

· [annual survey] ·

NEARLY HALF OF LEF Funding GOES TO TEACHER QUALITY

ANNUAL SURVEY OF LEFS REVEALS EXPANDED OUTREACH AND ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS

LEFS BY THE NUMBERS

- Number of LEFs in the Public Education Network: 55.
- Number of school districts reached by LEF programs and initiatives: 290.
- Number of staff employed by the 55 LEFs across the country: 610, working in 27 states and the District of Columbia.
- Estimated number of hours contributed by LEF volunteers for school improvement: 180,000.
- Total amount of revenues of all LEFs in the year 2000: \$65 million.
- Share of each LEF dollar that goes directly to programs and services: 87 cents.

LEFS BY THEIR IMPACT

- The programs of LEFs reach and serve nearly 6 million poor and/or minority children in more than 6,600 public schools.
- LEFs are actively working in public school districts in which a majority of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches—significantly higher than the national average of 35%.
- The work of LEFs impacts nearly one in 10 of America's public school children.
- LEFs have raised nearly \$500 million for school improvement programs in the past five years.
- The Network's "Library Power" initiative provided \$45 million to support and encourage reading in 19 cities.
- Out of an 8-hour workday, LEF staff spend an average of 3 hrs., 31 minutes on teacher quality issues.
- 95 percent of LEFs conduct community forums on educational issues.
- In 1999, LEFs in eight cities sponsored 60 community forums on the critical, related issues of education and race.

Local education funds (LEFs) are dramatically increasing their capacity to develop programs and leverage dollars to advance their critical mission: assuring a high quality of public education for all children.

In the past five years alone, LEFs have not only contributed nearly half a billion dollars to support public schools and the communities they serve, they have worked to convert this financial capital to social capital by reconnecting parents and other stakeholders to key issues confronting public schools.

According to a report on this year's annual survey of LEFs conducted by the Public Education Network, nearly half of the \$65 million raised by LEFs for programs last year—roughly \$29 million—was invested in programs to advance or support teacher quality. About a quarter, \$16 million, was devoted to programs bolstering standards and assessments, a key vehicle for school accountability.

Not only are LEFs promoting accountability, they are thoughtfully examining their own accountability. More than six out of 10 LEFs conduct a formal assessment of their executive directors, and more LEF boards are relying on strategic plans to help them set clear benchmarks and achievable goals. Other LEFs are using retreats and other self-assessment procedures to ensure that decisions reflect organizational priorities.

LEFs are using their money and resources in a focused and efficient manner. This year's survey shows that LEFs are keeping administrative costs low, allocating nearly nine of every 10 LEF dollars for programs and services.

"LEFs have matured from their once-predominant role of fundraising to playing critical roles in school reform," notes Wendy Puriefoy, president of the Public Education Network (PEN). "In an environment that frequently can be divisive, LEFs are helping to build consensus around the need for, and direction of, education reform."

For example, LEFs research school reform strategies and report on the extent of their impact, offer training for school board members, and contract for needed services such as staff development for teachers and principals.

"Local education funds are putting resources to use to improve schools, and they are recognizing that

knowledge is power in their communities. To increase public involvement for the benefit of young people, LEFs are increasing the flow of information available to the public to explain what the research says works best to improve student achievement."

The latter point is borne out in PEN's annual survey, which shows there has been a 20% increase in the number of LEFs that provide research and other information to the media. In addition, LEFs continue to increase their efforts in organizing community forums and joining coalitions made up of other stakeholders.

This increasing knowledge that LEFs are sharing may explain their success in tapping the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers. This year, volunteers are contributing 180,000 hours of their time to LEF programs and activities.

Other findings:

■ **LEFs Exemplify Diversity.** From the scope of their efforts to their staffing, LEFs are diverse organizations serving local needs. LEF budgets range from a low of \$25,000 to a high of more than \$9 million. More than four out of 10 staff are racial or ethnic minorities, and LEFs continue to explore ways to be more inclusive in their membership, leadership, and outreach.

■ **Revenue Sources Expand.** Foundations continue to serve as the largest source of funding, but LEFs are increasingly turning to other sources, such as corporations, individuals, investments, or fees-for-service. Corporate funding has slowly increased to make up 15 percent of LEF funds, and funding from individuals has risen significantly—from 5% of all LEF revenues in 1996 to 12% this year.

■ **Endowments Enhance Funds.** Endowments are also an important source of funding for LEFs. Today, seven out of 10 LEFs have endowments, and the median endowment is more than \$90,000.

■ **Base of Leadership is Broadening.** Only a few years ago, two-thirds of the members serving on LEF boards were from the business community. However, diversity has improved considerably as LEFs benefit from the special insights offered by those from non-profit organizations, school districts, government agencies, and the academic community.