

**EMBARGOED**  
until April 17, 2012

# The Way Forward: From Sanctions to Supports

Report of the New York City  
Working Group on  
School Transformation

April 2012

With support from the  
Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University

# Acknowledgments

Barbara Gross, Norm Fruchter, and Warren Simmons of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University coordinated the proceedings of the Working Group for School Transformation. The same trio compiled and edited this report, based on the deliberations of the Working Group, which met regularly from November 2011 to mid-February 2012.

Beverly Donohue of New Visions for Public Schools, Cassie Schwerner of the Schott Foundation, and Saskia Traill of The After School Corporation contributed additional editorial insights.

Christina Mokhtar, Sara McAlister, Michelle Renée, and Jacob Mishook of the Annenberg Institute; Courtney Hall, a graduate student in Brown University's Urban Education Policy program; and Leigh Dingerson, a consultant for the Annenberg Institute, provided critical research assistance.

Editing: O'rya Hyde-Keller

Graphic design: Haewon Kim

# Summary

**T**he New York City Working Group on School Transformation brought together education practitioners, school reformers, policy-makers, advocates, and parent and student leaders to propose alternatives to the school closings policy of the New York City Department of Education (DOE). (See the list of Working Group members in Appendix 1.) The group was initiated by the New York City Coalition for Educational Justice and coordinated by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform following the fall 2011 conference *Effective Alternatives to School Closings: Transforming Struggling Schools in New York City*.<sup>1</sup> This report presents the Working Group's conclusions about the limitations of school closings and a set of recommendations for systemic responses to the needs of struggling schools.

The Working Group believes that the Bloomberg Administration's school closing policy has not and cannot successfully address the needs of the system's struggling schools and the students enrolled in them. The administration has yet to articulate a convincing rationale for why particular schools should be closed or explain why it has failed to launch effective interventions to improve schools instead of closing them. The Working Group believes the DOE has not met its responsibility to help students in the system's struggling schools and has instead exacerbated the challenges faced by many of the schools it has subsequently targeted for closing. The Working Group calls for the DOE to refocus its reform efforts on a strategic intervention – a Success Initiative zone – to improve the system's struggling schools as well as on building instructional capacity across the city system. Therefore, the Working Group recommends:

## STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: A SUCCESS INITIATIVE

The DOE should:

- constitute a Success Initiative as a pilot effort to provide targeted support to the city's struggling schools.
- identify a set of research-corroborated improvement strategies employed within the city system, as well across the country, which can be adapted by the Success Initiative schools.
- designate several high-performing city schools as professional development lab sites where teams from Success Initiative schools can observe best practices and develop their own improvement strategies.
- provide the resources and supports necessary to help the Success Initiative schools develop improvement plans and should support the plans' implementation by the schools and their parent and community constituencies.
- help Success Initiative schools that adapt similar strategies build networks of school leaders and staffs to identify critical implementation problems and discuss how to resolve them.
- ask the city's Independent Budget Office to assess the progress of the Success Initiative's schools and evaluate the effectiveness of the Success Initiative effort.

---

<sup>1</sup>The conference was convened by the Coalition for Educational Justice, the Urban Youth Collaborative, and the Alliance for Quality Education and held at the Bank Street College of Education.

## SYSTEMIC CAPACITY BUILDING

The DOE should:

- no longer concentrate high-needs students in struggling schools.
- develop interventions and supports to help all schools build their capacity to effectively educate high-needs students.<sup>2</sup>
- define and promulgate school performance standards, especially those that might require closure, and develop and implement an inspection system to provide early warnings of deteriorating school performance.
- develop interventions to aid improvement in schools whose performance is deteriorating. School teams should adapt the DOE's interventions to each school's needs, and parents and community constituencies should be included in the planning and implementation processes.

## Background

**F**ulfilling his pre-election promise, Mayor Bloomberg transformed the governance and administration of public education in New York City. His department of education (DOE) ended chronic teacher shortages and, with the help of new state policies, assured the assignment of certified teachers in every classroom. The DOE has provided schools with significantly more data about their students' achievement and has increased schools' flexibility to use their fiscal and human resources. Moreover, recent studies indicate that many of the new small schools created by the DOE are succeeding.

But the mayor's reforms are not without costs; they have marginalized parent and community voice and eliminated educator and citizen participation in education decision making. Moreover, though the administration insists that its reforms have produced dramatic gains in student outcomes, recent evidence provides a sobering contrast to claims of systemic progress. Consider, for example:

- In 2009, the New York State Regents acknowledged that student scores on fourth- and eighth-grade English language arts and math tests had been inflated and recalibrated them downward, negating most of the test score gains recorded during the Bloomberg administration.
- In 2010 the Regents reported that very few of the city's high school graduates – only 13 percent of Black and Latino students who had entered ninth grade four years earlier – were prepared to succeed in college.
- More than 50 percent of the city's public school graduates at four-year colleges, and nearly 80 percent at community colleges, are required to take remedial courses after enrolling at City University of New York.
- Since 2003, there has been no significant reduction in the achievement gap separating New York City's African American and Latino students from White students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing program.

Moreover, the city's struggling schools' sector is expanding, and many of the struggling schools are performing far below state proficiency levels:

- In more than 200 of the city's elementary and middle schools, less than 25 percent of the students are achieving proficiency on the annual English language arts exam.<sup>3</sup>
- In more than 200 of the city's high schools, less than 50 percent of the students are graduating with a Regents' diploma.
- In more than 70 percent of the city's high schools, less than 25 percent of the students are graduating college-ready, according to the state's new standards.

This growing number of struggling schools raises questions about the effectiveness of Mayor Bloomberg's school improvement policies – choice, autonomy, competition, incentives, and sanctions – because such market-based strategies have not helped the city's schools develop their capacity to improve. Instead, the Working Group believes, these strategies have marginalized and isolated educators' knowledge and experience and emphasized structural rather than instructional solutions. Michael Fullan made this point in an analysis that compared the dominant school reform strategies employed in the U.S. to reform strategies used by nations that outperform the U.S. with international assessments.<sup>4</sup> Fullan argues that current U.S. reforms rely on the wrong drivers – “deliberate policy forces that have little chance of achieving the desired result” and defines four wrong drivers pervasive in school reform efforts throughout the U.S.:

- Using test results to reward or sanction schools and reward or punish teachers.
- Promoting individual rather than group solutions to issues of teacher and leadership quality.
- Investing in technology rather than improving instruction.
- Investing in fragmented reforms rather than integrated whole-system strategies.

These wrong drivers are the linchpins of the mayor's school reforms. His department of education, for example, relies primarily on standardized testing results to identify unacceptable student outcomes across the city's schools. But identifying poor performance without providing a systemic approach to improvement has generated a disruptive cycle of school closure – nearly 140 schools have been closed, or slated for closure, since 2003, when the Bloomberg Administration took office. The DOE has actually begun to close some of the schools it recently opened; nearly half the schools most recently closed by the DOE were opened during the past ten years.

If, as Fullan argues, districts should develop their schools' capacity to improve instruction and student achievement, rather than closing them, what alternative strategies should the DOE employ? Although it seems unlikely that Mayor Bloomberg will alter the school system's reform directions, the city's mayoral candidates and the broader community must consider adopting new education strategies, given the large number of struggling schools the new mayor will inherit in less than two years.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 3: The Parthenon Report.

---

<sup>3</sup> This finding is based on the outcomes of New York State's standardized testing program. The Working Group is not convinced that the state's testing constitutes an adequate or appropriate assessment system.

---

<sup>4</sup> Fullan, M. *Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform*, Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series Paper No. 204 (East Melbourne, Australia: Centre for Strategic Education, 2011). Fullan is Professor Emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto and a renowned authority on international education reform.

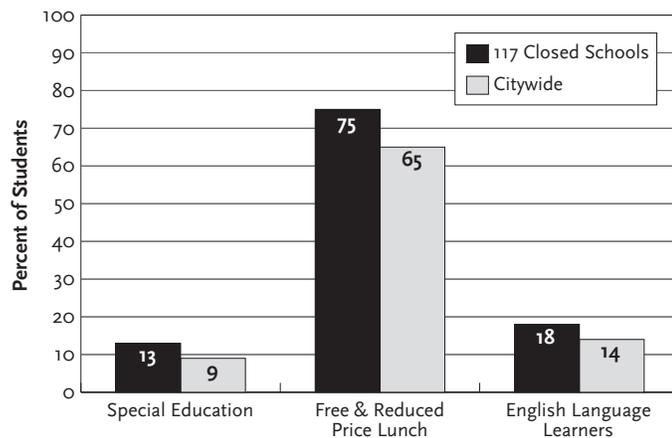
Fullan argues that to significantly improve its struggling schools, the U.S. must adopt capacity-building strategies used by countries that outperform the U.S. on international measures of achievement: “The right drivers – capacity building, group work, instruction, and systemic solutions – are effective because they work directly on changing the culture of school systems (values, norms, skills, practices, relationships).”

While the DOE has honed its choice and accountability reforms, it has not focused on implementing these “right drivers.” Instead, it has far too often left schools to struggle on their own to improve their instructional capacity. Worse, the DOE has allowed the numbers of high-needs students in many struggling schools to significantly increase in the years before the DOE targeted them for closure.

## The DOE Exacerbates the Challenges in Schools It Subsequently Closes

**T**he 140 schools the DOE has closed since 2003 served large numbers of the city’s highest need students. Those closed or closing schools had higher percentages of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch (a proxy for poverty), higher percentages of students with disabilities, and higher percentages of English language learners (ELLs) than the school system as a whole, as Figure 1 shows.

FIGURE 1.  
Demographics of the 117 Schools Closed Since 2003



**SOURCES:** New York City Board of Education, 2002–2006 Annual School Report Cards; New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), Comprehensive Education Plan 2007; NYCDOE, Progress Reports 2008–2011.

**NOTES:** Figures above represent phase-out year 1 averages (2002–2011) across the 117 closed schools.

Subsequent analyses indicate that the twenty-three schools most recently targeted for closure had higher percentages of special education students, low-income students, and students over-age for grade than the system as a whole. Moreover, the middle schools and high schools recently targeted for closure had, on entry, higher proportions of students whose English language arts and math skills were far below state proficiency levels than the citywide average.<sup>5</sup>

The data in Figure 2 demonstrate that schools targeted for closure served larger percentages of high-needs students with sig-

nificant academic challenges than students in the city system as a whole. Moreover, the DOE has too often failed to provide the necessary instructional support for struggling schools before deciding to close them.<sup>6</sup> Worse, analyses of the schools beginning their phase-out in 2011 indicates that in the five years prior to the announcement of the decision to close, the DOE significantly increased the percentages of high-needs students in those schools, as Figure 3 below shows.

Several schools targeted for closure experienced particularly dramatic increases in their high-needs student populations in the five years prior to phase-out and the first year of their phase-out (see Figure 4). New Day Academy, for example, saw an almost 50 percent

FIGURE 2.  
Demographics in the 23 Schools Most Recently Targeted for Closure

	Closing Schools	Citywide
Special Education (2010)	17.0%	14.0%
Self-Contained Special Education (2010)	8.0%	5.0%
Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (2010)	82.0%	74.0%
Students Entering High School Over-age for Grade (2010)	20.0%	5.0%

SOURCES: New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), Comprehensive Education Plan 2010; NYCDOE, New York City Results on the New York State ELA & Math Tests, Grades 3–8 (2010–2011); NYCDOE, Graduation Results, 2001–2006 Cohorts; New York State Education Department, Information and Reporting Services, Total Cohort Graduation Rate and Enrollment Outcome Summaries.

FIGURE 3.  
Increases in High-Needs Students and Decreases in Achievement at Schools Starting their Phase-out in 2011

	5 Years Prior to Phase-out Announced (2006)	Year 1 of Phase-out (2011)
Special Education	14.0%	18.0%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	75.0%	79.0%
Homeless	1.0%	4.0%
English Language Learners	11.0%	14.0%
Students Entering High School Over-age for Grade*	9.0%	28.0%
Gr. 3–8 Proficient and Above in English Language Arts	34.6%	22.1%
Gr. 3–8 Proficient and Above in Math	37.8%	26.6%

SOURCES: New York City Board of Education, 2006 Annual School Report Cards; New York City Department of Education, Comprehensive Education Plan 2006 and 2011.

<sup>5</sup> An analysis by the Independent Budget Office reached similar conclusions: New York City Independent Budget Office, *Statistical Profile of Schools on the DOE's 2012 Closure List* (New York: Independent Budget Office, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Advocates for Children's report on the closure of Tilden High School and the dispersion of the school's bilingual program: Advocates for Children and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, *Empty Promises: A Case Study of Restructuring and Exclusion of English Language Learners in Two Brooklyn High Schools* (New York: Advocates for Children and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2009). See also: New York City Department of Education, *School Disclosure Discharge Reporting* (New York: New York City Department of Education, 2012).

increase in its special education students and 60 percent rise in its ELLs. Global Enterprise High School’s special education and ELL populations doubled, while at IS 231, special education students and ELLs increased by almost 60 percent. At Grace Dodge Career and Technical Education High School and Samuel Gompers Career and Technical Education High School, two schools on the most recent closure list, 47 percent of incoming ninth-graders had posted eighth-grade reading scores in the lowest third citywide in 2003. By 2011, at least 61 percent of both schools’ entering students fell into that category.<sup>7</sup>

The instructional challenges these schools face are often heightened by the DOE’s tendency to assign over-the-counter students<sup>8</sup> to struggling high schools. In the 2010-2011 school year, for example, Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology was assigned 110 over-the-counter students, or 16 percent of its total enrollment. Gateway School was subsequently targeted for closure in 2012.

As school closings have multiplied across the past few years, critics have charged that DOE student assignment policies have contributed to the poor school performance that the DOE subsequently cites in targeting schools for closing.<sup>9</sup> The data summarized above indicate that the charges have validity. Therefore the Working Group calls for the DOE to stop concentrating high-needs students in struggling schools.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the DOE should develop interventions and supports to help all schools build their capacity to effectively educate their high-needs students, through policies such as the Success Initiative outlined below.

FIGURE 4.  
Percent of High-Needs Students at Schools Beginning Their Phase-out in 2011  
Compared to 2006

		5 Years Prior to Phase-out Announced (2006)	Year 1 of Phase-out (2011)
<b>New Day Academy</b>	Special Education	15.0%	22.0%
	Free and Reduced Price Lunch	81.0%	88.0%
	English Language Learners	7.0%	12.0%
<b>Global Enterprise High School</b>	Special Education	9.0%	17.0%
	Free and Reduced Price Lunch	77.0%	82.0%
	English Language Learners	8.0%	16.0%
<b>IS 231 Magnetech 2000</b>	Special Education	11.0%	17.0%
	Free and Reduced Price Lunch	63.0%	78.0%
	English Language Learners	2.0%	5.0%

SOURCES: New York City Board of Education, 2006 Annual School Report Cards; New York City Department of Education, Comprehensive Education Plan 2006 and 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Grace Dodge High School enrolled a uniquely challenging student body. “Approximately 25 percent of the student populations are teen parents ... which contributes to the poor attendance rates at the school,” the DOE reported when applying for \$3 million from the federal government to turn Grace Dodge around. Yet when the DOE recently announced Grace Dodge’s closure, its explanation never mentioned the school’s high number of teen parents but emphasized the school’s very low attendance rate as a cause for termination.

<sup>8</sup> *Over-the-counter students* are students who were not assigned through the system’s high school choice admissions process or were new registrants to the school system in September.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: New York City Independent Budget Office, *Demographics, Performance, Resources: Schools Proposed for Closing Compared with Other City Schools*, January School Brief (New York: New York City Independent Budget Office, 2011); Urban Youth Collaborative, “No Closer to College: NYC High School Students Call for Real Transformation, Not School Closings” (New York: Urban Youth Collaborative, 2011); Phillips, A., “Students and Staff Say Washington Irving Was Set Up to Fail” (*New York Times*, December 20, 2011). See also the Parthenon Report described in Appendix 3.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 3, The Parthenon Report, for a description of a similar recommendation.

## Strategic Intervention

### What the DOE Should Do to Improve Struggling Schools

**T**he DOE should constitute a Success Initiative to concentrate resources and supports to improve the system’s struggling schools.<sup>11</sup> As part of the Success Initiative, the DOE would identify a set of research-corroborated school improvement strategies, developed within the city system as well as across the country, which would be adapted by the Success Initiative schools. (Appendix 4 offers an initial set of instructional and support strategies that research suggests have improved schools in their local settings.) Each Success Initiative school would choose a specific strategy to adapt and integrate into its instructional improvement plan; the DOE would help the schools determine the interventions that would best support their improvement efforts by facilitating visits to schools using successful reform strategies. The DOE would designate several high-performing city schools as professional development lab sites where teams from Success Initiative schools could observe best practices and develop their own improvement strategies. The DOE would organize the resources, assistance, and support necessary to help Success Initiative schools work with parents and community constituencies to effectively implement their plans.

The DOE would help Success Initiative schools build networks of school leaders and staffs implementing similar strategies; these networks would identify critical implementation problems and explore strategies to resolve them. The DOE would ask the city’s Independent Budget Office to assess the progress of the Success Initiative’s schools and evaluate the effectiveness of the Success Initiative effort. (See Appendix 2 for a brief discussion of how the Success Initiatives’s costs might be met.)

## Building Instructional Capacity

### What the DOE Should Do to Minimize the Number of Struggling Schools

**T**he DOE should employ a combination of policy levers and improvement interventions to build instructional capacity throughout the school system. The DOE should significantly reduce the number of the city’s struggling schools by ensuring:

- High and rigorous expectations for students and schools.
- Flexible fiscal, staffing, and professional development resources, as well as expanded learning time to realize high expectations for all students.
- That all schools have effective leaders capable of building and supporting collaborative teaching staffs.
- That all resources are distributed equitably to schools in accordance with their student needs.

---

<sup>11</sup> How schools should be selected for the Success Initiative is an issue the Working Group has deferred. Since many researchers have demonstrated that the administration’s current accountability metrics are too unreliable to be used with confidence, new assessment methods, based on multiple criteria, seem necessary to ensure the reliability and transparency of school selection.

<sup>12</sup> In a recent study of successful turnaround efforts in low-performing California schools, WestEd and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) defined a set of key instructional strategies used by the turnaround schools' principals that were very similar to the list above. See: American Institutes for Research, *Turnaround Schools in California: Who Are They and What Strategies Do They Use?* (Washington, DC: American Institutes of Research, 2011). See also: Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., and Darwin, M., *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools: A Practice Guide* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2008) for a similar set of recommendations for improvement strategies.

- That all choice and assignment policies do not assign disproportionate percentages of high-needs students to struggling schools.
- That school evaluation and assessment policies are based on multiple measures that are rigorous, diverse, transparent, relevant, and equitable.
- Early interventions identify negative school performance trends and provide systemic supports for school improvement.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the Working Group recommends that the DOE define and promulgate school-level performance standards, especially those that might require closure, and develop and implement an inspection system that provides early warnings of deteriorating school performance. The DOE should develop strategic interventions to help schools whose performance is deteriorating and involve parents and community constituencies in those interventions as part of ongoing efforts to improve school performance.

## Conclusion: The Way Forward

**F**or the past ten years, the Bloomberg administration has worked assiduously to reform the city's education system. But its over-reliance on the wrong reform drivers has eroded systemic instructional capacity and marginalized the voices and experience of educators and parent and community constituencies. The administration's reform strategies – choice, empowerment, autonomy and accountability, technology, and, in particular, school closings – need to be countered by a comprehensive focus on building instructional capacity in individual schools and across the entire school system. The failures of the DOE's school closings policy highlighted in this report, as well as the Working Group's recommendations for how to improve struggling schools, should be articulated in education debates across the city as the 2013 municipal elections approach.

How the DOE can best help struggling schools improve will vary across this enormous system of nearly 1,600 schools. The Working Group has recommended adapting school- and district-supported capacity-building strategies based on successful efforts in New York City and in other districts across the country. Our central conclusion is that the DOE must develop the capacity to support improvement efforts differentiated for the specific needs of struggling students and schools, just as teachers must develop their capacity to differentiate instruction for students with varying needs. The ultimate goal of teaching individual students is to develop successful learners and thinkers; similarly, instead of closing struggling individual schools, the DOE's overarching goal should be to develop its systemic capacities to improve them.

# Members of the Working Group on School Transformation

APPENDIX 1

Warren Simmons\*

*Executive Director*, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University

Zakiyah Ansari\*

*Advocacy Director*, Alliance for Quality Education

*Parent Leader*, New York City Coalition for Educational Justice

Ruddie Daley

*Parent Leader*, New York City Coalition for Educational Justice

Carmen Fariña

*Former New York City Schools Deputy Chancellor*

Maria Fernandez

*Senior Coordinator*, New York City Urban Youth Collaborative

Norm Fruchter

*Senior Policy Analyst*, Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University

Jo Haines

*Executive Director*, Everyone Reading, Inc.

John Jackson

*President*, Schott Foundation for Public Education

Pedro Noguera

*Professor of Education*, New York University

*Director*, New York University Metro Center for Urban Education

Christine Rowland

*Teacher*, Christopher Columbus High School

Jon Snyder

*Dean*, Bank Street College of Education

Kim Sweet

*Executive Director*, Advocates for Children of New York

Philip Weinberg

*Principal*, High School of Telecommunications Arts

\*Co-chairs

## A Note on Costs

The Working Group’s recommendation on per-school costs in the Success Initiative depends on the mix of intervention strategies employed to improve particular schools. Per-school costs in the Chancellor’s District, a systemic intervention from 1996 to 2003 to improve sixty struggling schools removed from their community school districts, were approximately \$1 million per school.

Similar per-school costs for the Success Initiative schools could be met by the U.S. Department of Education’s School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, which awards up to \$2 million per school undergoing one of the department’s four turnaround models.<sup>14</sup> The amount of the grant award is driven by each school’s student enrollment.

Additionally, the New York City Department of Education’s (DOE) Fair Student Funding formula could be utilized to subsidize the improvement efforts of Success Initiative schools. When the DOE implemented its Fair Student Funding formula in 2007, it capped schools at less than 100 percent of the funding the formula recommended; the larger the school, the higher the amount of funding the DOE withheld, since the formula is driven by the number of students enrolled in each school. Allocating the struggling schools in the Success Initiative their full funding under the Fair Student Funding formula would, in combination with the federal SIG grants, provide sufficient funding to carry out the improvement efforts this report recommends in most, if not all, the Success Initiative schools.

In terms of the number of schools selected for the Success Initiative, the Working Group suggests that a combination of the struggling schools currently receiving SIG grants, as well as those schools designated as Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) schools by the New York State Education Department, would become eligible for inclusion. This would produce fifty to sixty schools eligible for the Success Initiative as a pilot project. The Working Group further suggests that each school selected for the Success Initiative remain in the Initiative for at least three years.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The use of SIG grants for Success Initiative schools obviously depends on the continuation of the U.S. Department of Education’s School Improvement Grant program.

<sup>15</sup> For a range of fiscal sources available for funding extended learning time, see also J.S. Curry and E. Morgan, *A Fiscal Map for Expanded Learning Time (ELT)*, a TASC Policy Brief (New York: The After School Corporation, 2011).

# The Parthenon Report

**T**he Parthenon Group is a Cambridge, Massachusetts, consulting firm contracted by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) in 2005 to analyze the performance of the school system’s high schools and make recommendations for their improvement. One aspect of the Parthenon Group’s report analyzed the effects on high schools of a combination of large school size and a concentration of students with Level 1 and low Level 2 eighth-grade English language arts and math test scores. Parthenon found that in high schools of more than 1,500 students and with more than 40 percent of the student population scoring Level 1 or low Level 2 in both English language arts and math, the odds of students graduating were significantly reduced.

The Parthenon report put forward several strategies to reduce this peer effect that significantly lowers graduation rates for all students in schools with such concentrations. Among their recommendations was that the DOE alter their student assignment policies to reduce the concentration of Level 1 and low Level 2 students in large struggling high schools, a strategy that this report’s recommendations have taken up. Parthenon also recommended closing or dividing large schools and starting new smaller schools “to absorb displaced students – particularly low-proficiency students.” They also suggested that the DOE identify large high schools with high concentrations of Level 1 and low Level 2 students that had achieved above average graduation rates in spite of their concentration of low skills students. Parthenon further recommended that the DOE conduct research into the practices of these beat-the-odds schools to determine what instructional strategies led to their successes. (This recommendation by Parthenon is similar to the establishment of the professional development lab schools that the Working Group report recommends.)

The DOE had begun to close large high schools and open new small schools before the Parthenon report was issued, though the extent to which the new small schools have absorbed the students displaced from the closing schools has been fiercely contested. But the DOE has not acted on Parthenon’s recommendations to alter student assignment policies to reduce the concentrations of high-needs students in large high schools. Instead, in many struggling schools, the DOE has significantly increased the percentages of high-needs students and then targeted those schools for closure. Parthenon’s recommendation to identify large schools with concentrations of high-needs students that show achievement outcomes significantly higher than predicted, and then determine what school practices helped to produce those outcomes, has also not been acted on by the DOE.

# School Improvement Programs that Success Initiative Schools Could Adapt

## PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY (CAS) COMMUNITY SCHOOLS		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
CAS works with seventeen New York City schools.	Community schools mobilize and coordinate a broad range of resources to support student success. Since 1992, CAS has developed a community schools model based on a “developmental triangle” of strong academic instruction, expanded learning opportunities, and integrated services to remove barriers to learning. Most CAS community schools are open six days a week well into the evening and incorporate a comprehensive range of supports. In addition to its New York City work, in 1994 CAS established the National Center for Community Schools to facilitate the development of community schools based on the New York City model. The Center has advised more than 15,000 community schools in the U.S. and internationally.	According to CAS, their community schools have higher student and teacher attendance rates, more appropriate rates of referral to special education, higher parent involvement, and higher student achievement than demographically similar schools.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.childrengroups.org">www.childrengroups.org</a>

INSTITUTE FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (ISA)		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
ISA works with eighty schools in six states, including thirty-three in New York City.	ISA works with the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching (NCREST) at Teachers College, Columbia University to restructure high schools into small, college-preparatory learning communities. The model is built on eight principles: a college preparatory curriculum for all students; “distributed counseling,” including teacher-led advisories of fifteen to eighteen students that remain together for four years; ISA coaches who work on-site; teacher and counselor teams that follow students for four years; ongoing professional development; an extended school day and year; parent involvement; and ongoing program monitoring and improvement.	A 2010 evaluation of ISA schools in New York City by the Academy for Educational Development found that students in ISA schools had higher credit accumulation and grade promotion rates, better attendance, higher graduation rates, and stronger college preparation than a demographically matched comparison group. Graduates of ISA schools have much higher retention rates than the national average, particularly Black and Latino graduates.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.studentachievement.org">www.studentachievement.org</a>

**THE AFTER SCHOOL CORPORATION (TASC) EXPAND/ED MODEL**

Scope	Model	Outcomes
<p>TASC works with a network of seventeen New York City schools.</p>	<p>ExpandED Schools offer an expanded learning day delivered by a blended school-and-community workforce. Building from an evidence base of high-quality after-school programs and successful schools with a longer learning day, TASC re-engineers schools to give students more time and opportunities to learn and helps them develop resilience to withstand environmental stress and economic hardship. The model has four core elements common to every ExpandED School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More learning time for a balanced curriculum: Schools partner with community organizations to re-engineer the school day to deliver at least 1,600 hours of learning time, an increase of more than 35 percent compared to the average American school.</li> <li>• School-community partnership and staffing: The principal, teachers, and other school staff join forces with community educators from a lead partnering organization. They operate from a common set of goals and share accountability for student outcomes.</li> <li>• Engaging and personalized instruction: Students benefit from individualized instruction in small groups facilitated by a blended staff of teachers and community educators who are deployed across the longer learning day.</li> <li>• Sustainable cost model: To achieve cost-effective, sustainable reform, ExpandED Schools adhere to a scalable cost model, using an incremental cost of \$1,600 per student in kindergarten through eighth grade.</li> </ul>	<p>According to external evaluations, students in schools implementing the ExpandED model with fidelity showed significantly greater attendance than students in peer schools, and 85 percent of teachers reported that expanded learning time improved learning for participants.</p> <p>According to TASC’s own studies, between 2009 and 2010 and 2010 and 2011, schools with expanded learning time increased their math proficiency level by 5.9 percentage points compared to the citywide average of 3.3 points. Between 2009 and 2010 and 2010 and 2011, schools with expanded learning time gained 2.2 percentage points in English language arts compared to 1.5 points citywide. Schools with the highest fidelity to the ExpandED model showed the best gains in percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency. ExpandED also works with three schools in Baltimore and three in New Orleans.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Web</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="http://www.tascorp.org">www.tascorp.org</a></p>

PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY (continued)

TURNAROUND FOR CHILDREN		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
Turnaround currently works with seventeen New York City schools and three Washington, D.C., schools.	Turnaround for Children, founded in 2002, implements a whole-school transformation model that builds schools' capacity to serve high-needs students and students facing issues stemming from poverty. The model supports schools with high concentrations of poor students to foster positive behaviors, develop support systems within the school, and connect students to community resources. Turnaround partners with a school for three-and-a-half years and deploys a transformation team consisting of a project director, an academic coach, and a social work consultant. The model emphasizes building schools' capacities to implement better practices and systems after direct support ends. Each participating school hires a clinical worker who receives training from Turnaround staff and works to coordinate supports within and outside of the school.	A 2008 evaluation by the American Institutes of Research of five New York City Turnaround schools found that the schools experienced a 51 percent reduction in police-reported incidents and a 32 percent decrease in suspensions. Teacher turnover declined by three-quarters and teacher absences by a third. According to Turnaround, their New York City partner schools showed gains in math results equivalent to citywide gains, as well as increases in English language arts outcomes slightly better than the citywide English language arts gains.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.turnaroundusa.org">www.turnaroundusa.org</a>

**PROGRAMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

<b>HIGH SCHOOLS THAT WORK (HSTW), A PROGRAM OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD (SREB)</b>		
<b>Scope</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
1,200 schools in thirty states; the SREB was selected as an Educational Partner Organization (EPO) for Grover Cleveland and Richmond High Schools in New York.	HStW combines a college preparatory curriculum aligned to state standards with a two-semester “double dose” of core academic subjects for freshmen. Career education is integrated throughout the curriculum, and all upper-grade students are expected to complete at least one Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual-credit course. HStW schools assign each student a single mentor for the duration of high school; involve parents in planning and monitoring their students’ progress, beginning in middle school; and focus on critical transitions through summer bridge programs and other partnerships with postsecondary institutions. SREB provides technical assistance visits, assessment tools, training for school staff and leaders, and networking opportunities through state and national conferences.	An SREB evaluation compared urban schools with high levels of implementation of the HStW to low- to moderate-implementation schools between 2002 and 2004 found that students in high-implementation schools were nearly twenty percentage points more likely to meet the HStW performance targets in English, thirteen percentage points more likely to meet targets in math, and eighteen percentage points more likely to meet HStW targets in science. While there has been limited external evaluation of the HStW model, a 2002 meta-analysis of comprehensive high school reform models rated HStW as having strong evidence of positive impact on student achievement and relatively low implementation costs.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.sreb.org/page/1078/high_schools_that_work.html">www.sreb.org/page/1078/high_schools_that_work.html</a>

<b>MASSACHUSETTS EXPANDED LEARNING TIME INITIATIVE</b>		
<b>Scope</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
The Initiative works with nineteen schools in nine Massachusetts districts.	In 2005, the Massachusetts Department of Education and the nonprofit group Massachusetts 2020 launched the Expanded Learning Time Initiative to provide grants to schools and districts to expand learning time. Participating school districts lengthen their school year by at least 300 hours and receive technical assistance, research, and policy in crafting extended learning time opportunities. The extra time is carefully balanced between core academics, enrichment activities, and time for teachers to plan and learn collaboratively. Each school partners with universities, community-based organizations, and businesses to increase learning opportunities.	According to Massachusetts 2020, the percentage of Title I Expanded Learning Time schools rated as “high-growth” on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System is approximately double that of non-Expanded Learning Time Title I schools in both English language arts and math. Teachers in Expanded Learning Time schools report higher satisfaction with the amount of time available for instruction and for collaborative planning than teachers in comparison schools.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.mass2020.org/node/3">www.mass2020.org/node/3</a>

PROGRAMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY (continued)

STRATEGIC LEARNING INITIATIVES (SLI)		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
SLI works with ten elementary and middle schools in Chicago.	SLI developed the Focused Instruction Program as a turnaround partner for ten failing schools in Chicago, nine of which were slated for closure. SLI worked with existing principals and teachers to implement a structured, eight-step instructional process of frequent formative assessment, differentiated instruction, and re-teaching with rich professional development and collaboration opportunities for teachers. Professional development facilitators spend a full day a week in each school. Frequent professional development clinics focus on needs articulated by school leaders during classroom observations. The model includes curriculum workshops for parents, led by other parents. Teachers, administrators, and parents work together on school leadership teams to manage the reform.	A 2009 study of the Focused Instruction Program validated by the American Institutes of Research found that after two years, the ten SLI schools improved on average at more than three times the rate of their improvement prior to adopting the model. The schools increased the percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency in reading at twice the rate of the city's gains for the same period.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.strategiclearning.org">www.strategiclearning.org</a>

STRATEGIC STAFFING INITIATIVE (SSI)		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
SSI works with twenty schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) Public Schools.	Starting with seven low-performing schools in the 2008-2009 school year, SSI recruited experienced principals to the schools and asked each of them to assemble a team including an assistant principal, behavioral specialist, literacy coach, and up to five teachers with a demonstrated record of producing academic gains. SSI places the responsibility for designing and implementing a reform strategy with each school's team and works to earn the trust of the community through transparency of information and strong communication. Principals and teachers earn salary supplements, recruitment bonuses, and retention bonuses for teachers who stay in the school at least two years.	According to the Aspen Institute, during the first year of implementation, SSI schools had gains in the percentage of students rated proficient on reading and math that exceeded districtwide gains, and their gains in science proficiency were slightly below the district average. Proficiency levels across the twenty schools had been declining in the years prior to implementation.
		<b>Web</b>
		<a href="http://www.cms.k12.nc.us">www.cms.k12.nc.us</a>

TALENT DEVELOPMENT (TD)			
Scope	Model	Outcomes	
<p>TD works with more than 100 schools nationally.</p>	<p>TD schools organize themselves into small learning communities led by teams of four to six teachers, including a ninth-grade Success Academy and career-themed academies in the upper grades. An after-hours Twilight Academy serves students with severe behavioral problems and provides credit-recovery opportunities. Teams of four to six teachers share the same students, to foster close relationships and to allow extensive collaboration. Block scheduling of ninety-minute periods allows TD schools to provide a “double dose” of core subjects, with accelerated “catch-up” courses in the first semester and college-preparatory courses in the second. Ninth-graders learn study and social skills in a freshman seminar. Each TD school has a school-based facilitator and a team of trained curriculum coaches to work with existing school staff.</p> <p>TD’s newest initiative is Diplomas Now, a partnership between TD, City Year, and Communities in Schools. Diplomas Now supplements the core elements of the TD model with extensive socio-emotional supports and an early-warning indicator system. Mentors from City Year involve students in before- and after-school programming, tutor struggling students, and act as classroom assistants. Communities in Schools conducts community asset mapping to connect schools with community services and provide intensive case-management for individual students as needed. Diplomas Now is the Educational Partnership Organization selected to work with Newtown and Sheepshead Bay High Schools in New York City.</p>	<p>A 2005 MDRC evaluation of five low-performing TD high schools in Philadelphia, endorsed by the What Works Clearinghouse, found that the model significantly increased ninth-grade attendance, credit accumulation, and promotion rates and that those gains persisted throughout students’ careers. These results were reproduced with other cohorts as the model spread to other schools across the district.</p> <p>Diplomas Now reports improvements in attendance, behavior, and course-passing in the first year of implementation.</p>	
		<b>Web</b>	
		<p><a href="http://www.talentdevelopmentschools.com">www.talentdevelopmentschools.com</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.diplomasnow.org">www.diplomasnow.org</a></p>	

## PROMISING MODELS

LINKED LEARNING		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
<p>Linked Learning programs are being implemented in high schools in eleven California school districts through the California Linked Learning District Initiative, with support from Connect Ed: The California Center for College and Career. The Linked Learning model has been adopted by many California Partnership Academies and other California high schools.</p>	<p>Linked Learning combines strong academic curricula, technical education, and real-world experience organized around broad industry sectors such as bio-medical and health services, construction and building design, agriculture and renewable resources, and arts, media, and entertainment. The Linked Learning program consists of four essential components: an academic core that satisfies the course requirements for entry into California’s public colleges and universities; a technical component of three or more courses focusing on knowledge and skill learning; a series of project- or work-based learning opportunities; and support services including supplemental instruction, counseling, and transportation services. The program emphasizes a teaching approach that helps students make connections between theoretical learning and real-world applications. The Linked Learning model seeks to prepare all students for a range of post-secondary and career options.</p>	<p>According to the UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), research evidence supports the effectiveness of a Linked Learning approach for increasing achievement, decreasing dropouts, preparing students for college, and preparing students for well-paying careers and civic participation. UCLA/IDEA is currently preparing a case study of ten California schools and programs that have successfully implemented the Linked Learning approach.</p>
		<b>Web</b>
		<p><a href="http://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/projects/linked-learning">idea.gseis.ucla.edu/projects/linked-learning</a></p>

GENERATION SCHOOLS		
Scope	Model	Outcomes
<p>Brooklyn Generation High School opened in 2007; two new Generation high schools will open in Denver in 2012.</p>	<p>The Generation Schools model aims to maximize instructional time for students and collaborative planning time for teachers by reinventing the school day and year. At the pilot Brooklyn Generation High School, all teachers are responsible for ninety-minute “Foundation” courses taught in the morning, keeping class sizes as low as fifteen students; after lunch, students take larger “Studio” elective courses. Teachers have two hours of common planning time each day to work in grade-level and subject-specific teams. Twice a year, each grade-level team has a three-week break and a full week to plan together, develop curriculum, and observe colleagues, while other teachers teach their students in month-long “Intensives” focused on college and career readiness. The innovative schedule provides 200 days of instruction per year while limiting teachers’ work year to the standard New York City contractual length.</p>	<p>According to Generation Schools, while only 20 percent of Brooklyn Generation’s entering ninth-graders were on grade level four years ago, nearly three quarters are on track to graduate on-time and college-ready. Attendance is 85 percent, despite the longer school year. The New York City Department of Education reported a four-year graduation rate of 55 percent for the first graduating class in 2011, below the citywide average of 61 percent but substantially higher than the graduation rate of South Shore High School, which Brooklyn Generation helped replace. According to Generation Schools, 90 percent of graduates were accepted to colleges.</p>
		<b>Web</b>
		<p><a href="http://www.generationschools.org">www.generationschools.org</a></p>

## About the New York City Working Group on School Transformation

The New York City Working Group on School Transformation evolved from the conference *Effective Alternatives to School Closings: Transforming Struggling Schools in New York City*, convened in September 2011 by the New York City Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), the Urban Youth Collaborative, and the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE). The conference brought together education practitioners, school reformers, policy-makers, advocates, and parent and student leaders to propose alternatives to the school closings policy of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE).

The Working Group was initiated after the conference by CEJ and coordinated by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR), with Warren Simmons, AISR's executive director, and Zakiyah Ansari of AQE and CEJ, as co-chairs. The members of the Working Group represented a range of New York City education practitioners, advocates, and stakeholders. The goal of the Working Group was to analyze the impact of the NYCDOE's school closings policy and develop recommendations for more effective ways to support the system's struggling schools.

School Transformation

A PDF of this publication can be downloaded at no charge at  
[www.annenberginstitute.org/project/collaborative](http://www.annenberginstitute.org/project/collaborative)

