

Federal, State, and Local Roles Supporting Alternative Education

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is one in a series written for the U.S. Department of Labor on the role of alternative education programs in the American education and workforce preparation systems. The first paper, *An Overview of Alternative Education*, reviews the literature on alternative education and offers a typology defining alternative education. The second paper, *Academic Programs in Alternative Education: An Overview*, describes the literature specifically focused on academic programs in alternative education and surveys programs. This third paper examines the roles that various levels of government play through legislation, policy, and other initiatives that support quality alternative education programs to reconnect youth to education and the workplace. It raises issues for policymakers at all levels to consider in facilitating the development of expanded alternative education pathways, which reduce the number of students dropping out of school and provide well-lit reentry points for those who leave school before obtaining a diploma.

America's dropout problem has a negative impact on the development of the nation's skilled workforce and the economy. In 2004, 6,277,000 (22%) of 18-24 year-olds had not yet completed high school (National Center for Education Statistics 2004; Greene and Winters 2005). An estimated 3.8 million or 15% of youth ages 18-24 are neither employed nor in school; and from 2000 to 2004, the ranks of these disconnected young adults in the United States grew by 700,000 (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2004). Those without diplomas earn less and draw upon more public resources than graduates, and this earning gap has been widening over the past three decades. While in 1971 men without a diploma earned \$35,087 (in 2002 dollars), by 2002 their earnings fell 35% to \$23,903. In the same period, earnings for women without a diploma, already far below that of men, also fell, from \$19,888 to \$17,114 (Barton 2005). In 2001, only 55% of young adults without a high school diploma were employed, compared to 74% of high school graduates and 87% of college graduates (Sum 2002). Dropouts contribute to Federal and state tax revenues at one-half the rate of high school graduates. This amounts to about \$50 billion annually for the 23 million high school non-completers aged 16-67 (Rousse 2005). Dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than high school graduates (Catteral 1985). If just one-third of the high school dropouts in the United States were to earn a diploma, Federal savings in reduced costs for food stamps, housing assistance, and TANF alone would amount to \$10.8 billion annually (Muenning 2005). In 2000-01, there were some 10,900 public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students in the United States. As of October 2000, the number of individuals enrolled in public school alternative school programs for students considered at-risk of education failure was 612,900, or 1.3% of all public school students (National Center for Education Statistics 2004).

Alternative education programs, both public school-based and community-based, offer students who are struggling or who have left school an opportunity to achieve in a new setting and use creative, individualized learning methods. While there are many different kinds of alternative schools and programs, they are often characterized by their flexible schedules, smaller student-teacher ratios, relevant and career-oriented themes, and innovative curricula.¹ Alternative education can be invaluable in helping communities offer multiple pathways to success for all high school-aged students, including those who are not succeeding in a traditional public school environment.

This paper provides an overview of policies and funding for alternative education at the Federal, state, and local levels and discusses issues of accountability, data collection, and assistance to providers. The paper raises concerns about fragmentation of services and proposes opportunities for strengthening the current system to better serve youth.

The Federal Role

Overview

Alternative education programs are funded largely by state and local public and private revenues; however, numerous Federal agencies administer programs that can be accessed by alternative education programs, both those associated with the K-12 public education system and those that are organized and managed by community-based organizations. A number of Federal programs provide funding specifically for educational purposes, but a wider range of programs exist that provide supportive services. Some of the larger Federal education programs that can be accessed by alternative education programs are the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (Perkins). Funding from other Federal programs, such as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), also provide a significant source of support for alternative education providers.

Federal Coordination and Responsibility for Alternative Education

No Federal agency has primary responsibility for alternative education or the youth involved in non-traditional education. There are various reasons why this has occurred, including the

¹ This paper focuses on alternative schools and programs which serve to reengage at-risk and out-of-school youth in education and training. For the most part, it excludes an examination of alternative schools used by many districts as quasi-detention centers, with little or no expectations for academic achievement, and may actually serve to further disconnect youth from schooling.

very complex relationships between the legislative and executive branches of government in creating funding and program priorities, but this is beyond the scope of this paper. As a result of the lack of an overall organized approach to serving at-risk youth, several Federal agencies have taken responsibility for dealing with certain youth who participate in alternative education (e.g., youth involved in the juvenile justice system or foster youth), but no agency's mission is designed to focus on all youth involved in alternative education. Another challenge is that programs are often limited in their scope of service. Understandably, Federal agencies approach their work on alternative education through the mission of their agency, which often limits how the funds can be used. Funds from the Department of Education are obviously focused on the public education system, limiting their reach to community-based alternative education providers; funds from the Department of Health and Human Services focus on physical and mental health issues of youth, as well as the well-being of communities or particular populations like foster youth, which limit the use of funds for education in general; funds from the Department of Justice focus on court-involved youth or those involved in unsafe activities like crime and gangs, and therefore deal with counseling, crime intervention, and self-sufficiency skills, but rarely education; and funds from the Department of Labor tend to be focused primarily on workforce skill attainment and have, in the past, focused on short-term academic interventions. Some programs only work with youth while they are of high school age, some only work with youth when they have left the education system and are seeking workforce training, and some only work with youth for a short period based on specific life circumstances. In other words, multiple Federal agencies provide a gamut of programs with little coordination focused on long-term support for needy youth.

The Administration recognized this lack of coordination around youth and youth programming and created the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth, which released its final report in October 2003. A major charge of the Task Force was to examine the issue of coordination across agencies. The White House Memorandum establishing the Task Force stated:

The Federal Government has spent billions of dollars over the last 30 years in a variety of programs to address these issues. A 1998 analysis by the General Accounting Office has pointed out that there were 117 Federal programs administered by 15 departments aimed at disadvantaged youth. Some of these programs have been very successful. However, overall, the Federal Government's efforts and programs to assist disadvantaged young people have been fragmented and not as successful as hoped.

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As a result of the work of the interagency Task Force, four goals were identified for Federal investment:

1. Better management of programs. The Task Force recommended the creation of a Disadvantaged Youth Initiative to oversee policy and coordinate Federal efforts, including moving some programs into more appropriate agencies; facilitating interagency collaboration for special populations; and improving the Federal grants system.
2. Better accountability of programs. The Task Force recommended that better accountability be achieved by increasing efforts to understand “what works” and holding programs accountable for results.
3. Better connections. To foster better connections with parents, the Task Force recommended increasing parent involvement in Federal youth programs and advisory groups.
4. Priority for neediest youth. The Task Force singled out youth in foster care, adjudicated youth, and migrant youth as high priority groups for targeting discretionary resources and as subjects of Federal interagency working groups that would address their most pressing needs.

Funding

Funding patterns at the Federal level make it difficult for alternative education providers to find readily available, sustainable funding. It puts a burden on program providers to seek out federal funding streams and either fit them into existing interventions or change existing interventions to accommodate the goals of the Federal program. Neither option results in sufficient and comprehensive coverage for alternative education programs. After a review of the list of potential funding streams that could support alternative education efforts in one way or another, it is quite clear that greater coordination across agencies, as called for in the White House Task Force report, is needed.

Another challenge with funding and program structure is that many programs do not cross sectors, such as secondary education, postsecondary education, health and mental health, and workforce systems. An alternative education provider, therefore, might have a difficult time finding Federal funds to support an approach that bridges education, training, and health care systems. Another example occurs for alternative education providers who seek to locate classes, particularly for older youth, on the campus of a postsecondary education institution because of the positive impact on the student population. Finding Federal dollars to support such an effort is extremely difficult. This inflexibility of funding streams adds

to the complexity of identifying sustainable funding for local program providers and can prevent innovative program interventions.

Another funding issue is that most of the available funding supports discrete, distinct activities of alternative education programs, such as counseling, mentoring, substance abuse intervention, or parent/family intervention. Alternative education programs may have no need for these specific program activities, but instead need ongoing general support, which is often difficult to access.

One funding challenge associated with large education programs is that many of these programs (NCLB, IDEA, Perkins) are formula or entitlement programs with strict eligibility rules that prevent youth programs from participating. For instance, most of the education grants flow directly to state or local educational agencies or to institutions of higher education, not to community youth groups. These funding formulas bypass community-based providers or require them to apply to the state or local education agency (if allowed by law), often setting up competitive situations. Many public schools view publicly supported alternative education as a competitor for funding, even if they work through the same school district structure. Many have even stronger negative concerns about education dollars flowing to alternative education providers outside of the K-12 public education system (American Youth Policy Forum 2003). When grants are discretionary, eligibility rules may allow community-based alternative education groups to apply, but most discretionary grants are small and do not reach large numbers of youth, and the competition for these grants is often intense. In some cases, community-based alternative education programs contract with the local education agency to provide services for youth, which often works quite well, but these are local decisions usually made on a case-by-case basis, and there is no consistent pattern with regard to Federal funding sources.

Yet another challenge facing alternative education providers is that the Federal investment in secondary education is small compared to the investment in elementary or higher education. For instance, the bulk of the \$12 billion Title I funding, the government's compensatory education program, is spent at the elementary school level, with only about five percent spent on students in high schools (Alliance for Excellent Education 2004). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, providing support to students with special needs, is funded at \$10.5 billion, but data is not available on how much helps students with disabilities at the secondary level. Student financial assistance and higher education funding total more than \$80 billion but, again, most of this money goes to students who have already graduated from high school. Only under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical

Education Act, which provides almost \$1.3 billion for career and technical education, does approximately 65% flow to secondary schools, with the remainder going to postsecondary education institutions (Silverberg et al. 2004). However, it is unclear how much money from any of these large Federal education programs is allocated or awarded to students in either publicly-supported or community-based alternative education programs, but one can assume it is a very small portion of the total dollars.

The combined funding from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth programs and Job Corps, approximately \$2.5 billion, pales in comparison to the total Federal education dollars available, but is a sizeable contribution to state and local youth programs that provide alternative education. These funds are more often directed toward alternative education providers that are outside the K-12 public education system, compared to funding from education sources, but competition for funding is strong for programs as well.

Accountability

NCLB is currently driving accountability efforts in public education at the state, district, school and classroom levels. The requirements for all secondary school students to be tested once in grades 10-12 and for schools to make adequate yearly progress and report on high school graduation rates is beginning to have a profound impact on school behavior. States and school districts must now focus on preventing dropouts and improving student performance. As a result, many school systems are beginning to look to alternative education as a source of information on how to work with at-risk and low-performing students. But non-traditional schools, that provide an alternative to the comprehensive high school and espouse an educational philosophy of performance-based education, are pushing up against the accountability requirements, causing them to change some of their instructional strategies. While the focus on improved academics in alternative education is needed, the shift to testing-based accountability, rather than performance or competency-based accountability, may ironically change the profile of many alternative education programs to look more like the traditional schools students left. As NCLB has focused primarily on traditional public education systems, with the law's reauthorization approaching, thought should be given to how NCLB impacts alternative education systems and programs and the youth in those programs. The recent agreement of the Department of Education to allow North Carolina and Tennessee to experiment with growth models² under NCLB may shed some light on how alternative education programs can best find a fit with the accountability

² The growth model of assessment is a system of measuring individual students' academic improvement as they advance from grade to grade. Current NCLB rules require states to measure schools' performance by comparing the scores of last year's eighth-graders, for example, with this year's group.

requirements. Alternative education programs, many serving students who are significantly behind academically and many serving their students for a limited amount of time, are eager to demonstrate the impact of their work with students and support such growth models.

Another concern arises as a result of the standards-based testing structures required by NCLB. Because of the pressure to make adequate yearly progress, it is feared that some schools and school districts may place low-performing students in public alternative education settings if they are too far behind in credits or are not able to pass certain high stakes tests. There is also an issue that some students may become discouraged in the traditional public school system if they lack credits and therefore move to community-based alternative education programs or drop out of school, in which case they would not be counted in the adequate yearly progress counts. Practitioners have reported that this has occurred in some school systems and should be watched carefully (Greene 2004).

Another major provision of NCLB requires districts to offer tutorial services to students enrolled in schools that have failed to make adequate yearly progress for at least three years. Supplemental Education Services (SES) are to be delivered by public or private providers selected by parents from a list of state-approved providers. Whether there is a market for alternative education programs that are not affiliated with the public school system to provide these services remains unanswered, but, to date, they are generally not included on the state lists of approved providers. One example of how this can be accomplished is found in Portland, Oregon, where Open Meadow Alternative School partners with Roosevelt High School utilizing SES funds to support dropout prevention activities through tutoring and mentoring.

NCLB also requires teachers of core subjects to be “highly qualified” as defined by the law by the end of school year 2005-2006. Given the difficulty in meeting this requirement, the U.S. Department of Education is providing states with additional time to ensure a skilled staff (Hicks 2006). Many alternative education programs do employ highly qualified teachers, but with their smaller size and need for teachers to cover multiple subjects, it can be a particular challenge for them to find staff. Alternative education programs that are outside of the public K-12 education system are not required to meet this requirement, which raises the question of how those programs monitor teacher quality.

The Appendix contains a chart with descriptions of many, but not all, of the funding sources that could support some piece of alternative education.

The State Role

Overview

As states work to redesign high schools and improve secondary education, they are faced with the task of engaging students at-risk of dropping out of school and reconnecting those who have already left. Alternative education programs help states and communities move toward a “menu of education options” for young people. In supporting the development of these expanded options for high school-aged youth, states must address a range of alternative education policies.

States may encourage the expansion of education options for young people by directing or encouraging districts to expand options for high school completion, by making sure education legislation is flexible enough to allow for multiple routes, and by providing community-based alternative education providers charter to operate as schools with state education funds.

While states have primary responsibility for defining and funding alternative education, they exercise this responsibility with varying degrees of intensity. States present a wide array of alternative education policies and initiatives, resulting in program offerings which range from minimal to extensive.

Governors' Initiatives

In 2005, all 50 state governors signed A Compact on State High School Graduation Data, agreeing to implement a standard, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate; to lead efforts to improve state data collection, reporting and analysis, and link data systems across the education pipeline; to take steps to implement additional indicators to provide richer information about outcomes; and to report annual progress on the improvement of their state high school graduation, completion, and dropout rate data. In addition, the National Governors Association has created the Honor States Grant Program, a \$23.6 million, governor-led initiative to improve high school and college-ready graduation rates in 26 states. Some of the states involved in the program are creating or expanding alternative education programs as part of their implementation of the grant. For example, Delaware is focusing on serving students considered at-risk of dropping out and supports GED preparation programs, as well as alternative night classes and an on-line course recovery program. Louisiana has made a similar commitment to focusing on students at-risk of not completing school.

In 2003, Virginia created the Path to Industry Certification Program to better prepare students for life after high school. The program is for high school seniors with no college plans, lack of occupational skills, who are on-track to graduate with a standard or advanced studies diploma. In exchange for agreeing to stay in school, students are offered tuition-free college preparation at several community colleges in Virginia and up to nine semesters of postsecondary training toward an industry-recognized certification or state licensure. In 2004, 24 high school seniors participated in the program to earn an industry certification or state licensure (National Governors Association 2005).

State Legislatures

With increasing focus on graduation rates, many states are showing awareness that providing alternatives and expanding education options must be part of any successful state-wide high school reform effort. While nearly every state defines alternative education through legislation, the depth of the policies and legislation varies widely among states. States may assume responsibility for various aspects of alternative education, including requiring and defining alternative education, funding, clarifying issues of curriculum and assessment, and other education areas of particular relevance to alternative education, such as teacher credentialing and student age limits.

Defining and Mandating Alternative Education

Although 48 states define alternative education, their definitions vary tremendously, as do their approaches. A recent review of state legislation on alternative education found “[s]ome states have legislation or policies that provide detailed descriptions of the states’ alternative schools and policies. Others have short, and at times, ambiguous descriptions of the programs and the policies” (Lehr et al. 2003).

Range of State Legislation on Alternative Education:

In California, governing boards must provide expelled students access to an alternative educational program operated by the district, the county superintendent of schools, or a consortium of districts (California Education Code Section 48916.1).

Schools and districts in Arkansas are required to offer appropriate alternative education programs for students whose educational progress deviates from that expected for a successful transition to a productive life or those students whose behavior interferes with their learning or the learning of others (Arkansas Code Section 6-15-1005).

In Ohio, local school boards may establish an alternative school for K-12 students who are on suspension, having truancy problems, experiencing academic failure, or exhibit disruptive behavior. An alternative education program must offer clusters or small learning communities, use of education technology, and provisions for accelerated learning programs in reading and mathematics (Ohio Revised Annotated Code Section 3313.533).

The alternative education system in Missouri serves students who are experiencing difficulty in school and are identified as at-risk of dropping out; are of school-age, who have dropped out of school and would like to reenroll in alternative education classes; are high school graduates (or hold an equivalent diploma) who are having trouble finding employment or would like vocational training; or are people without a high school or equivalent diploma who are having difficulty finding employment or want vocational training (Missouri Revised Statutes Section 167.320 – 322).

States with the most comprehensive legislation usually have a separate section of a statute on alternative education or, more broadly, children at-risk of failing. California, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Oregon, and Wisconsin have legislation which details the process by which students at-risk of school failure will be identified and supported toward high school graduation. Legislation addresses how students will be identified, what supports must be put in place and how state education funds may support students in appropriate alternative education programs. Oregon defines an alternative education program as “a school or separate class group designed to best serve students’ educational needs and interests and assist students in achieving the academic standards of the school district and the state.” The state requires that a district notify a student of the availability of alternative education programs when he or she has an erratic attendance record, has had two severe disciplinary problems within a three-year period, is being considered for expulsion, drops out or withdraws from public school, or has failed to meet or exceed all of the state standards in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 (Oregon Revised Statutes Section 336.615-665). Wisconsin’s “Children at Risk of Not Graduating from High School” legislation (Wisconsin Statute Section 118.153) defines

“children at risk” as students in grades 5 to 12 who are at-risk of not graduating from high school because they are dropouts or are two or more of the following:

- One or more years behind their age group in the number of high school credits attained;
- Two or more years behind their age group in basic skill levels;
- Habitual truants;
- Parents;
- Adjudicated delinquents; or
- Eighth grade pupils whose score in each subject area below the basic level, who fail the examination, or who fail to be promoted to the 9th grade.

Wisconsin legislation directs every school board to identify enrolled children considered at-risk each year and to develop a plan describing how the school board will meet their needs. School districts must provide programs for at-risk children designed to allow them to meet high school graduation requirements and are directed to identify appropriate private, nonprofit, nonsectarian agencies in their area to meet these requirements. Districts may contract with such agencies and the legislation details the financial terms of such arrangements. Districts are instructed to pay each contracting agency at least 80% of the average per pupil cost for the school district.

Funding

Alternative education can be costly. Program models often involve significantly lower student-teacher ratios than traditional high schools and extensive student support services, and the population includes students who require extensive remedial help. In addition, given that alternative education programs serve students who have struggled in or left school, it may be that such programs serve a higher percentage of students with special needs than the general public K-12 system. Thus, adequacy of financial resources is of crucial importance to alternative education programs.

The state portion of education funds varies from state to state, and these per pupil funds are the main source of funding for most alternative education programs (Thakur and Henry 2005; Gruber 2000). The per capita aid that states provide to local school districts (what is often known as “average daily attendance” or “average daily membership”) is both the most stable and the longest lasting source of funding for educating young people who have dropped out of high school or who are on the verge of doing so. In most states, funding is available for students until they reach age 21 or obtain a high school diploma. In some states such funds

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may even be used to cover dual-enrollment in postsecondary institutions. Unfortunately, funding of alternative education is inconsistent from state to state. For district-run programs, allocations of per pupil funding for alternative schools is fairly straightforward. For community-based programs, however, accessing state education dollars can be more difficult. A National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) report, *State Education Funding Policies and School-to-Work Transitions for Dropouts and At-Risk Students* (1996) found that while no state forbids school programs running outside of public school districts from receiving state education funds, it remains hard for alternative education programs to obtain these funds. Few states encourage funds to “follow the student” when they are enrolled in a program outside of a local school district. In cases where state education funds do move with students, they do so either by: 1) local school districts contracting with alternative education providers to work with at-risk or out-of-school youth; or 2) by establishing of charter schools designed to work with at-risk or out-of-school youth.

Example of Funds Following the Student: Oregon

Oregon law stipulates that state residents have a right to a publicly-funded education until they receive a high school diploma or reach age 21 by the start of a school year. State law allows Oregon school districts to establish alternative educational options within their systems or contract with qualified private providers. Such programs, whether district- or privately-run, must meet the state’s common curriculum goals, academic content, and state testing requirements. Districts which enroll students in private alternative education programs receive full State funding for each student. In practice, the state thus allows local school districts to contract out services for any student who would do better in an alternative setting; therefore, education funds follow the students as they move in and out of school districts or community-based organization-run schools. For example, in Portland, the district receives 100% of the state’s per-student aid for enrolled students and contracts with an alternative education provider, whom it pays for actual program costs or 80% of the district’s per pupil expenditure, whichever is lower. Thus, Portland Public Schools utilizes its various sources of funding, including Federal, State, and local sources, to contract with local community based organizations for alternative education programming. Portland’s at-risk and out-of-school youth thus have a range of options for completing education and/or employment training. (Martin and Halperin 2006)

Through granting charters to community-based alternative education providers, states essentially contract directly with such organizations to serve struggling students and those who have left school. Charter school legislation allows community-based groups to develop an alternative education program and provides ongoing state funding. Additionally, some local funds may be available to charter schools. Funding for charter schools varies from state

to state, with some states providing the same per capita amount to charters as to local school districts and others determining funding for charters through another formula. Charters allow for flexibility in programming and staffing and allow community-based organizations and for-profit entities to access a steady source of financial support for their alternative education programming.

Example of Publicly-Funded Charter School Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth to Education and Employment Training: Improved Solutions for Urban Systems

Established as a nonprofit organization to develop innovative strategies for self-sufficiency, Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS) has been a leader in Dayton, Ohio's dropout reconnection efforts since 1992. What began as a project to help dropouts acquire construction skills and a GED has evolved into a charter school preparing students for a high school diploma and training them in high-demand fields, with academics closely aligned with hands-on training. In an average of two years, ISUS students earn both a high school diploma and an industry-recognized credential in one of four career fields: construction, manufacturing, health care, or computer technology.

ISUS receives average daily attendance (ADA) funding from the State of Ohio. This funding is based on actual attendance, while traditional public schools in Ohio receive funding based on a yearly count taken in October. ISUS submits daily attendance (which averages to an impressive 84%). It is important to note that state ADA funds account for only 44% of ISUS' funding, with the remainder coming from Federal sources, such as Perkins, IDEA, and NCLB funding (23%), private sources (20%), and other government sources (13%).

(Martin and Halperin 2006)

In addition to providing per pupil state education funds to follow students to alternative education programs, states can use grants to make additional resources available to districts that provide programming for struggling students and those who have dropped out of school, though most of these types of grants are provided to discipline-oriented alternative schools.

Curriculum and Assessment

Although some states discuss curricular requirements for alternative education programs, many do not. In general, states provide little guidance for quality program components. (Lehr et al. 2003) found that 28 states had policies requiring that students in alternative programs complete state graduation requirements, 12 states had policies indicating that social services must or should be provided to students in alternative programs, 10 states had

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policies requiring work or service-learning in alternative programs, and 9 states required an individualized plan for students in alternative programs.

Many alternative education programs report the need for flexibility in curricular requirements. Alternative programs employ non-traditional techniques to fit into the lives of their students and keep them engaged. To meet the diverse needs of their students, alternative education providers employ elements such as open enrollment, year-round programming, compressed or expanded programs, credit-recovery courses, evening schedules, hands-on career-related courses and internships, GED preparation courses with expanded content to encourage students' further education, dual-enrollment, and credit for competency rather than the traditional "time in seat." State legislation allowing for (or even encouraging) such curricular flexibility is crucial to the implementation of alternative education programming at the local level.

As one example, some states have recognized that student academic competency, rather than actual "seat time," is important and have instituted policies allowing schools and districts to award credits for demonstrated competency in a subject area. In Utah, state legislation allows students to earn credit either by completing courses or by: (1) demonstrating competence; (2) assessment; (3) review of student work or projects consistent with district or school procedures or criteria; or (4) completing correspondence or electronic coursework provided by an accredited institution, with the district or school's prior approval (Utah Administrative Code R277-705-3). Rhode Island is moving to a proficiency-based system for all students. Beginning with the Class of 2008, all students will be required to demonstrate proficiency in certain subjects in order to graduate. Proficiency may be displayed through portfolios, exhibition/capstone projects, Certificate of Initial Mastery, or end-of-course assessments. Students still must take a state exam that is considered in graduation decisions, but the exam counts for no more than 10% in the process used to calculate graduation eligibility (American Youth Policy Forum 2006). A handful of other states are moving toward such performance-based education which allows students to move through traditional and non-traditional programs at their own pace.

In some states, requirements that all core subject areas be offered each term may constrain programs requiring more flexibility of schedule, such as programs incorporating a work component that seek to schedule students into an academic course schedule every other quarter. As more states implement standards-based reform systems with high stakes tests for high school graduation, state accountability requirements can prove difficult for alternative programs to meet. What is more, alternative education sites are adamant that assessments measuring growth (i.e., using pre- and post-tests) are much more appropriate for

the population served than traditional achievement tests which measure one point in time (Thakur and Henry 2005; Academy for Educational Development 2006).

Recognizing the differences in populations served by alternative education programs and traditional high schools, many states allow for flexibility in method of assessment for programs serving at-risk populations; and some states are working to develop standards for alternative education programs. For example, North Carolina recently signed into law an act which directs the State Board of Education to adopt standards for alternative learning programs and to require local boards of education to develop proposals that are submitted to the State Board of Education before establishing any alternative learning program or alternative school (North Carolina House Bill 1076).

Other Areas of State Policy Relevant to Alternative Education

Teacher Certification. No Child Left Behind requires states to ensure that teachers in core classes are highly qualified by school year 2005-2006. While states are working hard to reach this goal, nearly every state will be required to submit a revised plan outlining how it will ensure the teacher quality requirements are met by the end of the 2006-07 school year (Hicks 2006). In 2003, Lehr et al. found no reference in state legislation or policy of a requirement for teachers in alternative education programs to be certified in their subject area or grade level. However, quite interestingly, Oklahoma does require alternative schools to hire teachers on the basis of a record of successful work with at-risk students (Oklahoma Statutes Section 70-1210.568).

Educational Age Limits and Compulsory School Attendance. Most states support education for students until they reach 21 or obtain a high school diploma. Older youth returning to school after long absences with few credits and far behind academically, as well as students whose educations are interrupted by personal crises often face unrealistic timeframes when they return to school. For such students, having educational services only until age 21 can make it impossible to complete a full high school program, or at very least, serve as a discouragement to return. Many alternative educators believe that an age limit of 25 is more realistic, particularly for certain populations like English language learners. Recognizing the importance of allowing older youth the opportunity to complete education and obtain crucial employment training, the State of California has removed the age limit for students enrolled in Youth Service and Conservation Corps and YouthBuild programs. Directors of these programs point to this "exception" as critical to the work they do with older youth. Recently, in an attempt to reduce the dropout rate, states like Indiana and New Hampshire have raised the age of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. In the absence

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of larger high school reforms, simply requiring that students remain in school until a certain age is not likely to prove effective in improving outcomes for young people; however such legislation may be useful to support the notion that funding for education should be available to young people until they have completed secondary education.

Partnerships with Higher Education. Some states encourage partnerships between local school districts and higher education. For example, North Carolina's Innovative Education Initiatives Act encourages collaboration between high schools and postsecondary institutions to offer accelerated learning programs which target students at-risk of dropping out of high school. High school-community college partnerships may apply for grants to create cooperative innovative programs in high schools and community colleges, including creation of high schools or technical centers on community college campuses (North Carolina General Statutes Section 116C-4). Many community colleges serve as natural settings for alternative education, particularly for older out-of-school youth seeking to continue their education, and state policy can facilitate their partnering with school districts and community-based organizations.

**Example of Postsecondary Education Opportunities as a Component of
Alternative Education: The Diploma Plus Model**

Diploma Plus (DP) offers struggling students a rigorous, engaging, and supportive alternative educational experience. The program consists of three phases: the Foundation Level, the Presentation Level, and the Plus Phase. During the Foundation and Presentation Levels, students study core subject areas that are mapped to explicit competencies. During the Plus Phase students transition into the world beyond high school, with postsecondary experiences, including an internship and college course work, while receiving strong support for completing high school.

Unlike traditional schools where credit accumulation is based upon time, DP is a performance-based program. Both promotion and graduation are based on successful demonstration of proficiency in specified competencies and content objectives that are benchmarked at each program level. Therefore, DP places emphasis on contextual learning, portfolio development, and authentic assessment.

Diploma Plus not only graduates at-risk students with a high school diploma, but provides guidance and support to facilitate students' transitions to life after high school. Challenging transitional experiences include major academic projects, a structured internship, and one or more college courses for credit, which allow students to have an opportunity to explore an array of post-graduation options.

Research conducted on students enrolled in the program from September 2002 to September 2004 found that 84% of DP students were attracted to the program because of the opportunity to take college-level courses. In addition, 78% of graduating students planned to continue their education immediately after graduating (Brigham Nahas Research Associates 2005).

Presently there are 15 DP sites in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York serving nearly 2,000 students. The DP model is designed to be applicable to different settings, and current sites include small district-run schools, charter schools, alternative education programs, and community college transition programs (<http://www.commcorp.org/diplomaplus/index.html>).

The Local Role

Overview

Alternative education programs are implemented at the local level, where counties, cities, and school districts all have potential roles to play in the development and delivery of programming.

Communities which have chosen to prioritize providing alternative education options for struggling students and out-of-school youth find it hard to negotiate the maze of funding sources and regulations necessary to access various sources of financial support for such educational opportunities. Communities where offerings are extensive and community support is great serve as excellent models for others wishing to increase their programming for struggling students and out-of-school youth (Martin and Halperin 2006). These communities have recognized that in order to provide a range of educational options to meet students' varied needs, collaboration and involvement need to be community-wide.

Most communities could increase their alternative education options, both within and alongside their public school systems. And it is crucial that communities provide such options, so students who leave school before graduating are offered pathways back into education. What is more, expanding options for high school and creating multiple pathways to graduation can be seen more broadly as part of any successful high school reform effort.

Funding streams for alternative education programs at the local level are disjointed. While Federal workforce funds flow to counties and cities, education funds come to communities through local education agencies. Thus, collaboration at the local level is crucial for effective and sustainable alternative education programming. In communities where county and city agencies have good working relationships with the education system and there is a high level of cross-system collaboration, there is much greater potential for quality alternative education programming which minimizes young people's breaks from education and training. Unfortunately, in many communities relations between the public schools and other organizations and systems serving youth are limited. In some instances, community-based alternative education programs and initiatives are seen as a threat to the public schools because they appear to take away students, and therefore funding, from the traditional K-12 system.

Counties, Mayors and City Councils

Cities and counties can provide leadership in efforts to expand alternative education offerings by prioritizing alternative education, especially as part a larger program of high school reform. Local leaders can facilitate collaboration among the various systems working with youth (education, welfare, foster care, juvenile justice, workforce preparation, etc.). City and county leaders are also in a position to influence the availability of the support services so crucial to the success of struggling students and out-of-school youth.

Counties, mayors, and city councils have shown increasing interest in alternative education. Although most do not have governing authority over their public schools, mayors report being the first to hear complaints about poor schooling. And increasingly, local leaders are recognizing the costs of failing to educate all of their communities' young people. In April 2006 nearly a dozen mayors from across the country gathered for a National League of Cities forum on improving public schools. At the forum, Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz remarked, "most mayors now find it unacceptable to say that 'it's not my job' to worry about education. We're not experts in school reform, but we have to do what we can to improve the quality of life in our cities and that includes working to improve public schools" (quoted in Johnson 2006).

The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families (IYEF) is currently working with five cities (Hartford, CT.; Phoenix, AZ.; San Jose, CA.; Corpus Christi, TX.; and San Antonio, TX) through a two-year technical assistance initiative to help municipal leaders expand options and alternatives for high school. IYEF chose these cities through a competitive process to foster innovation at the high school level that promotes more academic rigor, engaged learning, and highly personalized education. IYEF has helped the cities develop individual action plans, conducted site visits, and facilitates technical assistance through meetings and the sharing of resources and best practice. Each city team is focusing on a different aspect of alternative education, including developing small learning communities, building civic capacity and support for alternative education, or strengthening systems that are already in place for alternative education. In addition, IYEF created and supports the Education Policy Advisors' Network (EPAN), a national network of senior municipal officials who are working with their mayors on key issues related to education reform and school improvement. These officials assist in implementing strategies to help their local school districts improve the quality of public education and confront the critical issues affecting student achievement. EPAN members have the opportunity to share information, insights, and lessons learned. IYEF has also formed the

Municipal Network on Disconnected Youth among city policy staff and mayors' advisers, for which it publishes a monthly newsletter highlighting best practices in cross-system collaboration, including in the area of alternative education for disconnected youth.

Example of a County-led Initiative to Reconnect Out-of-School Youth to Education: The Montgomery County, Ohio Out-of-School Youth Task Force

In 1998, local leaders in government, business, and education, who were profoundly concerned about the number of young people in Dayton, Ohio aged 16-24 without a diploma or job, established the Montgomery County Out-of-School Youth Task Force. One of its first moves was to establish an institutionalized and centralized city-wide system of dropout recovery for out-of-school youth. With strong support from Sinclair Community College, Dayton is now home to the Sinclair Fast Forward Center, an efficient central clearinghouse to reconnect young people who have left school to further education. Out-of-school youth need make only one telephone call to reach a staff person qualified to lead them to opportunities for second-chance education and skills training geared to their needs. In describing her reasons for supporting the initiative, Montgomery County Administrator Deborah Feldman said, "It became clear that there was no one responsible for dropouts until they committed a crime or had a baby. We were doing little to keep people from coming into our [social welfare and criminal justice] systems; and if it was one criterion that was bringing them to our systems, it was lack of education" (Martin & Halperin 2006).

In many ways, cities and counties are uniquely positioned to facilitate collaboration among those primarily focused on education and other areas of importance to youth development, such as employment preparation, juvenile justice, and foster care. For instance, with the passage of the 1998 Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), local communities have created workforce investment boards (WIBs) with youth councils. These councils make recommendations on youth policy to the WIBs and can be used to leverage greater coordination and increased programming for struggling and out-of-school youth. In Baltimore, the Career Academy, one of four Harbor City High School (HCHS) locations, provides 16-21 year-old students with education, project-based experiential learning, career-specific training, and social adjustment skills. The Academy demonstrates enhanced collaboration among Baltimore's Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED), the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board (BWIB), and HCHS to expand educational options for out-of-school youth. The Baltimore City Career Academy opened as the Learning Center in 1973, with initial offerings of GED preparation and job skills training and placement to both adults and youth. Realizing that young people needed more specific supports, in the late 1980s, MOED transformed the Learning Center into the Career Academy as a means for youth to work toward the GED and obtain job skills and experience in becoming employed. Over the years, the relationship between the Career Academy and HCHS has evolved into a formal partnership forged through the process of applying jointly for WIA funds. Today,

the Career Academy at HCHS, co-managed by MOED and Baltimore City Public School System with sponsorship from BWIB, serves approximately 150 young people annually from nearly every neighborhood in Baltimore (Martin and Halperin 2006).

Districts

School districts play an important role in expanding alternative education options at the local level. Districts can provide multiple pathways themselves or contract with community-based organizations and private contractors to provide these pathways. Regardless, the emphasis is on meeting the range of student needs by offering a variety of options for young people—including those of young people who have left school at some point.

While decisions about funding for alternative education programs is primarily the responsibility of local school districts, many districts do not have the ability to support the full range of educational options necessary for students. Nonetheless, local education agencies generally control the allocation of education resources for alternative education and often dictate the priority which alternative education is given within the district.

When districts are able to re-enroll formerly out-of-school youth, education funds return to the district with that student. Some school districts have recognized the potential of contracting with community-based organizations, for-profit schools, and community colleges to increase the range of programs they are able to offer their students, particularly those who are struggling or those who have left school. With such “contracting out” arrangements, funds follow the student. Districts receive Federal, state, and local education funds for all enrolled students and use these funds (or a previously agreed upon portion of them) to pay the providers serving the students.

This is true when students are enrolled in district-run programs and even in community-based alternative programs (in which case the district generally retains a portion of state education dollars to cover administrative costs.) For community-based alternative programs, entering into a relationship with their local school district may help them obtain access to state education funds. Arizona is an example of a state that makes it clear through state statute that school districts are able to count for attendance purposes pupils who are not physically in a recognized high school, but who are enrolled in an alternative education program which meets state standards (Arizona Rev. Stat. Section 15-797).

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2000-01, 39% of public school districts offered at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students. Urban

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districts were more likely than rural ones to offer alternative education programs, and districts with more than 10,000 students were much more likely to offer such programs than were moderate-sized or small districts—95%, 69%, and 26%, respectively (National Center for Education Statistics 2004).

In New York City, the Department of Education, through its Office of Youth Development and Community Services, offers students “multiple pathways to graduation.” Distinguishing students who are overage and under-credited but currently attending New York City high schools and those who have disengaged from the school system and are long-term absentees or dropouts, the district offers a variety of alternative programs, including Young Adult Borough Centers with afternoon and evening classes in neighborhood high schools; Learning-to-Work Young Adult Borough Centers which include in-depth job readiness, career exploration, and college readiness programming; Transfer High Schools with small, academically rigorous programming for students who have dropped out or are far from making adequate progress in their current high school (i.e., who are overage for their grade and behind in credits); and full and part-time GED programs. Similarly, Portland, Oregon and Milwaukee, Wisconsin offer students multiple options toward high school completion. In the case of these communities, however, the options are offered primarily through the public schools contracting with numerous community-based organizations to provide alternative education programming. This broadens the range of options the districts are able to offer their students without requiring the in-house expertise and resources necessary.³

To offer the flexibility that is key to the success of alternative education programs, districts must be willing to provide leeway in local policies affecting issues such as length of school day and school year, school hours, and curricular requirements, all areas crucial to providing multiple pathways to graduation. For example, Gonzalo Garza Independence High School, an Austin, Texas Independent School District School opened in 1998 with the mission of removing traditional barriers to high school completion, operates year-round and accepts new students every day. Garza students are offered an individually tailored, rigorous academic program and graduate on their own schedule. At Garza there are no penalties for absences aside from the consequence of failing to complete work (Martin and Halperin 2006). Districts must be willing to engage in outside-the-box thinking, and teachers unions should be included in district-level conversations about alternative education. In some cities, unions have been a strong partner in creating alternative learning environments to meet the needs of all students. For example, Boston’s Pilot Schools operate within the Boston Public

³ It is interesting to note that despite state legislation meant to encourage the development of alternative education programs, only one city in Oregon and one in Wisconsin appear to be fully taking advantage of the legislation. It would be helpful to learn more about why other cities have not chosen to do so.

Schools (and the Boston Teachers Union bargaining unit) with the same school governance and program flexibility as charter schools outside of the district.

Example of a District Providing Multiple Education Options: Portland Public Schools

Portland Public Schools (PPS) offers its students choices such as school-within-school programs in high schools, night schools, and alternative programs in their own locations. Alternative offerings include specialized programs targeting primarily at-risk youth, out-of-school youth, homeless students, teen parents, teens with drug and alcohol problems, and teens returning from the juvenile justice system. In addition to alternative education programs run directly by PPS, the PPS Office of Educational Options contracts with community-based organizations (CBOs) to offer education programs to youth who have left or are at great risk of leaving school. The programs these organizations offer are an integral part of the District's commitment to reengaging youth who have dropped out. In School Year (SY) 2003-2004, PPS contracted with 16 different CBOs to educate 2,232 high school students in 19 alternative programs. About five percent of the PPS budget, or \$8.5 million per year, is spent on contracting with such programs.

The 16 organizations which partner with PPS comprise the Coalition of Metro Area Community-Based Schools (C-MACS), a coalition of CBOs working with PPS to comprise a comprehensive education system accessible to all students. Portland Public Schools views the C-MACS organizations as partners in the city's mission to educate all children. PPS is part of a system which offers attractive, student-focused options, with programs and paths to meet their varied needs. The 19 programs offered by C-MACS range in size from one with 10 students to another that serves 754 students annually. Located throughout Portland, they include drop-in, GED, small diploma-granting, and community college programs. They also provide specialized services for homeless youth, teen parents, recent immigrants, and English language learners.

(Continued on next page)

Example of a District Providing Multiple Education Options: Portland Public Schools (continued)

PPS established an evaluation component for CBO-run programs that specifies annual performance objectives which, over time, have essentially become school improvement plans for all CBO-directed alternative programs in the city. Since 1999, C-MACS member programs contracting with PPS have been evaluated annually by the federally-funded Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL). This evaluation has raised the rigor of the programs while student achievement has also risen dramatically among those who complete these alternative programs. According to the annual NREL evaluation, the attendance rate for students in the CBO alternative programs in SY 2003-2004 was 86%, with 80% judged to have experienced "positive outcomes," such as gains in skills, graduation, GED attainment, employment, transition to public high school, or continued involvement in an alternative program.

Of the 2,232 students enrolled in CBO alternative programs during SY 2003-2004, about 15% (332) who had been enrolled in a PPS high school on October 1 left that school and later in the school year enrolled in a CBO alternative program. Of these, 289 stayed in PPS through their participation in CBO alternative programs and only 43 (fewer than 13%) dropped out during the school year. Eight-five percent of the students served by the CBO alternative programs in SY 2003-2004 had not been enrolled in a PPS high school on October 1. These out-of-school youth were brought back into the District through their enrollment in a CBO alternative program, thereby increasing the total number of high school students served by a resounding 14% to 15,379.

C-MACS schools are supported by per pupil funding of about \$35 per day from PPS, as well as other sources, including federal funds (e.g., YouthBuild, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Temporary Assistant for Needy Families, etc.) and contributions from local business and philanthropic organizations. In fact, a 2004 evaluation of C-MACS programs found that every dollar paid to programs by PPS was matched by a dollar in other funding (Martin and Halperin, 2006).

Policy Barriers

A range of barriers must be overcome to ensure that high quality, comprehensive alternative education programs are available and can succeed.

Little Overall Coordination. The reviews of programs at the Federal level point out the large number of funding sources with little overall coordination of efforts. There is no guiding vision on how to most effectively serve these youth, and there is currently no way of determining how much funding is actually dedicated to alternative education. Various Federal agencies have expertise in certain areas of working with youth, and they are to be commended for their efforts. But viewed from the local provider level, support appears both disconnected and inadequate.

Lack of Systemic and Holistic Approach. Another challenge related to funding and program structure is the inherent limits in their authorizing legislation for each program. This is not a fault of any level of government. Separate committees and legislators with expertise in their own area write laws to solve certain problems and because the programs span various disciplines or areas, there are few comprehensive legislative remedies. Young people's problems cannot be compartmentalized. A long-term investment and systemic approach to deal with needy young people, and the need for dependable funding from the early grades to adult goals remains. But identifying effective programs that can span the middle grades to secondary education to postsecondary education to workforce development and adult education is a challenge.

Non-equitable Funding for Alternative Education. Alternative education programs, especially those outside the public K-12 system face added challenges of accessing Federal, state, and local education dollars that are most often designed to be allocated to state and local education agencies. Once in the education system, it is extremely difficult to access these dollars to support students in alternative education placements. The competition for dollars in education is always intense, and public systems do not generally like to "lose" their dollars to another services system. Encouraging education policymakers to see the value of creating a system in which funds follow the student is a difficult undertaking. Even when funds do flow to alternative education programming, they are usually at a level below general education funding. In situations where funds follow students to community-based schools, a significant portion is often kept by the district to cover administrative costs. Likewise, charter schools can be subject to different attendance reporting requirements than regular public schools, often resulting in lower student counts and, therefore, funding. Such policies result in inadequate funding for alternative education.

Lack of Data. Lack of data hampers alternative education efforts as well. Few school systems, states, or the Federal government use student identifiers to effectively track the progress of youth after high school and into college or the workforce. It becomes even more difficult to track youth who leave the public education system before receiving a diploma. To understand how youth find their pathways to success, much better data is needed. Adelman's *Answers in the Toolbox Revisited* (2006) provides a good source of data on students moving through postsecondary education, but a similar analysis of how students in the alternative education world progress is similarly needed on a national scale.

Impact of NCLB on Alternative Education. While NCLB's focus is on the neediest youth and collecting data on outcomes, questions have been raised about the fit between the competency-based approach of alternative education and NCLB's standards-based approach. Also, the large number of overage students who are behind in skills when they come to secondary education (particularly in urban areas) poses a challenge for states and schools seeking to meet the adequate yearly progress benchmarks. These realities need to be taken into consideration as more and more students are accessing alternative education programs.

Poor Alternative Education Placements. In creating multiple options for students, districts must address how students are assigned to alternative education programs and ensure they are placed in high quality programs. While in some districts, a move to an alternative education program is a student's choice, in others it is part of the district's zero tolerance disciplinary plan and is a coerced move unlikely to improve the student's relationship to school and learning. School districts also sometimes assign poor-performing and disruptive students to alternative education as a way to remove them from regular classrooms, with little attention paid to the quality of the program or the range of supports to help students learn or catch up.

Limitations of Curriculum and Program Design. Curricular requirements at the local and state levels can prove difficult for alternative education programs, which often employ nontraditional methods and flexibility in order to meet their students' varied needs. In particular, states' and districts' requirements of time (length of school day or school year, hours in class for a particular course, etc.) can prove challenging to programs seeking to meet their students' educational and social needs through open-entry/open-exit programs, expanded and compressed programs, credit recovery, work and experience-based learning, or flexible scheduling. State legislation allowing for such flexibility is critical to the expansion of alternative education options.

Limited Funding. While additional funding is not an answer in and of itself, most

alternative education programs have few guaranteed sources of funding on which to rely. Inadequate funding compromises programs' ability to work with a population that, by most accounts, has special needs above and beyond those of typical students.

Areas of Opportunity

Federal Level

The White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth has focused the conversation about increasing attention to certain categories of needy youth and improving services available to them. Policymakers and practitioners should be encouraged to broaden this focus by creating multiple options and pathways through education and training for all youth, and ensuring high quality alternative education choices as one of those options.

- **Increasing Coordination of Programs**

At the Federal level, there are large numbers of programs that can support alternative education programs or aspects of alternative education as well as helping to build a system of options and choices for youth. These programs are spread across multiple agencies which makes it difficult for program providers. One approach is to call for more coordination of programs and funding streams at all levels. This is not a new call, and we have learned over the years how difficult it is to coordinate government entities at any level. Rather, experience tells us that funds can be combined effectively at the local level if the program provider understands the range of resources and has the tools to manage the process. This requires greater transparency and information regarding funding and more creative program management strategies. DOL (and other Federal agencies) can help state and local program providers coordinate their efforts more effectively by providing certain services such as technical assistance and professional development, data collection and evaluation, and research and development. DOL and other agencies could play a constructive role in each of these areas to promote high quality alternative education.

- **Facilitating the Inclusion of Alternative Education Providers in Education Funding Eligibility Requirements**

The Federal government should ensure program eligibility requirements across agencies and programs allow for the inclusion of alternative education providers to the extent possible. Eligibility for education programs, for example, could be expanded to include community-based youth organizations and alternative education providers.

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- **Allowing Schools to Receive K-12 Funding for Students Until Age 21**

The Federal government could ensure that all students are able to take advantage of K-12 funding at least until the age of 21. While this is primarily a state policy issue, the Federal government could ensure that its programs are explicitly authorized to serve youth through the age of 21, as the Individuals with Educational Disabilities Act allows.

- **Developing a System for Tracking Students**

The Federal government could also support the creation of a unique student identifier (i.e., I.D. number) that cuts across programs (education, alternative education, postsecondary education, and the workforce), and also allows students to be tracked across state lines. Despite the efforts of several states to develop such unique student identifiers, they are hampered in determining outcomes by the mobility of youth who move to another state. Better national data on the mobility of youth, especially disabled and English Language Learners (ELLs), is also needed, and could be developed and collected with Federal support.

- **Improving Data on Actual Funding for Alternative Education Programming**

Federal agencies have knowing how much funding goes to students in alternative education settings, whether in public K-12 education programs or community-based programs. Increased data on the status of funding for these programs would be very helpful in determining the scope of the issue. Disaggregating data by subgroups (ELLs, students with disabilities) would also be extremely helpful.

- **Providing Technical Assistance to Alternative Education Providers**

The Department of Labor and/or other Federal agencies could provide information, networking, and convening opportunities to state and local alternative education providers regarding innovative practice, various funding streams and strategies, and leadership and professional development. Such technical assistance could include the wide range of individuals associated with alternative education to ensure that they are cross-cutting and inclusive: middle and secondary educators from the traditional K-12 system; community-based youth providers, workforce development providers, adult education providers, and postsecondary education providers. Technical assistance can be provided on funding streams and program structures, program evaluation, and accountability systems, as a way to improve programs and collaboration.

- **Creating Learning Networks of Alternative Education Providers**

The Department of Labor and/or other agencies could also create learning networks among alternative education providers to advance the field. Because alternative education programs often operate in relative isolation, they are missing important opportunities for professional development and collaboration. A learning network of alternative educators would make it possible for established programs to:

- document what works in serving struggling students and reengaging out-of-school youth;
- share best practices to improve the quality of programming;
- provide technical assistance in the area of program management and funding strategies; and
- provide technical assistance, including ongoing mentoring, to communities interested in establishing new programs.

Information arising from the learning networks could be shared with the wider range of individuals working with youth, including those in the K-12 system. The Federal government routinely supports demonstrations of promising and effective practices as a way to learn and develop sound policy. A number of items emerge that could be studied as part of a demonstration effort, such as:

- development of proficiency based assessments that can be aligned with standards-based accountability systems or
- development of data collection and tools that could be used by programs to track longitudinal outcomes of youth across systems.

- **Encouraging Data Collection and Program Evaluation**

Government leadership is needed in the areas of data collection and program evaluation. One of the greatest data needs is to follow students longitudinally through education and training systems to determine their outcomes. Because education and college-going patterns and patterns of participation in work are changing, better data on the multiple pathways youth follow to their end goal is needed in order to make informed policy. Few programs conduct process or outcome evaluations, but evaluations are key to ongoing improvement. Federal agencies could allow a certain percentage of funds to be used for program evaluation. While this might cut down slightly on the amount of funding that goes to program services, much would be learned by having strong program evaluations to inform policymakers and practitioners.

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- **Development of Model State and Local Legislation**
As many states and local communities are grappling with these issues, the Federal government could support a consortium of states or communities to develop comprehensive alternative education policy with a goal of developing model legislation on areas such as competency-based credit, funds following the student, student identifier systems, and accountability for alternative education.
- **Expanding on Existing Successful Programs**
In an ideal situation, the Federal government would expand and highlight current successful programs. While it is unlikely that additional dollars will be available in the near future for any large-scale expansion of these efforts, even small increases would result in many more youth being served.
- **Examining NCLB Accountability Requirements vis-a-vis Alternative Education Programs**
With regard to NCLB and the requirement of schools to make adequate yearly progress, there should be a full review as part of the reauthorization process to ensure that NCLB addresses some of the unique aspects of alternative education programs. While it is critical for alternative education programs to meet AYP targets, given the educational levels of many of their participants, it is almost impossible to imagine that a 16- or 17-year old who reads at the third or fourth grade level will meet math and reading targets by 10th or 11th grade, even with intensive supports. Allowing Federal funds to be used until students reach age 21 (or beyond) might allow more flexibility and keep overage students in the system longer.
- **Encouraging Better Use of the Supplemental Education Services Provision of NCLB**
The Supplemental Education Services (SES) provider provision could also be used more effectively by building stronger connections to the workforce training and alternative education systems, rather than just tutoring companies, which represent the bulk of currently approved SES providers. Because many of the youth who need help in meeting academic targets have other needs that may prevent them from learning, programs with a stronger focus on youth development principles, in addition to a comprehensive academic approach, may have better success with these youth.

State Level

As part of their attention to high school redesign, many states are considering multiple option approaches. State policymakers should be encouraged to consider several areas of opportunity for increasing available pathways through education:

- **Increasing Focus on Developing Alternative Education Programs Designed for Struggling Students and Out-of-School Youth**

States should be encouraged to facilitate the development of quality alternative education programs that reconnect youth to education and the workplace. In addition to accurately measuring and reporting graduation rates, states should direct districts to provide alternative education options not only as a means of supporting struggling students and reengaging out-of-school youth, but also as a part of their high school reform efforts. State legislation directing districts to focus specifically on students at risk of not graduating, including those who have left school, helps districts to focus their efforts.

- **Redefining Curricular Requirements to Allow for Program Flexibility**

States should rethink the current system of credits based on time in seat and consider competency-based approaches. Likewise, states should increase flexibility around other curricular requirements, such as school day length and time in classroom.

- **Increasing Funding for Alternative Education**

States should consider increasing the funding for alternative education to at least the same levels as general per pupil amounts. Those states which allow funds to follow students outside of the public K-12 system should send their full funding with them. Likewise, alternative education programs which are charter schools should receive equivalent funding to the general K-12 system.

- **Allowing Schools to Receive ADA Funding for Students At Least Until Age 21**

States should enact policies that allow students to continue to receive ADA funds at least until age 21 if they have not completed a high school diploma. More often than not, these over-age students will be outside of the traditional K-12 system and therefore, funds will need to flow to the non-traditional alternative education system. Also, states need to review their compulsory school attendance laws. In some cases, when students are allowed to leave at age 16, it is questionable whether ADA funding would continue to flow to that student even if he or she reentered a public alternative education or training program.

- **Easing the Flow of Funding for Alternative Education**

States could facilitate the smoother flow of funding by creating official mechanisms for funds to follow students into alternative education settings, including those outside of the public K-12 system. States should be encouraged to allow districts more leeway to award graduation credit based on competency, not just "seat time."

- **Developing Systems for Tracking Students**

As previously mentioned, states need to develop systems for unique student identifiers. As many states have put P-16 Councils in place, this is beginning to happen. The National Governors Association's efforts to develop consistent high school graduation reporting rates is also driving states to develop systems that allow tracking of students after high school to determine if they returned to obtain a GED or other certificate. States are also beginning discussions on transparency of data across state boundaries as a way to track students into postsecondary education, although this is at an initial stage. States that have particularly large numbers of students crossing lines (e.g. Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia) should consider ways to work together on common data systems.

States should be encouraged to develop comprehensive legislation calling for increased local attention to struggling students and out-of-school youth. With states' attention currently focused on high school reform, it is the perfect time for increased attention to the large numbers of students not successfully prepared for adulthood. State education grants targeting dropout prevention and recovery and supports for struggling students would go a long way toward encouraging greater attention to this important issue.

Local Level

At the local level policymakers and practitioners should be encouraged to consider:

- **Expanding Options for All Students**

Communities and school districts should take a more active role in expanding alternative education options for students. Since the traditional high school does not work for all students, school and community leaders need to develop a range of schools and programs to meet the needs of diverse learners. Whether offered in-house or by community-based partners, districts should be offering all students multiple pathways to a recognized credential, with options such as flexible scheduling, compressed and expanded programs, dual-enrollment, credit recovery, career-based programs, and adult high schools.

Local education agencies should consider partnering with other public systems and community-based providers to extend the range of alternative education options they can offer students. Many districts might do well to work with the wider community as they seek to serve at-risk and out-of-school youth. Contracting with community-based providers makes it possible for a district to offer its students many more pathways to education success than would be possible for most school districts to offer themselves.

- **Encouraging Postsecondary Connections**

Community colleges are promising sources of alternative education, particularly for older out-of-school youth seeking to continue their education. State and Federal funds should be leveraged to encourage community colleges to partner with school districts and community-based organizations to offer alternative education programs, both GED and high school completion. Partnerships with community colleges show particular promise, especially for older out-of-school youth seeking to complete high school and continue with further education. Existing dual-enrollment programs should be followed carefully to learn if they hold promise for accelerating learning for at-risk students.

- **Fostering Cross-system Collaboration**

Cities and counties should be encouraged to take a more active role in forging collaboration among various local agencies serving young people so that programming and funding streams can be coordinated and young people do not get “lost” in cracks in the system.

In addition, cities and counties should be encouraged to be creative in utilizing other tools at their disposal, including partnering or contracting with community-based organizations and using their bonding authority to support adequate facilities for alternative education.

Conclusion

High school reform has moved to a position of national focus, and alternative education must be included in the discussion about redesigning the American high school. Alternative education is an essential component of high school reform, for

[t]rue quality high school reform must include effective strategies to reengage and reconnect young people who are in danger of failing or who have failed to complete high school... To reform high school without a strategy to reengage these young people who have already dropped out would be to abandon them to, and accept the social costs associated with, bleak futures marked by reduced earning potential, poverty, crime, drug abuse, and early pregnancy (ACTE 2006).

Quality alternative education programs, which have successfully reengaged some of the hardest-to-teach young people, have vital information about what works in secondary education, information which could assist greatly efforts to improve all high schools. Communities need to learn from the best alternative education programs to ensure strong principles of youth development, supports for needy youth, and academic rigor.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL ROLES SUPPORTING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

It is time to consider a new approach to education for high school-aged youth—one that recognizes the various and diverse needs of our young people and that provides multiple pathways to success in postsecondary education, careers, and life. Alternative education has a key role to play to help youth, and policymakers should consider ways to improve the integration of those programs with the education and training system.

Appendix: Potential Federal Funding Sources for Alternative Education^{1 2}

| Department or Agency | Program Name | Program Description and Strategies | Funding | Target Population |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| DOL | Workforce Investment Act Youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic and remedial education, work experience, training, and mentoring programs • Academic enrichment activities to develop leadership, decision-making, and citizenship skills. • Local workforce investment boards (WIBs) and their youth councils oversee the distribution of WIA funding to service providers, which can be community-based and not-for-profit organizations, local public agencies, and other entities. | FY 01 - \$1.377 B FY 02 - \$1.343 B FY 03 - \$1.038 B FY 04 - \$995 M FY 05 - \$986 M FY 06 - \$940 M | Low income youth, ages 14 to 21, who face at least one of the following barriers to employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deficient in basic literacy skills • a school dropout • homeless • being a runaway, a foster child, pregnant or a parent, an offender • require additional assistance to complete their education or secure and hold employment. <p><i>At least 30 % of local youth funds must help those who are not in school.</i></p> |

¹ The programs included in this paper are meant to be illustrative and not exhaustive of the kinds of programs available. It is not known how much money from most of the programs listed is actually allocated to alternative education providers, whether in or outside of the public K-12 system. This would be an excellent subject for further research.

² Numerous small discretionary grant programs are not included in this chart, because the dollar amounts are small, competition for them is great, and we assume that many alternative education providers do not have the time or expertise to apply. Also, we do not list many of the smaller programs which cover the costs of non-essential, but "nice-to-have services," (e.g. Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth or National Youth Sports Program Fund).

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| DOL | Job Corps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential education and employment training program designed to address the multiple barriers to employment faced by disadvantaged youth • Centers provide integrated academic, vocational, and social skills training to help young people further their education, obtain quality long-term employment, and gain independence | FY 01 - \$1.4 B FY 02 - \$1.454B FY 03 - \$1.509B FY 04 - \$1.535B FY 05 - \$1.551B FY 06 - \$1.564B | Disadvantaged youth ages 16 to 24 |
| DOL | Responsible Reintegration of Youth Offenders | Grants address the specific workforce challenges of youth offenders and utilize strategies that prepare them for new and increasing job opportunities in high-growth/high-demand and economically vital industries and sectors of the American economy. | FY 01 - \$55M FY 02 - \$55M FY 03 - \$54.6M FY 04 - \$49.7M FY 05 - \$49.7M | Youth ages 16-35; youth offenders in either adult or juvenile system <i>Grants are made to states, community-based organizations at the local and national levels, and to some faith-based organizations.</i> |

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| ED | No Child Left Behind | <p>The NCLB Act increases educational accountability for states, school districts, and schools; provides greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; increases flexibility for states and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the use of Federal education dollars; and places a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for our youngest children. The NCLB Act will strengthen Title I accountability by requiring states to implement state-wide accountability systems covering all public schools and students. These systems must be based on challenging state standards in reading and mathematics, annual testing for all students in grades 3-8, and annual statewide progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students reach proficiency within 12 years. Assessment results and State progress objectives must be broken out by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency to ensure that no group is left behind. School districts and schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward statewide proficiency goals will, over time, be subject to improvement, corrective action, and restructuring measures aimed at getting them back on course to meet State standards.</p> | <p>FY 01 - \$ 8.762B FY 02 - \$10.350B FY 03 - \$11.688B FY 04 - \$12.342B FY 05 - \$12.739B FY 06 - \$12.713B</p> | School-aged students |
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| ED | Public Charter Schools Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports planning, development, and initial implementation of charter schools. • In exchange for increased flexibility, charter schools are held accountable for improving student academic achievement. • Objective is to replace rules-based governance with performance-based accountability, thereby stimulating the creativity and commitment of teachers, parents, and citizens. • Many alternative education programs have become charter schools as a way to access average daily attendance dollars, but there are no statistics on how many charter schools provide alternative education. | <p>FY 01 - \$190M FY 02 - \$200M FY 03 - \$198M FY 04 - \$218 M FY 05 - \$216M FY 06 - \$214M</p> <p><i>Note the bulk of funding for charter schools comes from local sources though average daily attendance/membership dollars.</i></p> | School-aged students |
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| ED | Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA state grants) | Under IDEA, states are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities. Services are provided in accordance with individualized education programs (IEPs) that are developed by teams that include: the child's parents; a special educator; a representative of the local educational agency; a regular educator, if appropriate; and others. In addition, services must be provided—to the maximum extent appropriate—in the least restrictive environment, which for most children means in classes with children who are not disabled. Under IDEA, children with disabilities must be included in general state and district-wide assessments, including the assessments required under NCLB | <p>FY 01 - \$6.34B FY 02 - \$7.528B FY 03 - \$8.874 B FY 04 - \$10.06B FY 05 - \$10.589B FY 06 - \$10.582B</p> <p><i>It is unknown how much IDEA funding is sent to students attending alternative education programs. Of all IDEA youth who left high school during the 2000-01 school year, 57 % received a standard diploma and an additional 11 % received an alternative credential.</i></p> | Students with disabilities ages 3 to 21 |
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| ED | Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technology Education Act | <p>This program provides states with support for state leadership activities, administration of the state plan for vocational and technical education, and subgrants to eligible recipients to improve vocational and technical education programs. To be eligible for a subgrant, an eligible recipient must operate a vocational and technical education program that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Strengthens the academic, vocational, and technical skills of students participating in vocational and technical education programs, achieved by integrating core academic subjects into vocational and technical education programs through a coherent sequence of courses; o Provides students with strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of an industry; o Provides professional development programs to teachers, counselors, and administrators; o Develops and implements evaluations of the vocational and technical education programs carried out with funds under the Perkins Act, including an assessment of how the needs of special populations are being met; o Links secondary vocational and technical education, including Tech-Prep programs, with postsecondary vocational and technical education programs. | <p>FY 01 - \$1.243B FY 02 - \$1.324B FY 03 - \$1.325B FY 04 - \$1.327B FY 05 - \$1.326B FY 06 - \$1.296B</p> | Youth and adults |
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| ED | School Dropout Prevention Program | <p>Funds may be used for a variety of dropout prevention strategies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying and providing dropout prevention services for at-risk students; • identifying and encouraging youth who already have dropped out to reenter schools; and • implementing other comprehensive dropout prevention approaches. <p>Youth development initiatives can coordinate with state and local educational agencies and use funds to provide mentoring and other support services to prevent youth from dropping out and encourage the reentry of youth.</p> | <p>FY 01 - \$5 M FY 02 - \$10M FY 03 - \$10.9M FY 04 - \$4.9M FY 05 - \$4.9M FY 06 - \$4.9M</p> | <p>State and local educational agencies serving communities with dropout rates above the state's average annual dropout rate are eligible to apply for funding.</p> |
| ED | Neglected and Delinquent Program | <p>State formula grants to support educational services for an estimated 171,000 children and youth in state-operated institutions.</p> | <p>FY 01 - \$46M FY 02 - \$48M FY 03 - \$49M FY 04 - \$48M FY 05 - \$49M FY 06 - \$49M</p> | <p>Children and youth in state-operated institutions</p> |
| ED | Adult Education and Family Literacy Act | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Basic Education (ABE) to assist adults in gaining fundamental literacy skills • English as a Second Language (ESL) training to help recent immigrants learn English • GED test preparation for older youth and adults with higher skills. • Funds are allocated fairly evenly among the three programs. | <p>FY 01 - \$560M FY 02 - \$591M FY 03 - \$587M FY 04 - \$590M FY 05 - \$585M FY 06 - \$579M</p> | <p>Adults and out-of-school youth ages 16 and older</p> |

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| ED | 21 st Century Community Learning Centers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to extend the school day and/or year to provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet state and local student academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics • Funds flow from to state educational agencies which then make competitive grants to local educational agencies, community-based organizations, other public or private entities, or consortia of two or more of such agencies, organizations, or entities. • States must give priority to applications that are jointly submitted by a local educational agency and a community-based organization or other public or private entity. | FY 01 - \$845M FY 02 - \$1B FY 03 - \$993M FY 04 - \$999M FY 05 - \$991M FY 06 - \$981M | Students grades K-12 |
| ED | McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth | Supports homeless youth by providing academic enrichment; job/life skills; special needs services; workforce development; basic education and literacy; secondary school diploma/GED attainment; and mentoring | FY 01 - \$35M FY 02 - \$50M FY 03 - \$54M FY 04 - \$59.6M FY 05 - \$62.4M FY 06 - \$61.9M | homeless youth <i>Grants are made to SEAs.</i> |

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| ED | GEAR UP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education • Provides five-year grants to states and partnerships to provide early college preparation and awareness activities to participating students through comprehensive mentoring, counseling, outreach and other supportive services in high-poverty middle and high schools | FY 01 - \$295M FY 02- \$285M FY 03.- \$293M FY 04 - \$285M FY 05 - \$306M FY 06 - | <p>GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. GEAR UP funds are also used to provide college scholarships to low-income students.</p> <p><i>State agencies, community-based organizations, schools, institutions of higher education, public and private agencies, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, and businesses are eligible to apply.</i></p> |
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| ED | TRIO | <p>A set of programs to help low-income Americans enter college, graduate, and move on to participate more fully in America's economic and social life. These programs are funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and are referred to as the TRIO Programs (initially just three programs). While student financial aid programs help students overcome financial barriers to higher education, TRIO programs help students overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education.</p> | <p>FY 01 - \$730M FY 02 - \$802M FY 03 - \$872M FY 04 - \$832M FY 05 - \$836M FY 06 - \$828M</p> | <p>Two-thirds of the students served must come from families with incomes under \$28,000, where neither parent graduated from college. More than 2,700 TRIO Programs currently serve nearly 866,000 low-income Americans. Many programs serve students in grades six through 12. Thirty-seven percent of TRIO students are Whites, 35% are African-Americans, 19% are Hispanics, 4% are Native Americans, 4% are Asian-Americans, and 1% are listed as "Other," including multi-racial students. Twenty-two thousand students with disabilities and more than 25,000 U.S. veterans are currently enrolled in the TRIO Programs as well.</p> |
| ED | Pell Grants | <p>Grants to students enrolled in postsecondary education to support the cost of attendance. May be used to support enrollment in remedial postsecondary courses, but this then limits the amount of grants a student can receive to complete for-credit college coursework.</p> | <p>FY 01 – \$8.756B FY 02 – \$11.314B FY 03 – \$11.364B FY 04 – \$12.006B FY 05 – \$12.365B FY 06 – \$17.345B</p> | <p>To receive a Pell Grant, a student must have financial need. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) formula is the standard formula used in determining financial need for FSA programs. The formula produces an EFC number. The lower the EFC, the greater the student's financial need. Thus, the neediest students will have an EFC of 0 and may be eligible for the maximum Pell award.</p> |

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| HHS | Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) | The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant provides Federal funds states with income assistance programs for poor families with children, welfare-to-work efforts, work supports such as child care, and other social services for low-income families. Over the past 8 years, the number of families receiving income assistance has fallen sharply and in 2003, most TANF funds - more than 60% - were spent on areas other than income assistance. | FY 01 – FY 02 – FY 03 – FY 04 – FY 05 – FY 06 – | Funds can be allocated to youth who are in-school to support their continued educational experience and to support teen parents to access job preparation and workforce training. States also support specific activities such as employment centers, access to postsecondary education and training, and eliminating barriers to employment. |
| HHS | Community Mental Health Services Block Grant | Provides financial assistance to states and territories to enable them to carry out the state plans for providing comprehensive community mental health services to adults with a serious mental illness and to children with serious emotional disturbances. | FY 01 - \$420.000 M FY 02 - \$433.000 M FY 03 - \$437.140 M FY 04 - \$434.690 M FY 05 - \$432.756 M FY 06 - est. \$410.953M | People with mental disorders |

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| HHS | Community Services Block Grant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides services and/or activities to meet the needs of low-income families and individuals in the following areas: child care, employment, education, better use of available income, housing, nutrition, emergency services, and health. Youth development initiatives can use funds to support a wide range of youth development activities including education and employment training, financial opportunity, literacy development, and independent living, job search, adult basic education/literacy, and GED attainment. | FY 00 - \$519.253M FY 01 - \$590.470M FY 02 - \$639.740M FY 03 - \$635.561M FY 04 - \$ 631.795M FY 05 – est. \$626.723M FY 06 - \$620.364M | Low income individuals and families <i>States make grants to qualified locally-based nonprofit community antipoverty agencies and other eligible entities which provide services.</i> |
| DOJ | Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Grants | Youth development initiatives can receive funds from the state directly or in partnership with others and can use funds to support a variety of educational and youth development programming including mentoring, enrichment, life skills training, delinquency prevention, and leadership development. | FY 01 – \$89M FY 02 - \$86M FY 03 – est. \$88M FY 04 – est. \$66M FY 05 - FY 06 - | Thirty-five programs targeting youth in different age ranges between birth to age 18 <i>Funds flow to the designated state agency, which may contract with private, nonprofit organizations to provide certain services.</i> |

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| <p>HUD1*</p> | <p>YouthBuild</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs offer educational and job training services, leadership training, counseling and other support activities, as well as on-site training in housing rehabilitation or construction work. • YouthBuild funds can be used to pay for training, wages, and stipends for participants, entrepreneurial training, internships, drivers' education, in-house staff training, acquisition of rehabilitation of housing, and limited construction costs. • Youth development initiatives include programs that deal with education and skill training, financial literacy training, entrepreneurial training, and leadership training. • Funds may also be used for some administrative costs. | <p>FY 01- \$59.9M FY 02 - \$65.0M FY 03 – est. \$59.6M FY 04 – est. \$65.0M FY 05 – \$61.5M FY 06 – \$49.5M</p> | <p>Youthbuild provides grants on a competitive basis to non-profit organizations to assist high-risk youth, between the ages of 16-24, to learn housing construction job skills and to complete their high school education.</p> <p><i>Public or private nonprofit organizations, public housing authorities, state and local governments, Indian tribes, or any organization eligible to provide education and employment training under Federal unemployment training programs are eligible to apply for funds.</i></p> |
| <p>HUD</p> | <p>Community Development Block Grant</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds can be used for academic enrichment; job/ life skills, adult education /GED; and job training. • Entitlement grants awarded to large cities and counties. • States are allocated funding to make grants to smaller cities and rural areas. | <p>Entitlement grants: FY 03 - \$3B FY 04 - \$3.032B FY 05 - \$2.882B Grants for smaller cities, rural areas (pop. Under 50,000): FY 04 - \$1.293B FY 05 - est. \$1.23B FY 06 – \$1.1B</p> | <p>Community action agencies; community-based organizations; local government agencies; other youth-serving organizations; and faith-based organizations are eligible recipients.</p> |

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| CNCS | Americorps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides trained volunteers to public agencies, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations to help those organizations accomplish more. • AmeriCorps members tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters. • In return for their service, AmeriCorps members receive an education award which can be used to pay for college and/or training-related educational expenses. • Youth development initiatives can utilize AmeriCorps members to supplement their staff and can encourage youth to become AmeriCorps members to further their education and training goals. | <p>FY 04 - \$312M FY 05 - \$312M FY 06 - \$290M</p> | <p>Americorps State and National: citizens, nationals, lawful or permanent resident aliens, ages 17 and older Americorps Vista: 18 and over Americorps National civilian Community Corps: ages 18-24 Senior Corps: ages 55 and up</p> |
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| <p>CNCS</p> | <p>Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides funds for elementary and secondary schools and community-based agencies to develop and offer service learning opportunities for school-age youth; educate teachers about service learning and incorporate service learning opportunities into classrooms to enhance academic learning; coordinate adult volunteers in school; and introduce youth to a broad range of careers and encourage them to pursue further education and training. • Youth development initiatives can use funds to support activities that engage youth in service learning projects to further their education and training. | <p>FY 01 - \$32M FY 02 - \$32M FY 03 - \$32M FY 04 - \$32M FY 05 - \$42M FY 06 - \$37M</p> | <p>Learn and Serve America: provides direct and indirect support to K-12 schools, community groups and higher education institutions to facilitate service-learning projects</p> |
| <p>USDA</p> | <p>Cooperative Extension Service: 4-H Youth Development Program</p> | <p>Funds are used to support programs and activities for preschoolers through late teens in both rural and urban settings. Some 4-H clubs can be dedicated to special interest areas like technology or leadership, while others can be more broadly focused on youth development.</p> | <p>Est. \$70 million in CSREES funds have support 4-H activities annually 2000-2006.</p> <p><i>Funds require a match, with states contributing more than a dollar for every Federal dollar.</i></p> | <p>Nearly 7 million youth, ages 5-19, participate in 4-H youth development experiences</p> |

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| DOD | National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses the National Guard to provide military-based training, including supervised work experience in community service and conservation projects for at-risk youth. • Focuses on civilian youth who cease to attend secondary school so as to improve the life skills and employment potential of such youth. | FY 01 - \$62M FY 02 - \$62M FY 03 - est. \$62.5M FY 04 - est. \$62.5M FY 05 - \$73.3M FY 06 - \$78.6M | The National Guard ChalleNGe Program, a preventive, rather than remedial, youth-at-risk program, targets participants who are unemployed, drug-free and non-offender high-school dropouts, 16 to 18 years of age. Core components of the program are citizenship, academic excellence (GED/high school diploma attainment), life-coping skills, community service, health and hygiene, skills training, leadership/followership, and physical training. |
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1 * Legislation has been introduced to transfer YouthBuild from HUD to DOL

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