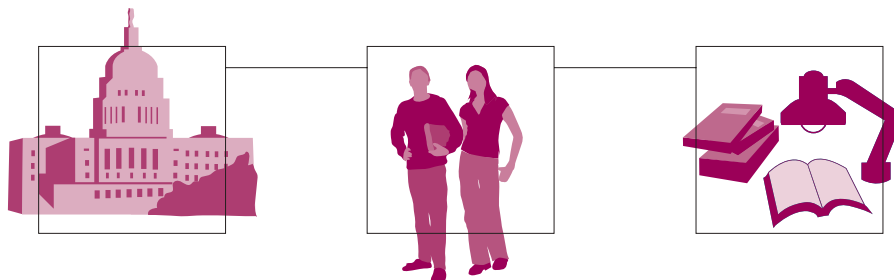


# Finance and Resource Issues in High School Reform

by **Heather Voke**  
and  
**Betsy Brand**

July 2003

BRIDGING YOUTH POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH



AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM



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– Bridging Youth Policy, Practice and Research

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization, provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth issues at the national, state, and local levels. AYPF's goal is to provide participants with information, insights, and networks on issues related to the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers, and participating citizens in a democratic society. Our work focuses on: secondary and postsecondary education, out-of-school and at-risk youth, juvenile justice, national and community service, service-learning, and related forms of youth development, transition to careers and career development, training, and preparation for employment.

Since 1993, AYPF has conducted an average of 40 events per year for thousands of policymakers, including lunchtime forums, out-of-town field trips, and foreign study missions with a thematic focus. Forum participants include Congressional staff, officials of various federal agencies, state and local government officials, policymakers from national non-profit and advocacy associations, and members of the media who report on youth issues. AYPF publishes a wide variety of policy reports and material on youth and youth policy issues. Many of these publications may be found on our website at [www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org).

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**Bridging Youth Policy, Practice and Research**

**American Youth Policy Forum**



# Table of Contents

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Acknowledgements	i
Executive Summary	ii
Introduction and Context	1
Discussion of Issues	3
Issue 1: Allocation and Alignment of Resources to Support Standards-Based Reform	3
Are We There Yet?	3
Flexibility and Autonomy	3
Sustainability, Focus, and Measuring Effectiveness	6
School Culture and Professional Development	7
Strategies for Accessing Resources	8
Issue 2: Interventions and Special Programs	10
Coordinated Efforts and Good Data	10
Adolescent Literacy	11
Special Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	12
Community Involvement	12
“Pepsi” and “Coke” Funds	13
Issue 3: Alternative Education Options	14
Insufficient Support for Alternative Education Settings	14
Impact on Traditional High Schools	14
Issue 4: Dual Enrollment	16
Diverse Approaches to Dual Enrollment	16
Who Should Dual Enrollment Serve?	17
Recommendations	18
Closing	21
Appendix A: Key Elements of High Schools of the Millennium	22
Appendix B: Participants	24
References	26



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When anyone discusses finance and resource issues, the first inclination is to immediately say, “We need more money.” While this group recognizes the need for schools to have adequate resources and funding, the discussion did not get stuck on this point. Participants frequently were heard to say, “There is enough money in the system; it’s how the money is used that makes a difference.” This attitude helped make the discussions fruitful and get beyond the standard complaints about lack of money. Thanks to the group for having such a constructive attitude.

Thanks also go to all of our funders, who make our work possible. In particular, I would like to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for their support of American Youth Policy Forum’s work on high school reform.

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Betsy Brand

July 2003

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**I**n 2000, the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) issued its report on high school reform, entitled *High Schools of the Millennium*. That report summarized a series of discussions held with education and youth development leaders regarding the need to reform American high schools to meet the demands of the twenty-first century and to imagine what these reformed high schools might look like.

The vision of the High School of the Millennium that this group presented differs in important respects from the traditional American high school. For instance, this vision dissolved the standard sharp division between the school and the outside world, in recognition that learning can and should take place both within school and in the community. High Schools of the Millennium, if they are to prepare youth for the challenges of the twenty-first century, must help students realize the essential connection between learning and living.

The High Schools of the Millennium workgroup recognized that all students should participate in a rigorous and engaging curriculum that prepares them for the challenges of life, work, and citizenship, while also acknowledging that students learn in different ways, at different paces, and in different types of environments. High Schools of the Millennium provide students with multiple pathways through which they can achieve common and high standards. The group also argued that because students learn best when they are supported by a network of adults who care for them, high schools and other learning environments must be structured in such a way that adults and students have the opportunity to develop the personal and caring relationships that promote student engagement and learning.

### A Roadblock to Reform

In the High Schools of the Millennium report, the group identified some impediments to reform and issued some recommendations for how they might be overcome. In their discussions, however, they found that one challenge was a particularly problematic obstacle to reform, namely, accessing the finances and resources needed to initiate, implement, and sustain meaningful reform.

To a certain extent, this challenge is one of sufficiency and equity: many of our schools simply do not have access to the financial resources needed to provide their students with a quality education. Thus, providing adequate funds and ensuring that they are equitably distributed across all schools are important policy goals. However, as the workgroup's discussion proceeded, it became clear that for many schools, the obstacle to change was not simply a matter of access to funds; rather, **there are serious impediments that limit the effective use of existing resources and that constrain how these resources are allocated in the implementation and sustaining of meaningful reform.**

### Finance and Resources Issues

AYPF held this second series of discussion groups in 2001 with leaders in the fields of education and youth development to focus on financing and resource issues in high school reform. The discussions centered around four general topics or issues: (1) allocation and alignment of resources to support standards-based reform (SBR) and higher expectations for all students, (2) generating resources for the interventions and specialized programs necessary to support the learning of students with special needs, (3) allocating resources to support learning in alternative education settings, and (4) developing funding strategies for dual enrollment programs.

This report is organized around these four topics and addresses the challenges associated with each of these topics, as well as participants' ideas about how we might begin to address these resource challenges. This report also issues a series of recommendations for education decision-makers as they work to implement high school reform.



## Recommendations

Our discussions generated some major themes, mainly focused at the district and school level.

**District and School Reform Efforts Must be Aligned and Supportive of Each Other and Districts Need to Provide Leadership In the Strategic Use of Resources.** Districts must ensure that their plans for standards-based reform are accessible and understood by the larger community, but particularly by individual schools. Individual school-based reform efforts must align with the core goals of the district reform plan, but should be flexible enough to target resources based on the needs of the student population. Districts must play a key role in helping school leaders use their resources to improve student outcomes. For schools in which the leadership is strong and capable, districts should allow greater freedom to meet the priority goals, but hold schools accountable for improved student outcomes. Greater flexibility should also be given to principals to make the personnel decisions needed to implement the school improvement plan. For schools in which the leadership capacity is limited, assistance should be provided to help school leaders change the way resources are allocated to support the reform plan.

**Funding and Resource Decisions Need to be Driven by Data, Not by Past Practice.**

States, districts, and schools must make decisions on funding based on data about student outcomes and needs, not because of tradition or past practice. Budgets should be developed starting with a blank sheet of paper with funds and resources allocated to the activities that will support the reform goals. Ongoing data collection and analysis should inform funding and resource decisions. As some goals are met, resources can be switched to support different needs. Or if a goal is particularly challenging, more resources might be allocated for it. Budgets are driven by current needs, not past behaviors or traditions.

**Collect and Share Information About What Works.**

In schools and districts across the United States, educators have acquired experience developing and implementing a variety of approaches to high school reform and to funding and sustaining those reforms; in the process, they have learned valuable lessons about the effective and ineffective use of resources. Rather than re-create the wheel, attention needs to be given to sharing lessons about the efficacy of different high school models and structures, staffing, and instruction. School and district leaders need information about the cost-effectiveness of particular school interventions or programs, such as improving adolescent literacy or offering dual enrollment options.

**Creative Solutions to Resource-Related Problems Should be Explored.**

Districts and schools need to consider all the resources a community has to offer. States and districts should work to ensure that, whenever possible, policies are not implemented in such a way that they unnecessarily undermine, block, or inhibit creative solutions to school-based problems. Schools and districts should explore ways to collaborate with other schools and districts, as well as with community groups, higher education institutions, and local businesses, to generate financial and other types of resources to support the learning for all students. Schools can partner with the business community to provide tutoring and instructional services to youth who need additional learning support. Two schools may be able to share one full-time employee who works half-time at each school site or create opportunities for students to participate in shared course offerings. In an era of tightening education budgets, schools and districts must make a concerted effort to take full advantage of all resources that exist in their communities. Many of these resources will support value-added items, such as after-school or youth leadership activities, that are equally important to the success of young people.

Do we need more resources at the high school level to help students prepare for careers and college? Yes. Are high schools likely to get much more new money? Probably not in the near future. Therefore, in order to reform high schools and bring about improved student

achievement, school leaders must examine their budgets and resources with an impartial eye and make some hard decisions about which expenditures truly make a difference to student success and which are holdovers from the past.

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

**I**n 1999 and 2000, the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) hosted a series of discussions in which a group of our nation's leading professionals in youth policy, education research, and workforce development addressed the future of the American high school. Their core question was: How should our high schools be modified if they are to meet the needs of today's youth and prepare them to succeed in the new millennium?

The results of these discussions were presented in *High Schools of the Millennium*, released in August, 2000. The vision the group arrived at differs in many important respects from the traditional high school:

We believe that most high schools need to be completely redesigned to meet the needs of today's youth. The high school experience can no longer be limited to learning that only occurs inside a traditional school building, but rather the learning experience for teens must use all of the resources that a community has to offer. This new concept of a learning experience for youth must recognize that there are multiple teachers and caring adults and resources available throughout the community that can be drawn on to strengthen the learning experience in ways that neither schools nor community agencies alone could accomplish. Small, individualized, and caring communities must be created to help students manage the transitions in their lives and become active learners for life. Most importantly, youth must be seen as the primary actor in their development and that of others. The prevailing picture of youth as passive recipients of services must be replaced with an active vision of youth as resources and assets to be nurtured and engaged.

This vision challenges many of the traditional elements of the American high school.

It broadens the conception of schooling beyond the activities that take place within the traditional schoolhouse to recognize that learning also occurs in the workplace, the neighborhood, com-

munity organizations, technical colleges, and universities. It envisions a future in which all children are provided with a challenging and engaging curriculum that prepares them for the complex world they will face.

While demanding that all students achieve high academic standards, it also recognizes that students learn at different paces, and consequently provides multiple pathways leading to postsecondary education and the workplace. And it recognizes that while highly qualified teachers play an essential role in the educative process, caring adults from many different contexts can and should serve as role models, mentors, and educators for our adolescents. (See Appendix A for a summary of the key elements of a High School of the Millennium.)

Yet even as the group presented this vision for the High School of the Millennium, they acknowledged that a number of formidable challenges exist that make the realization of this vision difficult, including: differing parental expectations and community values; school cultures that resist change and block community involvement; an ever-growing range of diverse student needs; and the politics of school and district governance. They also found that their discussions inevitably returned to one challenge in particular, namely, adequate and targeted resources to implement and sustain high school reform.

To a certain extent, this challenge is one of sufficiency and equity: many of our schools simply do not have access to the financial resources needed to provide their students with a quality education. Thus, providing adequate funds and ensuring that they are equitably distributed across all schools are important policy goals. However,

as the workgroup's discussion proceeded, it became clear that for many schools, the obstacle to change was not simply a matter of access to funds; rather, **there are serious impediments that limit the effective use of existing resources and that constrain how these resources are allocated in the implementation and sustaining of meaningful reform.**

### **Finance and Resource Issues in High School Reform**

In 2001, AYPF, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, held a second series of three discussions to examine these issues and further explore financing and resource issues surrounding the creation of High Schools of the Millennium. Participants in two of these meetings included many who participated in the original High Schools of the Millennium group as well as other notable education policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. The third meeting was co-hosted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and was attended by principals from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Additional discussion, particularly on dual enrollment, took place through e-mail correspondence on the National Tech Prep Network Listserv. (A list of all participants appears in Appendix B.)

This report is centered around four general topics or issues: (1) allocation and alignment of resources to support standards-based reform (SBR) and higher expectations for all students, (2) generating resources for the interventions and

specialized programs necessary to support the learning of students with special needs, (3) allocating resources to support learning in alternative education settings, and (4) developing funding strategies for dual enrollment programs. These topics were selected from a list of subjects by the participants and ranked in order of priority.

Just as the first High Schools of the Millennium discussion group questioned the status quo and imagined a new way of educating our children, this work group probed existing funding structures and procedures and imagined new ways of generating and allocating resources to support this new vision of high school education. Participants discussed particular implementation challenges and shared their insights on addressing these obstacles. This report also issues a series of recommendations for education decision-makers as they work to implement high school reform. It is our hope that these ideas will generate further discussion and move us closer to realizing an educational system that provides all adolescents a quality education that prepares them for the challenges of life, citizenship, and employment.

*Note: For the purposes of this paper, the term "resources" means much more than just money. Resources include the personnel who support high schools, from custodial staff to principals as well as central administrative staff; curricular and instructional materials; professional development opportunities; leadership capability; physical plant; time; partnership arrangements; and community support.*

## DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

### ISSUE I: ALLOCATION AND ALIGNMENT OF RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STANDARDS-BASED REFORM

**T**oo many of our nation's students have been subjected to low expectations and denied access to a challenging core curricula. The standards movement has sought to remedy this problem by identifying the specific skills and knowledge that all children should be expected to acquire and then holding schools accountable for achieving these standards. High Schools of the Millennium are firmly enmeshed in the context of standards-based reform. These schools "set high academic standards that are challenging and that reflect the community's expectation of the knowledge and skills needed for full and meaningful adult lives." All students in High Schools of the Millennium have access to a demanding curriculum that prepares them for the challenges of adult life in the twenty-first century.

While the AYPF discussions occurred prior to the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the legislation was on the horizon, and participants recognized that SBR and accountability for high schools would only continue to grow in importance with educators, policymakers, parents, and the broader community.

#### Are We There Yet?

Participants agreed that many schools have not yet aligned their curriculum and their resources in ways that support the vision of standards-based learning envisioned in the High Schools of the Millennium report and described by NCLB. Quality standards-based instruction that challenges and engages students requires a significant investment in teaching and learning. Teachers need access to new, rigorous instructional materials that are aligned with state standards; they also need professional training in effective instructional strategies and the release time necessary to participate in this training and to plan instruction. School communities may need the planning time to restructure themselves into smaller learning communities that better support student learning, consider how to restructure the school day to promote maximal student learning, redesign curriculum, develop new assessments, or engage in the planning necessary to support cross-disciplinary teaching. This means using resources for professional development and curriculum very differently. Participants also noted that given the

current tight budgetary times, finding new sources of money for these activities is very difficult; therefore, using current budgets differently is the most realistic option.

While increasing the amount of money available to schools would perhaps be an easy way to address these needs, participants in the AYPF study groups agreed that much more can be done with existing resources to implement standards-based reform and improve the quality of instruction. **Too many schools have failed to align and allocate their resources to focus the entire community on producing meaningful student learning.** Too often, funds are spread thinly across a wide variety of programs, many with little apparent relationship to student achievement. Schools are notorious for their patchwork quilt approach to program development; new programs are added, old ones are retained, none are ever eliminated, and no thought is given to the overall effect on student achievement. Many schools have not developed a systematic plan that considers how each program relates to its academic mission. Too often, schools have not gathered and evaluated data about the various programs offered and consequently do not have the information necessary to make informed decisions about resource allocation.

#### Flexibility and Autonomy

Discussants argued that the lack of alignment of resources with SBR can partly be attributed to

the locus of control over funding decisions; too often, it is placed in the hands of those who are not sufficiently familiar with the accountability demands placed on schools or the needs of those individual schools. Those outside of schools (for example, superintendents, members of school boards, and officials in state departments of education) may not be aware of the specific needs at the building level. A recurring theme of the discussions was that there is a need to provide school principals with greater budget flexibility and autonomy so they can determine the most effective and efficient way to allocate funds.

Principals argued that to implement school reform, the central office (of the school district) needs to hold principals accountable, but also trust in their professional competence to make the right decisions for their schools. Schools need the flexibility to make decisions quickly – if a particular program clearly is not working, schools need to be able to eliminate it, tinker with it, or try something altogether different and new. But often school leaders feel they are locked into using certain programs whether or not they meet the needs of their school and students.

High school principals said they need to be able to reallocate money to activities for which they will be held accountable, and they expressed the belief that new accountability requirements (such as those associated with NCLB) will drive their curricular decisions. While they applauded the focus on improving math, science, and reading achievement, they worried that the focus on assessments for these subjects will force out other important subjects such as music and the arts. They want to ensure that these programs are not removed from the curriculum in the push to raise test scores. They believe that with the power to manage their budgets, they could find ways to raise achievement and continue popular programs like art and music.

One principal indicated that in her district, school budgets and plans must be aligned with district goals, and while the district plan is appropriate as a general roadmap, it doesn't always account for

the special needs of each school's student body. Because the school plan and budget are tied together, she cannot spend money on anything that is not in the approved plan, which limits her ability to respond to new and emerging needs. In one district, schools are forced to buy "canned" reform models, said one principal. "We can't get approval from the central office to carry out our own professional development." "We should be able to plan our own program, but the central office won't give us the flexibility," said another principal. Another said, "Each school is different. [Central office should] move beyond the idea that one size fits all and work with schools to develop an academic plan every year, based on the students' needs, not based on the needs of the central office."

In other discussion groups, there was recognition of the need for greater flexibility at the school level, but also recognition of the importance of district leadership in bringing about SBR. The balance between autonomy and control depends in large part on the leadership capacity of the high school principal and team. Participants felt that the schools that understand how to redirect or align resources with improved teaching and learning strategies should have more autonomy. But there are many schools in which the principal and other leaders do not know how to change the curriculum to increase student achievement, and the district needs to provide help in these cases. This tension between autonomy at the school level and control by the district office surfaced throughout the discussion groups.

Participants also argued that central office procedures, such as those associated with procurement, can hamstring reform efforts and make it difficult for schools to respond quickly to student needs and to plan and carry out needed reforms. Principals unanimously agreed that the procurement processes used by central offices need reform. They complained about the length of time the procurement process takes and the limits on what can be purchased. For example, in one jurisdiction, the central office limits expenditures

to \$2,500 a day. One principal remarked, “If you come across some great deal that’s more than \$2,500, you can’t do it.” Another indicated that their procurement process generally works, but they do not have the flexibility to “shop the deal to get a better price. When you have to pay \$1,200 for a computer that you know you can buy for \$500, it makes no sense.” Another principal said they submit their budget request in May, the central office orders the material in September, and the material comes the following spring. This timeframe makes it impossible to respond quickly to teachers’ needs. One said, “The procurement process takes months, so we have a problem getting teachers the training they really want, when they need it.”

Limitations on how money can be used were also discussed. Most principals do have some flexibility to shift funds from one department to another, allowing positions to be allocated more flexibly (e.g. one less physical education teacher and one more math teacher). However, principals generally cannot mingle funding for staffing with funding for curriculum and instruction, which makes significant change or restructuring more difficult. Also, state and local programs are more restrictive than federal programs, according to many participants.

Another participant pointed to examples in which the staff of particular schools have been given greater control over the allocation and distribution of funds. The Boston Pilot Schools have increased flexibility and control over budget and staffing. Schools can opt out of district services and instead contract for them independently, giving the school greater control over how to use their per pupil allotments. Most charter schools allow this financial flexibility as well.

Several principals said that there are small grant programs to help fill certain gaps in the budget, but applying for small grants generally is not worth the time and effort. “There needs to be a customer service mentality in central offices to make it easier on the schools to access pots of funding,” said one principal. One suggestion

was to establish a discretionary fund to allow for small amounts of money to meet specific needs linked to SBR quickly.

Most principals agreed that the concept of local school autonomy or site-based management had been discussed and sometimes initiated, but the support to move to a fully autonomous system did not exist in the central office. One principal suggested, “Why not announce a shift to school site-based budgeting in two years and spend the time educating personnel on how to do it?” Principals discussed the importance of having a transparent budget process so that teachers and staff would better understand how funds are used. One principal posted his budget so his administrative and instructional staff could see it, which he said helps resolve in-fighting over resources. “Teachers understand that there is only so much money, and they become more collaborative about using existing resources.”

Participants also discussed the notion of zero-based budgeting, which means developing a budget from scratch, with no predetermined allocations for any existing programs. Under zero-based budgeting, schools would state their most important goals (e.g. improving math and English performance) and align funding with what is needed to achieve that goal. Of course, many existing programs might not get funded if they do not contribute to the goal of increased student achievement. But, this way, funds are clearly directed to the stated needs, rather than continuing pre-existing, but possibly irrelevant, programs.

Principals also talked about how important it is to have experience with the budget process and funding systems so that they know how to move funds around or to find added flexibility. “Some of us know how to work the system and get around the budget restrictions. But the problem is that new principals and too many current ones don’t know enough about the budget or know how to navigate the political system. We need to help new principals and mentor them.”

Principals also discussed ways of sharing

resources with other schools that allowed them to meet their needs. For instance, in one school district, the elementary school in the feeder system to the high school did not have a music teacher. The music teacher at the high school, a very dynamic individual, worked out a schedule whereby he could meet all of his commitments at the high school in the morning and teach at the elementary school in the afternoon. In effect, the music teacher was working half time at each school. Both principals agreed it was a win-win situation for the students and allowed it to happen. However, the next year, when the two schools requested half-time music teachers, the central office responded that if the schools didn't need a full-time music teacher, they didn't need the position, putting an end to the creative work schedule of the music teacher. "Someone will catch you doing something different, saving money, and they will take it away." Principals questioned why the central office wouldn't support such creative arrangements.

Other principals discussed problems with financing Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which tend to have small enrollments. Various high schools have made arrangements for students from other schools to attend their AP classes, but the funding is tenuous, without knowing how many students from other schools will attend. Principals suggested that the central office could be helpful in rationalizing the distribution of AP classes across high schools.

Many of the comments on flexibility and autonomy raise the issue of how the district office and principals can work more closely together as a team to align funding for SBR. Principals suggested having the central office help in rationalizing programs (like AP courses) across high schools or in training staff in site-based and zero-based budgeting. Leadership from the central office to help lower-performing schools build capacity for change is needed as well. Just as funding needs to be aligned with SBR, the efforts of the central office and high schools need to be aligned so that both are working toward the same

goals. The central office should act as a facilitator to help schools deal with budget and resource issues, tailored to meet the needs of each particular school, but under the umbrella of the district reform plan.

### **Sustainability, Focus, and Measuring Effectiveness**

Participants in the discussion groups asserted that ensuring the goal-driven use of resources is the major challenge associated with implementing standards-based reform. They also expressed the belief that the effective and efficient use of resources requires that programs be left in place long enough for change to take place and to gather longitudinal data about effectiveness. It is impossible to allocate resources effectively and efficiently if there is no information about which programs do or do not work. Frequent changes in leadership often add to the difficulty in maintaining any program long enough to gather longitudinal data.

Participants expressed their frustration with how quickly and often reform efforts change. Such changes make it difficult to develop coherent, systematic, and effective plans that align resources in a way that makes meaningful and lasting improvements possible. One principal said, "School systems have the attention of an Irish Setter." The principals felt that it was very important to maintain particular reform strategies because it takes so long to change schools. "We need to take time to see what happens with what we started." Several principals also said more longitudinal studies are needed to determine the outcome of particular reform strategies. "We don't reinvest the time to see what happens five to seven years after an initiative has begun."

Changes in leadership were identified as being particularly problematic; just when districts and schools begin implementing a particular strategy, district leadership often changes, and new strategies are put in place. One principal said, "Things are handed down and change all the time." Another agreed: "We will have good dis-



district-wide cooperation with the superintendent to help place resources where they are needed, but then the superintendent will change.” These comments raise questions of how individual schools can sustain their reform efforts in the face of changing district leadership and programs.

Principals also discussed the need to educate decision-makers about funding and the importance of sustaining programs. They felt that decisions about programs and funding are sometimes made by people who do not understand the issues, but said, “We don’t have time to educate the public about what we need. We don’t have time to educate policymakers. We don’t educate our school board members, for example, very well at all.” They also said that parents can be key to funding decisions and supporting effective programs over the long-term either through their involvement in parent/school organizations or as empowered and organized community leaders. They agreed that school leaders should provide more information to and communicate more frequently with parents to help them understand standards-based reform and earn their support for school change and reallocation of resources.

### **School Culture and Professional Development**

Without sustained and ongoing professional development to help teachers and staff better understand and implement SBR strategies, those reforms will not succeed. Repeatedly, participants emphasized the need for training to provide staff with the skills necessary to implement reform. Teachers especially need training with regard to teaching literacy and math to improve student performance.

While school leaders expressed a willingness to be held accountable by their communities, they wondered how realistic it is to expect that high schools can overcome some student academic deficiencies. For example, it is one thing to hold high school teachers accountable for producing improvements in student achievement; it is another to expect a teacher to bring a child who is

reading at the fifth grade level to twelfth-grade proficiency in one or two years. High school teachers, who may have a solid grasp of the subject areas that they teach and effective instructional strategies for teaching that subject matter, may lack the training they need to support student learning when students lack basic literacy and computational skills. Other participants said they believed it is the job of the school leader to structure the school and curriculum to help address the needs of low-performing students and to ensure that the teachers have the necessary skills to help students. This is a clear area where resources need greater alignment with school needs. In this example, hiring a literacy coach to help teachers, rather than adding another section on English, might be a better expenditure of funds.

High school principals also expressed a concern that teachers at the elementary grades need more training in literacy and math instruction in order to better prepare students for the upper grades. Some principals also said they support directing more resources to the early grades if it means better-prepared students at the secondary level.

Participants also argued that professional development at all levels must be ongoing, and they worried that policymakers often fail to appreciate the important role that quality professional development plays in producing student learning. “Education is really a business, and we need to invest in human capital—our teachers. But policymakers don’t always understand why we need to invest in teachers.”

Finally, participants expressed a need for external leadership resources to help change a school. When schools try to move to a new standards-based strategy, it can be difficult to determine how to replicate existing school improvement models. School leaders need help to figure out “how to change the tires on the car while it is in motion.” Many participants agreed that we know what a good school looks like, but the difficulty lies in changing the culture that already exists at that school. Participants suggested that bringing an expert from the outside to lead school person-

nel through the structural and cultural change process and help build local school capacity is critical. “We need to leverage change, not throw money at it,” one participant said. Another said that if you do not provide a concrete new model for schools, they will reinvent the past. Others emphasized the importance of strong leadership, irregardless of where that leadership comes from. “If you just throw money at traditional schools without strong, focused leadership, things will not change,” one participant concluded.

### Strategies for Accessing Resources

Participants also identified some creative strategies for finding resources to help schools move toward a coherent, standards-based approach to teaching and learning. For example, the leadership in some districts has generated additional community support by approaching local businesses, foundations, and organizations to raise funds to support school improvement initiatives focused on increasing student performance. For example, one participant shared, the Milken Family Foundation has provided funds to support a master teacher in a school who teaches half time and coaches other teachers in effective instructional strategies for the other half. Their Teacher Advancement Program helps to retain experienced and effective teachers in the classroom by providing career ladders. Such programs enable veteran teachers to earn more money in more responsible and challenging teaching and leadership positions, and they benefit schools by helping to keep experienced teachers in the classroom where they can share their knowledge and skills with less experienced teachers.

Other participants cited other examples of successful community-school partnerships. One participant noted the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program as an example of a cost-effective way to find funds to improve basic literacy skills for adolescents. In this program, the local business community was tapped to help pay for an intensive eight-week reading curriculum for low-level readers. Another participant point-

ed to a Philadelphia initiative in which community foundations came together to raise funds to support the adoption of comprehensive school reform models like the Talent Development Model. Since the discussion groups were held, significant foundation funding (notably from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) have been given to numerous cities and schools to help reform high schools and improve student achievement.

One participant described the Minority Student Achievement Network, a group of schools that focus on changing the culture of achievement and expectations district-wide. The Network is a collaboration of schools that are collectively addressing how race and equity issues may impede student achievement. It actively involves teachers in trying new reform strategies and keeping data on the student performance. This network is a cost-effective way of sharing the intellectual capital present in schools to improve student achievement.

Others suggested how existing resources might be reallocated to support the neediest students. For example, one participant suggested that more money should flow to the neediest schools by having districts employ a weighted per pupil expenditure (PPE) as the Seattle and Houston school districts are doing. Allocation of the per pupil expenditure in these cities is based on the number of students who are living in poverty; possess limited English proficiency or disabilities; and those who participate in gifted and talented or career-technical education programs, and schools with greater numbers of high needs students receive a higher per pupil expenditure. Houston is also giving schools their PPE allotment based on actual teacher salaries, as opposed to average teacher salary. By linking the weighted per pupil expenditure and actual cost of teacher salaries, districts are recognizing schools with greater needs and directing more funds to them.

In summary, participants expressed the belief that positive changes that support standards-based

reform are possible within the current resource structure. Such changes, however, demand creative approaches and the efforts of tireless and innovative educational leadership.

## ISSUE 2: INTERVENTIONS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**W**hile the U.S. has made significant progress in increasing student achievement, too many of our nation's children are not receiving an education that prepares them for the challenges of life in the twenty-first century. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2002) in reading shows that while the average reading score of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 increased between 1994 and 2002, too many students have not achieved proficiency in this essential life skill. Only thirty one percent of U. S. fourth graders and 33 percent of eighth graders performed at or above the proficient level. Fourth and eighth graders in central city schools had lower scores than their peers in small or large towns. Students eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program had lower scores than their peers who were not eligible for the program. Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students had lower scores than their White counterparts.

The 2000 NAEP in mathematics found that overall, student scores had increased. Black, White, and Hispanic students all showed improvements. Here, too, however, is evidence that many of our students are not acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge: there are substantial differences in scores across these populations, and the gaps in performance have remained relatively unchanged since 1990.

Approximately six million U.S. students receive special education services, and the number of students identified as having a specific learning disability has grown by 300 percent since 1976. While our country has made substantial progress in improving the educational outcomes for students with disabilities, too many of these students are still not prepared for the challenges of life, citizenship, and employment. Students with disabilities drop out at twice the rate of their non-disabled peers (U.S. Department of Education, July, 2002).

There were approximately 4.6 million English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in public schools during the 2000-2001 school year; this is a 32 percent increase from the 1997-1998 school year. English language learners make up approximately 9.6 percent of the total public school enrollment (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2002a).

Participants identified some of the obstacles related to finances and resources that interfere with the effectiveness of programs serving these needy youth; they also identified some strategies for how resources can be more effectively used for special programs and interventions.

### Coordinated Efforts and Good Data

Participants agreed that there is a need to identify and fund those programs that the students truly need and eliminate those that they do not need. This involves, first and foremost, diagnosing what each individual student needs to be academically successful. Schools must have access to accurate and current data to make informed decisions about how best to allocate resources to meet the needs of individual learners.

Participants also agreed that it is essential to gather and disaggregate data by student subgroups so that inputs and outcomes for students can be identified and evaluated. At the same time, discussants said that despite the ever-increasing pace of testing in the classroom, test data is not always made available in a way that is useful for determining how to best allocate resources across programs within any given school district. Discussants said that there needs to be a district-wide effort to organize assessment data to strategize how to best allocate funds across programs.

Too often, districts and schools offer a chaotic hodge-podge of uncoordinated interventions and special programs directed at a wide variety of different types of needs. Participants suggested that too many special programs can impede the quality of services for students and that dealing with multiple programs aimed at solving many discrete problems is cumbersome. One participant cited Maryland as an example of a state considering a new state finance system that replaces multiple programs serving special-needs students with one all-encompassing block grant to local school districts, based on the number of needy students in that district. Districts would then draw from one pot of money to serve students as opposed to drawing money from multiple accounts for very narrow purposes.

### Adolescent Literacy

Participants expressed the strong belief that issues related to adolescent literacy in high schools are of central importance and identified a number of concerns about the capacity of high schools to help students acquire those skills. High school teachers, while they may be extremely knowledgeable about the specific subject area they teach, are often ill-prepared to help struggling readers gain access to that subject area knowledge though the written word, and many are simply not trained to teach literacy skills, especially higher order ones. Additionally, high schools are typically structured around disciplines such as math and science, and there is generally little space in the curriculum for instruction that focuses solely on literacy. Yet without access to appropriate literacy support, some students are likely to fall further and further behind their peers in acquiring subject matter knowledge. Participants also wondered whether the push to a standards-based curriculum has led to a hardening of disciplinary boundaries, making the problem of addressing adolescent literacy more difficult. The academic discipline-centered nature of high schools also presents another challenge: no single person is charged with providing literacy support or held account-

able for student performance in literacy. And because funding is almost always allocated by disciplines, not by student needs across the curriculum, it is a struggle to identify resources that can be allocated to literacy activities.

Participants agreed that high school teachers should have a general awareness of adolescent literacy and be able to recognize and diagnose problems and provide general help for students. Here, participants favored a more centralized approach to providing this training. For example, they pointed to districts that included the teaching of adolescent literacy as part of the professional development requirements in the union contract. San Diego City Schools has taken a very centralized approach to dealing with adolescent literacy issues and developed an instructional literacy strategy to be used district-wide. Participants acknowledged that while some types of education reform may work best if they are initiated at the school level, in some cases, letting everything happen at the building level may not be the best approach because schools may not know what to do. Given the lack of resources at the high school level and limited knowledge about adolescent literacy, a centralized approach to address adolescent literacy in needy urban school districts was viewed as a positive development by participants.

Other participants suggested that in order to meet the needs of students who lack literacy skills, districts might develop literacy bridge programs that could be offered in the summer to low-level readers as they make the transition from middle to high school. Others argued, however, that while such programs may be helpful, they are not enough for many students. The lowest quartile of students may need literacy support throughout the four years of high school. They argued that there is simply no cheap way to do this, and resources should be aligned to meet this need if it exists.

## Special Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its precursors was an important step in acknowledging the rights of special education students and their families. At the same time, the financial obligations have, from the beginning, been a burden on many school districts. Participants argued that the policies that have been put in place to implement IDEA need to be revisited because of the onerous demands they place on schools, teachers, and districts. Special education often requires that schools purchase or provide special equipment, transportation services, or other accommodations, drawing resources away from general education students. And participants expressed the view that some policies create difficulties. One principal described a policy set by the central office that opened advanced placement classes to students with disabilities, a worthy goal. But, he said, the central office doesn't "provide the resources to help that student succeed in that setting." While the principals recognize the need to provide these services under law, they wish they had time to plan and budget for these expenditures and prepare staff to meet the needs of special education students and avoid reductions in services for general education students.

While many education groups have criticized Congress for what they view as an under-funded federal mandate, participants in the AYPF discussion groups said that in reality, insufficient funding is only part of the picture. Regulations associated with IDEA were regarded by many participants as overly bureaucratic and prescriptive and excessively rigid. One participant pointed to the mandatory meetings that must be held to develop and evaluate Individual Education Plans (IEPs).<sup>1</sup> These meetings require the presence of a general education teacher, "taking that teacher away from a class of 30 students, when the teacher has mini-

mal input in the meeting anyway," said one principal. If we had more flexibility in how meetings are structured, costs could be more manageable, and we could give students with disabilities more," said a participant.

Participants also believe that resources need to be allocated to support training in special education for the general education teacher. Mainstreaming special education students with IEPs into regular classrooms has become increasingly common, yet the general education teacher often does not have the appropriate professional skills for teaching special education students. If special education students are to receive a quality education that takes their unique needs as learners into account, all teachers must receive high quality professional development that prepares them to work with these students.

## Community Involvement

The community surrounding a school can be both an obstacle and a springboard for effective allocation of resources across programs. Participants said that decisions about how to allocate resources across programs are not and cannot be made in a vacuum; they must be based on the values of the community and any change must be in the context of a set of community values. As one principal said, "You can't go after athletics if it is a major part of and important to the community." If you open the budget process to community involvement and scrutiny, one participant observed, it may be difficult to modify existing allocations because community members may have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Some parents may be opposed to reducing funding for programs that serve their children, even if the program is not effective or if the money might serve a larger number of needy students if allocated to a different program.

On the other hand, community involvement can help school and district officials. Participants observed that the simple act of engaging the

<sup>1</sup> IDEA requires each student deemed eligible for special education services have an IEP, which is developed by teachers (general and special education), counselors, parents, and the student (when appropriate) and describes the interventions to be provided to the student over the course of the year.

community in the discussion and decision-making process can be an effective means of generating support for particular initiatives.

Increasingly, education reformers have come to realize that many problems in education are “wicked” problems; problems whose root causes extend outside the school. If such problems are to be addressed, it is essential to involve the community and create access to other resources, such as community programs for youth, health services, or adult volunteers and mentors.

### **“Pepsi” and “Coke” Funds**

Many schools now have “Coke” or “Pepsi” funds (fundraising through vending machines or other commercial arrangements) that they use to fill in

funding gaps. Participants identified some issues associated with contracting with vendors. Some school districts do not have policies that clearly define whether or not schools can contract with companies, and as a result, individual schools can get caught in heated debates with their communities over whether or not to pursue commercial contracts. Increasingly, the central office is taking control of these arrangements with vendors. Despite the opposition to vendor relationships by some, most principals said that they have never been pressured by a commercial enterprise, and such relationships do provide a flexible source of cash that can be used to help meet their needs.

## ISSUE 3: ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPTIONS

**T**he AYPF discussion groups expressed enthusiasm for the idea that multiple learning options should be available to students. Participants described a wide variety of possible learning options, including virtual high schools, charter schools, and high-quality career technical programs. They recognized that existing alternative education programs often provide valuable services to youth and their families, and there appeared to be a consensus among participants that money should be used to support learning for students wherever it occurs in the community. However, the endorsement of multiple education options by participants was contingent upon those options being publicly, not privately controlled. And, while participants generally supported the provision of multiple options for students, they expressed serious concerns that the current funding structure limits the capacity of school districts to pursue this strategy.

### Insufficient Support for Alternative Education Settings

Principals said most of their districts are not doing a good job in terms of supporting existing alternative education options, and most alternative schools do not even have the fundamentals or money for start-up. “Money is always there for certain schools or programs (e.g. gifted and talented), but we don’t have that kind of funding for alternative education. We need to talk about getting money to the alternative schools to start off with,” said one principal.

The desperate need that exists for quality alternative programs, coupled with insufficient funding, results in good alternative education programs becoming overcrowded and overused, said another participant. These programs often provide valuable educational services, yet they are not provided sufficient funds and quality becomes compromised. Contributing to this problem is the fact that many districts do not have a clear and consistent policy for how to handle funding for students who transfer from a traditional school to an alternative education setting. In those districts that have few or no procedures for transferring funding from a student’s home school to an alternative setting, a financial burden is often placed on the receiving school.

Issues related to equity also arise. Good alternative education programs are not distributed evenly throughout the community, so needy students

often end up in low-resourced schools or in overcrowded good schools, where it is hard to provide all the services needed. Another participant stated that there needs to be a better understanding of the real work provided by alternative education programs, as well as a better understanding of the needs of these schools in terms of extra resources and more training for staff, said one participant.

One discussant said that all students should have access to high quality opportunities no matter which alternative they pursue, but we also need to be very careful that some students are not tracked into low-level programs. Further, it is essential that all students receive useful counseling and guidance to provide them with information on learning options available to them through their communities.

### Impact on Traditional High Schools

Participants expressed some concerns about the impact that funding of alternative education settings might have on traditional public schools. Principals were particularly wary, in a time of reduced budgets, that money might be shifted away from traditional schools to support alternative education programs. “Systematically, we have to watch out that we don’t take from one school to give to another,” warned one participant. “My school started with an enrollment of 1,425 students and went up to 1,500 students, but



we did not get any new money for our increased full-time enrollment. How can we shift money to another school?" In an era of tight budgets, this concern may grow.

Several participants suggested that tracking the movement of students more frequently and using that information to allot the PPE funds on a more frequent basis might be a way to address this problem. They also suggested that a uniform student ID might be one way to track students so that funds can be allotted on a more regular basis. However, at this time, it is a messy and inefficient system in most districts, according to participants.

A different approach to sending the PPE to follow students would be for services to follow students, suggested a participant. Even if funding does follow a student, sometimes it is insufficient to purchase the needed services. Principals suggested that a more cost-effective means of providing services might be to give them the ability to loan staff and contract services such as those associated with special education, English as a second language, counseling, and social and mental health to alternative schools. One principal suggested creating a database to track the number of youth in the community and their mobility rates and patterns, which could be used to help determine where services and funds are needed.

Another suggestion to improve the system was to provide alternative schools an allotment based on their average daily attendance from the previous year rather than current attendance, which is

lower in September (because more students transfer in as the year progresses). "We always start off with a low number of students in the beginning of the year, and then it grows throughout the school year, but we only receive funding based on the small numbers we start with," said a principal. Another principal said that he had to prepare the school's budget so far in advance that it was difficult to build in the cost of services for students because there was no way of knowing how many students would be at the school.

Participants also worried that allowing students to transfer across educational settings would generate additional costs that might have to be incurred by the student's base school. For instance, if students do transfer, there may be additional expenses associated with transporting students from one setting to another. One participant suggested that districts need to be involved in finding ways of avoiding overburdening students' base schools.

On a side note, principals wondered how the standards and accountability movement would impact the existence and funding of alternative education settings. Some principals expressed concern about being held accountable for and having their federal funding be contingent on the achievement of students who were not in their school any longer, or for students who transfer in and out of multiple settings. A number of other participants expressed a different concern: that if students drop out or leave school as a result of high stakes tests, funding of alternative education may become a higher priority issue.

## ISSUE 4: DUAL-ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

**A**s a spate of recent reports argues, too many high school students, having met course requirements, coast through senior year. Lacking challenge, they become disengaged from the learning process. Additionally, many have argued that there is an increasing disconnect between high schools and higher education. And, too many students begin their college years lacking the knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education.

Dual or concurrent enrollment programs can create closer links between high schools and institutions of higher education. Dual enrollment programs can be structured in (at least) two ways: students can take college-level courses delivered by qualified high school teachers or college-instructors on their high school campuses, or students can enroll in courses taught at a local community college or university. These programs provide students with access to a challenging college-level curriculum, make it possible for them to obtain college credit for courses taken during high school, extend and enrich the high school curriculum, and educate students about the demands of higher education.

### Diverse Approaches to Dual Enrollment

A distinguishing characteristic of the U.S. education system is its variability. Education policies and practices differ both within and between districts and states. It is no surprise, then, that dual enrollment programs are no exception. Existing dual enrollment programs vary greatly in mission, size, and population served; there is also a great deal of variation in the policies relating to management and funding.

Part of the attractiveness of dual enrollment programs is their potential to improve the education that high school students receive without significant additional costs to high schools or school districts. According to research conducted by the Education Commission of the States and AYPF, states have employed a variety of creative strategies to fund dual enrollment programs. In Illinois, for example, the Illinois Community College Board created the Accelerated College

Enrollment (ACE) Grant and committed \$2.5 million to support it. The grant flows directly to community colleges for the purpose of helping to defer the costs associated with tuition for high school students. Funds are dispersed to the college at the beginning of the fiscal year based on the number of 11th and 12th graders in the college's district. Some community colleges (such as Baltimore City Community College) make a limited amount of scholarship money available to cover the cost of tuition for students from area high schools. In Connecticut, local community colleges often waive tuition and fees; in other states, some community colleges choose to reduce tuition for high school students enrolled in their courses. As one participant argued, in some community colleges, course sections are not fully enrolled anyway, so having a high school student enrolled in class at a reduced fee is better than having an empty seat.

Despite the fact that some high school students may be enrolled at least part-time at a community college, twenty-five states allow the students' high schools to keep full state aid for those students (Education Commission of the States, 2000). However, some dual enrollment programs mandate that the local school districts pay for the courses that high school students enroll in at community colleges and, in six states, high schools do not collect full state aid for dually-enrolled high school students (Education Commission of the States). In some states, students and parents must pay for some or all of the dual enrollment classes or are reimbursed if the student achieves a certain grade.

There is also a great deal of variation across states and districts in how the credits associated with dual enrollment are handled. As AYPF learned, in some areas, students earn both college and high school credit for the college courses they take; in other areas, students earn only high school or college credit. And because dual enrollment programs are sometimes developed between a particular community college and a specific set of high schools, the community college credit earned may not be transferable to a different community college.

### Who Should Dual Enrollment Serve?

Dual enrollment programs are most commonly associated with two groups of students: the academically gifted students (who seek additional challenge and enrichment), and students who may want opportunities to explore a particular vocational interest. In the District of Columbia, for example, a program called High Skip provides funds for students to take courses at local universities. Students must meet the same entrance criteria as any college student and must have equivalent SAT scores. As a rule, students who participate in this program are exceptional students.

Participants wondered, however, whether dual enrollment could be used to enrich the educational opportunities for *all* students. If such programs enrich the education that academically gifted receive, why can't they enrich the education for average and at-risk students as well? Others worried, however, that dual enrollment programs could lead to a further entrenchment of

a two-tier system where the academically gifted are encouraged to take rigorous university-level courses, and the academically at-risk are relegated to vocational courses that offer little more than job training skills.

South Dakota is an example of a state that has used dual enrollment programs to target students who are at-risk of dropping out. One participant described another model: Diploma Plus, started in Boston, is designed to serve older students who have not performed well academically. This model provides an extra year of study during which the students take courses at a community college while also working toward a GED. The goal of the program is to help these older students, often dropouts or English language learners, become acclimated to college and continue their studies after receipt of a GED.

Some participants also worried about the development of a two-tiered system, but for other reasons. As noted, some dual enrollment programs require that students and their families take on some or the entire financial burden. In some states, families must pay the entire cost; in others, families are responsible only for fees associated with textbooks. However, no matter how low the fees, some families will not be able to afford them. Thus, in some communities or states, only those students whose families can afford the costs associated with dual enrollment programs will have the ability to take advantage of dual-enrollment opportunities, leading to differential educational opportunities. If all students are to be provided with the benefits associated with dual enrollment, policymakers should consider the financing structures of such programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**T**here is much that can be done to support the effective use of resources to implement meaningful high school reform. Our discussions generated some major themes and some specific recommendations, mainly focused at the district and school level.

### Themes

#### **District and School Reform Efforts Must be Aligned and Supportive of Each Other and Districts Need to Provide Leadership In the Strategic Use of Resources.**

Districts must ensure that their plans for standards-based reform are accessible and understood by the larger community, but particularly by individual schools. Individual school-based reform efforts must align with the core goals of the district reform plan, but should be flexible enough to target resources based on the needs of the student population. Districts must play a key role in helping school leaders use their resources to improve student outcomes. For schools in which the leadership is strong and capable, districts should allow greater freedom to meet the priority goals, but hold schools accountable for improved student outcomes. Greater flexibility should also be given to principals to make the personnel decisions needed to carry out the school improvement plan. For schools in which the leadership capacity is limited, assistance should be provided to help school leaders change the way resources are allocated to support the reform plan.

#### **Funding and Resource Decisions Need to be Driven by Data, Not by Past Practice.**

States, districts, and schools must make decisions on funding based on data about student outcomes and needs, not because of tradition or past practice. Budgets should be developed starting with a blank sheet of paper with funds and resources allocated to the activities that will support the reform goals. Ongoing data collection and analysis should inform funding and resource decisions. As some goals are met, resources can be switched to support different needs. Or if a goal is particularly challenging, more resources might be targeted to it. Budgets are driven by current needs, not past behaviors or traditions.

#### **Collect and Share Information About What Works.**

In schools and districts across the United States, educators have acquired experience developing and implementing a variety of approaches to high school reform and to funding and sustaining those reforms; in the process, they have learned valuable lessons about the effective and ineffective use of resources. Rather than re-create the wheel, attention needs to be given to sharing lessons about the efficacy of different high school models and structures, staffing, and instruction with others. School and district leaders need information about the cost-effectiveness of particular school interventions or programs, such as improving adolescent literacy or offering dual enrollment options.

#### **Creative Solutions to Resource-Related Problems Should be Explored.**

Districts and schools need to consider all the resources a community has to offer. States and districts should work to ensure that, whenever possible, policies are not implemented in such a way that they unnecessarily undermine, block, or inhibit creative solutions to school-based problems. Schools and districts should explore ways to collaborate with other schools and districts, as well as with community groups, higher education institutions, and local businesses, to generate financial and other types of resources to support the learning for all students. Schools can partner with the business community to provide tutoring and instructional services to youth who need additional learning support. Two schools may be able share one full-time employee who works half-time at each school site or create opportunities for students to participate in shared course offerings. In an era of tightening education budgets, schools and districts must make a concerted effort to take full advantage of all of the

resources that exist in their communities. Many of these resources will support value-added items, such as after-school or youth leadership activities, that are equally important to the success of young people.

## Specific Recommendations

### Standards-Based Reform

- Develop a district-wide school improvement plan and make sure that all members of the school community are aware of and working to support this plan. Educate school board members, parents, and others who vote on school budgets about standards-based reform and solicit their support of the plan.
- Make the budget process transparent so that teachers and parents understand the choices and tradeoffs that must be made. To garner community support for the budget, educate parents and community members about the requirements and constraints under which schools operate.
- Conduct ongoing evaluations of all programs to determine whether they support the improvement plan.
- Districts should require schools to gather and disaggregate data so that inputs and outcomes for students can be identified and evaluated. This information should be used to determine how best to allocate funds at the school level and make funding and personnel decisions.
- Establish a discretionary fund to provide principals with access to small amounts of money to meet specific needs quickly. Shorten the district procurement process to enable principals to take advantage of fast-rising opportunities or changed priorities.
- Increase flexibility so that principals can work with each other to develop creative solutions to shared problems. Support sharing of services and encourage princi-

pals to work together at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

- Reduce regulation and administrative burden and simplify procedures, both at the district and school level. Procurement procedures should be streamlined to reduce the amount of time and paperwork involved.
- Allow programs sufficient time to work before reallocating resources to new programs or interventions. Maintain reform initiatives across changes in district leadership. Support longitudinal studies and collect data to determine the long-term impact of particular school reform strategies.

### Interventions and Special Programs

- Diagnose the needs of each student to be academically successful. District and school leaders must ensure that schools and teachers understand how to interpret and use data to make informed decisions about how to allocate resources to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Use weighted per-pupil expenditures to direct funds to schools with the neediest student populations (for instance, those with high numbers of English language learners or economically- and educationally-disadvantaged children). Provide actual teachers' salaries to each school, not the average salary rate.
- Provide training to high school teachers in adolescent literacy so they are better prepared to identify students in need of help. Provide teachers or coaches at the high school level who can help students increase their proficiency in math and language arts.
- Provide regular classroom teachers with the professional training needed to support the learning of mainstreamed special education students.

### Alternative Education Options

- Enable money to follow students so it can be used to support learning wherever it takes place.
- Raise awareness with educators and the community about the educational value of alternative education programs and the need to support multiple learning options for youth.
- Ensure that high quality alternative education programs are distributed throughout the community so all students have equal access to them.
- Develop a system to track student enrollment at various schools or alternative settings on a regular basis and use this information to shift per pupil expenditures as students change from one educational setting to another. Track mobility rates and patterns to determine where funds and services are needed. Base starting alloca-

tions for alternative schools on the previous year's attendance figures.

- Enable principals from traditional high schools to loan or share staff or contract services with alternative schools.

### Dual Enrollment Programs

- Collect and disseminate data about various approaches used to fund dual enrollment, the students served, their outcomes, and which approaches are most cost-effective for schools, colleges, and states and best meet the various needs of students.
- Clarify the purpose of dual enrollment programs (e.g. to challenge advanced students or to increase the college-going rates of disadvantaged students) and ensure that funding mechanisms align with program goals (i.e., if the goal is to help disadvantaged students succeed, having them pay for tuition and fees may be counterproductive).

## CLOSING

**T**hroughout our discussions, a number of participants stated that many educators are unwilling or reluctant to change the way money and resources are currently allocated. This attitude is probably due to the fact that many schools are already under-resourced or struggling to meet the needs of their student body, and change is even more difficult in times of fiscal pressure.

Changing the way dollars are spent on high school reform is not an easy task, yet fundamental to making the types of changes required to increase student achievement. Most people do not like to have difficult conversations about money, because it usually is viewed as a zero sum game: one person or program gains at the expense of others. School leaders need to approach these discussions from a perspective that all resources must support a single clear goal (student achievement) and not a series of unrelated programs.

We also heard that many educators are eager to find ways to share resources (for a part-time teacher) or to improve some of the dysfunctional and overregulated systems (procurement comes to mind). While most education leaders have not

yet embraced large-scale financial and resource reallocation, there are signs that they are beginning to take smaller steps toward alignment with standards-based reform and other student needs. Like any reform process, this, too, will take time.

Do we need more resources at the high school level to help students prepare for careers and college? Yes. Are high schools likely to get much more new money? Probably not in the near future. Therefore, in order to reform high schools and bring about improved student achievement, school leaders must examine their budgets and resources with an impartial eye and make some hard decisions about which expenditures truly make a difference to student success and which are holdovers from the past.

## APPENDIX A: KEY ELEMENTS OF HIGH SCHOOLS OF THE MILLENNIUM

### Vision, Standards, and Expectations

High Schools of the Millennium have a clear vision of the standards, expectations, and educational experiences they want for ALL students. These schools set high academic standards that are challenging and reflect the knowledge and skills needed for full and meaningful participation in civic life. To ensure that all students have access to a demanding, authentic, and engaging curriculum, these schools provide students with a variety of educational opportunities, including dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, distance learning, service learning, and work-based learning.

### Teaching and Learning

High Schools of the Millennium recognize that while learning can take place in a traditional classroom and through lectures and seatwork, authentic and engaging instruction can occur in a variety of settings and contexts, such as the home and in community or work settings. Authentic instruction involves students in the creation and discovery of knowledge, interdisciplinary inquiry, and engagement in real-world issues. High Schools of the Millennium do not divide themselves into college-bound, general, or vocational tracks; all students are expected to pursue a rigorous course of study that leads to high academic achievement. At the same time, the school recognizes that students have different interests and future plans, and efforts are made to make the curriculum relevant. Progress through the high school is competency-based, not time- or credit-based. Teachers have access to high quality, ongoing professional development that provides them with the resources they need to design challenging, engaging, and meaningful instructional experiences for all students.

### Principles of Youth Development

High Schools of the Millennium recognize the

academic and non-academic needs of high school-age youth and embrace a youth development approach to create engaging learning opportunities for all. They prepare youth for lifelong learning, civic involvement, leadership, and employment, and engage youth in learning, work, and service activities in their communities. High Schools of the Millennium surround youth with caring and competent adults to help them navigate not only the challenges of high school and preparation for college and further learning, but also the personal and social trials of adolescence.

### Multiple Forms of Assessment

High Schools of the Millennium use assessments on an ongoing basis to determine how well students are learning and to provide information to teachers that can be used to alter or modify instructional practice to better meet the needs of individual students. High Schools of the Millennium make use of multiple forms of assessment to gauge student learning in recognition that no one type of test can provide a full picture of a student's knowledge, understanding, and skills.

### Immersion in the Adult World

High Schools of the Millennium recognize the importance of an advocate in a child's life and ensure that each student has a relationship with at least one caring adult and, hopefully, many of them in various settings. These schools provide students with opportunities to experience authentic learning situations with adults—at work, in the community, through volunteer activities, sports, clubs, band, or other youth groups.



### **Community-Based Learning**

Underlying each High School of the Millennium is a connection and relationship to its community and the resources that support learning. The community and the educational system form a partnership to ensure that all students have access to the supportive networks that allow them to pass through adolescence safely and with high levels of achievement and engagement. The High School of the Millennium is a critical component of the system of lifelong learning that exists in the community.

### **Instructional Teamwork**

A High School of the Millennium is designed to be a small, personalized, and caring learning community in which all members know one another well and work together around a shared commitment to promote student learning. The principal is the instructional leader for the school and sets the tone for excellence. He or she cre-

ates an environment that constantly encourages teachers and staff to review and improve their instructional strategies to help all students achieve. Teachers serve as coaches and facilitators of student learning; they work together on interdisciplinary teams to design effective instructional experiences for all students.

### **Accountability**

A High School of the Millennium is accountable to the community and provides information on its performance on a regular basis. The community surrounding the school recognizes that it also contributes to student performance and evaluates whether adequate resources are provided to support the development of healthy and successful youth.

[Contains material adapted from *High Schools of the Millennium: Report of the Workgroup*, American Youth Policy Forum, August 2000.]

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS

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