

CONNECTING

SCHOOLS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES

Stories and **Results** from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Education Investments



About the Author

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org.

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FOREWORD

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's mission is to improve outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable young people and families. Its education program advances this mission by supporting programs and initiatives that are committed to the following core result:

One day—all young people in tough neighborhoods will achieve the aspiration that their families have for them: to graduate from school prepared for adult success and well-being in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.

Achieving this core result involves support for efforts that create quality educational options for young people and their families along with the supports and services that these young people and their families need to ensure that young people can succeed in school and in adulthood. This publication chronicles the stories and some of the results achieved by seven of the Foundation's long-term investment partners.

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INTRODUCTION

Communities matter in the lives of young people. Good schools are essential—but even strong schools alone are not sufficient to ensure success for many young people. In tough neighborhoods, and especially in large urban areas, schools can become disconnected from other assets, isolated from community leadership and concerns, and fragmented in their approach to young people’s development. Working together, schools, families, and community organizations can reconnect urban schools to their communities and improve results for young people and their families.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s education investments reflect the important roles that schools, families, and communities play in the lives of young people. These investments are designed to advance the Foundation’s core result for its education investments:

One day—all young people in tough neighborhoods will achieve the aspiration that their families have for them: to graduate from school prepared for adult success and well-being in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.

From the Foundation’s perspective, achieving this core result involves support for creating quality educational options for families and young people and access to the services, supports, and opportunities that are needed to ensure that children succeed in school and are prepared for adult success. This broad approach recognizes that young people’s educational success is important to the economic success of neighborhoods and cities and that all community stakeholders play important roles in ensuring that young people can succeed. By strengthening community organizations and connecting them to schools, Casey seeks to expand and align the resources available to young people and families and support them in realizing their aspirations. Casey’s education program supports a group of community-based nonprofit organizations—many with national affiliations—that work in partnership with schools in the neighborhoods and cities where the Foundation is involved.

Schools are connected to organizations and resources in the community through formal and informal partnerships and working relationships. These partnerships between schools, families, and community organizations can improve results by:

- Strengthening schools and improving their power to help young people succeed.
- Improving transitions for young people across developmental levels and learning environments.
- Building the capacity of parents and community organizations to support young people’s healthy development.
- Preparing young people for college and careers.
- Strengthening neighborhoods and entire communities.

Casey’s education grants support schools and organizations that create or manage schools as well as community organizations that work with schools to serve young people and their families. This report examines a group of organizations that work in partnership with schools, from a single neighborhood community school to a network of school-based community centers stretching across New York City and other communities around the country.

The report provides an overview of the Foundation's education investment philosophy and strategies, and describes Casey's approach to defining and documenting the results of its grantmaking. It includes brief overviews of the work of seven grantees:

- District of Columbia Public Charter School Cooperative, Washington, District of Columbia
- Foundations, Inc., Moorestown, New Jersey/Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Fund for the City of New York—Youth Development Institute, New York, New York
- George Washington Community School, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Harlem Children's Zone, New York, New York
- Project GRAD Atlanta—Communities In Schools Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia
- Washington Scholarship Fund, Washington, District of Columbia

The report also includes observations about the strengths and accomplishments of these partnerships in light of recent research about the needs of young people. It also considers how partnerships can become even more effective in helping young people achieve their families' aspirations.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CASEY FOUNDATION'S INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION

A key element of Casey's education grantmaking is the belief that young people in tough neighborhoods do better when they have neighborhood-based systems and organizations that link families to schools and community institutions. Paul Hill describes three ingredients that are essential to producing strong results for urban schools—and, in reality, for any organization that wants to improve results for schools, families, and communities:

- *Incentives* for improved performance;
- Sufficient *freedom of action* to direct resources, including staff and funding, to respond to local assets and needs; and
- Investments in developing the *capacity* of people and organizations to learn from others' experiences and adapt new approaches to the school's needs.¹

To produce those results, Casey supports two distinct categories of grantees:

- Grantees that create and support quality educational options for families and young people so that young people graduate prepared for adult success.
- Grantees that provide robust connections to community supports and services through partnerships and alliances that link schools, families, and communities so that young people can succeed in school.

This report describes and discusses the work and some of the results of a group of grantees that link schools, families, and communities.

A COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

Casey's investments are designed to achieve results in three areas: impact, influence, and leverage. Although not every grantee will demonstrate results in all these areas, the commitment to accountability for results is central to the grantmaking strategy in the education program. Grantees work to:

- **CREATE VISIBLE IMPACT** IN SELECT COMMUNITIES.

To achieve impact, the education program works with other education improvement advocates in a set of local communities to advance initiatives with real potential to improve educational outcomes for young people. Examples of impact investments include grants to help open new schools that provide quality options for families in tough neighborhoods; grants to parent and community organizations to advocate for better schools; and grants to programs that provide technical assistance and other enhanced services to students, families, schools, and community organizations to help young people graduate prepared for adult success.

- **INFLUENCE** BEHAVIOR THROUGH EVIDENCE OF IMPROVED RESULTS.

Impact sets the stage for influence, affecting the behavior of a wider audience. The education program's influence strategy begins with documenting evidence of improved results achieved through these investments, along with careful analysis of success factors and pitfalls, information that can help other communities as they implement similar approaches. Next, the education program identifies target audiences and the individuals or organizations that can reach them to inform them about the activity or collection of activities that have led to improved outcomes, and creates messages or products to reach these audiences. Finally, the education program works to engage its audiences so that these messages reach them effectively. Examples of investments here include grants to organizations that influence individuals and organizations through advocacy, building public will, replication of successful programs, publications, and a variety of other approaches.

- **LEVERAGE** ADDITIONAL FUNDING.

These efforts are designed to encourage decision-makers to work collaboratively to improve results in tough neighborhoods. Specifically, they create conditions for financial supporters of education improvement—those with public and private dollars—to co-invest with Casey in advancing its mission of improving outcomes for families and young people. In education, these co-investments are in support of policies and practices that create quality educational options for young people and the supports and services they and their families need to help young people succeed in school.

Many of Casey's education investments are located in communities where the Foundation works intensively to strengthen families and communities. Additional education investments support organizations that provide extensive opportunities in multiple communities and/or model innovative and effective practices in school/family/community partnerships.

PROFILES OF SEVEN SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COOPERATIVE WASHINGTON, DC

The number of charter schools has expanded rapidly in the District of Columbia, and expertise about the needs of students with disabilities is not always available through the school district's Office of Special Education or at individual charter schools. Charter school leaders formed the DC Public Charter School Cooperative (Coop) to help charter schools provide an effective, appropriate education for students with disabilities. The organization provides capacity building and professional development for charter schools in the District of Columbia—a total of 55 schools on 58 campuses—including a monthly newsletter about serving children with disabilities, a telephone help line, an e-mail hotline for advice, and an annual conference. Coop has also worked to secure Medicaid provider status for individual charter schools, allowing these schools to be reimbursed for services provided to special education students.

New charter schools frequently make their first contact with the Coop when they are involved in a challenging situation with an individual student or with parents, then continue to use the organization as a resource to strengthen their special education programs. Most issues concern their ability to provide appropriate instruction for students. In Coop's early years, charter schools paid dues to become members of the organization. More recently, additional funding from DC's State Improvement Grant and the DC Public Charter School Association has allowed it to serve all charter schools in the District, as well as providing an annual "Casey Jumpstart" professional development conference at the beginning of the school year, open to staff from charter schools as well as schools in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS).

Impact results: More than 300 general education teachers in charter schools have been trained to better serve students with special needs, and more than 20 special educators in charter schools receive support and technical assistance.

Influence results: Coop's director receives frequent requests for information on how to create a Special Education Cooperative from other states and localities. The director has also presented the organization's model at a summit of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and made a presentation to the 2007 National Charter School Conference. The Cooperative model has been replicated in at least six other jurisdictions. During the 2006 "Casey Jumpstart" professional development conference, over 250 participants from 26 charter schools and five DCPS schools received a full day of training.

Leverage results: In addition to Casey support, Coop receives funding from the DC Public Charter School Association and a grant of \$150,000 over five years from the State Improvement Grant for the District of Columbia. Fourteen charter schools on 24 campuses now have Medicaid provider status so they can be reimbursed for some services to students with disabilities. Provider status enables schools to receive thousands of dollars for performing these services.

Funding from the Casey Foundation: \$425,000 since 2002.

FOUNDATIONS, INC.**MOORESTOWN, NEW JERSEY/PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

Foundations, Inc., works to increase educational opportunities for children and families in underserved communities. The organization provides a range of assistance and supports to build capacity in schools and community organizations, including professional development, technical assistance, assessment tools, and publications. From its home base in the Philadelphia area, Foundations works in communities to assist in designing and supporting the operation of charter schools, implementing effective afterschool programs, managing a network of public schools within the School District of Philadelphia, and initiating KidZone Philadelphia, a ten-year community engagement initiative to ensure the success of future generations.

Foundations helps potential charter school founders to understand all aspects of designing and operating schools and works with them to develop a school that fits their vision, beginning with a “Charter Schools 101” presentation for groups interested in operating charter schools, and including intensive individualized assistance in preparing the charter application—a lengthy technical document that requires specialized expertise. Potential operators often need assistance in developing both the academic and non-academic aspects of charter schools, especially financial and facilities issues, and in presenting their application to charter school authorizers. Once an application has been approved, Foundations can continue to support charter school operators with full-time professional school business management, as well as assistance in hiring and training school staff, and other aspects of operations.

Foundations also provides assistance and support in designing and operating afterschool programs, emphasizing “afterschool style,” with interactive, student-centered, student-identified, and project-based activities that infuse standards-based academic content to improve student success. In Atlanta, Foundations staff is working with Casey staff to adapt the After School All Stars program, which serves middle school students. In the afterschool area as well as in charter school development, Foundations has developed tools and processes for assessment and quality improvement.

In Northwest Philadelphia, Foundations manages the Neighborhood School Network for the School District of Philadelphia, including Martin Luther King High School, two middle schools, and three elementary schools, to improve students’ academic performance and build a sense of community around the schools. The work includes extensive outreach to involve parents, including developing Home and School Associations in all schools and working with parents to help them support their children. At the high school, Foundations provides job placement for students through the Job Development Resource Center and coordinates supports for career readiness and postsecondary preparation to provide personalized service for students. Foundations has also worked to modernize and improve facilities at the schools.

Also in Northwest Philadelphia, Foundations and a coalition of community partners have recently launched KidZone Philadelphia, working to mobilize the community, act as an intermediary for community efforts, and incubate new programs. In its first year, KidZone Philadelphia has begun a groundbreaking therapeutic preschool program to serve young children who have experienced trauma and train school staff to be aware of the effects of a range of traumatic experiences on children. KidZone also works to connect young people to community resources for out-of-school time.

Impact results: Foundations provided assistance in the initial application process for 33 of the 53 charter schools now operating in Philadelphia. These schools serve more than 15,000 students and employ more than 1,300 teachers. Foundations manages a combined budget of more than \$45 million for 13 charter schools. Students in the Neighborhood School Network managed by Foundations showed gains in the percentage of students scoring above the national average in reading and language, as well as a reduction in the percentage of students scoring in the bottom quartile in reading, language, and mathematics. Two of the six schools achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2006. At Martin Luther King High School, average daily student attendance improved almost 6 percent in the first four months of the 2004–05 school year over the previous year, and the number of arrests decreased significantly.

Influence results: More than 500 teachers and administrators have been enrolled in Foundations' professional development programs over a period of four years. Foundations operates Martin Luther King High School through an innovative hybrid management model with the School District of Philadelphia, under a negotiated agreement with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

Leverage results: Four charter schools for which Foundations serves as financial advisors obtained \$24 million in facility loans, one of which was the largest transaction approved to date by the Charter Capital Access Program, a federal grantee.

Funding from the Casey Foundation: \$3,500,000 since 1998.

FUND FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK/YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

THE BEACONS PROGRAM

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Beacons are community centers located in public school buildings in New York City and in six additional communities across the country. Through its Youth Development Institute (YDI), the Fund for the City of New York supports and builds capacity in the Beacons network. Youth Development Institute staff work with a variety of community organizations, schools, and colleges to create environments that keep young people connected with the supports and services they need to succeed in secondary school and move on to college and careers.

Beacons, managed by community-based organizations, work collaboratively with their host schools, community advisory groups, and a wide range of neighborhood organizations and institutions. Individual Beacons offer youth and adults a range of recreational programs, social services, educational enrichment, and vocational activities in four core areas: youth development programming, academic support and enhancement, parent/family involvement and support, and neighborhood safety and community building, always tailoring the activities to the unique circumstances of local communities. Each Beacon has its own Community Advisory Council, involving parents and family members, youth, school administrators, and elected officials.

Advisory Councils work with Beacons staff to assess needs in the surrounding community and develop programs to address those needs, such as adult education programs, including English as a Second Language (ESL) and citizenship preparation classes at Beacons in areas with many new immigrants. With Casey support, the Youth Development Institute developed and piloted a quality reflection tool

to assess individual Beacons' strengths and areas for growth. When the quality reflection process indicated a need to strengthen the Community Advisory Councils, the Institute provided seminars for staff from individual Beacons to increase their ability to involve a diverse group of community stakeholders. In 2006–2007, YDI is working to help strengthen the relationship between individual Beacons and their host schools in the rapidly changing New York City environment, which includes many new small schools and increasing autonomy for individual schools.

The Beacons work has led to YDI's work in building deep partnerships among schools, colleges, and community organizations. As a result, YDI has created new programs for young people who have dropped out or become marginalized, increasing their academic skills and getting them into colleges within the City University of New York.

Impact results: The Youth Development Institute has played an important role in conceptualizing and promoting high-quality youth development programming, in New York City and across the United States. A 2002 evaluation of the Beacons found that, in sites with better youth development quality, young people were more likely to feel better about themselves at the Beacon; believe that youth of all races and ethnicities were valued at the Beacon; perceive that Beacon staff had high expectations for their behavior and performance; and report that the Beacon had helped them learn leadership skills. They were also less likely to report that they had cut classes; hit others to hurt them; deliberately damaged other people's property; stolen money or other property; or been in a fight. The evaluation also found that Beacons sites with staff most frequently attending YDI meetings and training activities had the highest-rated youth development quality and most positive youth findings.²

Influence results: The Beacons initiative has been so successful that New York's mayor and city council have expanded the network from the original 12 centers to 80 centers in all city council districts. The Youth Development Institute also provides support for Beacons initiatives and Out of School Time efforts in six other communities, including a countywide network in Palm Beach County, Florida. In a new national initiative, the Institute will work with local Beacons in New York and San Francisco to build young adolescents' participation in out-of-school time programs, keeping these young people connected to community so they will not develop academic and other problems.

Leverage results: Beacons have grown to become a \$40 million initiative in New York City alone. In other communities, funding comes from a combination of public and private funding; a dedicated portion of property tax funds supports the work in Palm Beach County, for example, and the San Francisco Beacons initiative receives support from a public-private partnership including the City and County of San Francisco, the San Francisco Unified School District, and a consortium of foundations.

Support from the Casey Foundation: \$2,545,000 since 2001.

GEORGE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

In 2000, the Indianapolis Public Schools, responding to active advocacy from residents of the West Side community, reopened George Washington Community School (GWCS) as a middle school. It now serves about 900 students in grades 7–12. About 90 percent of students are eligible for free- or

reduced-price meals. The school offers supports for young people to make sure students' basic needs are met and that they are motivated and engaged in learning. In all social studies classes, for example, college students provide activities to help students connect their interests and values to post-secondary education.

With 49 partners who provide services and supports for students and their families or sit on the GWCS community advisory committee, the school-community connection at GWCS has been strengthened through the school's participation in the Indiana Student Achievement Institute. Teachers, parents, business representatives, and students work together in the Institute's Vision-to-Action process for systemic change to analyze data about the school and create a shared vision and road map for student success. The process has helped to increase the alignment between the work of community partners and the school's core instructional programs.

Impact results: In the school's first graduating class, in May 2006, 100 percent of students had passed the math portion of the state's Graduation Qualifying Exam and 90 percent had passed the language arts portion, surpassing all other traditional high schools in Indianapolis Public Schools. Half of those who did not pass the language arts portion were students with limited English proficiency. Eighty-one percent of George Washington's graduates had identified the colleges they planned to attend, and had amassed more than \$1 million in financial aid by summer's end.

Influence results: GWCS has gained national accolades for its work. In 2004, the Cincinnati-based KnowledgeWorks Foundation named GWCS as "one of the nation's best examples of a school as center of the community." In 2006, the Coalition for Community Schools presented GWCS with one of its inaugural National Community School Awards in the secondary school category. The school continues to serve as a model in its own community, as the Casey Foundation and others seek to expand implementation of community schools in Indianapolis.

Leverage results: In 2005, GWCS was one of six schools nationwide selected to participate in a long-term Learning Communities Initiative sponsored by USA Funds, ScholarshipAmerica, and eight other organizations collaborating to help prepare students for postsecondary education. Funding from the Learning Communities Initiative supports continuing presence of the full-time community school coordinator at GWCS, a position initially supported by Casey funding and continued with support from Chase Bank. GWCS partners contributed \$2.8 million in time and other resources in 2005–2006.

Funding from the Casey Foundation: \$181,000 since 2001.

HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Harlem Children's Zone, Inc. (HCZ), is a pioneering nonprofit community-based organization that works to enhance the quality of life for children and families in one of New York's most devastated areas. Over the past 30 years, HCZ has developed a network of educational, social service, and community-building programs that has grown dramatically in the past decade. Its network of service providers has increased from 6 to 18 and the number of children receiving services from 1,500 to 8,600.

The Harlem Children's Zone project was launched in 2001. It is a comprehensive, geographically defined community-building initiative—currently focusing on an unprecedented 100 block area of Harlem. Its goal is to build a community in Central Harlem that provides all of its children with the supports and services available in other communities and produces outcomes that exceed city and state averages. HCZ is setting up a seamless system of support from birth to the time that the child finishes college, implementing best practices at every stage.

There are numerous best practice programs that serve HCZ. For example, the Baby College provides parenting skills and other supports to HCZ residents who are either expecting a child or raising a child up to age 3. Harlem Gems provides a year-round, extended-day pre-kindergarten program for children ages 3–5. The Family Support Center provides neighborhood-based foster care prevention services. TRUCE and the Employment and Technology Center offer comprehensive youth development programs for adolescents. There is also comprehensive health programming through the Asthma Initiative.

Although HCZ works in seven public elementary schools in Central Harlem, providing classroom support, afterschool, and summer programming, the organization's leaders determined that the community's children needed more than the public schools now offer. HCZ has opened two charter schools; each will eventually serve students from the community in grades K–12. The HCZ Promise Academy charter schools were created to make a difference in the lives of low-income children by providing high-quality programming throughout an extended school day and school year: the school day lasts from 8 am to 4 pm, with afterschool activities that include academic support, cultural programming and recreation until 6 pm. Children are chosen by lottery to attend the charter school two years before kindergarten and enroll in intensive prekindergarten programs. All families have access to the full array of services offered in the HCZ network of comprehensive programs.

HCZ, formerly known as Rheedlen Centers for Children and Youth, has managed Beacons programs since their inception. There are now two Beacons, the Countee Cullen Community Center and the Booker T. Washington Center 54 Beacon in the Harlem Children's Zone; both are open to children, high school students, and adult residents of the community. HCZ provides youth and their parents with services and supports that enable young people to find an alternative to the streets and allow families to remain intact, solve their problems, and become positive assets in the community.

Impact results: The charter schools and Beacons programs serve more than 3,000 students. HCZ works to link Beacons with high schools and community groups in New York City and across the nation. HCZ most recently opened the HCZ Practitioners Institute, housed in the newly constructed HCZ Community Center, where it shares the Beacon model and HCZ Project model with communities nationally and internationally.

Influence results: The Fund for the City of New York has asked the Countee Cullen Beacon to participate as a mentor to developing Beacons. With Casey support, Countee Cullen serves as a demonstration site and provides technical assistance to youth providers in the New York City area.

Leverage results: HCZ has recently received major contributions from individuals and foundations to expand the Children's Zone to a 100-block area in Central Harlem and serve more than 10,000 children and youth, along with their families.

Funding from the Casey Foundation: \$1,125,000 since 1997.

**PROJECT GRAD ATLANTA/COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS ATLANTA
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

In Atlanta, Casey works actively with community residents and public and community-based organizations to improve the lives of children and families in Neighborhood Planning Unit V, a low-income area that includes the Pittsburgh and Mechanicsville communities. The area is home to the New Schools at Carver, four small semi-autonomous high schools on the campus of the former Carver High School, as well as Parks Middle School and three elementary schools. More than 90 percent of the students attending schools in the cluster are African American, and 90 percent of students qualify for the federal free- and reduced-price meals program. In partnership with staff from the schools and the Atlanta Public Schools, Project GRAD Atlanta, and Communities In Schools Atlanta, Casey staff and its Atlanta partners are working to create a network of high-performing schools in the community.

At Carver, the New Schools include Early College High School, the School of the Arts, the School of Health Science and Research, and the School of Technology. The schools, now in their second year, enroll ninth- and tenth-grade students. When they expand to include all four grades, they will total no more than 1,600 students. Curriculum in all four small schools reflects the commitment to prepare all students for success in college. Funding from Casey is used for teacher professional development and increasing the rigor of the curriculum, and for helping eighth-grade students at Parks Middle School prepare to be successful in high school.

At Parks, staff from the Civic Investment Site, using materials provided by the Education Trust (another Casey grantee), have worked to align and strengthen the curriculum so that students are well prepared to enter the high schools, and to provide high-quality afterschool programs. Casey staff were instrumental in securing funding for a summer enrichment program that linked Parks students to students in other areas of Atlanta.

Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) Atlanta, the school district's signature reform initiative, works with schools in the neighborhood school cluster to improve graduation, college entrance, and college completion rates. Project GRAD develops contracts with students: If a student attends school regularly, participates in summer programs for two years during high school, and graduates with a "C" average, Project GRAD guarantees scholarship assistance for college.

Communities In Schools (CIS) Atlanta, an affiliate of the national Communities In Schools network, links students and families to supports in the community. In Atlanta, CIS provides coordinators in all schools in the Atlanta Public Schools (APS), contracting directly with the school system, with measurable deliverables for the work in each school.

Impact results: Project GRAD now impacts approximately 16,000 students (one-third of the APS enrollment) and 1,200 teachers in 27 schools. At Carver High School/the New Schools at Carver, graduation rates have increased 47 percent since Project GRAD was initiated in 2002. In 2006, test scores at Parks Middle School improved sufficiently for the school to meet the goals for adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the first time. Staff report increased attendance and a resurgence of pride and optimism among staff and students at Parks and at the New Schools at Carver.

Influence results: The Early College High School at Carver, a partnership with Georgia State University, has been designated as a model for the State of Georgia.

Leverage results: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has provided a total of nearly \$2 million to the Atlanta Public Schools and other organizations to develop and launch a comprehensive secondary reform plan for the Atlanta Public Schools. The Gates Foundation noted that “the plan was built on the impressive progress at the former George Washington Carver High School.” The Georgia Department of Human Resources has provided \$100,000 for afterschool and summer programs at Parks. The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta has committed \$40,000 per year for three years to support afterschool programs at Parks Middle School.

Funding from the Casey Foundation:

Project GRAD Atlanta: \$1,330,000 since 2002 for general support of the Atlanta Public Schools Project GRAD district implementation effort.

Parks Middle School Curriculum Project: \$180,000 since 2006.

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta: \$100,000 since 2006 for an Atlanta Casey school improvement coordinator.

WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FUND

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The Washington Scholarship Fund (WSF) works to fulfill the promise of equal educational opportunity for low-income families and their children in Washington, DC. The nonprofit organization administers the federally funded DC Opportunity Scholarship/Voucher Program and the privately funded Signature Scholarship Program. Both enable low-income District families to have a choice in sending their children to elementary, middle, and high school. Under the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, students who apply for the \$7,500 scholarship—or voucher—are selected through a lottery. In 2006–2007, a total of about 1,800 students are enrolled in nearly 60 private schools with the help of these scholarships.

WSF works with families enrolled in the Opportunity Scholarship Program on a continuing basis, through a case management system, virtual “one-stop shops” to help families get the services they need from government agencies, and proactive two-way communication with families. The case management system assigns a staff person to each family to maintain communication throughout the year, and includes an integrated computer database that includes all family and student information, so that any staff member can assist a family if their designated case manager is not available. As a one-stop shop, WSF works with public agencies to develop processes and forms so that families can release information directly to WSF, and provides connections to other resources, including sources of additional funding, for families.

The Fund has initiated a Parent Empowerment Group to provide parents with a forum for discussion and learning around topics of shared interest or concern. Parent Empowerment Group meetings, held monthly at a central location in the city, help parents to make the transition from public to private school, learn how to communicate with teachers and administrators, and know what to expect in their first year in a new school. Parents also find out how to get academic support for their

children, find low-cost or no-cost tutoring and mentoring programs, and become stronger advocates for their children's educational needs. WSF also works to recruit schools to participate in the program, and supports schools in the process of admitting and placing students, and receiving the students' scholarship funds.

Impact results: In the 2006–07 school year, 1,802 students were enrolled at 58 participating non-public DC schools, an increase of nearly 6 percent over the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the 2005–06 school year.

Influence results: Washington Scholarship Fund has formed partnerships with the DC State Education Office, DC Public Charter School Association, DC Public Schools, and the Greater Washington Urban League to publicize the program and raise awareness of new K-12 options for low-income families. The Parent Empowerment Group provides support and training in advocacy skills for families of scholarship recipients. Through its Family Support program, Washington Scholarship Fund develops parent resource groups, monitors students experiencing difficult transitions, and provides special targeted support for eighth graders who will soon graduate. The organization has daily, individualized interactions with DC non-public schools on many issues, including ensuring payments are made on time and fee processes work smoothly.

Leverage results: \$12.1 million from the U.S. Department of Education for scholarships and \$375,000 for operations and family support; \$900,000 from the Walton Family Foundation; and \$10,000 from the Alliance for School Choice.

Funding from the Casey Foundation: \$950,000 since 2004.

PARTNERSHIPS IMPROVE RESULTS FOR SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

Casey education program grantees develop partnerships that improve results by connecting schools, families, and communities. These partnerships advance and support the roles of all community stakeholders—schools, families, and community organizations—by ensuring that young people have a chance to be successful adults in the worlds of school, family, and citizenship.

These partnerships work best when they develop a goal related to young people’s success and align their activities and resources to achieve that goal. They hold themselves accountable for making a difference. The partnerships work to improve results in five areas:

- They work to strengthen schools.
- They work to improve transitions for young people across developmental levels and learning environments.
- They work to build the capacity of parents and community organization staff to support young people’s healthy development.
- They work to prepare young people for success in postsecondary education and life.
- They work to strengthen neighborhoods and whole communities.

PARTNERSHIPS CAN *improve results* BY STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS

Partnerships between schools and community organizations are often seen as disconnected from outside the “real work” of schools: they provide additional activities, incentives, and opportunities for students, their families, and school staff, without becoming involved in the core work of teaching and learning. As partners work more directly with schools, however, they recognize the overarching need for young people to be academically successful, and align their resources more to strengthen schools’ ability to respond to academic and non-academic challenges young people face. Examples include:

Cities in Schools Atlanta works in a districtwide partnership with Atlanta Public Schools, tailoring the work of CIS staff to help each school achieve specific results. Each year, the school district and CIS negotiate a group of deliverables for schools that indicate improved conditions for learning. One of these deliverables is an annual reduction in the number of students who are absent ten days or more during the school year. Each school develops a plan for CIS staff, describing what CIS will do to help the school achieve priority results.

DC Public Charter School Coop assists staff in charter schools in working with students who have disabilities. Many charter school staff lack specialized knowledge and skills in this area, and have no other source of expertise that is readily available to them. Because schools often need immediate help with instructional issues or in working with parents, Coop makes sure it is able to provide that help, through telephone and e-mail hotlines, as well as longer-term support through a monthly newsletter and professional development opportunities.

Foundations serves as the educational manager for the Neighborhood School Network, (a high school, two middle schools, and three elementary schools) in Northwest Philadelphia. Foundations

staff convene clergy from the area in a series of monthly meetings to enlist their assistance in supporting students through mentoring and other strategies. Data on student performance and attendance show that the work is beginning to yield positive results, with increasing numbers of third-grade students who are reading on grade level and high school students who are taking—and passing—algebra.

The *Youth Development Institute* at the Fund for the City of New York, through work that began in Beacons, is increasing the educational capacity of community organizations and building partnerships between schools and community organizations specifically designed to engage young adults who are on the margins of school or have dropped out. Through this effort, YDI has developed programs serving more than 3,000 dropouts and helping them to re-commence their education or obtain work. In collaboration with the New York City Department of Education, YDI is assisting numerous schools and school programs to reengage youth who are in school, but have become over age for their grades or under credited.

Harlem Children's Zone has established two charter schools, each with an extended school day and school year, to provide intensive instruction and supports that children living in the impoverished Central Harlem neighborhood need to become academically successful. The schools will eventually span grades K-12 to ensure that young people have continuity of education.

PARTNERSHIPS CAN *improve results* BY EASING THE TRANSITIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

As young people grow and develop, they move through a series of developmental stages, with increasing independence and ability to engage in complex learning. They also move from one level of schooling to another, encountering differing learning and social environments and differing expectations for learning. Many students and their families find transitions challenging: a child who was a happy motivated learner in an informal preschool may be uncomfortable in a more structured kindergarten classroom, and the adolescent who was not academically motivated in middle school may be overwhelmed by the demands of high school course work in ninth grade.

Many students and their families also make transitions every day as they move from the culture of the home and neighborhood to the culture of the school. These transitions may involve speaking formal English at school, adapting to different expectations for behavior, and encountering challenges to self-esteem from school staff and peers. Transitions can be difficult for adults as well as children and may be a factor in schools' success in engaging families.

Partnerships work to reduce or eliminate unnecessary transitions, provide additional services and supports for children and families, align curriculum and academic expectations across grade levels to enable students to make continuous progress, and work with parents to strengthen communication with schools. Examples include:

In Atlanta, Casey staff are working to align the curriculum between Parks Middle School and the New Schools at Carver to ensure that students can make smooth academic transitions and continue to be successful learners when they change schools. Along with the work of CIS staff in all schools in the Carver High School cluster, this work connects schools across grade levels.

George Washington Community School, originally constructed as a senior high school, was reopened by Indianapolis Public Schools in 2000 as a middle school. Because many neighborhood students dropped out of school instead of traveling across town to attend high school, the school district agreed to extend the school's grade span. The school now serves 900 neighborhood students in grades 7–12, and high school completion rates are rising. Some students who are not able to graduate with their class become “fifth-year seniors,” returning the following year to complete their graduation requirements.

KidZone Philadelphia, a community initiative sponsored by Foundations and a community coalition staffed by *Foundations*, focuses explicitly on identifying and addressing challenges children and adolescents encounter during developmental transitions. Initial KidZone efforts include a therapeutic preschool program for children who have experienced trauma, and involving young adolescents in research to locate community resources and make their peers and families more aware of existing resources.

Washington Scholarship Fund recognizes that families also undergo transitions when young people move from public schools to private schools in the District of Columbia. WSF sponsors a Parent Empowerment Group, with monthly meetings and events for parents and other family members. Meeting topics include strategies for appreciating diversity within a group of students at a school, what to expect in a child's first year in a new school, how to be stronger advocates for their children's educational needs, and how to communicate effectively with school administrators and teachers.

The *Youth Development Institute* at the Fund for the City of New York is developing a national initiative to help Beacons and other out-of-school time programs sustain the involvement of young adolescents and their families after they leave elementary school. While cities are investing more resources in the non-school hours, for these investments to pay off, young people must be present. The work is critically important to leveraging the value of public investments.

PARTNERSHIPS CAN *improve results* BY BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION STAFF TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity building is a key function in many of these partnerships, extending their reach and helping to expand the scale of effective work. Working across the boundaries among schools, families, and communities requires attitudes and skills not common in any sector, and those who are involved can benefit from others' experiences. Effective capacity-building work is responsive to the needs and preferences of individuals and organizations; it grows through relationships and shared experiences. Examples include:

KidZone Philadelphia, a community initiative under the auspices of *Foundations*, conducted an 18-month series of expert presentations and planning sessions for practitioners who work with young children who have experienced trauma. KidZone staff leveraged resources for work in West Philadelphia to engage practitioners from across the city. As many as 400 people participated in some presentations.

The *Youth Development Institute* at the Fund for the City of New York works intentionally to strengthen the capacity of community organizations that operate Beacons. In Palm Beach County, Florida, the Youth Development Institute is sharing knowledge from the New York City Beacons in

developing a group of 14 Beacons, using funding from a dedicated source of property tax revenue for services to children and families.

PARTNERSHIPS CAN *improve results* BY PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND LIFE

Achieving the aspirations families have for their children requires community organizations to work with schools to expand the number of low-income and minority students who are successful in postsecondary education. It is not sufficient to keep track of the number of students who say they will attend college, or even the number who enroll in postsecondary institutions after graduating from high school. Many low-income students are the first in their families to attend college, and need additional supports to overcome predictable difficulties in the college years. A recent report from the Bridgespan Group, *Reclaiming the American Dream*,³ examines the challenge of increasing the numbers of low-income and minority students who make successful transitions to postsecondary education. The report outlines strategies that are most effective in this effort, including:

- Helping students understand that they will need a bachelor's degree to pursue the career they want to have at age 30;
- Having friends who also plan to attend college; and
- Visiting at least one college together with a parent.

Several partnerships are working, with support from Casey's education program, to increase the number of young people from tough neighborhoods who participate successfully in postsecondary education. Examples include:

Project GRAD Atlanta sponsors four-week summer sessions on college campuses for students from Atlanta high schools to build cohorts of students who plan to enroll in college. Project GRAD also organizes bus tours to colleges in the Atlanta area and in surrounding states for high school juniors and their parents. With Casey support, students from Parks Middle School will be able to spend a residential weekend at a college with their parents. At the High School for Health Science and Research at Carver, students participate in hands-on training at the Morehouse School of Medicine during the summer.

The Neighborhood School Network in Philadelphia, an initiative of *Foundations*, helps high school students obtain internships and part-time jobs that provide motivation and lead to greater opportunities for employment after graduation.

At *George Washington Community School*, college students provide college preparatory activities in social studies classes beginning in the seventh grade, helping students to understand their strengths and interests and envision themselves in a career that uses those strengths. They then find out what education is required for careers that interest them and begin to make plans to attend college.

The *Harlem Children's Zone* recognizes that "college is unfamiliar territory" to many of its students. HCZ provides the College Success program to work with college students who have graduated from HCZ programming. College Success coordinators check in frequently with students, and provide academic and life skills counseling, internship placements during summer and winter breaks, financial assistance, and trips to colleges.

The *Youth Development Institute* assists individual Beacons to meet community-identified needs, and is turning intensive attention to “returning students”—young people ages 16–24 who have dropped out of school or are in danger of dropping out. In partnership with the City University of New York and the New York City Department of Education, individual community-based organizations are forming “community networks” with local City University of New York (CUNY) colleges to enable young people to enter CUNY and remain connected to Beacons and other community-based services. The Youth Development Institute defines the issue as *Access* and *Success*; CBOs provide GED and pre-GED instruction in math and literacy to help students to catch up on the academic background they need to enroll and stay enrolled. Because Beacons are at the center of their local communities, they are a good launching platform for young people who want to enroll in college but need help in being successful and staying enrolled. Taking a longer look, Beacons are also establishing a new focus on keeping young adolescents (ages 9–14) engaged and learning.

PARTNERSHIPS CAN *improve results* BY STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS AND WHOLE COMMUNITIES

When school-family-community partnerships have sufficient breadth—involving a significant group of community stakeholders, as well as depth—creating multiple opportunities for participation and involvement, their reach extends beyond schools to improve whole communities. Casey grantees are living the Foundation’s maxim that children do better when their families do better, and families do better when they live in supportive communities. Examples include:

The Atlanta Civic Site, together with the Atlanta Public Schools, *Communities In Schools*, and *Project GRAD*, has developed a cluster strategy that links schools from prekindergarten through high school through curriculum alignment and supports for young people and their families. This approach creates more enduring relationships and increases social capital for young people and their families.

Beacons go beyond working with young people and their families to engage all members of the community. One Beacon program serves an annual Thanksgiving dinner for the community. At the first dinner, staff worked hard to get 120 community members to show up; more recently, they have had to turn people away when the numbers reach the school’s maximum capacity of 600. The Booker T. Washington Beacon in the *Harlem Children’s Zone* served an average of 111 adults per week in 2004.

In managing the Neighborhood School Network, *Foundations, Inc.* works to raise achievement and build community. The 2007 annual Greater Philadelphia Martin Luther King Day of Service culminated in a Philadelphia Orchestra concert at Martin Luther King High School.

The *Harlem Children’s Zone* is a premier example of strengthening the community to enable all children to become successful. Each program is consciously designed—and consistently evaluated—for its contribution to helping children and families succeed. Programs are provided in schools and community centers throughout Central Harlem at a scale that makes them available to all families, with outreach to make sure that the most vulnerable families are included. As the strategy demonstrates its success, it creates leverage for additional investments, and is able to expand its reach: In Phase III of its work, the Zone will encompass 100 blocks in Central Harlem and serve more than 10,000 children and youth, along with their families.

EXPANDING THE VISION OF SUCCESS FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships profiled in this publication have grown and matured over time to produce substantial results for young people, their families, and their schools. As successful as they are, they have the capacity to create even stronger results and increase their impact on whole communities. This expanded vision for partnerships holds the promise of helping more families and young people achieve their aspirations for success.

Partnerships can make more intensive efforts to involve families and community members and create momentum to improve schools. Work in communities of the Carnegie Corporation's Schools for a New Society initiative included efforts to engage community residents. Fruchter and Gray,⁴ in reviewing progress toward reform in three cities that participated in the initiative, document the importance of continuously engaging grassroots constituencies to keep reform on track and moving ahead. The *Youth Development Institute* is working with individual Beacons to strengthen the role of Community Advisory Councils. The *Washington Scholarship Fund*, in helping families to become advocates for their children and helping them to establish communication with staff at private schools, is laying the ground work for increased parent engagement in those schools. *George Washington Community School* is the result of continuous engagement between a community and its school.

James Austin describes a continuum of collaboration between businesses and nonprofit organizations, from a *philanthropic* stage, in which the relationship is primarily one between donor and recipient, to an *integrative* stage, when the partners' missions, people, and activities experience more collective action and organizational integration.⁵ Most of the partnerships profiled in this document are at an intermediate stage, which Austin calls *transactional*, in which partners are actively engaged and multiple benefits occur. When partners understand the dynamics of partnerships and maintain a focus on mutual benefits—citywide *and* community-focused; schools *and* communities; businesses *and* nonprofit organizations; young people *and* their families—partnerships grow stronger, benefits increase, and the institutional lines between partners become less obvious.

As partnerships mature and grow stronger, they become more integrated with the work of improving schools. Hill's description of three elements of reform strategies (see page 4) can be applied to these highly developed partnership strategies with a clear focus on improving urban schools, as illustrated in the chart on page 21.

These stories from communities illustrate the potential for school/family/community partnerships to transform results for schools and for whole communities—to make them positive, supportive places where children can thrive and achieve their families' aspirations.

INGREDIENTS FOR PRODUCING STRONG RESULTS

This chart presents an overview of Casey's education investments discussed in this publication.

	INCENTIVES FOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	INVESTMENTS IN SCHOOL CAPACITY	INVESTMENTS IN SCHOOL FREEDOM OF ACTION
DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COOP		Builds the capacity of charter schools to serve students with disabilities.	Works to support quality programming in schools of choice.
GEORGE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL		Partners provide classroom activities to prepare all students for post-secondary education.	Community support has been essential to maintaining the grade level and school size at GWCS.
FOUNDATIONS, INC.	Provides school management services to increase quality in low-performing public schools.	Invests in capacity of parents and school staff in the Neighborhood School Network.	Provides support for development of high-quality charter schools.
FUND FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK—YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE		Invests in the capacity of Beacons staff to keep youth positive and connected to learning.	
HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE, INC.		Invests at a scale designed to achieve results for all children who live in the Zone.	HCZ has opened two K–12 charter schools to prepare students to be successful in college.
PROJECT GRAD ATLANTA—COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS ATLANTA	Provides support for Parks staff and students to improve student performance on state tests.	Invests in curriculum alignment and strengthens afterschool programs by working with the Ed Trust and Foundations, Inc.	Supports transformation of Carver High School into four new small semi-autonomous schools.
WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FUND		Invests in supports for families so they have access to quality schools for their children.	

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