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WITH GRATITUDE

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October 2007

As founding Directors of the Research Partnership for New York City Schools, we are committed to building an organization that can engage top research experts and academic institutions to carry out applied research for and about the New York City schools, working in tandem with practitioners and policymakers.

Our plans for the Research Partnership are that it will be a source of powerful, independent information and analysis on performance of students, teachers, the schools and the system, as well as a guide to what interventions are working to improve this performance. In order to generate the type of applied research in which we are interested, we will need to create an institutional arrangement that makes possible and rewards new types of collaboration, not only between research institutions, but between and within fields, and inclusive of expertise outside of academia. We need to develop institutional arrangements and protocols that would structure these types of collaborations.

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) has taken the initiative in helping to organize the Research Partnership. SSRC has commissioned a set of papers, with support from early funders of the initiative and prior to the formation of the Governance Board, which it hopes will illustrate the value of applied research to policy-makers and the broader community. We are excited about the possibility of developing appropriate mechanisms to realize the goals of this project and to put a Research Partnership for New York City Schools into place.

William Bowen, co-chair
Fred Frelow
Chung-Wha Hong
Robert Hughes

Kathryn Wylde, co-chair
Joel Klein
Randi Weingarten
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early in his first term as mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg took over direct control of the City’s public schools. With Joel Klein as Schools Chancellor, the Bloomberg administration launched its Children First campaign in the fall of 2002—an ambitious reform agenda to improve the nation’s largest public school system. Children First gave more authority and autonomy to school principals across the City and made them accountable for progress in their schools. In 2005, The Partnership for New York City issued a Progress Report on New York City School Reform. With technical support from a team of New York University researchers, the report provided a preliminary independent assessment of the Bloomberg administration’s early reform efforts.

The research community had long called for rigorous, data-driven research to inform strategies for school improvement and to assess progress. In March 2006 Chancellor Klein, along with other prominent leaders, endorsed a proposal for a Research Partnership for New York City Schools. Coordinated by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), work had begun in earnest in 2005 to establish a non-partisan research consortium on City schools as a new “public good” for New York City. SSRC has taken the lead over the past two years in bringing together researchers, policy-makers, and community members in shaping a vision for a Research Partnership that will serve a broad constituency of stakeholders in the City’s public education system.

Working with the Department of Education (DOE), the Partnership will be a reliable source of high-quality data on the public schools that will benefit educators, researchers, media, and the general public. It will conduct empirical research that can guide enlightened policy-making and help shape useful strategies for effective teaching and learning. The Partnership will provide a new forum for discussion of school reform issues and will issue regular reports to stimulate community engagement and help create informed public opinion about New York City Schools. Ultimately, by setting a dispassionate, research-based standard for discourse around important issues, the Partnership seeks to promote equity and fairness in educational opportunity for young people across the City.

At the heart of the Research Partnership, a Digital Data Archive—to be established in cooperation with the DOE—will provide a centralized resource for data on all facets of public education in New York City. The archive will address a widely-recognized need for storing and retrieving historical data about schools, students, staff, and programs—while preserving the strict confidentiality of all individual information.

The SSRC has worked with a Steering Committee of prominent researchers in laying out an organizational structure for the Research Partnership. A Governance Board of prominent New Yorkers actively involved in public education issues has given informed advice during the Partnership’s incubation phase. A Research Advisory Board includes leading educational researchers who will set the Partnership’s ongoing research agenda with stakeholder input. The Research Corps will comprise teams of researchers who will address priority research questions, assess school reforms, and issue periodic reports.

Broad-based Work Groups have met regularly since late 2006 to ensure that the Research Partnership’s core functions reflect community involvement and priorities:

- The Data Work Group surveyed existing data sources in the City and completed a draft agreement with the DOE detailing protocols for transferring data to the archive.
- The Research Priorities Work Group has drawn up a preliminary list of research priorities and is working out a system for obtaining input from community organizations on selection and execution of research projects.
- The Partners in Education Work Group conducted a successful search for a Community Outreach Coordinator who will devise and execute community engagement strategies.
- The Administration and Finance Work Group drafted an initial budget, established the Partnership’s governance and research advisory boards in collaboration with the Steering Committee, and reviewed proposals for operating structures.
The Parthenon Group was engaged for an intensive three-month strategic planning consultation beginning in mid-July 2007. This process will inform decisions by the Governance Board on the Research Partnership’s structure as an independent organization, its leadership, and a plan for financial sustainability. With a strategic business plan in place by late October 2007, it is anticipated that SSRC can pull back from day-to-day oversight by the end of the year, as the Research Partnership begins independent operations.

In early October, an Inaugural Conference is being held in New York to introduce the Research Partnership to a wider audience. The meeting will feature presentations of four papers commissioned by SSRC, with input provided by the Research Priorities Work Group (prior to the formation of the Governance Board), to provide examples to the larger community of the types of research that a research consortium could undertake:

*Developing New Roles for Research in New Policy Environments: The Consortium on Chicago School Research* is a “lessons learned” paper by co-directors of the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR). As the most prominent model for New York’s Research Partnership, CCSR has operated successfully since 1990 as a source of high-quality research on Chicago schools. Fully engaged in the community, CCSR follows a “search for solutions” approach to research in which researchers work cooperatively with educators and other stakeholders to build capacity for school improvement and student success.

*The Demand for High School Programs in New York City* examines relative demand by eighth-graders in applying for admission to the City’s 600 discrete high school programs. A stable pattern emerges in which schools with the strongest academic profiles consistently attract significantly more applicants than schools whose students do poorly on exams and standardized tests. Future research should employ individual-level data to identify how student characteristics affect demand.

*Why Do Some Schools Get More and Others Less? An Examination of School-Level Funding in New York City* presents an analysis of the current distribution of funding among elementary and middle schools in New York City. Findings show weaker-than-expected relationships between factors commonly included in school funding formulae and actual per-pupil funding. Funding does not respond “crisply” to changes in school characteristics, and the prior year’s levels account for much of the current year’s funding.

*Do Effective Teachers Leave? Implications from Low-Achieving New York City Schools* considers the relative effectiveness of teachers in looking at patterns of attrition and retention among novice teachers in New York City elementary and middle schools. On average, first-year teachers who quit teaching—especially those from low-performing schools—are less effective in improving student achievement than their peers who remain. The same is true for teachers who transfer to other City schools. The most effective teachers who transfer go to schools with higher student achievement and fewer Black and Hispanic students.
In June 2002, less than six months after he was sworn in for his first term as mayor, Michael Bloomberg took over control of and accountability for the New York City public school system. Legislation enacted by the State Legislature and Governor made him the City’s first mayor ever to hold that direct responsibility. With elimination of the City’s Board of Education, Mayor Bloomberg now had full discretion over budgets and contracts as well as authority to appoint new top leadership for New York City schools.

Joel Klein was named Schools Chancellor in July, and by October of that same year the Bloomberg administration had initiated its Children First campaign to reform the public schools. Early efforts were designed to streamline and reorganize the Department of Education’s management structure and to make the nation’s largest public school system more efficient and effective. With some 1.1 million students, 1200 schools, 100,000 employees, and a 2002 annual operating budget of $12 billion, this was an immense undertaking.

By virtually all measures, New York City public schools had long suffered from the chronic problems that beset most large urban school systems: overcrowding, crime and safety threats, resource inefficiencies and inequities, teacher transfers and attrition, and low achievement for far too many students. Chancellor Klein’s vision for Children First called for reforms under three broad rubrics: leadership, empowerment, and accountability. He wanted to “unleash” principals—to give them the authority they need to make critical decisions at the school level and then hold them accountable for demonstrable progress.

On behalf of the City’s business community, the Partnership for New York City had long been committed to improvement of student performance in the City schools, and was an early advocate of mayoral control of the public school system. In April 2005 CEO Kathryn Wylde commissioned technical support from researchers at the Steinhart School of Education at New York University to provide independent evaluation of the Children First initiative during its first two years. The research team was led by Richard Arum, Professor of Sociology and Education at NYU and Program Director of Educational Research at the Social Science Research Council. In the fall of 2005, the Partnership issued its Progress Report on New York City School Reform. The 40-page report summarized the initiatives taken by the Department of Education from 2002 to 2005 and assessed—as best as possible with the data at hand—the Bloomberg administration’s initial efforts in addressing the seemingly intractable problems of City schools.

Based on data provided by the Department of Education (DOE), the NYU researchers organized their analysis into four categories: utilization of resources, quality of student experience and school climate, equity and adequacy of resources, and student achievement. Each of these areas subsumed multiple measures of school system performance and provided a macro-level assessment of progress. The research snapshot that emerged showed general improvement across several, but not all, indices. A higher proportion of certified teachers, less overcrowding in classrooms, fewer schools under Registration Review, and improved high school graduation rates were among the improvements cited. All parties involved in creating this initial assessment of Bloomberg-era initiatives acknowledged the Progress Report as an important, but limited, first step in what must become ongoing, impartial evaluation of school reform efforts. Indeed, the report was introduced as “the first installment on a long-term project to track the performance of New York City schools and the impact of reforms.”

Chancellor Klein and other DOE leaders also recognized that successful reforms must be guided by high-quality research and independent evaluation, as had long been advocated by the research community. In their coda to the Progress Report, the NYU research team made recommendations for data collection, longitudinal analysis, and evaluation research that could shape consistently effective assessment of school reforms. The researchers called for rigorous empirical research as the keystone to understanding possible causal relationships between reform interventions and outcomes. They acknowledged the many high-quality
evaluations that had been performed on past initiatives, and recommended concerted and systematic assessment facilitated by stakeholder institutions as the best path to school improvement going forward.

In late March 2006 Chancellor Klein formally endorsed a proposal coordinated by the Social Science Research Council to form a Research Partnership for New York City Schools. Endorsements of support for the proposed consortium were also given by several key institutions, including the City University of New York, Teachers College of Columbia University, New York University, and the Partnership for New York City.

What follows here is an account of the steps that have been taken by many stakeholders to create a collaborative of leading researchers from New York’s universities and nonprofit research organizations to benefit the City’s public schools. Still a work in progress, the Partnership for New York City Schools is evolving from the shared, deeply felt commitment of many institutions and individuals to make City schools better places for young people to learn and grow.

Improving the quality of the City’s public schools is our top priority in promoting New York’s long-term economic vitality. We must have independent research and analysis to guide education policies, programs, and investments in New York City. Without such information, it is impossible to measure the results of various interventions or to hold anyone accountable for success or failure of the schools.

Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO, Partnership for New York City

L-R: Robert Hughes, Joel Klein, Kathryn Wylde
A specific set of conditions. As demands for data have proliferated from state and federal accountability requirements—as well as the City’s own growing data needs and the public’s deepening engagement in school reform issues—the Research Partnership will provide a mechanism for access to a range of school-related data. The Partnership will significantly bolster the City’s current capacity for data archiving, distribution, and analysis.

The potential long-term benefits of this new public service to New York City and beyond are considerable:

- A new forum will be established for voicing civic concern and promoting interactive communication over school reform issues.
- Dissemination of regular progress reports will further stimulate sustained public engagement in improving the City’s schools.
- Policy-makers and administrators will be better prepared to develop and evaluate effective strategies for running schools.
- Principals and teachers will have research-based guidelines to enhance teaching and learning.
- Families and communities can draw on reliable sources of information to support children’s acquisition of academic skills, helping to ensure equity and fairness.

Availability of high-quality data through the Research Partnership will also mutually benefit the research community and the DOE. Opportunities for new and expanded research on urban education are likely to be generated for local researchers, as well as those across the nation. The Research Partnership will substantially augment the City’s data collection capacity and could make possible, among other things, more frequent surveys of public school teachers. The Research Partnership’s independent data archive could potentially also relieve DOE staff from responding to the many requests for data by individual researchers, freeing them to address other pressing issues. As with most aspects of the Research Partnership, these facets suggest win-win possibilities for many stakeholders in the City’s public education system.
**Conceptual Underpinnings:**

**The Chicago Model**

In setting forth the initial concepts and proposed structure for a research consortium, the Steering Committee for the Research Partnership drew on the experience of already-established consortia, notably the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR). Established in 1990, the Chicago Consortium enacted a model for *pluralistic policy research* in which diverse, multiple stakeholders—often with divergent or competing interests—have equal access to relevant and reliable information. Research conducted by CCSR is informed by the needs of principals, teachers, students, and community members and is broadly aimed at promoting *informed public opinion* about Chicago public schools. The consortium is “deliberately multi-partisan.” Its members and constituents reflect a range of interests and perspectives, which are taken into account in setting the consortium’s research agenda.

Seventeen years on, a successful Chicago Consortium holds a number of lessons for New York—many of which have been explored in meetings and ongoing communication between CCSR and New York’s incipient Research Partnership. The CCSR has focused consistently over the years on conducting research that benefits practice and builds the Chicago Public Schools’ capacity for reform. It has done so by ensuring that CCSR research addresses core problems faced by practitioners and decision-makers, and that researchers attend carefully to the processes by which people in the schools are able to take in new ideas and connect them to their own daily work. The CCSR has remained committed to extensive stakeholder engagement, to making high-quality research accessible to a broad audience, and to keeping the public informed. Its data archive on the public schools has proven to be indispensable to CCSR’s effectiveness as a key city-wide resource, in building continuity and coherence across research studies, as well as promoting important researcher feedback to the schools.

A summary of a “lessons learned” paper by CCSR co-directors Melissa Roderick and John Easton is included later in this report. More information may be found on the CCSR Website at [www.ccsr.uchicago](http://www.ccsr.uchicago). Two other well-established research consortia are the Texas Schools Project [www.utdallas.edu/research/tsp/Index.htm](http://www.utdallas.edu/research/tsp/Index.htm) and The North Carolina Education Research Data Center [www.pubpol.duke.edu/centers/child/ep/nceddatacenter/index.html](http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/centers/child/ep/nceddatacenter/index.html).

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**Rigorous and relevant social science research should ideally serve as the empirical foundation for school improvement efforts.** Now that we have a board consensus to proceed, we can put in place an organization in New York City that will serve as a powerful new public good for our community.

Richard Arum, SSRC Project Director

With completion of intensive strategic planning during the summer and fall of 2007, and implementation of a business plan for the Research Partnership by year-end, SSRC will soon transition out of its incubator role. While SSRC has been ideally positioned to play a central part in developing the Research Partnership, it does not have an interest in housing the enterprise on a long-term basis. In the meantime, however, SSRC headquarters at Columbus Circle have been a busy hub of Partnership activity over the past eighteen months—as numerous meetings have been hosted to determine a future for the research consortium. Indeed, the centrally-located SSRC offices at the base of Central Park in mid-Manhattan are an ideal symbolic home for bringing together people and institutions from across the City to frame an enduring new Research Partnership for the public good.

Providing A Start: The Social Science Research Council

An independent, not-for-profit research organization based in New York City, the Social Science Research Council is serving as the coordinating institution for the Research Partnership during its start-up stages. Founded in 1923, SSRC is among the nation’s most recognized research institutions. It is widely regarded by researchers and policy-makers alike for its commitment to non-sectarian, scientifically informed research practices. For decades, SSRC-affiliated projects have signaled to potential participants, funders, and the public a high degree of independence and integrity as well as openness to diverse and often divergent perspectives. SSRC has a long history of facilitating large, collaborative projects and brings to the incipient Research Partnership its know-how and proven record in bringing people and institutions together to get important civic ventures off the ground.

The Research Partnership for New York City Schools is an ideal demonstration project for SSRC: the emerging research consortium exemplifies one of SSRC’s operating precepts, “We must learn even as we act.” Throughout the early stages of the Research Partnership’s development, SSRC has drawn on its expertise in organizing scholarly exchanges, conferences, and outreach initiatives to draw together key players who see the value in taking action to make an independent research consortium a reality. Among its national and international interests, the SSRC focuses on generating critical knowledge about K-12 and postsecondary education within its broad portfolio on Knowledge Institutions. Richard Arum heads SSRC’s Educational Research Program and has been leading a team of fellow education researchers from several New York institutions in incubation work on the Research Partnership.

SSRC is facilitating Partnership relations with the Department of Education, the research community, partner institutions, community groups, and project funders. It has secured initial funding for development of the Research Partnership from a number of New York and national foundations including The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Donors’ Education Collaborative, The Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The New York Community
Building A Partnership

Working with a Steering Committee (See Appendix A) of researchers from New York institutions, SSRC staff have laid out a template for a likely organizational structure of the Research Partnership. It comprises three bodies: a self-perpetuating Governance Board, a Research Advisory Board, and a Research Corps. At the heart of the Partnership is a Data Archive to be maintained independently by the consortium as a ready source of school-related data for researchers across the City. To cultivate a sense of collective ownership and shared vision, many stakeholders have also been engaged in the planning process through a series of Work Groups focused on core Partnership functions.

Governance Board

Among civic leaders who voiced early support for the Research Partnership, several key figures now serve as members of the Partnership’s Governance Board. They include:

- William Bowen, former president, Mellon Foundation and Princeton University
- Robert Hughes, President, New Visions, and former deputy director, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity
- Fred Frelow, Director of Early College Initiatives, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowships Foundation
- Joel Klein, Chancellor, New York City Schools
- Randi Weingarten, President, United Federation of Teachers
- Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition
- Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO, the Partnership for New York City

The Governance Board has been active during the Research Partnerships’ formative period, as members have lent informed advice and made decisions at critical junctures. As top leaders in and around the City’s schools, Governance Board members are fully engaged in and well versed on issues affecting the public school system. (Governance Board member profiles are included in Appendix A.) As future fiduciaries of the emerging organization, they will ultimately be responsible for ensuring the Partnership’s continued fiscal integrity, political independence, and fulfillment of the founding vision of a new public good for New York. During the current foundational period, the board will determine the Partnership’s legal status as an organization, where it will be housed, and who will provide executive-level leadership. (See Taking Next Steps, below.)

Research Advisory Board and Research Corps

Two other bodies envisaged in the original concept paper and now in place are the Research Advisory Board and Research Corps. The Research Advisory Board includes thirteen of the nation’s leading educational researchers whose primary role is to set the Partnership’s research agenda with input from the DOE, community groups, and other stakeholders. The Advisory Board also works with the Research Corps to evaluate external requests for access to archive data and will assist with scientific review and dissemination of Research Partnership publications. The Advisory Board is a diverse group of individuals with varied research perspectives and interests, and will help to span the traditional boundaries between independent researchers and policy-makers. (Profiles of current Research Advisory Board members are included in Appendix A.)

The Research Corps comprises small, dynamic groupings of researchers who bring their complementary expertise to bear on questions and issues of priority interest to City schools and their various constituencies. Researchers are drawn initially from universities serving New York City and from non-profit research organizations such as MDRC, Rand, and the College Board. The Research Corps will hold primary responsibility for the Partnership’s ongoing evaluation of reform initiatives in the City schools. They will publish regular reports that may focus on a specific issue, group, or problem—or that may track basic indicators of school system performance. All such reports will be based on rigorous social science research under the general oversight of the Research Advisory Board.
Digital Data Archive
The Research Corps will also work in conjunction with the DOE in establishing and maintaining the Partnership’s Digital Data Archive. The Data Archive will provide a new central repository for integrated longitudinal data on many dimensions of the public school system—such as student demographics and performance, teacher and administrative staff profiles, allocation and use of operating and capital budget resources, and school characteristics. A pressing need to archive data systematically has long been recognized by DOE staff and individual researchers. The City has sophisticated infrastructure for data collection, but lacks capacity for storing and retrieving most historical data. Understandably, DOE has a low priority on the reconciling, organizing, and “cleaning” that must be done to make raw data suitable for research. DOE staff are also hard pressed to respond to ever-increasing data requests by individual researchers. The digital archive will make data available more readily and transparently to researchers, policy analysts, and other interested parties while protecting the confidentiality of individuals reflected in the archived data. A centrally located data archive maintained by the Research Partnership represents an effective solution to DOE and researcher needs, and will promote the well-being of public schools by generating public discourse, engagement, and civic responsibility in addressing school issues.

Work Groups
The December 2005 Action Plan called for formation of functional work groups around four areas central to the foundation and operation of the Research Partnership: Data, Research Priorities, Administration and Finance, and Partners in Education. Staffed by researchers from area universities and other organizations, as well as DOE staff and representatives of advocacy groups, work groups have met regularly since the latter part of 2006. (A roster of work group members is included in Appendix A.)

Monthly work group meetings have forged relationships among key players whose participation is essential to the operation of a fully-fledged Research Partnership. Facilitated by SSRC and coordinated by the Steering Committee, each work group has produced documents and carried out projects to begin to institutionalize what will be the Research Partnership’s central functions: data archiving, applied research, technical advisement, and public engagement. The work group model helps ensure that the Researched Partnership and the research it generates are shaped with input from representatives of organizations active in school improvement and that research findings are broadly and intelligibly disseminated to stakeholders. A summary of work group activity to date follows here.

Data Work Group
The Data Work Group has surveyed City data sources to catalogue existing cleaned and archived school data. It has coordinated with other urban research consortia to investigate best practices, and to explore future possibilities to link inter-consortia data. A signal accomplishment has been completion of a draft Memorandum of Understanding with the DOE to govern data transfer to the Research Partnership’s data archive. The draft MOU will be used to facilitate the first installation of data to the archive once a “home” has been designated. The 16-point agreement contains strict provisions to maintain the confidentiality of individual-level data and restricts their use to qualified researchers on a tightly regulated basis. It details the extensive data requirements that will be necessary for the Research Partnership to fulfill its mission and lays out specific, agreed-upon roles for DOE staff and Partnership representatives.

While protecting the confidentiality of all individuals reflected in archive data, the agreement also makes provision for creation of standardized data files for public use. These files will contain aggregate school-level data or individual-level data that have been stripped of individual identifiers and provides information that could be used by advocacy groups, offices of elected officials or other policy-makers, as well as analytic offices such as the City’s Independent Budget Office.

Research Priorities Work Group
The Research Priorities Work Group has coordinated with the DOE and surveyed New York City researchers to draw up a preliminary list of research priorities. In consultation with the DOE, it is working to devise a system by which broad input is sought from community organizations, projects are prioritized, and top research talent is brought to bear on agreed-upon priorities through a competitive process. The work group also issued a call for proposals to address an initial set of research questions, and commissioned four
academic papers for presentation in fall 2007. These papers—three research studies and a “lessons learned” paper from the Consortium on Chicago School Research—are summarized later in this report.

**Partners in Education Work Group**
The questions and experiences of people whose lives are intertwined with the City’s public schools are at the heart of the Research Partnership. The Partners in Education Work Group has made strides in ensuring that the Research Partnership will have a clear focus on practice-oriented research rooted in the experience of teachers, principals, counselors, community advocates, parents, and students. It has sought out community and advocacy organizations interested in research-based information on education issues. In early summer 2007 the group conducted a broad search for a full-time staff person to help design and execute a community engagement campaign. As a result, the Partnership’s Community Outreach Coordinator, Nicky Stephenson, is now leading efforts to put community engagement strategies in play once the Research Partnership’s organizational details have been settled.

**Administration and Finance Work Group**
Working closely with the Steering Committee, the Administration and Finance Work Group oversaw the nomination process for two key decision-making bodies—the Governance Board and Research Advisory Board—that have been indispensable in the Research Partnership’s early planning stages. The work group also drew up an initial operating budget and crafted and issued a Request for Proposals to house the Research Partnership. The group helped review a joint proposal submitted by New York University, City University, and Teachers College which in turn underscored questions—yet to be answered—about how the Research Partnership ultimately will be governed, operated, and sustained.

It is these remaining issues of institutional design, leadership, and fiscal planning to which the Governance Board is turning concerted attention in the summer and fall of 2007.
Involving the Governance Board and key stakeholders in prioritizing issues and developing hypotheses around governance structures and engagement models;
- Benchmarking analogous models through interviews;
- Developing “straw-man” governance models for Board consideration;
- Designing long-term engagement processes with all key constituents;
- Developing an organizational structure, leadership plan, and transition process from SSRC;
- Identifying strategies for long-term fiscal sustainability.

As of this writing, it is anticipated that the strategic planning process will be completed by late October 2007. By that time the Governance Board will have decided major issues of structure, leadership, and finance. Whether a free-standing 501c (3) organization, some variation on that model, or a consortium associated with a university or universities—the Research Partnership will have found a home and will be on the cusp of entering its full operating phase. With a business plan in place, the case for long-term financial sustainability can be made to an appropriate mix of public and private funding sources. As executive leadership is identified, a transition can be made from SSRC’s temporary stewardship to self-management. It is anticipated that the Research Partnership for New York City Schools will be a fully operating research consortium by the end of 2007, and that the goal of creating a “powerful new public good” will soon be realized.

**Inaugural Conference**

As organizational matters have taken up much of the Research Partnership’s incubation activities to date, efforts are also underway to advance its research agenda and to disseminate information about the consortium. Planned for October 5, 2007, an *Inaugural Conference* in New York City will introduce the Research Partnership to a broader public and highlight its goals and accomplishments. With prominent education researchers from across the country—as well as key players and stakeholders from around the City—the meeting seeks to make connections between decision-makers involved in the New York City incubation process and leaders in already-established
research consortia in order to share information on best practices. It will also raise the issue of linking the Research Partnership for New York City Schools with counterpart organizations in other urban areas.

The meeting features presentations of four research papers commissioned by SSRC. Selected by a conference organizing committee with input from the Research Advisory Board, three of the inaugural papers utilize data on City schools and reflect the Research Partnership’s research priorities as they are currently proposed. The fourth is a “lessons learned” paper by John Easton and Melissa Roderick of the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Each of these papers is intended to be accessible to a wide audience and useful to practitioners, policy-makers, community advocates, and all interested stakeholders. Demonstrative of the high-quality research the Partnership will be able to produce, the three empirical papers are based on rigorous methods consistent with the goals of the research and are intended to be written for the intelligent layperson. All of the inaugural papers are summarized in detail in the following section of this report and are available in their entirety on the Research Partnership’s Website at www.nycresearchpartnership.ssrc.org.
In their paper, Developing New Roles for Research in New Policy Environments: The Consortium on Chicago School Research, co-directors Melissa Roderick and John Easton reflect on the success of the Chicago consortium over its 17-year history and offer thoughts about basic questions that researchers and policy-makers in New York or other cities may face in developing their own research consortia.

The origins of the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) were in the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 which decentralized the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and gave school authority to local councils. Reform advocates at that time felt it was important to have independent, research-based evaluation of reforms—thus providing the impetus for the founding of the CCSR in 1990. Subsequent intervention by the state legislature in 1995 ushered in mayoral control of the CPS and re-centralized education policy and reforms, as has occurred in New York City. Born of decentralization, however, the CCSR identified the primary audience for its research not as central administrators but school-level practitioners and community actors. The CCSR developed a conceptual framework as a guide to promote school improvement, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms through coordinated research.

Even as the CCSR has evolved to meet changing policy environments, it has maintained a consistent focus around three central themes:

- Effective research attends carefully to the process by which practitioners assimilate and internalize new information and connect it to their own problems.
- Research must address the core problems facing practitioners and decision-makers.
- Researchers should be less “outside evaluators” and more of a resource that engages interactively with educators and reformers to build capacity for reform.

Roderick and Easton pose two fundamental questions with which researchers and policy-makers must contend, and offer extensive commentary on each.

**Question One: How can a research organization conduct research in a way that best maximizes the contribution of that research to practice and builds capacity for reform?**

A defining feature of CCSR is its data archive, currently the country’s most extensive repository of longitudinal data on any public school system. The archive contains complete student administrative, transcript, and test score records for 15 years or more; personnel files for teachers and staff; and nearly a decade of postsecondary attainment data for CPS graduates. A biannual CCSR survey of all students and personnel has systematically collected data about their experiences in school. The data archive has transformed the way research on Chicago public schools is conducted and has established the CCSR as a critical city-wide resource and capacity-builder. The archive not only increases the analytical capacity of researchers, but promotes coherence across studies while building mutual accountability and trust between individual researchers and schools. Operating in an interactive manner, researchers can also be more responsive. For example, when a new CPS policy to end social promotion was implemented in 1995, researchers could quickly track changes in retention rates and student performance. CCSR analysts also assist the media and community organizations in interpreting information, helping to create dialogue across reform initiatives.

A founding commitment to the idea of extensive stakeholder engagement has been institutionalized at the CCSR through the role of its Steering Committee. Advisory to the executive director and co-directors, the Steering Committee is a multi-partisan group currently comprising 20 researchers, university administrators, and representatives of the teachers’ union, reform organizations, and school systems. Its input helps shape research and interpretation of findings, and provides a robust forum for dialogue and debate that in turn assists stakeholders in understanding the value of research and putting it to work in their respective communities. The Steering Committee’s review of research contributes to the CCSR’s “no surprises” policy, whereby open vetting of findings ensures that all parties, notably district leadership, are prepared to respond to findings and
assess their likely impact as findings are made public. Also key to CCSR’s effectiveness is its commitment to conducting high-quality technical research that is made intelligible to the education community and broader public. Research must be rigorous in order to be authoritative, but it must also be understandable to non-researchers in order to be useful. CCSR takes great care to ensure that research and findings are as accessible as possible to a more general audience, both in language and use of multi-method investigation techniques. CCSR promotes accessibility by building coherence across studies and making timely topical reports to the education and reform communities, as well as individualized reports directly to schools. CCSR is also committed to informing practitioners and others through extensive public dissemination of research findings, often in person-to-person presentations and workshops across the city. This strategy is important in creating greater awareness of issues, and also in helping educators grapple with and connect findings to their own practice. Effective education research should percolate into communities, inform debate, and become part of practitioners’ knowledge base.

**Question Two: What is the role for research?**

A role that CCSR had set from the beginning as its core mission is that of researchers working interactively with schools and the reform community in helping to build capacity for improvement and change over time. This was a departure from the more traditional role of researcher as external initiator and evaluator of significant policy changes. It diverged from the “Big Idea” model of research where education researchers offered up important, transformational ideas such as decentralization, privatization, high stakes testing, and new school development. And it departed from a traditional “R&D” approach where researchers have laid out and tested effective models of “what works” such as Success for All, Reading Recovery, and First Things First. The CCSR approach also varies from a model in which researchers’ primary role is as third party evaluators, as well as from a strict policy analysis model, in which researchers are seen as providing disinterested expert advice devoid of political or interest group influence.

Acknowledging the importance of these more traditional models, CCSR found that none of them created sustained relationships between researchers and districts. Big ideas like decentralization—while essential—effectively became “capacity-sorters”

If we need schools to participate in research projects and surveys, we also need to ensure that schools feel the products they get from that research are worth their time and energy. If we need administrators to take seriously tough research findings, we also need to ensure that there are clear benefits and payoffs to opening themselves up to criticism.

*Melissa Roderick and John Easton, Co-Directors, Consortium on Chicago School Research.*
as many Chicago schools without the leadership or resources could not respond effectively and were left behind. While CCSR is itself often characterized as a policy analysis organization, that approach has come under criticism for its “cut-and-dried” methodology and unworkable “top down” solutions to problems.

It was in pursuing a new model for the role of education research that the CCSR turned a “failure” into one of its greatest successes. A major study released by CCSR in 1996 argued that Chicago high schools were in deep trouble. That report catalyzed a “Designs for High Schools” initiative based on CCSR concepts of “academic press” and “personalism” in which all CPS students were to take a college preparatory curriculum, with increased support through academic advisories. All of the pitfalls of a top-down policy analysis approach came to pass as most reform efforts fell short, with few high schools buying into the new mandates. Subsequent CCSR research on the freshman year in high school sought to develop an indicator to show how middle school students were progressing in the transition to high school. The resultant “on-track” indicator allowed schools to assess whether students in ninth grade were on track to graduate. In 2004, the CPS adopted the “on-track” indicator as one primary criterion for judging schools, yet its rationale and purpose were not clear. Based on interaction with principals who were struggling with this and other accountability measures, CCSR researchers issued a study in 2005 demonstrating the connection between “on-track” and graduation. The indicator has since become an important part of the CPS accountability system, in part as a result of CCSR’s interaction with educators and policy-makers. CCSR recently released “What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago public high schools,” which is already helping high schools create and identify strategies to move the indicator.

Based on the development work of William Easterly, CCSR broadly characterizes its approach to education research as a “search for solutions” in which researchers work interactively with practitioners and other stakeholders to help build capacity for reform and improvement. Three primary roles for CCSR are key to this approach: ensuring good measurement, identifying strategies for improvement, and providing feedback loops.

Good measurement brings conceptual clarity by precisely defining the phenomena targeted for change. Good measurement and indicator development are critical in helping schools determine what they need to work on. “On-track,” for example, brings the big problems—like reducing dropout rates—down to the day-to-day experiences of students in the building. Forthcoming CCSR work on the “ACT EPAS” testing system will ultimately lead to research to help determine what experiences in high school predict better-than-average growth in student performance. Ongoing CCSR research on program coherence is yet another example of how careful measurement of a concept has moved “coherence” from a finding in one study to a validated indicator of student achievement that schools can track over time.

Identifying strategies for improvement is a role for research that supports educators in finding the levers for improvement and in understanding what strategies generate desired outcomes. In this role, the aim of research is not to provide technical solutions to problems, but to give educators the conceptual frameworks they need to understand and address the determinants of those problems. For example, CCSR’s recent work with the CPS on improving postsecondary outcomes focused on instructional enhancements to increase college-readiness rather than just looking to the guidance departments for improved transitions to college.

Providing feedback loops to identify improvement and support program development reflects an important need in education for rigorous evaluation that isolates the effects of public policy. For example, considering whether ending social promotion worked in the CPS required setting out and testing the theories of action behind the policy as well as drawing on surveys, achievement data, and qualitative research. The result was a complex story of how the policies had both positive and negative consequences. More recently, CCSR adopted a “real time” model for evaluating a small high schools initiative, working closely with the district and the small school implementers.

In closing, Roderick and Easton suggest that since every city is different it may not be best to “simply reproduce” the CCSR in New York or other cities. Summarized briefly, their paper poses four sets of questions for New York to consider:

- How can a research organization maximize the contribution of the research it conducts on practice and build capacity for reform?
How does an organization break down walls among researchers and between researchers and practitioners in order to build knowledge and capacity over time? How are the central problems facing New York and what would engaging those questions mean for the Research Partnership for New York City? What is the theory of action for the role research can play in building capacity of the education system to solve central problems? Approaches taken by CCSR over the years may not be those New York or other cities will take. However, having a clear vision of the role research and a research consortium can play has been critical in guiding CCSR’s development and ultimately its effectiveness in addressing the problems faced by Chicago schools.

**The Demand for High School Programs in New York City** looks at the complicated phenomenon of applying for high school admission in New York City. Aaron M. Pallas and Carolyn Riehl of Teachers College, Columbia University examined publicly available information on application statistics for City high schools and aggregate student background data to illustrate the importance of research in this area, and to make the case for further study utilizing individual-level student data. Each year, more than 80,000 eighth-graders apply to one or more of New York City’s 400 public high schools and their 600 discrete programs. Applicants list up to 12 schools in order of preference, schools in turn rank applicants according to their stated or unstated criteria, and students are then computer-matched with high schools. The admission process takes up to a year to complete, but is apparently effective in matching students and schools: in one recent year more than 75 percent of applicants were admitted to one of their top three choices and 90 percent were admitted to at least one of their chosen programs. Yet relatively little is known about what drives the process: why students choose the schools to which they apply and why high schools select the students they admit. Why are some schools in demand and others not? What student characteristics are most important to different types of schools? What might schools do to attract a more diverse student body? How do students with similar profiles cluster in terms of their school preferences or their own desirability from the viewpoint of the schools? How do families use information about schools to inform their choices? How, exactly, do schools use the application information they collect about students?

Especially as increased choice has become a strategy for improving high schools and helping to ensure fair access to a good education, all parties involved should have solid information in order to participate effectively in the admission process. This paper draws on three sources to begin to probe some of the questions surrounding the high school application and selection process in New York City. First, the annual directory of high schools, published by the Department of Education, provides extensive information about the schools: programs and services offered, curricular themes, restrictions and requirements, selection methods, seats available, and application levels in the preceding year. Second, annual school reports compiled by the DOE provide aggregate demographic and performance data on students by school. Third, neighborhood information, such as crime rates, is obtained from the New York City Police Department for the precincts in which schools are located.

The current analysis is based on information collected for 2006. Certain groups of high schools have been eliminated from this analysis: the City’s eight specialized exam schools which together receive some 25,000 applications per year and “zoned comprehensive” schools, to which students are simply assigned based on location. Charter schools, schools serving special populations, and “transfer schools” are also excluded. Schools select students according to four methods: the screening method relies primarily on students’ seventh-grade academic record or audition; the educational option method selects half of entering students based on academic record and half randomly; and unscreened programs computer-select students randomly. Limited unscreened programs also rely on a random selection from among applicants who have demonstrated an interest in the program by attending a school’s information session. As the number of high school programs has increased markedly over the past four years, the total number of available seats increased only modestly. Average program size decreased over that time from 124 seats in 2004 to 100 seats in 2007, due
As shown in figure 2, students are more likely to apply to selective programs than to unselective ones. In 2007, screened and educational options programs received between 11 and 12 applications per seat while unscreened programs received only about eight. The overall decline in applications from 2004 to 2007 was more severe for unscreened programs than the other categories. The relative popularity of the programs themselves tends to remain very stable from year to year. The vast majority of programs that are popular in one year are likely to be equally popular the next year; those that are relatively unpopular tend to stay that way.

Given this general stability in levels of demand over time, it is important to know how programs and schools develop their reputations, and hence, their popularity. As figure 3 demonstrates, demand for programs is strongly related to the academic performance of the schools in which programs are located. The figure contrasts 2007 application levels for schools in the top and bottom quarter of schools across a range of academic performance criteria: the school’s attendance rate, its graduation rate, mean combined verbal and math SAT score, and the percentage of students scoring 65 or higher on the New York Regents Math A exam and Regents English exam. In each case, there is a dramatic difference in the relative popularity of programs in schools in the top 25 percent on these measures and those in the bottom 25 percent. Programs in the top quarter attract two to three times as many applications as those in the bottom quarter.
Other factors considered in this analysis do not seem to have a bearing on student demand. Programs located in high-crime areas are in the same demand as those in lower-crime neighborhoods. Provision of special education or English language learner programs is not related to program demand, nor are schools that require uniforms more or less popular than those not requiring uniforms. Schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families are less attractive than schools with fewer students in poverty, but this is mainly due to the fact that academic performance is on average considerably higher in low-poverty schools than in high-poverty schools.

Analysis of available public information allows for some conjectures about the causes of differential demand in terms of the characteristics of schools. However, it does not lead to an understanding of what student characteristics may explain why some programs are more popular than others. For example, it would be useful to know to what types of public high schools affluent white students, or high-performing black and Latino students apply. It would also be extremely helpful to have access to individual students’ listings of school preferences on their applications, in order to study the characteristics of different students’ top choices—information that would be very useful to the schools.

Individual-level student information is the kind of data that would be available under the proposed Research Partnership. Given the dramatic growth in educational options for New York City’s high school students, it is important to better understand the process by which students and schools are matched.

Why Do Some Schools Get More and Others Less? An Examination of School-Level Funding in New York City by Amy Ellen Schwartz and Leanna Steifel (Institute for Education and Social Policy, NYU Steinhardt and Wagner Schools) and Ross Rubenstein (Syracuse University), examines the current distribution of spending across schools in New York City just prior to implementation of the City’s “Fair Student Funding” initiative.

Background and Previous Research
An ambitious plan announced by the New York City Department of Education in the spring of 2007, Fair Student Funding (FSF) will gradually be phased in beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. The initiative is intended to alter school funding methods by more closely allocating resources to schools based on student body characteristics that reflect the costs of educating those students. FSF is also intended to give principals more discretion in determining how school resources are spent by providing schools with dollar budgets rather than with teacher positions. The overall goal of FSF is to promote greater equity in the distribution of resources and ultimately to improve student performance. This study attempts to provide a context for understanding this funding reform and to set benchmarks against which the future impact of FSF can be measured.

Although school districts have been consolidated over the years, most remain relatively small compared to the large urban ones, such as New York City. In fact, none is larger than New York City whose 1.1 million students—disproportionately low-income, African American, and Latino—outnumber the total public school enrollment of all but eleven states. In New York City, as in other large urban systems, the question of within-district resource allocation is critical to equitable and adequate provision of educational opportunities. Moving beyond district-level analyses to a school-level focus is important for a number of reasons. Not only is education provided by schools as opposed to districts, but accountability under No Child Left Behind falls at the school level. Evidence suggests that resources can vary considerably across schools in large districts and therefore “average resources” at the district level may not reflect the reality for many individual schools.
Moreover, research shows that poor, disabled, or English language-learners cost more to educate. A critical question for policy-makers is whether and how resources vary with the needs of students or otherwise reflect legitimate political or educational purposes. The purpose of this paper is to provide a descriptive analysis examining whether schools serving students with different levels of need in fact receive different levels of resources.

A growing body of recent research shows that school-level resource disparity can be greater within rather than between districts. Of course, resource inequalities that drive added resources to the students who most need them may be acceptable or even desirable. Within-district disparities that give more to schools with lower needs and less to those with high concentrations of low-income, disabled or English language learning students may be of concern, however. Available research commonly shows significant positive relationships between total expenditures and student poverty but results are more mixed for instructional expenditures. Findings showing that high-poverty schools have more teachers relative to pupils—but that those teachers are less experienced, less educated, and lower-paid—have been widely replicated. Trade-offs between teacher quantity and teacher pay, experience, and education were evident in California as K-3 class sizes were reduced in the late 1990’s: the gap between schools with the highest and lowest proportions of low-income students in terms of teachers who were fully credentialed increased by fifteen percentage points.

Similar patterns have been found in New York City schools. Schools having higher proportions of students with special needs and non-white students also have more, but lower-paid, teachers per student. In large New York State urban districts including New York City, low-performing, poor, and non-white students were found more likely to have uncertified teachers and teachers who failed certification exams. Resource disparities in New York City and elsewhere, particularly in terms of teacher characteristics, often disadvantage schools with greater student needs. These disparities are typically the de facto results of funding formulas that allocate positions rather than dollars, as well as sorting patterns where higher-paid teachers transfer to lower-need schools. Most schools, including New York City schools, receive teacher position allocations rather than lump-sum budgets. As more senior teachers receive preference for openings at schools perceived to have better educational environments, concentrations of less experienced, lower-paid teachers form at high-need schools. And under position-based budgeting, principals cannot use “savings” from lower salaries to address other needs. Similarly, schools with concentrations of higher-paid, more senior teachers do not have to worry about “breaking the budget.”

An approach known as Weighted Student Funding (WSF) has emerged in districts across the country, spurred by growing intra-district funding disparities. The Seattle program defines WSF as having three core principles: 1) resources follow students; 2) resources are denominated in dollars, not FTE staff; and 3) resource allocation varies by the personal characteristics of students. WSF approaches focus on achieving “vertical equity,” or unequal spending for unequal (e.g. more needy) students. Little empirical evidence is yet available on the efficacy of WSF: one study of Houston and Cincinnati showed that more resources were driven to high-need schools in both districts. If WSF is implemented using actual teacher salaries, there will undoubtedly be political controversy as greater resources will generally be re-distributed from low-need to high-need schools.

The Current Study on New York City
As New York City prepares to inaugurate its version of WSF with its Fair Student Funding initiative, the current study examines the distribution of funding by source for City schools.

Data and cross-sectional analysis
The dataset includes elementary and middle schools from school years 2000-01 to 2003-04. Spending is measured in two ways: total spending per pupil and total spending per general education pupil, which excludes full-time special education spending and pupils. In 2003-04, the City’s 911 elementary and middle schools educated 718,689 students, spending $11,441 per general education and part-time special education pupil. Of that, $9082 (71 percent) came from tax levy and state operating funds, on which FSF will focus initially, and the remainder from Title I and other sources. On average, 7.4 percent of students in the sample schools performed at the lowest level on state fourth-grade reading exams and 9.1 percent on eighth-grade reading exams. The average poverty rate for the schools as measured by free lunch eligibility is 72.3 percent. The average racial breakdown is 34.5 percent black, 38.4 percent Hispanic, 15.1 percent white, and 12 percent Asian. Nearly 7 percent of students receive part-time special education (resource room) services and 12.5 percent have limited English proficiency.
The study considers a series of factors expected to be related to school spending as correlates of per pupil expenditures for the 2003-04 school year. Some of these factors—such as percentage of students receiving special education, resource room and language services, and those eligible for free lunch—are often explicitly included in funding formulas and require higher levels of funding. Funding sources considered in the study include funding from all sources for all students; funding for all students except full-time special education students; state operating and tax levy funding for general education and part-time special education students; and Title I funding targeted to low-income students. The “expected” factors do, in fact, generate higher levels of per pupil funding in terms of total funding from all sources. For example, a one-point increase in the percentage of students receiving resource room services is related to higher total funding per pupil of just under $69. This positive relationship is also true of higher percentages of free-lunch eligible pupils and with more low-performing fourth-grade students. All expected factors combined account for 61 percent of cross-school variation in total spending.

A surprising negative relationship between tax levy and state operating funds and free lunch eligibility is noteworthy, indicating that schools with higher percentages of students from poverty receive less per pupil funding from those sources. Moreover, all the expected factors combined explain only 33 percent of the variation in funding from tax levy and state operating funds, compared to 61 percent in the total funding model. This unexpected result suggests that most tax levy and state operating funds—which comprise 71 percent of total spending—are distributed according to less-easily observed factors than those typically associated with variations in spending. Relationships between funding and poverty under Title I funding are positive, as expected, as is the relationship between low student performance and Title I funding. All factors combined account for 65 percent of variation in Title I spending.

The above analyses pertain to the 2004 school year, but similar patterns were found for the three prior years—including the negative relationship between poverty and tax levy and state operating funding. It is worth noting that in none of these years do the models explain more than 36 percent of variation in tax levy and state operating funds, and in fact that percentage has declined slightly over time.

An analysis of similar models using pooled data for 2001 and 2004 was conducted to see if funding allocations are responsive to changes in school and student characteristics. However, weaker relationships were found than in the cross-sectional models, suggesting that funding changes are not highly responsive to changes in school and student characteristics. It is widely recognized in studies of public budgeting that the best predictor of funding in a given year is the funding level in the previous year. In the current analysis, one dollar of funding in 2003 is associated with 77 cents of total spending and 84 cents of general education plus part-time special education spending in 2004—both showing substantial relationships from one year to the next. For tax levy and state operating funds, however, only 34 cents of funding in 2004 is explained by 2003 spending—again suggesting that other factors are at work in explaining year-to-year variability. However, the overall explanatory power of these models is considerably higher than in the previous cross-sectional analyses, with the combined factors accounting for 70-75 percent of variation in funding.

Conclusions and discussion

In general, per-pupil funding is related to “need” factors in school funding formulae, but much less strongly than one might expect. The regressions indicate that a good deal of variation in spending across schools is not explained by variation in factors that are “supposed” to generate differences. This is especially true for tax levy and state operating funds, where more than two-thirds of variation in funding is unexplained by the expected factors. Funding does not respond “crisply” to changes in school and student characteristics, even over a three-year period. There seems to be a good deal of inertia in funding, with sluggish responses to changes in school needs; last year’s levels account for quite a lot of this year’s funding. The relationship with poverty and funding is more complex and potentially more troubling. While Title I funding is larger in schools with higher percentages of students receiving free lunch, poverty in this study is negatively associated with funding from state operating and tax levy sources.

If, under Fair Student Funding, resources are systematically distributed according to the “expected” factors—consistent with policy goals—stronger, positive relationships should emerge between those factors and school funding. FSF could be one way to increase responsiveness to changing school and student characteristics, ensuring that all funds would be distributed more generously to schools with more poor and otherwise costly-to-educate students.
Do Effective Teachers Leave? Implications From Low-Achieving New York City schools considers patterns of attrition and retention among teachers in New York City elementary and middle schools. Authors Don Boyd, Hamp Lankford, and Jim Wyckoff of the University at Albany and Pam Grossman and Susanna Loeb of Stanford University address a research void in comparing the effectiveness of novice teachers by their retention status. The paper explores a crucial question as to whether teachers who transfer among schools or leave teaching entirely are more or less effective than those who remain.

Student achievement in many schools across the United States is disturbingly low. Given the concentration of low-performing students in relatively few districts, including New York City (NYC), it has been presumed that stemming the flow of good teachers out of low-performing schools would improve the educational outcomes of students. The implicit assumption, largely undocumented, is that those leaving low-scoring schools are the more able teachers. The current paper focuses on teachers’ attrition and retention in their first three years of teaching, analyzes how attrition rates differ according to teachers’ documented effectiveness, and considers whether these patterns differ across grade levels, subjects taught, and schools grouped by academic performance of students.

For teachers who started teaching between 2000 and 2003 in low-performing NYC schools, nearly 40 percent of elementary teachers and close to 60 percent of middle school teachers left their initial schools within two years. Previous research has found that teachers in the low-performing schools are much less qualified than those in better-performing schools. But teacher qualifications—such as scores on certification exams and educational status—are not synonymous with teacher effectiveness. A measure of teacher effectiveness used in the current study estimates within-school differences in teachers’ effectiveness at improving student scores on state math and English Language Arts (ELA) exams, net of the effects of a student’s personal background and past academic achievement. By isolating the value-added of a teacher in improving student test scores, the measure provides information about a teacher’s effectiveness relative to other teachers in the same school. Teacher value-added is estimated separately for math and ELA scores as well as separately for grades 4-5 and 6-8.

In terms of overall teacher attrition, first-year fourth- and fifth-grade teachers who are less effective in raising students’ math achievement are more likely to leave their current school than are their more effective peers, a result which holds across schools having different levels of student performance. Figure 1 shows that teachers whose value-added is in the bottom quartile are over 60 percent more likely to transfer to another school within New York City following their first year of teaching, compared to teachers in the quartile with the highest value-added. In addition, the least effective teachers are 75 percent more likely to leave teaching in New York State public schools. In total, 25 percent of first-year teachers whose math value-added is in the bottom quartile transfer or leave teaching, while only 15 percent of those in the top quartile do so. The differences in attrition rates also are smaller when teacher effectiveness is measured using ELA value-added rather than that for math.

Figure 1

There are meaningful differences between teachers who leave and their peers who remain in the same school. Figure 2 shows the average within-school differences in teacher effectiveness in math for fourth and fifth-grade teachers. On average, those transferring within New York City are less effective by -0.046 compared to the first-year teachers who remain in the same schools. The average difference for those who leave the New York State public school system is -0.044. To put these numbers into perspective, 0.050 is the average difference in effectiveness between the second year of teaching and the first, for those individuals who remain...
in the same school for a second year. Most observers believe the magnitude of these improvements is meaningful. As a result, we judge the lower effectiveness of elementary teachers who transfer within New York City or leave the New York State system as important.

Even though many less-effective, first-year teachers leave teaching, relatively more transfer within NYC. The effect of these transfers on student achievement in part depends on the schools to which these teachers transfer. Transferring can be beneficial if the new school is a better fit. However, if those transferring are equally ineffective in their new schools, transfers can have detrimental effects. This would be problematic in any situation, but is especially troubling if the receiving school serves students with the greatest needs.

To understand these transfer patterns, we compare the attributes of the schools where transferring teachers initially taught with those to which they transfer. In doing, we account for a natural tendency for teachers in low-scoring schools to move to higher-scoring schools—there are simply more higher-scoring schools to move to—and the reverse for teachers transferring from high-scoring schools. Net of these effects, the less effective teachers who transfer move to schools very similar to their initial placements. In contrast, the more effective teachers move to schools whose scores for students are 0.104 higher on average. For comparison, consider schools ranked according to average math scores. The 0.104 average difference is 15 percent of the change needed to move from a school at the 25th to one at the 75th percentile. Among teachers transferring within NYC, those who are more effective—as measured by their contributions to the test score gains of their students in math—are more likely than their less effective colleagues to move to schools whose students already are attaining higher academic achievement. These transfers disadvantage students in schools with high concentrations of students failing to achieve even minimal academic success.
In summary, a large number of New York City teachers leave their initial placement during the first two years on the job—particularly those in schools with many low-performing students. While teacher attrition merits close attention, the findings in the current study make clear that researchers and policy-makers should not jump to an immediate conclusion that across-the-board reductions in teacher attrition are desirable. The authors draw five conclusions from the analyses described above to support this recommendation:

- On average, elementary teachers and middle-school math teachers who leave teaching in New York prior to their second year are responsible for lower achievement gains for their students than their colleagues who remain. This is particularly true for those teaching in schools where achievement is lowest.
- Similarly, elementary teachers who transfer to other schools in New York City after their first year are less effective on average than the colleagues they leave behind.
- The first-year transfers who are more effective in math tend to move to schools where students achieve at higher levels and to schools with fewer Black and Hispanic students.
- Ineffective math teachers who transfer, on average, move to schools having academic performance and racial/ethnic composition that are very similar to those they left.
- Teachers who transfer or leave teaching following their second or third years of teaching are just as likely to be effective as ineffective teachers.

Based on the current study, it appears that general retention policies that do not discriminate among teachers based on their effectiveness in improving educational outcomes for students may lower student achievement. Moreover, a pattern in which more effective teachers systematically transfer within the City from lower-performing schools to schools with higher-performing students clearly exacerbates chronic achievement gaps.

The results presented here raise questions about the nature of teacher retention policies. Eliminating or even reducing the achievement gap will inevitably rely on improving the quality of teachers and teaching for low-achieving, poor, and black and Hispanic students. The recruitment, selection, development, support, and retention of teachers must be linked to policies that improve outcomes for students. Unfortunately, most states and school districts do not have good measures of a broad range of student outcomes and there is well-founded concern that a focus on isolating teacher effectiveness solely employing value-added achievement results will have unintended consequences. We have much to learn about the properties of such value-added test score measures and their correlation with a broad set of student learning outcomes. Successful teacher retention policies likely will need to differentiate among the performance of teachers and create incentives to retain teachers who are most effective and either support the improvement of less-effective teachers or encourage them to leave.

The full texts of these papers are available on the Research Partnership Web site at www.nycresearchpartnership.ssrc.org.

The Research Priorities Work Group has identified other areas for priority research in addition to the inaugural studies summarized above. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Leadership**: Demand for qualified principals has surged in recent years. The Leadership Academy and other preparation models should be studied for their impact on school leadership, teaching and learning, and student performance.

- **Teacher Quality**: Teachers are the single most important influence on student learning, and the recruitment and retention of effective teachers is a paramount challenge for New York City and all urban districts. More research is needed to increase understanding of hiring strategies, compensation, working conditions, professional development, and other factors that may contribute to the effectiveness of the City’s public school teachers.

- **School Accountability**: Educational research needs to identify a set of alternative “value added” models other than aggregate student test scores to better assess school performance. With increased demands for school accountability, new performance models that hone in on practices and classroom-level inputs are needed.

- **Understanding Empowerment**: Little is known about recent reforms to promote school autonomy, such as
chart schools and empowerment zones. How does increased empowerment affect school-level practices and how are changes in practices associated with variation in school effectiveness and performance?

- **Diverse School Models**: Do alternative school models match the needs of learners with schools better than traditional schools? Are they more or less efficient in using resources or more or less equitable in outcomes? Do they provide greater or less social cohesion in preparing students for civil society? These and other criteria are pertinent to educational policy, but may be weighted differently by different constituencies.

- **High School Choice**: As school choices have proliferated for rising ninth graders in New York City schools, research is needed to investigate how students and families perceive the process of entering high school and whether more choices lead to better student performance.

- **Partnerships**: Multi-dimensional partnerships among community, business, non-profit organizations, and schools are components of many reform strategies. Do any of these partnerships contribute to student learning? What are the direct and indirect benefits of such partnerships to school or community?

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**APPENDIX A:**

**Governance Board Profiles; Research Advisory Board; Steering Committee; Work Group Rosters**

**Governance Board**

**William Bowen** is a senior research associate at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation where he served as President from 1988 to 2006. He was the president of Princeton University from 1972 to 1988. In 1988, he left Princeton and joined the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, where he created a research program to investigate doctoral education, collegiate admissions, independent research libraries, and charitable nonprofits in order to ensure that the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s grants would be well-informed and more effective. Bowen has authored 19 books, including the Gravemeyer award-winning *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (co-authored with Derek Bok). His most recent book, *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education* (2005), was coauthored with Eugene M. Tobin and Martin A. Kurzweil. Bowen’s current research project involves a study of graduation rates at selective public universities in the United States.

**Fred Frelow** is Director of Early College Initiatives at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation where he is responsible for managing the development of 14 Early College High Schools. Prior to joining the Foundation, he was Associate Director in the Working Communities division of the Rockefeller Foundation where he was in charge of the continuing development and implementation of the Foundation’s school reform program. He has also served as Director of National Affairs and Associate Director of Urban Initiatives for the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future at Teachers College, Columbia University; Director of Curriculum for the Nyack, New York public schools; and Director of the US Department of Education’s Magnet School Assistance Project at Louis Armstrong Middle School in Queens, New York. He taught for 12 years in Newton, Massachusetts public schools. He has a doctorate in educational administration and policy analysis from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a Master’s in education and policy analysis from Boston University.

**Robert Hughes** is the President of New Visions. A prominent lawyer, Mr. Hughes formerly served as Deputy Director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, a coalition of parent organizations, community school boards, concerned citizens and advocacy groups that seeks to reform New York State’s education finance system to ensure adequate resources and the opportunity for a sound basic education for all students in New York City. Prior to joining Campaign for Fiscal Equity in 1993, Mr. Hughes was Deputy Director of Advocates for Children, a leading non-profit agency long active in securing quality and equal public education services for New York City’s most impoverished and vulnerable families. Mr. Hughes received his undergraduate degree...
from Dartmouth College and his law degree from Stanford Law School. Mr. Hughes' articles on public education have appeared in the Record of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, the Connecticut Law Review, the Journal of Law and Education and the Yale Journal of Law and Policy.

Joel Klein is the New York City schools Chancellor. As Chancellor, he oversees more than 1,450 schools with over 1.1 million students, 136,000 employees, and a $15-billion operating budget. Before Mr. Klein became Chancellor, he served as Acting Assistant United States Attorney General and as the antitrust division's principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General. His appointment to the U.S. Justice Department came after Klein served two years (1993-95) as deputy counsel to President William J. Clinton. He received his BA from Columbia University where he graduated magna cum laude/Phi Beta Kappa in 1967. Klein earned his J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1971, again graduating magna cum laude.

Randi Weingarten is president of the United Federation of Teachers, representing more than 140,000 active and retired educators in the New York City public school system since 1998. She is also a vice-president of the 1.2-million-member American Federation of Teachers and a board member of New York State United Teachers. Weingarten also serves as vice-president of the New York City Central Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, and heads the city Municipal Labor Committee, an umbrella organization for some 100 city employee unions. Weingarten holds degrees from Cornell University and the Cardozo School of Law. She worked as a lawyer for the New York firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan from 1983 to 1986.

Chung-Wha Hong is the Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition. Prior to her current position, Chung-Wha was the Executive Director of the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium, Inc. NAKASEC works for the education and empowerment of the Korean-American community nationwide, with particular emphasis on immigrant rights. She has worked on health care issues at the Committee of Interns and Residents, and served as the Assistant to the Director at the Washington, DC-based Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO. Working with NAKASEC staff, Chung-Wha initiated a national campaign which encouraged thousands of immigrants to voice their opposition to anti-immigrant legislation. Through her national leadership, more than 800 volunteers around the country worked to bring immigrants of all backgrounds into the democratic process. She serves as a member of the Board of Directors at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. She recently received the Asian Pacific American Award. Chung-Wha holds a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Pennsylvania.

Kathryn Wylde is the President and CEO of the Partnership for New York City, a nonprofit organization of the city’s business leaders, established by David Rockefeller in 1979. The Partnership is dedicated to maintaining New York City as a center of world commerce, finance, and innovation. Its public policy focus is on issues in the areas of education, infrastructure, and the economy. Wylde was also founding President and CEO of the Housing Partnership Development Corporation, serving from 1982-96. Wylde serves on a number of boards and advisory groups, including the NYS Commission on Public Authority Reform, the NYC Economic Development Corporation, the NYC Leadership Academy, the Manhattan Institute, and the Biomedical Research Alliance of New York. She chairs the board of Lutheran Medical Center, a community hospital in Brooklyn. She has authored numerous articles and policy papers and has been recognized for leadership by dozens of educational, professional, and nonprofit institutions. She is a graduate of St. Olaf College, ’68.


Research Advisory Board

Susan J. Bodilly is Acting Director, RAND Education, and Senior Policy Scientist at RAND. She has analyzed an array of K-12 improvement initiatives such as the General Electric College Bound program, attempts by high schools to integrate academic and vocational education, efforts by the federal government to return Section Six schools on military bases to local control, and attempts by schools to implement Perkins legislation as evaluated under the National Assessment of Vocational Education. Bodilly was a lead evaluator of the New American Schools Initiative. She is currently focused on how to improve the contribution of the arts to learning and improving early childhood and out-of-school-time offerings.

Ronald F. Ferguson, Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard University, is an economist and Senior Research Associate at the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy at Harvard, where he has taught since 1983. His teaching and publications cover a variety of issues related to education and economic development. Much of his research since the mid-1990s has focused on racial achievement gaps—appearing in publications of the National Research Council, the Brookings Institution, and the U.S. Department of Education, in addition to various books and scholarly
Norm Fruchter is the Director of the Community Involvement Program (CIP), formerly part of New York University for more than a decade, now part of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. He has previously worked as Director of the NYU Institute for Education & Social Policy and Clinical Professor at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Education, Education Grants Officer for the Aaron Diamond Foundation, Senior Consultant for the Academy for Educational Development and Advocates for Children of New York, and director of the Institute for Citizen Involvement in Education in New Jersey. Additionally, Fruchter was one of the founders and directors of Independence High School in Newark, an alternative high school for drop-outs. For ten years, he served as an elected school board member in Brooklyn’s District 15. He has published several novels and his latest education book, Urban Schools, Public Will, was published by Teachers College Press in 2007.

Susan Moore Johnson is the Pforzheimer Professor of Teaching and Learning at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she served as the Academic Dean from 1993-1999. A former high school teacher and administrator, Johnson studies and teaches about teacher policy, school organization, educational leadership, and school improvement in schools and school systems. Johnson is a member of the board of directors of the National Academy of Education and is a recipient of a Senior Scholar Grant from the Spencer Foundation. She is the author of Teacher Unions in Schools (1983), Teachers at Work (1990), Leading to Change: The Challenge of the New Superintendency (1996), Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools (2004) and many published articles.

Jim Kemple leads MDRC’s work in education, with expertise in evaluation design, site selection and engagement, experimental and quasi-experimental impact analyses, field research, and project management. He advises on evaluation design and site selection for the demonstration and evaluation of Academic Curricula in After School Programs and for the evaluation of Professional Development for Early Grade Literacy, and has served as principal investigator for MDRC’s Career Academies evaluation and for the evaluation of the Talent Development Middle School and High School models. Kemple also advises on research design and impact analysis for MDRC’s evaluation of Project GRAD and Scaling Up: First Things First. Kemple holds a masters degree and a doctorate in education policy from Harvard University.

Hamilton Lankford is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University at Albany, State University of New York, where he is involved in a variety of activities that link research to education policy. In New York, these have included his research and expert testimony in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, research and consultancy for the New York State Special Commission on Educational Structure, Policies, and Practices (1993-94), and work as a member of two NYS Board of Regents Technical Study Groups. More recently, he organized a symposium concerned with New York’s Teacher Workforce (2001) and participated in the Symposium on Education Finance and Organization Structure in NYS Schools (2004), both sponsored by the Education Finance Research Consortium. His academic publications in both economic and education policy journals include research on the teaching workforce, the allocation of education resources, the determinants of school choice, and the effects of enhanced school choice. In ongoing research, he is a principal investigator on Teacher Pathways Project, focusing on the linkages between teacher preparation, teacher labor markets and student outcomes. This project, which is now in its fourth year and focuses on New York City teachers and students, has received funding from the Carnegie Corporation, City University of New York, National Science Foundation, NYS Education Department, Spencer Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Henry (Hank) M. Levin is the William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Economics and Education and Director, National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education (NCSPE) at Teachers College, Columbia University. His research focuses on a multitude of issues including the economics of education, cost-effectiveness analysis, school reform, and educational vouchers. He is also the David Jacks Professor of Education and Economics, Emeritus, at Stanford University where he spent 31 years.

Susanna Loeb is an associate professor of education at Stanford University, specializing in the economics of education and the relationship between schools and federal, state and local policies. She studies resource allocation, looking specifically at how teachers’ preferences and teacher preparation policies affect the distribution of teaching quality across schools and how the structure of state finance systems affects the level and distribution of funds to districts. She also studies poverty policies including welfare reform and early-childhood education programs. Susanna is also director of the Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice at Stanford, co-director of Policy Analysis for California Education, an associate professor of business (by courtesy) at Stanford, and a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Pedro Noguera is a professor in the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University. He is also the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education and the co-Director of the Institute for the study of Globalization and Education in Metropolitan Settings (IGEMS). An urban sociologist, Noguera’s scholarship and research focuses on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions in the urban environment.
David Rindskopf, Distinguished Professor in the Ph.D. Programs in Educational Psychology and Psychology at the City University of New York (CUNY) is considered to be one of the leading experts in the applications of statistical methodology to important research problems in psychology, education, and related fields. He has made pioneering contributions in a wide variety of areas, including structural equation modeling, latent class analysis, categorical data analysis, missing data analysis, meta analysis, and hierarchical linear models. Many of his papers, published in prestigious journals, have become standards in the field of applied statistics. He has also written numerous book chapters and co-authored the textbook *Applied Statistics: A First Course* (Prentice-Hall, 1988). Rindskopf has taught at The Graduate Center for over twenty-five years and was also a visiting professor at UCLA (1990-1). He is an elected Fellow of the American Statistical Association, a rare honor for someone outside of statistics and biostatistics departments, and he served as President of the Society for Multivariate Experimental Psychology in 2003-2004. He received his Ph.D. from Iowa State University.

Lauren B. Resnick is University Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science at the University of Pittsburgh, where she directs the prestigious Learning Research and Development Center. She founded and directs LRDC’s Institute for Learning, which is helping several major U.S. urban school districts raise academic achievement for all students. The institute focuses on professional development based on cognitive learning principles and effort-oriented education. Dr. Resnick is also co-founder of the New Standards Project, which has developed standards and assessments that have widely influenced state and school district practice. Her current research focuses on school reform, assessment, the nature and development of thinking abilities, and the role of talk and discourse in learning. Dr. Resnick is a past president of the American Educational Research Association, a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Education and the International Academy of Education, and a member of the executive committee of the European Association on Research for Learning and Instruction.

Melissa Roderick is the Hermon Dunlap Smith Professor at the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) at the University of Chicago and a co-director at the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Professor Roderick is an expert in urban school reform, high school reform, high stakes testing, minority adolescent development, and school transitions. Her work has focused attention on the transition to high school as a critical point in students’ school careers and more recently examines the transition to college among Chicago Public School students. In prior work, she led a multi-year evaluation of Chicago's initiative to end social promotion and has conducted research on school dropout, grade retention, and the effects of summer programs. From 2001 to 2003, Professor Roderick joined the administration of the Chicago Public Schools to establish a new Department of Planning and Development. At SSA Professor Roderick is the faculty director of a new program in community schools and youth development and is a co-leader of the Network for College Success, a network of high school principals in the Chicago Public Schools. She is a founding board member and currently serves as the chair of the board of North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High School.

Leanna Stiefel is Professor of Economics at the Wagner School of Public Policy. Her areas of expertise are school finance and education policy, applied economics and applied statistics. Some of her current and recent research projects include: patterns of resource allocation in large city schools; costs of small high schools in New York City; effects of school organization on student achievement; racial test score gaps; measurement of efficiency and productivity in public schools; and segregation, resource use and achievement of immigrant school children. She is author of *Statistical Analysis for Public and Non-Profit Managers* (1990) and co-author of *Measuring School Performance and Efficiency: Implications for Practice and Research* (2005) as well as *The Measurement of Equity in School Finance* (1984), and her work appears in journals and edited books. She is past president of the American Education Finance Association, a member of the National Center of Education Statistics Technical Planning Panel (US Department of Education), on the policy council of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), and a governor on the New York State Education Finance Research Consortium. She has been a consultant for organizations such as the National Science Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the New York ACLU, and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

Richard Arum (ex-officio). See Governance Board.

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