

# The Annenberg Challenge

A public-private partnership improving education for 1.5 million urban and rural public school students



## Inside this issue

Impacts on Students  
Schools & Systems

Building Expertise  
& New Partnerships

Collaboration Across  
Projects

**I**nside the *Annenberg Challenge* highlights recent accomplishments in the eighteen sites across the country that were awarded funds under Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg's \$500-million "Challenge to the Nation" to improve its public schools, especially for underserved urban and rural students.

## Up Front

▶ **Three Annenberg Challenge sites are among seven school-community partnerships to be awarded matching grants from the Schools for a New Society initiative**, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The \$60-million program aims to reinvigorate efforts to improve high schools around the country. The Boston Public Schools/Boston Plan for Excellence and Hamilton County Schools/Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Education Foundation partnerships each received \$8 million; the larger Houston Independent School District/Houston Annenberg Challenge received \$12 million. The winning plans, out of 21 innovative urban districts invited to submit initial proposals, demonstrated political will and the ability to forge broad-based local partnerships.

Further information from the Carnegie Corporation: Tel: (212) 371-3200; Web: [www.carnegie.org](http://www.carnegie.org)

▶ **The New Educator Support Team (NEST) has received a \$500,000 grant from the AOL Time Warner Foundation to accelerate new teacher development and retention in New York City.** NEST is a collaborative initiative of New York Networks for School Renewal, the New York City Board of Education, and the United Federation of Teachers. This grant, announced in May, brings the Foundation's total investment in NEST to \$2.5 million over three years as part of its 21st Century Literacy Initiative. NEST helps public schools address specific needs of new teachers by developing their capacity to educate students more effectively, increasing retention, strengthening schools' support and development of new teachers, and creating replicable models for professional development.

For further information: Tel: (646) 486-4141; Web: [www.nynetworks.org](http://www.nynetworks.org)

▶ **The Boston Public Schools and the Boston Plan for Excellence-Boston Annenberg Challenge (BPE-BAC) have designated 26 "Effective Practice" schools** that adapted one or more of six "Essentials" – activities required by the district's Plan for Whole-School Improvement – to make it even more effective in improving literacy and math instruction. The schools were honored in May at an event hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and attended by Mayor Thomas Menino and Superintendent Thomas Payzant. In the coming year, the Effective Practice schools will work closely with the BPE-BAC on refining elements of Whole-School Improvement and identifying additional practices that lead to stronger instruction. In a pilot effort, they will also receive more flexibility from the district in staffing, budgeting, and other decisions.

For further information: Tel: (617) 227-8055; Web: [www.bpe.org](http://www.bpe.org)

“This initiative . . . is based on a great deal of educational research as well as common sense. We know that students and teachers tend to thrive in small schools, and these grants will result in dozens of small urban schools.”

Tom Vander Ark,  
Executive Director of Education,  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

“We believe the responsibility to support teachers everywhere lies with all of us, the private sector as much as the public, and we're hopeful NEST will provide a national model for teacher development and retention.”

Gerald M. Levin,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
AOL Time Warner

## ▼ Impacting Students, ▼ Schools & Systems

“The core work [of reform] is in the classroom. Eventually, if the district doesn’t understand the school’s work, there’s conflict. The priority in every aspect of the district’s work has to be to create an environment where teachers can teach and students can learn productively.”

Barbara Adams,  
Region 1 Superintendent, West  
Contra Costa Unified School District

“It’s scary for teachers to invite change into their classrooms. It can take a good year for some of them to understand that I’m trying to figure out how to help. External partners aren’t there to make more work.”

Marlene Meisels,  
Co-Director for Literacy and  
Leadership at Designs for Change,  
a Chicago Annenberg Challenge  
external school partner to Galileo  
Academy

“I’ve been so energized working on the Annenberg project. It gets me excited about the profession and makes me like coming to work.”

A Minneapolis teacher on the Arts  
for Academic Achievement program

**The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) is committing \$14,025,000 annually in renewable, multiyear improvement grants to 91 schools in 18 districts** in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Marin counties. The schools and districts make up 23 “Local Collaboratives” that will use a data-based, continuous improvement process that adjusts teaching practices and curriculum to better meet students’ needs. Another nine districts will receive \$2.1 million over three years to undertake research and development to discover how to change their own policies and practices to better support school improvement. Tel: (415) 348-3500; Web: [www.basrc.org](http://www.basrc.org)

**The latest report from the Chicago Annenberg Research Project at the Consortium on Chicago School Research offers lessons learned on how to improve schools.** *Development of Chicago Annenberg Schools, 1996–1999*, presents findings on how 200 Chicago public schools developed in their first three years of participation in the Chicago Annenberg Challenge and identifies strategies used by schools that made progress: target multiple supports for student learning, cultivate strong distributive school leadership, secure adequate external resources, and employ multiple, reinforcing strategies for change. Tel: (312) 413-5869; Web: [www.chi-challenge.org](http://www.chi-challenge.org)

**Detroit’s Schools of the 21st Century has piloted a new teacher-quality initiative that pairs student teachers with experienced professionals who are implementing new instructional practices.** The program seeks to promote continuous professional growth

and powerful teaching practices and to prepare new teachers to work in schools now implementing comprehensive reform plans. The 11 student teachers from the University of Detroit–Mercy and Wayne State University will participate in professional development on the reform model of their assigned school and will serve as substitute teachers when contract teachers are released for model training. Tel: (313) 871-3515; Web: [www.s21c-detroit.org](http://www.s21c-detroit.org)

**The Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) and several schools it supports have recently been honored.** The Accelerated School, a charter school serving South Central Los Angeles, was named elementary School of the Year by *Time* magazine. LAAMP received the Los Angeles Education Partnership’s (LAEP) second annual Founder’s Award in recognition of its commitment to excellence and its lasting contribution to the quality of public education in Los Angeles County. LAEP awards also went to several LAAMP-supported schools and teachers; honored schools received \$10,000 to continue and deepen their work; schools whose teachers were honored received \$5,000 to support their work. Tel: (213) 580-8888; Web: [www.laamp.org](http://www.laamp.org)

**Teachers in Minneapolis find that their instruction has changed notably since the Annenberg-funded Arts for Academic Achievement project began.** A report by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, entitled “Teacher Practice Change: Conceptions of the Classroom and Instructional Choices,” affirms that arts integration has challenged teachers’ perception that there is no time for arts in a packed

classroom schedule, surprising them with the realization that the arts make it easier to teach core concepts. Teachers report moving beyond an activity repertoire to enhancing questioning skills, making connections with the arts and the curriculum, transforming their work into deep knowledge, re-energizing their teaching, and having higher expectations of students. Tel: (612) 668-5333; Web: [mpls.k12.mn.us/annenberg](http://mpls.k12.mn.us/annenberg)

**The Ford Foundation has awarded a \$50,000 planning grant to the Rural School and Community Trust** in cooperation with the New Mexico Organizing Strategy, School at the Center (Nebraska), Challenge West Virginia, Southern Echo (Mississippi), Vermont Children’s Forum, and the North Carolina Justice Center. Known as the Rural Equity Collaborative, the partners will prepare a plan to improve the equity and adequacy of school finance systems for rural communities in high-poverty regions of the country. In addition to individual, comprehensive state action plans on rural school finance, the final proposal will include broad common objectives giving a national cohesion to the effort. Tel: (202) 955-7177; Web: [www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org)

**Valley Oak Elementary School, a Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC) school in Fresno, California, has been named a National Blue Ribbon School** for the second time (the first was in 1993–94) – an honor attained by only a small number of schools since the Blue Ribbon Program began in 1982. The review panel cited Valley Oak specifically for the work they have undertaken as part of TETAC. The committee was impressed that the school had not only made good progress toward whole-school reform but had also powerfully integrated the arts into its core curriculum. Tel: (614) 292-5649; Web: [www.arts.ohio-state.edu/NAEC](http://www.arts.ohio-state.edu/NAEC)

## ▼ Building Expertise ▼ & New Partnerships

**Although the Boston Annenberg Challenge has come to an end, the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) continues the work – and the fundraising.** Grants from the Wallace and Stone foundations will fund a network for principals from Effective Practice schools to identify the factors that helped them become more effective school leaders and to meet their continuing professional development needs; the findings from this work will inform the district's efforts to support aspiring principals. Federal and state Comprehensive School Reform grants, as well as an award from the Tower Foundation, are supporting Boston's "coaching" model for in-school professional development. Tel: (617) 227-8055; Web: [www.bpe.org](http://www.bpe.org)

**The South Florida Annenberg Challenge (SFAC) recently won the prestigious Broward County Schools Partnership Award** (school category) for one of its Partnership to Advance School Success (PASS) models. Jointly administered by SFAC and the Florida Department of Education, PASS teams a top CEO and the principal of a low-performing school. The CEO commits \$100,000 as well as his or her time, resources, and business skills and strategies, which are incorporated into the school's improvement plans. Tel: (305) 377-9909; Web: [www.sfannenberg.org](http://www.sfannenberg.org)

**The first class of John P. McGovern, M.D. Fellows graduated from the Houston Annenberg Challenge's Leadership Academy in June.** The 23 elementary, intermediate, and high school principals from Aldine, Alief, and Houston districts began their work in June of 2000 and will continue to meet as a professional learning community centered on leadership. The Leadership Academy,

which is modeled after the Harvard Graduate School of Education Principals' Center, requires a commitment to learning, reading, and reflecting on professional practices and leadership. Principals must also agree to attend monthly meetings and participate in a one-year program extension after their graduation. Approximately 30 fellows will attend the second class of the academy. Tel: (713) 658-1881; Web: [www.houstonannenberg.org](http://www.houstonannenberg.org)

**Arts for Academic Achievement held its third annual Urban Retreat for the Arts in August at Minneapolis' North Community High School.** The conference provides teachers, artists, and arts partners an opportunity for practical and useful experiences in and through the arts and focuses on how the arts impact various areas of school reform. More than 400 teachers chose from 90 arts-integrated sessions including workshops, tours, and seminars. Each morning began with a session called "Start with the Arts," featuring music, dance, and/or poetry. Speakers included Minneapolis superintendent Carol Johnson; Joe Dowling, artistic director of the Guthrie Theater; and New York City Center for Arts Education director Hollis Headrick, who also accompanied poet J. Otis Powell on percussion as part of the final day's "Start with the Arts" session. Tel: (612) 668-5333; Web: [mpls.k12.mn.us/annenberg](http://mpls.k12.mn.us/annenberg)

**Staff from the Center for Arts Education (CAE) in New York City accompanied partnership colleagues on a cultural exchange to England in June,** sponsored by the London Arts Board. Participants from Martin Luther King, Jr. High School and its cultural partnerships, the New York City Opera and the American Social History Project, spent a week with

their British counterparts visiting schools and cultural organizations and observing differences and similarities between London and New York City schools, with particular emphasis on arts-in-education programs. The Londoners plan to visit New York this fall to continue the conversations and observe first-hand the Center's programs in action. Tel: (800) 721-9199; Web: [www.cae-nyc.org](http://www.cae-nyc.org)

**Salt Lake City's Eccles/Annenberg Challenge hosted an accountability event in June that focused on data-driven decisions that improve teacher practice and student learning.** School teams shared information and examples of student and teacher learning that represented their growth and development over the past year. Participants then analyzed the information to identify the implications for teaching and learning. Each school team designed a page for a portfolio to demonstrate what they had learned from the conference. The high point of the event was a Gallery Walk display of each team's portfolio page, providing additional opportunity for sharing and learning. Tel: (801) 578-8599; Web: [www.slk.k12.ut.us/annenberg](http://www.slk.k12.ut.us/annenberg)

**Three hundred Hamilton County educators attended the annual Summer Leadership Institute sponsored by Chattanooga's Annenberg Challenge,** the Public Education Foundation. Keynote speaker Michael Fullan set the stage for two days of intensive concurrent sessions. Central office and school administrators, curriculum specialists and classroom teachers worked collaboratively to enhance their individual and collective capabilities for improving teaching and learning across the district. One of the most innovative and effective workshops provided participants with tools for understanding and using data to improve student achievement. Tel: (426) 265-9403

**“It's made me think more and be more open-minded to change. It's also allowed me to develop relationships with some really smart, innovative, experienced people who share the same challenges that I face every day.”**

Steve Grabowski, principal, Kennedy Elementary and participant in the Houston Annenberg Challenge Leadership Academy

**“Teachers across schools are learning from each other and this is making a difference for our students.”**

Christelle Estrada, Director of Professional Development Services, Salt Lake City School District

**“Centex Rooney [PASS business partner] and their top management team have been an exceptional friend to the school and to me. They roll up their sleeves, dig-in, and help. It's also been a learning experience for them to see 'up close' what's involved in operating a school.”**

—Cheri Zahn, Principal, Croissant Park Elementary and Broward County Principal of the Year, 2000–2001

# INSIDE The Annenberg Challenge

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Permit No. 202  
Prov. RI 02912

Twenty-seven high school students from Annenberg Challenge sites attended the first Wallis Annenberg Scholars Program at the University of Southern California this summer. The students – from sites including Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and the Rural Trust – were offered seminars in art and architecture, engineering, introduction to film, media and politics, and news in a new media universe. Each student received a laptop computer, a \$600 stipend, and three college credits, as well as tuition, and travel. Wallis Annenberg, daughter of philanthropist Walter Annenberg, created the program to motivate Challenge-site students to pursue high academic, social, and ethical standards.

## Collaboration Across Projects

**In July, teams from six Challenge sites met with three urban districts known for their innovative union-district partnerships** to explore and share ways to build trust-based, collaborative relationships to promote student success. Hosted by the Annenberg Institute, the meeting brought together Challenge teams from Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Boston, Detroit, South Florida, and Philadelphia with teams from Seattle; Montgomery County, Maryland; and Rochester, New York. The 70 participants included union leaders, school board members, district leaders, and principal-teacher pairs; Challenge directors or staff joined their local teams. Through small-group exercises and general sessions participants broadened awareness of promising strategies, developed cross-site ties for future collaboration, and began work on local action strategies.

**Participants from eight Challenge projects took part in a Cross-site Meeting on Communications** in April in San Francisco, hosted by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC). Presenters included BASRC staff, school

principals, three Bay Area education journalists, and Bill Jackson, president of GreatSchools.net, all focusing on building effective communications strategies. Nicolette Toussaint, BASRC's communications director, and Soteri Zoulas, director of communications at the Annenberg Institute, led a question-and-answer/advising session.

**The Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) hosted a Cross-site meeting in June on parent and community involvement.** The three-day meeting featured conversations with staff from LAAMP and its successor organizations – Families in Schools and the Los Angeles County Alliance for Student Achievement – as well as members of the Parents as Learning Partners initiative. Attendees participated in school-site visits, discussing parent and community involvement practices with school administrators, district leaders, teachers, and parents, and met with representatives from L.A. METRO–Industrial Areas Foundation, which is partnering with LAAMP and its successor organizations to build an

effective constituency for public school reform. Ernesto Cortes, Jr., who directs the Southwest Regional Industrial Areas Foundation, spoke on the transformative power of school-based organizing.

**The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) and the Houston Annenberg Challenge (HAC) are lead partners in the public-engagement campaign for *SCHOOL: The Story of American Public Education*,** a PBS documentary airing this fall. HAC held a two-part event in August that included a preview screening, remarks by Secretary of Education Rod Paige, and breakout sessions focused on issues raised in the documentary at the American Leadership Forum's yearly Convocation on Public Education. BASRC and the San Francisco Education Fund are building a coalition of over 20 organizations to sponsor forums, events, and discussions including a televised Town Hall Meeting on how to ensure that all students receive a quality education in San Francisco's diverse public schools.

Visit us on the Web:  
[www.annenbergchallenge.org](http://www.annenbergchallenge.org)