



AHSI Network News December 7, 2009

AHSI NEWS & EVENTS

As we approach the end of the first 90-day implementation of the AHSI business plan (October-December 2009), AHSI Director Talmira Hill and AHSI Network Support Coordinator Lauren Smock-Randall continue to focus on four priorities: AHSI Membership, Funding, Structure, and National Conference planning.

We are excited that within this period, the AHSI Letter of Agreement for Founding Members was fully signed, and two organizations (Communities in Schools National and National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families) have identified resources and begun to submit the Year 1 membership fee due by March 31, 2010. As we consider AHSI's future structure, we learned a great deal about the requirements of becoming an independent 501c3 organization as compared with securing fiscal sponsorship within an existing nonprofit during a meeting on December 2 with Third Sector New England arranged by Bill Diehl. Elliot Washor continues discussions with Chad Wick, President and CEO of KnowledgeWorks Foundation, regarding KW's potential interest in serving as a parent organization for AHSI, and Elliot's presentation to the KW Board on November 18th went well. We continue to stay in touch with Leah Hamilton of Carnegie regarding future funding opportunities, and we are pursuing conversations with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and Ford Foundation. We have begun conversations with SH Worldwide, an event management firm based in Seattle recommended by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to determine how best to organize ourselves for implementing the national conference outlined in our AHSI business plan.

All work is progressing rather well, and we look forward to updating Advisory Board Members during our AHSI Advisory Board call this Thursday, December 10, 2009, 12:30-2:00 p.m. EST/ 9:30-11:00 a.m. PST. In addition, we would like Advisory Board Members to HOLD February 22-24, 2010, for our next in-person AHSI Advisory Board meeting. MANY THANKS!

AHSI NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

SEVEN CITIES LAUNCH COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has announced \$4 million in grants to the YEF Institute and seven cities to boost college graduation rates by better coordinating the services that colleges, schools and communities provide to students.

The Communities Learning in Partnership project is part of the Gates Foundation's Postsecondary Success Strategy, which aims to double the number of low-income young adults who earn postsecondary degrees or credentials by age 26. Selected cities for the nine-month planning phase of the project include Dayton, Ohio; Jacksonville, Fla.; New York City; Mesa, Ariz.; Phoenix; Riverside, Calif.; and San Francisco.

Read more in Nation's Cities Weekly:

<http://www.nlc.org/articles/articleItems/NCW110909/CommGradRates.aspx>

Learn more about Communities Learning in Partnership:

http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/B4B1A94FF60A464FB8DB37460CC25626/IYEF_CLIP_Announcement_11-09.pdf

DIPLOMA PLUS COMPARISON STUDY OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND OUTCOMES

Diploma Plus recently completed a comparison study, led by Almanzia Akinyi Opeyo and Akili Moses Israel, to assess student outcomes in DP's New York City and California schools. The study matched DP schools in NYC and CA with comparable public schools, and a statistical analysis was conducted on a number of student outcomes. Lists of schools were obtained from NYC DOE and CA DOE, respectively, and separate matching indicators were identified for each group of schools.

DP focuses heavily on literacy and English Language Arts development, and results indicate that this emphasis has impacted student achievement.



In NYC, for example, the following results were obtained among DP schools that have been operating at least two full years -- Brownsville Academy, Crotona Academy, Harlem Renaissance, Liberation Diploma Plus, and PULSE Academy (Providing Urban Learners Success in Education):

- In 2008-09, the five established NYC DP schools had higher passing rates on the Regents English tests than 80% of comparable schools; the DP schools were significantly higher than 25% ($p < .05$).
- At the newest of these five DP Schools, Liberation, the ELA passing rate was higher than 80% of comparable schools, and significantly higher than 20% ($p < .01$).
- At two of the other established DP Schools, Harlem Renaissance and Crotona, the ELA passing rates were as high or higher than 100% of comparable schools ($p < .05$).

Results from DP's California schools are equally promising in literacy and English Language Arts.

In addition, DP's study generated other positive results in Numeracy/Math as well as for attendance and retention. DP also examined other indicators of success, and additional evidence emerged indicating that 75% of DP graduates plan to attend a 2- or 4-year postsecondary institution, a higher percentage than in comparable schools.

A full summary of the DP study and additional details will be shared during an AHSI Tool Share call to be held January 28, 2010, 2:00-3:30 p.m. EST (proposed call time).

We commend Diploma Plus and look forward to learning about the entire study. To obtain a full summary of the DP study prior to the AHSI Tool Share call in January, please contact Lauren (ismock-randall@bigpicturelearning.org).

THE EDVISIONS MODEL CONTRIBUTES TO ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE!



In a study done recently by Mark Van Ryzin, who is now a research associate at the Oregon Social Learning Center, the school culture created by the EdVisions Design Essentials has been documented to have a positive effect on student

engagement, hope and achievement. In a study of 425 students in 5 different EdVisions schools, Dr. Van Ryzin found that schools that pay attention to developing a culture that provides “protective factors” for students will also create a culture of achievement. In this model, “student perceptions of autonomy, belongingness, mastery goal orientation, and academic press each have a significant, independent impact on engagement, which in turn has a significant impact on change in hope and academic achievement.”

Additionally, evidence was found for a “reciprocal link between earlier levels of hope and later student perceptions.” In other words, hope influences student perceptions, which in turn impact future levels of hope and academic achievement. “Thus, we can conclude that those students who have more positive perceptions of their school environment will be more engaged in their learning, and, in turn, this process of active engagement promotes positive gains in hope and academic achievement.”

Dr. Van Ryzin goes on to say that “by introducing modifications to existing pedagogical practices to 1) provide increased opportunities for student choice in meeting requirements, 2) create more opportunities for students to develop supportive relationships with teachers and peers, 3) create greater emphasis on deep learning and a more individualistic focus on student evaluation, and 4) foster high expectations for all students,” a school can enhance gains in engagement, hope and academic achievement. The link between engagement and hope had been made previously, but with this study the link is also made to academic achievement in standardized test scores for reading and math as measured by NWEA’s Measure of Academic Progress. The study proves that to improve achievement, paying attention to the protective factors and developmental assets of adolescents should take precedence over any other pedagogical practices.

Thus far this theory has proven true in EdVisions Schools and a few other charter schools in the study. Five years of data have shown that the EdVisions model, which involves student-directed project-based learning, full-time multi-age advisories, and authentic assessment, does increase engagement and hope; and now, is proven to raise achievement as well. Other school programs that incorporate the above named pedagogical practices likely are also to raise engagement, hope and achievement. Utilizing the Hope Study surveys and analysis can provide proof that your school is fulfilling its mission.

DIPLOMA PLUS HIGHLIGHTED IN NATIONAL PUBLICATION



The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a Washington DC-based nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization, recently released *Success at Every Step: How 23*

Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond. This publication identifies programs that have been proven to help young people successfully complete high school and be prepared for success in postsecondary education and careers, based on the results of recent, high-quality evaluations. Diploma Plus was identified as one of 23 effective programs that address the critical imperative to improve the college- and career-preparation of all youth.

The programs described in this publication address this crisis by increasing the number of young people who graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and employment. The vast majority of programs (20 out of 23) improved students’ academic outcomes at the middle and high school levels, and 10 programs were associated with increased enrollment and success in college.

As AYPF reported, Diploma Plus students’ program completion and graduation rates are higher than the average rates for alternative high school programs. In New York, DP schools had higher retention rates and state exam passing rates than other similar schools. Participants reported higher rates of engagement, effort, and interest in their DP

classes than in their previous schools, and reported that the program helped them plan for postsecondary success. The average graduation rate, across all sites, was 88 percent and, in 2008, 86 percent of DP graduates were accepted into and planning to attend college.

“Youth need a continuum of supports to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal resources necessary for success at each level of the educational and developmental pipeline,” according to Dr. William Diehl, Executive Director of Diploma Plus. “Programs like Diploma Plus play an important role in ensuring that more students reach the long-term goals of career success, civic engagement, and the capacity for lifelong learning. Diploma Plus students gain strong academic and life skills and valuable college and work experiences that prepare them for successful transitions to post-secondary education and careers thus ensuring all youth succeed. Diploma Plus is honored to have our dedicated work and successes recognized by the American Youth Policy Forum.”

The report is available at: <http://www.aypf.org/publications>

GATEWAY TO COLLEGE ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERS

GATEWAY to COLLEGE

NATIONAL NETWORK

This fall, the National Network selected three new partners to implement the Gateway to College program. Des Moines Area Community College (Des Moines, Iowa) and Durham Technical Community College (Durham, North Carolina) were awarded start-up grants from GtC National Network, while Metro Community College (Omaha, Nebraska) will be supported through the implementation period using ARRA stimulus funds that Omaha Public Schools has designated for dropout prevention efforts. These new partners will receive extensive training and technical assistance over the next 9 months and will begin serving students in fall 2010.

The GtC program at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) will be part of wide-ranging initiatives underway at the college and the Des Moines school district to connect high school dropouts to alternative education and career option programs. “DMACC was selected to receive this grant because of its proven commitment to serving young people who have previously struggled with academics and because of its many examples of strong partnerships with Des Moines Public Schools,” according to Laurel Dukehart, Executive Director of Gateway to College National Network.

Durham Tech is a natural fit for Gateway to College because of its strong commitment to the academic success of all students. As an institution, it has dedicated significant resources and innovative teaching strategies to the benefit of students who have struggled in the past. Durham Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Carl Harris welcomes the partnership with Durham Tech to reach students who have dropped out of high school. “We want to provide every opportunity for students to be able to complete their high school education,” he said. “This program provides a wonderful avenue for students to do so while also getting a start on college. We look forward to another in a long line of successful initiatives with Durham Tech.” Brendon Comer, who served as the Gateway director at Community College of Philadelphia from 2006 to 2008, has been hired as the director of Durham Tech's Gateway program. Brendon's passion and expertise will be a great asset to the program and the network as a whole. Welcome back, Brendon!

Metro Community College and Omaha Public Schools are also institutions with a commitment to innovative strategies for serving young people. Through a variety of dual enrollment and alternative high school programs, the community is working toward a strategy where disengaged students have a path back to education and all students are

positioned for success in college. A group of leaders from the Omaha education community representing the college, the district, and the Sherwood Foundation have built considerable support for the program in a short period of time.

All three new partners share our network's collective priority to improve the quality and relevance of education for struggling students, with a particular emphasis on developmental education. Combined with very supportive and active relationships with their school district partners, we fully expect each of these new programs to be very successful and we ask you to join us in welcoming them to the network.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES & STORIES OF INTEREST

AHSI FEATURED IN TEN WAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD IN YOUR TWENTIES

The Alternative High School Initiative is featured in Ten Ways to Change the World in Your Twenties by Libuse Binder. Ten Ways is an inspiring collection of new ideas, resources and innovative twists that help twenty somethings tackle today's toughest issues and find their inner activist. You can learn more about the author and project at <http://www.tenways.org/index.html>.

EARN YOUR MASTERS IN EDUCATION FROM AMERICAN PATHWAYS UNIVERSITY

A program specifically designed to equip teachers with the skills and methodology to scaffold high-need learners from at-risk environments toward academic and personal success.



A Unique Program:

- Developed in conjunction with educators from StreetSchool Network™
- Teaching faculty who have spent their careers in at-risk settings
- Apply learning in your own classroom everyday to complete coursework
- Collaborate with others that teach high-need students across the country
- Designed for working educators
- Reasonably priced - reduced fees based on income.

Classes start January 18, 2010, with a deadline for application of January 4, 2010. Another round of courses will start August 2010.

Apply today at <http://www.americanpathways.org/academics/masters-program>
For Questions, email Kara Vandas, Program Director at KaraV@StreetSchoolNetwork.org.

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION'S 2010 NEW JERSEY HEALTH INITIATIVES PROGRAM ANNOUNCES FOCUS ON AT-RISK YOUNG MEN

New Jersey Health Initiatives 2010, a statewide grant making program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, will support projects that foster positive intellectual and emotional development and prevent violence and related health-risking social behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, physical aggression, delinquency) in young men between the ages of 14 and 24. Project funds will support prevention efforts using evidence-based or promising models of positive program solutions for young men at risk.

Applicant organizations must be either nonprofit organizations that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or public entities such as a unit or

department of government or a school board. Private foundations as defined under Section 509(a) are not eligible. Deadline is January 28, 2010.

Up to six New Jersey projects will receive grants. Grants of up to \$400,000 each over a three-year period will be made, commencing on July 1, 2010, and concluding on June 30, 2013.

Visit the RWJF Web site (<http://www.rwjf.org>) for complete program information.

Contact: <http://www.rwjf.org/applications/solicited/cfp.jsp?ID=20911>

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT INFORMATION FOR THE NEXT AHSI NEWSLETTER, please forward it by email to Lauren Smock-Randall (ismock-randall@bigpicturelearning.org)

Many sincere thanks!

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