



A PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Communities of Color Define Policy Priorities
for High School Reform

Campaign for High School Equity

Preparing every student for graduation, college, work, and life



Quality education is a civil right. However, many of our nation's children, overwhelmingly those of color or from low-income backgrounds, are being denied the education they deserve, trapped in under-performing, under-funded, and often segregated schools. It is both a moral and economic imperative that we close the opportunity gap and ensure that all children have access to the high quality education they will need to succeed in life.

Wade Henderson
Counselor, Leadership Conference on
Civil Rights Education Fund (LCCREF)
President and CEO, Leadership Conference
on Civil Rights (LCCR)

Introduction

Communities across the United States share a common desire to see their children graduate from high school with a quality education that prepares them for college, the twenty-first-century workplace, and overall success in life. Yet far too often, some communities are torn apart by the tragic consequences of an unequal public education system that fails to provide high-quality education to students of color and youth from low-income neighborhoods.

Nowhere is this crisis more acute than in our nation's high schools. The problem is defined by several variables, including a growing number of schools that have inadequate human and material resources, large differences in student achievement, and unacceptable numbers of dropouts.

Why are there such blatant inequities in the distribution of education opportunities in America? One key problem is that many high-poverty schools, which predominately serve students of color, lack the funding and resources of wealthier schools and districts. A recent report noted that in thirty-one of forty-nine states studied, school districts with the highest minority

enrollments received fewer resources than districts with the lowest number of minorities enrolled (Carey 2004). Another study determined that in schools where at least 75 percent of the students were low-income, there were three times as many uncertified or out-of-field teachers teaching English and science than there were in wealthier schools (Wirt et al. 2004).

Students of color and low-income students are also ill-served by low academic expectations, which often result in their disproportionate enrollment in less rigorous courses (Barth 2003). The challenges of fewer resources and lowered expectations serve as barriers for districts and schools that struggle to improve their students' achievement to the levels of white students from more affluent areas. The consequences can be seen, for example, in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) statistics, which show that 86 percent of Hispanic and 89 percent of African American eighth graders read below grade level, compared to 63 percent of white eighth graders (U.S. Department of Education 2005). The consequences are also acute for English language learners (ELL): only 4 percent of eighth-grade ELL students reached the proficient or advanced NAEP reading levels in 2005 (U.S. Department of Education 2005).

Parents and communities play a key a role in strengthening educational opportunities and ensuring the success of young Latino students. We must make this critical link between parents, communities, and schools to prevent more dropouts and increase the number of graduates prepared for college, work, and life.

Rosa Rosales

President, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

Every school year, about 1.2 million students drop out of our nation's high schools, leaving almost one of every three freshmen without a high school degree four years later (Swanson 2004). While roughly 70 percent of high school students graduate on time, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian and Alaska Native students have only a 55 percent or less chance of graduating from high school with a regular diploma (Greene and Winters 2006). In addition—and contrary to the model minority myth—many Asian Americans also face barriers in education. For example, about 50 percent of Cambodians and Laotians and about 60 percent of Hmong aged twenty-five and older who are living in the United States have less than a high school education (Reeves and Bennett 2004).

Research shows that about 2,000 of America's 17,000 high schools produce approximately half of America's dropouts (Balfanz and Legters 2004). In these schools—commonly called “dropout factories”—less than 60 percent of ninth graders are enrolled as twelfth graders four years later. The nation's students of color are four times more likely than the nation's nonminority students to attend one of these low-performing schools, and three times less likely to attend a high school with very high graduation rates. With the growth of the

nonwhite population expected to outpace overall population growth in coming years, a steadily rising percentage of Americans will be without high school diplomas if this situation is not effectively addressed.

Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to experience poverty, poor health, and incarceration during their adult lives. And the high cost of dropping out is borne not only by the individual but by all Americans, who pay an economic and social price when students leave high school without a diploma. If minority high school graduation rates were raised to the current level of whites by 2020, and if those new graduates went on to postsecondary education at similar rates, the potential increase in personal income across the country would add, conservatively, more than \$310.4 billion to the U.S. economy (Alliance for Excellent Education 2006a).

Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE)

While many in the education policy world are aware of and committed to the need to concentrate on the plight of low-income students and students of color, a vast amount of insight can be gained by incorporating the knowledge and perspectives of communities

of color in the growing national discussion about secondary school reform.

The Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE) is a diverse coalition of national organizations representing communities of color that believe that high schools should have the capacity and motivation to prepare every student for graduation, college, work, and life.

Members of the Campaign include the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, the National Council of La Raza, the National Indian Education Association, the National Urban League, and the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. The Alliance for Excellent Education serves as the Campaign's convener and

coordinator. These organizations have long been involved in the education policy issues facing the nation. Their experiences and specialized understanding of the issues add significantly to the high school reform debate, and must be included as an integral part of the national discussion about policy change options as the country moves toward action.

In recognition of the facts and challenges enumerated above, these groups and other civil rights organizations met regularly with the Alliance for Excellent Education over the past year to discuss problems and solutions for students of color who are poorly served by America's high schools.

This document outlines CHSE's collective sense of the policy priorities that must be addressed if our nation's high schools are to change so that *all* young people graduate from high school ready to work, ready for college, and ready to be knowledgeable citizens. Its intent is to acquaint

policymakers, advocates, educators, and the general public with key policy levers identified by these organizations to increase high school graduation rates, as well as the college and workforce readiness of minority and low-income youth.



Education equity and education equality are the birthrights of all native children and form the cultural and language legacies of their families, communities, and nations.

VerlieAnn Malina-Wright
President, National Indian
Education Association (NIEA)

Defining Policy Priorities

The role of fostering educational equity is a historic one for the federal government, from school desegregation to Title IX to Federal Pell Grants and Title I. With America's high schools currently exacerbating rather than eliminating opportunity gaps, the time has clearly come for all communities, with leadership from the federal level, to act on an agenda to dramatically improve America's high schools.

Although the federal government has involved itself in the reform of elementary schools, it has been less involved in America's secondary schools. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has helped to bring issues of race and ethnicity to the center of discussions on the education crisis. As required by NCLB, state, district, and school report cards all contain information about student achievement disaggregated by race and ethnicity (as well as low-income status, limited English proficient status, and other factors). Those achievement gaps at the elementary level explain, in part, the failure of high schools to educate students of color and low-income youth. Building on this foundation, the reauthorization of NCLB (scheduled to be undertaken by the Congress) should have as a primary focus the reform of

America's high schools to better educate students of color. The following policy recommendations are designed to spur changes that, if implemented, would improve the academic and socioeconomic outcomes for students of color and low-income students.

Make All Students Proficient and Prepared for College and Work

Access to equal opportunity can only exist if all students are challenged to reach the same high expectations. Only about half of students who graduate from high school are prepared to be successful in college (Greene and Winters 2005). Those who attend college without the basic skills they should have mastered in high school cost the nation more than \$1.4 billion a year in community college remedial education alone (Alliance for Excellent Education 2006b). Sadly, surveys of employers indicate that many high school graduates also do not have the skills necessary for success in the workplace (Conference Board et al. 2006). States and districts should work in partnership with schools and communities to restore the value and utility of a high school diploma. Organizations that are doing work to align state standards with college- and work-readiness benchmarks, such as Achieve's American Diploma Project, are also important in helping to achieve this goal. To promote proficiency and

preparedness, policies that support the following should be implemented:

- align high school standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction with college- and work-readiness standards, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- require states to publicly report on access to college preparatory classes and course-taking patterns by income, race, and ethnicity, both among and within schools;
- provide meaningful information and other support for parents seeking a rigorous curriculum for their child;
- promote culturally relevant content knowledge and teaching that prepares students to be effective in a global economy; and
- ensure that all students, especially those in high-need schools, receive rigorous and engaging classes in core subjects.

Hold High Schools Accountable for Student Success

If the purpose of high school is to prepare students for college and work, then high schools should be held accountable for meeting this expectation for all students equally. As it stands, there are few mechanisms for making sure that high schools accomplish

this mission. A well-designed accountability system should help communities ensure that their schools are serving their children well. Proposals that hold high schools to a higher standard include the following:

- develop state longitudinal data systems with unique student identifiers that align student data with teacher data and school performance and resource data;
- define graduation rates according to a common standard and use longitudinal data systems and individual student identifiers to follow every child's path to graduation;
- develop an NCLB accountability system that requires schools to increase their disaggregated graduation rates over time and to consider graduation rates on an equal footing with high-quality assessments aligned to college and work readiness in determining school quality;
- provide states and districts with incentives to foster more effective, data-driven decisionmaking and professional development in the use of data to improve policy and practice for state and district officials, school leaders, teachers, and parents;
- publicly report disaggregated racial and ethnic data to highlight subgroups of students (for example, Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders, newly

Our schools cannot be considered successful until they address the needs of all students. This includes English language learners, who have a long history of being overlooked. It is vital to the future of our nation that all children be able to achieve so they are prepared for college and the twenty-first century workforce.

Janet Murguía
President, National Council
of La Raza (NCLR)

arrived immigrant students, and former limited English proficient students);

- invest in technical assistance and evidence-based school improvement tools to provide states, districts, and communities with resources to improve low-performing high schools;
- use high-quality valid and accurate assessments for all students (including appropriate use of accommodations when needed and mandatory use of alternative assessments, which may include native language assessments and simplified English assessments when ELL students have not yet met the threshold for taking

standard English-language assessments); and

- disseminate high school data and other information through media and other information distribution vehicles specifically serving communities of color.

Redesign the American High School

It is not enough for states, districts, and schools to raise expectations; they must also provide sufficient support for their students to help them reach and surpass these higher standards. Additionally, some categories of students, like those who have learning disabilities or are English language learners, may need more specialized support (Short and Fitzsimmons 2006). In order to address students' diverse needs, states and districts must provide their schools with the means to explore and implement new educational models, as well as other effective interventions such as literacy programs, personal graduation plans, and extended learning time. To truly serve the needs of America's diverse learners, high schools must be redesigned in the following ways:

- implement a variety of quality high school models shown to support different learning styles and student situations (for example, high-quality charter schools, small schools, newcomer schools, alternative schools,

Contrary to the ‘model minority myth,’—the idea that all Asian Pacific American (APA) students are achieving above and beyond—APA students face tremendous challenges in education. The plight of APA immigrant, refugee, and English language learner students are often obscured and overshadowed and only when data is disaggregated do some of the needs of this population become more apparent. We call on the reauthorization of NCLB to include disaggregation of data which will highlight some of the real barriers for all students including APAs.

Doua Thor
Executive Director, Southeast Asia
Resource Action Center (SEARAC)



- career academies, distance learning, and immersion schools);
- provide integrated student supports that utilize both in-school and community-based services (for example, high-quality high school counselors, social workers, health care, and mental health services);
- promote strategies (such as literacy coaches or native language instruction) and targeted interventions (such as afterschool programs or block scheduling) that improve student numeracy and literacy skills without sacrificing access to high-level academic subjects;
- promote instructional practices designed to meet the needs of diverse learners such as reflexive learning and culturally competent learning techniques;
- ensure that legally and educationally valid criteria are used to appropriately inform decisions regarding student eligibility for services in special education, services for English language learners, college preparatory curricula, and gifted and talented programs;
- develop consistent standards and practices, such as improved identification and assessment systems, to facilitate English language learners' integration into the American public education system; and
- provide access to computers and other learning technologies that can be used to complement in-class instruction and tutoring.

Provide Students With the Excellent Leaders and Teachers They Need to Succeed

Secondary schools designated as needing improvement tend to have fewer school resources and poorer working conditions; they also disproportionately serve students of color and are located in areas of concentrated poverty (Cohen and Ginsburg 2001). Schools with these challenges require especially strong and effective leaders. Unfortunately, the multiple challenges associated with low-performing schools impair the effective recruitment and retention of experienced principals (Stecher et al. 2003). Since principals have a critical role in managing the school environment and setting high expectations for teacher and student academic performance, it is important to adopt policies that attract and keep effective leaders in schools needing improvement.

It is often difficult to recruit high-quality teachers to low-performing schools for many of the same reasons that make attracting effective principals a challenge. Teachers in these schools generally do not have the benefit of effective mentoring and other introductory training supports, and ongoing professional development opportunities are scarce. These teachers also are often stressed by trying to make sure their students reach standards

that, with the previously mentioned lack of resources, may seem impossible to attain. As a result, low-performing schools disproportionately attract teachers who are new to the profession and/or are teaching out of their field of expertise (Peske and Haycock 2006).

One measure of success for secondary school teachers is their ability to increase student achievement by effectively communicating and engaging a diverse group of students around complex academic content while adroitly managing the classroom environment. This is a tall task for most individuals, and it is especially difficult when teachers lack adequate support systems.

Recommendations to improve school leader and teacher effectiveness include the following:

- provide higher pay and other incentives, such as home-buying programs or tax credits, to attract highly effective school leaders and teachers to serve in high-need middle and high schools;
- establish incentives for leaders and teachers whose students and schools exhibit marked improvement in academic achievement and other outcomes;
- equip and train school leaders and teachers working in

high-need schools by supporting in-school clinical training, effective induction and mentoring programs, and other professional development opportunities designed to better enable school leaders and teachers to teach students effectively, as well as to understand the students' school, family, and community environments;

- support principal and teacher diversity recruitment and preparation programs in schools of education that diversify the gender, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and linguistic composition of the nation's principal and teacher pool, integrate culturally competent school and classroom instructional leadership methods with effective management techniques, and provide additional financial assistance to teacher candidates;
- develop and support education centers of excellence at minority-serving institutions to strengthen their capacity to recruit and train a diverse pool of teachers;
- promote the development of principals and teachers from the community by creating a pipeline that draws from sources such as teacher aides and existing high school students, and by recruiting highly qualified traditional and nontraditional professionals; and
- develop standards for managing diversity in the school context

and require quality diversity management training and certification as a standard part of principal and teacher training.

Invest Communities in Student Success

Every high school needs a safe and supportive community, inside and outside the classroom, so the focus can be on improving academic achievement. The school environment is critical to student success, but it is not the only factor that impacts secondary school students' academic and social outcomes. Families and communities also play key roles in shaping the environment. Students in low-performing schools often do not receive the same exposure to outside learning opportunities as their more affluent counterparts. As a result, they start the academic race steps behind other students, and many never catch up. Too often these students do not have access to the quality community support services that can contribute to their overall health, well-being, and development. Measures should be taken to harmonize the incentive and disincentive structures of the external and internal environments to support each student's ability to stay in school, excel academically, and develop into a healthy and productive individual. Recommendations to help coordinate these structures include the following:

- create and support multilingual parent centers to train parents and other caregivers in interpreting school and student performance data, advocating on behalf of their children, working with their children and school personnel to develop personal graduation plans, and selecting courses their children need in order to graduate from high school prepared for college and overall success in life;
- provide more support for community-based organizations running afterschool and out-of-school programs, and coordinate these programs to ensure alignment with students' academic goals and needs;
- improve access to community-based resources that support students' ability to learn by locating services, such as health clinics and child-care centers, within or near schools; and
- create business and community partnerships that support student enrichment opportunities (such as internships) and facilitate community and college linkages.

Provide Equitable Learning Conditions for All Students

Persistent disparities in the allocation of key education resources often bar low-income and minority students from receiving the high-quality education they deserve. Research demonstrates that, across



Often, schools serving high-poverty or predominantly minority communities do not receive the resources that their more affluent counterparts receive. Such disparities must be eliminated in order to guarantee that all students are equally well-prepared for success in life.

Dennis Hayes
Interim President and CEO, National
Association for the Advancement of
Colored People (NAACP)

Many parents want to advocate for quality education for their children, but they do not know where to start. By informing parents of their rights and responsibilities concerning their children's education, we can give them the tools they need to take effective action.

John Trasviña
President and General Counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense
and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

states, school districts that enroll the highest percentage of students of color and low-income students receive fewer resources than school districts serving white and affluent students (Carey 2004, Education Trust 2005). Resource inequity affects schools in such areas as staffing, facility quality, textbook and equipment availability and adequacy, and access to challenging academic coursework. For secondary school students, these inequalities are exacerbated because the federal dollars that are supposed to make up for the lack of resources in low-income communities (Title I) are disproportionately allocated to grades K–6. Resources must be distributed equitably and adequately and used effectively. They should be directed to where they are needed the most, and, in most cases, a significant portion should be invested in research-based practices that have been proven to help student learning. Policy recommendations that support these objectives include:

- create a new federal secondary school improvement fund that would be used to turn around low-performing middle and high schools;
- provide sufficient additional resources to appropriately serve English language learners;
- offer federal incentives to encourage states to develop alternative school-finance formulas that minimize heavy reliance on local property taxes and increase resources for the students and schools that need it most; and
- require states to compare and publicly report resources available to achieve a sound and basic education at every school; for states where inequities appear, develop five-year plans for equalizing resources and require a publicly reported biannual report that evaluates progress toward the five-year goal.

Conclusion

The quality of the nation's high schools and the students they produce should be of concern to each and every person in America, whether they have children or not. These students are America's future, and the country's collective economic and social well-being rests on their shoulders.

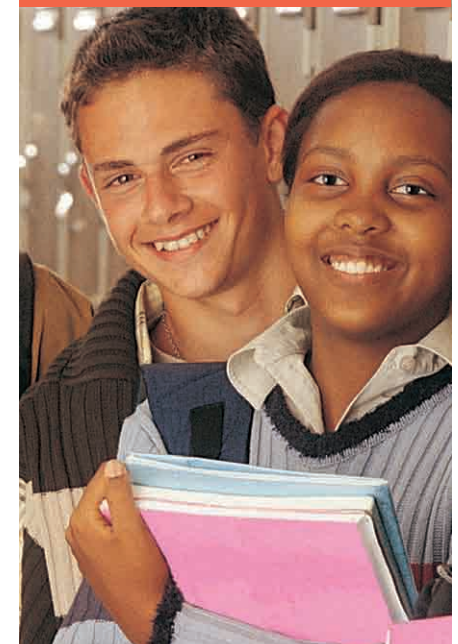
It is time to end the inequities of the current system. To do that, expectations must be raised, and the public must demand changes in policy and practice that will support the transformative redesign of secondary schools into centers of engaged academic learning that *prepare all students equally* for success in life. This will not be an easy task, but it is a critical one that requires federal, state, and local leadership.

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Full civic participation is the key to strong communities, yet most surveys show that high school dropouts are not as actively involved in their communities. A quality high school curriculum that promotes civic learning and engagement alongside vital skills such as strong reading, writing, and critical thinking will strengthen our democracy.

Arturo Vargas
Executive Director, National
Association of Latino Elected
and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
Educational Fund



Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE) Organizations

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund (LCCREF)

Founded in 1969 as the education and research arm of the civil and human rights coalition, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund (LCCREF) emphasizes the need for national policies, including education policies, that support civil rights and social and economic justice. LCCREF initiatives are grounded in the belief that an informed public is more likely to support effective federal civil rights and social justice policies. By fostering a fuller understanding and celebration of our nation's diversity, LCCREF also plays a major role in leading individuals, families, and communities to a fuller appreciation of our nation's diversity and the inherent necessity of equal justice and equal opportunity.

As a leading expert on civil rights research and education, LCCREF enjoys a sisterly relationship with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), a coalition of nearly 200 national organizations committed to the enactment and enforcement of strong federal civil rights and social justice legislation.



NUL stands for opportunity. Yet young African Americans will not be able to achieve economic and social success if they are not given the opportunity to receive a quality high school education. A high school diploma is the passport that will facilitate success in the world of work and postsecondary education.

Marc Morial
President and CEO,
National Urban League (NUL)

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is the largest and oldest Hispanic organization in the United States. LULAC advances the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health, and civil rights of Hispanic Americans through community-based programs operating at more than 700 LULAC councils nationwide. LULAC councils provide more than one million dollars in scholarships to Hispanic students each year, conduct citizenship and voter registration drives, develop low-income housing units, conduct youth leadership training programs, and seek to empower the Hispanic community at the local, state, and national level. In addition, the LULAC National Educational Service Centers, LULAC's educational arm, provides counseling services to more than 18,000 Hispanic students per year at sixteen regional centers.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

Founded in 1968 in San Antonio, Texas, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) is the leading nonprofit Latino litigation, advocacy, and educational outreach institution in the United States. MALDEF's mission is to foster sound public

policies, laws, and programs to safeguard the civil rights of the 45 million Latinos living in the United States and to empower the Latino community to fully participate in our society. Through the skills and training taught in its parent leadership programs, MALDEF provides parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to advocate for a quality education for their children.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. From the ballot box to the classroom, the dedicated workers, organizers, and leaders who forged this great organization and maintain its status as a champion of social justice, fought long and hard to ensure that the voices of African Americans would be heard. For nearly one hundred years, it has been the talent and tenacity of NAACP members that has saved lives and changed many negative aspects of American society.

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund is the nation's leading organization that promotes the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. A nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization first established in 1981, it carries out its mission through programs that integrate Latinos fully into American political society, provides professional development opportunities and technical assistance to the nation's more than 6,000 Latino elected and appointed officials, and monitors and conducts advocacy on issues important to the Latino community and its political participation. Through its policy institutes, the NALEO Educational Fund conducts skills and policy development opportunities for Latino elected and appointed officials throughout the country. As part of the organization's mission to promote the governance and policymaking success of Latino elected and appointed officials, the Fund created the NALEO Education Leadership Initiative in 2002 to assist the nation's Latino school board members and state legislators with technical assistance, training, and networking opportunities designed to increase their effectiveness as education

policymakers, advocates and local leaders to close the educational achievement gap between Latino and non-Latino students.

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in forty-one states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas: assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

National Indian Education Association (NIEA)

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is a membership-based organization committed to increasing educational opportunities and resources for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students while protecting cultural and linguistic

traditions. Founded in 1969, NIEA is the largest and oldest Indian education organization in the nation and strives to keep Indian Country moving toward educational equity. Governed by a board of directors made up of twelve representatives, the NIEA has several committees that work to ensure native educators and students are represented in various educational institutions and forums throughout Indian Country and Washington, DC.

National Urban League (NUL)

Established in 1910, the Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. Today, the National Urban League, headquartered in New York City, spearheads the nonpartisan efforts of its local affiliates. There are over one hundred local affiliates of the NUL located in thirty-five states and the District of Columbia providing direct services to more than two million people nationwide through programs, advocacy, and research. The mission of the Urban League movement is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights. Through their Education and Youth Empowerment initiatives, the Urban League works to ensure that all children are well educated and prepared for economic self-reliance

in the twenty-first century through college scholarships, early childhood literacy, Head Start, and aftercare programs.

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) is a national organization advancing the interests of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans through leadership development, capacity building, and community empowerment. SEARAC was founded in 1979 to facilitate the relocation of Southeast Asian refugees into American society and foster the development of nonprofit organizations led by and for Southeast Asian Americans. SEARAC serves as a coalition-builder and leader, carries out action-oriented research projects, and strengthens the capacity of community-based organizations. SEARAC also fosters civic engagement and represents these communities at the national level in Washington, DC.

Alliance for Excellent Education (CHSE coordinator)

Launched in 2001, the Alliance for Excellent Education is a national nonprofit policy and advocacy organization that works toward a national goal of making every child a high school graduate, prepared for postsecondary education and

success in life. It focuses on the needs of the six million secondary school students (those in the lowest achievement quartile) who are most likely to leave school without a diploma or to graduate unprepared for a productive future. The Alliance is a respected source of information about the dropout crisis in America's high schools, as well as on the research and practice-based solutions that can improve schools and lead to higher levels of student achievement and attainment. Its audience includes elected and appointed officials, the media, educators, business and labor leaders, parents and students, and a concerned public. To inform, in particular, the federal-level debate about education policies and options, the Alliance produces reports and other materials, convenes conferences and meetings, briefs policymakers and the press, and provides timely information to a wide audience via a number of publications, including *Straight A's*, its widely distributed biweekly newsletter, and regularly updated website.

The Campaign for High School Equity's efforts will focus the attention of the country's leaders on the high school crisis and involve individuals from every community in encouraging federal, state, and local governments to put policies in place that will ensure that every child graduates from high school with the knowledge and skills he or she needs for success in postsecondary education, the modern workplace, and life.

Bob Wise
President, Alliance for
Excellent Education

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