

How District Leaders Can Support the New Schools Strategy

The latest in a series of reports on the changing face of public education

January 2004



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ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF AN ‘OPEN SECTOR’ IN EDUCATION

Much of the work being done by Education|Evolving is to help create and sustain an “Open Sector” in public education – in Minnesota and elsewhere in the country. By “Open Sector,” we mean a “space” in public education that is open to new entrants – new schools that are started from scratch by teachers, parents, community organizations and multi-school networks. The “Open Sector” is also open to new authorizers or sponsors – entities other than school districts that oversee schools. The “Open Sector” is open to new learning programs and to new ways of governing and managing schools. And, as part of a broadening definition of public education, the “Open Sector” is open to all students who choose to attend schools in that sector.

The “Open Sector” is based on the premise that we cannot get the degree of change and improvement we need in education by relying only on fixing the schools we now have. And, to get enough new schools that are fundamentally different, we need a combination of public policies and private actions that will allow new schools to emerge and that will create an environment in which they can succeed. This kind of positive environment for creating and sustaining new schools can be established on a state-level through actions led by state policy makers. It can also be done – and is certainly needed – in major urban communities all across America.



Though chartered schools may be the most visible part of the “Open Sector” today, this concept of a positive environment for creating and sustaining successful new schools is not limited to charters. The “Open Sector” can also include schools operating within a district or state on some kind of contract other than a charter – as long as they are truly autonomous, accountable and open to all students who chose them.

There is also no prescribed or uniform learning program presumed by this vision for creating many more schools new. In fact, there’s an urgent need to better understand, respect and address the individual differences in students. It’s likely, however, that successful new schools in the “Open Sector” will be smaller and that they will make it possible for all students to take a more active role in their learning and to develop more direct and nurturing relationships with adults.

ABOUT THIS REPORT AND ITS AUTHORS

This report is one of a series funded with support from the **Annie E. Casey Foundation** to encourage and assist urban and other communities in starting and sustaining high quality new schools. This report focuses on the role that **school districts** and **district leaders** can play in providing inspiration and assistance to their teachers, community-based organizations, parents and others in creating new schools that are more autonomous, more accountable, often smaller, and fundamentally different environments for teaching and learning. Several major urban districts – including **New York City**, **Milwaukee** and **Baltimore** – are now providing this kind of leadership and are profiled in this report.

The research and writing for this report was done by **Bryan Hassel**, president of North Carolina-based Public Impact, and his associates **Valaida Fullwood** and **Michelle Godard Terrell**. Bryan Hassel has supervised a number of similar projects over the last six years for the Center for Policy Studies and its Charter Friends National Network (CFNN) -- and now Education|Evolving – initiatives. Final editing and production supervision was also provided by **Jon Schroeder**, Education|Evolving’s coordinator and, from 1996 to 2003, CFNN’s co-founder and director.

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WHY WOULD DISTRICTS PROACTIVELY CREATE SCHOOLS *NEW*?

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

What are “new schools?”

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

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

- **Autonomy**: Being autonomous enough to be innovative and responsive.
- **Choice**: Serving as schools for choice for both students and staff.
- **Equity**: Receiving an equitable share of financial and other resources.
- **Contracts**: Retaining protection from shifting political winds via enforceable performance contracts, agreements or a memorandum of understanding.
- **Results**: Focusing on results and producing outcomes that demonstrate growth in student educational achievements.

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

New schools can take the form of alternative schools, contract schools, magnet schools, community schools, schools-within-a-school, charter and charter-like schools. No matter the name, a new school is a public

school with the flexibility to adapt to the students it serves and the responsibility to produce results. This balance of accountability and autonomy is timely, as greater emphasis is placed on having *all* students achieve at high levels and as student populations grow more and more diverse.

Though many districts require all new schools to meet certain quality thresholds, there is no prescribed, uniform learning program presumed by the new school strategy. To the contrary, the premise behind creating a space for new schools is the need to better understand and address the individual differences among students.

While most successful new schools tend to be smaller than conventional public schools, the most notable common denominator is ability to start fresh, developing a school program and culture designed to meet the needs of their students. But the curriculum, the role of students and teachers, and other key factors vary from school to school.

Why new schools matter

The critical challenge before school districts today is embodied in the widely held belief that public education must bring *every child* up to ambitious levels of achievement. The latest federal legislation on education, “No Child Left Behind,” was developed on this premise.

Though a relatively new concept in the history of the American public education, the bold aspiration of all students achieving at high levels has been building for some time — as states, business leaders, community activists, parents and students themselves have begun to demand it. Yet, as a broadening cross-section of the public embraces the ideal and as more leaders espouse its merit, too few schools are changing sufficiently to achieve it.

Nationwide, attempts at fixing existing schools are producing mixed results. When a school or set of schools

does turnaround for the better, districts are hard pressed to sustain that success or replicate it elsewhere. Since the “Nation at Risk” report in 1983, and long before that, public schools have been awash in efforts to reform and improve what already exists.

Districts have created and raised standards; instituted assessments; reduced class sizes; raised teacher pay; changed certification requirements; increased spending — all in the hope these strategies would *cause* schools to improve. While this litany of measures to reform schools has advanced public education, all told, the change has yet to approach the kind of success schools want and now need to achieve — bringing *every child* up to a high standard.

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

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

- Mounting pressure to bring all students up to standard.
- Understanding of the diversity of needs.
- Recognition that “fixing” strategies have their limits and that starting from “scratch” may be a more effective approach.
- Ability to attract supporters and school leaders and to generate financial and human resources through these “new” opportunities in public education.

A small, but growing number of school districts

across the country are recognizing the value of starting with a blank slate in the design and operation of a school.

These districts are finding that *new* schools can accelerate their efforts to produce high-level academic results among a wide range of students. Going far beyond standards-based reforms and other “fixing” strategies, schools built anew – under dramatically different arrangements – are fulfilling the promise of lasting systemic change being called for by families, students, educators and civic and political leaders.

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

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

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

While districts are using varied approaches to creating space for new schools, there are a number of common threads. Case examples from a number of different communities that are supporting the new schools strategy (profiled beginning on page 6) illuminate both the dif-

ferences and prevailing elements in their approaches.

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

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

Differences in how districts approached the new schools strategy include:

- **Source of impetus** (e.g., vision of district officials, pressure from the business community, and expressed desires of parents and community members).
- **Legal / institutional vehicles** (e.g., chartered schools, magnet schools, and pilot schools).
- **Use of start-ups vs. conversions** (e.g., creating wholly new schools and reinventing existing schools).
- **Pace / scale of effort** (e.g., granting autonomy to one or a few selected schools and initiating large-scale reform in a cluster of schools).
- **Degree to which a district requires schools to include certain design characteristics** (e.g., instructional program, assessment processes, collaborative relationships).

How District Leaders Can Support the New Schools Strategy

While differences exist, several common elements in their approaches are also emerging. In each community, new schools were created when district leaders demonstrated the will to suspend long-held assumptions about schooling and acknowledge where past reforms have fallen short.

These leaders also conceded the intrinsic limitations

of implementing reform strategies under the same arrangements that have historically governed public schools. Opportunities to create schools anew flourished when district leaders cleared identified barriers, invested a fair share of resources, and valued new school designs and methods for producing academic results.

LESSONS LEARNED/ADVICE OFFERED ON CREATING SCHOOLS NEW

It's difficult to generalize because the political, legal and other environments around new schools development vary greatly among the states and major urban areas. Following, however, is a quick list of common lessons learned and advice offered districts on opening a space and creating opportunities for the creation of new schools – all based on experiences of early pioneers in the cities we examined.

- **Take a proactive approach to implementing a new schools strategy and make it an integral part of the district's reform agenda.** Laura Weeldreyer of Baltimore states that creating new schools works best when a district introduces the strategy as a proactive measure and as an integral element of the reform philosophy and beliefs.

A court order was the impetus for the Baltimore New Schools Initiative; and thus Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) had the strategy imposed upon an existing framework, rather than having it arise from the organization's core beliefs, culture and structure. As a result, systems that could readily support school innovations and the overall strategy were not always in place. The Baltimore's initiative has struggled to overcome this systemic challenge.

- **Ensure new schools are autonomous enough to be innovative and responsive.** District and community leaders must stay focused on their rationale and guiding principles for creating new schools. "A new school

strategy must have a clear rationale, otherwise it's too easy to create schools that look like the ones we already have," cautions Jonathan Gyurko, director of the New York City school district's charter program. Gyurko emphasizes the need to re-examine assumptions about what's a school and what's a good school, then start from scratch about what must be in place to create a new and successful school. He adds, "It's not enough to re-shuffle the cards." It is important to ground a new school strategy with a strong plan, good resources, and guiding school design characteristics of effective schools.

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

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

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- **Allot a fair share of resources.** The New Vision for Secondary Education in Milwaukee brings considerable public and private funds and resources to transform the district's high schools. In New York City, the schools' Chancellor has established an Office of New Schools Development, which dedicates resources to support the planning, start-up and operation of high-quality new schools. Charter schools in New York City are also benefiting from the Chancellor's policies to provide start-up funds, special education resources, and use of public school buildings.

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

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

- **Include the community, in particular parents and teachers, in the development of the district's shared vision and goals and in decision-making processes.**

Libia Gil, formerly superintendent of the Chula Vista, California school district, says that public engagement is critical to sustaining improvements district-wide. It is important to include the community's vision and goals in

process of converting existing district schools to charter status and selecting school models.

The value of public engagement played was evident when Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD) became California's first district to contract with Edison Schools, Inc. Gil states that there were concerns that the national, for-profit company would come and take over local schools.

"The district was adamant that it was not about a takeover, but a partnership. The district never gave up its responsibility for serving students," a point Gil says was emphasized to community members. The school's community partnership is producing results. Feaster-Edison Charter School made gains at all grade levels in Language Arts and Mathematics on a recent report of Adequate Yearly Progress.

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

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

- **Collaborate with local community-based education organizations.** Based on his city's experience, Gyrko believes districts of all sizes can benefit from partnership with organizations like New York City's New Visions for Public Schools. These organizations

bring a broad base of support and resources and are often more nimble than a school district in responding to opportunities and school needs. New Visions is serving as the school district's partner in managing the New Century High School Initiative. The New York City school district is also supporting the development of a new not-for-profit entity to drive the district's charter school initiative.

- **Create diverse advisory boards and staff – including both district and community leaders – for district-led new schools initiatives.** Weeldreyer states that her advisory board has been critical to the success of the Baltimore New Schools Initiative. The board benefits from civic leadership from the mayor's office, local

education funders, and community-based nonprofit organizations. The involvement of these leaders has influenced the district to act differently in instances when a school's autonomy and innovations are in jeopardy.

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

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

CASE EXAMPLES ON NEW SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT

The following case examples – drawn from interviews and other direct sources – provide an overview of the rationale and initial experiences in a proactive strategy of starting schools in seven cities: Baltimore, New York City, Chula Vista (CA), San Diego, Milwaukee, Philadelphia and Oakland. As more information becomes available these profiles will be expanded upon and updated on the Education|Evolving web site – www.educationevolving.org.

BALTIMORE, MD

Educational climate and rationale

The Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) introduced its New Schools Initiative after a longstanding special education lawsuit. In 1995, a judge ordered the initiative as a potential remedy for improving education and as a means of encouraging inclusionary practices for students receiving special education

services. While many public school districts have instituted comparable new schools programs, the federal court action has been a central and distinctive aspect of the Baltimore New Schools Initiative.

New school strategy and descriptions

Greater autonomy and authority in exchange for stricter accountability is the core concept behind New Schools in Baltimore. The District's first ten new schools are a mix of wholly new schools and previously existing schools that converted to New School status (see page 8 for a listing of the first ten Baltimore New Schools). All New Schools have authority in four important areas: staffing, budget, curriculum, and governance.

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners launched the initiative by releasing a request for proposals to not-for-profit institutions who were seeking to “operate innovative public schools in such a way as to address the needs of all students attending said schools, including students with educational disabilities, and in so

doing, to make an enormous difference in the lives of students attending said schools and their families.”

The school board established contracts with selected applicants and gave the schools five years to show significant progress towards meeting state standards and individually established performance standards. Operators of New Schools vary and include community-based organizations, local and national education reformers, an organization serving adjudicated youth and a college.

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

These schools receive funding through the same budget allocation process used for other Baltimore City Public Schools. New Schools housed in buildings not owned by BCPSS are held responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and receive no funds from the City related to their space.

District investments and leadership

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

Community partnerships and collaboration

The advisory board that leads The New Schools

Initiative includes representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Disability Law Center, the Baltimore Urban League, Citizens Planning and Housing Association, the Abell Foundation, the Baltimore Teachers Union, the Mayor's office and the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

The advisory board’s role is “to provide a vehicle for leadership and vision around the creation and conversion of schools as part of an effort to identify innovations – in instruction, in curriculum, in management and structure – that positively impact student achievement.”

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

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

Outcomes and impact

Program Coordinator Laura Weeldreyer has observed that the initiative serves a “pressure release valve for the system.”

“There will be parents, teachers and students you’ll lose if you don’t do something different. Some don’t be-

lieve in uniform, centralized models; they want options in approaches,” says Weeldreyer.

When a district offers a broad selection of schools, it is not just about the schools and schooling, but also about the health and future of communities. Weeldreyer believes the Baltimore New Schools Initiative has

introduced a new way to keep good teachers and vital parental support in the system, which otherwise might have lost the talent of innovative educators and the involvement of families, communities and organizations.

BALTIMORE’S ‘NEW SCHOOLS’ FOR 2002-03

Wholly New Schools

Midtown Academy #321 (K-8)

Operator: Midtown Academy, Inc.

Curriculum Focus: Core Knowledge, Civic Responsibility, Arts

New Song Academy #322 (K-8)

Operator: New Song Community Learning Center, Inc.

Curriculum Focus: Calvert Curriculum, Expeditionary Learning, year-round school

The Crossroads School #323 (Grade 6)

Operator: The Living Classroom Found.

Curriculum Focus: interdisciplinary, Expeditionary Learning

KIPP Ujima Village Acad #324 (Grade 5)

Operator: KIPP Baltimore, Inc.

Curriculum Focus: college preparatory, extended day and year

School: ConneXions Community

Leadership Academy #325 (Grade 6)

Operator: Baltimore Teacher Network, Inc.

Curriculum Focus: Expeditionary Learning, Community leadership development

Conversion schools

Rosemont Elementary #63 (PreK-5)

Operator: Coppin State College

Curriculum Focus: Baltimore City’s Curriculum/Thinking Skills Curriculum

City Springs Elementary #8 (Pre K – 5)

Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project

Curriculum Focus: Direct Instruction

Barclay School #54 (K-8)

Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project

Curriculum Focus: Calvert Curriculum

Collington Square Elem School #97 (K-6)

Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project

Curriculum Focus: Direct Instruction

Hampstead Hill Elementary School #47 (K-5)

Operator: Baltimore Curriculum Project

Curriculum Focus: Direct Instruction

CHULA VISTA, CA

Educational climate and rationale

The Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD) is located between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico. The growing district currently enrolls approximately 25,000 students across 40 public schools.

Student demographics reflect the community’s social, cultural, economic diversity. Roughly 60 percent of students are Hispanic, and many students are English-Language Learners. Nearly half of students have incomes that make them eligible for a subsidized lunch.

In the mid-1990s, local education stakeholders re-converted

the district into a more decentralized system, with a focus on instituting a variety of school reform models to address the diversity of student needs. The CVESD premise for its reform strategy was simple: The goals for student learning are non-negotiable, but *how* schools achieve those goals *is* negotiable.

While CVESD held fast to its high expectations for learning and literacy among students, individual schools gained the flexibility to choose their own strategies to meet district expectations. The strategies they chose were aimed at meeting the schooling needs of their students and the community.

New school strategy and descriptions

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

The result of CVESD's district-wide strategy was the evolution of a continuum of educational choice for students, families and educators. School choices include magnet schools, chartered schools and other schools with their own themes and distinctive models. The district has also established five schools with "wrap-around" services that provide a range of resources for families, including healthcare, social services and English language instruction.

Supporting chartered schools as a vehicle for system-wide change, CVESD opened its first chartered school in the mid-1990s and now has partnerships with five others. Chartered schools serve as test sites for hypotheses on freedom to design the learning environment

in exchange for producing higher student outcomes. Five of the district's six charters converted from conventional schools, to what could be called, new school status.

Many of these conversion schools were among the district's largest schools. As a result the chartered schools serve a large share of the district's students – now approximately 22 percent.

District investments and leadership

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

During its reorganization, CVESD was a pioneer in creating a process of oversight and delineating roles and responsibility for school board and the district's central office.

Community partnerships and collaboration

With the solid support of school board members, Superintendent Gil led the district and community through an 18-month process of community engagement as an integral part of the educational change process. While the district took the lead, the process was inclusive and collaborative. Gil organized a series of listening forums to engage community members in discussions about their vision and desires for changes in schools.

Participants in the process included parents, senior citizens, faith-based organizations, political groups and former students. They all helped write vision statements, identify shared values and goals, and ultimately create a belief system under which the district and schools would operate. Gil states that while the process was lengthy –

even longer than expected – it was crucial and well worth the time and effort.

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

Outcomes and impact

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

Gil believes that chartered schools brought public accountability to the district. While the district had moved in that direction, chartered schools advanced the concept, and the heightened accountability is now having an impact on all schools in the district. Impressed by the chartered schools' annual data presentations to the school board – a legislative requirement – school board members now ask all schools to make PowerPoint presentations with a team of school staff, parents and students. “This is not a dog-and-pony show but data-driven. They present what the school is doing well, where there are gaps and what needs to be done next,” Gil emphasizes.

“It's about accountability to the public.”

The agreements negotiated between charters and the district gave the district reason to reflect on its operational practices and consider implications for the system wide changes. CVESD began to challenge the value of centralized services offered to its schools. Gil adds that it was “not just from fiscal services, but from other practices, as well.”

MILWAUKEE, WI

Educational climate and rationale

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

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

New school strategy and descriptions

As part of its mix of approaches to creating new schools, MPS is presently introducing innovative high school models. This change is part of the “New Vision

for Secondary Education in Milwaukee,” a community collaboration to improve learning outcomes for nearly 15 percent of the district’s 105,000 students.

A five-year multi-million dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, announced July 2003, will support a district and community-wide effort to redesign seven large high schools and create 40 new small high schools. The large-scale initiative seeks “to improve achievement and graduation rates, and increase the percentage of graduates who are prepared for college by creating stronger, more personalized schools.”

Thirty of the 40 planned new schools will be operated by MPS or in partnership with MPS. Chartered school authorizers and private school operators will have the opportunity to create 10 additional schools, outside of MPS operations.

MPS plans to convert seven existing district high schools to multiplexes, where district facilities will each house several new small, autonomous schools. While co-habiting with other small high schools, each school will offer a distinctive educational option that meets the expressed needs of students, teachers and parents in the community. The multiplex model is based on the Julia Richmond Complex in New York City, where academic results have significantly improved since new, smaller schools were first opened.

District investments and leadership

Dismayed by a dropout rate approaching 50 percent and persuaded by compelling research on small schools, MPS Superintendent William Andrekopoulos began his tenure by advocating for the reorganization of high schools. He soon assembled a school re-design team comprised of community residents and civic powerbrokers to build broad-based support for his vision.

Andrekopoulos has clearly articulated his plans for improving graduation rates. He states that high schools

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

Community partnerships/collaboration

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

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

Other crucial partners in creating the new vision have been the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Alliance for Choices in Education and

the Milwaukee Partnership Academy. Together, these organizations have brought the collective interests, resources and influence of Milwaukee's families, educators, business leaders, and reform advocates to transform high school education.

Outcomes and impact

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

Cindy Zautcke, assistant director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning in Milwaukee, believes there has been “real change since the early days.” She has observed that while other districts in the state that could apply the new school strategy, they have failed to pursue it. “There’s not the pressure, as is the case in Milwaukee,” says Zautcke. She notes that too many superintendents dismiss good ideas for creating schools anew with the statement that ‘it’s not part of my plan.’

“Communities are wed to the idea that ‘the superintendent knows best.’ This (mindset) fails. They can’t possibly know all the options and what’s best for all local children. Part of the reason I like to start schools new is because community people know best. In Milwaukee we can do that.”

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

NEW YORK, NY

Educational climate and rationale

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

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

New school strategy and descriptions

The New York public schools offer a “portfolio” of new school products, which represent a range of innovations in schooling that includes charter schools, college partnership schools, a program-to-school incubator model, and now the New Century High Schools Initiative.

The New Century Initiative is a collaborative effort to provide greater school choice for parents and students and to develop small schools of excellence that promote supportive relationships between students and adults in these schools. The initiative is led by a consortium comprised of New York City Department of Education, New Visions for Public Schools, Council of Supervisors and Administrators, United Federation of Teachers, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of NYC and the Open Society Institute.

The \$30 million initiative focuses on historically and chronically low-performing high schools and aims to create up to 60 new, better and smaller schools in their place. The initiative was rolled out in the Bronx two years ago and has now expanded to Brooklyn (see page 15 for “Guiding Principles for New Small Schools in Brooklyn”).

Planning teams of educators, parents, students and community-based organizations in the city participate in a competitive process. In response to an RFP, the teams design each of their schools with an innovative theme and focus. Partnerships with educational organizations, higher education, business and industries, cultural institutions and community groups are required.

Under the initiative, existing high schools will not take in a new ninth grade class, but will begin a transition where each school facility will eventually house several new smaller schools.

Through this phased process, the newly created small high schools will begin serving ninth graders and then add subsequent grades year until they have a full 9-12 program. Each small school will have its own classrooms, teachers and administrators, but can share spaces such as labs, libraries and gymnasiums with other small schools in the same building. These new high schools are to be marketed through high school fairs and orientations for students and families, who can choose from among a wide selection of educational themes and specialties.

District investments and leadership

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

dramatic examples for change desired across the district.

In 2003, Chancellor Klein established an Office of New Schools Development to coordinate coherent approaches to designing new schools and to ensure those approaches play an integral role in district-wide reform. Using a set of design characteristics supported by the Chancellor, the new office applies consistent, results-based elements in requests for proposals and in assessments of New Century high schools, charter schools and other new school models in the district’s portfolio. (See page 14 for a listing of New York City’s new school design characteristics.)

The Office of New Schools Development includes the district’s Charter Schools Program, which works to realize the Chancellor’s vision of authorizing a significant number of newly chartered schools. He has not only supported growth among district-authorized charters, but also schools created by the state’s two other charter authorizers, the State University of New York’s Charter Schools Institute and the State Board of Regents. As a result, all New York charter schools can benefit from district policies that provide for start-up funds, special education funds, and use of public buildings for school facilities.

Community partnerships/collaboration

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

children's issues including the Chancellor and union representatives.

In 1992, New Visions led efforts to create a number of small schools as a key strategy to improve teaching and learning in New York City. Since then, it has helped create 35 theme-oriented, small school environments that boast high rates of attendance, retention and graduation among enrollees.

To promote the creation and operation of high-quality new schools, New Visions dedicates resources to assist charter schools, coordinates programs that support school goals and currently manages the New Century High School Initiative.

NYC Design Characteristics

While new schools in New York City look different from one another and retain different legal status (charter, non-charter), they all must demonstrate a number of common characteristics of highly effective schools. These characteristics allow for differentiation and autonomy, but also act as quality controls. They include:

- **A rigorous instructional program** that enables students to master challenging content and skills and meet state standards through in-depth courses of study, teaching and learning.
- **Personalized relationships** characterized by teacher and administrator knowledge about each student's social and family conditions, strengths and aspirations and by each student enjoying a close continuous relationship with one or more adults in the school community.
- **Clear focus and expectations** through an internal school culture focused on high expectations for students and teachers, a shared vision of teaching and learning, and the other common values and commitments of the entire school community.
- **Instructional leadership** characterized by a focus on student achievement and support for the improvement

and enhancement of the school culture and teaching and learning by effective collaboration among school principals, teachers, parents and students.

- **School-based professional development and collaboration** through on-site professional development that provides opportunity for continuous assessment, reflection and improvement of teaching and learning by the entire school community.
- **Meaningful continuous assessment of student learning** through a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate that they have met standards, including diagnostic and mandated tests, to identify student needs and improve instruction.
- **Supportive community and parent/caregiver engagement**, including involvement in school governance, financial support, and extended learning opportunities for students.
- **Student engagement and youth development** characterized by the influence of "student voice" in classroom teaching and learning, as well as significant age-appropriate student responsibility in the operation and governance of the school.
- **Effective uses of technology**, including tools for use by students and teachers in teaching, learning and technology as a subject of study.
- **Prudent resource management**, by directing resources toward teaching and learning.

Editor's note: For further background on the charter school component of the New York initiative, go to: <http://www.nycenet.edu/charterschools/application1-1.htm>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR NEW SMALL SCHOOLS IN BROOKLYN

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

SAN DIEGO, CA

Educational climate and rationale

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

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

New school strategy and descriptions

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

One of the district’s charter schools, High Tech High School, has garnered national attention and financial support because of its innovative approaches. Serving 400 students, the small school is the brainchild of San Diego’s high tech business community and the Business Roundtable for Education, a part of the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce. It is not a traditional technical school, but offers a full high school curriculum

and emphasizes project-based learning and immersion in real-world experiences through academic internships in industry.

District investments and leadership

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

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

Community partnerships and collaboration

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

These community partners helped the district secure the expertise of San Diego State University and the University of California-San Diego in developing instructional methods, curriculum and other essential elements for the district’s pilot schools. They also lent

support to the district in creating a memorandum of understanding regarding the financial obligations of the district and the new schools.

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

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

Outcomes and impact

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

Hovenic states that San Diego's charter school movement has a good reputation because of investment of district and community-wide resources in their early development and operations.

"There are lot of solid charter schools here," emphasizes Hovenic. The school operators who are most active in efforts sponsored by the district and business and community groups have healthy schools and are not at risk of closure.

The presence of new schools, modeling best practices and producing results among students, has reorganized the business services system of San Diego's

schools. Hovenic says that how new schools operate has changed how the district's accountability department looks at data. "It's totally reorganized it. Now they are beginning to use longitudinal match data and success factors."

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

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

HIGHLIGHTS FROM TWO OTHER DISTRICTS THAT ARE CREATING NEW SCHOOLS

Of course, the above five school districts aren't the only ones in the country that are proactively creating new schools. Brief highlights from two others are included below. All of these examples, and others, will be expanded upon and updated – as new developments take place – on the Education|Evolving web site at – www.educationevolving.org.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

In response to a state takeover and intense public pressure, the School District of Philadelphia has introduced sweeping reforms to overhaul its 75 lowest-performing schools. The School Reform Commission, which replaced the school board, has approved a range of reforms to design school anew that include establishing chartered schools, contracting with private Education Management Organizations (EMOs), restructuring troubled schools and partnering with area corporations and institutions.

Alice Heller, director of the district's Office of Charter and EMO Schools, states that the Commission is committed to reform and raising the bar and that the District CEO Paul Vallas is a vocal proponent of experimenting with new approaches to recreate schools for the better. (Vallas previously promoted creation of new charter and district schools as CEO of Chicago Public Schools.)

As a result, the district is taking strides to strengthen its connections with charter schools and increasing its support of their operations. Examples include approving new charters, leasing a district-owned building to chartered school operators and piloting a second campus for chartered schools that have demonstrated results. In

addition, it is partnering with area universities, Microsoft, and The Franklin Institute Science Museum to design and open smaller, theme-oriented high schools.

Heller said it is Vallas' vision of school reform and openness to experimentation with concurrent reform models that have been the impetus for broader and more aggressive community involvement in school reform. His leadership has gone a long way in bringing local institutions and other groups to the table, she said. She noted that, while these new partners have always had some kind of relationship with the district, their past roles were often traditional and limited in scope.

"These new partners have taken his vision and run to with it. Amazing things *can* happen," says Heller.

Heller notes that a prime resource for implementing reforms in Philadelphia has been the district's existing infrastructure. Internal departments, such as the capital planning, secondary education and legal affairs are now collaborating. "Philadelphia is a very exciting place to be if you're an educator and I'm hopeful that our results will match the effort."

Heller advises other districts to understand that it is not easy to change culture – school culture and district culture. "It's hard to move that rock, it's like a boulder. You can expect some flack, because it's against human nature to change even when the status quo isn't good enough."

OAKLAND, CA

Long one of California's most troubled school districts, Oakland is now promoting a concerted community effort to create what are being called New and Autonomous Schools (NSAS). With the leadership of its school

board and Superintendent Dennis Chaconas, the Oakland Unified School District instituted policies and formed community partnerships to support the creation such schools.

The new schools concept in Oakland goes beyond constructing new school buildings to fundamentally re-defining the central office's function and its relationship to schools – both small autonomous schools and existing larger schools. Chaconas believes that, without a supportive school district to provide infrastructure, charter schools almost inevitably waste their energy and get bogged down in bureaucratic issues. He views NSAS as a way to transform not only schools but the district's central office, making its services more accountable to and useful to schools.

Crucial to the Oakland's efforts has been the district's partnerships with Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BayCES) and Oakland Community Organizations (OCO).

BayCES is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement and greater equity of student outcomes in the Bay Area. With financial support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and other funders, BayCES has launched an effort to create new small schools primarily in the largely immigrant Lower San Antonio neighborhood. The organization has developed a Small School Incubator to assist school design teams with planning, proposal development, professional development and troubleshooting operational issues.

BayCES has outlined several issues of autonomy that are essential for new small schools and gained the district's commitment to work through these issues. (Refer to the box on the right for BayCES's "Areas of Autonomy.")

Further supporting Oakland's new small schools movement is Oakland Communication Organizations (OCO), a church-based community-organizing group

that mobilizes parents to advocate for smaller, more personalized schools. Both OCO and the district recognize that parents are integral to school reform in Oakland, and their partnership is based on a personal commitment between the superintendent and the OCO director. OCO has helped amplify parents' voices on such school-related issues as student achievement, overcrowding, and safety.

NOTE: The above summary on Oakland is based on from "Making Connections to Improve Education: A Snapshot of School-based Education Investments in Seven Making Connections Sites," Jeanne Juhl. Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.

BayCES's 'Areas of Autonomy Necessary for New Small Schools'

- Staffing
- Budget
- Curriculum and assessment
- Governance and policies
- School calendar and schedule
- Contiguous space identifiable as "our schools"

These autonomies play out differently across campuses as school staff, communities, and the district develop an understanding of the ways the schools can function.

From "Making Connections to Improve Education: A Snapshot of School-based Education Investments in Seven Making Connections Sites," Jeanne Juhl. Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT NEW SCHOOLS

There are literally hundreds of print and on-line resources available on starting new schools. Following is a compilation of a number of those resources, largely drawn from the charter school sector, but also relevant to starting schools new in districts.

CHARTER FRIENDS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MATERIALS

Charter Friends National Network (CFNN), now in transition to a new national charter school leadership organization, has published a number of resource guides that are available upon request and online at www.charterfriends.org.

While based on the charter school experience, these resources transcend any single classification and offer insights on how all new schools can confront common challenges, create effective systems, and advance local efforts to improve educational opportunities for children. Path-breaking new schools – whether charters or charter-like schools – complement and accelerate ongoing reform efforts in traditional public schools.

- **A Guide for Developing a Business Plan for Charter Schools** (February 1998). This publication offers practical suggestions, and outline and sample budgets that can be used by charter developers in preparing a business plan to be included with a charter application and with grant and loan requests.
- **Accountability for Student Performance – An Annotated Resource Guide for Shaping an Accountability Plan for Your Charter School** (June 1998). This resource guide offers dozens of resources grouped under six key questions schools need to ask and answer as they develop accountability plans that match their unique missions and goals.
- **Charter School Facilities: A Resource Guide on Development and Financing** (April 2000). CFNN and the National Cooperative Bank Development Corporation have collaborated on this guide that walks charter school operators through all the major steps of facility planning, development and financing.
- **Charter Schools and Special Education: A Guide for Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of Serving Students with Disabilities** (April 2001). The second edition of a pioneering work on special education and charter schools that was originally produced in 1997 by Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- **Charting a Clear Course: A Resource Guide for Charter Schools Contracting with School Management Organizations** (Second edition, April 2001). This publication raises common issues that have arisen in contracting arrangements, noting important considerations and options for both parties. It includes examples from existing contracts on key issues like roles and responsibilities of charter boards, performance evaluation and compensation.
- **Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide offers strategic advice for meeting twelve critical challenges that charter school governing boards must meet.
- **Creating and Sustaining Family Friendly Charter Schools** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide helps charter founders develop schools that are connected to their communities and involve and serve families whose children attend them.
- **Employer-Linked Charter Schools: An Introduction** (June 2000). Produced jointly by Public Policy Associates, CFNN and the National Alliance of Business, this guide includes profiles on employer-linked charters as well as experience and advice from successfully operating schools on how to form employer-charter school partnerships.
- **How Community-Based Organizations Can Start Charter Schools** (2001). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide focuses on lessons learned and best practices in starting and operating charter schools in partnership with established community-based organizations.

How District Leaders Can Support the New Schools Strategy

- **If the Shoe Fits! A Guide for Charter Schools Thinking About a Pre-existing Comprehensive School Design** (August 1998). This resource guide is designed for charters to use in deciding whether a partnership with a school design group could be in their interest and offers some helpful hints for evaluating individual school designs to determine if there might be a mutually beneficial "fit." (available only on-line)
- **Mobilizing and Motivating Staff to Get Results** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide is designed to help charters think creatively about their use of compensation and benefits, recruitment, selection, professional development, staff organization and performance evaluation to best serve their schools.
- **Out of the Box: An Idea Book on Charter School Facilities Financing** (June 1999). This publication aims to help charter school leaders identify creative ways to finance facilities, drawing on the real-life experiences of dozens of charter schools.
- **Paying for the Charter Schoolhouse: Policy Options for Charter School Facilities Financing** (February 1999). This 22-page resource guide contains both policy options and examples of current initiatives to use public financing and public-private partnerships to help meet the facilities needs of charter schools. (available only on-line)
- **Personnel Policies and Practices: Understanding Employment Law** (December 2000). Produced in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this guide is designed to help charters develop basic personnel policies that meet all federal, state and local regulations and law.

OTHER HELPFUL PUBLICATIONS ON STARTING SCHOOLS

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

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Daniel Grego, Executive Director of Trans-Center for Youth, Milwaukee, WI

Jonathan Gyurko, Director of the Charter Program, New York, NY

Alice Heller, Director, Office of Charter and EMO Schools, Philadelphia, PA

Ginger Hovenic, President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation, San Diego, CA

Laura Weeldreyer, New Schools Initiative Program Coordinator, Baltimore, MD

Cindy Zautcke, Assistant Director, Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Milwaukee, WI

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ABOUT EDUCATION|EVOLVING

Millions of America's students head off to school each morning sporting brightly colored backpacks and determined to make this their "best school year yet." At the same time, federal and state policymakers are making tough new demands that our schools change and improve – so that "All students learn at high levels." New standards, tests, timelines and consequences are all being put in place to make sure that "No child is left behind."

Yet, all across the country, many policymakers, journalists, teachers, parents and students themselves are troubled by a haunting feeling that all this effort may not really produce the degree of change and improvement that we need. At a minimum, we are now taking a series of risks that are neither wise nor necessary to be making with other people's children. These are, after all, demands and results well-beyond what we've ever expected of American public education – all at a time of severe budgetary pressures on states, districts and individual public schools.

That, at least is the serious concern of a small group of Minnesota-based public policy veterans who have come together as Education|Evolving... a joint venture of the Center for Policy Studies and Hamline University. The individuals behind this initiative believe...

... it's an unwise and unnecessary risk for the state and nation to be trying to get the results we need solely by changing the schools we now have...

... the issues about teachers and teaching should not be debated only in the old employer/worker framework...

... the solution to maintaining financially viable public education in rural areas may not lie in the three old 'solutions' of excess levies, consolidation and state aid...

... today's schools should not go on largely failing to take advantage of new electronic technologies and other substantially different ways of teaching and learning...

... and the critical discussion about the future of K-12 education in Minnesota and nationally must not proceed solely as a discussion among adults, with students largely left on the outside looking in.

Education|Evolving is undertaking a number of initiatives over the coming year. They include a national initiative to convince policy makers, education reform leaders, journalists and others that *creating new schools* should be an essential element in achieving needed changes and improvements in teaching and learning – at least equal in importance to *changing the schools we now have*.

One focus of this initiative is to introduce the concept of an "*Open Sector*" – to help create the kind of legal and political environments in which new schools can be created and succeed. Another is designed to challenge the fundamental premise that teachers in schools must always be "employees." Another initiative is looking at the premises used in asking the critical question, "How are chartered schools doing?" Other ongoing Education|Evolving projects focus on strengthening and enhancing the role of the agencies and organizations that sponsor chartered schools – and on how policymakers, journalists and others can more routinely and substantively tap into the experiences and perspectives of students and of young people not now attending school.

Education|Evolving's leadership is provided by two Minnesota public policy veterans: Ted Kolderie, senior associate at the Center for Policy Studies, and Joe Graba, a senior policy fellow at Hamline University. Its coordinator is Jon Schroeder, former director of Charter Friends National Network.

Education|Evolving's activities are regularly updated on the initiative's new and unique web site – www.educationevolving.org. To receive print and electronic updates of Education|Evolving initiatives, contact info@educationevolving.org.



education evolving

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1295 Bandana Boulevard / Suite 165
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108

telephone: 651-644-6115
e-mail: info@educationevolving.org
web site: www.educationevolving.org

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