



AHSI Students, Schools & Services: At a Glance

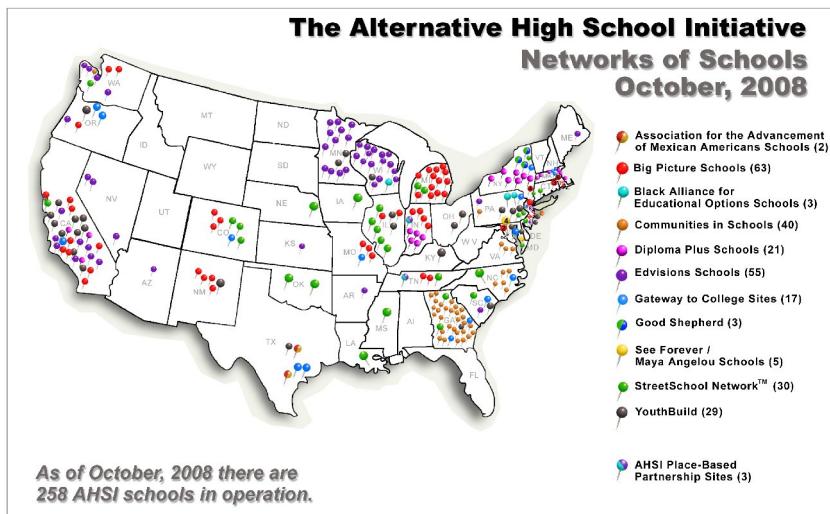
AHSI Network: The Alternative High School Initiative is a network of youth development organizations committed to creating educational opportunities for young people for whom traditional school settings have not been successful. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supports AHSI as a response to the growing national trend of diminishing graduation rates affecting this country's marginalized youth. As a collaboration of organizations working with first generation, low-income, underrepresented youth, AHSI schools are committed to providing educational experiences characterized by learning that is academically rigorous, relevant to the real world and supported by meaningful relationships.

AHSI Students: As a result of these educational experiences and the unique strengths of our students, institutions of higher education can expect AHSI students to arrive on campus with a specific skill set that ensures a smooth transition and successful degree completion. We help students develop as critical thinkers, meaningful change agents, resourceful innovators, dynamic leaders, resilient learners and effective advocates for themselves and their peers. Ranging in age from 14-24 years old, our students have demonstrated persistence in the face of adversity that allows them to make positive personal and community transformations.

The current and potential success of AHSI students in post-secondary settings is evidenced by an increasing body of national research demonstrating that a set of non-traditional, non-cognitive factors provide a more realistic and holistic evaluation of students' readiness skills and abilities than more traditional measures (e.g. GPA, SAT/ACT, etc.) Many of these non-cognitive skills (positive self-concept, successful leadership, demonstrated community service, availability of strong support person, etc.) are points of consistent focus across the AHSI network¹.

AHSI Schools: Collectively, AHSI operates 258 high schools across the country and serves a population of more than 10,000 students. While we have chosen to identify our network as "alternative" to illustrate the power of choice and options students and parents have, we recognize that the term sometimes evokes a false connotation of students with challenging behavior, low academic skills and limited strengths. In reality, we serve a diverse population of students with unique talents, remarkable capabilities and tremendous commitment to learning. AHSI schools drive the learning process through student-centered instruction incorporating youth voice, project-based learning and leadership development. In addition, the AHSI member organizations employ certified teachers who implement state-standard aligned curricula that are unique to each network. In most cases the curricula also include college preparatory activities. Because our organizations are held to a high standard of implementing top quality schools; AHSI has developed five guiding principals or distinguishers that illustrate the core elements each organization must deliver within their network of schools. The distinguishers include:

1. **Authentic Learning, Teaching and Performance Assessment:** Learning is centered on students' personal passions, interests, styles and needs and is deepened through relevant and real world experiences.
2. **Personalized School Culture:** Personalization is a critical component to all aspects of school culture. Teachers are responsive to students' cognitive, emotional, and physical needs.
3. **Student leadership and Responsibilities:** The school mission, vision, and goals are clearly defined and understood by all. Stakeholders participate regularly in data-driven decision making focused on improving support for student achievement and attainment.
4. **Supportive Partnerships:** The school is seen as an asset to the local community and community members are engaged with the school and with individual students. Community businesses contribute to student development by providing real world relationships, relevant learning opportunities and rigorous expectations.
5. **Future Focus:** Upon entering an AHSI school, every individual becomes intentionally aware that college is a viable option. All AHSI graduates will leave high school ready to access and achieve in postsecondary learning options.



AHSI Post Secondary Supports and Partnerships: As AHSI students continue to and through their post secondary experiences, the network continues to support our young people. Network organizations employ various dedicated personnel to provide effective transition support and ongoing graduate support services. Alumni networking and tracking services further enhance our ability to document, analyze and improve post secondary outcomes for our students. AHSI provides many of these ongoing services in coordinated partnership agreements with post-secondary institutions. Network organizations maintain an interest in and capacity for developing articulation agreements, memoranda of understanding and formal structures that promote the success of our students and our post secondary partners. To learn more about the Alternative High School Initiative and its member organizations visit www.ahsi.org.

¹ Dr. William Sedlacek in *Beyond the Big Test: Non-Cognitive Assessment in Higher Education*

