

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

September 5, 1997

SUPPORT WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE

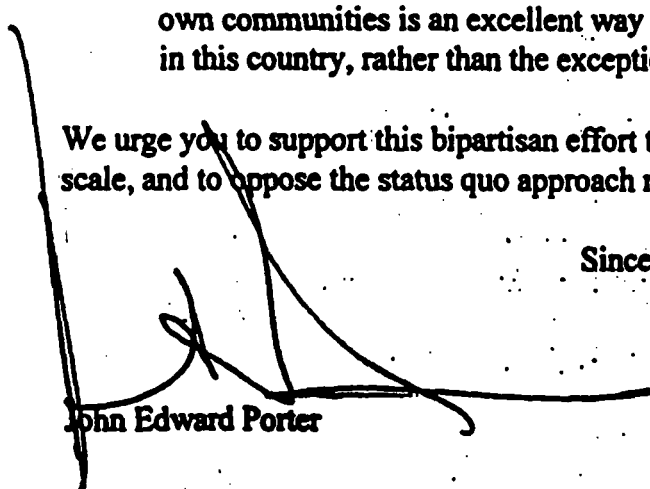
Dear Colleague:

During debate on H.R. 2264, the FY1998 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill there was some misunderstanding and confusion about the purpose of the \$200 million whole school reform initiative included in the bill and how this initiative would work. We would like to correct some of misstatements made about this proposal.

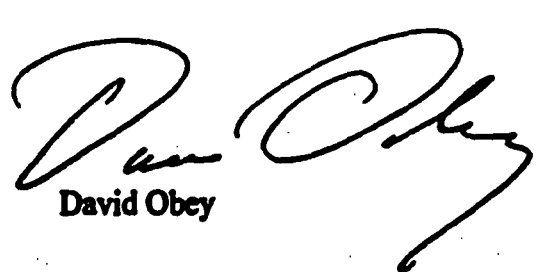
- **NOT A FEDERAL MANDATE.** Whole school reform does NOT mean federal control, or even state control, of local schools. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Whole school reform simply means a comprehensive, research-based, school improvement strategy selected or developed **AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL** that changes the entire way that the school functions - by addressing instruction, student assessment, classroom management, teacher training, parental involvement, and governance in a schoolwide effort to raise standards and student performance. Each school decides its own educational philosophy, and evaluates which strategy is best for that school. No state or school district would be forced to accept a grant. No state would be required to change its laws. Local schools would remain subject to relevant state laws on school reform.
- **GIVES PARENTS AND SCHOOLS MORE AUTONOMY AND FLEXIBILITY.** Whole school reform is an effort to end top down school management and to empower parents, teachers, and school administrators to unite behind a shared vision of how to improve student academic performance in their schools. Whole school reform allows schools to be more autonomous, but also more accountable for student results.
- **NOT A NEW FEDERAL PROGRAM.** The funds are fully authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: \$150 million would be allocated under the Title I basic grants formula to state departments of education for competitive grants to school districts that elect to participate. States would decide which school districts make the best case for improving the performance of Title I schools (serving the most disadvantaged students) based on well-designed whole school reform plans. Another \$50 million would be awarded in discretionary grants to school districts that are not eligible for Title I.
- **BASED ON BEST PRACTICES.** Whole school reform has been championed by corporate and education leaders (*see list on back*) and, unlike other educational reform efforts, has united the education community because it is based on using effective best practices. After twenty years of research and development on effective educational practices, we believe that providing parents, teachers and administrators with the tools and incentive to apply these best practices in their own communities is an excellent way to make high performing schools the norm in this country, rather than the exception.

We urge you to support this bipartisan effort to achieve educational success on a broad scale, and to oppose the status quo approach represented by the Riggs amendment.

Sincerely,



John Edward Porter



David Obey

CORPORATE LEADERS SUPPORTING WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM

David T. Kearns
Chairman/CEO
Xerox Corporation

James K. Baker
Vice Chairman
Arvin Industries

Lou V. Gerstner, Jr.
Chairman and CEO
IBM Corporation

Frank Shrontz
Chairman
Boeing Corporation

Robert E. Allen
Chairman and CEO
AT&T

Norman R. Augustine
President and CEO
Lockheed Martin Corporation

John L. Clendenin
Chairman and CEO
BellSouth Corporation

Joseph T. Gorman
Chairman and CEO
TRW Inc

Earl Graves
Chairman and CEO
Black Enterprise Magazine

John R. Hall
Chairman and CEO
Ashland, Inc.

Sidney Harman
Chairman and CEO
Harman International Industries

Charles Lee
Chairman and CEO
GTE Corporation

John D. Ong
Chairman and CEO
The BFGoodrich Company

Lee R. Raymond
Exxon Corporation

James J. Renier
Retired Chairman and CEO
Honeywell, Inc.

Paul Tagliabue
Commissioner
National Football League

John T. Walton
President
Quantum Partners

Stanley A. Weiss
Chairman
American Premier, Inc.

EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM

National Parent Teacher Association

American Federation of Teachers

National Education Association

Council of Chief State School Officers

National School Boards Association

New American Schools Corporation

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of State Title I
Directors

National Education Knowledge Industry Association

American Educational Research Association

Consortium of Social Science Organizations

Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences

BUILDING BETTER SCHOOLS THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM

"Efforts are now underway to scale up a number of exemplary programs that involve intensive schoolwide change, but these efforts are gradual and require substantial investments of resources.....schoolwide reform projects, such as the Coalition for Essential Schools, the Accelerated Schools Project, the School Development Program, and the Annenberg initiatives, are also trying to take their improvement efforts to scale. Indeed, if all of these and similar efforts prove to be successful it is possible that by the year 2000 that 10 percent or more of all public schools could be involved in intensive, focused school improvement efforts. The challenge in coming decades is to bring school reform, based on well-tested, effective strategies to the other 90 percent." Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners, Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement research priorities plan, 1997.

Helping Schools Adapt Effective, Research-based Comprehensive School Models

\$200 million in FY1998 L-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill for incentive grants for schools to adopt effective, research-based comprehensive school reform models (\$150 million under Title 1 and \$50 million under the Fund for the Improvement of Education).

\$5 million in FY1998 L-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill for the regional educational laboratories to deliver expert assistance to schools to ensure successful implementation and evaluation of comprehensive school reforms.

Endorsed By:

- **National PTA, National School Boards Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, National Association of State Title 1 Directors, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council of the Great City Schools, American Educational Research Association, National Association of Secondary School Principals**
- **New American Schools (a non-profit organization founded by corporate leaders to develop and pilot new comprehensive school designs)**

Rationale:

In recent years, a dramatically different approach to school reform - that emphasizes school by school reform supported by networks of trainers and facilitators with well-researched and well-documented designs for schoolwide change - is quietly achieving significant increases in student achievement in a small number of schools across the country. Schools engaged in this comprehensive school reform process have challenging academic standards, engaged teachers, and strong parental and community support.

Effective comprehensive school reform models, such as the *School Development Program* developed by Yale University's psychiatrist James Comer, the *Success for All* and *Roots and Wings* programs developed by Johns Hopkins University's Robert Slavin, and the *Modern Red Schoolhouse* developed by the Hudson Institute are far ahead of other school improvement efforts in producing results because schools know where they are headed before they start. Each model:

- is based on solid research,
- is known to be replicable in schools with diverse characteristics,
- provides comprehensive vision for transforming the entire school,
- has high academic standards,
- engages the entire school community, including teachers and parents,
- places a high priority on intensive and ongoing teacher and staff, development and training, and
- is guided by benchmarks for implementation and results.

A program to provide modest seed capital for school-by-school change could begin to revolutionize the way in which a majority of American schools operate. Such a program would enable a broad range of schools to implement the best-designed, best-researched models now in existence to improve schools and help children achieve world-class standards.

How Would the Comprehensive School Reform Initiative Work?

- \$200 million would be used to provide initial start-up funding on a competitive basis to schools that elect to pursue comprehensive school reform. School leaders, teachers and parents select or design a research-based comprehensive school reform model that fits their community.
- Up to 4,000 local schools could receive grants not less than \$50,000; grants would be renewable for two years. The actual number of schools participating would depend on the cost of the particular reform model chosen or designed by each school.
- Individual schools that elect to participate would identify or design an effective, research-based, comprehensive school reform model that has the support of the school faculty, staff and parents, and develop a plan for its implementation and evaluation.
- Participating schools would use funds to support the startup costs of professional development and training for teachers, administrators and staff ; on-site technical assistance; and special materials needed to successfully implement comprehensive-school reform. For example, funds could be used to finance release time for teachers, staff and administrators to evaluate comprehensive school reform models including visiting other schools, and participate in training; to develop or acquire curriculum; to pay for technical assistance and training materials; and to implement parent outreach programs.
- The Secretary of Education would provide information to state and local educational agencies and to schools on proven and promising comprehensive school reform models and implementation costs so that schools can make informed choices about what methods would work best in that jurisdiction.
- \$5 million in new funding would be provided to the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories to expand the expert support system needed to deliver expert high quality assistance to schools implementing research-based comprehensive school reform models, tailored to local conditions, resources and needs. The laboratories would also assist schools in the rigorous evaluation of the results achieved.

How Would the Funds Be Distributed?

- \$150 million would be appropriated under the Title 1 - Demonstrations of Innovative Practices Program to provide assistance to Title 1 schools. This program authorizes funding for promising educational strategies that show the most promise of enabling children to meet challenging state content and student performance standards, including effective approaches to comprehensive school reform. Funds would be distributed to state educational agencies based on their relative share of Title 1 basic grant funds. State education agencies, in turn, would distribute funds to school districts on a competitive basis on behalf of Title 1 schools that want to participate.
- \$50 million would be appropriated under the Fund for the Improvement of Education to provide assistance to schools not eligible for Title 1 funding. This program authorizes the Secretary to make grants for innovative elementary and secondary school reform efforts. Discretionary grants would be made to school districts on behalf of schools that want to participate.



Embargoed for Release
September 15, 1997, 10:30 AM

Shep Ranbom or Matt Maurer (202) 467-8344
Rhea Borja (703) 908-0617

**House Leadership Agrees to \$200-Million Appropriation
For Scale Up of Comprehensive School Reforms
Funding Would Support National Expansion of New American Schools Initiative**

**Leaders of Movement To Redesign Public Education School-by-School Urge
Overhaul of School Funding, Governance, and Management**

WASHINGTON—As \$200 million in funding for comprehensive school reform makes its way through Congress, representatives of a growing movement of organizations favoring increased autonomy for individual schools today challenged more communities to work toward revamping the way schools are managed, financed, and organized to support higher achievement for a broader range of students.

"The current centralized school system, where individual schools have little or no authority, hampers the development of comprehensive school improvement efforts that stimulate student achievement," said John Anderson, president of New American Schools, which represents eight different comprehensive school reform models, or templates, that help communities design their schools. NAS designs are now being used in more than 750 schools nationwide. "Real reform will not advance beyond rudimentary levels unless each school is held accountable and allowed control over how it is run," Anderson said.

"This national initiative will enable a broad range of schools to implement the best-designed, best-researched models now in existence to improve schools and help children achieve world class standards," says Rep. David Obey (D-WI), ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee and one of the sponsor's of the measure. "Comprehensive school reforms, such as the Coalition for Essential Schools, the Accelerated Schools Project, and the designs offered by New American Schools, are trying to take their improvement efforts to scale. Our challenge is to bring these options to every school in the country."

"Comprehensive school reform is an effort to end top-down school management and to empower parents, teachers, and school administrators to unite behind a shared vision of how to improve student academic performance in their schools," adds Obey.

"Comprehensive school reform is going to help change school systems that are dysfunctional into ones that really work for American children," says Rep. John Porter (R-IL), chairman of the House Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. "This issue is probably the most exciting thing going on in education today."

* These remarks were delivered during an event here today at which the need to rebuild the nation's public education system community-by-community and school-by-school was the primary focus of leading business people, members of Congress, school superintendents, and top education researchers. The meeting was organized to mark the fifth anniversary of New American Schools and to assess the progress of the movement to redesign public education using tested school designs. Other successful strategies for improving student performance discussed at the event include the Comer School Development Model and Paideia.

—more—

Strategies for Revitalizing Schools and Districts

During today's event, participants outlined a strategy for revitalizing school districts that would support these comprehensive school designs, which are characterized by high quality curriculum and instructional programs and a school-based organizational structure that involves teachers in decisions that influence the classroom and student performance. The strategy they argue is necessary because the current system is sometimes at odds with the freedom and flexibility inherent in new design schools and the "scale-up" plans now underway.

The necessary steps for implementing change are included in a series of publications to be released this week. The publications tackle issues related to school reform, including the call for decentralized school management and finance. The guidebooks are designed to help school districts and local communities understand their roles in a revitalized, school-based environment. (See attached news release for details and "Five Years on the Front Lines" for a summary of the major recommendations.) The reports are available through New American Schools, 1000 Wilson Blvd., Suite 2710, Arlington, VA 22209, (703) 908-9500.

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New American Schools

1000 Wilson Boulevard • Suite 2710 • Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 908-9500 • FAX (703) 908-0622
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DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

***Profiles of Exemplary Schools Using NAS
Whole School Designs***

September 1997

ATLAS COMMUNITIES

The ATLAS design centers on pathways—groups of schools made up of high schools and elementary and middle schools that feed into them. Teams of teachers from each pathway work together to design curriculum and assessments based on locally defined standards. Teachers collaborate with parents and administrators to form a learning community that works together to set and maintain sound management policies.

Number of Schools: 52 (11 pathways)

Locations: Gorham, Maine; Memphis; Norfolk, Virginia; Philadelphia; Prince George's County, Maryland; Seattle, Everett, Northshore and Shoreline, Washington

For More Information contact: Jane Feinberg, (617) 969-7100, email: Atlas@edc.org

Website address: <http://www.edc.org/FSC/ATLAS>

The Booker T. Washington High School

Memphis, Tennessee

In 1989, Principal Elsie Lewis Bailey joined The Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, TN as an assistant principal. Her appointment was part of the city's "deregulation" experiment, which gave schools in close proximity to public housing and opportunity to interview only those staff who chose to be there. As a result, "the turmoil was gone, but the academics were still very poor."

As principal, Bailey began to lay the groundwork for changes in curriculum and teaching practice. A colleague in Texas helped her implement block scheduling. The school also formed curriculum committees, readying her staff for conversations around education reform. "If you don't have or develop a site-based framework, ATLAS won't work," commented Bailey.

After two years with ATLAS, Bailey reported that the school has incorporated pieces of the ATLAS design in phases. During the first year she spent much of her time working closely with the "resistors to change." It was not until the next year when she visited the elementary and middle schools in the pathway that, "the light bulb went off in my head. ATLAS is not going to make us change. ATLAS is a framework—we decide how we're going to do it."

ATLAS has had a deep impact on the students at Booker T. Washington. A peer mediation program is in full force. All student work is expected to be typed. The school just finished its first pilot year doing Exhibitions, a milestone considering that students in the school thought they were incapable of such work. The school has also implemented full inclusion. Bailey mentioned one student whose state test score went from 49 to 85 after inclusion. "We've got to stop labeling kids. Our children lack experiences. If you've never seen a mountain, you can't talk about it."

AUDREY COHEN COLLEGE: Purpose-Centered Education

The Audrey Cohen College system of education focuses student learning on the study and achievement of meaningful "purposes" for each semester's academic goals. In fourth grade, for examples, one purpose is "we work for good health." Students achieve their purpose by using their knowledge and skills to plan, carry out, and evaluate a Constructive Action to benefit the community and the larger world. The design emphasizes strong leadership among administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members.

Number of schools: 18

Locations: Dade County, Florida; Hollandale and Leland, Mississippi; Memphis; Philadelphia; San Diego; Seattle

For More Information contact: Janith Jordan, (212) 343-1234 ext. 3400; email: JanithJ@aol.com;

Website address: www.audrey-cohen.edu

Simmons Elementary School

Hollandale, Mississippi

For six years, Simmons Elementary School has been an Audrey Cohen College school. Students monitor their own progress as they increasingly assume responsibility for their learning.

Each student is assessed to see how well he or she understands academic content and to determine their ability to use knowledge and skills with increasing sophistication to achieve the overarching purpose of the academic plan. Under the Audrey Cohen whole school design, students achieve a meaningful purpose each semester by planning, carrying out, and evaluating a "Constructive Action" in which they use their knowledge and skills to benefit their community and the larger world. In using what they know and applying what they learn, students not only achieve a meaningful Purpose, but they also learn to be effective and caring citizens able to manage their lives and help to make the world a better place to live. For example, sixth graders at Simmons Elementary School recognized the need for more community planning. They met with university, business, and government officials to initiate work on a strategic plan for economic and community development. Subsequently, they participated in the actual community planning.

As a result of this approach, students at Simmons Elementary made gains in reading, mathematics, and language on the state's test of academic skills between 1994 and 1995. By 1996, fifth grade students at Simmons ranked third in the state among the 153 districts in the state in language, ninth in reading, and sixteenth in mathematics. Simmons has been featured in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* as a "success story," an honor, according to the superintendent, credited to the Audrey Cohen College approach.

Louisa May Alcott Elementary School

San Diego, California

"My husband and I learned first-hand that in many areas – math, computer technology, reading comprehension, and most important, the teaching of respect for oneself and others – this school far exceeds the two private schools we tried. I have seen the strength of the Purpose-Centered curriculum and staff."

--Louis May Alcott Elementary School Parent

"We introduced the College's Purpose-Centered Education in our elementary school five years ago and the results have been incredible. The evidence is varied and is visible not just in the excitement and new culture of the school but throughout the community."

--Principal

Louisa May Alcott Elementary School in San Diego has been using Audrey Cohen's Purpose-Centered school design since 1991-92. Over the past six years, the community has been actively involved with the College's system of education through a growing number of community members serving as Purpose Experts and community businesses and organizations serving as sites for Purpose Trips.

School-wide activities developed by students have been effective in sustaining and increasing student achievement gains. Through the years, the school has maintained or improved its above-average scores in reading and math. Constructive Actions being developed at the school are creative and far reaching. For example, through the Internet, students learned that foundations offer help to people who are suffering. The students decided to find a way to use technology as a communications device in order to rally people from all walks of life around individuals in need. This activity enabled students to become learn how to use various technologies, including the Internet, for sharing information. Students were able to understand how distant communities can be linked by sharing information around subjects of interest and concern to all.

Students at Louisa May Alcott Elementary School also planned and conducted a full-blown health conference, with exhibits, demonstrations, activities, materials and services such as blood pressure readings to inform community decision-makers about health issues that they thought were not being addressed. Through the local news media, the class also took a position against proposed cuts in the local Health Department budget.

Co-NECT Schools

Assisting schools in creating and managing their own high-tech equipment and network, Co-NECT uses technology to enhance every aspect of teaching, learning, professional development, and school management. Co-NECT Schools are organized around small clusters of students who are taught by a cross-disciplinary team. Most students stay in the same cluster with the same teachers for at least two years. Teaching and learning center on interdisciplinary projects that promote critical skills and academic understanding. A team of educators and parents set school goals.

Number of Schools: 60

Locations: Cincinnati; Broward and Dade Counties, Florida; Juneau, Alaska; Memphis; Philadelphia; San Antonio; Worcester, Massachusetts

For More Information contact: Diana Nunnaley, (617) 873-2683; email: info@conect.bbn.com

Website address: <http://co-nect.bbn.com>

Oak Forest Elementary School

Memphis, Tennessee

Oak Forest Elementary School, located on the outskirts of Memphis, Tennessee, has been working with Co-NECT Schools since 1995. The school houses a greenhouse, computer lab, multipurpose room, storytelling room, library/media center, and music rooms.

The school has had a strong commitment to technology since its opening in the fall of 1993. It is one of 24 Memphis City Century Classroom Program. Every classroom in grades 4-6 has a minimum of three fully equipped technology stations, and one teacher workstation with a large screen display, laser disc player, and VCR. Every classroom in grades K-3 has at least one computer. Every classroom is connected to the Internet.

Some 32 classroom teachers in grades K-6 are teamed in clusters of three to four classes, representing different grades and ages. The cluster studies the same topic, with each class investigating a different question related to that topic. For example, if the topic is North America, one class may study North American birds, another may study the different cultures, while another may elect to study folk tales. As a way of keeping teachers with the same group of students for more than one year, some teachers "loop" with their classes—teaching, for example, 4th grade one year and 5th grade the next.

In recent years, teachers have become increasingly adept at using technology to enrich and extend curriculum projects. For examples using the Internet, students have collected data on acid rain from other students in California, New York, Illinois, Germany, Japan, and Russia. They used a spreadsheet program to organize the data and create graphs and charts, then presented their findings using HyperCard.

Campbell Drive Middle School

Homestead, Florida

In the spring of 1996-1997, Campbell Drive Middle School, a Co-NECT School in Dade County, Florida, reported test score gains in several critical areas, including writing, reading comprehension, science, and mathematics.

Most impressively, the percentage of students scoring "3.0" or higher on Florida Writes!, the state writing assessment, is now up to 72 percent approaching the district average, marking the third year in a row of continuing improvement.

Percentage scoring 3.0 or better on Florida Writing Assessment

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Dade County Public Schools	45	66	84	80
Campbell Drive Middle School	14	52	67	72

These results are especially impressive in a year when scores on the state writing assessment have dropped districtwide. In fact, Campbell Drive was the only school in Region IV to show improvement, and was the second most improved middles school in Dade County. Scores on the Stanford Achievement Test were also up in science (grade 8), reading comprehension (grade 8), and math applications (both grade 7 and grade 8).

Principal Santiago Corrada credits the hard work of this teaching staff and students for these improvements. "We've had a banner year," he says, "and although we still have room for improvement, we're rapidly becoming the premier middle school in South Dade."

The school has recently organized a "Tech Squad" to help train other students to use various software applications as well as help maintain the school's web site. The squad is made up of nine students trained by four Campbell Drive teachers. The students have learned how to use a number of software applications including ClarisWorks, Adobe PageMill, Photoshop and HyperStudio. The students have also learned to use scanners and QuickTake cameras. After learning various technologies, the squad ventures into classrooms to help train teachers and fellow students.

Located in Homestead, Florida, Campbell Drive Middle School serves a student population that is 54 percent Hispanic, 34 percent African-American, and 10 percent White. In 1995-1996, approximately 83 percent received free or reduced lunch, and eight percent were classified as having Limited English Proficiency. Many are children of migrant workers. The school has been a Co-NECT School since 1995-1996.

EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING OUTWARD BOUND

Built on the 10 Outward Bound principles, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound operates on the belief that learning is an expedition into the unknown. Expeditionary Learning draws on the power of purposeful, intellectual investigations—called learning expeditions—to improve student achievement and build character. Learning expeditions are long-term, academically rigorous, interdisciplinary studies that require students to work inside and outside the classroom. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students and teachers stay together for more than one year, teachers work collaboratively through team teaching and shared planning, and there is no tracking.

Number of Schools: 48

Locations: Baltimore County, Annapolis, Maryland; Boston and Newburyport, Massachusetts; Cincinnati; Dade County, Florida; Decatur, Georgia; Denver; Dubuque, Iowa; Portland, Maine; Memphis; New York City; San Antonio; Seattle and Edmond, Washington; Santa Barbara, California

For More Information contact: Amy Mednick, (617) 576-1260 ext. 17; email: info@elob.ednet

Website address: <http://hugsel.harvard.edu/~elob>

King Middle School

Portland, Maine

King Middle School's students include a growing number of immigrants who speak as many as 28 different languages. Nonetheless, the school went from performing below the state average in all curriculum areas on the 1994-95 Maine Educational Assessment Test to above the state average in six out of seven areas one year later. As a result, principal Mike McCarthy was selected as Maine Principal of the Year.

The King faculty has developed a shared understanding of effective instructional practice grounded in six core principles: active learning in thematic, project-based learning expeditions that have meaning and purpose; sharing student work with authentic audiences beyond the classroom; heterogeneous grouping and instructional practices that incorporate multiple learning styles; multidisciplinary team teaching; cooperative learning; and high expectations that each and every student is capable of high achievement and high quality work. Through on going conversations, there is a shared vision of comprehensive school change focused on a common set of design principles.

All teachers plan and teach in teams during common planning time built in the school schedule. Staff development workshops are held weekly after school on issues related to school improvement and implementation of Expeditionary Learning. The school is divided into two houses to promote and foster effective student teams. All students stay with the same team of teachers for two years in order to foster a sense of belonging among both students and teachers and to create the stability and familiarity of a long-term relationship between students, teachers, and parents.

Every learning expedition ends with students sharing work with an audience beyond the classroom, enhancing the sense of purpose and belonging. For example, students published a professional quality field guide to intertidal life in Casco Bay and presented their design plans for a Portland aquarium to architects and the Portland Museum Design Committee. Both the nature of the tasks and the public demonstration constitute real world assessment that foster high-quality student work. The school held a two day fair where community members, parents, and teachers from other schools were invited to see a gallery of student work from learning expeditions.

King School has developed a core curriculum aligned with Maine educational standards that is the focus of learning expeditions. Learning expeditions challenge and support each student to do his or her best, using multiple voices and media, and then to better their personal best. The ability to translate state learning standards into an effective curriculum and instructional practices was demonstrated by performance of King students on the Maine Educational Assessment, which focuses on critical thinking and higher order thinking skills.

Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning (RMSEL) *Denver, Colorado*

"The Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning is well on its way to becoming a powerful example of educational practice for the state of Colorado and the nation. We were greatly impressed with the level of commitment, respect, and thought about learning that both students and teachers demonstrated during our visit. Nearly every student interviewed by the visiting team could articulate what they were learning and where they were going. We saw much evidence of Expeditionary Learning Design Principles in action. RMSEL is helping students overcome fear and apathy while allowing them to discover that everyone has much more in them than they think. It is clear the RMSEL is a thoughtful, caring and respectful community of educators. We look forward to following the school's progress."

--From the Report of the Visit of the North Central Association (NCA) Visiting Resource Team (April 1997)

Through an ongoing series of task forces, comprehensive school planning meetings, and reflection, the Rocky Mountain School's faculty and parents have developed and are continuously improving rubrics for student work for scientific reasoning (science and technology), quantitative reasoning (math), cultural understanding (social studies), language arts, writing, arts, literature and aesthetics. Led by the portfolio committee, the school structure encouraged discussions of student work in teacher teams and in classes with students, and developing a school-wide assessment plan.

The school has set aside one staff meeting each month to fine-tune rubrics, and to think about what they value in student work in various domains and how to capture those criteria in rubrics. Additional staff meetings are devoted to sharing and giving feedback on learning expeditions. Assessment of student work with rubrics is used in developing learning expeditions and thinking about the qualities of culminating projects and exhibitions.

The school has developed the “rites of passage” (graduation performances) for grades 2,5,8, and 12 -- based on current knowledge demonstrated in their portfolios. The process of developing graduation requirements began with a three day retreat where teachers, parents, and students developed a draft for discussion within the school community. This graduation requirement integrates the major academic disciplines with experiential learning , intellectual rigor, reflection, service, and adventure. To demonstrate that the graduate has both a well developed intellect and character, he or she must present ten portfolios and a senior exhibition project to the graduation committee.

RMSEL makes service learning an important and formal part of their educational focus. As part of the graduation requirement, students must submit a Service Portfolio that contains 1) a formal resume of the student’s community service work that is viewed as being significant to the community and relevant letters of reference from supervisors or organizers; 2) a major service project that is presented in the form of an essay, video, or oral presentation; and 3) evidence of service to the school.

MODERN RED SCHOOLHOUSE INSTITUTE

This design strives to help all students achieve high standards through the construction of a standards-driven curriculum; employment of traditional and performance-based assessments; effective organizational patterns and professional-development programs; and implementations of effective community-involvement strategies. Students master a rigorous curriculum designed to transmit common culture, develop character, and promote the principles of democratic government.

Number of Schools: 33

Locations: Beech Grove, Indianapolis, Greentown, Bartholomew County, Taylorsville, Indiana; Broward and Dade Counties, Florida; Franklin and Lawrence, Massachusetts; LeRoy, Illinois; Memphis; New York City; Philadelphia; San Antonio

For More Information contact: June Gregory, (888) 275-6774; email: skilgore@mrsh.org;

Website address: <http://www.mrsh.org>

Treasure Island Elementary School

North Bay Village, Florida

Treasure Island Elementary also uses the Modern Red School House design to focus on high academic achievement for all students. According to the approach taken by the school all children can learn and attain high standards but vary in the time they need to learn and the ways they learn best. To accommodate the varying needs of children, the school introduced 13 after-school classes which are attended voluntarily by over 20 percent of students at the school. These classes include both enrichment and support topics such as creative writing, math-manipulatives, and Spanish literature. The school also implemented a Saturday Academy focusing on instruction and practice in test-taking.

Treasure Island has developed block scheduling for staff in order to allow them one hour of grade level planning time every day to be used either for grade level teams or for personal planning time.

Modern Red Schoolhouse has helped to clarify and target Treasure Island's focus—organizing instruction to meet the needs of all students. By reallocating funds from a variety of sources (Title I, grant monies, and instructional funds), they have been able to improve both the content and the delivery of curriculum.

Results have been impressive. Students have increased their reading comprehension, mathematics computation scores, mathematics applications, and science scores each year. Scores in reading comprehension are up four percent since last year. Math computation and application scores are up 15 percent and 7 percent, respectively. Science scores increased 11 percent.

Rozelle Creative and Performing Arts School

Memphis, Tennessee

Rozelle began design implementation in 1996, and student and school benefits can already be seen. Many of the classroom environments have been rearranged to allow students to work more independently, reducing the time teachers devote to collecting, sorting and distributing material. Teachers have successfully increased their ability and time to address individual needs of students.

The daily attendance rate has increased to over 96%. Students have demonstrated a greater desire to attend school more often and stay later to work on their projects. The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) shows that all grades have exceeded the median national percentiles for the state of Tennessee in at least one content area. All grades have met or exceeded 90% of the district median percentiles., and fourth grade writing proficiency scores improved by more than 100%.

Using Modern Red Schoolhouse standards, teachers continue to develop curriculum that enables students to meet high standards. "We believe that what students know is as important as how they think and analyze problems," stated a Rozellè teacher. To be successful in this process, the faculty established common planning periods so all teachers can plan and share activities. At the end of a unit, a creative and performing arts program is presented by each grade for the entire school, demonstrating standards taught during the unit. Students are responsible for the research and content of the program; teachers assist with dance choreography, music and art backdrops.

National Alliance for Restructuring Education (NARE)

This partnership of schools, districts, states, and leading national organizations works to change the education system from classroom to statehouse through a five-point set of priorities. Known as "design tasks," they are: standards and assessments, learning environments, high-performance management, community services and supports, and public engagement. The National Alliance provides extensive training and materials in each area.

Number of Schools: 218

Locations: Arkansas; Chicago; Kentucky; Pittsburgh and the Milton Hershey School, Hershey, Pennsylvania; Rochester and White Plains, New York; San Diego; Washington

For More Information contact: Dr. Mary Anne Mays, (202) 783-3668;

email: nareinfo@ncee.org;

Website address: <http://www.ncee.org/OurPrograms/narePage.html>

John F. Kennedy Elementary School

Louisville, Kentucky

Once known for all the wrong reasons, John F. Kennedy Elementary School has improved student performance remarkably over the past five years and has earned national acclaim for doing something right. Performance in reading and math tripled; performance in writing quadrupled; and scores in science and social studies were twice what they were. The school's principal, who was once summoned to the superintendent's office to explain a high kindergarten failure rate, received the Milken Family Foundation Award.

JFK Elementary School Progress on State Assessments Since Participating in NARE

SUBJECT	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
<i>Reading</i>	16	24	40	67
<i>Math</i>	11	13	53	61
<i>Science</i>	16	10	23	37
<i>Social Studies</i>	17	22	48	51
<i>Writing</i>	11	23	46	54

Teachers and parents credit the school's remarkable improvement to its commitment to ensuring that all children achieve at high levels and its relentless focus on student achievement. Jacqueline Austin, the school's principal, notes that National Alliance workshops and technical assistance have helped her improve her own ability to analyze student performance data and to focus the school's strategies on improving performance.

Kennedy Elementary is continuing its quest to reach its goal of ensuring that all students reach high standards of performance. This year, Austin and her staff are focusing on improving performance in reading and literacy by aligning its reading curriculum more closely to standards. Kennedy will continue to concentrate on its professional development resources on enabling teachers to use instructional strategies tied to standards for student performance.

Canyon Creek Elementary School

Bothell, Washington

Canyon Creek Elementary School has attained what one parent calls “a track record of success” by maintaining an unswerving commitment to improving performance for all students, particularly the lowest performers, and doing whatever it takes to achieve the goals. And parents and members of the community feel that the school has succeeded, and that students are learning consistently.

Canyon Creek has also developed a discipline policy that has had a dramatic effect at the school and was chosen as exemplary by the district. Drawn up by a committee composed of parents and staff members, it states rights, rules, and consequences.

This year’s goal for performance-driven improvement was to increase by eight percent the number of students who read above the 80 percent mark and to decrease by 16 percent the number children who were reading below the 25 percent level. In order to measure progress, the school had to identify a new assessment instrument since the current assessment tested reading performance only in the fourth grade.

The Canyon Creek approach for this coming year is to institute a new calendar aimed at helping them reach their performance targets more efficiently and effectively. Under the calendar, students will be in school 4.5 days a week, and school will close early on Friday to permit time for teachers to plan together and develop professionally. This calendar shift was developed during a three-day retreat of parents and staff, and adopted by an 85 percent vote. It represents a typical effort by Canyon Creek to listen to the entire community, take risks, and involve everyone in decisions.

Roots & Wings

This elementary school design builds on the widely used Success for All reading program and incorporates science, history, and mathematics to achieve a comprehensive academic program. The premise of the design is that schools must do whatever it takes to make sure all students succeed. To this end, Roots and Wings schools provide at-risk students with tutors, family support, and a variety of other services aimed at eliminating obstacles to success.

Number of Schools: 286

Locations: Anson County, North Carolina; Asbury Park, New Jersey; Cincinnati, Elyria, and Dawson-Bryant, Ohio; Columbus, Indiana; Dade County, Palm Beach County, and Putnam County, Florida; Everett, Washington; Flint, Michigan; Henry County and Memphis, Tennessee; Houston; Aldine, Morton, Muleshoe, San Antonio, Texas; Mesa and Lueppe, Arizona; Modesto, Pasadena, and Riverside, California; Brooklyn, New York; Philadelphia and Johnstown, Pennsylvania; Rockford, Illinois; St. Mary's County and Baltimore County, Maryland

For More Information contact: Dr. Robert Slavin, (410) 516-0274; email: rslavin@inet.ed.gov

Website address: <http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/sfa>

Lackland City Elementary School

San Antonio, Texas

Lackland City Elementary School began working with the *Success for All* component of Roots & Wings in the fall of 1994. The reading program was successfully implemented at all grade levels and a special effort was made to ensure that all students had opportunities to take books home to read. The school developed a program where older students listen to younger students read during breakfast. The school added its family support component in 1994 and began implementation of *Math Wings* in third, fourth, and fifth grades in the fall of 1996. The school's focus on community involvement has led to partnerships with local agencies. For example, Santa Rosa Hospital provides a weekly immunizations clinic at the school, as well as WIC program services.

Since implementing Roots & Wings, 84 percent of students at Lackland Elementary are achieving the grade level objectives in reading on the Texas Statewide Assessment (TAAS). On the math TAAS, 85 percent of the students achieved grade level—an increase of 35 points over the previous year when the school began implementation of *MathWings*. All students read a book of their choice at home each night and virtually every single parent reports that they listen to or discuss what their children are reading and sign a "reading response" form each week.

El Vista Elementary School

Modesto, California

El Vista Elementary School has been working with the Roots & Wings design since 1993. All of the elements of the reading program, *Success for All*, have been fully implemented throughout the school since 1991. Additionally, one of the other key

elements of the design. *MathWings* was implemented in grades 3,4, and 5 during the 1995-96 school year. El Vista has a very strong Family Support Team, which has developed a wide variety of strategies for helping parents read to their children. The teachers at El Vista are very active in the development of specific classroom materials to enhance their implementation of Roots & Wings components.

Since 1992, achievement levels for all first graders have been tracked until the students finish third grade. Of the students tracked, only two were below grade level at the end of the third grade. Discipline problems are down and students are actively involved in the school and in each other's success. After only one year in *Math Wings*, total math scores on the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) had increased by 2.5 points among third graders, 6.2 points among fourth graders, and 8.6 points among fifth graders at the school.

NEW AMERICAN SCHOOLS DESIGNS

ATLAS Communities

The ATLAS design centers on pathways—groups of schools made up of high schools and elementary and middle schools that feed into them. Teams of teachers from each pathway work together to design curriculum and assessments based on locally defined standards. Teachers collaborate with parents and administrators to form a learning community that works together to set and maintain sound management policies.

Number of Schools: 56 (11 pathways)

Locations: Gorham, Maine; Memphis; Norfolk, Virginia; Philadelphia; Prince George's County, Maryland; Seattle

For More Information: (617) 969-7100; email: Atlas@edc.org

Website: www.edc.org/FSC/ATLAS

Audrey Cohen College

The Audrey Cohen College system of education focuses student learning on the study and achievement of meaningful “purposes” for each semester’s academic goals. In fourth grade, for examples, one purpose is “we work for good health.” Students achieve their purpose by using their knowledge and skills to plan, carry out, and evaluate a constructive action to benefit the community and the larger world. The design emphasizes strong leadership among administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members.

Number of schools: 18

Locations: Dade County, Florida; Hollandale, Mississippi; Memphis; Phoenix; San Diego; Seattle

For More Information: (212) 343-1234; email: JanithJ@aol.com

Website: www.audrey-cohen.edu

Co-NECT Schools

Assisting schools in creating and managing their own high-tech equipment and network, Co-NECT uses technology to enhance every aspect of teaching, learning, professional development, and school management. Co-NECT Schools are organized around small clusters of students who are taught by a cross-disciplinary team. Most students stay in the same cluster with the same teachers for at least two years. Teaching and learning center on interdisciplinary projects that promote critical skills and academic understanding. A team of educators and parents set school goals.

Number of Schools: 60

Locations: Cincinnati; Dade County, Florida; Juneau, Alaska; Memphis; Philadelphia; San

Antonio; Worcester, Massachusetts

For More Information: (617) 873-2683; email: info@conect.bbn.com

Website: <http://co-nect.bbn.com>

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound

Built on the 10 Outward Bound principles, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound operates on the belief that learning is an expedition into the unknown. Expeditionary Learning draws on the power of purposeful, intellectual investigations—called learning expeditions—to improve student achievement and build character. Learning expeditions are long-term, academically rigorous, interdisciplinary studies that require students to work inside and outside the classroom. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students and teachers stay together for more than one year, teachers work collaboratively through team teaching and shared planning, and there is no tracking.

Number of Schools: 48

Locations: Baltimore County, Maryland; Boston; Cincinnati; Dade County, Florida; Decatur, Georgia; Denver; Dubuque, Iowa; Portland, Maine; Memphis; New York City; San Antonio

For More Information: (617) 576-1260; email: info@elob.ednet

Website: <http://hugsel.harvard.edu/~elob>

Modern Red Schoolhouse Institute

This design strives to help all students achieve high standards through the construction of a standards-driven curriculum; employment of traditional and performance-based assessments; effective organizational patterns and professional-development programs; and implementations of effective community involvement strategies. Students master a rigorous curriculum designed to transmit common culture, develop character, and promote the principles of democratic government.

Number of Schools: 33

Locations: Columbus, Beech Grove, and Greentown, Indiana; Dade County, Florida; Franklin and Lawrence, Massachusetts; Illinois; Indianapolis; Kayenta, Arizona; Memphis; New York City; Philadelphia; San Antonio

For More Information: (888) 275-6774; email: skilgore@mrsh.org

Website: www.mrsh.org

National Alliance for Restructuring Education

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For More Information: (202) 783-3668; email: nareinfo@ncee.org

Website: www.ncee.org/OurPrograms/narePage.html

Roots and Wings

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Number of Schools: 286

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For More Information: (410) 516-0274; email: rsalvin@inet.ed.gov

Website: <http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/sfa>

Los Angeles Learning Centers

The Los Angeles Learning Centers (LALC) design is a comprehensive K-12 model for urban schools. The curriculum and instruction are designed to ensure that all students are taught in a K-12 community, enabling new strategies to overcome barriers by addressing the health and well-being of students and their families. Governance and management are also restructured to engage community members in decision making and to ensure that the design can improve and evolve. LALC also incorporates the extensive use of advanced technology as an essential element of the design.

Number of schools: 4

Location: Los Angeles

For More Information: (213) 622-5327; e-mail: gpruitt@laedu.lalc.k12.ca.us

Website: www.lalc.k12.ca.us



New American Schools

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(703) 908-9500 • FAX (703) 908-0622
E-mail: info@hq.nasdc.org

Five Years on the Front Lines:

**Advancing Comprehensive School Reform
In 750 Schools Nationwide**

**John Anderson, President
New American Schools
September 15, 1997**

The Comprehensive School Reform Movement

"The New American Schools...is another powerful example of how change can take place. It has developed eight different, well-conceived models of how to fix a failing school. Local parents and school leaders choose the right model that fits their community. That's public school choice at its best."

—Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education

New American Schools and its partners represent a growing movement in this country that has quietly influenced and improved the way education is delivered in thousands of schools in more than half the states. This movement focuses on doing what is required to make all individual schools the best they can be. Our goal is to empower parents, teachers, and school administrators to unite behind a shared vision for improving student academic performance in their schools. Unlike many reforms, which offer only add-on programs or isolated projects, NAS and other comprehensive reform efforts work to improve the whole school, from curriculum and instruction to parent and community involvement.

Autonomy, Accountability, and Results

New American Schools and other comprehensive school improvement efforts believe the nation's public schools need to target resources in more effective ways, increase school autonomy and accountability, create more substantial and ongoing engagement with parents and the public, think systematically and strategically about what works and what doesn't, and introduce higher standards for student performance.

The transformation of individual schools into autonomous, high performance organizations will not occur by adding new programs or layers to the existing system. Rather, schools need to be redesigned and school districts need to be reinvented to support these autonomous, high performance organizations.

Supporters of comprehensive school reform believe **each school must become an organization that creates its own staff, mission, and approach to instruction and is accountable for its progress and results.** Supporters also believe that quality and equity are synonymous. The opportunity to choose between schools of quality is the most equitable system one could have. What we have today are choices between mediocre schools or choices between a few good schools and poor schools.

Supporters of comprehensive school reform efforts are increasingly concerned that the way education is organized and delivered and the methods often used to improve education are not designed to address the root causes of the problems affecting public education. Our schools need to be more responsive to the needs of parents and communities and to make better use of the \$1.5 billion the nation spends every school day. Our schools need to be more accountable to the public for how well they help a broader segment of the student population achieve high standards.

The common school that emerged with Horace Mann in 1840 has been the bedrock of this nation, has fueled the economic growth and development of this country, and has advanced equity, social cohesion, and community identity. Unless public schools are redesigned to provide what it takes to help young people achieve today, Mann's vision and the continued contribution of community-centered, free public education to American life is in danger. Unless public schools change to meet the needs of students, communities, and the nation, then public support for the common school will die, and community-based schooling as we know it will cease to exist.

Scope of the Movement

New American Schools (NAS) was launched in 1991 to develop new, innovative school designs that would improve student academic achievement. Funded by the private sector, NAS has created school designs that expect all students to achieve high standards and systematically remove common barriers to success. NAS is also tackling the difficult challenge of scale. Through a strategic restructuring process, NAS is helping to create school systems where high performance schools are the norm rather than the exception.

Today, more than 750 schools in over 30 states are implementing eight NAS-developed designs. In addition, other school improvement efforts that meet research-based criteria, such as Accelerated Schools, Paideia, and the Comer School Development Program are demonstrating success in hundreds of additional schools nationwide.

Research-Based Results

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the NAS approach and other comprehensive school reform efforts is the research-based nature of the enterprise. NAS has worked with many of the nation's top education researchers and others to develop these models and continues to draw on expert assistance to help school districts and communities learn how to finance and refine comprehensive school improvement efforts with limited additional financial support and generate the community and policy supports necessary to help the designs flourish. Some of the researchers involved in this effort include: Robert Slavin (Johns Hopkins University), James Comer (Yale University), and Marc Tucker (the National Center on Education and the Economy). In addition, NAS has contracted with the RAND Corporation to measure, monitor, and report improvement in schools and districts using NAS designs. (RAND publishes regular reports on the NAS effort, including: *Lessons from New American Schools Development Corporation's Demonstration Phase* and *Reforming and Conforming: NASDC Principals Discuss School Accountability Systems*.)

The results thus far have been promising. In many schools using one of the NAS designs:

- Students are producing higher quality work, achieving at higher levels, and showing improvement on standardized tests and other measures of performance.
- Discipline problems are down, and student attendance and engagement are up.
- Teacher enthusiasm and community involvement are both on the rise.
- The pace of change is quicker than conventional wisdom suggests is possible.

In the words of Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University and the director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "New American Schools help create a new design for education that uses time, talent, and resources more efficiently. NAS helps ensure that students have a school environment organized to offer a rich learning experience geared to their individual needs. NAS designs also help ensure that teachers have a rich learning environment to improve their practice with kids."

The proof is in student performance gains that are occurring at design-based schools across the nation. **Simmons Elementary School in Hollandale, MS**, for example, is a demonstration site for the Audrey Cohen College school design initiative. Students at Simmons achieved gains in reading, mathematics, and language on the state's test of academic skills between 1994 and 1995, and these gains were sustained on the most recent 1996 tests. By 1996, fifth-grade students at Simmons ranked third in the state in language, ninth in reading, and sixteenth in mathematics out of 153 school districts measured.

What's unique about the school? Students monitor their own progress as they increasingly assume responsibility for their learning. Each student is assessed to see how well he or she understands academic content and to determine his or her ability to use knowledge and skills with increasing sophistication to achieve the overarching purpose of the academic plan. Within the Audrey Cohen comprehensive school design, students achieve a meaningful purpose each semester by planning, carrying out, and evaluating a "Constructive Action" in which they use their knowledge and skills to benefit their community and the larger world. In using what they know and applying what they learn, students not only achieve a meaningful Purpose, but they also learn to be effective and caring citizens able to manage their lives and help to make the world a better place to live.

At **King Middle School in Portland, ME**, the student body includes a growing number of immigrants who speak as many as 28 different languages. King went from scoring below the state average in six curriculum areas in 1994-95 to scoring above the state average in all six areas in 1995-96. As a result, principal Mike McCarthy was selected as Maine Principal of the Year.

The comprehensive school design at work at King is Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, which has helped King faculty draw on the power of purposeful, intellectual investigations—called learning expeditions—to improve student achievement and build character. Every learning expedition ends with students sharing work with an audience beyond the classroom, enhancing their sense of purpose and belonging. For example, students published a professional quality field guide to intertidal life in Casco Bay and presented their design plans for a Portland Aquarium to architects and the Portland Museum Design Committee. Both the nature of the tasks and the public demonstration constitute “real world” assessment that fosters high quality student work. The school held a two-day fair where community members, parents, and teachers from other schools were invited to see a gallery of student work from learning expeditions.

In the spring of 1996-1997, **Campbell Drive Middle School**, a Co-NECT School in Dade County, Florida, reported test score gains in several critical areas, including writing, reading comprehension, science, and mathematics. Most impressively, the percentage of students scoring 3.0 or higher (on a six-point scale) on Florida Writes!, the state writing assessment, is now up to 72 percent from 14 percent in 1994, marking the third year in a row of continuing improvement.

Percentage scoring 3.0 or better on Florida Writes!

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Dade County Public Schools	45	66	84	80
Campbell Drive Middle School	14	52	67	72

These results are especially impressive in a year when scores on the state writing assessment have dropped districtwide.

Located in Homestead, Florida, Campbell Drive serves a student population that is 54 percent Hispanic, 34 percent African-American, and 10 percent white. In 1995-96, approximately 83 percent of students received free or reduced-price lunches, and eight percent were classified as having Limited English Proficiency. Many are children of migrant workers. The school has been a Co-NECT School since 1995-1996.

El Vista Elementary School in Modesto, CA, has been working with the Roots and Wings design since 1993. All of the elements of the reading program, *Success for All*, have been fully implemented throughout the school since 1991. Additionally, another key element of the design, *MathWings*, was implemented in grades 3, 4, and 5 during the 1995-96 school year. El Vista has a very strong Family Support Team, which has developed a wide variety of strategies for helping parents read to their children. The teachers at El Vista are very active in the development of specific classroom materials to enhance their implementation of Roots and Wings components.

Since 1992, achievement levels for all first graders have been monitored until the students finish third grade. Of the students monitored, only two were below grade level at the end of the third grade. Discipline problems are down and students are actively involved in the school and in each other's success. After only one year in *MathWings*, total math scores on the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) had increased by 2.5 points among third graders, 6.2 points among fourth graders, and 8.6 points among fifth graders at the school.

Examples of achievement gains at individual schools like these abound. RAND is working to determine the magnitude of improvements across a sample of sites and how well these improvements are sustained over time. Those results are due in a report next year.

Support for Local Efforts

To ensure these research-based efforts continue to flourish, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations has included \$200 million in scale-up funds to allow more communities to engage in New American Schools and other comprehensive school reforms. This funding is roughly equivalent to the amount of money that has been invested by the private sector thus far to make comprehensive school design a reality.

The funding, sponsored by Rep. David Obey (D-WI), ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee and John Porter (R-IL), chairman of the Subcommittee for Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education, is moving through the House with strong bi-partisan support. The initiative is part of the 1998 education appropriations bill and is intended to help equip schools with research-based tools to jump start their reform efforts. The \$200 million would be apportioned by state education officials and the Department of Education to school districts interested in making a serious commitment to comprehensive school improvement.

Each participating school would receive a grant of at least \$50,000 a year to help finance initial start-up costs and provide an incentive for schools to reallocate existing resources to sustain the reform effort. Because one size does not fit all, the schools themselves would choose which research-tested reform design to use based on local circumstances, needs, and resources.

A Public/Private Partnership

This bill will create the kind of public/private partnership this country needs to support lasting school improvement. As the nation faces a new millennium with confidence and hope, the quality of education available to young people still depends too much on where children grow up and what neighborhood families can afford. Quality education is available, but not for everyone. Every district in this country has a few good schools. But you will not find one district, certainly not of any size or diversity, where you can say that good schools are the norm.

Neither the public nor the private sector acting alone can create the kind of environment necessary to change this fact. In order for American education to improve we need to:

- ensure that parents have good choices among strong and distinct schools;
- encourage schools to invest in the classroom rather than in ancillary activities not central to teaching and learning;
- ensure that school staff can improve their professionalism and take on new roles in managing the school; and
- invite communities to work in partnership with schools to set high standards and measure results.

In this way, we will ensure better choices and better results for all children.

Redesigning Education

While other industries have dramatically retooled or are in the process of redesigning their operations, this nation has not yet made the same commitment to reinventing and reinvigorating public education. Americans want their public schools to have higher standards and better teaching, connections to community and technology, and greater accountability. These are reasonable expectations that this nation can meet, but they will not be met if we continue to pursue an approach to school improvement that supports the system as it now exists.

Following are six crucial ideas that are central to what the comprehensive school reform movement is about:

1. **There must be strong choices available to students, parents, and teachers.** Unfortunately, the pressures from school systems that encourage individual schools to look like one another has increased rather than abated. Often times, instruction, curriculum, and priorities are dictated from the "top down" instead of the "bottom up." This is the wrong direction for the country, especially at a time when the nation must work to dramatically increase results across more than one hundred thousand schools challenged to individualize instruction for an increasingly diverse student population.
2. **Schools must be more autonomous, with teachers and building administrators able to redirect resources to invest in the classroom.** Schools in this country are spending a declining proportion of each dollar on the actual classroom teacher and a rising proportion on a whole set of activities outside of the classroom. It's hard to be a high performing school organization if a significant percentage of the money is spent on items other than classroom instruction. How can we focus more on providing support for teaching and learning in individual classrooms? School districts must reduce the number of school "specialists" and pull-out programs to put greater focus on core services in the classroom. This means more teachers will take on multiple roles, with smaller classes, and they must receive ongoing training and professional development – two trends that are characteristic of most evolving high performance organizations.

3. **Educators, parents, and the public must agree on high standards for achievement and call for the development of a reliable accountability system aligned with the standards to measure progress.** School districts can be more effective at supporting higher student achievement if they provide a focused accountability system that includes a clear and measurable set of educational goals; a set of measures that indicate the current status of student performance and changes over time; a reporting system that regularly informs the public, the school system, parents, and students of school performance in accomplishing results and degrees of improvement; and a set of both rewards and sanctions tied to changes in schoolwide performance over time.
4. **Schools, districts, and states must support the continued growth of teachers to take on new roles and leadership.** Taxpayers and policymakers must be willing to provide teachers and staff the opportunity to gain and continually refine the skills they need to assist students in meeting high standards. School districts must invest in building the knowledge and skills of teachers. Professional development should be ongoing and designed to help achieve the goals of the whole school. It should allow teachers to tap into national networks, encourage them to learn from each other, and provide the assistance and tools they need to enhance their own knowledge, skills, and professionalism.
5. **School district operations must be decentralized** to strengthen the autonomy and flexibility of individual schools. This is not to say abolish the central office or eliminate the school board. But it does say that the roles for school boards, central office staff, and superintendents should be dramatically changed.
6. **School districts must involve parents and the community must become more involved in the life of the schools.** Well-functioning schools require a support system that strengthens community and family engagement in the school and reduces non-school barriers to learning. Community involvement in schools is a broad umbrella for a host of new relationships in support of public education. Community support means helping parents share the responsibility for raising student achievement—making sure their children study and do homework, learning about the standards students are expected to reach, volunteering in the classroom, and even offering their worksite for field trips.

Facing the Future

The first five years of New American Schools has been marked by a rapid growth in this country's capacity to help school's achieve design-based improvements, along with an increased knowledge base about what can be done to make public education more productive and effective.

NAS and its partners believe that increased support for comprehensive school reform and awareness of what we have learned will not only preserve the common school but protect the nation's future, providing better choices and higher quality education for a broader range of students.

Bottom-up involvement at the school and community level and top-down support from state and federal governments will continue to enhance our ability to influence school performance on a nationwide scale. Our challenge is redesigning public schools from the inside to yield significantly higher achievement for all students. We will not have succeeded until Americans renew their confidence in and commitment to public schools and make each school the heart of its community.



NEW AMERICAN SCHOOLS

**PRESENTATION TO THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 7, 1997**

AREAS FOR COLLABORATION

- **GOALS 2000**
- **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
- **STATE OF EDUCATION ADDRESS**
- **LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS**
- **CHARTER SCHOOLS**
- **TECHNOLOGY GRANTS**
- **READING INITIATIVE**
- **TITLE I SCHOOL-WIDE PROGRAM**
- **OERI DISSEMINATION**
- **LABS/TACS DISSEMINATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**



New American Schools

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February 18, 1997

The Honorable Richard W. Riley
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

→ Copies to
- Gary T. Roggi
- Mary Jean L. Fisher
- Tom Sawyer
- Bill Kinsert
- Jennie Lewis

Dear Secretary Riley:

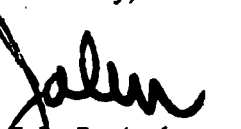
Thank you for affording us the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how New American Schools can become more integral to the President's priority to help all students achieve high academic standards. We welcome a closer working relationship with the Department of Education, and applaud your support for NAS designs as working examples of the successful use of federal program funds. We suggest a joint effort with the Department of Education to create pilot or demonstration districts where federal funds are systemically applied to implementing successful whole-school change models in schools.

We will work with Terry Peterson and Mike Smith and his staff to develop specific recommendations to narrow the gap between the Department's programs and the successful implementation of whole-school designs at the local level. As we discussed, we will look at the possible applications of Goals 2000 funds, Title I schoolwide grants, technology grants, charter school grants, funds for low-performing schools, and teacher training opportunities, as well as the potential of consolidating these funding sources. We also discussed including NAS in any Department effort to assist the District of Columbia public schools.

After meeting with your staff we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you again with specific recommendations. In the meantime, we invite you to visit our schools as you travel the country, and we will work with your staff to include such visits in your schedule.

We very much appreciate your leadership and your support.

Sincerely,


John L. Anderson
President

JLA/ems

cc: Terry Peterson
Marshall S. Smith ✓
James K. Baker
Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.
David T. Kearns
Frank Shrontz