

November 13, 2005

A Portrait of the Network: Local Education Funds' Impact in Schools and Communities

2005 Annual Member Survey

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INTRODUCTION

For the past ten years, PEN has undertaken a survey of its members, the purpose of which has been to chart organizational and programmatic characteristics of local education funds (LEFs). In addition to providing valuable information about individual LEFs, each year's survey results provide a snapshot of members' collective work, used primarily by LEF directors to inform their development efforts, communications strategies, and other organizational decision-making. The survey also provides data for deeper research on the work and impact of LEFs.

Focus of 2005 Survey

Last year, based on recommendations from the membership, PEN expanded the focus of the survey to include deeper information on LEF programs and initiatives. The survey revealed several trends, such as an increase in policy research, larger and more comprehensive reform initiatives, broader public engagement activities, and youth development. This year, we have taken an opportunity to collect recent information on the impact of LEF programs and initiatives. LEF initiatives that have been in operation for at least the past two years have begun to yield impact data on critical measures such as student academic achievement, student higher education participation, community involvement in education, and teacher quality, satisfaction and retention.

Methodology

PEN research staff conducted a document and website review for all 88 local education funds in the Network. Based on this review, a sample (40) of LEFs were selected by geographic region, size, and scope of work and were contacted to submit findings of recent evaluations or other documentation exemplifying their impact in a variety of areas. (Contact information for LEFs cited in this report can be found at www.publiceducation.org.) Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted as needed to obtain additional information. This report therefore represents only a snapshot of LEFs and the kinds of impact possible through their interventions in schools and communities. We encourage readers to contact LEFs of interest to them directly for additional impact information.

Information on LEF revenues and other organizational structures was gathered from IRS 990s for all LEFs using the Guidestar database. Based on the alternating-year schedule for collecting LEF organizational data, the 2006 survey will yield deeper information on all organizational categories.

Conceptual Framework

Recent research by Research for Action describes a theory of change that encompasses work across the wide variety of LEF organizational structures, strategies and activities. The theory of change articulates four functions that LEF efforts address: knowledge building, infrastructure, innovation, and leadership. This framework provides a tool that LEFs can use to explain how their efforts lead to impacts in different outcome areas critical to education and community

improvement. Specifically, Research for Action identifies three outcome areas:

- a supportive civic environment for public education
- school and community capacity to support student achievement
- community status (includes long-term outcomes such as student achievement, graduation rates, higher education participation, economic development measures)

(Please consult *Crafting a Civic Stage for Education Reform: Understanding the Work and Accomplishments of Local Education Funds* at www.publiceducation.org for a complete discussion of these functional areas and corresponding impact areas.) By examining accomplishments within these different outcome areas, LEFs can explain how their work can systematically achieve expected outcomes as well as manage expectations among their constituent groups by showing how impacts are incremental, interrelated, and lead to broader long-term impact.

In this report, we present information supplied by several LEFs on the impact of their programs and initiatives in all three outcomes areas described by Research for Action—a supportive civic environment, school and community capacity, and community status. We highlight wherever possible impact information on the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement. We also take the opportunity to highlight projects and initiatives whose design and results fall specifically within the category of creating a supportive civic environment for reform, as this category captures the value-add and arguably unique contribution of LEFs' work within the landscape of organizations involved in education reform.

BUILDING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Of the LEF programs and initiatives described below, the majority involves educational leadership development and implementation of whole school reform models. This is not accidental: over 60 percent of LEF resources are deployed for professional development of teachers and school administrators and implementation of school-wide curricular and instructional reform. Larger initiatives such as those in Baltimore, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Chattanooga work with outside evaluators and are able to generate impact data on student achievement. As is clear from the data presented here, small and medium-sized LEFs, however, are also beginning to capture impact data through formal evaluation and other forms of documentation.

- Hillsborough Education Foundation (Tampa, FL)**
 Impacted more than 750 Robinson High School students through *Revitalizing High School Media Centers Grant* awarded by PEN and New York Life Foundation. The school's state grade went from a "D" rating to within three points of a "B." Reading and writing scores increased dramatically on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test for 9th -12th grade at Robinson due, in part, to the increased emphasis on reading this initiative provided.
- Public Education Partners (Aiken, SC)**
 Implemented the Great Leaps Reading initiative by replicating the program to 20 schools and providing materials, training and supplies as well as ongoing support and evaluation. Five hundred students were served, with third grade students increasing their average reading speed by 50 percent and a reduction of 46 percent in errors. Observation data indicates increased student motivation to read independently, higher participation in class, and marked reduction in reading-avoidance behaviors.
- Achieve!Minneapolis (MN)**
 Helped establish 34 small learning communities as part of its high school transformation efforts, increasing student retention by 15 percent. It also launched the STEP-UP summer jobs program, employing 600 teenagers in the private and public sectors over a period of three years. A total of 80 percent of the students said that their summer job experience helped them to decide what course of study to pursue in college.
- El Dorado Education Foundation (AR)**
 Partnered with faith-based and other organizations in a summer math camp for students at risk of failure. One hundred percent of participants enrolled in upper-level math classes, graduated and continued on to college. El Dorado also partnered with area individuals and organizations to purchase almost 200 TI-83+ calculators for all high school classes, which resulted in an astounding test score increase of 56 percent in Algebra I.
- Norwalk Education Foundation (CT)**
 Brought *Saturdays in Action* (SIA) to all four Norwalk middle schools. Previously, the program – shown to be successful at engaging students and increasing academic skills – had only been funded in one school. Norwalk manages this program, providing funding and evaluation that have led to increased interest in the SIA curriculum by the school district.

- **The Public Education Foundation (South Bend, IN)**
Implemented a tutoring lab nicknamed “Light Bulb Lane,” where resistant readers were selected to participate in tutoring. A sample of the 2004-2005 school year preliminary results in the reading lab shows that students who were struggling with reading continue to show strong gains using the Woodcock Johnson-Word Attack: one year, one month gain in the second grade; two years, four months in the third grade, and one year, three months in the fourth grade.
- **Public Education Foundation of Evansville (IN)**
Implemented House Building Project, in which high school career/technical education students design, build, and landscape a single family home that is sold on the open market. The Foundation pays all building costs and assumes all financial risk, with proceeds going to provide funding for other programs. A total of 3,000 students are given practical, hands-on experience. One hundred percent of building trades student graduates are already working in the field, with a job waiting or post-secondary arrangements finalized.
- **Synergeia (Makati City, Philippines)**
Through efforts to marshal public and private support, Synergeia has spearheaded and implemented its Reading and Mathematics Proficiency Program, reaching over 319,000 children. The programs are co-financed by local governments, corporate donors and private individuals. Gains achieved in the average reading scores of children have been significant, with scores doubling from 25 percent to 54 percent in one community (Lipa City). Proficiency levels in mathematics have increased from 50 percent to 75 percent in another community (Bulacan).

The results indicated above demonstrate the power of LEFs – from small to medium sized – to effect measurable change in school capacity and in the lives of students.

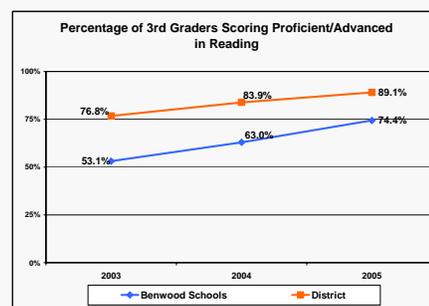
Below, we focus on selected large-scale initiatives carried out by larger LEFs. These initiatives are organized as vignettes, with headline titles designed to convey the power of LEF work to effect needed change and drive valued outcomes, such as student achievement.

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

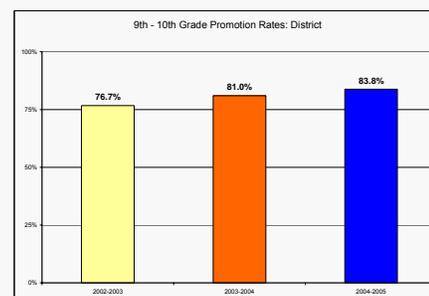
Public Education Foundation (PEF) (Chattanooga, TN)

The PEF Benwood Initiative has focused on the nine lowest performing elementary schools in Hamilton County, Tennessee. The goal is ambitious: to have every student reading at grade level by the end of the third grade. Tools have included a strong, balanced literacy program with a protected literacy block of 2 - 2½ hours each day, along with an emphasis on attracting and retaining high-performing teachers and providing focused professional development for those teachers. The results to date have been exemplary (see graphs below), and show how this critical work has begun to close the achievement gap.

The percentage of Benwood third graders scoring “advanced” or “proficient” in reading increased from 53 percent in 2003 to 74 percent in 2005 – an increase almost twice as high as that of the district. In addition, Benwood schools posted dramatic gains in all subjects tested by the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS): reading/language arts, math, science and social studies. Teacher turnover rates in the nine schools have also been dramatically reduced from 26 percent in 2001 to less than 20 percent in 2004.



At the high school level, there have been impressive results as well. Each of 17 high schools crafted its own strategy for success and targeted four basic goals: a more challenging, relevant and engaging curriculum; more professional development for staff; a more personalized and engaging experience for students; and more flexibility to meet student needs more effectively. Key elements include a college-track diploma for all students; career academies that utilize small learning communities to combine college preparatory courses with a career theme; and a focus on ninth grade transition programs and academies that give students more individual attention.



The percentage of Hamilton County 10th graders passing the English Gateway exam increased from 87 percent in 2003 to 92 percent in 2004 – above the 2004 state average of 90 percent. Performance on the 11th grade Writing Assessment is higher than the state average and increased in 2004 from “above average” to “exemplary.” More students are taking the ACT college entrance exam, and average scores are rising. Ninth to tenth grade promotion rates increased from 77 percent in 2003 to 84 percent in 2005.

HIGH EXPECTATION FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PAYS OFF

Philadelphia Education Fund (PA)

The Philadelphia Education Fund is the regional partner for Johns Hopkins University's Talent Development comprehensive school reform initiative for low-performing high schools. To date, the Talent Development model has been adopted in seven of the District's 22 comprehensive neighborhood high schools. A recent study conducted by MDRC indicates that Talent Development has produced substantial educational gains for students in these once very low-performing schools in Philadelphia. Core components of Talent Development include:

- *Ninth Grade Success Academy*: A self-contained school-within-a-school that provides incoming freshmen with a “double-dose” curriculum in English and math.
- *Tenth Grade Success Academy*: The continuation of the ninth-grade academy, again designed as a separate school-within-a-school.
- *Career Academies*: Grades 10-12, divided into teams, serving 130-150 students.
- *Curriculum Instruction*: An academic “catch-up” process providing students with the learning opportunities, motivation and supports they need to overcome poor prior preparation, and to successfully complete a core college prep curriculum.
- *Teacher Support*: Year-round professional development is provided, both in the classroom and in small group, content-specific workshops.
- *On-Site Facilitators and Curriculum Coaches*: Highly trained, on-site staff (consisting of an organizational facilitator and academic coaches) works with participating schools to improve student academic performance, and to create a safer school climate.
- *Extra Help for Students*: Summer School, Saturday School, after-hours Credit School and an after-school alternative program (Twilight School), offer students additional services in a small-class environment with dedicated support staff.

Making Progress Toward Graduation MDRC's report, found that for first-time ninth-grade students, the model had an impact on academic course credits earned, attendance, and promotion rates. Most notably, Talent Development produced a substantial increase – nearly 25 percentage points – in the proportion of students who earned a credit in algebra, a critical, "gate-keeping" course that is usually required of students both for high school graduation and for admission to college. In addition, attendance rates in the Talent Development schools improved by about five percentage points over the non-Talent Development schools – an average increase of about nine extra school days per year for each student. These impacts emerged in the first year of implementation, and were reproduced as the model was extended to other schools in the district and as subsequent cohorts of students entered the ninth grade.

TRANSFORMING CULTURES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Galef Institute (Los Angeles, CA)

Two recent independent studies have corroborated and extended a decade of prior research on the impact of the *Different Ways of Knowing* school improvement design on student performance, teaching quality and school climate. *Different Ways of Knowing* provides resources, professional development opportunities, and one-on-one coaching which targets standards-based planning in curriculum, assessment, instruction, and student inquiry and self-directed learning. It also includes a comprehensive schoolwide literacy program, integration of the arts for deeper content learning, shared leadership for results, and organizational structures that support teaching, learning, and a positive school climate.

In March 2005, the Center For Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis released its report of the *Different Ways of Knowing* Middle Grades Research Project, a five-year initiative funded largely by the U.S. Department of Education. Among its findings, *Different Ways of Knowing* helps teachers to ensure that their lessons have specific learning goals; that they analyze student work to modify their instruction; that they provide continuous feedback to their students while they are working on projects, and that all the learning goals of the lessons are based on standards.

The results: in a control study of three urban Kentucky schools, *Different Ways of Knowing* schools consistently outperformed matched control schools in student achievement. Attendance patterns were significantly more positive over the three-year study period in *Different Ways of Knowing* schools than in control schools.

In August of 2005, the Center released a second study that evaluated implementation of *Different Ways of Knowing* in 17 schools (preschools, and elementary, middle, and high schools) in three states (Kentucky, California, and Arizona). Through formal interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and classroom observations, this study concluded that in *Different Ways of Knowing* schools, students were more engaged, motivated, and excited about school due to the arts program, and that the program had created positive relationships between students and teachers. Administrators felt that *Different Ways of Knowing* had increased the use of technology, provided the opportunity for more project-based learning, promoted collaboration between teachers, and encouraged the use of more creative lessons in the classroom.

The results: In most *Different Ways of Knowing* schools, attendance, conduct, and academic achievement have improved significantly.

CLOSING THE GAP K-12

Fund for Educational Excellence (Baltimore, MD)

The Fund for Educational Excellence is committed to improving student achievement by increasing the Baltimore City Public School System's (BCPSS) capacity to develop and sustain high quality teaching and learning in every classroom across the K-12 continuum. The Fund believes that the key to improving student achievement is improving the quality of instruction in the classroom, and of the leadership in the school. To that end, quality professional development and best practices from across the country are brought directly into Baltimore's schools and classrooms, helping teachers and principals develop the skills and tools they need to make a positive, measurable difference in the lives of their students. The BCPSS has seen consistent improvements in student achievement over the past six years. The Fund's reform efforts are an integral component of that success.

This year, the Fund's reform efforts are at work in 26 elementary and middle schools, helping to introduce new curricula in the critical kindergarten through third grade years, and in the sixth through eighth grades. It is also helping the system complete a new blueprint for achievement in grades six through eight.

Schools the Fund works with saw impressive gains in student achievement with 70 percent of the schools registering higher reading performance and 6 percent more students achieving proficient or above standing than in 2004 in both grades three and five on the Maryland State Assessment Tests. In a Spring 2004 survey, 100 percent of principals and 95 percent of teachers agreed that student performance in reading and writing is continuing to improve as a result of the Fund's reform efforts.

To date, four large neighborhood high schools have been restructured into 12 small schools, and six new Innovation High Schools have opened their doors. Independent studies show that these new high schools are achieving significant improvements in smaller class size, safe and personal environment, quality of instruction, and overall reading and math test scores, compared to larger comprehensive neighborhood schools.

Baltimore's overall graduation rate is now at 59 percent, an increase of 29 percent over the last 10 years. There are nine high schools that have graduation rates in the nineties. In addition, the graduation rate for African American males has increased from 45 percent to 50 percent. For African American females, it has increased from 63 percent to 67 percent.

Other important areas of impact include:

- In 2003, the Fund was instrumental in changing the number of credits needed to graduate, allowing students to increase their core skills with year-long courses in literacy and math.
- In 2004, the Fund helped BCPSS design and implement a citywide choice program for high school students, giving students and their parents the option to select from a portfolio of themed and new neighborhood high schools without admissions criteria.
- In 2005, the Fund worked with BCPSS to implement a new principal recruitment process that placed seven new principals earlier in the year than ever before. It also helped launch a new partnership with New Leaders for New Schools, resulting in the placement of eight new leaders in the partnership's first, three-year training program.

A CITY DISTRICT TRANSFORMED

Alliance for Education (Seattle, WA)

Today, Seattle boasts more focused schools, with more skilled teachers and more engaged students. The results: teachers and principals have more opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other, and innovative reading, math and science programs are underway. Student achievement in Seattle Public Schools has increased as measured by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, commonly called the WASL. (see graphs below). The Alliance ties these improvements to its core accomplishments, among them:

Advocacy for schools to implement clear academic standards and hold higher expectations for all students.

Private giving resulting in more than \$90 million to improve student academic achievement.

School change through administration of \$25 million in School Transformation Grants to accelerate improvements in teaching and learning, and close the achievement gap.

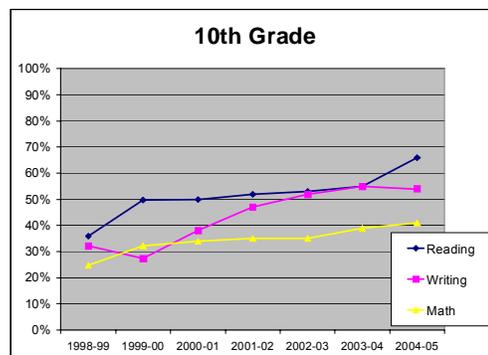
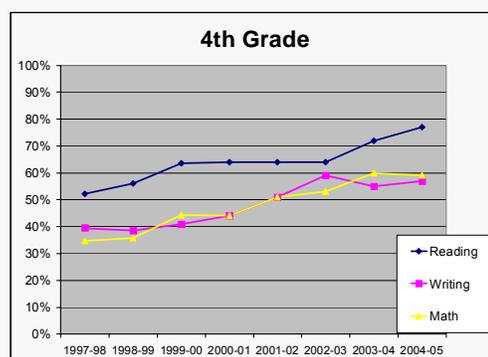
Leadership development to help build skills of school principals and other school leaders through training and mentoring programs.

Teaching Quality supported by investment of more than \$20 million in high quality professional development training and coaching programs.

Literacy development by rallying community support for a citywide literacy campaign to make “every child a reader,” and investing nearly \$4.5 million in literacy training for teachers and new books for school libraries.

High school reform by helping to raise more than \$3.5 million for development of smaller learning communities and school-based career academies within the district’s large high schools.

Community Engagement in Seattle Public Schools by bringing together more than 200 community organizations and over 7,000 citizens to engage in dialogues on how best to improve schools.



DISTRICT CAPACITY, DISTRICT POLICY

Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools (MA)

A core area of work at the Boston Plan has been piloting of Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) – intensive ongoing staff development that reduces professional isolation and encourages a more collaborative culture. In each eight-week cycle, a small group of teachers in a school studies together a strategy from Readers' Workshop or Writers' Workshop; observes the content coach demonstrate the strategy with students; takes turns with colleagues teaching the strategy; participates in a debrief after each demonstration, and receives support in their own classrooms.

More intensive and more focused than the one day/week coach model that Boston has used since 1996, CCL has many advantages over its predecessor, CCL:

- Deepens participants' knowledge and skills in specific literacy strategies.
- Is aligned with the district's instructional priorities – Readers' Workshop and Writers' Workshop.
- Is organized around regular demonstrations of the strategy in the school's own classroom settings, with its own students.
- Is structured so that participating teachers not only observe, but also conduct demonstrations with their colleagues.
- Expects every teacher to participate in a cycle, not just volunteers.
- Engenders collaboration among teachers, but still provides follow up with individual teachers in their classrooms.
- Begins to transfer responsibility for professional development from a consultant-coach to school staff, and builds in opportunities for teachers to learn and assume leadership skills.

Because high schools are different in organization, instruction, and culture, the Boston Plan adapted the CCL approach and piloted it in four Effective Practice high schools, and at the district's K-12 school for the deaf and hard of hearing. In each, a CCL content coach worked with one classroom teacher to set up and pilot a model classroom for Readers' Workshop or Writers' Workshop.

CCL has resulted in revised district policies. Since 2003, the district superintendent has protected coaching funds in each year's budget and established language in the last teachers' contract that acknowledges CCL as BPS's approach for school-based professional development and mandates participation.

SMALL SCHOOLS AT THE FOREFRONT

New Visions for Public Schools (New York, NY)

The New Century High Schools Initiative (NCHSI) is a groundbreaking program to rethink secondary education and provide New York City's students with small, effective high schools that help them meet high standards of academic and personal success. Each New Century high school has its own identity, yet all combine rigorous academic programs with innovative teaching, personalized learning environments, and deep ties to the local community. Each school is created through a partnership between educators and community organizations, which work together on every aspect of the school's design and operation. Since 2002, 78 New Century High Schools have opened in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. More than 65 community partners – from social service providers and CBOs to museums, arts organizations, hospitals and universities – have played a lead role in designing these schools. More than 225 additional community partners are providing needed services.

New Century High Schools in the Bronx reported attendance rates at least 10 percent higher than their larger counterparts. Across the Bronx New Century High Schools, an average of 84 percent of the students passed their courses. New Century High Schools are creating new demand for small schools – nearly 15,000 students applied for the 3,200 seats available in the Bronx New Century High Schools in Fall 2004. The Bronx City Council delegation has approved the use of approximately \$26 million to create 1,600 new seats in 12 Bronx high schools and to customize the schools to house and support New Century High Schools.

TEACHER CAPACITY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Houston A+ Challenge (TX)

Houston A+ Challenge (formerly Houston Annenberg Challenge) provides teachers and school leaders with training, support and technical assistance so they can meet the differing needs of every student. It accomplishes this through teacher professional development, personalization and collaboration in six independent school districts, and in more than 120 schools in the metropolitan Houston area. At the core of its work is leadership development through coaching. Coaching builds a culture of inquiry and reflection, leading to change in practice and improved student learning. Houston A+ has integrated coaches into elementary mathematics classes, into literacy training for high school content teachers, into development of professional learning communities on various campuses, and into a leadership academy for principals and assistant principals.

To date, Houston A+ Challenge has trained nearly 1,000 coaches. These include mathematics specialists, literacy coaches, Critical Friends Group coaches, classroom teachers, university faculty, Teach for America corps members, and fellows of the Houston A+ Challenge New Visions in Leadership Academy. Data show that academic achievement by economically disadvantaged students is growing faster in the elementary schools using math coaches than in the non-project schools. At high schools with literacy coaches, ninth grade reading scores on the Texas state accountability test improved at 21 of the 24 campuses.

ACADEMIC RIGOR AND INCREASED SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

The Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools (Los Angeles, CA)

The Alliance launched its mission to create small high performance charter schools in 2003. The Alliance College-Ready brand of high performance schools seeks to deliver a consistent educational environment that guarantees a powerful learning experience for each student – preparing every student with the skills, experience, and knowledge to enter college. Components include:

- Standards-based instruction in interdisciplinary projects
- Individualized student learning plans
- Use of data to assess improvement efforts
- Culture of high expectations
- Increased instructional time
- Engaged parents

College-Ready Academy High School significantly outperformed Los Angeles Unified School District high schools in grade nine English Language Arts and Algebra 1 on 2005 California content standards tests. Students achieved a 95 percent average daily attendance, and almost all ninth graders are continuing on to tenth grade.

DRAMATIC GAINS, SHORT TIME

In2Books (Washington, DC)

In2Books is a literacy program designed to foster reading and writing skills in elementary school students. An analysis of Washington, DC student performance in grades two, three, and four on the 2004 district-administered SAT-9 reading achievement tests shows that children in classrooms that participate in In2Books scored significantly higher than did nonparticipating students. In2Books is actively used in more than 250 classrooms and nearly 70 DC elementary schools, with 6,000 students participating this year. The children work closely with more than 3,000 adult pen pals, drawn from organizations such as AOL, Verizon, and AARP.

In classrooms with teachers who have implemented the In2Books program for two or more years, students in the second through fourth grades scored, on average, 12 points higher on test-scaled scores than did students from classrooms that did not use In2Books. Overall, students from In2Books classrooms scored, on average, nearly nine points higher on the Stanford-9 Reading Test.

The Center for Learning, Instruction and Teacher Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago, which conducted an independent evaluation of the program using scores supplied by DC public schools, reports that the test results alone are very encouraging, especially when considering the short period of time in which the program has been in place.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR REFORM

Research for Action describes a supportive civic environment as one characterized by deep and trusting relationships across constituencies. A supportive civic environment, the researchers point out, adds value to other activities conducted by LEFs such as district and school capacity building by increasing sustainability, equity, and the level of quality and ownership of ideas for change.

Below, we examine two key indicators of a supportive civic environment for public education, and give examples of LEF successes for each. The indicators are:

- Committed school and community leaders and cross-constituent alliances
- Shared agenda for reform

Committed School and Community Leaders

LEFs have helped to create committed school and community leaders and build cross-constituent alliances through a wide array of activities. These include, among others, public forums and information campaigns, voter campaigns, and development of community-wide action plans. Austin Voices for Education and Youth, for example, conducted *Get Out the Vote Campaign* for a local school bond election. Early voting sites where Austin concentrated its efforts had the highest early voter turnout. \$519 million in school bonds was approved by voters. The Greater New Orleans Education Foundation (LA) spearheaded and is leading the New Orleans Community Trust (a three-way partnership between the City of New Orleans, the Orleans Parish School District and the Greater New Orleans Education Foundation) to help rebuild 120 schools destroyed by the recent hurricanes.

Other examples of successful initiatives that have helped to create committed school and community leaders and build cross-constituent alliances include:

- **The Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF)(AL)**
MAEF has been pursuing an extensive school reform and public engagement effort (YES WE CAN) for the last four years, demonstrating that the community can rally around critical public school issues and promote transformative changes in how schools are governed and led. This has led to adoption of a citizen-driven long range strategic plan (*PASSport to Excellence*) using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as the strategic framework. After three years of implementation, the district has made progress on the five goals and nineteen performance targets in the plan. Specifically, the students in Mobile County are showing continuous progress and as a district met AYP in all student subgroups.
- **The Education Partnership (Providence, RI)**
The Providence After School Alliance (PASA) has created and implemented a model to promote high quality after-school programming for youth. It is the result of a

comprehensive planning process that brought together 100 leaders from various sectors (including the Mayor of Providence, the Providence public school department superintendent, recreation center director, police chief, president of the libraries, the city's arts council, Johnson & Wales University, Rhode Island Kids Count, and the Providence student government) to work together to create a system of out-of-school time learning opportunities for all of Providence's children and families. This broad initiative has resulted in the development of citywide quality standards and a quality improvement strategy.

- **Paterson Education Fund (PEF) (NJ)**

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, PEF planned and hosted a symposium in May 2004 to build common ground among Paterson's diverse populations. Inspired by the book *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges, the Paterson symposium helped Paterson's new immigrants connect with the *Brown v. Board of Education* experience. Community members of diverse backgrounds, including immigrants and African Americans who were the first to enter all white schools, participated in humanities workshops and anti-racism training. The result: increased sensitivity to the various cultures in Paterson across all groups and the identification, unpacking, and diffusing of racially charged language, actions and assumptions.

- **Mon Valley Education Consortium (McKeesport, PA)**

Literacy for Life is the Consortium initiative that addresses the literacy needs of all children. It involves collaboration among the medical community, human service agencies, the home, the school and the public at large. With Literacy for Life, the Consortium has succeeded in deepening collaboration among these groups. Major accomplishments include: commitment of schools to a yearlong agenda to increase designated silent reading times, adding up to some 10 million minutes of silent sustained reading across all districts; and collection of nearly one half million books through book drives.

Shared, High-Quality Agenda for Reform

LEFs believe that when key stakeholders in a community can agree on needed changes, it is more likely they will take action and sustain momentum for reform. LEFs have helped create a shared and high quality agenda for reform with measurable results. DC VOICE (Washington, DC), for example, released its action-research report *Ready Schools Project* on the conditions for teaching and learning at the opening of school year. This report resulted in \$6 million being allocated by the DC legislative council to school building maintenance in summer 2005. The Wake Education Partnership (Raleigh, NC) worked with the Wake County Board of Education in the adoption of community-wide goals for student achievement. Since the adoption of these goals, the percent of students performing above grade level has increased 12 percentage points to 91 percent in 2005. Good Schools for All (Buffalo, NY), in the belief that 100 percent literacy is in fact achievable and must be achieved, has made great strides toward redesigning the school system's literacy services, and has successfully created a coalition of more than 32 organizations and a community-wide strategic plan.

Other notable examples of LEF work to increase a shared and high quality agenda for reform include:

- **The Education Partnership (Providence, RI)**
 Through its Contract Research Program and the Policy and Research Division, the Partnership has widened the scope of its work to include policy and governance improvements in public education. *Teacher Contracts: Restoring the Balance*, the first report of its kind in Rhode Island, has informed school committees and legislators on the content of teacher contracts across the state and on the impact of these contracts on public education in Rhode Island. It offers compelling reasons and recommendations to change the scope of collective bargaining. As a result of this work, 10 Rhode Island school districts refused to agree to new teacher contracts until a health insurance cost share was included and seven school districts have asked the Partnership how it might assist with negotiation strategies and contract language changes applicable to their own district needs.
- **The Education Alliance (Charleston, WV)**
 The Alliance has been involved in several policy initiatives over the last two years. These include: conducting research that helped to create and pass HB 4669, establishing a new program to close the achievement gap in the 10 counties with the highest numbers of minority and low-income students; shaping the West Virginia Study of Professional Development for Public School Educators by the National Staff Development Council through its teacher quality initiative, which engaged 76 percent of West Virginia counties in a dialogue about supporting quality teaching at the local and state levels; and providing information for the Special Legislative Session held in September 2005 where a three-year commitment was made to increase salaries for professional educators.
- **Voices for Education (Tucson, AZ)**
 Voices has worked over the past several years to raise awareness on reducing class sizes in grades K-3 as a strategy to improve outcomes for children. Because of its community-based policy analysis and other activities designed to raise public awareness, the Tucson Unified School District Board voted to reduce class sizes to no more than 18 students in Kindergarten classrooms in 50 schools. Voices has also worked over the past several years to collect information and data on the sale of state trust lands to support public schools. Voices produced an easy-to-read brochure and video raising awareness of complex state land issues and succeeded in educating policymakers and education advocacy organizations about the importance of sensible state land policies.
- **Public Education Foundation of Little Rock (AR)**
 With leadership from the community and a powerful partnership of state and regional foundations and corporations, Public Education Foundation of Little Rock established Project SOAR to build and support learning communities in schools through data driven instruction in the classroom and targeted professional development for teachers. In its first year, Project SOAR is already being implemented in 27 Little Rock School District elementary and middle schools.

SNAPSHOT OF LEF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

Financial Characteristics

Using figures from the latest IRS form 990s submitted by LEFs as of October 2005, LEFs reported: Over \$200 million in revenue in 2004 with median revenue of \$819,000, the highest ever reported since the inception of the Network.

Staff

There are approximately 880 paid staff members across 88 LEFs nationally. The average (10) and median (6) number of LEF staff members has remained constant since 1999.

Boards

There are over 2,300 LEF members serving on 88 Network LEFs boards. The average LEF board size is 26. This is much larger than the average board size of nonprofits in general – 19 according to the BoardSource. Approximately 25 percent of LEFs have boards with over 31 members.

Geographic Location

By 2005, PEN doubled its membership from 44 in 2000 to 88 LEFs, including three overseas LEFs (Philippines, Mexico, and Peru). Domestically, LEFs are now active in 34 states and the District of Columbia.

LEFs currently serve one half of the country's largest urban school districts. However, the number of LEFs located in or serving rural areas has doubled in the last 10 years: 25 percent in 2005 compared to 12 percent in 1995.

There are six statewide LEFs. These are located in Alaska, West Virginia, Arizona, Rhode Island, Ohio and Puerto Rico. Additionally, 17 LEFs have a regional reach, and at least four LEFs conduct work nationally (Galef Institute, In2Books, PEBC, and Mon Valley Education Consortium).

Reach

Overall, PEN member LEFs serve:

- 11.5 million children nationwide (22 percent of the 53 million public school students)
- Almost 18,000 schools (19 percent of the nation's 95,000 public schools)
- More than 1,600 districts (19 percent of the total 17,000 school districts)

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As is clear from the examples presented in this report, LEFs large and small are responding to the call within the nonprofit and education sectors to measure impact of their programs and initiatives. As the current policy environment continues its emphasis on accountability for results and sustainability of efforts, LEFs will continue to undertake new and more systematic ways of demonstrating their impact. To this end, LEFs leaders might consider the following questions regarding LEF organizational strategies and structures:

- Are current evaluation and documentation efforts by LEFs sufficient to address the heightened accountability requirements of the current policy environment?
- In what ways might LEF strategic planning and governance embrace evaluation as a more explicit and central function of LEF work?
- How can LEFs' current communications capacity be increased to convey the impact of LEF work in ways that are understandable and meaningful to a broader audience?

LEF leaders understand that the outcomes of their work to increase district and school capacity and to create a supportive civic environment for reform act synergistically to drive up student achievement and related measures (such as students' participation in higher education and the workforce). As LEFs accumulate data in these outcome areas, LEFs will be able to tie their work increasingly to broader and long-term measures of their communities' economic and social wellbeing. Austin, Texas, for example, was recently recognized as one of the top "100 Best Communities for Youth" as a result of the work of the Austin Voices for Education and Youth and its Ready by 21 Coalition of youth service providers. By virtue of the demographic characteristics of the communities in which LEFs work – with well over 50 percent of students on average eligible for free and reduced lunch – clearer connections between indicators of a community's status and improved systems of public education are critical.

PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK: 2005 Annual Member Survey

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