



**CITIZEN MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNITY
INSTITUTIONS: THE PUBLIC EDUCATION
NETWORK'S POLICY INITIATIVES**

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Summary

This report analyzes the results of a bold set of initiatives designed to stimulate and support public responsibility for public education in 14 locales around the country. Local education funds (LEFs) led these initiatives, which received support from the Annenberg Foundation through the LEFs' national organization, the Public Education Network (PEN). In each of the three initiatives, the LEFs were expected to lead a process of community engagement in one area of local education policy: equipping students to meet the standards set forth in accountability systems; improving teaching quality; or strengthening school-community ties.

The LEFs worked to forge a stronger and more durable role for the public in the reform of the public schools. The goal was an active, informed constituency, broadly based in the community, that would hold a shared vision of school reform and would hold the school system accountable for delivering on that vision. Although the initiatives had policy objectives, the main point was less about the substance of policy than about the origins and ownership of policy. The LEFs were expected to lay the groundwork for democratically determined education policies and services that would have staying power.

The initiatives sought to break out of stereotypical images of public engagement. They were not about reforms that originate in superintendents' offices and that enlist public support through an information campaign. Nor were they focused exclusively on the involvement of parents. Instead, the aim was to support active public participation, community-wide, in determining policy directions and holding the school system accountable.

With six-month planning grants followed by three-year implementation grants, the participating LEFs worked toward this ideal. They convened inclusive public conversations about public schools and how to improve them; they enlisted professional service providers in collaboration; and they communicated with policymakers about priorities that emerged.

As evaluator of the initiatives, Policy Studies Associates (PSA) documented these activities and gathered evidence of the extent to which members of the public in the participating communities took action to exercise greater responsibility for public education. The evaluation methods were entirely qualitative, including in-person and telephone interviews with a range of community members, review of documents, and observation of all the key national events of the initiatives as well as several local events.

Based on the analysis of this evidence, the evaluators conclude that in one of the participating sites, the ambitious ideal of the initiatives was very substantially realized. In that site—Mobile, Alabama—the LEF organized broad-

based public participation by Mobile County residents in articulating a vision for the education of all children, pressing for school improvement aligned with that vision, and monitoring the system's progress. Policy and practice have changed in response to public engagement. The success achieved in Mobile demonstrates that the aims of the initiatives are in fact reachable.

Evidence from the other sites suggests that the vision could eventually be realized elsewhere, as well. Nearly all of the participating sites broadened participation in policy conversations and saw some changes in policy, although the public was not the driving force for policy change in these other sites. Some examples include the following:

- Voters in Portland, Oregon, replaced their school board with one more likely to act on a community strategic plan for education
- Public dialogues conducted across the state of West Virginia generated a set of shared beliefs that were translated into action steps at a statewide summit that brought together policy leaders and grass-roots community members
- In Durham, North Carolina, all major officeholders signed a Covenant for Education that gives the community the means to hold them accountable for supporting school improvement
- School-based Community Learning Centers are up and running in Lincoln, Nebraska, with active collaboration and financial support from a range of community agencies

A few participating LEFs made little progress toward realizing the vision of more broad-based and active public responsibility. In each of these cases, staff changes and competing organizational priorities weakened the focus on the initiatives' aims—although even in these sites there were activities consistent with the initiatives, with some resulting response from the public.

Aside from these few least-successful sites, all the other LEFs saw many instances of individuals and organizations in the community attending events, raising their voices for school reform, planning together, and taking action. Most also saw some changes in policy and practice. Whether the public will continue to support and press for a shared policy vision remains an open question at this time, but groundwork is in place for such a result in most of the participating sites.

Because the design of the PEN policy initiatives is unconventional in education reform—not centered on the work of the professionals in school systems, but instead straddling schools and community in order to strengthen both—this report contains a good deal of description of the work that was done

and the community response that ensued. Public responsibility is a new field of endeavor in education reform, and this report seeks to contribute to the field by building a descriptive base of knowledge about it. The report also analyzes the strengths and weaknesses found in the implementation of the initiatives, identifying both local and national factors.

The initiatives have been important to PEN because they demonstrate how LEFs, as organizations that work closely with both school systems and communities, are positioned to take leadership in public responsibility. The initiatives also have broad implications in demonstrating the purposeful mobilization of public responsibility for public education. Looking ahead, it is possible to imagine a basis for education policy that is more democratically grounded and less subject to technocratic or partisan extremes, thanks to its base in an informed and active community.

Acknowledgments

This evaluation depended on the cooperation and candor of the local education fund leaders, board members, staff, and community members. While working long hours for the benefit of their communities, they found time to welcome the evaluation team and to reflect thoughtfully on their accomplishments and struggles in repeated interviews. Becoming better acquainted with all of these individuals has been a privilege.

At the national office of the Public Education Network, Guitele Nicoleau skillfully oversaw the evaluation. She and others in the national office, particularly Rudy Careaga, William Miles, and Wendy Puriefoy, consistently supported a probing look at the implementation of the policy initiatives, offered insights into the emerging issues, and enthusiastically joined in the work of learning from local experiences. The directors of the three policy initiatives—Debra Banks, Robert Saffold, and Richard Tagle—were invaluable partners in raising questions and uncovering answers.

The evaluation team at Policy Studies Associates included Janie Funkhouser, Christina Russell, and Imeh Williams. Their hard work and their insights have contributed immeasurably to the findings presented here.

The Annenberg Foundation supported this work, not only financially but also by believing that the aims of the initiatives would be best served by an independent external evaluation. The support of Gail Levin, Executive Director, is much appreciated.

Although all these individuals made invaluable contributions to this report, its conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author.

Contents

Summary

Acknowledgments

Introduction.....	1
The Aims of the Initiatives	2
The National Evaluation	6
What the LEFs Did: Three Lead Strategies	9
Broad Public Engagement.....	9
Collaboration by Organizations and Professionals	18
The Policy Arena	24
What the Lead Strategies Were and Weren't.....	27
Does the Theory of Action Work?.....	29
It Can Work: Harbingers of Sustainable Change.....	30
Success is Far From Certain: The Challenges	34
Conclusion: Some Success	38
What It Takes.....	39
LEF Roles and Capacities.....	39
Changes for LEFs	41
Leadership.....	42
What It Takes: No Simple Recipe	43
Building on the Initiatives.....	45
References.....	47
Appendix A: Individual Site Summaries	A-1
Appendix B: Behavioral Outcomes Indicating Public Responsibility.....	B-1

Introduction

With support from the Annenberg Foundation, the Public Education Network (PEN) has led a set of initiatives designed to enlarge the role of the public in school improvement. In PEN's view, "public responsibility" will not emerge from conventional, smaller-scale efforts to involve parents more closely with their children's schools or to inform the community about a superintendent's program. Instead, the PEN policy initiatives took as their premise that in a democracy, the public schools will only improve in a sustainable way if a broad-based coalition of community members pushes them to improve and holds them accountable. The initiatives charged PEN's member organizations with moving their communities toward different and more substantial forms of responsibility for their schools.

Wendy Puriefoy, PEN's president, has written: "...without citizen mobilization, reform and continuous improvement in public education cannot occur" (2005, p. 236). She goes on to connect this mobilization to broad civic purposes: "The ultimate aim of citizen mobilization in the context of school reform is to reshape the relationships people have with one another, with their community, their neighborhood, their state, and their country" (p. 250). Thus, the public role envisioned in PEN's work is like the one observed by Mark Warren, who has studied the ways in which different forms of public engagement may benefit a community as well as its schools, and calls for "a renewed vision of education reform linked to the strengthening of civil society in our cities" (2005)

Similarly, Archon Fung writes of the potential benefits of social movements for both public institutions (such as school districts) and communities:

Social movements can thus advance two complementary transformations. They can press governments to reorganize their decision-making in ways that allow the direct and indirect participation of many more voices in areas such as economic development, education, social services, and the environment. They can reorganize community institutions—churches, unions, and other civic associations—not only to engage effectively in traditional political arenas but also to create and take part in a new, more encompassing democratic politics. (2003)

The members of PEN, the "community institutions" charged with carrying out the vision of citizen mobilization, are 83 local education funds (LEFs). They vary in size, from dozens of staff members down to one or two. Some have existed for decades. Although they are independent entities, all have worked closely with their local school systems, and most offer resources to their schools. As community-based intermediary organizations, they often receive grants from foundations that seek educational improvement but are wary of making grants to public bureaucracies.

The LEFs vary in the depth and breadth of their connections with communities. Some have stronger ties to officeholders and other civic leaders than to neighborhood groups; others have broad recognition and participation in many sectors of the community. A recent study, while pointing to the great variation among LEFs, describes their four broad functions as building knowledge, creating infrastructure, encouraging innovation, and developing leadership (Simon, Christman, Hartmann, & Brown, 2005).

The following LEFs and consortia of LEFs participated in these initiatives:

- Alliance for Education (Seattle)
- Durham Public Education Network
- DC VOICE
- Education Alliance (West Virginia)
- Education Partnership (Providence)
- Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools
- Lancaster Foundation for Educational Enrichment
- Mobile Area Education Foundation
- New Jersey LEF Consortium
- New Visions for Public Schools (New York)
- Paterson Education Fund
- Pennsylvania Public Education Partnership
- Portland Schools Foundation
- Public Education Foundation (Chattanooga)

The Aims of the Initiatives

The national office of PEN issued a broad and ambitious charge to LEFs that would choose to participate, by developing a Theory of Action for the policy initiatives in 2001. The Theory of Action asserted that the combination of public engagement and specific school reform goals would result in sustained policy and practice and the public taking responsibility for public schools. It argued that too many school systems lack accountability to their local constituencies, and that the reforms undertaken by school professionals or brokered in back rooms without public engagement are likely to be faddish and ephemeral. It said: “We believe that policy changes can be stabilized when the public is involved in clarifying the problem, diagnosing the causes, developing solutions and monitoring the impact” (Public Education Network, 2001, p. 3).

The Theory of Action identified three categories of the public: policymakers; organized groups; and the public at large. For each, it spelled out strategies and tactics by which LEFs should cultivate public engagement: advocacy with policymakers; community strategic planning with organized groups; and community organizing with the public at large. The Theory of Action

went on to provide examples of these strategies in action. It ended with a vision of the long-term goal:

...to create public demand for good public schools and to have this demand actually improve public schools. When we're done, we envision communities with a substantive education agenda making real changes in student achievement. We envision a strong community voice outside the schools — with its own power and constituency — that argues for improvement and helps guide changes. We envision robust community organizations that always are in the process of building new leadership and sustaining involvement. And we envision an accountability system that places shared responsibility for success with everyone in the community. (p. 11)

Having articulated its theory and a portfolio of strategic approaches, the national office issued requests for proposals for planning grants and then, some months later, implementation grants. The grants would support LEFs in interpreting and implementing the Theory of Action in their communities.

For most LEFs in the PEN network, this work would stretch their missions and capacities in new directions. To be sure, LEFs brought strengths to the work. Significantly, as community-based organizations that sat outside the public school systems and had a mission of educational improvement, they were generally positioned to support and prod their school systems. They had credibility as champions for the education of poor and disadvantaged children.

Still, in order to realize the vision articulated in the Theory of Action, LEFs would have to exercise leadership in their communities, galvanizing a range of individuals and organizations to take action and building their capacity to do so. They would have to make “positioning decisions,” as Simon and colleagues (2005) have termed them: for example, where they would situate themselves in the civic infrastructure, what relationship they would have with the school system, and how visible their work should be.

In addition to spelling out a vision of public engagement and public responsibility, the RFPs from the national office articulated “policy targets” in three domains of policy: Standards and Accountability, Schools and Community, and Teacher Quality. Considerable work, involving nationally prominent experts in each field, had gone into developing a framework for policy action in each area. The Theory of Action had sketched what each of these domains was about, as follows (p. 4):

- Standards and Accountability: PEN seeks to establish systems by which communities hold their school systems and themselves accountable for ensuring that all children have the opportunity to achieve at high levels.

- Teacher Quality: PEN seeks to address the current inequitable distribution of qualified teachers across high-poverty school districts — where students now in need of greatest support to meet academic standards have the least support to do so. The initiative will seek to address recruitment, distribution and retention of qualified teachers to ensure a qualified teacher in every classroom.
- Schools and Community: PEN seeks to integrate public education with the community-based academic and nonacademic support programs (e.g., health, social, recreational, citizenship and youth development, tutoring, mentorships) that help all students achieve at high levels. The initiative will seek to use models such as community schools, full-service schools and others, both to ensure that such programs are available and to invite the “public” back into the public schools as direct beneficiaries of available programs.

The first phase of the initiatives consisted of planning grants to selected LEFs, each receiving \$25,000. Ten LEFs received Standards and Accountability planning grants in December 2000; nine Schools and Community planning grants were awarded in June 2001; and seven Teacher Quality planning grants were awarded in July 2001. During the planning phase, LEFs laid the groundwork for further work in the initiative areas. Some competed for implementation grants, which PEN awarded to five sites in each policy area between July 2001 and March 2002. Also eligible to apply for implementation grants were the recipients of a separate program of grants for data collection and strategic planning in teacher quality, supported by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

The RFPs for the implementation grants of about \$500,000 over three years, each informed by a task force of experts in the substantive domain, spelled out in some detail what was wanted. This was somewhat paradoxical in a set of initiatives that asserted the sovereignty of communities over education policy, and all participants recognized that there would be some tension in guiding the community vision into some degree of alignment with the national policy frameworks. The hope was that the experts’ advice would provide useful scaffolding for the development of specific policies responsive to each community’s collective will.

The most broadly defined initiative was Standards and Accountability, which charged participating LEFs with helping their communities equip schools and children to attain high standards in the following five ways: (1) every child enters school ready to learn; (2) every child has access to a rich curriculum aligned to standards; (3) every child has high-quality instruction; (4) every child

is in a school environment conducive to learning; and (5) every child has access to community services that support and enhance learning.

The Standards and Accountability initiative also strongly encouraged participating LEFs to work statewide. Indeed, two of the five implementation grantees were consortia of LEFs that planned to engage in statewide policy work in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, respectively.

The Schools and Community initiative was aimed at linking a range of services to schools:

- Increased access to services and supports through better use of school facilities
- District and state policies, protocols and programs that ensure the linkage between public schools and community-based programs
- Increased community ownership of local public schools

Finally, the Teacher Quality initiative had the most detailed guidance about the means to its end. It sought broad public engagement in the process of raising the skills of those teachers who work in secondary schools, particularly those serving students of color and students living in poverty. The RFP said:

PEN holds one basic and uncompromising goal for this initiative: a high quality teacher in every public middle and high school classroom. As a means of addressing this overarching goal, the Teacher Quality initiative is concerned with the recruitment, retention, and distribution of highly qualified teachers. The initiative has three outcome areas, developed with the assistance of PEN's Task Force on Teacher Quality, as well as other national experts, LEF member organizations, and the PEN board of directors. These outcome areas are:

Teacher Skills and Capacity – Coordinated activities that allow teachers to grow in their craft, expanding their skills and competencies to meet the needs of students more effectively. Examples include induction programs, on-going professional development, opportunities for teacher leadership, and evaluation aligned to teacher and student standards.

Working Conditions – An improved working environment that will support quality teaching in the targeted schools. Examples include: streamlined recruitment and hiring efforts, reduced teacher load, access to appropriate teaching resources, satisfactory facilities, opportunities for adequate individual and common planning, and supportive principal/administrative leadership.

Compensation – A coordinated set of incentives and differentiated pay models that help attract and retain qualified teachers to the targeted schools and subject areas.

The National Evaluation

Conducted by Policy Studies Associates (PSA), this evaluation began in fall 2001, when the Standards and Accountability sites had begun their work but the RFPs had not yet been issued for implementation grants under the other two initiatives. Thus, the evaluation was largely contemporaneous with the work of the LEFs.

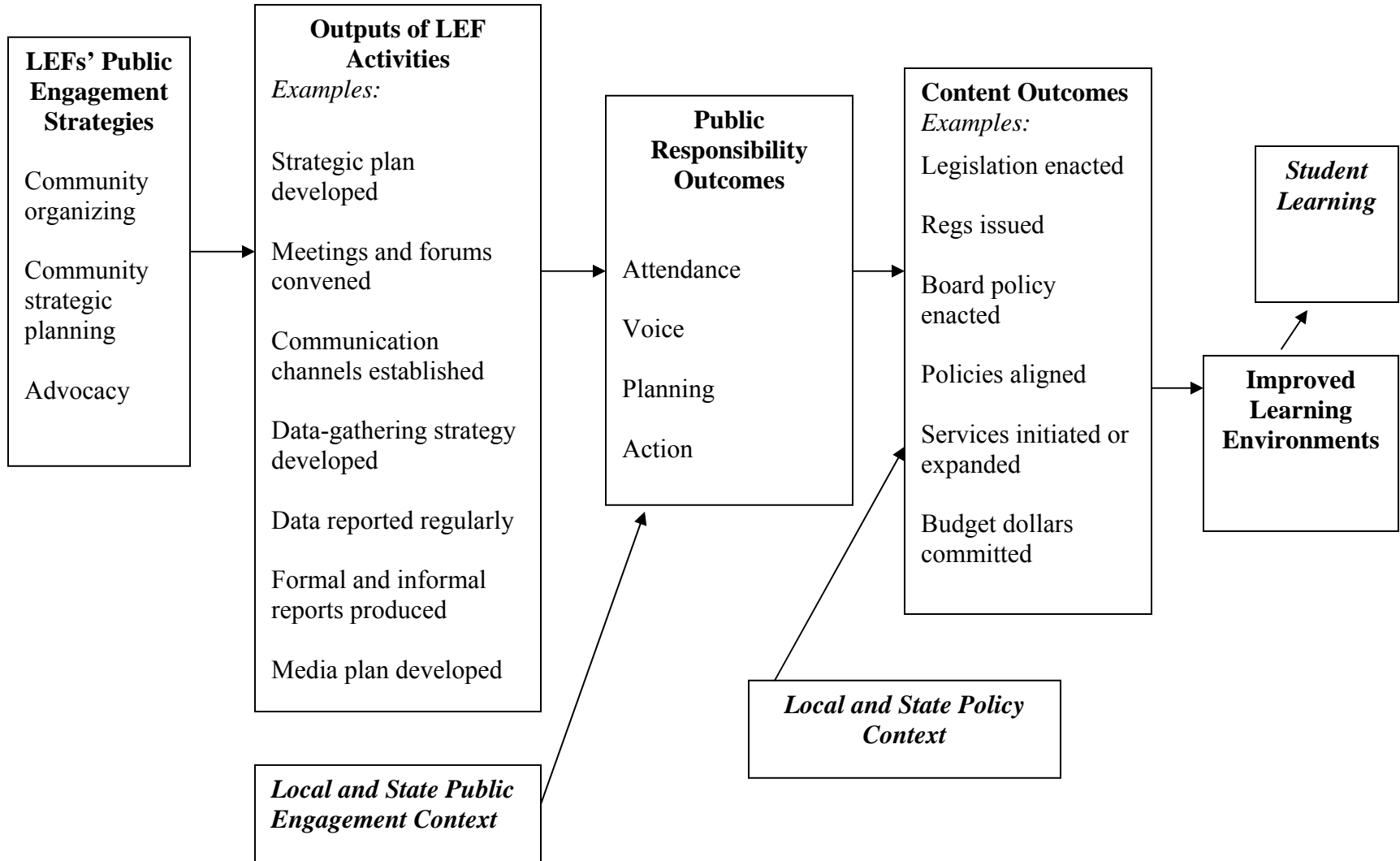
From the beginning, the evaluation was designed to trace the public engagement and policy change emerging in communities. In the logic model for the evaluation, shown as Exhibit 1, the emphasis was on the outcomes (toward the right-hand side of the model), with backward mapping to identify and describe the strategies that supported them. The evaluation did not tally the LEFs' outputs such as numbers of meetings held or publications distributed.

Because PEN's work was new, reflecting emerging ideas about public engagement and public responsibility, the evaluation aimed to describe as much as to analyze. The evaluation team visited sites, conducted in-person and telephone interviews with LEF staff and community members, observed meetings of the grantees, and reviewed all the reports submitted to the national office by the participating LEFs.

The evaluation team also provided frequent feedback to participants about patterns of accomplishments and difficulties observed in the sites. Not only in annual interim reports but also in regular meetings, formal and informal, with the national office, the evaluators offered observations about what people at the sites were saying, doing, and learning. The evaluators also worked with several of the sites as they composed their final reports to the national office. One goal here was to weigh the evidence of their accomplishments through an exchange of observations and views between evaluator and program. Another was to test the evaluators' sense of ways in which a particular site's successes and struggles resembled or differed from those found elsewhere in the initiatives. Although the sites took responsibility for their own reports and the evaluation team takes responsibility for this one, the exchange of views was intended to help each participant put the initiatives in a clearer perspective.

Despite this collaborative relationship, confidentiality has been maintained in the data collected for the evaluation. When participants in the initiatives spoke in large meetings or submitted reports, their remarks were considered to be "on the record." When they spoke to the evaluator, they were assured of anonymity.

Exhibit 1
National Evaluation of Policy Initiatives: Logic Model



The evaluation was charged with testing the Theory of Action by observing and analyzing the results in the sites. The initiatives were launched in 15 sites that initially showed enough will and capacity to be entrusted with carrying out the work. Thus, at a minimum, they could potentially furnish a set of existence proofs: if *any* of the sites carried out the theory with reasonable fidelity, and if there were any results in policy or in the exercise of public responsibility in those communities, it would be possible to conclude that the theory *can* work. There would also be at least one example of how to make it work.

This evaluation has also addressed the extent and nature of results achieved from the launch of the Theory of Action. It has assessed the results in policy, in the exercise of public responsibility, and in changes in the participating LEFs.

In public responsibility, the evaluation used a classification of results into the areas of “attendance, voice, planning, and action”; the specifics of each type of result, by participants (policymakers, groups, or the public) are shown in a table in Appendix B. This framework permitted the evaluation team and PEN to recognize different types or stages of results in the public arena. It provided some needed discipline in focusing on the behaviors of those outside the LEF itself, where important and lasting results of the initiatives could potentially be found.

Across sites, the evaluation has identified patterns—how did the sites operationalize the theory, what results were most common, and what challenges and tensions repeatedly emerged? More speculatively, it also began to assess which results appear to have staying power.

The next section of this report describes the strategies that emerged in the work of LEFs as they came to terms with the Theory of Action. The following section poses the question: did the theory work? Finally, the report offers observations about the capacities that PEN used—and developed—over the course of the initiatives; it discusses both the LEFs and the national office.

What the LEFs Did: Three Lead Strategies

As had been envisioned in the Theory of Action, the work of these initiatives did fall into three categories corresponding to three potential types of participants: the public at large; organized groups or professionals; and policymakers. The work itself evolved over time, however, reflecting the “theories in use” of the participants (Argyris & Schon, 1974). As the LEFs used and further developed their skills, and as they interacted with their communities, they arrived at some characteristic ways of working. These did not necessarily look like the strategies originally set forth in the Theory of Action, which had been community organizing, strategic planning, or advocacy.

Based on the activities and progress of the LEFs over the course of the initiatives, the three lead strategies that made up their theories in use can be described in this way:

- **Structuring and hosting broadly inclusive public conversations** about public schools and how to improve them
- **Enlisting professional service providers** inside and outside the schools in collaboration designed to extend and enhance their professional work
- **Communicating early and often with policymakers** about priorities that the LEF identified

Each is described in this chapter.

Broad Public Engagement

At the outset of the policy initiatives, examples of a deliberate and broad-based process of building public responsibility in education were rare and had not been thoroughly documented. Thus a source of frustration for LEF staff was that they were not sure exactly what public engagement, as envisioned by their national office, would or should look like. The national office staff experienced similar frustration with their inability to offer many specific examples of the vision in action. However, through the actions that the LEFs took and the community response that they encouraged, such examples began to take shape. Over the period of the grants, members of the public in many communities took action for school improvement.

Now, looking back, the field of public engagement has greater clarity, thanks in good part to these initiatives. Several examples from the participating sites show what public engagement in school reform actually looked like. Mobile

County, Alabama, had an especially broad, deep, and sustained experience with public engagement, which is described next. Other sites provide different examples. They included grassroots participation in thinking about schools, in pressing for change, and in holding school systems accountable.

Mobile: Public Engagement Leading to Policy Change

The work of the Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF) illustrates a multi-year process of public engagement that achieved substantial policy change. It had several steps.

Education became a pressing public issue in Mobile in 2001 when budget issues caused the superintendent to threaten to shut down high school football and bands, both cherished institutions in the Mobile community. In interviews for this evaluation, a public official, a civic leader, and a community activist all agreed that the threat to football galvanized public attention. Working with the school system, MAEF launched a major campaign to inform the public about a pending tax referendum. For the first time in 41 years, the citizens of Mobile voted in 2001 to tax themselves for education.

Building on the momentum of the tax referendum, the LEF used its grant from the Standards and Accountability initiative to cast a wide net to engage the public in conversations about the public schools. In February 2002, about 1,400 citizens participated in 48 Community Conversations that lasted about two hours each. For the majority of these Community Conversations, local community leaders (many of whom had been identified through the Vote Yes campaign) hosted friends and neighbors in their homes, churches or community centers across Mobile. In addition, five Community Conversations, one in each school board district, were widely advertised public forums. Using a process adapted from the Harwood Institute, the participants discussed their goals and the challenges for Mobile County schools, and LEF staff recorded the conversations.

The first step was to ask people about values in a very basic and concrete way, asking what community means to them. Some responded that in a community they stand in their front yard and talk with a neighbor. To the LEF, this was important because public discussion in Mobile had become fractured and disconnected. An individual, face-to-face connection with a neighbor was a significant positive value. Having spoken about a sense of personal connection in their community, the participants were then asked what they had in common with the entire county. They spoke of everything from the water system to the values they held in common.

Participants and observers say that this process was a great success. In this diverse district—geographically almost as large as Rhode Island—common ground emerged. “From the bayou to the pine trees to rolling hills, [people] found

a consensus on what they want in schools,” said a public official. A leader in the process agrees: “We found we had far more in common than we had different.”

Out of these conversations, a group of 20 parents and educators formed a Citizens Advisory Team to study school reform across the country and identify the key issues for reform in Mobile. In addition, a group of “Nifty Fifty” citizens was identified out of the Community Conversations to participate in further discussions over the summer of 2002. They produced the Yes We Can Community Agreement, reflecting the perspectives of citizens from across Mobile. The wording of this agreement was critical, says an LEF board member: although an editor wanted to smooth the language, instead the agreement preserved the exact words of citizens who had participated in the original Community Conversations.

Members of the Citizen Advisory Team met with school board members before a board meeting at which the Yes We Can Community Agreement would be considered. At the meeting, nearly 300 community members attended wearing “Yes We Can” stickers. Looking out at the audience, the board endorsed the agreement. A board member later said in an interview, “The way Yes We Can was put together, it transcended race, gender, professions. For the school board to resist would have been terrible [for the board].”

Meanwhile, outside pressures on the school system were also mounting. The state of Alabama had been notified in 2001 that it was out of compliance with the No Child Left Behind requirement for disaggregating data on student performance by subgroups. Mobile, like the other districts in the state, would have to develop a system for tracking student achievement. And in December 2002, the state School Accreditation Committee (SAC) was called in to Mobile because of tension between the school board and superintendent. The SAC placed the school system on probationary accreditation.

Against the backdrop of the probationary accreditation, the district agreed in December 2002 to work with an outside consultant retained by the LEF. The consultant, using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as the framework, provided crucial expertise for a painstaking process of translating the Yes We Can agreement into a strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives. That plan, called the PASSport to Excellence, was adopted by the board in June 2003 and continues to guide the district’s work in 2005-06.

The strategic plan has the following goals:

1. Student achievement: All children can and will become proficient learners who will graduate.
2. Quality leadership: A highly trained and proficient staff, administration and board will provide excellence in

teaching and learning for every student in all classrooms in our schools.

3. Communications/parental and community involvement: We will create a new story about public schools to build and sustain parental and community involvement.
4. Governance: We will establish governance that provides evidence of accountability, trust, compliance, and responsiveness to key communities.
5. Equity: We will ensure that all schools have equal access to needed resources to enable every student to meet high standards.

Bold decisions about budgets and policies have followed from this plan. Schools with the lowest performance received extra resources to carry out their Transformation Plans. Schools were reconstituted and teachers reassigned. When the state teachers' union encouraged every reassigned teacher to file an appeal with the school board, the board stood firm, announcing that it would arrive at 7 a.m. to begin hearing the appeals and would stay as long into the night as necessary. With encouragement and support from the LEF, the board and the local union agreed in 2004 that the district would offer performance incentives for teachers in the lowest performing schools—something that has been prohibitively contentious in many other districts around the country.

Grass-roots participation remains a hallmark of the Mobile process. As part of the accountability system, every school has in its foyer a dashboard display of its improvement targets by grade level. And every school has two “key communicators,” one parent and one teacher, who have been trained in how to describe the school’s dashboard indicators and its progress in meeting goals. All leaders—including central office administrators, the school board, and Yes We Can community leaders—have “one-page plans” showing the actions for which they are individually accountable, and the plans are reported publicly.

West Virginia: Respect and Trust among Diverse Community Members

A mutually trustful discussion about education issues did not always seem attainable in West Virginia, where the Education Alliance (a Charleston-based LEF that works statewide) participated in the Teacher Quality initiative. During the planning period for the initiative, the Alliance convened dialogues in four West Virginia counties. The dialogues brought together parents who were involved with their local schools, parents representing underserved populations, business, teachers, school administrators, school board members, social services,

state legislators, and students. Although the content of the discussions demonstrated that organized professional groups and members of the public shared many beliefs about what constituted teaching quality, the tone told a different story: that they did not necessarily trust or respect one another. They were unaware of how much they agreed on the basics.

Broadly based participation continued to be a hallmark of the LEF's work, however. The implementation phase, like the pilot phase, intentionally drew together diverse participants in each county. In the 16 counties where dialogues were held, diverse representation was maintained: parents, policy makers, business, teachers, and students were all represented in substantial numbers among the 215 participants, although student representation was less than originally hoped, and the cultural and racial diversity of the dialogue fell short in some counties. Participants engaged in large-group and small-group discussions, designed to generate shared understandings about the elements of teaching quality, and to recommend both local and state actions that would support it. As a final step, representatives of the participating counties joined a large array of state leaders at a statewide Education Summit in May 2005.

After the initial distrust voiced during the planning phase, participants arrived at a tone of trust and respect that represented a signal accomplishment of the initiative. Superintendents and high school students, bankers and laborers reached a core set of shared understandings about teaching quality. This reflected a major departure from past efforts at community dialogue in West Virginia, which had been dominated by educators. Even at the statewide summit, the leaders of professional groups in the state attended but did not dominate the discussion.

Paterson: Citizens Engaged around a Five-Year Facility Plan

In annual citywide conferences and other venues for engagement, Paterson citizens responded to encouragement from the Paterson Education Fund and participated actively in planning for community schools.

From the beginning, public engagement and community organizing were central to the LEF's work under the Schools and Community initiative. Citizen involvement built on the LEF's earlier work with The Right Question Project, which equips parents (and others) to monitor their schools by probing for needed information. Rather than arranging for service provision, LEF took the approach of identifying needs and opportunities in the community, and in so doing it worked with and through community members. For example, in October 2003, the LEF organized community volunteers to gather input for a proposal to the state to have a particular neighborhood designated as a Renaissance Zone. Twenty volunteers walked the streets of the neighborhood to interview residents, parents, business owners and employees, community organization staff, and

clergy. They also gathered data to produce neighborhood maps. The result of this work was designation as a Renaissance Zone, in which state investment will potentially be targeted to spur private economic development.

Each January, the LEF has organized and led a community conference on community schools. Although the grant ended in 2005, the conference has been institutionalized; one was held in 2006. While drawing participation from community and state leaders and national experts, the conferences have enabled citizens to learn more about options for new and renovated schools and to offer their ideas. Citizens from all walks of life participate as volunteer translators and facilitators, and over time they developed their skills in leading these discussions. The LEF also organized and facilitated community forums in all six wards of the city, also with volunteer facilitators.

Similarly, the annual conferences have built the LEF's skills in leading community conversations. One important aspect of this work has been the development of presentations that are engaging. Another has been the growth in community members' capacity to help with conference administration and to facilitate community conversations. This capacity building for community volunteers began in 1999, under an anti-racism initiative, and deepened with their engagement in a policy conversation about community schools.

Seattle: Citizens Discussing Teaching Quality

Alliance for Education staff members were determined to realize the Theory of Action vision of authentic engagement of the public at large. Accordingly, under the Teacher Quality initiative, they partnered with many grass-roots community organizations and reached out to citizens in neighborhoods throughout Seattle. Initially, in summer 2003, the LEF conducted nine pilot public dialogues to develop and test an approach to community engagement. The community outreach in this initiative also included training for community members in facilitating public dialogue. Then, in late 2003, the LEF conducted 44 public dialogues with community groups and organizations throughout Seattle, involving more than 1,500 community members. These dialogues included data presentations and an open discussion structured around three key questions:

1. In your opinion, what is required for teachers to meet the individual academic needs of all students?
2. Based on your answer to question 1, what can the community do to support this idea?
3. How do we go about rebuilding trust between schools, teachers, and the community?

Some stakeholder groups initially expressed doubt about the LEF's commitment to public engagement, because they saw it as a business and "insider" organization, not necessarily representative of the community. It was important, therefore, for the LEF to demonstrate that the meetings were a two-way dialogue, not a public-relations exercise.

Chattanooga: Community Forums

Not unlike the LEF in Seattle, the LEF in Chattanooga convened public forums, in partnership with the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga, as part of its Teacher Quality work. Three of the forums were also cosponsored by neighborhood organizations. Participants were principals, teachers, parents, students, school board members, small business owners, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, parents with children in private schools, and former Hamilton County teachers who were lured away by Georgia's higher teacher salaries. The LEF also conducted a forum with the members of the superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, which has representatives from all schools in the district. The LEF produced a brief video for the forums, showing local citizens and teachers speaking about teacher quality. Everyone who attended the forums received an invitation to join a task force to hammer out next steps in the effort to enhance teacher quality. Only a handful of attendees—six in all—accepted that invitation, however.

Washington, DC: Avenues for Engagement

In conjunction with the Teacher Quality initiative, the Ready Schools Project provided direct entrée for the public into the vexing annual struggle to ensure that DC Public Schools (DCPS) buildings are ready to begin effective teaching and learning on the first day of school in September. DC VOICE conducted training for about 50 community members during the summer of 2004 and, through existing relationships at the school level, arranged for them to visit 43 schools that summer. Armed with checklists, the participants gathered data in a common framework addressing school staffing, new teacher support, professional development, teaching and learning conditions, safety and security, facilities, and parent and community involvement. The resulting report highlighted, among other things, the need to support teachers by hiring them earlier and providing additional professional development. These recommendations, supported by data that members of the public gathered, carried weight in the policy changes made by DCPS in spring 2005.

In addition, as part of outreach efforts under the Teacher Quality grant, the LEF worked to make student voices heard in the dialogue around teaching. More than 60 DC youth spoke about their education in seven discussion groups conducted by the LEF, in collaboration with youth organizations, in December

2003 and January 2004. The youth's concern was that they were not learning what they need to successfully function in today's society. They expressed two priorities for high school reform: (1) making the classroom work relevant to students' present and future lives and (2) meeting individual student needs, especially for students who have fallen behind. Participants came from many racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Five of the discussion groups consisted primarily of African-American youth, while one comprised Asian-American and another Latin American youth. The discussions were conducted not only with current high school students (ages 14–18) but also with out-of-school youth (ages 18–20).

Durham: Reaching Out

The Durham Public Education Network (DPEN), participating in the Standards and Accountability initiative, took an inclusive approach to public engagement. Because diverse groups had a stake in the success of the schools and students, and because the LEF had not always worked with the entire community, the LEF reached out widely in identifying problems and setting priorities. Reaching out to “groups that do not like us,” as an LEF staff member put it, has been part of the work. “We are intentionally inclusive,” she said. Building trust through respectful discussion has been another part of the work. A community observer credited the LEF with success: “People are coming to the table to talk without being confrontational. DPEN has created a baseline of civility.” This was no small achievement in a community where school board meetings regularly degenerated into shouting matches, with participants not infrequently being escorted out by the police.

Partnership with the faith community was also part of this work. In June 2004 the LEF and North Carolina Central University held a conference, “Working Together to Close the Achievement Gap: Communities of Faith Making a Difference.” It was designed to build relationships, strengthen capacity, and teach ways of helping students and families. The LEF also maintained active communication with church groups working on education issues.

Portland: Convening Citizens and Informing Voters

The Portland Schools Foundation, early in the Standards and Accountability initiative, found itself at an impasse in supporting the implementation of an existing community plan for school improvement. A series of community forums was the lead strategy that the Foundation chose when faced with this impasse. The Foundation did not have a good relationship with school district leaders at that time. An LEF staff member, quoted in the final report of the local Portland evaluation, characterized the Foundation's choice as follows: “So let's go back out to square one and begin engaging our community again

about what is important and what needs to happen so that they can be equal players and voices that will support change. That is why we did the community forum series. It wasn't just so that we could bring national folks here to talk about education. It was a tool to get folks from the community to come together to talk about education to get a sense that they have some power in this process.”

Large-scale community forums were planned in conjunction with several community-based organizations, including the Urban League, Communities and Parents for Public Schools, Stand for Children, Portland Schools Alliance, Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, and the Coalition for Latino Education. The first forum was, “A Powerful Teacher in Every Classroom: How Do We Get There?” A local observer commented that this forum sparked interest and lively discussion among the participants.

Some individuals who had worked together as LEF board members were frustrated by seeing a school board that was not aggressively working to improve schools. They decided by 2003 that a change was needed. Independent of the LEF—but having been informed by its work over the years—they formed a political action committee and succeeded in electing a new majority to Portland's school board. Another school-board election, in 2004, resulted in a board unanimously supportive of the LEF's perspective.

Elections have also been a vehicle for addressing the recurring struggle for adequate funding for the Portland schools. Despite statewide sentiment for cutting taxes, the citizens of Portland approved a school-financing measure in May 2003. They also rejected a measure in the next year that would have rolled back their taxes.

Pennsylvania: Creating Statewide Opportunities

The Pennsylvania Public Education Partnership was a consortium of four LEFs formed to participate in the Standards and Accountability initiative and create a model for statewide citizen engagement. Major activities included the preparation and dissemination of Voters' Guides for the 2002 gubernatorial election, both the primary and general elections, and the convening of Town Meetings about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2004.

The structure and agenda of the Town Meetings were developed through meetings with constituents across the state. The questions identified for the agenda were:

1. How has NCLB positively affected your child's/your community's schools, and what positive effects do you foresee in the future?

2. What concerns do you have about NCLB's effects on your child's/your community's schools, now and in the future?
3. What do you think the federal government should do to improve education outcomes for children in your community? Can NCLB be implemented better or modified to respond to those needs?

More than 450 people, all told, attended the seven Town Meetings held in cities and towns across Pennsylvania. After an initial overview of major provisions of NCLB, the participants in each Town Meeting broke into small groups to address the three questions above, and then the groups reported out.

All participants were invited to attend the statewide hearing in Harrisburg, and some agreed to testify at that hearing. According to the LEF organizers, reasons for the good attendance and positive response included the public nature of the planning process, the location of Town Meetings in different regions of the state, and cooperation with other organizations in setting up Town Meetings where the participating LEFs did not have a presence.

In its final report to the national office, the Pennsylvania consortium wrote: "At each of these Town Meetings, we were asked, 'When are you coming back?' We were overwhelmed by how much people wanted to be engaged."

Summary: The Strategy of Inclusive Public Conversations

All the LEFs that used public conversations as a lead strategy saw some attendance and voice outcomes. Members of the public showed up and spoke up. In several cases, their voices were further channeled into plans and actions, such as the votes for a new school board in Portland, the identification of action steps for state policy in West Virginia, the Yes We Can agreement and the PASSport to Excellence in Mobile, and the community conferences in Paterson. Such conversations were crucial in bridging the gap between national experts' views and community members' perspectives on education policy.

Collaboration by Organizations and Professionals

PEN's Theory of Action emphasized the grounding of school improvement in a widely shared community vision. For several LEFs, as just described, this translated primarily into organizing and supporting ways of putting citizens' expectations on the table and helping the schools meet those expectations. But the Theory of Action also directed LEFs to bring the existing community infrastructure, including service-delivering organizations, into a closer relationship to their school systems. Particularly in the Schools and Community

initiative, some LEFs selected the strategy of collaboration among professionals as a lead strategy for bringing the theory to life.

Lincoln: Expanding and Institutionalizing Services

In Lincoln, Nebraska, the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools made tremendous strides in establishing and beginning to institutionalize an approach to school-linked services called Community Learning Centers (CLCs). The approach there was less about citizens holding their government accountable and more about professionals and leaders coming together to serve children and families differently, strengthening the links between schools and the kinds of services that were traditionally based elsewhere in the community.

Having set up school-linked services with grant support in the 1990s, only to see the services end when that grant ended, leaders in the Lincoln community were determined to create a system of services with more staying power. They began by gauging support for the notion among people who were active in the schools and community. A poll of 130 such individuals produced the finding that more than 80 percent supported the concept of CLCs. That evidence of public support was a key building block in gaining political, organizational, and philanthropic support.

Another important early step was sponsorship of a trip to Kansas City for civic leaders, underwritten by the planning grant for the Schools and Community initiative. The visits to community schools were informative, but more important was the participants' opportunity to talk and plan while traveling. In discussing their goals for a sustainable initiative, the participants made some important decisions about its design. They also solidified their own pledge to serve as its champions.

Eighteen CLCs were operating in elementary and middle schools when the Annenberg implementation grant came to an end in the 2004-05 school year, with a nineteenth preparing to open in the fall. This represented tremendous growth from the four pilot sites that had been in place as of December 2000. All the centers were supported by funds and in-kind contributions from community agencies, local philanthropy, and the school system. In each site, a site supervisor employed by a community agency directed the work, coordinating it with the school principal. The CLC leadership had decided early on that seeking support for positions would provide more stability than seeking program dollars, since a position is harder to terminate than a cash grant. Thus, for example, the Parks and Recreation Department put support for two site supervisors in its budget starting in 2003-04, cooperating in the negotiation of job descriptions and employment policies.

Beginning with a focus on serving children, the CLCs evolved gradually toward incorporating more services for families. The next projected step, services for entire neighborhoods, had just begun to emerge as the grant ended. With a history of substantial funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, before- and after-school programs remained central in the CLCs' services. The Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) provided leadership in aligning the curriculum with standards and offering staff development. The site supervisors have participated for years in LPS professional development. The centers offered increasing opportunities in academics, enrichment, sports and health, clubs, and community service.

Evidence showed that the CLCs were implementing major elements of their design. In particular, according to the local evaluation, they offered a range of program opportunities for children and youth. Site supervisors were clear about their goals. School Neighborhood Advisory Committees (SNACs) met and reviewed their CLCs' annual plans. These elements of CLC design were implemented with reasonable consistency across the 16 sites visited in two years of the evaluation, as judged by a broad-based group of site visitors who were involved in the development of CLCs.

The CLC model links schools and the community through collaboration among service providers, especially the professionals in schools and other agencies. It has done this effectively. Not only did collaborators work together in accordance with the CLC mission and guiding principles, but partners supported the initiative financially. For example, lead agencies like the YMCA, Family Services, and Lincoln Parks and Recreation supported the salaries of site supervisors. The YMCA used revenues from its facilities in a wealthier neighborhood to fund two CLCs.

In assembling these very active partnerships, interagency collaboration brought many practical challenges in staffing, facilities use, and programming. The partners had to agree to work collaboratively, relinquishing the idea of total control or credit. In coordinating among agencies, the CLC leadership had to balance commitment to the core mission and principles of CLCs with the autonomy that each site needed. All of this required a great deal of learning. Over time, experience made it easier to draw up new memoranda of understanding, heading off issues that in earlier years might have threatened to derail a partnership.

Connections to grass-roots community members took two forms in the CLCs. First, community members were the beneficiaries of the services. Second, as members of the SNACs, some of them participated in setting priorities. Developing capacity in the SNACs was part of the work in Lincoln. For example, members attended annual "summits" for leadership development.

The initiative in Lincoln was not aimed at ratcheting up school-system accountability to the community. Indeed, an early challenge in the work was the district leaders' concern that the initiative would be explicitly or implicitly critical of their performance. A leader in the initiative explained in 2003 that the phrase "public engagement" has a connotation suggesting something is broken.... We had a breakthrough in the last few months [with the] district finally coming to the realization that concept of engaging the public is a positive thing and in the long run will help them accomplish their mission.... [Earlier, there was] a lot of skepticism, feeling that we were threatening." In interviews, leaders of the initiative took care to explain that they held the school system in high regard and were merely aiming to complement and support its existing mission. For the long term, however, they also emphasized that wider community engagement could only strengthen the health of the school system as a civic institution.

Lancaster: Convening Professionals in "Switzerland"

Much like the LEF in Lincoln, the Lancaster Foundation for Education Enrichment took on a mission of connecting social services more directly with children and families by connecting them in schools. The Annenberg grant supported the LEF, which is a very small one, and its partner in the work, the School and Community Network (formerly named the Network for Safe and Healthy Children). The Network is itself a coalition of more than 90 service providing organizations. At the beginning of the initiative, the executive directors of the LEF and the Network had working relationships with key partners because of their history of engagement in education and community issues in Lancaster. Those original networks grew and strengthened.

In the second year of the initiative, the Network changed its mission from a statement about "physical health, physical safety, and mental/ emotional/ spiritual well-being of children" to one focused on capacity building and inter-organizational relationships: "to increase the capacity of the School District of Lancaster and community organizations for sustainable school and community partnerships to benefit students and families." The result of strategic, deliberate relationship building was that partners came to the table more and more readily.

Striving for inclusiveness and transparency, the Foundation and Network achieved credibility as conveners. As a member of the Leadership Team commented: "The Network is not a threat to anybody. [Usually when a meeting is called], you ask, 'Who's controlling this?' Egos come into play. The Network is like Switzerland. It's neutral. There is no ulterior motive."

The initiative in Lancaster embraced the model of community schools, and it set about putting that model in place. The initiative leaders reasoned that they would garner support if and only if other professionals could actually see community schools at work. By the end of the funding period, all four middle

schools in Lancaster and five elementary schools had in place at least some of the elements of true community schools. Key building blocks at the school sites included after-school programs, on-site behavioral health services, and social-work case management and family support.

For the LEF and the Network, service delivery was important for two reasons. First, it could help children and families. The Student and Family Advocates based in schools met needs that ranged from the simple (a warm coat on a cold day) to the complex (long-term mental health services). The school served as the primary point of contact for service delivery or referral.

Second, the services offered a tangible rallying point for support for community schools. Because full-service community schools were a novel idea, it was deemed essential to have working examples to show to decision makers. Rather than engage in lengthy discussion or planning before putting a full set of services in place, Lancaster began with the services that could be most easily set in motion, using those early accomplishments to demonstrate the value of the approach. A participant commented that she had heard influential community members say the approach “did work, because services were delivered.”

New York: Partnerships around Small Schools

New Visions for Public Schools, the LEF in New York City, participated in the Teacher Quality initiative at the same time as it led a much more extensive initiative in the establishment of small high schools. Not surprisingly, much of the teacher quality work in New York was closely related to the New Century High Schools initiative. It included the involvement of community organizations as key partners in school management, after-school services, and teacher professional development. Through documentation and analysis of these partnerships, the LEF hoped to generate useful models for itself and other organizations to follow in improving teaching and learning through partnerships. It attended to the technical aspects of partnerships: for example, it studied the costs of partnerships; and it worked with lawyers on briefing documents and a standardized memorandum of understanding for potential partners.

Community partners in this effort also met in a network with school principals to discuss recurring problems and challenges. The LEF’s work with partners, unlike more conventional and superficial partnership programs in education, featured hands-on engagement with issues of teaching and learning.

Paterson: Community-Based Organizations at the Table

By establishing a steering committee at the outset of the Schools and Community initiative and by continuing to reach out to other organizations, the

Paterson Education Foundation started a process that brought issues of educational facilities into the foreground for organizations that would not otherwise have attended to those issues. Having seen that school facilities are part and parcel of community development, other local organizations began to take the lead in some of the discussions of schools and community.

One example was the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity, which became engaged early in the discussions of community schools. Through its exposure to the LEF's work, the local Habitat chapter changed its policy on "sweat equity," deciding that volunteer service at the annual community schools conferences would meet the definition of sweat equity for prospective residents. This policy change signaled the organization's recognition that the conferences were valuable to the community.

The Paterson Alliance, an umbrella group for community-based organizations, worked in an increasingly collaborative mode over the course of the initiative. The discussions of community schools helped Alliance participants see the interrelationships among the specific issues that each organization addresses. When a particular issue, such as hunger, would come up in meetings, each participant was asked to consider how that issue could affect the outcomes that his or her organization cared about. In this way, the facilitation of these conversations helped to bring the organizations closer to a shared viewpoint.

Collaboration among local organizations was far from easy. According to LEF leaders, their coalition-building work benefited from their experience in leading anti-racism training, which equipped them to confront difficult topics and bring race issues to the forefront of the conversation. Because the history of Paterson's racial dynamics continues to resonate in current issues, this experience was an asset to the LEF in bringing diverse groups to the table.

Summary: The Strategy of Professional Collaboration

Enlisting professionals and organizations in collaboration was a lead strategy that often led to very tangible results. The Community Learning Centers in Lincoln, the community schools in Lancaster, and the partnerships in New York were among the examples of up-and-running results of this strategy. By focusing primarily on organized groups, some LEFs were able to make rapid strides in getting to the point of service delivery within the brief three-year period of their initiative grants. By working hard, they moved their collaborating partners swiftly through the stages of attendance, voice, and planning to arrive at action. Over the longer run, they might eventually gain broader community buy-in and participation, although this outcome has not yet been demonstrated to result from the strategy of professional collaboration.

The Policy Arena

Every LEF participating in these initiatives attempted to influence policy in some way at some time. However, some of them made the direct engagement of policymakers a lead strategy. Some examples follow.

Durham's Covenant for Education

A critical strategic step taken by the Durham Public Education Network in the Standards and Accountability initiative was the formal enactment and signing of a community covenant for public education. An elaborate public signing ceremony in March, 2003, convened hundreds of leading public figures—the mayor, city council members, county commissioners, the superintendent, board members, and others—to endorse the one-page covenant.

The Covenant for Education concludes with these words:

We supporters of public education in Durham, North Carolina, do hereby agree to work for the improvement of public education and closing the achievement gap by committing our time, energy, and resources; working in partnership with one another and the public schools; and coordinating and sharing our resources to the benefit of all students in Durham's public schools.

We make this commitment to our community's children and call upon all citizens to commit their time, energy, and resources to ensure the highest achievement of all children in Durham's public schools. We pledge to make a quality education for every child a top community priority.

The covenant was a key link in an overall strategy designed to move from planning (the covenant) to further action. Not allowing civic leaders to endorse education and move on, the LEF repeatedly reminded them that they had signed a covenant. It invited them to meet the public again and again in events that would showcase needs and program opportunities in education. It also encouraged them to invest staff time and resources in planning and services. With the covenant putting the entire civic leadership on record in favor of a high priority for education-related programs, the LEF believed that agencies had a mandate to solve the problems that faced students and their families, and the LEF reminded them of that mandate.

Maintaining the visibility of issues related to education, the covenant signing was followed by formation of a Covenant Task Force. With more than 40 members from business, community-based organizations, schools, government, and parents, the task force met monthly. The LEF provided important staff support to the task force, which undertook formal processes of assessing needs

and mapping assets. A needs assessment for each school in the Durham Public Schools generated detailed information about the schools' challenges. The task force presented the findings to the board of education, other public agencies, and the community at large. School principals used the findings in their management retreat, and schools began to cite the data in their fund raising.

Providence: City and State Support for Services

From its original base in one low-income neighborhood in Providence, the Schools and Community initiative as carried out by the Education Partnership has evolved as a model for a set of related programs with a higher public profile. (The initiative began under the auspices of the Providence Public Education Fund an LEF that later merged with another organization to form the Education Partnership.) The mayor endorsed the service model early on. The governor of Rhode Island has also proposed state funding for after-school services.

Currently, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), incubated by the Education Partnership, is a public-private partnership led by the mayor of Providence. Developed in a process that involved more than 100 leaders from business, government, and philanthropy, it aims to provide out-of-school time learning opportunities for children and families throughout Providence. The alliance has received major support from the Wallace Foundation, which selected it as a site for a national initiative in after-school services, as well as from Bank of America.

New Jersey: Working with *Abbott* Implementation

Opportunities and challenges in New Jersey have followed from the major state court decision on school funding, the *Abbott* decision. The history of this decision is complex, but its essence involves a ruling that urban schools needed massive amounts of extra help, and that the state should provide it. Implementing this decision has been a challenge for the state.

With funding from the Standards and Accountability initiative, awarded to the Paterson Education Foundation as the lead agency in a statewide partnership, New Jersey organizations and individuals working directly with schools took steps toward routine, active, participation in state policy discussion. Starting at the outset of the initiative, when two key PEF staff were each appointed to one of the state-level working groups on *Abbott* implementation, LEFs and their community-based allies took on more visibility in the state policy world. LEF members or strategic partners became members of the working groups on State Takeover Districts, Measuring Student Achievement, School Facilities, K-12 Education, and Early Childhood Education.

Local officeholders for whom Trenton, the state capital, had appeared somewhat remote and alien became increasingly comfortable making their views and concerns known there. Somewhat to the surprise of LEF staff, being heard and remembered in Trenton has not been difficult. On reflection, they concluded that one reason was that they bring credible, understandable community concerns to the forefront. For example, the executive director once asked policymakers to imagine that their air conditioning was turned off, and to think about how much work they would get done. Then she explained that schools, too, need air conditioning so that their work can get done. The LEF staff have also seen the power of simply writing letters to policy makers. Receiving a knowledgeable, individual letter turned out to be a rarity for the head of the state board of education.

Tools that make policy accessible to citizens have long been part of this LEF's stock in trade. A reporting format, "Understanding School Budgets," reduces complex documents to clear summaries that reveal spending priorities. The LEF published this report to coincide with mandated local budget hearings, as a tool to help communities advocate for full implementation of the *Abbott* decision in these respects:

- Per-pupil funding equal to spending in successful suburban schools
- Needed supplemental programs to "wipe out student disadvantages,"
- Comprehensive educational improvement to deliver the *Abbott* programs and reforms at the school site
- State assurance of adequate funding and full, effective and timely implementation in districts and schools

The LEF also used the School Budget Report in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Assembly Appropriations Committee, and the State Board of Education.

West Virginia: House Bill 4669 Addressing the Achievement Gap

Research and testimony by the Education Alliance played a part in the formulation of a West Virginia bill addressing the achievement gap, with a mandate for community participation. The Education Alliance research on the achievement gap included a compelling report based on focus groups conducted with high school students, *Student Voice: West Virginia Students Speak Out about the Achievement Gap*. Another report, *Bridging the Achievement Gap: The Role of Professional Development for Teachers*, incorporated national data and themes of the Teaching Quality initiative. Based on this research, the Executive Director

of the Education Alliance asked to testify before the House Education Committee. The chair turned to a committee member during the hearing and said, “I want you to draft a bill to address this.”

This bill, enacted in 2004, was designed to support a five-year effort to close the achievement gap for African-American students and students from low-income families in the 10 counties with the highest rates of minority and low-income students. It was funded with a \$700,000 appropriation in its first year. Up to 30 schools across the 10 counties will develop strategies for closing the gap. The bill provides that the schools will work with community organizations.

Summary: Communicating with Policymakers

Gaining visibility on the policy scene in a variety of ways (such as Durham’s covenant, the delivery of services in Providence, and legislative testimony in New Jersey and West Virginia), several LEFs saw results. Policymakers lent their voices to the initiative aims by using the vocabulary and conceptual frameworks of the initiatives. They made plans and, in some instances, appropriated funds. LEFs generally found that their base of community participation lent important authority to their communications with policymakers.

What The Lead Strategies Were and Weren’t

These lead strategies reflect the evaluation’s after-the-fact analysis of some characteristic ways in which the participating LEFs worked. As each LEF gained familiarity and comfort with the policy initiatives, its theories in use took shape. By describing what the LEFs did and how the communities responded, we can revisit aspects of the original Theory of Action, lending it more specificity and—crucially—some evidence of its results.

It is important to remember that the LEFs participating in these initiatives did not have descriptions like these to guide their work. They were inventing strategies as they went along, typically trying to attend to the three parts of the public but working with the notions of community organizing, strategic planning, and advocacy. Because each LEF was improvising and learning, there were no sites that brought together all of the theory-in-use strategies described here. In future efforts, it would be interesting to see whether the combined use of all three would provide powerful leverage for more far-reaching change.

This report turns next to an analysis of the overall successes and shortcomings of the initiatives in their sites.

Does the Theory of Action Work?

Although a far cry from an experimental research design, the launching of the three initiatives was in some ways a test of the Theory of Action. If no participating sites had gained traction in cultivating public responsibility or channeling public engagement toward policy change, the Theory of Action would clearly need revision if not abandonment.

The evaluation set out to learn, at a minimum, whether the Theory of Action *could* work—to see whether these initiatives yielded an existence proof for the theory. It was also designed to identify patterns in the results found locally, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the LEF work that was guided by the theory, and of the support that the national office provided.

As the initiatives wound down, the question of their sustainability rose in prominence, and that is also a focus here. Much discussion took place among the sites, the national office, and several consultants involved in the work, some of it aimed at figuring out what “sustainability” would mean for these initiatives. Was it about LEFs continuing the specific activities that had been supported by the grant funds? Or about results—in policy, practice, and public engagement—that would have staying power? This evaluation emphasizes the staying power of the results. There is, however, the caveat that little time has elapsed since the end of the grant period, making the assessment of durability somewhat speculative.

The sites fell into three groups with respect to the theory’s results. First, Mobile offers a unique example. There, the results showed considerable fidelity to the original theory: with LEF leadership, the citizens of the county articulated a policy destination; a broad base of committed citizens repeatedly made their views known to the school board and superintendent; policy changes were put in place; and a framework for continuing transparency and public accountability was created.

Second, in a large group of the other sites, the policy changes realized during the grant period did not flow so directly from grass-roots citizen action. Some sites had grass-roots engagement that had not, as yet, produced policy results. Some had policy change that resulted from the actions of civic leaders; these actions in some cases coincided with—but did not directly result from—citizens’ views expressed through broad-based public engagement. In Lincoln, for example, organized groups and civic leaders have considerable commitment to the Community Learning Centers that took root under the Schools and Communities initiative. Their engagement in enhancing the school experience (by supporting and delivering services) is genuine; they represent a broad base of professionals and organizations; and they are part of the public, although not the grass-roots public.

Finally, there were a few sites in which less happened as the result of the initiatives. Typically, they experienced staff turnover and did not enjoy executive-level leadership for their work on the initiatives.

Most sites, though, show a mixed picture of successes and struggles. We analyze all of these in this chapter, recognizing that successful sites were hampered by many of the same challenges that appeared in less successful sites.

It Can Work: Harbingers of Sustainable Change

Results in several sites, as will be summarized below, demonstrate that an LEF adhering to some interpretation of the Theory of Action could see changes come about in policy and practice. In different ways, many LEFs strengthened the infrastructure for problem solving in their communities. We trace here the evidence of that strengthened infrastructure.

Citizens Holding the School System Accountable

In Mobile County, the general public holds major responsibility for the public schools. Citizens watch the work of the school board, superintendent, and schools. They know what they expect to see, and they demand it. The LEF director summed up the work in this final report submitted to the national office in 2004:

We learned how important it is that the strategic plan originated in a broad-based community process for genuine public ownership. We have learned that public engagement is **the** lever for systemic change and that ... it is the currency that we stand on when defending decisions and defining direction. ... So, we have learned how to reconnect our community and public schools[:] By first establishing high expectations through a collective and shared vision and then by tying that vision to an action framework that delivers measurable results. When the community sees its leaders and institutions doing the work of the people, by the people, and for the people it is authentic. PEN's Theory of Action provided Mobile, Alabama with a formula that properly highlights the centrality of public responsibility and democratic participation.

Mobile thus completed the full cycle of establishing expectations, implementing change, and maintaining accountability.

Local Leaders Supporting a Policy Change

Several LEFs saw policy changes supported by coalitions of agency leaders and other professionals. Forging these alliances took a great deal of work, and it was arguably consistent with the Theory of Action. The alliances may have lasting value in strengthening the community's capacity to work on problems.

For example, in Lincoln the CLCs enjoy the support of a high-level Leadership Council that draws together local and state leaders from a wide range of agencies and institutions. Their imprimatur and their active participation in decision making have helped pave the way for support and involvement by many different kinds of agencies, which now work in unusually close partnership. Participating agencies also contribute substantial financial support to the initiative. For example, lead agencies like the YMCA, Family Services, and Lincoln Parks and Recreation support the salaries of site supervisors at their respective sites. The YMCA uses revenues from its new facilities in an affluent part of town to fund its work at two CLCs. The Lincoln Housing Authority became a lead agency and pledged more than \$70,000 for a site supervisor, program staff, and other program costs.

Other policies have been enacted in response to information that LEFs brought to bear. To some extent, in offering information and advice, the LEFs were able to claim credibly that they were speaking for community sentiment. These examples fall short of demonstrating what one participant called the "pure Theory of Action," in which a groundswell of public demand would lead in a straight line to policy, and grass-roots citizens would hold leaders accountable for their response. However, these examples are at least consistent with the Theory of Action because they reflect a demand for change emanating not just from the LEF but from an organized group of community partners. They include:

- New policies for teacher induction enacted in the District of Columbia, including a much earlier deadline for teachers to give notice of their resignation or retirement (enabling the system to begin its hiring process earlier)
- Professional development funds used for new and different programs in Seattle, as advised by the Alliance
- A new approach to after-school services in Providence
- A school board policy in Paterson formally supporting community schools
- Inclusion of community schools in the strategic plan of the Lancaster school district

In West Virginia, where the LEF worked statewide, the summit held in May 2005 was designed to lay groundwork for policy change in the next legislative session. The statewide summit, as the culmination of a bottom-up process of engagement, generated many recommendations. If policymakers choose to pursue any of these policy targets, they will be able to cite public support. A concise write-up of the results of the public engagement provides the briefing material that policymakers will need. Using this briefing paper, several policymakers will be in a stronger position to move forward on issues of importance to them. Legislators will be able to point to widespread support for improving the system of teacher evaluation. They can also point to support for better teacher preparation and professional development. At the same time, the teachers' unions can cite support for higher salaries.

Local Philanthropy Committed to Continuation

The engagement of local philanthropy represents an important advance in operationalizing the Theory of Action. The original Theory of Action did not dwell on local philanthropy as a target of action, but several LEFs astutely engaged local grant makers in the work, with the result that some of the changes they have brought about are being sustained financially. Again, this gives promise of lasting effects for communities.

In Lincoln, local foundations took prominent roles in supporting CLCs from the beginning. Early support from the Lincoln Community Foundation and the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA, an independent quasi-governmental agency) paved the way for a feasibility study and the creation of the four pilot sites. NIFA later elicited additional support when it offered to fund a site for five years if the community would match its contribution. By soliciting support from banks, the CLCs were able to raise enough matching funds to support three sites.

The CLCs have gained two kinds of funding commitments that are difficult to secure: support for operations rather than direct service; and multi-year support. The Lincoln Community Foundation not only provides funding for operations but has advocated such support in conversations with other local philanthropies, saying that effective services depend on a stable infrastructure. The Woods Charitable Foundation has offered a three-year funding commitment to the CLCs, something that it rarely does.

Lancaster, similarly, has sought and received key support from local philanthropy. For example, early funding for the initiative came from the Lancaster Osteopathic Foundation. That foundation not only continued to provide funds but forged a relationship with the school system: a school board member and a principal involved in the Schools and Community initiative were invited to join the foundation's board. Other examples include a fundraising appeal from

Samaritan Mental Health Services specifically mentioning that donations would help support the services based at Hand Middle School.

Support from local grantmakers was pursued strategically in Lancaster. With advice from the Finance Project, the LEF and the Network kept local funders informed about the work and engaged in helping set its direction. A representative of the Lancaster Community Foundation was invited to join the initiative's Leadership Team and did so. Having learned about the work in depth through that involvement, he arranged for a presentation at the foundation's annual meeting. The foundation then provided a grant of almost \$250,000 to support the operational budget of the Network for two years. With so many local philanthropies favoring grants that provide tangible services to individuals rather than supporting behind-the-scenes coordination, this operational grant represented an important milestone.

In Seattle, the Gates Foundation has provided a grant for engaging the public around small schools. The Paterson LEF has also received New Jersey-based philanthropic support for engagement work.

A Way of Working Taking Hold in the Community

Another type of sustainable result from the initiatives is the incorporation of public engagement into the standard operating procedures of other agencies and organizations with which the LEFs have worked. In Seattle, for example, the public engagement process developed by the LEF has taken hold in both the school system and the local teachers' union.

The school district held a series of community forums in order to gain input into its five-year transformation plan, and to engage the community around the notion of school consolidation. During the process of developing its new five-year plan, Seattle Public Schools organized several planning committees for public input. LEF staff members participated on the planning committees, and the LEF helped fund the engagement efforts. The resulting plan contains several benchmarks related to teaching quality. The LEF is also providing resources to help the district engage the public on other topics

The union, the Seattle Education Association, has adopted the LEF's process of public engagement in order to have dialogues with teachers and administrators related to developing a new teacher evaluation system. It invited an LEF staff member to help train teachers in a public engagement process and then polled its teachers, who reported with a strong majority (about 70 percent) that a focus on student academic achievement should be central to the new teacher contract. This response from the rank and file helped the union and Seattle Public Schools agree on a new five-year teacher contract that provides for development of a new teacher evaluation system.

In New Jersey, after some years of working with the Paterson LEF, some community organizations have built their capacity not only to work collaboratively with each other at the leadership level, but also to engage in more genuine dialogue with the public at large. The Paterson NAACP chapter held a candidates' forum before the last school board election, featuring questions from the community. The Education Law Center in Newark also increasingly recognizes the importance of listening to community voices, according to observers in the LEF.

Success Is Far From Certain: The Challenges

The Theory of Action called on LEFs to stretch their capacity in many ways. Predictably, not all were able to move skillfully in and among different realms of activity: organizing large public events; bringing policymakers and civic leaders to tables large and small for public and private conversations; mustering data; and shining a spotlight of accountability into the policy arena. If the Theory of Action is to guide future work in the PEN network, the LEFs and their national office will need to learn how to overcome the many challenges that recurred across sites.

Moving from Engagement or Service to Policy Targets

Identifying and pursuing policy targets was not easy for participants in these initiatives. Several sites started with extensive work in public engagement, and some started with service delivery. In either case, making the transition to a focus on policy was usually a challenge.

For sites that began with particularly broad-based processes of public discussion, distilling the many voices into a clear statement of a policy target was difficult at best. The Seattle LEF, for example, struggled with this transition. Wary of imposing an arbitrary destination on the people who had been invited to participate, the LEF did not know how to make the transition from wide-ranging discussion to convergence. Staff members were keenly aware that members of the public would not want to serve as window dressing for someone else's agenda. They felt that they lacked a good mechanism for faithfully capturing the richness of the public discourse and translating it into clear goals.

The West Virginia LEF, having faced the same conundrum, hit upon the solution of having its evaluation contractor assemble a report summarizing the public concerns. With bar graphs and numbers, the evaluators claimed credibility for an easily digestible set of talking points extracted from a huge volume of public comments. This solution emerged very late in the life of the initiatives, however, when other sites were not in a position to adopt it.

For the Schools and Community sites that used the grant funds to put services in place for children and families, moving from programmatic concerns to a policy perspective was also challenging. In a spring 2003 convening, many expressed discomfort with the idea of identifying policy targets. Over the next two years, although their discomfort with the policy realm eased to some extent, staff members in these sites generally focused more on issues of service delivery and funding. In some cases LEF board members added to the tension by insisting that providing service must remain the primary aim of the LEF.

Entering the Policy Arena

Throughout the initiatives, LEF executive directors and board members alike had concerns about taking higher-profile roles in community mobilization. LEFs' past accomplishments have depended in part on their credibility as neutral conveners of people and organizations with a variety of viewpoints. Thus, taking a position on public policy issues and rallying support for that position brought a sense of risk.

These risks were not theoretical. In interviews for the national evaluation, some school district leaders emphasized that there are limits to the LEF's claim to leadership in a community drive for school improvement. For example, a superintendent said in an interview that the LEF in that district was "not representative of the community" and complained that it was trying to end-run the school system. A newspaper editorial publicly criticized the Seattle LEF in July 2003 for working on policy rather than sticking to a more traditional fund-raising role.

An LEF executive director commented at a PEN meeting that there was a negative reaction from some community leaders when the LEF "went from preaching to meddling." Although this reaction did not necessarily deter the LEFs, it was an obstacle.

Grass roots participants, too, might object to the LEFs' efforts to claim a leadership role in community discussions. In particular, issues of race and class often bubbled just below the surface—or came to the fore in confrontational ways. In a nation profoundly shaped by a history of institutionalized racism, there is no simple way to resolve the tensions that arise in racially charged discussions such as those around the distribution of educational opportunities. If the LEFs approached these discussions naively, they encountered opposition or disengagement.

Straddling the Expert/Citizen Divide

The Theory of Action envisioned public mobilization around policies for the improvement of schools, and the RFPs spelled out many specific policies that would be associated with teacher quality, with closer ties between schools and community, and with opportunities to meet standards. In implementing the initiatives, however, the LEFs found that the allegiance of an engaged public to these or other pre-specified policy targets was tenuous at best.

The PEN policy initiatives varied in the extent to which they initially articulated specific targets. Standards and Accountability, which defined a very broad policy terrain, accommodated broad community agreement on principles. Teacher Quality, at the other end of the continuum, sought to advance a detailed agenda for supporting teachers in middle and high schools, although some communities might instead have been more easily engaged around elementary schools or around more general endorsements of high-quality teaching. Engaging the grassroots public around issues of teaching quality proved to be tricky, because these discussions quickly became very technical.

Several issues came to the fore as LEFs tried to mobilize the public around policy targets. First, maintaining enthusiastic public engagement became difficult when the conversation turned to policy and program mechanisms such as teacher induction programs or common planning time. The professionals collaborating on Schools and Community service delivery, similarly, encountered disengagement by parents who had been invited in to join technical discussions among specialized professionals.

If parents and community members disengaged from the specifics, the LEFs then struggled with a second problem, which was a sense that the reform had lost its moorings in broad-based ownership. Technical experts, once they enter a local discussion, may use a community as a stage on which to showcase their pet reforms. Members of the public may feel that, once again, their engagement has been exploited in support of a predetermined agenda.

It turned out that devising detailed policy targets or prescriptions, especially at an early stage of the work, did not help build public responsibility. A sense of community solidarity and support did coalesce in several sites among professionals or the general public, but it arose from face-to-face discussions that built trust and social capital over time, leading to greater public responsibility. When LEFs tried to shape their initial work around specific policy prescriptions, they did not gain broad-based community support for those policies. “This is not rocket science,” the Mobile LEF director often said, “it’s political science.” She had found that technical specifics of data and policy were not the key factors in engaging the public, but that instead the political dynamics of participation and influence were more significant.

Finding and Creating Opportunities in Difficult Civic Arenas

Finally, LEFs often struggled with civic environments that were unresponsive to the level and kind of public engagement that the LEFs' work was able to inspire. In Buffalo, an LEF that embarked on the Schools and Community initiative simply failed to gain any traction in local policy or practice amid organizational and civic turmoil. Changes in the LEF leadership and mission came at the same time as municipal budgets were in crisis and priorities for school improvement were hotly contested. In this environment, progress on the Schools and Community aims proved elusive. By mutual agreement with the national office, the grant to Buffalo was ended early.

A site that carried out serious work in public engagement only to experience frustration was Paterson, where ongoing municipal corruption made school construction an unattainable policy aim. Three school system employees have been jailed. Because contracts for facilities and services are lucrative for corrupt local officials, a process of community engagement is not necessarily going to result in actual contracts. The slowness in launching construction may be associated with corruption at high levels, something that has long been part of the landscape in New Jersey politics. Over time, greater transparency may result from active community participation, but at this point the slow government response to community wishes threatens to discourage citizens from continuing to participate.

In Paterson and other sites, the initiative was not equal to the challenge of creating an overwhelming momentum of public engagement adequate to overcome political obstacles. Over the long term, with continued efforts, it is possible that corrupt or recalcitrant public officials might come to fear the wrath of an engaged citizenry. But during the life of these initiatives, the force of public will was weaker than the entrenched resistance.

Working statewide was another challenge that the locally based LEFs could not effectively surmount. LEFs in the Pennsylvania consortium, while reporting that they had greatly increased their understanding and skill in the statewide civic arena, acknowledged that their consortium had not become a powerful force in that arena. Similarly, the effort to launch or revive several LEFs in New Jersey and forge them into a consortium to address *Abbott* implementation was too much of a challenge for the scope and duration of this grant. In each of these cases, the interorganizational work took valuable time. The consortia were also hampered by the weaknesses of some of their members, such as the fledgling status of some of the New Jersey LEFs. Building up these organizations was legitimate and worthwhile work, but one could not realistically expect that they would immediately move actively into the policy arena.

Other LEFs that had originally said they would try to work statewide in some way had little success in doing so. Even West Virginia's Education Alliance, which was already a statewide organization and which succeeded in articulating state policy goals at a statewide summit, was unable to fulfill its original aim of conducting a community dialogue in every county in the state.

This universal frustration with working statewide suggests that there was a design flaw in the RFPs' expectation that locally based LEFs (in consortia or even individually) would have some state-level impact. With the resources and time available, this was almost certainly an unrealistic charge. Valuable lessons were learned in the effort, and some state-level visibility attained, but the locally based LEFs probably should not have been asked to pursue state-level results.

Conclusion: Some Success

A handful of sites showed exceptional levels of success in these initiatives, whether in the overall achievement of public responsibility that led to policy change in Mobile, or in the very substantial accomplishments registered in Lincoln and other sites that implemented the Theory of Action in different ways. Several sites showed policy change reflecting the views of organized groups of community partners.

In several ways, too, the initiatives helped strengthen the infrastructure for local problem solving in the participating sites. Local philanthropy became more involved in supporting public engagement. Other organizations and agencies began to incorporate greater public participation into their own standard operating procedures, following the example set by the LEF.

There have been challenges, of course. In this pathbreaking initiative, making the leap into the policy arena has been difficult for many LEFs. Many have also struggled to bring together expert voices and grass-roots voices in a unified vision; often the presence of national experts leads to a conversation about technicalities, losing its connection to the fundamental concerns of the community. And some environments were difficult, whether because of local political turbulence or because the LEFs were asked to do too much by working statewide.

By and large, however, many aspects of the original vision were realized in the participating sites.

What It Takes

These initiatives, while aimed at changing and improving the communities in which they were carried out, were also aimed at changing and improving PEN. The participating LEFs were expected to stretch their capacities in several ways. The national office, which had led only one major national initiative before these, was also trying to stretch its capacity. The evaluation looked at the skills developed in the LEFs, the changes that took place in their mission and approach, and the leadership capacity that the initiatives called forth.

LEF Roles and Capacities

The initiatives built on the characteristic strengths of LEFs as entities that know their school systems well, that embrace the aim of improving education for all children—but that sit outside the school system itself and are free to take a critical stance when necessary. The initiatives also built on their grounding in their communities, and challenged them to forge connections with diverse stakeholders and citizens concerned about public education.

Building Community Capacity

Offering venues for discussion was part of the LEFs' work under these initiatives, but much more significant and demanding was the work done to prepare for those venues. Part of the work was the LEFs' effort to broaden their base of trusting relationships with people in the community. By teaming up with community-based organizations—and, in several cases, by adding staff who had credibility with particular parts of the community—the LEFs extended the base of trust that they had previously enjoyed. The community discussions also demanded specialized skill in facilitation.

In some cases, too, the LEF provided training for community members to equip them to raise their voices more effectively in civic conversations. Leadership or facilitation training for local citizens was part of the work in Lincoln, Mobile, Paterson, and Seattle.

One of the capacities the LEFs have used in these initiatives is that of putting a shared vision into words. In formal, summary documents such as Mobile's Yes We Can agreement or Durham's covenant, in legislative testimony in New Jersey, and in the verbal summaries of meetings large and small, LEFs have solidified agreements by using language that reflects everyone's contribution.

Community leaders, as well as grass-roots participants, told the evaluation team that they had learned from their participation in the work of the initiatives. For example, in Schools and Community sites they buckled down to the challenge of cross-agency collaboration. In the local Standards and Accountability sites, task forces engaged with uses of data and other demanding aspects of school improvement. Some organizations in the initiative communities, such as the teachers' union in Seattle and community-based organizations in Paterson, tried out more participatory ways of working with their members or constituents.

Building School System Capacity

Helping to build the capacity of school districts is a time-honored role for LEFs, but these initiatives took several LEFs into new realms of professional capacity building. The Mobile experience with the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence is an example of a particularly exacting approach to accountability and improvement—one that called for sustained work by a highly skilled consultant hired under LEF auspices. The newly elected school board in Portland, similarly, benefited from other national consultants quickly brought in by their LEF.

In Lancaster, Lincoln, and Providence—where actual service delivery was a primary focus of the Schools and Community initiative—the schools' capacity was directly enhanced by the presence of school-linked services. Moreover, each of these sites arranged for the services to continue beyond the period of the initiative grant.

Over the long term, the initiatives were designed to build the school systems' capacity not just to carry out technical tasks, but to do something more fundamental: to listen to citizens. An example of that kind of capacity building can be seen in Durham, where the school district moved from a posture of tolerating public participation to formally acknowledging its value. The district's annual report highlighted citizen engagement for the first time in 2004; the position description used in its 2005 superintendent search cited community engagement as part of the superintendent's job.

Persevering

The Portland LEF exemplified the patience that was sometimes necessary in this work. With a community-based strategic plan already developed before the initiative began, the LEF found that the district was making no headway in implementing that plan, and that its offers of help were essentially rebuffed. Shifting gears, the LEF conducted the activities that it could conduct without much district support, and members of the LEF board took the effort into the political arena by recruiting a slate of candidates for school board. After the

composition of the school board had changed, the superintendent resigned and a new one—much more in tune with the priorities of the LEF and the existing strategic plan—was recruited.

In every site, though, setbacks derailed some aspect of the LEF's hopes and plans. The Mobile LEF, for example, would have preferred to see a statewide tax increase pass in 2004, but it was defeated. Regrouping was a crucial skill. Although the original Theory of Action depicted a kind of inevitability in a community's march toward the realization of a shared vision, the reality that faced every participating LEF was one of alternating progress and frustration. Moreover, as the participants agreed at an early cross-site meeting, each achievement opened up vistas not of easy progress but of new challenges. Because most of the work was new to the LEF staff, these challenges sometimes appeared overwhelming. Thus, perseverance and ingenuity were key assets for the LEFs.

Changes for LEFs

Repeatedly, the executive directors of participating LEFs said that the policy initiatives had changed their organizations. None referred to the initiative as a mere project. Instead, most of the executive directors said it had brought a new organizing framework to much of their work, if not all of it. Some dropped their support for such projects as teacher mini-grants; others are thinking about eliminating these and other small-scale programs.

An example of a new organizational focus is the 10-year strategic plan adopted by the West Virginia Education Alliance. With its commitment to systemic change in public education, the strategic plan articulated a much bolder mission than the organization had previously embraced. The mission is to “create positive, systemic change in public education.” The plan's first “guiding principle” states that “enduring change in education occurs when communities take ownership of school performance.” The plan describes the role of the organization in this way:

We are a knowledge-based catalyst for positive change—leading as a facilitator, partner and broker for results. To achieve this, we must:

- Undertake action research as a respected, nonpartisan source for useful information and policy guidance
- Apply what is learned as a credible, trusted facilitator, broker, and advocate.
- Partner for change as an enabler of strategic alliances, bringing the right people to the table.

This plan provides a mandate for roles that depart from the organization's previous stance. The executive director believes it is an important outcome of participation in this policy initiative.

In Seattle, similarly, public engagement is now an integral part of the LEF's identity as an organization. With frequently changing leadership and priorities at the district level, LEF leaders say they have realized that the community at large must be invested in education and reform. As a result, the LEF now describes itself in terms of three functions: public engagement; coalition-building, and fundraising.

Leadership

Moving a community toward realizing a shared vision, with sustained engagement that takes different forms for different people and groups, requires a particular set of skills that LEF staff and leaders had to develop. Leaders had to focus relentlessly on the mission of bringing the public into a closer relationship with its school system, seizing opportunities wherever they might arise rather than attending intermittently to the work of public engagement. They also had to confront the challenges of "leading without authority," as Heifetz (1994) puts it.

The burden of sustaining engagement and momentum fell heavily on the LEF leaders, who worried about their own fallibility in keeping everything in motion. The Mobile and Durham executive directors often used the metaphor of "spinning plates"—the vaudeville act in which a man balances spinning plates atop many poles, constantly running from pole to pole to keep each plate from falling and smashing. As each group in the community became engaged, that group became a spinning plate that needs attention from the LEF. Attending to both policy and outreach simultaneously could cause the LEF directors, like the vaudeville performer, to stay in frenzied motion.

Another challenge for the LEFs, especially their leaders, was that of exercising leadership in their communities without formal authority. No one had elected them, they were sometimes reminded. The executive directors in Chattanooga and Portland found themselves embroiled in political battles after they reminded elected officials of what community members had said they wanted (adequate school funding in Chattanooga, and adherence to the strategic plan in Portland).

The LEFs' boards, with many members whose tenure predates the policy initiatives, have varied in their enthusiasm for a new mission. For example, one board has reluctantly agreed to the mission of building a cross-organizational capacity to serve children, but several key members of that board would prefer to see the LEF focus on directly funding services instead. An executive director of

another LEF commented that a “fund-raising board,” like the one that the LEF now has, “did not sign on to do advocacy or political work.”

On the other hand, some boards have learned more about public engagement as a vehicle for school improvement and have agreed that it should be central to their LEFs’ missions. In some cases, the decision to apply for a grant under the policy initiatives reflected careful board deliberation about the far-reaching implications of such a mission. As strategic plans are revisited in the coming years, it will be interesting to see how many—like the West Virginia LEF’s—are rewritten with a more prominent emphasis on public engagement for systemic change.

What It Takes: No Simple Recipe

Although no sane person would have expected to mobilize public responsibility for public schools by following a clear and simple set of instructions, there were certainly times when the participants in these initiatives wished they had such instructions. Instead, they managed to find their distinctive ways of building capacity in both the community and the school system, of regrouping and persevering in the face of setbacks, and of redirecting their organizations into new roles. Several executive directors found themselves beginning to work effectively in arenas that were new to them; others deepened their skill in the arts of leading without authority.

Building on the Initiatives

At the start of these initiatives, the PEN national office set out a vision of public responsibility mobilized around specific policy targets, resulting in policy change and, more important, in a changed civic arena in which the schools would answer more directly to the entire community. The initiatives charged LEFs with taking giant steps toward the realization of this vision.

Like any ambitious initiative, these had partial success. There was a full-blown success in Mobile, where the community articulated the key elements of a plan and continues to oversee its implementation. Much was achieved in other sites, as well. Most of the sites have seen both policy change and the heightened engagement in education policy of members of the public—or, at least, of professionals who had not previously worked with the schools. In this large group of sites, the new participants in the education-policy arena may turn out to be vital long-term supporters of effective policies.

It should be clear from this report how fundamentally the PEN vision of public responsibility differs from the notions that often go by the name of public engagement. The PEN vision is not just about parent participation in schools or the effective communication of a superintendent's vision for a school system. Instead, it is about connecting the schools to broad-based, inclusive democratic participation. Whether this will prove to be an essential support for significant school reform remains to be seen, but it is the theory on which the initiatives were founded, and the participating communities have taken several steps toward demonstrating the power of the vision.

In working toward this vision, the participating LEFs convened public conversations, enlisted the collaboration of a wide swath of professionals and organizations, and worked directly with policymakers to a degree that was new to many of them. These tasks stretched the organizations and their leaders. The participants worked hard, engaged in serious efforts to learn, and remained open to new tactics and strategies.

This report has described the on-the-ground activities and responses found in the participating sites. It offers ideas and lessons for those who may want to extend the work of building public responsibility, whether locally or nationally. The story is unfinished, but its early chapters have shown how organizations and individuals have risen to a substantial challenge.

Looking ahead, it is clear that the work of building and maintaining public responsibility involves managing a number of tensions. One is the tension between expert policy prescriptions and authentic community voice. Often, the experts and the community members either stayed in separate arenas or talked past each other when they met. Hurrying to get policies in place, many LEFs felt

unable to build the bridges of understanding that might help a community embrace an expert's plan as a means to an end.

Other tensions arise from local politics, in which constituencies with different interests do not readily find ways to work together. For any policy that is advocated by some, there will be others who view it as a threat to their interests. The politics of schools can be highly contentious, particularly when schisms of race and class lie just below the surface discussions. Seemingly petty disputes over substance or process may reflect more serious fissures. And local politics also presents barriers when the civic leadership is unable or unwilling to act on a plan that has garnered community support.

Finally, holding civic leaders accountable for their actions, particularly over a period of time, is a tall order for a community group that lacks formal sources of authority such as elective office. The sustained vigilance shown in some of the sites in this initiative, such as Mobile, Lincoln, and Portland, represents a major achievement.

PEN intends to move forward with its vision of public responsibility, seeking to entrench the vision more deeply and broadly in a range of communities through the work of these and other LEFs. This evaluation has shown that the vision can be realized. It has begun to articulate what the building blocks look like, and what may impede success. Because PEN's vision is, deliberately, the opposite of a quick fix for schools, much more remains to be done, both in mobilizing public responsibility and in building knowledge about it.

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Appendix A: Individual Site Summaries

Standards and Accountability Sites

Durham, North Carolina: Durham Public Education Network
Mobile, Alabama: Mobile Area Education Foundation
New Jersey: New Jersey LEF Consortium
Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Public Education Partnership
Portland, Oregon: Portland Schools Foundation

Schools and Community Sites

Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Foundation for Education Enrichment
Lincoln, Nebraska: Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools
Paterson, New Jersey: Paterson Education Fund
Providence, Rhode Island: The Education Partnership

Teacher Quality Sites

Hamilton County, Tennessee: Public Education Foundation
New York, New York: New Visions for Public Schools
Seattle, Washington: Alliance for Education
Washington, DC: DC VOICE
West Virginia: The Education Alliance

Durham, North Carolina: Durham Public Education Network

A critical event in the work of the Durham Public Education Network (DPEN) in the Standards and Accountability initiative was an elaborate public ceremony in March, 2003. DPEN convened hundreds of leading public figures—the mayor, city council members, county commissioners, the superintendent, board members, and others—to endorse a community covenant for public education. By signing the covenant, these leaders made a commitment to working to improve education and close the achievement gap. It stated: “We pledge to make a quality education for every child a top community priority.”

DPEN repeatedly reminded civic leaders that they had signed a covenant. It invited them to meet the public again and again in events that would showcase needs and program opportunities in education. It also encouraged them to invest staff time and resources in closing the achievement gap.

A Covenant Task Force with more than 40 members from business, community-based organizations, schools, government, and parents met monthly, with staff support from DPEN. A needs assessment for each school in the Durham Public Schools generated detailed information about the schools’ challenges. The task force presented the findings to the board of education, other public agencies, and the community at large. School principals used the findings in their management retreat, and schools began to cite the data in their fund raising.

DPEN took an inclusive approach to public engagement, reaching out widely in identifying problems and setting priorities. Building trust through respectful discussion was part of the work. A community observer credited the LEF with success: “People are coming to the table to talk without being confrontational. DPEN has created a baseline of civility.”

Results have included a change in the school system’s stance toward public engagement. Annual reports began to emphasize public engagement as a priority; school staff were trained in making visitors more welcome to the schools. Policies in support of student achievement were enacted by the city, county, and legislature, including a change in bus routes to make schools more accessible to families.

Mobile, Alabama: Mobile Area Education Foundation

The Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF) used its planning and implementation grants from the Standards and Accountability initiative to launch a process that has culminated in an engaged and vigilant public for the public schools. In February 2002, about 1,400 citizens participated in 48 Community Conversations hosted by local community leaders in their homes, churches or community centers across Mobile. Five Community Conversations, one in each school board district, were widely advertised and open to all. Using a process adapted from the Harwood Institute, the participants discussed their goals and the challenges for Mobile County schools. A sense of common ground emerged from these conversations.

Next, dozens of parents and educators studied school reform across the country and identified issues for reform in Mobile. They produced the Yes We Can Community Agreement, reflecting the perspectives of citizens from across Mobile.

Spurred by widespread public support, the school district agreed in December 2002 to work with an outside consultant retained by MAEF in translating the Yes We Can agreement into a strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives. The school board adopted that plan, called the PASSport to Excellence, in June 2003 and has continued to use it to guide the district's work through 2005-06.

Bold decisions about budgets and policies followed from the plan. Schools with the lowest performance received extra resources to carry out their Transformation Plans. Schools were reconstituted and teachers reassigned. With expert support arranged by MAEF, the board and the local union agreed in 2004 that the district would offer performance incentives for teachers in the lowest performing schools—something that has been prohibitively contentious in many other districts around the country.

Grass-roots participation in holding the school system accountable remains a hallmark of the Mobile process. All leaders—including central office administrators, the school board, and Yes We Can community leaders—have “one-page plans” showing the actions for which they are individually accountable, and the plans are reported publicly.

New Jersey: New Jersey LEF Consortium

The Paterson Education Fund (PEF) took the lead in assembling a consortium of New Jersey LEFs to participate in the Standards and Accountability initiative. There were two main purposes: working with the state on implementation of the Abbott school-finance decision; and building the capacity of new or small LEFs individually and collectively.

Starting at the outset of the initiative, when two key PEF staff were each appointed to one of the state-level working groups on Abbott implementation, LEFs and their community-based allies took on more visibility in the state policy world. Strategic partners of PEF were asked to be members of the School Facilities, K-12 Education, and Early Childhood Education workgroups. Local officeholders, community members and advocates grew more comfortable speaking up in Trenton, the state capital. At the same time, the state's receptivity to local voices increased.

PEF was a leader in framing the policy discussions of advocates and LEFs. Some provisions of Abbott have been in jeopardy as implementation has unfolded, and PEF has worked to organize support for adhering to those provisions. For example, in 2003 the Commissioner of Education suggested revise the Abbott regulations to exclude supplemental services. Setting up a website, GiveNJKidsGoodSchools.com, PEF provided a vehicle for 1500 emails to the governor in support of full Abbott implementation. A PEF reporting format, "Understanding School Budgets," reduces complex documents to clear summaries that reveal spending priorities. PEF used the School Budget Report in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Assembly Appropriations Committee, and the State Board of Education.

Relatively inactive New Jersey LEFs began to build their own capacity, with considerable help arranged and supported under this grant. Some that had focused on immediate, small-scale shoring up of school systems, through such vehicles as minigrants, became more attuned to policy and building community capacity. By attending PEF board meetings, other LEF representatives saw the level at which an experienced board can function. LEF executive directors also participated in national PEN events. Group events held in New Jersey for the LEFs and their potential allies included a statewide convocation and substantively focused meetings later that year addressing data use, PEN resources, fundraising, and board development.

At the state level, policy makers are now more apt to know what an LEF is, what it does, and what it can be called upon to do.

Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Public Education Partnership

The Pennsylvania Public Education Partnership (PAPEP) was a consortium of four LEFs, funded by the Standards and Accountability initiative, formed to create a model for statewide citizen engagement. Major activities included the preparation and dissemination of Voters' Guides for the 2002 gubernatorial election, both the primary and general elections, and the convening of Town Meetings about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2004.

The participating LEFs worked carefully to position themselves as an effective alliance, representing two urban areas (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh), a small city (Lancaster), and a rural area (the Mon Valley). They negotiated the ways in which they would work together. They sought and found allies on the state policy scene, including the statewide organization Good Schools Pennsylvania. They learned a great deal about ways of effectively advocating for public education in Harrisburg.

Toward the end of the grant period, the Town Meetings became a major focus of PAPEP. The structure and agenda were developed through meetings with constituents across the state. The questions identified for the agenda were:

1. How has NCLB positively affected your child's/your community's schools, and what positive effects do you foresee in the future?
2. What concerns do you have about NCLB's effects on your child's/your community's schools, now and in the future?
3. What do you think the federal government should do to improve education outcomes for children in your community? Can NCLB be implemented better or modified to respond to those needs?

More than 450 people, all told, attended the seven Town Meetings held in cities and towns across Pennsylvania. After an initial overview of major provisions of NCLB, the participants in each Town Meeting broke into small groups to address the three questions above, and then the groups reported out.

All participants were invited to attend the statewide hearing in Harrisburg, and some agreed to testify at that hearing. In its final report to the national office, PAPEP wrote: "At each of these Town Meetings, we were asked, 'When are you coming back?' We were overwhelmed by how much people wanted to be engaged."

Portland, Oregon: Portland Schools Foundation

The Portland Schools Foundation (PSF), over the course of its participation in the Standards and Accountability initiative, saw the local political context change dramatically. At the outset, an existing strategic plan—developed in 2000 with extensive community participation—was languishing because of a lack of commitment and leadership from the city school board and school system administration.

PSF thus began by arranging a series of community forums to discuss priorities in education and to re-engage community members in advocating policy change. The forums were planned in conjunction with several community-based organizations. A related strand of work was leadership development for school site councils and school-site leadership teams.

An Achievement Data Task Force, assembled by PSF, included educators, community leaders, parents, and teachers. It examined not only the data but also the processes by which the data were reported and used. One result was a report, *All Children Achieving: Creating a System of High-Performing Learning Communities*, which addressed ways of making data a tool for improvement. Another was a strengthened capacity for data use.

PSF has also advocated strongly for funding for Portland schools. Despite statewide sentiment for cutting taxes, the citizens of Portland agreed in 2003 to tax themselves to support the public schools, and in 2004 rebuffed another ballot measure that would have repealed that tax.

PSF board members, having concluded that the existing school board was not aggressively working to improve the schools, decided to take action independently. Several individuals who had worked together on the PSF board formed a political action committee in 2003. They succeeded electing a new majority to Portland's school board. Another school-board election, in 2004, resulted in a board unanimously supportive of moving forward to close the achievement gap and improve the schools.

With PSF support, the school board members received expert training from the Broad Institute, participating in a retreat in which they identified a shared vision and a plan for changing the school system. They hired a new superintendent, nationally known as a leader in teaching and learning. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform was called in to study the district and make recommendations for strengthening it.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Foundation for Educational Enrichment

The Lancaster Foundation for Education Enrichment (LFEE), participating in the Schools and Community initiative, took on a mission of connecting social services more directly with children and families by connecting them in schools. The initiative supported LFEE and its partner in the work, the School and Community Network (formerly named the Network for Safe and Healthy Children), which is a coalition of more than 90 service-providing organizations

The Network adopted a mission statement focused on capacity building and inter-organizational relationships: “to increase the capacity of the School District of Lancaster and community organizations for sustainable school and community partnerships to benefit students and families.” Through a stance of inclusiveness and transparency, the Foundation and Network achieved credibility as conveners.

The initiative in Lancaster embraced the model of community schools. By the end of the funding period, nine schools (all four middle schools in Lancaster and five elementary schools) had in place at least some of the elements of community schools. Key building blocks at the school sites included after-school programs, on-site behavioral health services, and social-work case management and family support. Moreover, community schools were specifically endorsed in the school district’s strategic plan.

Local philanthropy also became engaged in this initiative. For example, early funding for the initiative came from the Lancaster Osteopathic Foundation, which later invited a school board member and a principal involved in the initiative to join the foundation’s board.

In addition, a representative of the Lancaster Community Foundation was invited to join the initiative’s Leadership Team and did so. Having learned about the work in depth through that involvement, he arranged for a presentation at the foundation’s annual meeting. The foundation then provided a grant of almost \$250,000 to support the operational budget of the Network for two years. With so many local philanthropies favoring grants that provide tangible services to individuals rather than supporting behind-the-scenes coordination, this operational grant represented an important milestone.

Lincoln, Nebraska: Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools

In Lincoln, Nebraska, the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools used the Schools and Community initiative as a vehicle for beginning to institutionalize an approach to school-linked services called Community Learning Centers (CLCs). Eighteen CLCs were operating in elementary and middle schools when the implementation grant came to an end in the 2004-05 school year, with a nineteenth preparing to open in the fall. In each site, a site supervisor employed by a community agency directed the work, coordinating it with the school principal.

The CLCs' Leadership Council includes local and state leaders from a wide range of agencies and institutions. Their participation helped pave the way for support and involvement by many different kinds of agencies, which now work in unusually close partnership.

The CLC leadership had decided early on that seeking support for positions would provide more stability than seeking program dollars, since a position is harder to terminate than a cash grant. Thus, for example, the Parks and Recreation Department put support for two site supervisors in its budget starting in 2003-04, cooperating in the negotiation of job descriptions and employment policies.

All the centers were supported by funds and in-kind contributions from community agencies, local philanthropy, and the school system. Lead agencies like the YMCA, Family Services, and Lincoln Parks and Recreation support the salaries of site supervisors at their respective sites. The Lincoln Housing Authority became a lead agency and pledged more than \$70,000. From the Lincoln Community Foundation and the Woods Charitable Foundation, the CLCs gained funding commitments that are typically difficult to secure: support for operations rather than direct service; and multi-year support.

Beginning with a focus on serving children, the CLCs evolved gradually toward incorporating more services for families. The next projected step, services for entire neighborhoods, had just begun to emerge as the grant ended.

With a history of substantial funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, before- and after-school programs remained central in the CLCs' services. The Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) provided leadership in aligning the curriculum with standards and offering staff development. The centers offer many opportunities in academics, enrichment, sports and health, clubs, and community service, with an increase over time in the types of services available for participants.

Paterson, New Jersey: Paterson Education Fund

Public engagement and community organizing were central to the work of the Paterson Education Fund (PEF) under the Schools and Community initiative. For example, PEF organized and led annual community conferences on community schools. Although the grant ended in 2005, the conference was institutionalized; one was held in 2006. The conferences brought together nationally known experts, state leaders, and many Paterson residents, all discussing community schools together.

PEF's board also decided that community organizing was needed in Paterson. PEF's Executive Director visited the national office of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) in Brooklyn and its chapter in Jersey City, and helped ACORN secure funding for its work in Northern New Jersey.

By establishing a steering committee and continually reaching out to other organizations, PEF brought issues of educational facilities into the foreground for a range of organizations. Having seen that school facilities are part and parcel of community development, others began to take the lead in some of the discussions of schools and community. The local chapter of Habitat for Humanity changed its policy on "sweat equity," deciding that volunteer service at the annual community schools conferences would meet the definition of sweat equity for prospective residents. This policy change signaled the organization's recognition that the conferences were valuable to the community.

The Paterson Alliance, an umbrella group for community-based organizations, worked in an increasingly collaborative mode over the course of the initiative. The discussions of community schools helped Alliance participants see the interrelationships among the specific issues that each organization addresses. Public engagement is more and more part of the standard operating procedures of agencies and organizations in and around Paterson. After some years of working with PEF, some community organizations have built their capacity not only to work collaboratively with each other at the leadership level, but also to engage in dialogue with the public at large.

In January 2004, the Paterson School Board unanimously enacted a policy supporting community schools, putting itself on record as working toward building community schools. Advocates cited this board policy in the discussions of a new five-year facility plan for Paterson schools. However, political complications, including issues of public corruption, impeded progress in construction.

Providence, Rhode Island: The Education Partnership

From its original base in one low-income neighborhood in Providence, the Schools and Community initiative as carried out by the Education Partnership has evolved as a model for a set of related programs with a higher public profile. The initiative began under the auspices of the Providence Public Education Fund, an LEF that later merged with another organization to form a new LEF, the Education Partnership.

The Education Partnership offers school-based programming in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence. Increasing attendance at the after-school and evening programs, among both children and adults, was a continuing effort under the initiative. For students, the program was a 21st Century Community Learning Centers site, and the program has contracted with the school system as a Supplemental Education Services provider.

Offerings for parents, over the course of the initiative, evolved away from an initial focus on community organizing, leadership, and advocacy. By focusing on matters of more immediate personal utility like English instruction and health workshops, the Education Partnership hoped to attract greater participation. The Olneyville Community Schools office also began offering volunteer assistance with income-tax preparation in order to help families claim the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The mayor of Providence endorsed the service model demonstrated in Olneyville early on. The governor of Rhode Island has also proposed state funding for after-school services.

Currently, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), incubated by the Education Partnership, is a public-private partnership led by the mayor of Providence. Developed in a process that involved more than 100 leaders from business, government, and philanthropy, it aims to provide out-of-school time learning opportunities for children and families throughout Providence. The alliance has received major support from the Wallace Foundation, which selected it as a site for a national initiative in after-school services, as well as from Bank of America.

Hamilton County, Tennessee: Public Education Foundation

The Public Education Foundation (PEF) initially received a planning grant to gather and analyze data on teacher quality in Hamilton County, which includes the city of Chattanooga and surrounding suburban and rural areas. That grant sparked initiatives for a group of high-poverty schools in Chattanooga. PEF documented issues in the teaching in those schools compared with schools in the nearby suburbs, including lesser qualifications of the teachers and issues in placing substitutes in the classrooms when teachers were absent. The data played a powerful role in convincing regional foundations to support new programs focused intensively on those schools, including a program that supports the teachers in attaining master's degrees. Highly effective local teachers, identified through PEF's further research under the implementation grant, have worked together as a network and serve as mentors to the master's program candidates.

Throughout its participation in the Teacher Quality initiative, PEF provided expertise to the mayors of the city and county, drawing on national consultants as well as its own data.

PEF convened public forums on teacher quality in 2003, in partnership with the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga and neighborhood organizations. Among the more than 200 participants were principals, teachers, parents, students, school board members, small business owners, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, parents with children in private schools, and former Hamilton County teachers. PEF also conducted a forum with the members of the superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, which has representatives from all schools in the district. At the forums, discussions were sparked by a PEF video showing teachers and community members speaking about teacher quality.

PEF and the Council of PTAs sent reports to more than 39,000 parents showing data on teacher quality in their child's school. In cooperation with the PTAs and Family Partnership Specialists, parents have been invited to school-based workshops, each designed for the particular school by PEF.

Despite budget constraints, a community-based task force launched the Hamilton County Reading Initiative, which involves representative groups from across the community.

New York, New York: New Visions for Public Schools

New Visions for Public Schools in New York City participated in the Teacher Quality initiative at the same time as it led a much more extensive initiative in the establishment of small high schools. Much of the teacher quality work in New York has built upon opportunities associated with the New Century High Schools initiative.

During 2002, New Visions hired facilitators to conduct meetings and interviews around New York City with parent groups, community organizations, businesses, universities, and faith-based institutions. More than 50,000 people participated in this joint effort between New Visions and the Department of Education. The events included 10 town-hall forums across all five boroughs, smaller meetings with over 100 community-based organizations to gather input on community challenges, conversations with approximately 270 middle and high school students, and other meetings and forums with members of the religious, business, and academic communities.

Early in the grant period, New Visions also pursued a partnership with the City University of New York for teacher preparation aligned with the new small high schools. This partnership ended in disagreements over timing and priorities, but the groundwork done on issues of teacher preparation later informed an emerging partnership with Lehman College, which is designed to increase mentoring opportunities and enhance clinical training for prospective teachers.

In the New Century High Schools initiative and the Teacher Quality initiative, community organizations have been involved as key partners in school management, after-school services, and teacher professional development. These partnerships have represented an opportunity for a variety of organizations to engage directly in the improvement of teaching and learning. Through documentation and analysis of these partnerships, New Visions hoped to generate useful models for itself and other organizations to follow in improving teaching and learning through partnerships. It attended to the technical aspects of partnerships: for example, it studied the costs of partnerships; and it worked with lawyers on briefing documents and a standardized memorandum of understanding for potential partners.

New Visions also worked with networks of teachers, providing venues and opportunities for them to improve their practice. Teachers' inquiry and action research were hallmarks of this part of the initiative.

Seattle, Washington: Alliance for Education

The work in Seattle was characterized by unusual breadth in outreach to members of the public. Heeding the charge to engage the voices of all members of the community, the Alliance for Education enlisted the cooperation of many grass-roots community organizations and reached out to citizens in neighborhoods throughout Seattle. Community members were trained as facilitators. In summer 2003, the Alliance conducted nine pilot public dialogues. The next phase was 44 public dialogues with groups and organizations throughout Seattle, involving more than 1,500 community members. In these dialogues, the Alliance posed three key questions to the community:

1. In your opinion, what is required for teachers to meet the individual academic needs of all students?
2. Based on your answer to question 1, what can the community do to support this idea?
3. How do we go about rebuilding trust between schools, teachers, and the community?

The Alliance also engaged civic decision makers in a Public Education Task Force that met for two years to address issues of teaching quality. Providing safe, neutral ground for different stakeholders to meet was an important function of the Alliance in this initiative.

Results of the work can be seen in both programs and infrastructure. A policy outcome is that some of the school district's professional development funds have been redirected into new uses, following advice from the Alliance. Teacher induction programs are also changing.

The public engagement process developed by the Alliance has taken hold in both the school system and the local teachers' union. The school district held community forums on its five-year transformation plan, and also attempted to engage the community around the notion of school consolidation. Alliance staff members have participated on the planning committees for the transformation plan, and the Alliance helped fund the engagement efforts. The union, the Seattle Education Association, has adopted the Alliance's process of public engagement for dialogues with teachers and administrators related to teacher evaluation. It invited an Alliance staff member to help train teachers in a public engagement process and then polled teachers, who agreed that a focus on student academic achievement should be central to the new teacher contract. This response helped the union and Seattle Public Schools agree on a teacher contract that provides for development of a new teacher evaluation system.

Washington, DC: DC VOICE

District Community Voices Organized and Informed for Change in Education (DC VOICE) has participated in the Teacher Quality initiative, striving to bring a constructive and informed perspective to the support of teaching improvement in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), where blame and finger-pointing have often impeded progress.

The work of DC VOICE was guided by its Supports for Quality Teaching and Learning framework, which in turn was informed by community forums, surveys of teachers, and reviews of research. In a Policy Advisory Group, DC VOICE brought together civic leaders, community members, and district officials. In March 2004 the Board of Education passed a resolution supporting teacher induction that followed this framework. In the following year, DCPS changed its procedures for teacher hiring. Earlier dates for recruiting and hiring, along with more widespread recruiting, are intended to improve principals' opportunities to hire strong candidates. Issues of career ladders, induction, and mentoring have also been addressed in close collaboration with the district administration.

The Ready Schools Project provided direct entrée for the public into the annual effort to ensure that DCPS schools are ready to begin effective teaching and learning on the first day of school in September. DC VOICE conducted training for about 50 community members during the summer of 2004 and, through existing relationships at the school level, arranged for them to visit 43 schools that summer. Armed with checklists, the participants gathered data in a common framework addressing school staffing, new teacher support, professional development, teaching and learning conditions, safety and security, facilities, and parent and community involvement. The resulting report highlighted, among other things, the need to support teachers by hiring them earlier and providing additional professional development.

DC VOICE has also negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the DC chapter of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). This alliance brings together the education expertise of DC VOICE with the organizing skills of ACORN.

In addition, DC youth spoke about their education in seven discussion groups conducted by DC VOICE, in collaboration with youth organizations, in December 2003 and January 2004. Participants from many racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds expressed their priorities for high school reform. The discussions were conducted not only with current high school students but also with out-of-school youth ages 18-20.

West Virginia: The Education Alliance

The Education Alliance, a Charleston-based LEF that works statewide in West Virginia, participated in the Teacher Quality initiative. Under the planning grant and the implementation grant, the Alliance convened dialogues in counties around West Virginia. The dialogues brought together parents who were involved schools, parents representing underserved populations, business, teachers, school administrators, school board members, social services, state legislators, and students. Participants engaged in large- and small-group discussions, designed to generate shared understandings about the elements of teaching quality and to recommend local and state actions that would support it. Superintendents and high school students, bankers and laborers reached a set of shared understandings about teaching quality. This reflected a major departure from past efforts at community dialogue in West Virginia, which had been dominated by educators.

As a final step, representatives of the participating counties joined a large array of state leaders at a statewide Education Summit in May 2005. There, too, professional groups did not dominate the discussion. The participants heard a keynote address by the governor, reviewed the consensus views that had emerged from counties throughout the state, and then worked in small groups to develop action steps for policy.

Research and testimony by the Education Alliance also played a part in the formulation of a West Virginia bill addressing the achievement gap, with a mandate for community participation. The Alliance research on the achievement gap included a compelling report based on focus groups conducted with high school students, *Student Voice: West Virginia Students Speak Out about the Achievement Gap*. Another report, *Bridging the Achievement Gap: The Role of Professional Development for Teachers*, incorporated national data and themes of the Teaching Quality initiative. Based on this research, the Executive Director of the Education Alliance asked to testify before the House Education Committee. The chair turned to a committee member during the hearing and said, “I want you to draft a bill to address this.”

This bill, enacted in 2004, was designed to support a five-year effort to close the achievement gap for African-American students and students from low-income families in the 10 counties with the highest rates of minority and low-income students. It was funded with a \$700,000 appropriation in its first year. Up to 30 schools across the 10 counties will develop strategies for closing the gap. The bill provides that the schools will work with community organizations.

Appendix B

Behavioral Outcomes Indicating Public Responsibility

Note that no site would be expected to show all these outcomes.

	Local or State Policymakers	Organized Stakeholders and Media	Public at Large <i>(individuals, including youth, and groups not traditionally active in education)</i>
Attendance	Come to meetings	Come to meetings	Come to meetings
Voice	Lead or convene meetings Request testimony Request reports Issue reports Cite data Use the vocabulary of the initiative	Lead or convene meetings Request reports Issue reports Cite data Use the vocabulary of the initiative	Speak at meetings Write letters Make phone calls Request reports Use the vocabulary of the initiative (in any language) For groups: all items shown in "Organized Stakeholders" column
Planning	Commission data collection or analysis Participate in community strategic planning Enter into formal partnerships Commit to action	Collect data Analyze data Formally identify priorities Participate in community strategic planning Organize citizen actions (voting, volunteering, etc.) Enter into formal partnerships Form subcommittees, etc. Commit to action	Participate in community strategic planning For groups: all items shown in "Organized Stakeholders" column
Action	Pass legislation Issue regulations Spend money Implement legislation from higher level of government Establish an office or agency; give a new mission to an office or agency Initiate or expand services	Spend money Provide in-kind resources Deliver services Print or broadcast stories Advocate, lobby, or litigate Abandon or lessen opposition Join a long-term oversight committee or similar structure	Vote (or stay home) Volunteer Get training Run for office or take another public role Participate in organizing Advocate Join an organized group For groups: all items shown in "Organized Stakeholders" column

Note: Shaded area also represents policy outcomes