



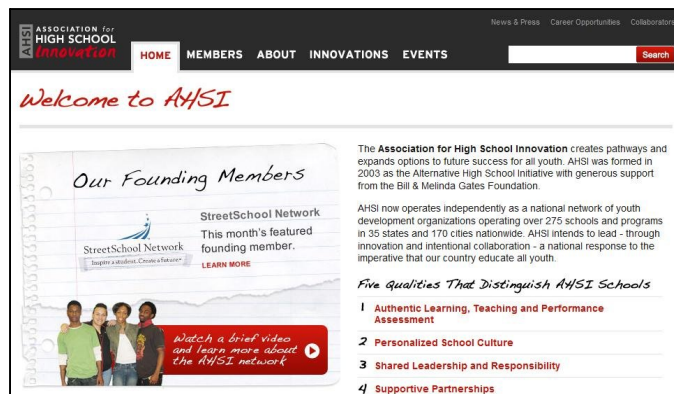
AHSI Network News March 16, 2010

AHSI NEWS & EVENTS

AHSI ANNOUNCES NEW NAME

We are very pleased to announce that AHSI has officially changed its name from the Alternative High School Initiative to the Association for High School Innovation. This change allows us to reach a wider audience as we continue to launch our new business plan while maintaining our acronym, logo design, and website. As you can see above, we did some work to update our logo, including the addition of a new tagline that provides direction and explanation about what we do as a network: Creating Pathways & Expanding Options. There was also a restructuring of the website to better reflect our new strategies and innovations, including an update to the homepage that more prominently features our Founding Members and allows us to highlight an individual Member Organization each month. Check out these exciting updates at www.AHSI.org.

In addition we are finalizing new outreach materials and will be sending those to Advisory Board Members in the coming weeks. Please be sure that our name, logo, and related information that may exist on your own organization's website are updated to reflect our recent changes! If you have any questions or need a particular format of the new logo please email Lauren Smock-Randall at lsmock-randall@bigpicturelearning.org.



AHSI ADVISORY BOARD MEETING, NASHVILLE, TN

AHSI Advisory Board members convened at the Union Station Hotel in Nashville, TN on February 22-24, 2010, to address critical milestones facing the Association for High School Innovation. Key decisions were reached regarding AHSI's future structure, membership, national conference, and funding strategies. Mid-course modifications to the AHSI Business Plan (October 30, 2009) were discussed with John Anderson and Mark Strickland of Schoolhouse Partners. Below is a summary of progress made in Nashville.

1. AHSI Structure – AHSI will remain housed within Big Picture Learning through June 30, 2010, and we'll continue to explore opportunities to affiliate with a neutral, well-established nonprofit organization. By June, AHSI will identify a list of potential fiscal sponsors that would house AHSI as of July 1, 2010, allowing the network to begin the process of filing for independent nonprofit status this summer.

2. Transitional Capital Base & "All hands on deck" Fundraising – AHSI Director and Advisory Board members will continue to approach funders about AHSI. We'll distribute the business plan more widely. We'll attach the newly drafted "AHSI: Tapping Our

Expertise" profile which articulates how AHSI's collective work adds value independently of any single member's contributions. AHSI is uniquely designed to assist cities, states, and school districts in assessing secondary school options and expanding the number of high quality, competitive pathways to graduation in ways that promote systemic change.

To leverage investments from private and other funders, AHSI Founding Members agreed to remit their Year 1 membership fees by March 31, 2010. These funds constitute a \$90K base for attracting new funding and covering incremental expenses that will be required for planning the AHSI National Conference and maintaining operations beyond June 2010.

3. AHSI Membership Enterprise – AHSI will accelerate the original time frame for launching a review process and accept up to three new member organizations between now and June 30, 2010 (instead of waiting until Year 1, July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011). At least four organizations have expressed interest in joining AHSI. A New Member Application Packet with information about the review process will be made available to interested candidates on April 1, 2010. The application process will conclude by mid-May, and new members will be invited to join in June 2010. We look forward to accepting referrals and self-nominations between now and March 31st by organizations seeking to join this dynamic national network of practitioners committed to educating all youth.

4. AHSI National Conference – AHSI is gearing up to host its first-ever national event – the AHSI National Conference – designed to convene educators, policy makers, higher education representatives, city leaders, state officials, and others interested in expanding high quality pathways to graduation and college & career success. Advisory Board Members agreed to re-envision the National Conference and held a productive conference call on March 11. A revised proposal for the National Conference will be forwarded soon. We're considering new dates -- instead of February 2011, perhaps June/July 2011 with participation by AHSI member organizations leading sessions as part of their own institutes. We're also considering the potential for assembling young adults for a policy session in Washington, D.C. on Capitol Hill.

5. AHSI Place-based Partnership Business Model – AHSI is targeting our place-based efforts to align with federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) investments in promoting high school graduation and college completion. AHSI will approach all 40 states and D.C. with information about AHSI's potential contributions to their Race to the Top applications. We decided not to submit a separate AHSI application for the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3), but AHSI will serve as an official or other partner in support of any member organization's (i3) application. AHSI continues to receive inquiries from cities and school districts, and we're responding with information and a process for customizing our response to meet the needs of prospective clients.

6. National Advocacy – AHSI will defer hiring a P/T Consultant until 2011 to gain cost savings in Year 1. AHSI launched a national advocacy strategy with meetings in D.C. in October 2009 with the America's Promise Alliance and National Youth Employment Coalition. In February 2010, AHSI introduced our new enterprise and solicited comments on our business plan from the American Youth Policy Forum; The Corps Network; Council of Chief State School Officers; National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices; U.S. Department of Education's Jim Shelton, Director, Office of Innovation; and United Way Worldwide. In March, AHSI formally partnered with the America's Promise Alliance and Grad Nation to collaborate in promoting high school graduation and post-high school success for all students.

These developments reflect updates to the AHSI strategy and business plan as of March 2010. The next AHSI Advisory Board milestone will be in June 2010 when we assess overall progress and welcome any new member organizations.

RACE TO THE TOP FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

On Thursday, March 4, 2010 the Department of Education announced the Race to the Top Phase 1 Finalists. They include: CO, DE, D.C., FL, GA, IL, KY, LA, MA, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, SC, and TN. These finalists will be invited to D.C. in March to make a presentation and discuss their proposals before the final winners will be selected. You can read about how the finalists were chosen and more about next steps in the U.S. DOE press release here: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03042010.html>. States that are not awarded funds in Phase 1 may reapply for Phase 2; Phase 2 applications are due in June 2010.

AHSI 's Race to the Top Strategy

AHSI has developed a strategy for reaching out to all forty-one Phase 1 applicants and potential Phase 2 applicants to introduce AHSI, find opportunities to become subcontractors if the state is successful with its Phase 1 application, and find opportunities to assist in improving a state's application if it is unsuccessful but intends to reapply in Phase 2. We thank Founding Member Organizations for contributing time and energy to help review and summarize the Phase 1 applications. Your efforts will help us keep to our timeline of contacting all Phase 1 applicants by the end of March.

INVESTING IN INNOVATION FUND FINAL NOTICE PUBLISHED

Compiled by Marjorie Cohen and Jonathan Rogers, National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

The [official announcement](#) by the Department of Education marks the release of the [final priorities](#) for this ARRA competitive fund. Please visit the i3 Fund webpage on ED's website often for updated and helpful information. Right now, ED has the following resources posted:

- [i3-at-a-glance](#) highlights the key elements of the i3 Fund, as well as any changes from the proposed guidance draft
- A [PowerPoint](#) that provides a clear overview, priorities, awards available, and eligibility requirements
- A [Webinar from March 9th](#) with explanations by and a Q&A with Assistant Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Improvement Jim Shelton
- In-person regional events and webinars on applying for i3: [register here](#)

Important dates:

April 1 – Deadline for notice of intent to apply
 May 11 – Final applications due
 July 10 – Deadline for ED's application review
 September – Grant awards announced

Other i3 resources:

*Education Week's [informative article](#)

*Tom Vander Ark, former official with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has a written a [thorough analysis](#) of changes in the final priorities and provided a thoughtful commentary

Open Innovation Portal

On a related note, but separate from the Invest in Innovation (i3) Fund, the U.S. Department of Education has launched an [Open Innovation Portal](#). The portal is a web 2.0 collaboration tool that facilitates educational innovation and collaboration among key stakeholders in education. Among other uses, entrepreneurs, education stakeholders, and funders can use the portal to partner to develop and fund innovative ideas in the education sector. Please see the [FAQ](#) page, or the portal's new [blog](#) for more information.

AHSI 's i3 Strategy

We recommend that AHSI not submit an i3 application on behalf of the network. We recommend instead that [AHSI serve as an official or other partner](#) in support of a

member organization's i3 application. We have reviewed the final rules and application guidelines, and AHSI would be able to partner with all interested member organizations (no limit on nonprofit partners), provided those organizations take the lead in submitting an i3 application. Interested member organizations can email Talmira and Lauren for additional information.

AHSI NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

PRESIDENT OBAMA HIGHLIGHTS TWO AHSI ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TO REDUCE DROPOUT RATE

On March 1, 2010 President Obama and Secretary Duncan joined General Colin Powell and America's Promise Alliance Chair Alma Powell for the announcement of Grad Nation — a 10-year campaign to mobilize America to reverse the dropout crisis and help America's children be prepared for success in college, work and life.

During his speech, President Obama highlighted Communities in Schools and Big Picture Learning's Met Center in Rhode Island as examples of programs already working to not only keep kids in school, but to help them achieve high school diplomas and envision future success. He said:

"Of course, getting it right requires more than just transforming our lowest performing schools. It requires giving students who are behind in school a chance to catch up and a path to a diploma. It requires focusing on students, from middle school through high school, who face factors at home, in the neighborhood, or in school that put them at risk of dropping out. And it requires replicating innovative ideas that make class feel engaging and relevant — because most high school dropouts in a recent study said the reason they dropped out was that they weren't interested in class and they weren't motivated to do their work.



"So that's why we'll build on the efforts of places like Communities in Schools that make sure kids who are at risk of dropping out have one-on-one support. That's why we'll follow the example of places like the Met Center in Rhode Island that give students that individual attention, while also preparing them through real-world, hands-on training the possibility of succeeding in a career.

"And that's why we'll invest in accelerated instruction in reading and math to help students who've fallen behind make up credits and ultimately graduate on time. It's also why we'll foster better alternative high schools and transfer schools, where students who have dropped out and who are at risk of dropping out, can return to the classroom and earn their diploma."

A third AHSI organization, YouthBuild USA, was also featured during the event when YouthBuild Brockton graduate Patrick Breton began the event by introducing General Colin Powell.

View Patrick's presentation here:

<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/id/220330>

Watch President Obama's entire speech here:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/35645359#35645359>

Also, read General Powell's recent blog post on the White House website:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/03/01/helping-america-become-a-grad-nation>

A FAREWELL NOTE FROM RON NEWELL OF EDVISIONS
 February 26, 2010

To all AHSI personnel:

Today is my last day with EdVisions. I am retiring from the arena; but not fading away! It has been my honor and privilege to have worked with the finest group of educators in the business. I have always loved coming to AHSI events because of the great number of people who have a genuine love for young people and the highest level of educational expertise. I have been in education for 44 years, and you are the greatest group of educators I have been associated with. I wish you all well as you move into uncharted waters.



Best wishes, always.
 Ron

AHSI THANKS & CONGRATULATES Ron Newell, EdVisions
 March 16, 2010

Dear Ron,

The AHSI network has benefited tremendously from your vision, expertise, and contributions to our collective effort. We are wiser and better informed thanks to your leadership of AHSI Tool Share calls on the Hope Study and your ongoing engagement with the Data & Evaluation Work Group! We value and appreciate the conversations and strategies you've helped design. Congratulations, again, on *Assessing What Really Matters in Schools: Creating Hope for the Future* (2009), and the important case it makes for understanding how a young person's perceptions of autonomy, belongingness, and the culture of school can encourage a sense of promise and heighten aspirations for the future.

As you retire from EdVisions Schools, we know you won't be too far away! We're likely to call on you from time to time, and we hope you'll answer!

May you and your family enjoy the new time you'll have together!

Sincerely yours,
 Your AHSI Family

OBAMA VISITS YOUTHBUILD STUDENTS AT SAVANNAH TECH
 March 2, 2010
 By Lesley Conn



President Barack Obama's first stop in Savannah was at a small, cement block classroom at Savannah Technical College. Under the watchful eye of instructor Daniel Krautheimer, 10 students were learning how to build cement and brick walls. They are classmates in the Savannah YouthBuild program, which puts at-risk students through a combined GED/construction program. The students, when weather permits, are building a house on Love Street near downtown Savannah.

The students knew to expect the president. National and local media were herded in behind them only moments before the president entered. It didn't keep a few of them from gasping and gaping the moment they saw him. Anquane Richardson was the first to get to shake his hand. Iyeshia Biggins gasped and put her hands over her heart, beaming as the president approached.



With hands behind his back, Obama surveyed the walls taking shape under the students' hands. "Who's the best bricklayer?" he asked, as hands shot up all around him. As he left, he told the students a lot of people had worked hard to create the national YouthBuild program. "Pay attention. No goofing off," he told them. "We're proud of you."

Before he stepped away to head to a speech at Savannah Tech's main auditorium, he posed for a picture

with beaming students. As he left the room, the students converged, talking, giggling and boasting over their individual moments with the president.

Watch a video of the visit at www.YouthBuild.org

DIPLOMA PLUS APPROACH SPECIALIZES IN EDUCATING DROPOUTS

The Providence Journal

Written by Julia Steiny
February 14, 2010

A class of Charlestown (Mass.) High School students are riveted to their teacher's lesson about plotting negative slopes. And smiling, to boot. With long dreadlocks pulled into a loose pony tail, Hayden Frederick-Clarke talks to the kids with a fascinating blend of rich, well-educated vocabulary and street syntax. He's cool.

Gesticulating effusively at the slope on the white board, he says, "When I've got a negative slope, I'm riding my bike down the hill, DOWN the hill. Make sense?" The kids are with him. "Cool. Now, how do we read?" "Left to right" is correct, but a few kids elaborate to show they're really getting his point. He exults, "Thank you! You have been here. I am actually your teacher." The kids laugh and assure him he's the teacher. The lesson is information-rich, but it's work to keep every kid engaged.

A girl, heavy with the end of a pregnancy, enters the room and drops hard into a chair. She's not the only one. And actually, most of these kids seem older than typical high-school juniors and seniors. Which they are.

They attend the Diploma Plus Academy, one of five small learning communities at Charlestown High in Boston. Diploma Plus' 29 schools and programs, dotted around the country, specialize in educating recent dropouts or those who are over-aged and under-credited, meaning they're already 17 with maybe a couple of ninth-grade credits.



The principal, Margaret Bledsoe, fought to get Diploma Plus into Charlestown High because about 30 percent of her school's 1,000 students are at least one grade level behind. "A kid comes in and says, 'If you put me in the ninth grade again, I'm out of here.' We wanted to have a program that was not just another year to fail. Diploma Plus has high rigor and challenging class work. If a kid wants an easy way to get out of high school ASAP, it isn't that."

Charlestown identified 50 students who were beginning to age out. "Project Reconnect," a Boston drop-out initiative, sent 10 more students who had already dropped out. Enrollment will double next year, and top out at 180 students the year after.

Nationally, America's 70-percent graduation rate often drops to 50 percent or below in urban areas. As early as middle school, kids start losing grades when their family moves a lot, or they just blow off school. In high school, kids leave to take care of a sick family member, or get pregnant, involved with drugs, or just bored. And one day a kid realizes there's no way he can graduate while still in his teens.

Diploma Plus offers these kids options.

A student, Vlad, says, "Here it's flexible. Most of us have jobs, and work is not easy with school and stuff." Never mind adding a baby to the workload.

Betsy Roter, the Academy's coordinator, explains, "We don't use the language of grade levels. Here we use skills and products of mastery," to determine when a student matriculates.

The students in the "Foundations Phase" have literacy and numeracy skills at the sixth to eighth grade level. By the "Presentation Phase," they've improved to ninth to 11th grade levels. The "Plus Phase" gets them ready to transition into the world beyond high school. Some Diploma Plus programs are on college campuses, where kids finish high school and are supported through the beginnings of college itself. "Plus" students enroll in college courses, participate in internships, do major projects and participate in seminars geared toward applying to college or developing a plan for the future.

"Personal competencies" count for 35 percent toward each phase. So a kid who's soaring academically but not showing up on time, with a civil tongue in her head, doesn't matriculate.

Roter says, "We have students who passed the MCAS (the Massachusetts state tests) and did really well, but who have never passed a class. So they have the content, but school didn't work at all well for them. The kids tell us they feel connected to the adults here, and that was what was missing in their earlier education."

The Diploma Plus Academy's discipline system is "restorative," meaning only rarely do they use traditional suspensions and detentions to control kids' unwanted behaviors. On Friday afternoons, and some Saturday mornings, errant students sit in circles with adults and peers to discuss their behavior. Sometimes the group helps them make a plan to make amends for their rude ways.

Roter says, "With these kids, traditional discipline has created a really negative history with authority. So we use conferencing and restorative justice. The kids say, 'No, Miss, give me the days of suspension, I don't want to come in on Saturday or do a circle.' The circles hold kids accountable for the specific behaviors," which is a whole lot more effective as a teaching technique for "personal competencies" than suspensions.

On average, across the East Coast sites, Diploma Plus graduates 90.2 percent of their kids. These are all kids who would have dropped out. The reality of kids' chaotic modern

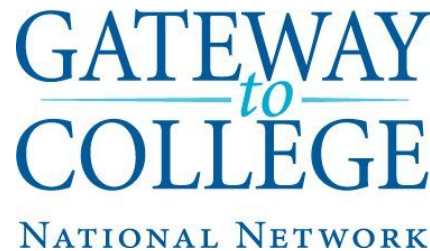
lives today is that a ton of them fall behind. Diploma Plus has figured out a way to reverse the course of sure failure.

GATEWAY TO COLLEGE NATIONAL NETWORK RECEIVES \$13 MILLION TO EXPAND PROGRAMS

Four foundations support promising program to help students earn college degrees

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Gateway to College National Network has received \$13 million in grants from four leading foundations to expand a program that transforms high school dropouts into college-ready students.

Now in operation in 27 colleges in 16 states, these new investments will allow Gateway to College to expand into 15 new community colleges and to make the program a model for colleges serving students who need remedial academic help.



Without a program like Gateway to College, national statistics suggest only 19 percent of dropouts will get a diploma within eight years of their expected graduation date. Through dual credit, Gateway to College graduates earn not only a high school diploma, but also have an average of 41 college credits by the time they complete the program; 90 percent indicate that they will continue their educations in college. These are remarkable statistics when you consider that the average student entered Gateway to College with a high school GPA of 1.6.

The grants announced today include \$7.28 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, \$3.8 million from the Foundation to Promote Open Society, a sister organization of the Open Society Institute, and nearly \$1 million each from Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Kresge Foundation.

Ensuring that more young people in America have the opportunity to complete college is crucial to our country's economic growth and stability, as the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that by 2016, half of all U.S. jobs will require college-level skills. Between 2005 and 2007, the average high school dropout earned \$18,800 a year, while the average community college graduate brought home more than \$34,500.

"As a nation, we can't afford to write off any of our young people," said Laurel Dukehart, Executive Director of Gateway to College National Network. "We have to do everything we can to reengage them and help them earn the high school and college credentials they'll need to become successful adults."

In addition, the Gateway to College model will be adapted to serve 18 to 26-year-olds who need to hone basic skills in reading, writing and math. The Gateway to College National Network will work with nine colleges to pilot the new program, called Project Degree.

Gateway to College's success is due to a combination of intensive academic and non-academic supports, and can be an important model for community colleges nationwide which are struggling with sky-high remedial rates. Nationally, as many as two-thirds of all community college students enter with inadequate academic skills.

"Gateway to College offers at-risk youth an opportunity to thrive," said Mimi Corcoran, director of the Open Society Institute's Special Fund for Poverty Alleviation. "By providing a responsive education in a flexible environment, this program helps underserved students excel at school and beyond and aims to break the cycle of poverty."

The Obama administration has called on states and education leaders to help the United States lead the world in percentage of college graduates by 2020. Until recently, education reform efforts and national policies have focused on increasing access to college, but have done little to help students graduate with credentials that employers value. Programs like Gateway to College are taking the important step of helping students succeed by developing individual college graduation plans, teaching time management and stress management skills along with note taking and communication skills.

“With our business leaders warning us that good-paying jobs require a college degree, we have to drastically improve the number of students completing college,” said Hilary Pennington, Director of Education, Postsecondary Success & Special Initiatives at the Gates Foundation. “Scholarships and tuition assistance aren’t enough. Schools must look to programs like Gateway to College to improve the services they offer and to give students the support they need to finish what they start.”

NEW OPPORTUNITIES & STORIES OF INTEREST

GATEWAY TO COLLEGE SEEKS SENIOR DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION & NETWORK SUPPORT

Gateway to College National Network (GtCNN) is a fast-growing education nonprofit organization with partner programs in 16 states. The National Network is replicating the Gateway to College model and a new program called Project DEgree with support from national foundations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wal-Mart Foundation, the Foundation to Promote Open Society, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and The Kresge Foundation. Gateway to College was founded at Portland Community College and now operates at 27 colleges partnering with over 115 school districts. Rapid growth is expected to continue. More information about Gateway to College is available at: www.gatewaytocollege.org

This is a new position designed to reduce the workload of the Executive Director by supervising 11 staff who manage the network partner support and evaluation work of the organization. The successful candidate will be part of the senior leadership team, collaborating with the Sr. Director of Finance & Administration and the Executive Director in support of a multi-million-dollar budget and ambitious goals for continuous improvement. It is a full-time, salaried position located in Portland, OR.

For a complete list of duties, requirements, and how to apply visit <http://www.ahsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/sr-director-job-posting.pdf>

INDIANAPOLIS OFFICE OF THE MAYOR – POSITIONS AVAILABLE WITH CHARTER SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Data & Operations Manager

The City of Indianapolis has an immediate opening for a full-time Data & Operations Manager to work exclusively with the Mayor’s charter school initiative. The Data & Operations Manager will be responsible for the overall direction, coordination, implementation, execution, control and completion of all Mayor-sponsored charter school initiative projects ensuring consistency with the office’s strategy, commitments and goals. Such areas include, but are not limited to the development and execution of the annual Accountability Report for public charter schools, communications initiative activities, management of the annual budget, grant activity and reporting responsibilities, and other special projects. For a complete list of duties, requirements, and how to apply visit <http://www.ahsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/data-operations-manager-job-description.pdf>

Accountability Manager(s)

The City of Indianapolis has immediate openings for two full-time Accountability Managers to work exclusively with the Mayor's charter school staff and oversee the performance of public charter schools authorized by the Mayor. Accountability Managers are responsible for all issues related to the performance and compliance of Mayor-sponsored charter schools and serve as the primary point of contact for school administrators and boards of directors. For a complete list of duties, requirements, and how to apply visit <http://www.ahsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/accountability-manager-job-description.pdf>

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

Many sincere thanks!

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