Whatever It Takes

How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth

NANCY MARTIN AND SAMUEL HALPERIN

AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

In Cooperation With

National Conference of State Legislatures ■ National League of Cities ■ National School Boards Association
National Association of Secondary School Principals ■ Council of the Great City Schools

AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

Bridging Youth Policy, Practice, and Research

Mission:

To improve opportunities, services, and life prospects for youth, we provide learning experiences for national, state, and local policymakers and practitioners.

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC, provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local levels. AYPF's goal is to enable participants to become more effective in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation's young people by providing information, insights, and networks to better understand the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers, and participating citizens in a democratic society. AYPF does not lobby or advocate for positions on pending legislation. Rather, we believe that greater intellectual and experiential knowledge of youth issues will lead to sounder, more informed policymaking. We strive to generate a climate of constructive action by enhancing communication, understanding, and trust among youth policy professionals.

Founded in 1993, AYPF has interacted with thousands of policymakers by conducting an average of 40 annual events such as lunchtime forums, out-of-town field trips, and foreign study missions. Participants include Congressional staff; federal, state, and local government officials; national nonprofit and advocacy association professionals; and the press corps. At forums, these professionals interact with renowned thinkers, researchers, and practitioners to learn about national and local strategies for formal and informal education, career preparation, and the development of youth as resources through service and skill development activities. Study tour participants visit schools undergoing comprehensive reforms, after-school and community learning sites, and youth employment and training centers, where they learn experientially from the young people and adults in the field.

AYPF focuses on three overlapping themes: Education, Youth Development and Community Involvement, and Preparation for Careers and Workforce Development. AYPF publishes a variety of nationally disseminated youth policy reports and materials. Many of these publications may be found on our website, www.aypf.org.

FUNDERS. AYPF events and policy reports are made possible by the support of a consortium of philanthropic foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Ford Motor Company Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, General Electric Fund, William T. Grant Foundation, George Gund Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Charles S. Mott Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and others. The views reflected in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.

COPYRIGHT. American Youth Policy Forum, Washington, DC, 2006. This publication is copyrighted, but may be quoted without permission provided the source is identified as: Martin, N., & Halperin, S. (2006). *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. Reproduction of any portion of this report for commercial sale is prohibited. For additional copies of this publication, see back pages, or visit our website, www.aypf.org. ISBN # 887031-93-6

Whatever It Takes

How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth

NANCY MARTIN AND SAMUEL HALPERIN

AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

In Cooperation With

National Conference of State Legislatures ■ National League of Cities ■ National School Boards Association
National Association of Secondary School Principals ■ Council of the Great City Schools

Contents

Acknowledgements v

Every Nine Seconds in America a Student Becomes a Dropout: The Dropout Problem in Numbers vii

Introduction 1

PART I: COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION: **Dropout Recovery in Twelve Communities** 7

CHAPTER 1: **Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio** 11
A county-led recovery effort centered on charter schools for out-of-school youth

CHAPTER 2: **Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky** 23
A large school district with 80 options to retain and graduate its students; advanced use of student data to ensure accountability

CHAPTER 3: **Austin, Texas** 31
An alternative public high school and community-based organization charter schools providing multiple options for out-of-school youth

CHAPTER 4: **Salt Lake City, Utah** 41
A public high school that transcends definitions of dropout prevention and recovery and continuing education to serve 9,000 youth and adults annually

CHAPTER 5: **Portland, Oregon** 47
A school district, community-based-organizations, and a community college working together for at-risk and out-of-school youth; state legislation facilitating dropout reconnection and funding of alternative education

CHAPTER 6: **Oakland, California** 59
Two veteran, entrepreneurial community-based organizations approaching out-of-school youth with different perspectives

CHAPTER 7: **Trenton, New Jersey** 69
A nontraditional public high school graduating large numbers of out-of-school youth and young adults

CHAPTER 8: **Baltimore, Maryland** 73
A mayoral commitment to out-of-school youth leading to partnerships with the private sector and many community-based organizations

CHAPTER 9: **Pima County (Tucson), Arizona** 89
Arts and horticulture employment training programs and a county-wide public campaign to support dropout recovery

CHAPTER 10: **Camden, New Jersey** 101
An education and job-readiness youth service and conservation corps with a strong emphasis on youth development

Contents *(continued)*

CHAPTER 11: **Milwaukee, Wisconsin** 107
Pioneer state legislation and school board innovation offering multiple educational options for at-risk and out-of-school youth

CHAPTER 12: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** 113
Mayoral and school district leadership supporting city-wide youth service planning and funding mechanisms for community-based organizations; innovation in juvenile justice reintegration

PART II: MAJOR NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Introduction to Major National Programs 135

CHAPTER 13: **Job Corps** 137

CHAPTER 14: **Jobs for America's Graduates** 141

CHAPTER 15: **National Guard Youth ChalleNGe** 145

CHAPTER 16: **Opportunities Industrialization Centers** 147

CHAPTER 17: **YouthBuild** 149

CHAPTER 18: **Youth Service and Conservation Corps** 153

CHAPTER 19: **Youth Opportunity Grant Program** 157

Recommendations: Building on Strength 163

Additional Resources 167

Glossary 169

About the Authors 173

American Youth Policy Forum Publications List 175

Publications Order Form 181

Every Nine Seconds in America a Student Becomes a Dropout

*The Dropout Problem in Numbers**

Millions of students leave school before high school graduation.

- In School Year 2002-2003, US public schools awarded 2.7 million diplomas and the National Center for Education Statistics calculated the graduation rate to be 73.9%. Graduation rates varied greatly by state, from 87% in New Jersey to under 60% in the District of Columbia and South Carolina. Thirty-nine states increased their graduation rates from 2001 to 2003 while most southern states, plus Alaska, the District of Columbia, and New York, experienced declines.[1] Other authoritative research found the 2002 graduation rate to be 71%, little changed from 1991's 72%.[2]

- In 2004, there were 27,819,000 18-24-year-olds in the United States. Of these, 21,542,000 (78%) had either graduated from high school, earned a GED, completed some college, or earned an associate's or bachelor's degree. The balance, 6,277,000 (22%), had not yet completed high school.[3] Some scholars exclude GED holders, resulting in a much higher noncompletion figure. Similarly, if researchers count the adult population over age 24, the high school noncompletion rate would be higher still.[4]

- An estimated 3.8 million youth ages 18-24 are neither employed nor in school—15% of all young adults. From 2000 to 2004, the ranks of these disconnected young adults grew by 700,000.[5]

- From 1990 to 2000, high school completion rates declined in all but seven states and the rate of students dropping out between 9th and 10th grades increased.[6]

Members of some demographic groups are at much greater risk of dropping out of school.

- Nationally, only about two-thirds of all students who enter 9th grade graduate with regular high school diplomas four years later. For minority males, these figures are far lower.[7] In 2001, on average, 72% of female students, but only 64% of male students graduated. African American students had a graduation rate of 50%, the lowest of racial and ethnic groups identified; the other student groups graduated at the following rates: American Indian, 51%; Latino, 53%; White, 75%; and Asian and Pacific Islander, 77%. But there were enormous disparities among state graduation levels, and even larger disparities by ethnicity and gender within the same states.[8]

- In SY 2000-2001, high school students from low-income families (the lowest 20%) dropped out of school at six times the rate of their peers from higher-income families.[9]

- In SY 2000-2001, only 47.6% of persons with disabilities ages 14 and older graduated with standard diplomas while 41.1% dropped out.[10]

When young people drop out of school, they—and American society at large—face multiple negative consequences.

- Of those who fail to graduate with their peers, one-quarter eventually earn a diploma, one-quarter earn the GED, and about one-half do not earn a high school credential.[11]

* There is no generally-accepted definition of a dropout. Some use school enrollment figures; others rely on US Census population surveys. Some include GED recipients; others do not. Some keep records of transfer students; many do not.

- Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts, as are 59% of federal inmates.[12] In fact, dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated in their lifetime.[13] African American men are disproportionately incarcerated. Of all African American male dropouts in their early 30s, 52% have been imprisoned.[14] 90% of the 11,000 youth in adult detention facilities have no more than a 9th grade education.[15]

- The earning power of dropouts has been in almost continuous decline over the past three decades. In 1971, male dropouts earned $35,087 (in 2002 dollars), but this fell 35% to $23,903 in 2002. Earnings for female dropouts fell from $19,888 to $17,114.[16] The mean earnings of Latino young adults who finish high school are 43% higher than those who dropout.[17]

- The earnings gap widens with years of schooling and formal training. In 2003, annual earnings of male dropouts fell to $21,447. High school graduates earned an average of $32,266; those with associate's degrees earned $43,462; bachelor's degree holders earned $63,084—about triple that of dropouts.[18]

- In 2001, only 55% of young adult dropouts were employed, compared with 74% of high school graduates and 87% of four-year college graduates.[19]

- Between 1997 and 2001, more than one-quarter of all dropouts were unemployed for one year or longer, compared with 11% of those with a high school diploma or GED.[20] In 2003, more than one-half of African American young adult male dropouts in Chicago were unemployed.[21]

- The US death rate for persons with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than for those with 13 or more years of education.[22]

- Dropouts are substantially more likely to rely on public assistance than those with a high school diploma.[23] The estimated lifetime revenue loss for male dropouts ages 25-34 is $944 billion. The cost to the public of their crime and welfare benefits is estimated to total $24 billion annually.[24]

- Dropouts contribute to state and federal tax coffers at only about one-half the rate of high school graduates; over a working lifetime about $60,000 less, or $50 billion annually for the 23 million high school non-completers, ages 18-67.[25]

- The US would save $41.8 billion in health care costs if the 600,000 young people who dropped out in 2004 were to complete one additional year of education. If only one-third of high school dropouts were to earn a high school diploma, federal savings in reduced costs for food stamps, housing assistance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families would amount to $10.8 billion annually.[26]

- Increasing the high school completion rate by 1% for all men ages 20-60 would save the United States $1.4 billion annually in reduced costs associated with crime.[27]

- Federal investments in second-chance education and training programs fell from $15 billion in the late 1970s to $3 billion (inflation-adjusted) today.[28]

- Dropouts "cost our nation more than $260 billion dollars…That's in lost wages, lost taxes, and lost productivity over their lifetimes. In federal dollars, that will buy you ten years of research at the National Institutes of Health."[29]

- The statistic bears repeating: every nine seconds in America a student becomes a dropout.[30]

Sources

[1] Seastrom, M., et al. (2005). *The averaged freshman graduation rate for public high schools from the Common Core of Data: School years 2001-03*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

[2] Greene, J.P., & Winters M.A. (2005, February), p. 1.

[3] National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *Digest of education statistics 2004*. Washington, DC, Table 9; Greene, J.P., & Winters, M.A. (2005, February). "Public high school graduation and college readiness rates: 1991-2002." *Education Working Paper No. 8*. New York, NY: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.

[4] Hood, L. (2004). *High school students at risk: The challenge of dropouts and pushouts*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *The condition of education 2005*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, pp. 55-57; Reimer, M., & Smink, J. (2005). *Information about the school dropout issue*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center/Network at Clemson University.

[5] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2004). *Kids count data book*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

[6] Barton, P. E. (2005). *One-third of a nation: Rising dropout rates and declining opportunities*. Princeton, NJ: Policy Information Center, Educational Testing Service, p. 3.

[7] Orfield, G. (Ed.). (2004). *Dropouts in America: confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, p. 1. See also: Swanson, C.B. (2004). *Who graduates? Who doesn't? A statistical portrait of public high-school graduation*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

[8] Orfield, G., Losen, D.J., Wald, J., & Swanson, C. B. (2004). *Losing our future: How minority youth are being left behind by the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. See also: Losen, D.J. (2005, December). *Racial inequity in graduation rates*. Research presented during Connect for Kids and National Education Association conference call on the Dropout Crisis. Greene, J.P., & Winters, M.A. (2005, February) find the African American graduation rate in 2002 to be 56%, Latinos 52%, and Whites 78%.

[9] US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *The condition of education 2004*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, Indicator 10, p. 11.

[10] US Department of Education. (2003). *Twenty-fifth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Washington, DC.

[11] Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004). *A framework for an excellent education for all high school students*. Washington, DC: Author.

[12] Harlow, C.W. (2003). *Education and correctional populations, bureau of justice statistics special report*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice.

[13] Catterall, J.S. (1985). *On the social cost of dropping out*. Stanford, CA: Center for Education Research, cited in Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004, December). *Measuring graduation to measure success*. Washington, DC: Author.

[14] Western, B., Schiraldi, V., & Zienberg, J. (2004). *Education and incarceration*. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute, p. 1.

[15] Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2001). *From the prison track to the college track*. Washington, DC: Author.

[16] Barton, P.E. (2005), p. 5.

[17] US Bureau of the Census. (2002). *Educational attainment in the United States*. Washington, DC, Table 9.

[18] Center on Education Policy and American Youth Policy Forum. (2001). *Higher learning = higher earnings*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy and American Youth Policy Forum.

[19] Sum, Andrew et al. (2002). *Left behind in the labor market: labor market problems of the nation's out-of-school, young adult populations*. Chicago, IL: Alternative Schools Network. Retrieved December 27, 2005 from http://www.nupr.neu.edu/2-03/left_behind.pdf

[20] Wald, M., & Martinez, T. (2003). Connected by 25: Improving life chances of the country's most vulnerable 14-24-year-olds. *William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Working Paper*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University. Retrieved December 27, 2005 from www.youthtransitions.org

[21] Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. (2003). *Youth labor market and education indicators for the state of Illinois*. Chicago, IL: Alternative Schools Network.

[22] Alliance for Excellent Education. (2003). *Fact sheet: The impact of education on health and well-being*. Washington, DC: Author.

[23] Adair, V.C. (2001). Poverty and the (broken) promise of education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(2), pp. 217-239.

[24] Thorstensen, B. I. *If you build it, they will come: Investing in public education*. Retrieved December 27, 2005 from http://abec.unm.edu/resources/gallery/present/invest_in_ed.pdf

[25] Rousse, C.E. (2005, October). *The labor market consequences of an inadequate education*. Paper presented at the symposium on the social costs of inadequate education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY. Retrieved December 27, 2005 from http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/EquityCampaign/symposium/speakers.asp?SpeakerId=11

[26] Muenning, P. (2005, October). *Health returns to education interventions*. Paper presented at the symposium on the social costs of inadequate education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY. Retrieved December 27, 2005 from http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/EquityCampaign/symposium/resourceDetails.asp?PresId=5

[27] Moretti, E. (2005, October). *Does education reduce participation in criminal activities?* Paper presented at the symposium on the social costs of inadequate education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY. Retrieved December 27, 2005 from http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/EquityCampaign/symposium/speakers.asp?SpeakerId=9

[28] Barton, P.E. (2005), p. 4.

[29] *Closing the achievement gap in American schools: The No Child Left Behind Act: Hearing before the Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives*, 109th Cong. (2005, September 29) (testimony of Margaret Spellings). Retrieved December 27, 2005 from (http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/109th/fc/spellingsnclb092905/spellings.htm

[30] Lehr, C.A. et al. (2004). *Essential tools: Increasing rates of school completion*. Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. (Full text available online from Education Commission of the States at: http://www.ecs.org/html/Document.asp?chouseid=6649)

Introduction

Conventional wisdom holds that America's enormous school dropout problem is a scourge on the nation's moral, social, and economic life, and a blight on our common national future. That conventional wisdom is right. As a reminder of the shameful facts, the preceding pages summarize the magnitude of the dropout problem, its disproportionate impact on particular communities, and its corrosive consequences for all Americans, not merely the dropouts. The problem must no longer be ignored or treated lightly.

Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth is not, however, a mournful jeremiad repeating the sad facts. Nor does it recycle what the popular media trumpet about the supposed failure of our public schools as symbolized, for example, by the shocking enormity of the dropout problem. Rather, this report explores two questions:

What can be done to recover and reconnect our young people to opportunities for building useful lives in work, family, and citizenship?

Who is doing what, and where, to reengage out-of-school youth while working to strengthen the communities in which they live?

Focusing on the positive, the American Youth Policy Forum's research, interviews, and site visits demonstrate that there are thousands of committed educators, social entrepreneurs, and community leaders across the country who are doing whatever it takes to reconnect out-of-school youth to the social and economic mainstream. Their efforts generally occur without public fanfare or adequate recognition.

Any sensible school reform effort must embrace both dropout prevention and recovery. ***Whatever It Takes*** does not focus on prevention but recognizes its obvious importance. With roughly one-third of our young people dropping out of school—one-half among young people of color—recovery and reconnection must become a top priority of public school districts. Through our research, we have come to believe strongly that high school reform would be greatly enhanced by the kinds of leadership and innovation displayed daily by the people whose work is chronicled in these pages. Many are extraordinary individuals who persistently perform the heavy lifting necessary to ensure that out-of-school youth are properly reconnected to society's mainstream.

Observations and Reflections

The settings and modes of dropout recovery are many and varied. They encompass traditional public schools, specially-created recovery-focused schools, alternative learning centers, community-based non-profit schools and programs, for-profit schools, federally-, state-, and county-funded efforts, community colleges, the adult education system, and other social services. It is heartening that such diverse people, resources, and institutions recognize the urgency of steering their communities' out-of-school youth back into education and/or employment training so that they can build lives of genuine high promise and responsibility. Unfortunately, in many communities the work of recovery and reconnection has yet to begin in earnest.

Our descriptions and impressions of this sample of a dozen communities with notable reclamation endeavors are stories of success rather than products of rigorous scientific analysis. While each community can point to measurable evidence of success, few of these measures would meet the gold standard of today's evidence-based research. If fully reliable, comprehensive evaluations of K-12 schooling are few, those relating to out-of-school youth are even rarer. "Stories" better captures the essence of what we have seen and wish to share with others: young lives changing from poverty and despair to possibility and promise; institutions effectively reshaping themselves to meet the learning needs of young people who seldom have been the object of society's attention and compassion.

Having studied numerous dropout recovery efforts in-depth, we offer these observations to those concerned with high school reform and reconnecting out-of-school youth to opportunities for education and employment:

The large majority of out-of-school youth have been impeded not only by poor prior schooling, but also by social, economic, and psychological barriers to effective learning. To become successful adults they need multiple supports. Improved schooling alone will not "fix" these young people or solve their manifold problems, not the least of which are often inherently personal traumas. At a minimum, these typically low-income and often troubled students must have ready access to support services in such vital areas as health, nutrition, teen parenting, childcare, transportation, substance abuse treatment, mental health, and instruction in English as a second language. Without these supports, and in some cases even more specialized professional resources, prospects for genuine academic achievement and successful career-focused training can dissolve into pipe dreams.

Beyond question, youth must acquire literacy, numeracy, and communication skills to be adequately prepared for adult life. Students in the vast majority of the schools and programs described in this report are being prepared to meet or exceed state and district academic standards. As a practical matter, managers of recovery and reconnection programs realize that their claims on public monies (e.g., through charter school funding, Workforce Investment Act funds, or funds-follow-the-student arrangements) depend heavily on their students' improved academic performance. While these schools and programs work to increase student performance on standardized tests, they frequently supplement such testing with portfolio assessment, exhibition of student work, and other proven ways of evaluating what young people know and are able to do. They emphasize less easily measured qualities such as artistic talent, leadership ability, and social and environmental responsibility. Most also place a high premium on students avoiding negative and harmful behaviors.

Effective dropout reconnection efforts are comprehensive, youth-centered, flexible, intentional, pragmatic, and inclusive of extensive post-graduation follow-up. Some efforts emphasize preparing young people for employment after first building a foundation in literacy and numeracy. Others stress education writ large and, from the outset, urge their participants to aim for success in postsecondary education. Still others focus on personal development and preparation for responsible adulthood in all its familial and civic dimensions. Likewise, long-established national program models (discussed in Part Two of this report) that merit support are only replicable with sensitive adaptations to local culture, history, and power structures. What they share is an unwavering commitment to putting students at the center. As we often heard from students, these schools and programs often provide the first occasion for them to feel that anyone cares about their success, the first chance for them to feel valued.

Young people want to learn and succeed. Skeptics who doubt that dropouts want to learn and to achieve mainstream employment and respectability should visit the schools and programs described in this report. Most have long waiting lists well beyond their ability to serve. Conversations with the young participants themselves reveal motivated, spirited individuals who realize they have wasted much of their young lives and are eager to change, to learn and grow, to accept adult help, and to make the hard personal effort required to earn a respectable place in their communities. They readily acknowledge that their old lives were not working for them but now revel in their new friends, expanded opportunities, and heightened sense of personal responsibility and optimism.

Service to others and to the community is a key element of many dropout recovery efforts. Successful dropout reconnection depends on more than just success in academic education and employment training, augmented by a broad range of sensitively targeted and accessible support services. Preparing troubled young people for roles as responsible, engaged citizens is an integral, nearly universal characteristic of the successful recovery efforts we studied. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that community service and service-learning are built into many more recovery schools and programs than we had anticipated.

Committed adults, steadfast in their support of young people's success, are the key element of dropout recovery. Of the many laudable features of impressive recovery schools and programs—program design, institutional structure, and educational methodology, to mention a few—the quality that most distinguishes exemplary efforts is the exceptional caliber of the people who serve in them. Of the key players on a large roster, several groups repeatedly stand out: the

policymakers, many of them elected office-holders, who champion, authorize, and fund recovery efforts; the teachers, mentors, counselors, coaches, and others who commit themselves with passion to direct involvement in the lives of the young people and who make themselves available to them around the clock; and the community leaders, employers, and supportive family members and friends, who help guide out-of-school youth to self-respect and self-sufficiency. Our experience with over 40 programs persuaded us that adults involved in recovery efforts must honestly believe that they can help young people to overcome the ego-smashing effects of past failure and trauma. Repeatedly, in the face of seemingly overwhelming contrary forces, they simply refuse to give up on young people. They search relentlessly for more effective ways to reach and teach even the least promising and most recalcitrant. Many keep close tabs on their students, often well past graduation. Such concern and persistence can help trump many of life's adversities while ennobling both the teacher and the learner.

Language is an important consideration in the world of dropout recovery. Many respected leaders in that world conspicuously shun such descriptors as "dropouts," "at-risk youth," "kids," "alternative education," "nontraditional school" and "second-chance program." Rather, they view their work as redefining what effective education and youth development really can and should be. They see themselves as authentic reformers, attuned above all to the interests of their students or trainees, people who are not labeled and pigeon-holed as "at-risk" or "errant" youth but, instead, as potentially motivated young adults and students of promise. Program leaders acknowledge the traumatic personal histories that many of these young people have experienced, but they refuse to accept those histories as excuses for continued self-destructive and antisocial behavior. They try, with much success, to treat the youth in their schools and programs as resources whose opinions on the shaping and management of their education can be valuable assets. Listening carefully to young voices is a critical element in most successful recovery and reconnection efforts. The language of staff in recovery schools and programs is revealing: almost invariably they internalize and vocalize their responsibility not to "their" students but to "our" students.

School districts must take responsibility for all of their young people and show leadership in reaching out to disconnected youth. Contrary to the widely-held attitude that public schools have little or no interest in helping young people get back on track, some urban school districts, often with powerful support from politicians and business interests, are providing convincing evidence to the contrary. While some school systems are establishing close ties to external, nonprofit, community-based entities to provide their students with a broader portfolio of educational options, others are doing the same entirely within the public school system. As a practical matter, this often means extending their services to adults well beyond the age of compulsory attendance. School districts must be willing to insist that an irrevocable responsibility of public schools is to educate, and educate well, all youth and young adults.

Many practices prevalent in successful "alternative" and "second-chance" education programs should be adopted by the "first-chance" system to improve student retention and academic success. When we ask young people who are successfully completing a second-chance recovery program why this program has worked whereas their former high school failed them, they tell us that they no longer feel like a number, that they are now part of a "family" that looks out for them and is genuinely dedicated to their success. They describe satisfying relationships with caring teachers and counselors who treat them like responsible adults and expect the best of them. Most are in programs with low student-to-staff ratios, which permit the development of close-knit personal support systems. Students also emphasize their preference for hands-on, contextualized learning, or experiential education—internships, apprenticeships, field work—that demonstrate the relevance of classroom learning to their present lives and future careers. They appreciate demanding teachers, clear rules, and the flexibility to recover lost credits or accelerate their learning—elements often lacking in their previous schools. What these young people have to tell us must be used to inform any discussion of high school reform.[1]

While charter schools evoke passionate, often negative, reactions in many educational circles, their flexibility and adaptability make them increasingly popular among nonprofit, community-based organizations dedicated to reconnecting out-of-school youth to the mainstream. Many secondary schools serving

out-of-school youth have obtained charters, not only to gain access to state education funding, but, more fundamentally, because they believe that public education dollars should serve all young people, including those who have not been successful in traditional schools. They believe that many traditional schools have failed these youth and that the state has a moral obligation to fulfill its promise to educate all of the nation's young people. Public funding, such as payments based on average daily attendance, is seldom enough to cover the full costs of an effective recovery effort. But combining it imaginatively with other public and foundation grants, as entrepreneurial charter school leaders are learning to do, can result in academic and employment gains that compare favorably with those achieved by traditional public schools.

Dropout recovery efforts are funded largely by state and local public and private revenues. Over the past decade, intrepid practitioners and entrepreneurs have also learned how to access monies from other funding streams (e.g., juvenile justice and social welfare), as well as from the burgeoning world of state and local charter school agencies.

Support from the Federal Government, which otherwise underwrites a large array of education and job training programs, plays a relatively minor role in the genuinely worthwhile endeavor of dropout recovery. Funds from neither the US Department of Education's Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act nor the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, both logical potential sources of help for dropout recovery, are cited by program directors as significant sources of support.[2] In contrast, grants from the now-ended Youth Opportunity Program and Workforce Investment Act (US Department of Labor), the YouthBuild program (US Department of Housing and Urban Development), and AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) have been more closely attuned to the missions of these programs, even though they, too, fall far short. It has become ever-clearer that governments at all levels do not yet regard dropout recovery (as distinct from prevention) as a morally or economically compelling priority worthy of major investment of public monies. We believe it most surely is.

The varied programs and policies described in this report are possible for any community to implement. As a number of program directors have noted, effective dropout reconnection is not rocket science. It lends itself neither to silver bullets nor to simple, universal solutions. Dropout recovery is hard, often frustrating, work, more perspiration than inspiration. At its core, it is a matter of moral and political will, an insistent commitment to do whatever it takes to get the job done--and done right.

Our goal in presenting this report to decision makers and practitioners alike is to highlight some of the ways that remarkably dedicated people are addressing an underrated American dilemma that, to an alarming degree, threatens social stability, weakens our economy, and diminishes the lives of millions of our fellow Americans—and our own. Policymakers of good will have often rallied around causes that they perceive matter; reconnecting our nation's dropouts to the mainstream should be such a cause.

The nation has more than enough models and know-how to be able to reclaim America's dropouts. Although more innovative and efficient approaches will surely emerge over time, perfection will probably always elude this greatly underappreciated field. And that, put bluntly, will be because the toughest problems that the world of recovery and reconnection faces are not basically ones of school reform or program structure. To a large degree, these problems revolve around the central issue of moral and political will, both of which are often in short supply. Without a widely-held popular conviction that dropouts represent an unacceptable loss of life and opportunity both for young people and the nation, real progress will be difficult to achieve.

Nancy Martin
Washington, DC

Samuel Halperin
March 2006

---

[1] We distinguish between the types of nontraditional schools profiled in this study from the so-called "alternative schools" used by many districts as disciplinary dumping grounds. While the former effectively reconnect out-of-school youth to education, the latter may actually serve to further disconnect youth from schooling.

[2] A large but generally unacknowledged source of effective financial support is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Part II of the Workforce Investment Act). Administered by the states under funding from the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, the FY 2005 appropriation of $578.7 million will serve almost three million adult learners, including well over one million in-school and out-of-school 16-24-year-olds.

PART I: COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

Introduction: Dropout Recovery in Twelve Communities

This first, and major, section of Whatever It Takes describes dropout recovery activities in 12 US communities, from New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Oregon and California. To choose these sites, AYPF published a "Request for Leads," asking leaders in the youth policy, research, and program fields, as well as key staff in each state department of education, to contribute recommendations of exemplary dropout reconnection efforts. Based on these responses, a list of more than 100 recommended schools, programs, and initiatives was generated, and these were screened for three criteria: comprehensiveness, award of a recognized credential, and primary focus on dropout recovery (as differentiated from prevention). Case study examples were selected to cover a range of programs and policies to reconnect out-of-school youth, with emphasis on innovation and success. To avoid duplicating the work of ongoing research, a number of other dropout recovery efforts were not profiled in this study.[1]

After reading descriptive materials posted on the nominees' websites and conducting telephone interviews with program directors, principals and community leaders, the authors (and American Youth Policy Forum and National Youth Employment Coalition colleagues, Betsy Brand, Rachel Hare, Jennifer Lerner, Sarah Pearson, and Kristen Henry) visited the sites during the six-month period ending in October 2005. What follows is the information gathered and our subjective reactions to what we experienced.

Our profiles of dropout reconnection efforts in a dozen cities are, therefore, only a sampling, illustrating various modes of reconnecting out-of-school youth to education, employment, and civic participation; this is not a scientifically rigorous survey. The 12 profiles illustrate what is actually happening today to reengage disconnected youth. We hope they will serve as a practical resource for those leaders—whether at the school, program, district, city, county, or state level—who are in a position to make additional commitments to reconnect their communities' dropouts to the economic, educational, and social mainstream.

The schools, programs, policies, and practices profiled here deserve far greater public attention and support than they are receiving. In the course of our site visits, we came to admire dozens of remarkable educators, youth workers, program managers and staff, and their supporters, who work both within and outside of local government. Equally impressive were the many young people who had dropped out before completing high school, but who ultimately decided to seek a high school diploma, GED, or other organized career preparation program. These youth were generally working against great odds and juggling responsibilities that often obstructed their paths to a productive future. Often, we wondered if we ourselves could have overcome the roadblocks of inadequate schools, homelessness, frequent family moves, poverty, parenting at a young age, fear of abuse and violence, among others, that impede the way of so many young people today.

Eight of the communities in Whatever It Takes have programs housed within their public school systems. Others have schools and programs created and operated by entrepreneurial, public-spirited citizens working through community-based organizations. State charter school legislation and its accompanying public funding are especially important to this group of schools pursuing dropout recovery.

In the Introduction to this report, we assert that reconnecting dropouts is not rocket science. Rather, it is more an exercise in imagining what might be, of having the skills, the will, and the stamina to shape reality in more creative and positive directions. There is no one perfect model or blueprint for successful dropout recovery. On reflection, though, we think readers will find that most of the following characteristics of effective dropout recovery efforts recur throughout the community reports:

Open-Entry/Open-Exit—Most programs are open-entry/open-exit, with students proceeding through curricular modules at their own pace. Graduation occurs once the student has successfully completed state and district requirements. Some

programs use teacher-developed curricula keyed to state standards. Extensive use of computer-assisted technology (frequently PLATO or EXTRA Learning System software) and the Internet are common. Such flexibility is crucial to schools and programs serving youth with vastly different skill levels and needs.

Flexible Scheduling and Year-round Learning—Flexible scheduling and year-round learning are common features of successful dropout recovery schools and programs. One program has five eight-week sessions interspersed with two-week breaks. Another uses trimesters with an extended school-supervised internship in the field. Two-hundred-day school years and longer school days are common. Many programs include a half-day of hands-on field work, such as skill-building through home construction, computer repair, or conservation work. Others are half-day academic programs, with a choice of early, midday, or evening classes. Such built-in flexibility accommodates students who have family and work responsibilities.

Teachers As Coaches, Facilitators, and Crew Leaders—Reliance on self-paced learning in small, personalized learning communities often changes teacher roles to those of facilitators, coaches, and crew leaders. Because the emphasis is on close, informal relationships, many students call staff by their first names, and symbols of authority such as teacher desks and privileges available only to staff are often absent. The message sent to program participants is: "You are an adult. We respect you. We are here to help you achieve your goals."

Real-world, Career-Oriented Curricula—Curricula in successful community-based schools and programs tend to be real-world and career-oriented, with an eye toward local employer needs, such as entry-level positions in hospitals and the construction trades. Teachers and program managers recognize that success in employment, not simply the acquisition of paper credentials, is the near-term objective of their students and trainees. In the school programs and initiatives profiled, extensive investments are made in preparing students for postsecondary education, post-graduation employment, and further advancement in the world of work.

Opportunities for Employment—Recognizing that many students need income to support themselves and their families, many schools and programs arrange employment opportunities in summer and afterschool hours for their students or offer modest stipends for work performed while in training. Work opportunities related to their educational programs provide students much-needed income while stressing specific career goals. Many program directors wish that they could also provide stipend incentives for hours spent in academic study.

Clear Codes of Conduct with Consistent Enforcement—Although dropout recovery programs serve a high proportion of young people who have been involved in juvenile justice systems or expelled from previous schools for disciplinary reasons, few programs experience serious violations or expulsions, and even fewer believe that security personnel or metal detectors are needed. Staff and students enforce honor codes and contracts (e.g., no violence, no bullying, no drugs) and strict standards of attendance and effort. Instead of strong reliance on punitive discipline or security measures to make their schools and programs safe, dropout recovery administrators use the positive rewards of learning, achievement, and peer recognition to great success.

Extensive Support Services—Virtually all schools and programs engaged in dropout recovery recognize that students require extensive support services, notably those related to health and physical well-being, to overcome barriers to learning. Pregnant and parenting students, in particular, need child care and instruction in child development if they are to concentrate on their academic programs. Many program leaders report a high incidence of homelessness among their students, a problem few programs are able to address effectively. Nor are all schools and programs able to afford professional counselors, case managers, and social workers, but most identify this need as a top priority. Above all, young people need—and want—caring adults who counsel, mentor, and guide them.

A Portfolio of Options for a Varied Group—Young people who drop out of school are a heterogeneous group that requires a wide range of reconnection options. Students leave school for a variety of reasons and have many different barriers to success upon reentry. Strong dropout recovery efforts are varied and offer students a wide range of program options. Larger schools and programs are able to present a number of programs so that students may choose the program that best meets their needs. When this type of "portfolio of options" is offered by a school district, such as in Portland, Oregon, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, the opportunities

for students to reconnect and succeed are greatly enhanced.

The sum total of what is reported in these pages is a hopeful, even inspiring, perspective on what is being done to return thousands of American young people to productive participation in the nation's economy and society. We urge our readers to make similar contributions to the public good by studying this report, contacting the caring women and men who daily create, manage, and refine their mission of reclaiming out-of-school youth, and then proceeding to explore and shape authentic ways to achieve equally laudable results in their own communities.

---

1 See page 167 for additional resources on dropout reconnection.

CHAPTER 12

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- *City-wide planning and interagency partnerships, including a comprehensive Reintegration System for youth leaving the justice system*
- *Community-based organizations adapting national program models to enhance local education and job training opportunities*
- *School district "contracting out" alternative education for dropout recovery*

At first glance, the statistics on Philadelphia, the nation's fifth largest city with a population of 1.5 million, are anything but encouraging, especially for its less privileged youth. The Brookings Institution ranks it 97th among America's 100 largest cities in workforce participation, 92nd in percentage of population with a bachelor's degree, and 84th in median family income. According to Paul Harrington of Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, 46.7% (87,571) of the city's 187,330 16-24-year-olds are not enrolled in school and, of these, 19.9% (37,193) are also unemployed. Of those neither enrolled in school nor employed, 46% (17,097) are not high school graduates.

Focusing more directly on the student body of the city's struggling public schools, the core economic and ethnic data are equally striking. The School District of Philadelphia has a predominantly African American and Latino student population of 214,000, with 57,000 students attending the District's 55 high schools in the SY 2004-2005. More than 72% of students are from low-income families, with 80% eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Approximately 2,300 youth are committed annually to residential placement in the juvenile justice system.

Trying to cope with such hard facts, Philadelphia stands out for having exceptional planning, consensus-building, and partnership mechanisms for recovering out-of-school youth. These arrangements enjoy the strong support of city government, employers, foundations, youth-serving intermediaries,[1] and community-based nonprofit organizations.

Consensus-building began in earnest under former Mayor Edward Rendell, now Pennsylvania's Governor, and continues under the current leadership of Mayor John Street and School District of Philadelphia CEO Paul Vallas. City leaders have created noteworthy opportunities to participate in constructive dialogue about how to reconnect the city's dropouts. A strong commitment to data collection and analysis as a guide to policy undergirds the entire system.

Central to the entire process are two nonprofit intermediaries, **Philadelphia Safe and Sound (PSS)** and the **Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN)**. Philadelphia Safe and Sound monitors the city's centralized data collection system and produces an annual Report Card measuring the quality of life for the city's young people. The Philadelphia Youth Network plays the central role in creating a workforce development system for youth by staffing the Philadelphia Youth Council and overseeing programming for out-of-school youth throughout the city.

A powerful catalyst for much of what is occurring in Philadelphia is the **Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG)**, a group of local, regional, and national philanthropies concerned with struggling students and out-of-school youth. YTFG provided grants to five cities, including $275,000 to Philadelphia, for assessments of how to reduce the dropout rate and reconnect out-of-school youth. The Youth Transition Funders Group itself addresses such pivotal matters as inequities of race and class and seeks greater national visibility for the issue of dropout recovery. The YTFG grant stimulated Philadelphia's youth programs to find ways to improve their capacity to use data properly, identify policies that help or impede meeting the needs of youth, increase the supply of high-quality educational options, and mobilize the necessary support among key partners and stakeholders who have traditionally operated in separate silos. Contributors to YTFG include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation

of New York, and the C.S Mott Foundation each of which provided funding for the national initiative with matching funds provided by Philadelphia's William Penn Foundation to extend the work of Philadelphia's local partnership. The Philadelphia Foundation and the Samuel S. Fels Fund have also contributed locally to the initiative.

As an example of a city creating an effective culture of collaboration, Philadelphia is home to several notable initiatives to serve vulnerable and out-of-school youth. Specifically, these include a collaborative effort by local agencies to redesign aftercare services for youth and a new approach for those leaving the juvenile justice system. **The Reintegration Reform Initiative** and its components (described below) were established to help young offenders refrain from offending again.

The city has many community-based organizations working under the umbrella of the Philadelphia Youth Network that strive to help out-of-school youth continue their education, enter employment, and remain violence free, in particular the **E³ Power Centers** and the **YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School**. The School District of Philadelphia has also increased its attention to out-of-school youth through newly-developed **Accelerated High Schools**. These allow over-age and under-credited youth, both in- and out-of-school, to expedite earning a high school diploma through contracted services with both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. This seeming jumble of acronyms and authorities makes surprisingly good sense in a city that, without the creativity and ingenuity it has come to represent, might never have been able to build a coherent youth policy and programs to implement it.

Philadelphia Youth Strategy

The city's Youth Council was—and remains—a prominent contributor to the cooperative spirit that, in 2003, prompted city government, the School District, and local intermediaries to develop a comprehensive out-of-school youth policy. The Council established the Out-of-School Youth Committee and increased its funding from the WIA statutory minimum of 30% to 50%. With all the right players at the table—representatives of the School District, Family Court, Department of Human Services, Philadelphia's WIA One-Stop System, the Mayor's Children's Investment Strategy, and other major youth service agencies—this action was a substantive and symbolic step toward a general sharing of resources that would ultimately lead to the most feasible city-wide approach to helping the city's out-of-school youth.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound and the Children's Investment Strategy

Philadelphia Safe and Sound, established in 1995 with a grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative to conduct research, advocacy, and best practice program development, plays a major role in giving substance to Mayor Street's Children's Investment Strategy (CIS). Emphasizing youth development activities in the nonschool hours that provide preventive services to strengthen families and parent-child relationships, CIS has expanded and targeted its services while stressing performance and accountability. CIS is also responsible for an increase in the funding and programming for out-of-school time activities for Philadelphia's children.

Safe and Sound creates an annual Report Card, the most comprehensive study of children's health and safety indicators ever undertaken in Philadelphia. Serving as a vital resource for city government's planning decisions, the Report Card monitors 26 key indicators of childhood in Philadelphia and measures progress toward five overall "desired results" that represent how all children should live.

Safe and Sound uses the indicators to assess the city on its progress in meeting each goal. The scores range from one to five ("commendable" to "problematic"). A three-year time frame is considered when changing ratings of indicators. The indicators, such as academic performance, infant mortality, children living in poverty, healthy lifestyles, and juvenile victims of crime, measure progress toward specific quality of life goals for children and youth.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound also produces the Children's Budget as a companion to the Report Card. It analyzes all Philadelphia government spending for children and youth by the funding source, purpose of the spending, and the type of services provided. The Budget provides spending comparisons over time to help policymakers evaluate whether available funding streams are appropriately targeted and producing positive outcomes.

Beginning in 2005, Safe and Sound began issuing an individual Community Report Card for 12 Philadelphia neighborhoods. Critical indicators (such

2005 Report Card Results

Children are born healthy, thrive, and are ready for school	2—Promising
Children and youth live in stable and supportive families	3—Mixed
Children and youth are involved in healthy behaviors and do not engage in high-risk behaviors	3—Mixed
Children and youth live in safe, supportive communities and environments	5—Problematic
Children and youth achieve in school and make a successful transition to adulthood	3—Mixed

Source: 2005 Children's Report Card, Philadelphia Safe and Sound

as prenatal care, school dropout rates, juvenile arrests, and youth development opportunities) highlight progress and challenges. State-of-the-art mapping technology dramatically displays specific conditions with measurable impacts on the daily lives of children and youth in their neighborhoods. With this information, local leaders are able to target neighborhoods and advocate for the development and growth of healthy community-based programs and projects. The Community Report Cards will be used to launch neighborhood-based planning forums throughout the city.

Philadelphia Youth Network

Like Philadelphia Safe and Sound, the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) also supports system-building for the city's youth. PYN is a six-year-old nonprofit youth intermediary dedicated to building a comprehensive and coherent citywide youth workforce development system and helping young people gain access to the city's economic mainstream. PYN president Laura Shubilla and her staff play vital roles in advocating for and funding services to meet the needs of out-of-school and at-risk youth.

As a broker of youth services, PYN's work helps to strengthen the capacity of the city's youth-serving organizations while leveraging resources from many sources to support academic achievement, career success, and responsible citizenship. It oversees youth workforce programs for almost 10,000 young people annually with services provided by more than 40 youth-serving community organizations. PYN's annual budget of $18 million is derived largely from government grants, foundations, and private donations.

The Philadelphia Youth Network manages WorkReady Philadelphia (WRP), a Youth Council- and Workforce Investment Board (WIB)-endorsed citywide youth workforce development system. The initiative coordinates existing programs and develops new approaches, with an emphasis on employer-paid internships, which are the heart of the campaign.

Through the 2005 WRP program, almost 6,000 students and out-of-school youth were served by several program strands, including:

- **Employer-paid summer internships** providing unsubsidized jobs for several hundred youth who receive training and mentoring in work readiness;
- ***YouthWorks***—a federally-funded summer and year-round effort serving 4,100 youth in work-experience, community service projects and college-based programs;
- **Summer Career Exploration Program**—a foundation-funded program providing enhanced summer jobs for 1,100 youth in local businesses;
- **Summer Development Institute's afternoon work experience**—an SDP-funded program providing paid work and service experiences in the afternoon for nearly 300 students attending summer school.

PYN also provides technical assistance, training, and curriculum development to youth-serving organizations and agencies. Its most recent focus is directed at underserved populations, especially court-involved youth and youth aging out of foster care.

Department of Human Services

Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) plays an important role in the city's youth strategy through its Division of Community-Based Prevention Services. Pennsylvania uses a portion of its federal TANF block grant to support child welfare prevention programming. The money is county-administered but state-supervised, with funding allocated to areas based on county requests. In Philadelphia, the Division of Community-Based Prevention Services of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services has allotted TANF funds for youth aging out of foster care, those leaving the juvenile justice system, and other out-of-school young people. The DHS-PYN working relationship is particularly collegial and effective.

> *"Each of the systems that come into contact with out-of-school youth may do so from different directions and for different purposes, but in the end they are all the same kids–and they are all our kids."*
>
> —David Fair, Formerly of Philadelphia DHS

The Department of Human Services provides intensive case management services to help youth in foster care overcome challenges that may have led them to leave school or undermine their ability to achieve there. These services, delivered by foster care agencies, group homes. and institutions are comprehensive. They include assessment of the child's needs and plans; advocacy for the child to the school district, especially when issues of special education arise; direct provision or linkage to tutoring for literacy and other competencies; and, for those not going back to school, assistance in linking to other supports that will help them become independent upon leaving foster care. Youth willing to participate also have access to the Achieving Independence Center, a one-stop program that offers a variety of supports, including education, job training, and housing assistance for adolescent youth in foster care, with a high priority on helping them engage or reengage with their educational and employment options.

To serve young people involved with the juvenile justice system, DHS established a similar network of supports in partnership with Philadelphia Family Court and PYN, which operates three E^3 Power Centers, formerly called Youth Opportunity Centers. DHS funds Welcome Home Centers, which are within the E^3 Centers, to provide reintegration services for youth returning from court placement. DHS also provides youth returning from detention with a team of "reintegration workers" who work with them, in close collaboration with their probation officers, while they are in placement and after their return to the community. These workers help youth take advantage of the array of supports available from city agencies and community-based organizations, including the E^3 Centers. The Reintegration Reform Initiative is discussed below.

Through its community-based prevention initiatives, DHS also targets other out-of-school youth who are not involved in the child protection or juvenile justice systems. Priority targets for these services are youth ages 15 or older who have 16 or more unexcused absences from school, homeless youth, adolescent sex workers, and youth who have dropped out of school but are seeking a way to reconnect. Through partnerships with an array of community organizations, DHS supports programs in job readiness, GED-preparation, high school diploma courses, and home schooling approaches. DHS's afterschool programming helps adolescents to overcome such barriers to learning and works closely with the School District to link these youth to accelerated and other alternative educational options made available by the District.

The Reintegration Initiative

Concerned that large numbers of juvenile offenders were leaving residential placements without adequate supports to help them make the difficult transition back into mainstream society, Family Court, the Department of Human Services, the School District of Philadelphia, the Office of Behavioral Health, the Philadelphia Youth Network, and various other city agencies collaborated to redesign aftercare services based on information about best practices across the nation. The Initiative has received considerable support from the current Administrative Judge of Family Court, Judge Kevin Dougherty.

The Reintegration Initiative required the new collaborative to pool additional and redirected funding from several sources, most notably from DHS, the Probation Department, and the US Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act and Youth Offender Demonstration Act. In addition, DHS and Philadelphia Family Court received a grant from The MacArthur Foundation to support the administration and measure the quantifiable outcomes of the project.

The Reintegration Initiative embraced these new or enhanced services:

- Immediately following the decision by a court to place a youth in a residential facility, assessments are conducted to determine a level of aftercare supervision and support.
- At a minimum, all youths receive support and supervision, for three months, from a team consisting of a probation officer and a reintegration worker. This initial period, or Standard Level, is followed by three more months of probation. In

addition, the reintegration worker begins to work with the youth's family from the beginning of the youth's placement, until discharge from probation.

- Comprehensive, individualized, and community-based reintegration plans are then developed by the reintegration worker/probation officer teams within the first 60 days of placement and are reviewed regularly by a multidisciplinary team. These plans are the foundation of treatment within the placement and after release. Probation officers and reintegration workers visit the residential placement on a regular basis to monitor the youths' progress. Regular family visits prepare the family to better support and monitor the youth after discharge, and additional community linkages are explored and established.
- Youth most at risk (Intensive Level) receive additional services, both during placement and after discharge, that research shows to be effective. These services include Functional Family Therapy and the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Program. In addition, after discharge, they must participate in the daily community-based program at the Welcome Home Centers located within the E^3 Power Centers, to supplement their case-management services.
- Regardless of level, all youth participate in competency-building community service projects run by the Probation Department and/or the reintegration workers, during home passes and after release.
- The Probation Reintegration Program Director, a high-level administrator from within the Juvenile Probation Department, chairs the multidisciplinary Reintegration Oversight Committee that reviews the plan for any youth at risk of failure in order to provide additional resources and guidance for supervision.
- A Cross-System Reintegration Coordinator, chosen jointly by DHS and the Probation Department, guides the collaborative, provides training and technical assistance to the partners, and ensures that all systems are appropriately involved and that potential conflicts between systems are quickly addressed.
- Considerable attention has been given to the barriers, which have historically made reintegration into the public schools difficult. This has included collaborative work with the School District, to facilitate credit retrieval and better align the curricula of residential placements with the School District. The Reintegration Initiative has worked closely with the Philadelphia School District to improve the District's RETI-WRAP, the transitional program for youth returning to school from residential placement.

The Reintegration Initiative has put programs and support systems in place to prevent youth from reoffending by giving them safe places where they may go to engage in positive activities and gain educational and employment skills. Since the majority of those involved in the juvenile justice system lack a high school diploma or GED, the Initiative helps them reconnect to positive supports in the hope that this will deter them from reoffending. Philadelphia's Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP), Teen Centers, and E^3 Centers are components of the city's reintegration system and are discussed below.

Philadelphia's Youth Violence Reduction Partnership

Philadelphia is home to an innovative program to reduce violent crime committed by youth ages 14-24 in three of Philadelphia's most violence-prone neighborhoods. Many youth have histories of multiple offenses that include violence and drugs, and about 70% had dropped out of school and had no diploma or GED when they were assigned to the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP).

In 1999, a group of 24 youth-serving organizations and criminal justice agencies founded YVRP as a vehicle to steer young people at greatest risk of killing or being killed toward productive lives. Participants are those youth living in communities saturated with violence, guns, and drugs, and who suffer from economic and educational deprivation, who generally grow up in unstable home environments. Almost all YVRP participants are under court supervision, meaning that they have a probation or parole officer, and most have been convicted or adjudicated on a violence or drug-related charge at least once. Since January 1, 2000, over 1,400 young Philadelphians have been involved with YVRP, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of homicides in the neighborhoods where it operates.

Participants, referred to as "youth partners," are identified by adult and juvenile probation officers, police, prosecutors, and the local nonprofit organization, Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network (PAAN). The YVRP Operations Committee, composed of supervisors from the partnering operational

agencies, formally determines if they are appropriate for YVRP and, if so, requests the assignment of the youth partner to a street worker and a probation officer by PAAN and the appropriate probation department. The only formal criterion for entering into the program is whether, according to a consensus of the partner agencies, the potential youth partner is likely to kill or be killed in the near future.

The YVRP Program

The program employs two principles for helping youth participants remain "Alive at 25:" diverting them from violence through careful and constant supervision and providing them with the supports necessary to set them on the path to productive adulthood through relationships with caring adults. The program "works" because participants have almost daily contact with adults from YVRP agencies who provide constant supervision and monitoring. The police, probation officers (POs), and street workers, the latter employed by PAAN, have different roles, but are all part of a cohesive front-line team geared to helping participants. In total, YVRP involved more than 20 public and private organizations in its development and has a front-line staff of more than 50 police officers, probation officers, and street workers.

Street workers or POs visit the youth and their families almost daily—at home and at places of employment—and they check corners or "hot spots" during the evening and at night. On their nighttime patrols, police and POs try to see each participant four times a month while POs are also assigned to visit each participant at least twice a month, without police officers present, at the participants' homes, jobs, or school. They also have formal meetings with the youth in the probation office about once a week. The POs choose to participate in YVRP because, they said, they enjoy working closely with troubled youth and see the YVRP process as a way to help the young people and their communities.

"Coming from that area, being blessed enough to get out of there when you see your friends die and go to jail…you just feel fortunate to get out of that. I was involved with drug activity, always in trouble when I was younger. So when I got out of it, I always told myself that if I ever got the chance to give back, this would be it."

—YVRP Street Worker

Probation officers enforce the conditions of the participants' probation in a variety of ways. They conduct drug tests; ensure that participants are in court-ordered drug treatment, counseling, work, or school; and make sure that participants stay off drug corners or away from specific individuals. They talk to the families, check on the general household situation, and find out what the participants want and need. POs also have the legal power to tighten or loosen conditions of probation, such as curfews and area restrictions. They have the authority to initiate an "expedited punishment" process with swift and certain consequences, such as incarceration or placement in a juvenile or detoxification facility. YVRP administrators consider expedited punishment a key to protecting these high-risk youth.

While having no legal authority over the youth partners, street workers actually have more contact with them compared to other front-line staff, with a street worker-to-youth partner ratio of 1:15. Street workers attempt to visit participants eight times each month at home and eight more times in the community, often while connecting them to support services. Street workers and POs share the responsibility of engaging youth in positive supports, such as schooling, job searches, paid work, community service, drug treatment, counseling, and organized recreation. They also improve home lives by helping the families of the participants find housing, employment, and health care.

Street workers play vital roles in YVRP. Since they live or have lived in the communities, they are not considered outsiders. Their understanding of the community culture helps them build trusting relationships with the youth and act as intermediaries between participants and law enforcement. Most street workers grew up in the same police districts where the participants live. They are generally in their late 20s and early 30s, and most are African American, although some are Latino and White. All are high school graduates and half have completed some college coursework. The majority became part of YVRP after working in other community-based organizations and youth groups. According to the June 2004 Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) evaluation of YVRP,

Alive at 25, "The significance of street workers—the credibility they hold within the community and bring to the partnership—cannot be overstated."

Street workers serve as friends and role models. They provide transportation to job interviews, organize trips and recreation, help with family problems, and lend an ear when someone needs to talk. Street workers are able to reinforce the rules of each youth's individual probation sentence while also serving as trusted friends and confidantes. The P/PV evaluation explains that "street workers represent a critical bridge between the community and mainstream society—a support mechanism missing from many programs targeting high-risk youth."

One street worker explained, "Coming from that area, being blessed enough to get out of there when you see your friends die and go to jail…you just feel fortunate to get out of that. I was involved with drug activity, always in trouble when I was younger. So when I got out of it, I always told myself that if [I] ever got the chance to give back, this would be it."

Police officers constitute the third part of the line staff. They ride with POs on "targeted patrols" during the evening hours to ensure the safety of the POs and to help scan drug corners for violators. This collaboration between the police and POs provides a unified front and shows participants that the police support the POs' authority. The hope is that police presence will allow officers to get to know neighborhood families outside the context of crime, thereby helping to break down the barriers between police and community.

The YVRP model works because of the continuing communication between agency staff and youth partners. This differs from more traditional juvenile and criminal justice systems, in which probation officers and police do not communicate with each other and the youth have no one to turn to outside of their community. POs and street workers speak informally at least once a week and up to several times a day. They also meet monthly to discuss individual cases.

Unlike other programs aimed at reconnecting youth, no single organization or funding stream is responsible for Philadelphia's YVRP, but the District Attorney is considered to be its leader. YVRP did not require the formation of new organizations nor did it require its partners to take on dramatically new roles. But, YVRP does insist that the partners coordinate and communicate with each other, which is not always an easy task.

YVRP Outcomes

P/PV's study, *Alive at 25*, concluded that YVRP has overcome issues of administration, finance, and coordination to run a decidedly effective program. Its emphasis on data helps researchers analyze the continuing effectiveness of the program. Monthly data provided for program management by a P/PV-created monitoring report disaggregates information by agency. The report includes basic information, such as the number of participants, the number contacted, where those contacts took place, the number never reached, and why not. It shows the number of youth involved in "positive supports," broken down by activity, such as school, employment, substance abuse programs, and athletic leagues. It includes any violations, such as arrests, failed drug tests, or informal violations. Philadelphia Safe and Sound will soon assume responsibility from P/PV for tracking these data.

Current data show that the front-line staff has succeeded in supervising youth closely and helping many of them find employment, educational opportunities, rehabilitation, recreation, counseling, and training. Analyses of youth homicides in YVRP districts provide initial evidence that the program is helping high-risk youth stay alive. P/PV found that the majority of youth partners engage in education and employment: 40% of the participants were employed for three consecutive months or more after leaving the program, and 29% remained involved in education past noncompulsory age for three consecutive months or more. (Since all youth 18 or younger are legally mandated to attend school, statistical data do not include information on youth partners who had dropped out and then reconnected to education.)

On average, youth partners remain in YVRP for six to nine months and are either positively discharged or leave the program when their probation ends. If YVRP participants are arrested for another offense, the Operations Committee can reopen a case and extend some youths' status in YVRP.

Teen Centers

In 2000, the Department of Recreation, with help from Philadelphia Safe and Sound, created nine Teen Centers to provide enhanced recreational and educational opportunities for older youth and to assist in reducing their involvement with the criminal justice system. Building on the experience of YVRP, it had become clear that to keep youth off the street the city

needed to provide appealing places for them to go.

First established in recreation centers in neighborhoods with high rates of youth violence, Teen Centers are open from 5 to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and offer educational and cultural programs, youth development training, mentoring workshops, and job readiness courses, in addition to the sports and fitness programs offered at most recreational facilities. Outreach services seek to engage youth who may be at risk. Additional recreation and educational activities include: arcade games, large screen televisions, video games, literacy programs, Girls Empowerment Programs, Teen Center basketball tournaments, and dances, among others. Sue Buck, Teen Center Coordinator, said that a typical Friday night dance attracts as many as 200 young people.

Some Teen Centers have also become home to a literacy and employment training program, a joint effort between Philadelphia Safe and Sound and the Department of Recreation serving youth partners in YVRP and members of the Teen Centers. The program utilizes the READ 180 instructional model that combines teacher-led instruction with adaptive and individualized instructional software. Students leave the program once they have achieved a 12th grade reading level. This program began in Fall 2005 with incentives offered for participation.

City and community agencies such as the Department of Human Services, PAAN, YVRP, and local schools refer youth to the Teen Centers. PAAN workers also volunteer to supervise large events, such as dances. Of the 2,200 Teen Center registered youth, approximately 31% have had contact with the juvenile justice system. Demographically, 59% are African American, 21% Latino, 4% White, 2% multiethnic, 1% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% other, and 12% unknown.

Welcome Home Centers, another crucial aspect of the Reintegration Reform Initiative, is discussed in the Community-Based Organizations Section.

Community-Based Organizations

Philadelphia's many community-based organizations (CBOs) are important in reconnecting the city's out-of-school youth. CBO-run programs range from long-standing programs to newly-developed models for out-of-school youth. The Philadelphia Youth Network plays the key leadership role with local CBOs as it manages competitive grant processes involving WIA, TANF and foundation funding; provides technical assistance to the programs; and convenes the groups to discuss issues of collective interest. PYN's leadership is playing the key role in keeping the former Youth Opportunity Centers going after the end of federal funding. They have been instrumental in reprogramming additional funding from Philadelphia's Department of Human Services and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council. The former YO Centers, now renamed E^3 Power Centers, have added reintegration services to serve adjudicated youth through Welcome Home Centers that are located within the E^3 Centers. As a result, E^3 Centers can now serve a more geographically diverse group of youth with an emphasis on out-of-school and court-involved youth. Additionally, the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School is a large and exemplary YouthBuild program that has worked with dropouts for over 13 years.

E^3 Power and Reintegration Centers

Among its other activities, PYN oversees three E^3 Power Centers (Empowerment, Education, and Employment). These Centers developed out of Philadelphia's five-year $20 million federal Youth Opportunity (YO) Grant in 1999 from the US Department of Labor which targeted youth ages 14-21 residing in the Empowerment Zones to provide services to in-school and out-of-school youth. (For further discussion of the YO Program, see Chapter 19).

PYN assumed management of the Youth Opportunity centers in 2002 and initiated a redesign of their service delivery structure under a new name: E^3 Power Centers. Beginning in July 2005, through a competitive RFP process, PYN turned management of the three centers over to three community-based organizations: The Bridge, an affiliate of Philadelphia Health Management Corporation; Resources for Human Development, Inc. (RHD), a nonprofit social service organization; and Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Inc., a community-based organization dedicated to improving the lives of the city's Latino population. With other funding streams to support the centers, eligibility to participate has expanded beyond Empowerment Zone residents. Each of the three centers is now required to recruit and serve approximately 180 out-of-school youth from the neighborhoods near their physical location. Between 10% and 20% of the required 180 participants must still be Empowerment Zone residents.

With financial support from the Department of Human Services, the E3 Power Centers also host reintegration centers known as Welcome Home Centers for youth returning from juvenile placement facilities who are at the highest risk of recidivism. These Centers provide services and supports for up to 90 youth returning from juvenile placement. They range from ages 12-18 (average of 16.9) and have been in placement for 6 to 15 months (average of nine). These Welcome Home Centers have been seamlessly integrated into the E3 Power Centers rather than being two separate programs located in the same building. The only difference between Welcome Home Center and E3 participants is that youth returning from placement are required to participate in each of E3's Four Pathways for specific, monitored lengths of time, while other E3 participants have no such requirement.

David Fair, former Director of the Division of Community-Based Prevention Services of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, explained that DHS became involved in the continuation of the YO Centers because of its participation in the WIB Youth Council and the visionary leadership of PYN. "The network they had built with the YO Centers provided a perfect framework for us to build a system of reintegration services for delinquent youth returning from placement. In the end, it was a classic 'no brainer.'" DHS targets services to youth who are "clearly beginning on the path to failure—missing school regularly, getting into trouble with the law for the first time, behaving in ways that make it difficult for the parents to control them— in order to concentrate human and financial resources where they can be most effective. "We hope," said Fair, that this approach "will divert these youth from a path that will lead them to becoming dependent adults, and to show the taxpayers not only that there really is hope for these kids, but that it's actually cheaper to invest in their hopes rather than in their pain."

The Four E3 Pathways

Services in the E3 Power Centers are organized into four Pathways: Education, Employment and Placement, Occupational Skills, and Life Skills. Working with their advisors and based on their own assessments and goals, out-of-school youth select from among these four service areas. Participants in the Welcome Home Centers must take part for a mandated number of hours in each Pathway. All are encouraged to participate in multiple Pathways with the objective of building the necessary skills to achieve long-term educational, employment, or occupational benefits.

The Education Pathway includes several options for Center participants to increase their knowledge and earn a credential. There are three levels of classes for youth preparing for the GED. Youth must pass through each of these levels, organized in 10-week cycles, before taking the GED examination. Alternatively, they may participate in a program aligned with School District standards and curricula where they may earn District credits toward graduation. With the assistance of Center staff, students may also choose to attend a high school or alternative school to receive individual tutoring and links to postsecondary education, including preparation for the SAT.

E3 students work together on a computer project. (Photo courtesy of Philadelphia Youth Network)

For the Employment and Placement Pathway, participants must complete at least 12 hours of an intensive work-readiness program, including resume-writing, interviewing, and interpersonal skills needed for workplace success. They may also participate in short-term subsidized employment, a self-directed job search leading to unsubsidized employment, rapid attachment into full- or part-time unsubsidized jobs through CareerLink for those youth demonstrating readiness for employment, and community service and service-learning opportunities. PYN is also working with the managers of the centers and several business partners to establish youth-operated business enterprises as a strategy for preparing for

employment. These youth-operated enterprises will be funded under separate contracts in partnership with PYN and selected vendors.

The Occupational Skills Pathway comprises skills training programs accessible directly or by referral at the Centers. Some E3 Centers have introduced other types of on-site training beyond the already available partnerships of multimedia CD/video development and production, Certified Nurse Aid training, and Customer Service Retail Skills Certificate training. The Life Skills Pathway has a number of electives for enrichment provided through the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Tool and Guidebook. These domains include Daily Living, Housing and Community Resources, Money Management, Self-Care, Social Development, and Work and Study Skills. This Pathway also includes community service, training in aggression replacement, drug and alcohol prevention services, and victim and community awareness.

Reintegration Center participants are required to attend the education pathway for six hours per week as well as the employment and placement pathway, participate in the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Tool and Guidebook activities, and perform community service weekly. In addition, they must go through the drug and alcohol prevention services within their first 90 days of leaving placement, attend three one-hour sessions per week of aggression replacement training, and have daily victim and community awareness training.

Each of the three centers offers courses in the four pathways, but each center has its own personality created by the differences in the CBOs that run the programs and the various neighborhood characteristics. “Each vendor brought a skill set and certain strengths to the centers. For example, Congreso de Latinos Unidos is focused on occupational skills while the Bridge has a strong educational focus since it also operates a school in Philadelphia,” said PYN’s Chief Operations Officer Stacy Holland.

All three centers are dedicated to using accepted principles of youth development in engaging young people to change their lives. For example, at the North Broad Street site run by Resources for Human Development, staff asked students what motivational posters they wanted on the walls. Students responded and it is now decorated with posters commemorating civil rights leaders, famous African American artists and athletes, and the students’ own poetry. Broad Street Director Julius Jackson said, “We try to make kids believe in themselves and show them that people believe in them.” The students elect peers to work with professional staff in planning the center’s program.

The Parkside Center, run by the Bridge, emphasizes extracurricular activities. Students may participate in photography, mural arts, film, and music and music video production programs. The Bridge also has ties to LA Fitness, a Philadelphia health club, where students exercise. Students enrolled at the Bridge contribute to the community through Saturday community service activities. All three centers provide positive academic and recreational activities for young people throughout the week.

In 2003, Youth Opportunity Centers had 155 new enrollments of out-of-school youth and 528 new enrollments of in-school youth. From 2000 to 2005, the centers served a total of 2,402 youth. In 2003, 92% of the youth participated in Center activities five hours or more per month and 68% met one or more interim education, training, or employment goals. Overall, 150 YO participants met their education goals, 389 obtained short-term unsubsidized employment, 60 achieved long-term unsubsidized employment, and 22 entered long-term occupational skills training. The Congreso-operated E3 Center has a large number of Latino participants, while the other two centers’ participants are primarily African American. More males than females use the centers. mainly because the young people in the Welcome Home Centers are primarily male.

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School

Like the over 200 other YouthBuild programs nationwide, the mission of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (YBP) is to provide out-of-school youth with a broad range of tools, supports, and opportunities. Founded in 1992 and based on the national YouthBuild model, YBP gives high school dropouts the opportunity to earn educational credentials while developing employment and leadership skills through a concrete community service: rehabilitating rundown or abandoned housing for future sale to low-income families. (See Chapter 17 for further information on the national YouthBuild model.) Along with 25 other YouthBuild programs, YBP has chosen the charter school model as the most appropriate vehicle for helping its young people earn a high school diploma while simultaneously learning job skills and providing valuable community service.

Public charter school funding helps to ensure YBP's fiscal sustainability, a perennial problem that can make or break efforts to recover dropouts.

In SY 2004-2005, YBP enrolled 191 students ages 18 to 21 who were chosen from a pool of over 950 applicants. All YBP students are considered at-risk of dropping out of school. Over 85% are from low- or very low-income homes, 64% have no health insurance, approximately one-third have dependent children, 20% have been victimized by violence or crime, 68% have been expelled or suspended from their previous schools, 31% have been arrested, and 23% have been through juvenile court. Half the participants are women, 91% are African American, 4% are Latino, and 4% are White.

When they enroll in the YouthBuild Philadelphia program, young people are limited by the stereotypical role of "high school dropout." By graduation, they see themselves in a multitude of positive roles: as students, as achievers, as helpers, as builders, and as leaders.

The first YBP class in SY 1992-1993 enrolled 24 students and rehabilitated one abandoned house for a low-income family. Since then, YBP has grown into one of the nation's largest and most successful YouthBuild programs. Over 950 young adults have completed the program with 85% earning their high school diploma in a 10-month period. Graduates move on to successful lives after leaving YBP; of the 2004 graduating class, 20% enrolled in college and 41% in a vocational school or job training program, while 33% became employed full-time. YBP students have rehabilitated over 60 houses and, in a recently added computer technology program, refurbished over 1,500 computers.

Academics at YBP

The YBP curriculum meets the academic standards of the School District of Philadelphia and is based on an intensive course load, including math, science, English, and integrated humanities. Academic offerings are balanced with hands-on job skills training and an appreciation for community service through either the Construction Training or Technology Training Program. Participants in Construction Training learn building skills at a worksite where, working in crews with an experienced adult supervisor, they rehabilitate abandoned houses for sale to low-income families. Students in Technology Training learn software and hardware skills while they refurbish old computers for donation to community organizations and schools.

Overall, YBP sees its mission as helping out-of-school youth rebuild their lives while they rebuild their communities. "When they enroll in our program," reads the YBP brochure, "students are limited by the stereotypical role of 'high school dropout.' By graduation, they see themselves in a multitude of positive roles: as students, as achievers, as helpers, as builders, and as leaders."

From September to June, YBP students attend academic classes for six weeks from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and then alternate, on the same time schedule, with six weeks of job training projects in construction or technology. The education model seeks to maintain an effective learning environment aimed at improving student's basic skills and increasing self-esteem and capacity for critical thinking. With a student-to-teacher ratio 20:1 and a carefully selected staff of certified teachers, case managers, and other professionals, students receive the individual support services they need in addition to the intensive core curriculum. Students pursue such enrichment courses as leadership development, AmeriCorps (service-learning), computer education, career development, and life skills.

Among its other features, the curriculum enables YBP students to connect content to their own life stories. In English classes, for example, students read autobiographies of inner-city youth and author their own biographies while developing fundamental writing skills. This emphasis on student-centered material is one of the many qualities that helps set YouthBuild apart from most public school curricula. "At YouthBuild," said graduate Craig March, "We learn so much about ourselves and our culture. The stories we read actually mean something to us…We can relate to them." Students keep daily journals and write poetry, folktales, research papers, and essays.

At the beginning of the year, students are administered pretests to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in each academic subject and to identify any

special educational needs. Individualized instruction is then given where additional assistance is needed. All students participate in an Academic Support class where they complete work from their core classes with the assistance of two certified special education teachers. Not all students are considered special education students; rather, YBP provides intensive academic support for all students to ensure content mastery.

Frequent student evaluations provide teachers and instructors with opportunities to study student work and to assess their progress. Students present portfolios in every subject in each academic trimester. The portfolio presentations and assessments enable them to make important connections between theory and practice. The small size of the school makes it possible to provide students with detailed feedback (in areas of growth, strength, or functional deficiency) at the end of each trimester through individual report card conferences attended by each student's academic advisor, construction trainer, case manager, mentor, and the Director of Education.

Job Training

YBP's intensive academic curriculum is combined with hands-on job training. Students take one of two job training programs, Construction or Technology, based upon their interest and the availability of the program. Construction Training allows each participant to experience the entire process of "full-gut," or rehabilitation, of abandoned houses through an arrangement that allows YBP to act as a subcontractor to complete work on abandoned houses owned by the city or the Community Development Corporation.

Students at the construction site enjoy a student-to-instructor ratio of 12:1. They learn major aspects of construction from safe handling and proper use of materials and tools to demolition and cleanout. They work with certified trainers to learn such skills as interior framing of walls and ceilings, floor preparations, interior finish work, and installation of doors and windows. Instructors also use appropriate moments at the worksite to strengthen students' academic skills through hands-on construction activities. When students are framing a house, for example, they learn about the mathematical concepts behind framing and strengthen their skills in measurement and tool use. Students building stairs are engaged in a module on geometry, thereby gaining a better understanding of these concepts. Interested participants go on to complete internships with private sub-contractors where they learn skills in plumbing, roofing, and electrical work.

Overall, students experience the pride of transforming a severely damaged property into a well-built home for a family of grateful new owners. About 30% of the students who complete the Construction Training Program pursue careers in construction; many are linked into union-sponsored registered apprenticeships and internship programs immediately following graduation. While not all YouthBuild students choose to remain in construction, all benefit from equally important lessons in teamwork, dependability, punctuality, perseverance, and preparedness.

YouthBuild Philadelphia's Technology Training Program was piloted in 2003 as another option in job skills training. It offers 25 students an opportunity to explore a career offering excellent opportunities for growth and advancement. The program provides participants with industry-recognized training in hardware and software and eases their passage into the computer technology field.

As part of the Technology Training Program, students acquire donated computers from local and national businesses on which they perform diagnostic evaluations, complete necessary repairs, and install them refurbished in qualified, underserved community organizations and schools. They then provide the recipient organizations with training courses so they can maximize use of the donated technology. Students learn the skills necessary to operate various computer programs, as well as to instruct other YBP members in how to use the technology and provide help desk services to staff and students. In addition to learning valuable skills in hardware and troubleshooting, students train in business and design applications, including Adobe PhotoShop, Microsoft Office, and Microsoft Publisher.

For the portion of the YBP program spent in hands-on job training, students earn a minimum wage stipend, which with perfect attendance, amounts to $290 every two weeks during the three trimesters. No stipend is provided for the time students are engaged in academic studies.

Transition Services

YBP provides all students and alumni with continuing access to career development, placement in jobs

Left: Students work in teams to complete an academic assignment. Right: YBP students use mathematical skills learned in the classroom to complete their construction projects. (Photos courtesy of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School)

and postsecondary education, and alumni support through a Transition Services Program that helps graduates as they continue their education, advance in the workplace, and make plans for the future. Most YouthBuild students come from families with few, if any, role models of responsible employment and a similar lack of family networks to locate jobs. Thus, for many, YBP provides the only help they can get in establishing a job network and support system.

The Transition Services Program includes placement support and counseling for jobs in construction, technology, and other fields; support for enrollment in continuing education (including Education Awards through the AmeriCorps program); job

A Day in the Life of a YouthBuild Philadelphia Student

Marie is a 20-year-old high school dropout with a two-year-old son. Before enrolling at YBP, she worked part-time as a supermarket cashier and dreamed of going to college and becoming a teacher.

It is 8 a.m. Tuesday and Marie is in Morning Program, where her program manager takes attendance and goes over the day's schedule. Then the group reviews yesterday's Youth Congress meeting and the dress code policy.

At 8:05 a.m., the students split into three groups, and Marie heads to Integrated Humanities class where she discusses the role African Americans played in World War II. English class for her group starts at 9:20 a.m., and Marie writes a first draft of an essay on the life and times of the poet Margaret Walker. In math class she works with a group, to solve geometry theorems. After a break for lunch, Marie goes to her service-learning class where she and her service partner use their geometry skills to design a blueprint for a vacant lot they will transform into a community park. At 2:05 p.m., she heads to the computer lab where she works independently on Microsoft PowerPoint, developing a presentation on the findings of her fish farming study to present for her science class the following day. At 3:30 p.m., she stops by the case manager's office to confirm her appointment for lunchtime tomorrow, and then heads home.

The following week, Marie will be at the construction site, learning how to install drywall and hang interior doors. She has to make sure she arrives there before 7:30 a.m., since she is part of a team that is competing for a "Crew with Perfect Attendance Award." During her lunch break she will take photographs of the house so that she can include them in her multimedia construction portfolio.

When they return to the worksite, Marie and her crew will begin to paint the interior walls. Marie's crew and two alternate crews working on the house will have it completely rehabbed and ready for the new homeowners by the end of the program year.

development; need-based financial aid; and alumni activities so that young adults can continue to be connected to a supportive peer group.

YouthBuild encourages students to seek post-secondary education and helps them navigate the process of applying to college and obtaining financial aid. It also offers SAT preparatory classes, counseling, and additional academic instruction to help prepare them for college success. It organizes college fairs and visits with nearby higher education institutions such as Temple University, Cheyney University, and Community College of Philadelphia.

For students who choose to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation, YBP has developed a network of individuals, corporations, and public agencies that employ its graduates. It also has connections to the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, Home Depot, Avis, and many union apprenticeship programs and large construction companies and developers.

Support Services

Realizing that many of their students need extra support and guidance to be successful, YBP also provides extensive support services for its students:

- **Case Management:** Upon entry, each YBP student is assigned a case manager, the central person in the lives of the students and the key person who coordinates any needed support services. Students meet with their case managers to develop a comprehensive personal assessment of their goals, self-esteem, substance abuse, sexual health and practices, family relationships, educational history, employment history, medical history, health insurance, finances, and any legal issues. Students have individual counseling sessions with the case manager and are also assigned an in-house staff mentor who serves as an additional source of support and encouragement.
- **Life Skills:** Mastery of life skills is a critical graduation standard at YBP and is integrated into all facets of the program, including construction training, technology training, service-learning class, leadership development class, core academic subjects, and career development. Students attend weekly gender-based group sessions on personal relationships, sexual health, rape and sexual abuse prevention, substance abuse, and parenting. The men's and women's groups separately handle topics that will help them deal with everyday life issues, such as parenthood, birth control, personal responsibilities, and self-esteem. Students discuss how to change negative perceptions, deal with anger, learn to accept and respect their accomplishments, and how to deal with the loss of a loved one and forgive past mistakes. Through these exercises in life skills, students recognize and demonstrate their unique strengths and talents.
- **Community Service:** Students attend a civic engagement/service-learning class to explore community issues of education, community outreach, beautification, hunger, homelessness, and violence. Service projects throughout Philadelphia include sorting and packaging food donations, cleaning vacant lots, and maintaining community gardens. Each year, students give over 10,000 hours of community service to Philadelphia charities and community organizations. Those performing a minimum of 900 hours of service earn a continuing education award of $2,300 from AmeriCorps.
- **Special Education:** YBP's special education program meets the requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Upon admission into the program, all students take an academic screener, the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), to establish their skill levels in reading and mathematics. Students whose grade equivalents in either subject fall below 4.5, or whose reading and math grade equivalents are separated by four or more grade levels, are referred for an evaluation under the supervision of the school psychologist. Special education students are not separated from their classmates; rather, they all attend mainstream academic classes. Certified special education teachers provide the requisite services, resources, and supports to promote academic success. In addition, special education teachers work with the regular education teachers so that accommodations are made for each student in the regular education program. The Director of Education, a certified special education teacher, monitors implementation of the students' Individual Education Plans, including the required transition services.
- **Health Care:** Students ages 18 and older do not qualify for national children's health programs. YBP does not have a nurse on staff but it does offer access for students to health care professionals and services. Since 85% of the students are from low- or very low-income families, and 64% have

YouthBuild Program Funding

Source	Amount
Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction-charter school funding	$1,200,000
US Department of Housing and Urban Development (2004 grant)	$700,000
Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development	$665,000
School District of Philadelphia Alternative Education Funding (Funding for 25 students as part of the Accelerated Schools)	$250,000
AmeriCorps/Corporation for National and Community Service	$246,000
Pennsylvania AmeriCorps Commission	$196,000
YouthBuild USA (subgrant from US Department of Labor adjudicated youth reentry program)	$160,000
Workforce Investment Act–via the WIB Youth Council, administered by the Philadelphia Youth Network	$240,000
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (subgrant from YouthBuild USA)	$100,000
Corporate, foundation, and individual grants	$40,000
Other	$227,000
Total Revenue	**$4,024,000**

no health insurance, YBP provides vision, dental, general health and sexually-transmitted disease screenings, and medical assistance to all students. Case managers help students navigate state medical assistance programs and local community resources.

- **Leadership Development:** Leadership development and youth voice are essential to the success of the YouthBuild model. At the beginning of the school year, 15 students are elected by their peers to the student government or Youth Congress. This committee is active in policy issues and in efforts to enrich the YBP program. Youth Congress meets with the Executive Director every other week to discuss programmatic and policy issues. It is regarded as an effective tool for fostering leadership and promoting the idea of accountability to peers.

  All students are given the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity and to have their voices heard. Construction trainers select squad leaders, and technology trainers assign individual duties to students at their hands-on job training sites. At the school site, students help pick the locations of service projects, contact community organizations, and lead tours of the facility for visitors. Students fill out frequent evaluations of classes, teachers, staff, and the school. These evaluations provide YBP staff with multiple opportunities to examine academic progress, student concerns, and staff performance. In a 2005 student survey, all of the students said they recommended the program to others and, after the first three weeks, 85% believed that they had a strong, positive relationship with two or more staff members.

Leadership and Staffing

The YBP staff of 45 includes six academic teachers, eight construction instructors, and a manager, three technology instructors, four case managers, three graduate transition services personnel, nine full-time AmeriCorps volunteers, plus administrative and support staff. Executive Director Simran Sidhu has been on staff for 10 years and has served as Director for three. She attributes YBP's success, thusly:

> Since our inception we have stayed true to our mission. We continue to serve at-risk youth regardless of their past histories and academic levels, and we continue to believe that it is our duty to provide them with as many high quality opportunities and supports as we can. We are comprehensive in the services we provide and we

constantly push for improvements in program quality. We are honest with ourselves as we assess our effectiveness, and this allows us to admit weakness and then build them into strengths. We focus on hiring the best people for the program because they are the magic that brings it all together for the young people.

Funding

All YouthBuild programs rely on a variety of funding sources to support their work. YBP's budget for SY 2005-2006 is $4,024,000, derived from the sources in the table (top of page 136).

After 13 years of carefully honing the original YouthBuild model, YBP has evolved into one of the largest YouthBuild programs in the nation, respected locally and in the state capital of Harrisburg. Charter school legislation has enabled YBP to focus on meeting the needs of several hundred young people, notably students who have not been successful in traditional schooling, and who have, in effect, been written off by many.

Other Notable Community-Based Programs

Philadelphia also has many other alternative educational and workforce development programs available to out-of-school youth run by community-based organizations, including:

- **The Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)** runs GED and hospitality training programs for out-of-school youth and adults. The Learning Opportunities Center uses an individualized, computer-assisted, self-paced, open entry/open-exit instructional system to provide adult learners with literacy training, Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED test preparation, and prevocational training information. The Hospitality Training Institute runs Opportunities Inn, a training institute devoted to providing the hospitality industry with a skilled workforce. (See Chapter 16 for more information about the national OIC program.)
- **Youth Empowerment Services (YES)** serves youth and young adults ages 17-22 in one of three programs. Digital Media Training Program (DMTP) is a hands-on job training program focusing on graphics and web design, video production, audio engineering, and digital video editing. It uses state-of-the-art, professional-grade equipment and software taught by trained media arts specialists. A second program, Changing Tracks, is dedicated to youth who have been truant and/or delinquent and need academic and personal support. The Voices Project engages out-of-school youth in project-based civic activities and mentoring opportunities for Temple University students. The Project operates through Temple University's Community Collaborative in partnership with the Big Picture Alliance.
- **The Indochinese American Council (IAC)** provides an adult high school diploma program for out-of-school youth ages 19 and older. It is competency-based and uses standardized tests and a life skills curriculum. IAC is funded by the US Department of Labor and the US Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education.
- **ASPIRA** offers out-of-school youth a diploma track via the Edison High School Educational Options Program (EOP) and ASPIRA Kensington High School EOP. ASPIRA prepares high school dropouts and students at risk of dropping out for a diploma through afternoon classes and one-on-one morning tutoring classes at several locations. The program is open to youth and young adults ages 17-21 with at least 11 high school credits for admission. Through this program, students also participate in a six-week summer employment program and a 60-hour internship.

The School District of Philadelphia's Accelerated High Schools

The School District of Philadelphia's (SDP) Office of Secondary Education spearheads the District's internal efforts to recapture its dropouts. It offers newly-created Accelerated High Schools and an Educational Options Program (EOP). The Accelerated High Schools serve students ages 17-21 who are out-of-school, at risk of dropping out of school, who have less than five credits, or who are returning from adjudicated court placement.

SDP decided to outsource the accelerated schools for over-age and under-credited students to three organizations. Its first contracts were awarded in 2004 to Camelot Schools, a for-profit Texas company; Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America (OICA), a Philadelphia nonprofit group providing education, training, and other services; and One Bright Ray, another Philadelphia nonprofit that also runs a charter school in the city. All accelerated

A CADI teacher meets with the student body president to discuss school issues. (Photo courtesy of OIC CADI)

school teachers are hired by the contractors and are nonunionized employees. Another accelerated school will open in the winter of 2006 with a goal of eight regionally-based schools opening by 2008.

All accelerated schools receive funding based on the number of students to be served and are required to use the District's standardized curriculum to ensure that learning meets state standards. When students complete the program, which varies in length depending on how many credits the student has previously earned, they receive a traditional high school diploma that has no mention of the accelerated program. It takes approximately two-and-one-half years to graduate from an accelerated high school if a student enters without any credits.

SDP also has a relationship with the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (YBP) in which 25 YBP students are funded by SDP directly instead of through the school's charter. Accelerated high school students in the YouthBuild School are seamlessly integrated and do not know which entity is funding their education. Those enrolled in YBP through the accelerated schools will receive a YBP diploma, not a traditional District diploma like the other accelerated students. (For more about YouthBuild Philadelphia see pages XX above.)

All accelerated schools are designed to accommodate no more than 250 to 300 students. SDP is already finding that demand for the program is outstripping supply. In its first year of operation, Camelot's accelerated high school, the Excel Academy, enrolled 125 students in the 9th grade and OICA's Career & Academic Development Institute (CADI) enrolled 150.

The accelerated programs are credit-based. They represent a new experience for SDP because the District's alternative schools had previously focused on disciplinary programs designed to serve students expelled from their traditional high schools under provision of Pennsylvania Act 27. The accelerated schools, thus, represent the District's latest effort to provide alternative options for students who are not successful in its traditional comprehensive high schools.

OICA's CADI is the only accelerated school located in Center City, Philadelphia's downtown area. Its focuses on academics and to prepare its students for postsecondary education. Students take two periods per day of English, math, science, and history and complete assignments on the computer-based Extra Learning Systems educational software (ELS). ELS's "bite-sized" learning modules and ancillary tests prepare students for the rigors of test-taking. Students must demonstrate competency at the 85% level before advancing to the next lesson. All CADI students have teacher-time and computer-time in order to master the material. The school's emphasis on academics enabled 34 students to graduate in its first year of operation. The OICA CADI's student body is predominantly African American with an enrollment of 56 females and 61 males enrolled in September 2005.

Participants in the CADI program customarily need extra services and follow up in order to be successful in school and life. Two case managers assist students in their educational pursuits and attempt to remedy any negative environmental influences. They provide students with additional positive influences and assistance, such as asking positive role models and other volunteers to support the academic and functional aspects of students' success, including job placement assistance, tutoring, and financial assistance. They provide counseling and assistance to help students achieve beyond their perceived capabilities.

CADI students may participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by OICA: flag-football and basketball intramural leagues as well as an afterschool program operated in the building by Philadelphia Safe and Sound. The majority of students, however, work after school in order to support themselves and their families. CADI students benefit from OICA's managerial experience. The organization regularly raises money for scholarships for program graduates and contributes in-kind and financial resources to

underwrite specific activities throughout the year.

Another intervention sponsored by SDP, the Educational Options Program (EOP), serves students ages 17-21 who have eight or more credits. EOP serves both in-school and out-of-school youth who wish to attend classes, for 15 hours a week, from 3:30 to 6:30 pm Monday through Thursday. There are 11 EOP sites in the city, including one in a correctional facility. These programs are not accelerated and operate on a block schedule with students taking two 90-minute courses each day. EOP is located at traditional high schools and courses are taught by District teachers who have been specially trained on strategies to engage this population.

Gateway to College, beginning in September 2006, will be another option for Philadelphia's out-of-school youth. The Community College of Philadelphia will administer the Gates Foundation's national Gateway program. (See Chapter 5 for more information about Gateway to College in Portland, Oregon.)

Conclusion

The sheer magnitude of Philadelphia's population of vulnerable and out-of-school youth could discourage even the most optimistic policymakers and service-providers. This not the case in the nation's 5th-largest city, where a large roster of creative options and resources helps reconnect youth to the mainstream and is backed by unusually dedicated leadership. The emerging Philadelphia story is becoming a showcase of effective cross-system collaboration to attack the seemingly endless range of issues faced daily by many thousands of young people.

Of the keys to Philadelphia's growing success in reclaiming dropouts, none has proved more vital than the readiness of city officials to initiate and support the many-sided collaborative efforts among youth-serving organizations of all kinds, notably community-based nonprofits and the private sector, which epitomize the city's approach. Politically savvy and imaginative, yet realistic, the people staffing the city's reconnection efforts are at all levels of the power-structure. Their dedication, strong top-level support, partnerships, and collaboration are the hallmarks of this city-wide effort. If there is a negative note to be sounded, it is the obvious one: Limited resources prevent the city, school district, and other partners from serving more than a small fraction of the youth who would profit tremendously from the kinds of opportunities available to far too few of their peers.

Contact Information

For more information about the Philadelphia Youth Network:
Laura Shubilla, President
Philadelphia Youth Network
714 Market Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia, PA 19106
267-502-3800
lshubilla@pyninc.org
http://www.pyninc.org/

For more information about Philadelphia Safe and Sound:
Anne Leigh Shenberger, President and CEO
Philadelphia Safe and Sound
1835 Market Street, Suite 420
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-568-0620
info@philasafesound.org
http://www.philasafesound.org/

For more information about Philadelphia's Department of Human Services:
Cheryl Ransom-Garner, Commissioner
Department of Human Services
1515 Arch Street, 8th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-683-6000
cheryl.ransom@phila.gov
http://dhs.phila.gov

For more information about the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership:
John Delaney, Deputy District Attorney
Trial Division
1421 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215-563-0047
John.Delaney@phila.gov

For more information about the Teen Centers:
Susan Buck, Coordinator
Teen Centers
Philadelphia Department of Recreation
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

215-683-3633
susan.buck@phila.gov
http://www.phila.gov/recreation/teen_centers.html

For more information about Accelerated High Schools:
Albert Bichner, Deputy Chief Academic Officer
The School District of Philadelphia
440 N. Broad Street
2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19130
215-400-4200
abichner@phila.k12.pa.us.

For more information about the OIC Career and Academic Development Institute:
Nathaniel LeRoy Teagle, Jr., Principal
C. Benjamin Lattimore, Director National Literacy Programs for OIC of America
1225 Vine Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-561-0820
nateteagle@gmail.com

For more information about the E3 Power Centers:
Stacy E. Holland, Chief Operations Officer
Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Assistant Director, Out-of-School Youth Initiatives
Philadelphia Youth Network
714 Market Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia, PA 19106
267-502-3800
sholland@pyninc.org
ctownsend@pyninc.org

For more information about YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School:
Simran Sidhu, Executive Director
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School
1231 N. Broad St.
3rd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19122
215-627-8671
ssidhu@youthbuildphilly.org
www.youthbuildphilly.org

Additional Resource

For more information about out-of-school youth in Philadelphia, including the *Education Programs Guide for Out-of-School Youth*: www.osyphila.org

[1] For discussion of intermediary organizations, see Blank, M.J., Brand, B., Deich, S., Kazis, R., Politz, B., & Trippe, S. (n.d.). *Local intermediary organizations: Connecting the dots for children, youth, and family*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.The Intermediary Network's website: www.intermediarynetwork.org

Recommendations: Building on Strength

Most of today's high school students enjoy many advantages by virtue of their birth into stable families that offer multiple opportunities for positive personal and social development, and educational backgrounds in which quality instruction is paramount, at least in the early grades. On the other hand, most of the youth served by the programs profiled in this report have not enjoyed the advantages enjoyed by students in America's best-performing high schools. Therefore, our criteria for judging program effectiveness include the value added not only in academic achievement but in personal and social development as well. The key questions we have sought to answer are:

- *Do the schools and community programs profiled here help youth and young adults see themselves as successful learners?*
- *Do they support the positive development of youth who have previously experienced school failure?*
- *Do they move out-of-school and disconnected youth into a position where they can better compete for good jobs with decent wages that can support a family?*
- *Do they offer learners the tools to cope with a rapidly changing economy and to take advantage of opportunities to continue their education beyond high school?*
- *Do they help their graduates avoid self-destructive and antisocial behaviors?*
- *Do graduates understand and exercise their responsibilities, not only as good workers and parents, but also as citizens in a democratic society?*

Fair-minded observers of local and national dropout recovery programs will conclude from this report that laudable work is occurring across the nation to reclaim out-of-school youth. Expertise and experience in this field have been accumulating for over 25 years (40 in the case of the Job Corps). Policymakers can be reasonably confident that, when given society's mandate and adequate resources to reconnect out-of-school youth and help them become productive and responsible citizens, committed leadership can, in fact, do the job—and do it well.

In short, we believe that efforts of the type reviewed here merit the encouragement and support of the American people. If we are to be the kind of society envisioned in America's founding documents, a City on the Hill, we have much work to do, especially for and with the young people who are disconnected from America's mainstream.

As successful practitioners of dropout recovery consistently tell us, there is no large-scale formula or singular program model for recovering the literally millions of out-of-school youth who could profit from intelligent and sustained social policy for children and youth. However, there are actions we could take which would make a big difference to young people, their communities, the economy, and the nation's sense of social well-being.

Our recommendations build on the many strengths of the current dropout recovery field. They are not particularly expensive, though a number do require a larger public investment in youth. Implementing them would save American taxpayers many times the price we now pay for our national neglect of America's disconnected youth.

Recommendations

Policymakers at all levels of government should use both the bully pulpit and innovative legislation to achieve solid recognition that dropout recovery is an integral and essential dimension of school reform. As many of the sites profiled in *Whatever It Takes* demonstrate, public schools can mount effective and innovative measures if they embrace the notion that they have the moral responsibility to serve all of their community's young people and undereducated adults. Obviously, accepting this responsibility means that the public at large, as well as local and state governments, must be willing to underwrite the increased cost of educating all of our young people. We believe they will do so when they appreciate the beneficial results, including major economic gains, flowing from effective recovery programs. (We refer again to the data on pages vii-ix

for a reminder of the astounding costs to society of failing to embrace all our young people.)

School boards, superintendents, principals and other education leaders should take greater responsibility for all of their community's young people, including dropouts and other disconnected youth. The current models for standards-based high school reform assume that what works well for the one-third of students who are well-prepared for college will succeed for the two-thirds majority. This is patently not the case. School leaders would do well to learn from alternative educators about what works for students who are not on the college track when they enter 9th grade and then implement the changes necessary to reduce the number of young people dropping out of school. To meet the needs of diverse learners, both those in school and those who have left it, districts should work to create a portfolio of high school options embracing:

- multiple pathways to a recognized credential;
- programs offering open-entry and open-exit;
- compressed and expanded high school programs combined with dual enrollment in postsecondary institutions;
- programs to recover or make up missing academic credits;
- programs offering schedule flexibility, including evening and year-round schools;
- programs offering career-oriented curricula, with opportunities for students to engage in school-related internships and part-time employment; and
- adult high schools, especially the well-regarded daylight/twilight model, with opportunities for intergenerational learning.

In opening these options to their students, school districts should explore and deepen collaboration with existing youth-serving organizations in their communities, as many of the districts profiled in this report are doing with considerable success.

States should encourage the development of alternative education pathways. States can facilitate the development of alternative education pathways, which reduce the number of students dropping out of school, while providing well-lit reentry points for those who do leave school before obtaining a diploma. This can be done through legislation that, for example:

- provides uniform measures of dropouts and student tracking mechanisms,
- mandates that districts provide alternative education options and engage in dropout recovery,
- allows districts the flexibility to award credit toward graduation based on demonstrated competency, not just "seat time," and
- lays out a system for funds to follow students into alternative public education settings, including schools run by community-based organizations, community colleges, and charter schools.

Improving flexibility in funding programs that target struggling students and those who have already dropped out of school can be complicated. Such flexibility is crucial, however, to reducing barriers to stable funding for quality education options and alternative pathways to a high school diploma.

Build on the demonstrated success of long-established national dropout recovery programs. Expand the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program, currently in 25 states, and Jobs for America's Graduates, currently in 29 states, to all 50 states and every territory. Similarly, at least double, over a five-year period, the capacity of YouthBuild, Youth Service and Conservation Corps, and OIC programs, particularly in those communities with the greatest incidence of youth dropping out of school. Expand the Job Corps, over a five- to ten-year period, from its current 122 centers to at least meeting the demand by states and localities for an additional 25 Job Corps centers.

The Federal Government should re-establish a dedicated federal funding stream for community-wide planning and services for out-of-school youth. This would be analogous to the former Youth Opportunities Grant Program, which did so much to encourage community collaboration on behalf of out-of-school youth. (See Chapter 19.) The YO Program resulted in tangible, long-term benefits for young people, but its ambitious concept needed more than three or four years to strike deep roots.

State and federal funds should be used to encourage community college involvement in reconnecting out-of-school youth. Community colleges hold great attraction and promise, particularly for older, out-of-school youth who seek ways to enter or reenter the worlds of education and employment. To encourage community colleges to participate in public school and CBO partnerships and intermediaries aimed at reconnecting out-of-school youth, state and federal funds should be made available to the colleges to extend their outreach and student counseling efforts.

Congress should expand funding for the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. This will make it possible for youth who cannot participate in full-time dropout reconnection programs to partake of adult basic education and secondary school literacy programs in their local public schools, libraries, and community organizations. With the states' matching fund contributions, this is an admirable way to expand this well-functioning partnership which now serves over one million youth annually.

Funders should develop demonstration projects offering stipends or other financial incentives to increase student attendance, high performance, graduation, and continuing education so that students can devote their best efforts to learning and not be deflected by helping to meet their families' severe economic needs. Recognizing that most low-income, out-of-school youth desperately need at least modest income support or stipends to stay in and complete their respective programs, most alternative school and program leaders regard this as an extremely high priority.

Congress should enact and fund the Bush Administration's 2005 proposal amending the Workforce Investment Act to support nationally-competitive challenge grants for out-of-school youth programming. However, funding for this new approach should be in addition to, not at the expense of, WIA's current youth funding for both in-school and out-of-school education and employment training programs. The ability of local workforce investment boards to allocate their WIA youth funds as local priorities dictate should not be impaired by setting arbitrary national percentage allocations.

Funders should help create a learning network to promote opportunities for alternative education providers to advance their professional development. Dropout recovery programs are missing important opportunities because of their relative insularity. Leaders of these efforts generally operate in a trial-and-error mode, often reinventing the wheel because there is so little communication with others pursuing similar missions. Limited help from national program models is available, for example, from YouthBuild USA and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. Many programs clearly benefit from their association with the Washington-based National Youth Employment Coalition and its PEPNet Quality Improvement Awards process. The Alternative High School Initiative, launched in 2003, also has the potential to support collaboration among alternative educators serving disconnected youth.

Overall, however, we deem it highly lamentable that there are so few vehicles for professional collaboration and learning and networks for expressing common concerns and sharing possible remedies. A learning network of and for alternative education providers is urgently needed to:

- support interchange among education providers, allowing them to leverage the expertise of strong existing recovery programs to improve their own effectiveness, and
- enable established dropout recovery efforts to provide technical assistance to those just beginning to address the issue in their communities.

Additionally, we recommend that funders develop an *Annual Dropout Recovery Leader's Award* to recognize quality and innovation and enable selected Leader programs to host and assist visitors from potential new initiatives elsewhere.

High school reform efforts at the local level should include the leaders of alternative education and those working to increase public knowledge of dropout prevention and recovery. Many of the schools and programs we profiled say that they are generally excluded from mainstream and official discussions of high school reform. Even principals of highly successful alternative schools within public school districts regret not being asked to sit at the high school reform table in their districts. Yet, these are the people and the places that have been successful with the youth least likely to succeed in traditional high schools. They have much to teach traditional high schools, not only about how to reengage disconnected youth, but also about what can be done to get it right the first time with students at risk of dropping out.

These tasks are urgent. The time is now. How much longer will America tolerate the scandal of a young person dropping out every nine seconds? If we do not act, what will the America of our children's generation look like? And how will we, ourselves, look back and reflect on how well we have discharged our responsibility to our fellow human beings in distress?