Many grassroots community organizations, parents, and teachers in Chicago who have been fighting for high-quality education for years do not believe the city's reform strategies have worked in their communities. In fact, in June 2011 a network of more than 100 Chicago-area university professors – Chicagoland Researchers and Advocates for Transformative Education (CReATE) – published a research-based statement on Chicago school reform that decried the vast majority of reforms initiated in the previous decade. They specifically sought to counter what they describe as a "myth" that "school turnarounds have benefited Chicago Public Schools by giving 'failing' schools a new start."

Instead, CReATE cited evidence that since the implementation of Chicago's major school turnaround policies, districtwide high school student achievement hasn't risen and most of the lowest-performing high schools saw student test scores decline. The researchers also pointed to the disproportionate impact of school closings on low-income African American and Latino communities and increasing trends of violence inside and outside of "turned around" schools (Chicagoland Researchers and Advocates for Transformative Education 2011).

Disappointment in Chicago school reforms also led to the formation of the Caucus of Rank-and-file Educators (CORE), which was started by a group of teachers who came together to read Naomi Klein's (2008) *The Shock Doctrine*. Klein argues that in the practice of "disaster capitalism," policymakers and corporations take advantage of man-made and/or natural disasters to push through particular changes as a response to crisis. CORE members saw connections between Klein's argument and the ways in which education reformers were framing changes in Chicago as a crisis response, forcing school closures, transformations, and conversions to charters.

In five years, the leaders of CORE won election as the leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) – evidence that they were not alone in their critique of the direction in which Chicago Public Schools were headed. In the midst of contract negotiations in June 2012, CTU displayed a high degree of solidarity when 90 percent of its membership voted to authorize a strike should the union leadership deem it necessary (Davey 2012). This vote

signaled not only that Chicago teachers overwhelmingly supported their union leadership, but that they were just as overwhelmingly disillusioned with the leadership and direction of Chicago's public schools.

Virtually the same school turnaround strategies tested in Chicago are what have driven federal regulations for the School Improvement Grant program, Race to the Top, and ESEA waivers. As in Chicago, federal policies have promoted practices that have been criticized by teachers and teachers unions, such as teacher evaluations and school accountability based on student test scores alone and the spread of charter schools that are not unionized. These priorities have little or mixed research-based evidence for success (Springer et al. 2010; Fryer 2011; Fryer et al. 2012; Center for Research on Education Outcomes 2009).[1] In the absence of such evidence, the value of the serious disruption and alienation of the teaching force should be questioned.

Further, federal competitive grants like the Race to the Top initiative require teachers unions to co-sign the application. This creates competing interests for teachers unions: they are pressured to either support reforms that will alienate their members or be blamed for unsuccessful grant applications. For the DOE to avoid replicating these dynamics across the nation, federal priorities need to reflect a clear and proactive commitment to engage with teachers and their union leadership, looking for common ground and working to ensure that teachers are not automatically placed on the defensive. Treating teachers and their unions as true partners, not as coerced co-signatories, will go a long way toward ensuring that the resulting reforms and priorities represent a viable and sustainable path for change in our public schools.

1 For an additional list of research showing the negative impacts of high-stakes testing, see the source list for FairTest's Resolution on High-Stakes Testing at http://fairtest.org/sites/default/files/resolution_on_high_stakes_testing__signing_final_w_biblio_4-23-12.pdf.

COMMUNITIES, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS MATTER

Teachers and communities have a mutual interest in collaboratively addressing the real impacts of poverty on a child's readiness to engage in academic learning. Not only should teachers unions be seeking to partner with families and communities around these and other issues, but policymakers should also be shifting priorities to support these partnerships and address these challenges.

Union-Community Collaboration in Chicago

Public opinion polls conducted during the CTU strike repeatedly showed that more Chicagoans supported the teachers than they did Mayor Rahm Emmanuel. In fact, more people actually blamed the mayor for the strike than they did the teachers. Community organizations, parent groups, and youth groups all spoke out in support of the teachers' strike (Clawson 2012). The widespread support for CTU surprised many observers, but not the CTU. Since winning leadership in the CTU, president Karen Lewis and her team made it a priority to organize and build relationships with community members as well as teachers.

Caught in an education reform context that has made it commonplace to blame teachers as a primary cause for the failure and underperformance of our public schools, the CTU shifted their relationships with the communities in which they work. They embarked on the development of their own research-based reform agenda for Chicago's public schools, "The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve." The agenda calls for

ten essential elements that are student and community centered and focus squarely on important issues of teaching and learning conditions, such as reducing class size, supporting students and families with wrap-around social services, directly addressing systemic inequities, partnering with parents, and respecting and supporting teachers as professionals (Chicago Teachers Union 2012). Efforts like these have solidified CTU's legitimacy within Chicago communities. The union has worked hard to earn the trust of parent, youth, and community organizations by articulating its interests in ways that align with the interests of these other constituencies, and this trust garnered the support CTU experienced during its strike.

Taking Union-Community Collaboration to Scale

More broadly, both major national teachers unions – the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) – are working to build authentic community ties and relationships with families to identify and organize around mutual interests. With the support of national staff, AFT union locals and community partners have been co-hosting community-based town hall meetings to discuss the development of "community-driven reform agendas" while committing to "solution-driven unionism" (American Federation of Teachers 2012). To date, these meetings have been attended by hundreds of teachers, parents, and other community leaders in over ten cities. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) has been supporting these meetings by documenting the content of the conversations and will help the AFT and their community-based partners throughout the country distill the major themes and ideas for change that will inform a truly grassroots and partnership agenda for school reform (see the sidebar on page 59 for more on AISR's work with teachers unions).

For the past three years NEA Priority Schools Campaign (PSC) has targeted intense support for teacher-community collaborations in the neediest schools where their members are committed to "disrupting the status quo." The campaign focuses on supporting three key levers for student achievement (National Education Association, n.d.):

- A strong partnership between the school and students' families.
- An investment in increasing the skills and effectiveness of the school staff.
- Community-provided social and health services for students and their families.

> Teachers and communities have a mutual interest in collaboratively addressing the real impacts of poverty on a child's readiness to engage in academic learning.

NEA PSC accomplishments have included support for innovations to strengthen teacher-family partnerships focused on student learning and achievement. In Sacramento, the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project disrupts the cycle of blame and mistrust that is often found between teachers and parents. In Phoenix, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams have revolutionized parent-teacher conferences to support interactive meetings between

> Without meaningful partnerships between policymakers, unions, communities, and families, we will continue to witness the failure of school reform and the separation of teachers and communities.

parents and teachers aimed at developing capacity for effective at-home learning activities. The Compadres in Education program in Oklahoma City has worked to alleviate previous language and culture barriers between teachers and families at a city high school, overturning the feeling that parents were unwelcome at the school. Each of these NEA-supported innovations works to build the joint capacities of parents and teachers to support student learning, with the ultimate goal of dramatically increasing student achievement.

IN THE FIELD | MINNESOTA NEIGHBORHOODS ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

Excerpted with permission from "Real Parent Power: Relational Organizing for Sustainable School Reform" by Keith Catone and Sara McAlister, forthcoming in National Civic Review.

Minnesota Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC) is a multi-racial member-led organization whose mission is to build power in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods across the Twin Cities. A large part of NOC's organizing focuses on home foreclosure prevention and changing the policies that govern foreclosure. NOC has also worked on other economic justice issues and voting rights. In 2010, NOC surveyed its members about the issues they wanted to prioritize for the upcoming year. Though education was not included on the list, a large proportion of members wrote it in as a top concern.

While NOC leaders and staff were gauging members' specific interests around education in early 2011, the Minneapolis school district announced plans to close North High School. North was more than 100 years old and had been an anchor of the predominantly African American North Side. It had lately struggled through a cycle of declining enrollment and sinking achievement, which NOC and many local families attributed to the district's previous decisions to close all of North's feeder elementary and middle schools, eliminating the school's attendance zone. NOC joined with other community organizations, student and alumni groups, and the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers (MFT) to form the Save North High Community Coalition. Their public campaign convinced the district to reverse its decision and bring in a nonprofit school reform organization to lead a community redesign process.

To build off the momentum of the North High campaign, NOC leaders decided to conduct a community-wide survey to understand how families felt about the public schools and what issues resonated widely. Based on their collaboration on the North High campaign, they decided to approach the MFT to see if the union would be willing to help fund the survey. The MFT and the St. Paul Federation of Teachers both agreed to support the survey and a part-time education organizer for NOC. The group experienced some pushback about their decision to engage with the teachers unions from allies who saw unions as impediments to improving teacher quality. But NOC leaders and staff believed that in order for whatever campaign they might develop from the survey to gain traction, they would need

TURNING GOOD WORK INTO GOOD POLICY

These efforts demonstrate a significant and substantive commitment to building partnerships with families and communities and offer promising blueprints for federal, state, and local education policymakers to use in developing reform agendas seeking similar partnerships among all stakeholders. There is an opportunity in this next Obama administration to chart a new bold course for reform, one that includes teachers unions as leaders and partners rather than as adversaries. Without meaningful partnerships between policymakers, unions, communities, and families, we will continue to witness the failure of school reform and the separation of teachers and communities. The DOE should both acknowledge and utilize the substantial and effective work of unions and communities in Chicago and nationwide to lay the foundation for powerful, sustainable reform.

the support of classroom teachers to carry it out. They saw the process of jointly developing the survey as a way to build understanding between families and teachers.

The process was not without tension. The SPFT's contract was up for negotiation, and the union was nervous about questions that NOC had developed (with the help of AISR staff) that asked parents to give their child's teacher, the school, the district, and the state a letter grade. NOC leaders felt that the question was important for understanding parents' concerns, and the question stayed. The two unions were able to suggest a question that would help inform the upcoming contract negotiations in St. Paul. NOC conducted a massive survey collection drive, through door-knocking, phone-banking, and attending community festivals and other events. More than 400 parents from neighborhoods across the Twin Cities completed the survey. Parents rated their teachers quite highly, giving them much better grades than the district or state. Two clear issues emerged from the parent survey: reducing class sizes to allow more individualized attention and providing more time and avenues for parents and teachers to communicate about children. Both mattered a great deal to teachers, as well, and the union embraced them as priorities in their contract negotiations.

The SPFT was able to use the survey results to demonstrate broad parent support for lowering class sizes and new programs to facilitate communication. Union leaders invited parents involved in NOC to sit in on the bargaining sessions and explained what was happening at each step of the process. Through the survey development and contract negotiations, parents and teachers built a great deal of trust and developed personal relationships. The final contract included pledges to keep class sizes low and district investment in a Parent-Teacher Home Visit project, based on a model developed by another community organizing group, the Sacramento Area Congregations Together. NOC leaders are currently working with several schools to improve parent engagement and strengthen relationships between teachers and families.

For more on Minnesota Neighborhoods Organizing for Change, see www.mnnoc.org. For a short AISR-produced video featuring the NOC story, see www.realparentpower.com.

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IN THE FIELD | AISR'S WORK WITH TEACHERS UNIONS

Staff at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) have supported the strengthening of relationships between organized parents and youth and teachers unions in a number of ways. Our current work in this field includes:

- Documenting the themes and outcomes of ten town hall meetings, co-hosted by an AFT local and a community organization in cities across the country. In some cities, such as New York City and Chicago, there is a long history of collaboration between the union and parent/youth organizing groups. In others, the town halls are a first step toward building a relationship and developing joint work. For more on the town halls, see: www.aft.org/newspubs/news/2012/121212townhall.cfm.
- Executing a scan in four cities with the NEA to identify parent organizing groups so that they can begin to develop relationships.
- Providing facilitation, policy support, and strategic assistance to the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools (PCAPS), a coalition that includes the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, parent and youth groups, and other unions and advocacy organizations. After months of gathering student, parent, community, and teacher input, PCAPS recently released the *Philadelphia Community Education Plan: Excellent Schools for All Children*. Read the plan at: http://wearepcaps.org/2012/12/18/the-philadelphia-community-education-plan-excellent-schools-for-all-children.

In addition to our current efforts, our recent work in this field has included:

- Following the release of the film *Won't Back Down* in September 2012, participation in a community/AFT committee that drafted alternatives to Parent Trigger legislation that would empower parents to participate at every stage of school improvement.
- In collaboration with Communities for Public Education Reform, the organization of a two-day site visit in November 2012 to the Montgomery County Teachers Association to learn more about their innovative and effective teacher professional growth system.
- The production and release of the video *Organized Parents, Organized Teachers* in January 2013. This short animated film tells the story of how Minnesota Neighborhoods Organizing For Change (NOC) and the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers (MFT), along with other community partners, successfully stopped the closing of a local high school and instead worked to improve it and other neighborhood schools. Watch the film at www.realparentpower.com.

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