

newschools
venture fund
2005
SUMMIT

Hybrid Leaders, Entrepreneurial Solutions and the
Transformation of Public Education

A Report on the Sixth Annual NewSchools Summit

May 5, 2005

Empowering Entrepreneurs to Transform Public Education



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INTRODUCTION

The NewSchools Venture Fund Summit, created in 1999, brings together an important and unique community of “hybrid” leaders from across the education, business, policy, research, and philanthropic sectors to learn about and develop entrepreneurial solutions for the crisis facing our nation’s public schools. These change agents rarely have the opportunity to gather across the traditional boundaries of sector, geography, and political party. At the Summit, they are able to connect, collaborate and learn from one another, and thus to accelerate the transformation of public education so that it serves *all* of our children well.

While the entrepreneurial sense of urgency, enthusiasm and tenacity that pervades the Summit is impossible to capture adequately in a document like this, we know from past experience that the discussions and relationships fostered there help to keep these leaders energized and focused on continued progress in the year ahead.

This year’s Summit, with more than 400 leaders, continued to develop the kind of critical mass it will take to drive sustainable change throughout our public school systems. Conversations focused on a number of timely themes:

- **District reform remains a key lever in transforming public education.** Although many reform initiatives in K-12 education focus at the federal, state, school or classroom level, real transformation of our nation’s urban school systems must address the district as well. In the plenary session, two forward-thinking urban superintendents—Arne Duncan, CEO of Chicago Public Schools, and Randy Ward, the state-appointed administrator of the Oakland Unified School District—discussed the approaches they are using in their districts to create dramatic, sustainable, and systematic change. Other sessions throughout the day explored how school systems are becoming more performance-driven organizations and how some districts are radically redesigning the role of their own central office in order to better support schools, teachers and students.
- **The accountability and choice movements continue to converge.** Federal and state accountability initiatives have created a sense of urgency around addressing chronically failing schools; in many areas, states and districts are considering partnerships with charter school organizations to restructure or replace these chronically failing schools. As discussed during one of the morning panel sessions, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge to entrepreneurs who have traditionally focused on creating new schools from scratch. The opportunity to invest in turning an underperforming district school into a new charter school was further addressed by the lunchtime keynote speaker, Kevin Johnson. “KJ” (as he is known from his years as an NBA All-Star) recounted the story of St. HOPE Academy, a charter school and community development organization that overcame fierce opposition and legal battles with the teacher union to re-open Sacramento High School as a charter school. Johnson reminded the audience of why it is important to continue the hard work of creating opportunities for young people and emphasized the importance of linking education with community development work.

- **“Quality” means improved student outcomes.** Several panels touched on this theme, including a session on charter school performance and another on influencing state charter school policy. During a panel on shaping state policy “ecosystems” in a way that is favorable to charter schools, the speakers noted the importance of proactively defining “quality” so that the charter school movement is credible and delivers on its promise of accountability in exchange for flexibility. The session on charter school performance highlighted the need for better assessment tools that measure a school’s “value-add” on student performance—a critical piece of the puzzle for all public schools as they focus on measuring performance. And a session on the role of public schools in urban renewal raised the point that safer schools are necessary but not sufficient for community revitalization—schools must go beyond that minimum bar in order to truly transform their neighborhoods.
- **Ultimately, so much of the work of improving public education is about people.** Thus the notion of human capital and “hybrid” leaders as key change agents came up again and again throughout the Summit. One discussion focused on the importance of the teacher talent pool and what is being done to recruit, train, and retain that crucial part of the education labor market. The role of human capacity was also underscored in multiple conversations throughout the day, as speakers discussed the importance of and need for entrepreneurial and courageous leaders in districts, charter schools, foundations, and policy institutions.

Finally, it is worth noting that a new format was piloted at this year’s Summit. In the afternoon, two “working sessions” enabled smaller, deeper discussions among participants. Feedback regarding those sessions and others will be incorporated into subsequent Summits, to ensure that content and format remain “fresh” and meet the needs of participants.

The NewSchools Summit and this publication were made possible in part through the generous support and guidance of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We would also like to thank all of those who contributed to this important day of conversation through their participation.

The NewSchools team

PLENARY SESSION: THE MOST DIFFICULT TASK—CREATING DRAMATIC CHANGE IN URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Transforming urban school systems demands alignment, innovation and persistence

Speakers:

Dan Katzir

Managing Director, The Broad Foundation (moderator)

Arne Duncan

Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools

Randolph Ward

State Administrator, Oakland Unified School District

Urban school systems are among this country's most troubled bureaucracies, and yet they are charged with providing a high-quality education to more than half of all public school students. Today, a variety of factors—community demand, state and federal accountability mandates, pressure to prepare all students for success in the information age—are altering the landscape of public education. A few visionary district leaders are using this context as an opportunity not to retreat, but to step up. In a departure from the incremental reforms of years past, they are taking dramatic steps to transform their districts from the top down. At the NewSchools Summit, two of these leaders—Arne Duncan, CEO of Chicago Public Schools, and Randolph Ward, the State Administrator in charge of turning around Oakland Unified School District—sat down to reflect on the progress they have made so far and discuss the challenging work remaining ahead.

Many people view school districts as outdated bureaucracies that pose impediments to reform, noted moderator Dan Katzir. But, he added, these systems also have the potential to be critically important points of leverage. Most major reforms of the past few decades have focused at other levels of the system—No Child Left Behind at the federal level, standards at the state level, charter schools at the school level, teacher quality at the classroom level—but Katzir believes that equal or greater attention must be paid to the

work of school districts, who bear much of the day-to-day responsibility for public education and control the majority of the dollars. As such, changes that make these systems function more effectively—and that facilitate an across-the-board focus on supporting student learning—can have an enormous impact on student outcomes.

One of the most important factors in this dramatic reform for both Duncan and Ward has been aligning district governance with the goals and priorities of the rest of the school system. Neither Oakland nor Chicago has an elected school board, the most common form of school district governance and one that is often cited as a dysfunctional, politically-charged structure that inhibits long-term

improvement. Chicago's public schools have been under the control of Mayor Richard M. Daley since 1995, with Duncan as schools chief since 2001. In Duncan's view, mayoral control has been a critical piece of the puzzle, one that effectively aligns the city's resources in support of district change. He also noted that absent the daily battles and politicking of a school board, he has been able to focus his time and energy on leading the system and supporting school change.

Key Questions

- What are the key levers that these district leaders are using as they seek to create dramatic, sustainable, systemic change in their districts?
- Neither of these districts have elected school boards: one is under mayoral control, the other under a state takeover. How important is this type of centralized governance structure in achieving massive change?
- How does entrepreneurial change—from outside the system—connect to and/or conflict with internal change within the system?
- How are these leaders reinventing systems and structures within their districts so that change is sustainable over time?



In Oakland, Ward is an administrator acting on behalf of the state of California, which intervened to take over the district in 2003 as the result of a fiscal crisis. There, the school board has become more of an advisory group, with the state administrator empowered to take the steps necessary to bail out of

Oakland's massive deficits and set the district back on course. Despite the broad power Ward has been given, he was cautious about drawing governance conclusions from his experience (he was also state administrator in the takeover of the Compton school district in the 1990s) or from the mayoral control experiments taking place across the country today. Ward said that in his view, effective governance is more a matter of who than how. That said, Ward agreed with Duncan that getting to the important changes that affect student achievement directly—such as closing the achievement gap and addressing chronically failing schools—simply can't be done without getting governance right.

Another distinguishing strategy that both Duncan and Ward have embraced is the creation of new schools—both charter schools and district schools—as a means of catalyzing change across the district. In both cases, the district is working with educators and community leaders to create a new, diverse supply of schools. Many of these schools are smaller and targeted at specific student needs or interests. In Oakland, the district has been partnering for several years with a local nonprofit, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES), to create new small autonomous schools. Ward has built on that initial work by encouraging charter management organizations like Aspire Public Schools and Leadership Public Schools to expand their presence in the district.

In Chicago, one of Duncan's newest initiatives is Renaissance 2010, which aims to create 100 new schools by 2010. Approximately one-third of these will be charter schools, one-third will be contract schools, and one-third will be new district schools. The common bond is "performance contracts," which specify what schools must achieve in order to maintain their flexibility and autonomy. "If at the end of the day we can create 100 great new schools in neighborhoods that haven't had them—and build upon the successes of the vast majority of schools that are getting better—we think that collective synergy can put us in a spot to dramatically reverse the history of decline of the public schools," said Duncan. This innovative new strategy for district change incorporates new school creation with the turnaround of existing schools.



"We have a moral imperative not to turn a blind eye, not to look the other direction, but to try to create better options in those communities we have underserved for far too long."

Arne Duncan
Chicago Public Schools

Both Duncan and Ward stressed the importance of engaging with all levels of the school system, and beginning these conversations early. Balancing the needs of administrators, school leaders, teachers, parents and students is critical to both getting started and to sustaining improvement over time. One area where this need for outreach has surfaced is with teachers. Both cities have strong teacher unions, and Duncan observed that school system leaders must engage with union leadership on negotiations, but must also maintain direct communication with union membership (the teaching force itself).



Another area of crucial contact is with the community—parents and the neighborhoods surrounding schools—especially when it comes to a massive change at the school level, such as closing chronically failing schools. Duncan noted that he has learned over time to be clear in advance about the criteria for closing a school, and to involve the community in establishing that criteria. Their criteria for identifying a failing school were even more stringent, and their support for closing those schools more likely. Ward stressed the need to “overcommunicate” early and often, both for the reasons Duncan cited, but also so that teachers, parents and students would maintain a sense of ownership over the system’s changes. “This is not about me ... this is about buiding a system that will become a part of the fabric of the community,” Ward noted.

As Katzir noted at the start of the plenary conversation, these two districts have made long strides toward systemic reform, but they are both still “works in progress.” With a combination of major initiatives and persistent small steps, both Duncan and Ward are carrying out the most difficult task: creating dramatic change in urban school systems.

Context: Oakland and Chicago School Systems

| | <i>Oakland</i> | <i>Chicago</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Students | 44,925 | 420,322 |
| Schools | 105 | 623 |
| Full-Time Employees | 5,613 | 46,500 |
| Annual Budget | \$400 million | \$5 billion |
| Student Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12% of students receiving special education services 33% of students are English language learners 66% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13% of students receiving special education services 14% of students are English language learners 85% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch |

Sources: Oakland Unified School District, Chicago Public Schools

PANEL: BECOMING A PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN SCHOOL SYSTEM

Focusing district-wide culture on student achievement outcomes is a complex process

Over the last several decades, public education has begun to move away from a focus on inputs—dollars, hours, students per teacher—toward a culture of performance that is focused on outcomes. However, most public school systems are not yet effective learning organizations: while they are paying more attention to outcomes and using data to make decisions, they have not yet fully embraced an ongoing feedback loop that encourages constant inquiry, a regular monitoring of progress, and adjustments based on those results. Although many schools encourage curiosity, creative approaches and scientific experimentation among students, most have not yet embraced this practice of continuous learning by their own staff at the classroom, school, or district office level.

The definition of a performance-driven school system is laid out in a recent report from NewSchools Venture Fund, “Anatomy of School System Improvement: Performance-Driven Practices in Urban School Districts.” Essentially, a performance-driven school system is one in which all members, at all levels of the organization, clearly understand the organization’s performance goals and collectively support the strategies, resource allocations and activities needed to achieve those goals. These school systems create an ongoing feedback loop for regular and frequent monitoring of performance, which seeks to ensure that the district is regularly assessing and addressing student achievement needs, and aligning resources in support of those goals. However, as moderator Tony Bryk pointed out, “the devil is in the details—how do we actually make this work in the context of schools and districts?” He noted that two of the biggest questions to begin with are: (1) What is it that we want students to be able to know and do, and (2) How can we check along the way for signals that we are on the right track?

Building a culture of inquiry in a public school system is a complex transition from the way these organizations have traditionally operated. “Virtually every parent went to school so they’ve got a mindset about what school should be like, and it’s a fairly tradition-bound industry,” explained Larry Stupski, who has observed the entrenched culture of school districts across the country through his foundation’s work.

Creating a true performance-driven school system requires a district to begin by identifying its own developmental stage along a performance spectrum. “I think one of the things we’ve found in school districts is that school districts have a relatively weak understanding of where they are,” noted Stupski. “What’s the authentic reality about our school districts? What are our schools doing, what are our students doing, where are they, how do they feel, what are their opinions, what’s the culture, what are the assets that the district has, what are the liabilities the district has?”

Merrill Vargo highlighted two dimensions along which this assessment needs to occur: how focused the system is on outcomes and how it manages knowledge. Within each dimension, an organization can characterize itself as “beginning,” “emerging,” or “systematic,” where “systematic” indicates that the district’s performance-driven practices

Speakers:

Tony Bryk
Professor of Education and of Organizational Behavior, Stanford University (moderator)

Larry Stupski
Chair, Stupski Foundation

Merrill Vargo
Executive Director, Springboard Schools (formerly Bay Area School Reform Collaborative)

Dale Vigil
Superintendent, District 6, Los Angeles Unified School District

Key Questions

- What are the basic characteristics exhibited by a performance-driven school system?
- How do districts create the culture of inquiry necessary to become a system focused on outcomes rather than inputs?
- How do a performance-driven system’s practices support improvement in individual classrooms?



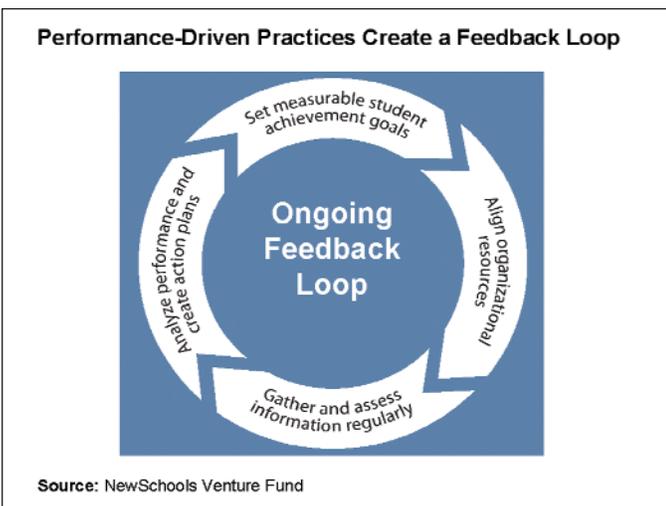
are embedded into everyday operations. Vargo noted that shifting toward “systematic” requires districts to break some of the old habits long entrenched in the education field, including the isolation of teachers and the reliance on intuition as “the highest form of knowledge.” She explained that data is necessary but not sufficient to change instructional practices. “The best practices don’t come out of the data,” said Vargo. “Data is crucial; it creates that learning appetite. ... Your teachers have to be connected to data sources, but also to what I call a rich soup of ideas.”

Implementing performance-driven practices in public education requires alignment of people and resources around the goals a school system has put in place. Comparing public education to his work in the private sector as a senior executive at Charles Schwab, Stupski observed that the level of technology investment in education is dwarfed by such spending in business. He urged foundations, entrepreneurs, and districts to innovate on this front, so that the lack of tools for data analysis does not continue to hamper efforts to gather and assess district progress. Vargo added that districts’ technology investments need to include ongoing support and implementation costs, not just the initial purchase cost which is the extent of most districts’ budgeting process.

“There is no lack of incentive to change or lack of good ideas, but there is a need to know how to get things started.”

Merrill Vargo
Springboard Schools

Ultimately, this work must reach down to the classroom level in order to be worthwhile. As the leader of a sub-district in the Los Angeles Unified School District, Dale Vigil stressed the importance of thinking systemically and focusing the entire district on student learning. Vigil said that he reinforces this message through weekly school visits, monthly meetings with principals that center on how to coach teachers and provide instructional leadership, and regular communications with parents on the district’s instructional initiatives. Vigil emphasized that what happens at the classroom-level must be connected to the systemic change that the district is undertaking. “Student practice needs to be at the heart of all discourse,” he said. “We have schools in our district where the teachers get together in groups with the site administrator, and they actually spend all day just looking at student work: critiquing it, talking about how it can be better, how they could frame professional development.”



All of the panelists acknowledged that these ideas are not new. The challenge is making performance-driven practices permeate into district culture so that these initiatives last beyond the tenure of a single administration or early adopter. This change process takes a long time. Stupski likened the two layers of this work to an “exoskeleton” and an “endoskeleton,” in which school systems must consider both the context of the external shell—community involvement, state policymakers, the city mayor, the school board—even as they address the system’s human and operational infrastructure. With thoughtful and consistent attention to both of these layers, public school systems can continue their transformation into cultures that embrace inquiry and improve student achievement.

PANEL: ADDRESSING CHRONICALLY FAILING PUBLIC SCHOOLS— DISTRICT-CHARTER PARTNERSHIPS

Opportunities emerge as choice and accountability movements converge to deal with chronically failing schools

Due to pressure from parents, educators, civic groups, business leaders, and politicians, public education has been moving towards increased accountability. At the same time, charter schools have advanced broader parental choice as a key lever of reform—increasing the supply of new, quality schools and introducing the concept of flexibility and autonomy in exchange for accountability for performance. Meanwhile, prompted by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and state-level accountability initiatives, it is increasingly common for states, districts, contractors and charter school operators to consider working together to replace or restart chronically failing schools.

In short, the pressing need to address these chronically failing schools has led the accountability and choice movements to converge. As moderator Michael Petrilli of the U.S. Department of Education explained, twelve states have already enacted policies allowing districts to restructure low-performing schools by closing and re-opening them as charter schools. In 27 other states, while policies are silent on the issue, an innovative district can still implement the charter school restructuring option within the parameters of charter school law. All told, Petrilli noted that approximately 1,200 schools are currently eligible for this type of intervention under NCLB, with that number expected to increase dramatically in the coming years. Still, the replacement or restructuring of chronically failing schools by providers other than the district is a very new field into which few have ventured.

Districts investigating these options may want to first consider the case of San Diego City Schools, where Leslie Fausset, Deputy Superintendent, learned that opposition from those who wish to retain the status quo can be intense. After years of failing to make progress using more conventional approaches (replacing administrators and restructuring staff), the district put out a request for proposal in July 2004 for charter schools, charter management organizations, institutions of higher education, employee associations, and community organizations to restructure eight failing schools under NCLB. After a lengthy, highly politicized process, two local universities and an independent organization won the right to operate three schools, while the five remaining schools failed to get the necessary signatures. In retrospect, Fausset believes starting the process earlier and communicating more effectively to address this resistance would have been wise.

Charter school operators should recognize that these turnaround opportunities may be very difficult, and quite different from traditional start-ups. Deborah McGriff from Edison Schools warned that because turnarounds usually involve a much closer relationship with the district, there may be pressure to compromise on design features. For example, charter school operators doing turnarounds often do not have the luxury of scaling up

Speakers:

Michael Petrilli
Associate Assistant Deputy
Secretary, Office of Innovation and
Improvement, U.S. Department of
Education (moderator)

Deborah McGriff
Chief Communications Officer,
Edison Schools

Leslie Fausset
Deputy Superintendent, San Diego
City Schools

Margaret Fortune
Director, California Governor's
Initiative to Turn Around Failing
Schools

Key Questions

- What strategies are states and districts formulating and implementing to address chronically failing schools?
- How should charter school operators evaluate the opportunities created by these new strategies?
- What are the political and operational implications of the increasing convergence of choice and accountability?

“Once you decide there is only one option that is a solution, you are doing nothing more than people who say everything must be run by the local public school system.”

Deborah McGriff
Edison Schools

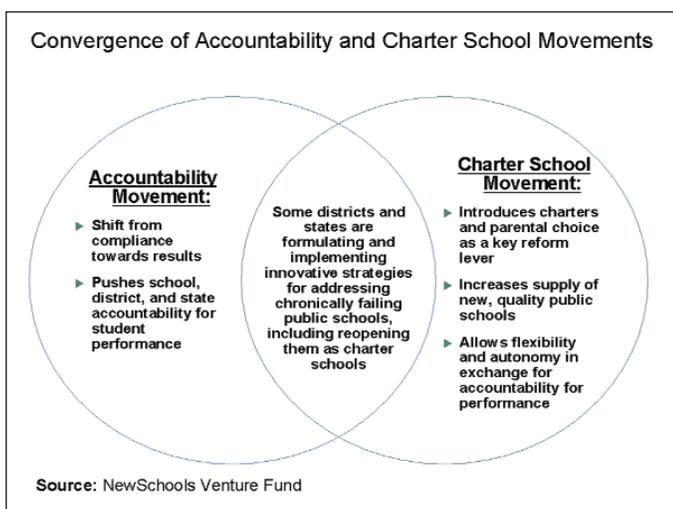
one grade at a time, as they may with a start-up school. Moreover, in return for facilities, they may also have to agree to contract with the district for some services that they might otherwise outsource to private providers.



While certain departures from the original model may be necessary and manageable, the panelists insisted that other design features should remain non-negotiable. McGriff maintained that the school operator should preserve control over anything that will directly affect student academic performance, including the ability of schools to select staff and execute their educational model faithfully. Furthermore, the panelists stressed that charter school managers engaging in these partnerships must be confident that the district, and at least some members of the community, want them to succeed and are committed to making it work. From her own experience leading St. HOPE Public Schools’ reopening of Sacramento High School as a group of charter schools, Margaret Fortune discovered the importance of forming strong relationships with parents, students and the press, so that those audiences can be rallied in support of the school if necessary. “You must choose an environment where there is some will on the ground and some educational leadership in the inside of the district to work as a partner,” she noted, adding that St. HOPE’s performance—compared with similar California schools—has improved under the new structure.

Despite the challenges in San Diego, Fausset was optimistic about what this all might mean for improving public education for all stakeholders. “I think that you will find educators within systems being more analytical and honest in terms of looking at schools that are struggling but also beginning to become more creative and innovative and entrepreneurial in what and how things might happen,” she said. “If we can get the right people around the table at the right time, we have an opportunity to engage as a profession to create more options for teachers, parents and students.”

Regardless of which path is pursued, student achievement must remain the top priority and guiding light. As McGriff concluded, “In the end, your goal is to have excellent schools for kids. Your goal cannot be whether you are totally into new schools, turnaround schools, charter schools, or independent schools, because once you decide there is only one option that is a solution, you are doing nothing more than people who say everything must be run by the local public school system.”



PANEL: STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING AND PREPARING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS

Leadership potential, working conditions seen as key elements for success

Among the many points of contention in public education reform, one of the few things that almost everyone seems to agree upon is how important high-quality teachers are in improving student achievement – and how difficult it is to attract and retain such teachers in low-income areas that need them the most. As No Child Left Behind and various state-level initiatives train the spotlight on improving teacher quality, districts across the nation are struggling to recruit and retain well-prepared teachers. Meanwhile, few agree on what makes a teacher high-quality, let alone the best way to attract and prepare teachers in a way that produces student achievement gains. This makes for a thorny labor market in an intensely people-driven system.

What is clear is that the real teacher shortage is not a lack of teachers entering the profession, but rather a lack of great teachers, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. Stanford economist Susanna Loeb noted that with one out of every ten college graduates entering the teaching profession, the pool of teachers is quite large. However, the percentage of teachers with high aptitude (as determined by standardized tests) has dropped from 25 percent to just 10 percent of new teachers. What's more, that 10 percent is far less likely to end up in low-performing schools and in schools where most students are minorities. "What elements of preparation are important for teachers to do a good job in the classroom and what elements keep people out?" asked Loeb. "Understanding both of those two things could be really helpful for improving what's going on."

Contrary to popular belief, Loeb said, it's not "all about the money;" rather, she has found that the one of the strongest determinants of where a teacher chooses to work is actually where he or she grew up. Moreover, she found that working conditions—including class size, leadership, facilities, time for preparation and professional development, and even student demographics—have an enormous impact on where teachers choose to teach and how long they stay. As such, Loeb suggested that districts must place attention on those matters they can influence, such as school leadership and culture.

Despite the great need for further understanding of quality teaching, few districts rigorously monitor teacher effectiveness. This is an area where districts can learn from entrepreneurs like Wendy Kopp, whose Teach For America program has recruited more than 10,000 top college graduates over the last 15 years, placing them for two years in high-need schools as teachers. Because the success of her program rests largely on the quality of the teachers they select and prepare, Kopp and her team have tried to understand what characteristics are predictive of successful teaching (defined at Teach For America as bringing about a year and a half of student achievement gains in one school year). She noted that these teachers resemble great leaders. "You see a person operating with a tremendous sense of urgency every minute of the day, where they're thinking 'where are my kids now versus where I want them to be' and they're using data, assessing their kids constantly to try to figure out where they are and what more they need to do," said Kopp. "They just do whatever it takes."

Speakers:

Andrew Rotherham
Director of the 21st Century Schools Project, Progressive Policy Institute (moderator)

Wendy Kopp
Founder and President, Teach For America

Susanna Loeb
Associate Professor of Education and of Economics, Stanford University

Michelle Rhee
Chief Executive Officer, The New Teacher Project

Key Questions

- What is being done to increase and improve the pool of teachers?
- What does a great teacher look like—and how can that person be recruited, supported and retained?
- What changes are necessary to ensure that high-quality individuals are teaching in the classrooms where they are most needed?

“Good teachers find a way,
despite all obstacles, to obtain
these gains in student
achievement”

Michelle Rhee
The New Teacher Project

Guided by these observations, Kopp said that Teach For America now looks for these qualities in its applicants—perseverance, ability to motivate others, analytic skills—in addition to traditional attributes such as tutoring experience or work with youth. Those with these skills have an edge, but Kopp added that even those motivated applicants who are not selected to participate in Teach For America could be strong teachers if they were able to work with great leaders and mentors. Unfortunately, the schools most in need of strong teachers are often lacking in the leadership capacity needed to shape new teachers into effective classroom leaders.

Like Kopp, Michelle Rhee of The New Teacher Project (TNTP) also suggested that much of the opportunity for finding and keeping great teachers lies in the hands of districts themselves, even though traditional teacher education schools and alternative certification programs will continue to play a large role in preparing those teachers. Like Teach For America, TNTP is drawing from a non-traditional pool of potential teachers: those who have been successful in non-teaching careers but interested in becoming teachers. The organization partners with districts to recruit and place these new teachers into classrooms.

Rhee suggested that even as districts bemoan the lack of teachers in high-need schools and subjects, they are setting up their human resources systems in a bureaucratic way that discourages teachers, especially those that are the most qualified. “What we found was that the districts were doing a lot of things to basically make sure that the best people didn’t come in to teach in their districts,” she explained. “You start out with a pretty solid group of applicants, [but] the best people became so frustrated and discouraged by the process that they were leaving, and the districts were actually hiring folks who were less qualified than the initial pool who had applied.” What’s more, Rhee noted that district policies—such as transfer rules that allow experienced teachers to take “easier” posts in higher performing schools—complicate things, leaving the hardest classrooms for the least experienced teachers to navigate.

All of the panelists agreed that the solution is easier to identify than to implement; district practices must be transformed so that those teachers with skills and talent are willing to teach in high-need areas, and so that those teachers with less obvious talent are still able to be successful in such environments. As Kopp observed, “there are only so many superstars out there who have, straight out of college, the kind of leadership skills to do this. I think it may be not the full recipe for success to keep placing new teachers who are mere mortals—really strong, committed people but who are just not at that level – in these environments where they don’t get a lot of good, strong, ongoing school-based leadership and management.” Still, it is clear that districts will need to address these inadvertent obstacles to great teaching so that their school systems can make critical progress toward improved student achievement.

PANEL: HOW GOOD IS GOOD ENOUGH? REFRAMING THE DEBATE ON CHARTER SCHOOL QUALITY

Charter school movement urged to take proactive stance, keep quality bar high

In the past year, the academic performance of charter schools has come under increased scrutiny. The emerging availability of data on student achievement, and the evolution of how charter schools are authorized and evaluated, have together spurred both debates and conversations about charter school quality. Moderator Rick Hess, an education researcher at the American Enterprise Institute, observed that the charter school movement has missed an opportunity by allowing the terms of the debate to be set by others, often failing to collect quality data, and sometimes failing to use data appropriately to judge performance.

This focus on whether charter schools are improving student achievement stems from the movement's core mantra of "autonomy for accountability." Current approaches to measuring performance, however, have proven to be severely limited—both for charter schools and other public schools. Accountability systems at both the state and federal levels capture "snapshots" in time and compare individual student achievement to set scores that are defined by state standards. "[Such] accountability systems are problematic," researcher Macke Raymond explained, "because they don't value what charter schools add to student performance." Since many charter schools target historically underserved populations with low achievement scores, this means that the improvements they do accomplish may not be counted. At the same time, Raymond acknowledged that charter schools might also benefit from self-selection bias, in which students apply because they or their parents are more motivated or advantaged in some other way.

To address these issues, the panelists noted that states, districts, and schools are investigating systems that measure longitudinal student gains. This requires a unique identifier for each student, so that their educational progress can be tracked from grade to grade and from school to school, as well as identifiers for each teacher so that instruction may be evaluated. This would allow professional development to be customized to each teacher's strengths and weaknesses, strong instruction to be rewarded, and poor instruction to be remedied. However, as Johnathan Williams of the Accelerated School and California State Board of Education explained, both ideas have encountered resistance from those concerned about student and teacher privacy, so secure solutions will be necessary to win large-scale approval.

Inevitably, implementing any kind of "value-added" educational measurement system requires a common set of metrics across schools, which is a notion that can run counter to two other important tenets of charter schooling: innovation and personalization. "The challenge is that all kids do learn differently, and in the charter schools world, we developed these schools based on a vision," said Williams. "When we started to open schools it wasn't about standardized tests. Now with the high-stakes game that we have ... we have to look at things very differently, where we are held to standards that are very much a challenge."

Speakers:

Rick Hess
Director of Educational Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute (moderator)

Macke Raymond
Director, Center for Research on Educational Outcomes; Research Fellow, Hoover Institution

Greg Richmond
President, National Association of Charter School Authorizers

Johnathan Williams
Co-Director, Accelerated Charter School; Member, California State Board of Education

Key Questions

- How should school performance be judged?
- How can charter school advocates be proactive in framing the charter school quality debate?
- How can charter school leaders and supporters better collect the evidence needed to measure school quality?

“Keep the bar high—we know what happens when we lower it.”

Johnathan Williams
Accelerated Charter School and California
State Board of Education

As Hess explained, this notion can be a double-edged sword for those charter schools that choose to target at-risk students. However, in order for charter school students’ degrees and qualifications to have merit, even historically low-performing students must eventually reach the high standards set out for all public school students. “Keep the bar high—we know what happens when we lower it,” cautioned Williams.

Greg Richmond of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers emphasized that differences over quality definitions should not prevent authorizers and communities from holding schools accountable. “The charter school community can’t use the disarray around educational performance as a reason for why we don’t enforce accountability. I don’t think it’s moral,” he said. “I know that it is possible to set performance standards that are not perfect but are good, and I often hear a lot of conversation that we can’t figure out perfect so we just accept whatever it is. Perfect is the enemy of good.” Even when data shows that a school is underperforming, Richmond added, the political will to close the school is often lacking.

One potential solution that emerged during the panel is to maintain high standards for all charter school students, but allow individual pupils to achieve them according to their own timeline, as long as they make steady and sufficient progress along the way. “Why do we keep thinking that all students must finish school in 12 years?” wondered Raymond. “Why can’t we invest in two additional years of schooling, rather than have that person leave and face consequences later in life?” She noted that even with a longer timeline for some students, interim metrics would need to be established along the way.

While the school quality debate may be highly technical, it is important for the community, especially parents, to remain involved so that the outcomes are legitimate and meaningful. Although audience members raised the question of whether safety ought to be enough for parents to choose charter schools in low-income areas, the panel responded that while safety and the ability to choose are clearly essential prerequisites, ultimately the charter school movement cannot stop short of improving student achievement.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: KEVIN JOHNSON, FOUNDER, ST. HOPE ACADEMY

As a pro basketball star, Kevin Johnson could have done anything with his money and time. Once he retired from the National Basketball Association in 2000, he chose to return to Oak Park—the underserved neighborhood in Sacramento, California in which he had grown up—to become a full-time social entrepreneur. A decade earlier, Johnson had founded St. HOPE (Helping Our People Excel) Academy as an after-school program. Over the last several years, the nonprofit organization has evolved a broader scope and mission: to revitalize Oak Park through public education, civic leadership, economic development and the arts.

Over lunch at the Summit, Johnson reflected on St. HOPE's work in public education, particularly its contentious battle to re-open the chronically failing Sacramento High School as a charter school. His remarks from the front lines of education reform were inspiring and compelling, and served as a potent reminder of the importance of prioritizing the needs of our nation's underserved students—and of making sure that the transformation of public education is integrated with community development.



Among Johnson's key messages:

- **Charity often begins at home.** Johnson explained that he was one of the few in his class to go onto college and a successful career. “Everybody else I grew up with: drugs, dead or jail,” he said. “That’s the reality of my community. And we had to do something to disrupt this cycle.”
- **Education is a vital component in revitalizing a neighborhood.** St. HOPE has created seven charter schools in Oak Park, including six high schools and one elementary school. The goal, Johnson says, is a “continuum of learning” that brings together a K-12 public school system with the other components of community development, all concentrated in one geographic area. Johnson believes this systemic approach is the only way to “counter all those negative forces that are out there.”
- **Likewise, economic development must tie into any successful education reform.** Creating new economic opportunities and a stronger environment for Oak Park has been an important part of Sacramento High's transformation. Johnson recounted the efforts of Magic Johnson to bring Starbucks into his home community of Ladera Heights, near Los Angeles. The project overcame Starbucks' initial skepticism about the area's profitability, and launched a nationwide effort to bring Starbucks stores into high-need communities in transition. Near St. HOPE's high school campus (which houses all six of its small high schools), the organization has constructed a new mixed-use retail facility—including a Starbucks. Many students work there after school, integrating real-life skills with those learned in the classroom. “If we're really going to improve public education it will not happen unless economic development and community revitalization are a part of the equation,” said Johnson.

“If we're really going to improve public education, it will not happen unless economic development and community revitalization are a part of the equation.”

Kevin Johnson,
St. HOPE Academy

“We’re focused on a K-12 public school system in one geographic area that combines economics, community, and the arts as it relates to public education. That’s what we’re trying to do: one continuum of learning.”

Kevin Johnson,
St. HOPE Academy

- **The success of revolutionary reforms like charter schools depends greatly on bipartisan outreach and support.** Johnson recounted separate conversations he had in the early 1990s about charter schools with Senator Ted Kennedy, a Democrat known for his work on public education, and with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. He was startled to find that Kennedy wasn’t familiar with the idea of charter schools, while Thomas acknowledged the role of charter schools in giving low-income and minority parents a real choice in public education. “We’re going to need people on both sides of the aisle to really make this happen,” Johnson noted.
- **Ultimately, those involved in public education must remain persistent and keep in mind that improving outcomes for students is the endgame.** When Sacramento High School was threatened with a state takeover in 2002, St. HOPE came up with a plan to turn the large, comprehensive high school into a set of small charter schools. The organization faced great resistance from the local teachers’ union and others in the school district, but ultimately received a great amount of support from the local community. Throughout the ordeal, Johnson recalled the “pit schools” that African-American slaves constructed, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and other campaigns to ensure learning would happen. “How could I not continue this fight?” Johnson asked. “It’s not about the movement. It’s about the kids that are in the movement. They will not get what they deserve—an equal opportunity for a great future—if we don’t succeed.”

PANEL: REDESIGNING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT MODEL

School systems rethinking the role of the central office

As district and charter school systems try to address poor student achievement, many are trying to determine the best system structure to support school sites. Similar to other multi-site organizations, school systems are exploring what role the central office should play relative to the school sites themselves. Often, this leads naturally into considering which areas the central office should maintain authority over, and which areas merit greater autonomy for school leaders. At the same time, they are investigating how outsourcing some “back-office” services to an external partner might reduce costs and enable greater focus on instructional quality. In both cases, system leaders must strike the right balance between centralization and decentralization while maintaining a high level of accountability and remaining connected to the needs of the community.

How a system redesigns its central office depends greatly on its vision for change. This vision cannot simply be a mechanical reworking of systems and organizational charts: it needs to strike at the heart of the organization’s culture and philosophy in order to be truly transformational. “You can’t have a technical solution to a political problem,” argued Katrina Scott-George of Oakland Unified School District, where a state takeover has prompted major district restructuring. “The work of creating change is about ideology and implementing it.”

Redesigning the central office inevitably involves comprehensive reform cutting across virtually all educational and operational activities. This can be dramatic, overwhelming and often painful. But as Cathy Minberg, former Houston Independent School District official and current leader of the Center for School District Effectiveness advised, “Hyperactivity creates momentum for change.”

All the panelists agreed that decisions about centralizing or decentralizing functions must be considered carefully: site-level autonomy should not be pursued for its own sake but should only be employed when it strengthens the capacity to support the school system’s ultimate goal of teaching and learning. Scott-George explained that Oakland, for example, has not mandated that each school assume all of the same functions and activities from central office. Instead, it is allowing principals to select which services they want to assume locally, which they want to outsource to third-party providers, and which should continue to come from central office. This also required a shift to what Oakland officials call “results-based budgeting,” which is designed to create greater equity among schools by allocating funding based on actual staff salaries instead of the district average.

Some services should stay centralized within the district offices: Minberg believes curriculum should be consistent across the district, with teachers allowed freedom in instructional methods, and both she and Scott-George advocated for a central warehouse for data. However, school leaders—whether in district, charter or independent schools—should maintain the prerogative of hiring and firing teachers, according to the panelists.

Speakers:

Maisie O’Flanagan
Principal, McKinsey & Company
(moderator)

Cathy Minberg
Chief Executive Officer, Center for
School District Effectiveness

Natalye Paquin
Chief Operating Officer, School
District of Philadelphia

Katrina Scott-George
Special Assistant to the State
Administrator, Oakland Unified
School District

Key Questions

- What factors are prompting district and charter school system to rethink the design of central office?
- Which functions should the central office retain, and which services might better be outsourced?
- What innovative models are emerging for systems of schools and the role of the central office?

Historically, unions have proven the greatest obstacle to giving principals this freedom. But without this authority, the panelists maintained that managers cannot build a cohesive, effective team where teachers need to perform. This consideration is often overlooked in the placement of teachers within a district, with seniority status or teacher preferences taking precedence.



Also under state takeover, the School District of Philadelphia has made significant changes in the structure of its central office. The district's chief operating officer, Natalye Paquin, explained that changing the boundaries of decision-making and service provision may also mean that existing staff need to be retrained or new talent hired to fill in skill gaps. In particular, operational and academic staff need to work closely together to make sure the entire central office is fully aligned toward improving teaching and learning. Mincberg noted that involving non-business staff in budget decisions can help them understand the financial trade-offs of their requests. In turn, business staff can also learn the educational implications of their actions from academic

officers. All panelists agreed that having instructional and business staff working together openly can help break down “siloes” between different roles and functions, thereby minimizing inefficiencies and maximizing outcomes for students.

However, this type of central office restructuring usually requires additional financial resources, particularly during the early planning and transition period. Paquin noted that Philadelphia officials looked to the legislature as a primary revenue source, investing in a lobbyist team to advocate for the district. In addition, they sought to build long-lasting partnerships with foundation and corporate sponsors, as well as charter schools and privately managed schools which could bring some of their own resources to bear on the challenge of restructuring. Finally, they worked to bring down costs by restructuring debt, instituting an early retirement program and outsourcing technology, food and janitorial services.

Rethinking the role of the central office also has implications for how a district works with outside organizations, including service providers. Structuring partnerships and contract agreements requires an effective legal team, as well as an increase in the skill set of managers overseeing implementation. “Outsourcing can be an enormous friend, but it can also be a foe,” Mincberg warned. “Managers can't wait until the end of the year to evaluate performance—they need to stay on top of it all year long.”

Dramatically changing the role or structure of the district's central office inevitably sparks strong resistance, and the panelists explained that a concerted communications effort is key to overcoming inertia. Mincberg suggested that a press officer—ideally with political experience as opposed to media experience—can be very helpful to leading a district communications campaign. Stirring up parents and other community members to voice their concerns about under-performing schools, putting pressure on the system to change, can also be a powerful tool. “People have been pacified to accept low performance,” noted Scott-George. “We need to challenge and create tension so we can engage in some constructive dialogue.”

“Managers can't wait until the end of the year to evaluate performance—they need to stay on top of it all year long.”

Cathy Mincberg
Center for School District Effectiveness

PANEL: FROM SCHOOLHOUSE TO STATEHOUSE—SHAPING CHARTER SCHOOL POLICY

Charter school advocates advance state policy strategies

Because of the differences in charter laws, policy climates and politics across states, charter school advocates have employed a wide variety of tactics in championing their legislative goals, including advocacy, grassroots organizing and legal action. From among these diverse efforts, several strategies are emerging that may prove effective across state lines as charter school proponents confront those factors that slow or inhibit their growth: statutory limits on new charters, financial or facilities constraints, unwilling or inadequate authorizers, increased regulation, uneven charter school performance and organized opposition.

First and foremost, charter school proponents are realizing that their advocacy must be continuous, not episodic. “Being more politically active is absolutely necessary because we can live and die by the will of the legislature,” observed Anita Neelam of the Ohio Charter School Association. “The legislature cannot see us only when we want something.” In other words, advocates must not simply be defensive, but must instead push continually for affirmative proposals to strengthen the policy environment in which they operate.

To that end, it is important for charter proponents to establish and then support a long-term advocacy presence, which is already happening in a number of states. For example, to ensure that there are charter supporters across the political landscape, these groups are developing relationships with political leaders across all levels of government, including state legislatures, school boards, policy committees, charter school authorizers, and overseeing agencies. Furthermore, the panelists have learned to avoid the mistake of enlisting a single legislator to their cause, lest he or she falters, leaving the movement without any political champions. Once political allies are in office, noted Caprice Young of the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), charter school proponents need to remain vigilant, continuing to keep charter school issues on the forefront of that legislator’s agenda.

In parallel with continuous communication with political leaders, charter school leaders also need to develop a strong, ongoing relationship with the press. “Relationships with the press are built on trust and delivery of quality and timely information,” explained Young. “You cannot be afraid to spend money on press, outreach and lobbying in order to get your message across.” At CCSA, staff members engage in constant conversations with editors and education writers, spending up to six hours a day with the press. The relationships developed through this ongoing effort have led to supportive coverage of the state’s charter schools, including editorials in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Sacramento Bee*. This has been important, especially as charter school opponents have become increasingly more organized in their own press efforts.

Speakers:

Jim Peyser
Partner, NewSchools Venture Fund
(moderator)

Chris Barbic
Founder and Director, YES College Preparatory Schools; Co-Founder, Texas Charter Coalition

Anita Neelam
President and Chief Executive Officer, Harte Crossroads Public Schools; Board Chair, Ohio Charter School Association

Caprice Young
Chief Executive Officer, California Charter Schools Association

Key Questions

- Which advocacy strategies and legislative solutions have been effective in shaping state-level charter policy?
- How do charter advocates successfully recruit community, political, and business leader support?
- Which strategies have been successful at addressing the various forces opposed to the charter school movement?

“Being more politically active is absolutely necessary because we can live and die by the will of the legislature... The legislature cannot see us only when we want something.”

Anita Neelam
Ohio Charter School Association

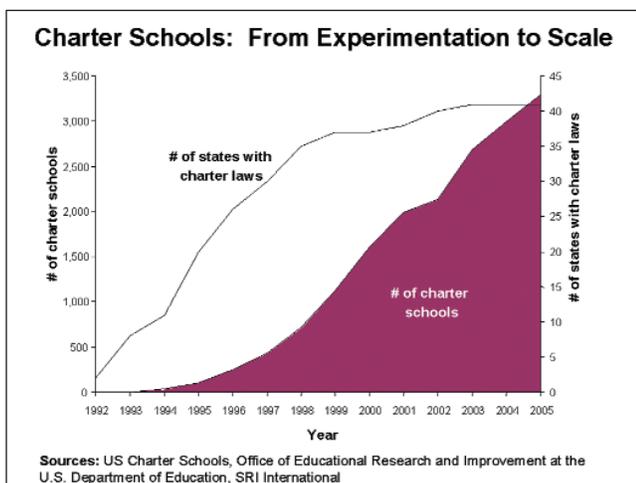
Grassroots efforts to gain community support have also proven powerful. Parents, urban reformers and business leaders are all natural allies whose support can be solicited to support formal advocacy. In one case, the Ohio Charter School Association sent postcards to all schools in order to solicit letters from



parents, students and other citizens on the importance of charter schools. The group then compiled the letters into a book called “Voices of the People” and sent them to influential leaders as evidence of a broad coalition willing to fight for charter schools. Similarly, YES College Preparatory Schools Director Chris Barbic shared how his Houston school had enlisted parents and students in a letter-writing campaign to legislators highlighting why charter schools are valuable, following up with parent and student participation in advocacy meetings at the state capitol.

As the charter school movement has grown in each state, the diversity of charter school operators has multiplied, increasing the challenge of building a unified coalition, even within a single state. Convening a group of charter operators from across political and educational spectrums requires a clear statement of what the movement stands for and a willingness of operators to sign up for it, noted the panelists. This requires effective leadership with strong facilitation skills, noted Barbic, who added that this may mean that some charter operators who cannot agree with the consensus should be excluded.

This is especially the case with school quality, where reaching agreement is difficult, yet essential for advocacy to be taken seriously. “Everyone has to be great. Overcompensate by being great,” Barbic advised, noting that Texas’ low-quality charter schools garner a disproportionate amount of press in the state. “Closing schools is necessary. Having credible schools is necessary so that legislators are willing to listen.” The panelists agreed that charter school advocates must self-police quality and proactively identify bad schools before the government or press does. Once underperforming schools are identified, the broader charter school movement must help them improve—or, if the school seems as though it cannot be turned around, call vigorously for its closure. This can help minimize embarrassing surprises and give the movement credibility by showing that its dedication to high student performance is legitimate.



As was evident from the panelists’ stories, these various state-wide charter school advocacy efforts have already yielded fruit. In California, Ohio and Texas, campaigns to increase or eliminate caps on charter schools, stem the “creep” of increased regulation, improve funding and gain facilities support have all helped improve the environment for education entrepreneurs seeking to provide better learning opportunities for all children. But resistance remains and not every battle has been won. As such, the next wave of advocacy will need to find ways to keep quality high so that charter schools remain a rational, viable long-term policy lever for improving public education.

PANEL: INTEGRATING QUALITY SCHOOLS INTO URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGIES

Public schools and community revitalization should go hand in hand

The economic development of communities and the educational development of students have long been the responsibilities of separate local government agencies. In most cities, the mayor and the school superintendent know each other, but their paths rarely cross. This divide may be the result of simple indifference, turf battles or communication breakdowns. Regardless, it is important to recognize that linking public schools with jobs, housing and other neighborhood revitalization efforts can have long-term impact in both directions.

Public education and urban renewal efforts have historically functioned on their own, and in some instances, have actually worked against each other. Deborah McKoy, who studies the link between city planning and school systems, noted that universities that train future city planners and administrators have focused on regional infrastructure, such as transportation and waste disposal, but generally do not include an understanding of how public schools affect urban policy. “Housing policy *is* school policy,” said McKoy. “If you tear down houses, you are depopulating schools.”

On the flip side, it has long been known that the quality of a neighborhood’s school often drives the value of the neighborhood and its homes. “Schools drive urban renewal by increasing housing prices, generating investment, creating jobs and building community,” noted moderator Bryan Hassel, who has studied both community development and public education. At its most basic level, this is evident in the first question many families shopping for a home ask their realtor: “How are the local schools?” Even panelist Jeremy Nowak, a real estate lender, observed that rebuilding or revamping property isn’t enough to add value to a neighborhood’s real estate. “You can build real estate value into the property but only to an extent,” said Nowak. “Then, you need to improve schools. Otherwise, families will not be attracted to the neighborhood, and the community will not develop.”

With this knowledge in mind, some community developers have begun to incorporate new schools—including charter schools—into their neighborhood revitalization efforts. Sharmain Matlock-Turner explained that the organization she chairs in Philadelphia, Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation (OARC), had included years of real estate investment and job creation. Recently, OARC created West Oak Lane Charter School; in combination with other educational initiatives the organization has implemented in that area, Matlock-Turner reported that over the last 18 months, real estate values in the neighborhood have increased by more than 10 percent, as educated young couples and families who might not have otherwise moved to the neighborhood have begun to settle there.

Those that believe in the value of connecting public schools and urban development are creating sophisticated new ways of exploring this link. In his real estate lending work, Nowak uses data (such as juvenile drug arrests, property vacancies and mortgage

Speakers:

Bryan Hassel
Co-Director, Public Impact
(moderator)

Sharmain Matlock-Turner
President and Executive Director,
Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs
Coalition; Board Chair, Ogontz
Avenue Revitalization Corporation

Jeremy Nowak
President and Chief Executive
Officer, The Reinvestment Fund;
Board Chair, Mastery Charter High
School

Deborah McKoy
Director, Center for Cities and
Schools at the University of
California-Berkeley

Key Questions

- What is the link between quality schools and the economic value of neighborhoods?
- What have been the historical challenges of linking education with community development?
- How might we better integrate public schools with broader urban planning issues?

foreclosures) to map what stage a community is in. This technique allows analysis that can demonstrate the relevance of schools for a community's renewal. "The use of good data has really been key to thinking about how to reform public systems," he said. "In fact, what we have is more information than we have good analytical tools to make use of that information."



For example, Nowak was able to show that some charter schools in Philadelphia had prevented their communities from, in his words, "sliding into disorder" by creating either the perception or the reality that these neighborhoods are now safe. Urban communities seem to prioritize safety in a school most, added Nowak, although he added that once safety has been established, schools must then move beyond that basic need to provide the quality learning that the neighborhood and students will come to expect.

Ultimately, the panelists emphasized the need to change state and local policies in order to make a sustainable difference in community development and education.

"In rebuilding communities, whether you're talking about rebuilding housing or other assets, a lot of what comes with that is a need to change the rules," noted Matlock-Turner. "You end up having to clearly break some eggs in order to get a good breakfast." Because residential mobility poses challenges for both low-income housing and urban schools, McKoy suggested that planning for these efforts should happen at the metropolitan level, rather than at the city level. One tactical suggestion McKoy made was to start including schools in the environmental impact reviews that are conducted when new housing developments are slated to go up; this would build educational impact directly into the urban planning process. "It's not a privilege or choice," McKoy emphasized. "it's our responsibility to go and create those avenues to connect power and choice and policy-making."

ABOUT NEWSCHOOLS VENTURE FUND

NewSchools Venture Fund is a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that is working to transform public education for underserved children by supporting education entrepreneurs who create high-quality education ventures, and by providing thought leadership across traditional education boundaries to ensure that results-oriented, systemic change is accomplished.

Founded in 1998, NewSchools has invested more than \$40 million in both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Our current investments focus on facilitating the growth of nonprofit charter school systems and enabling school districts to become performance-driven systems. NewSchools also works with a bi-partisan community of education, nonprofit, policy, and business leaders to accelerate the process of education reform.

For more information, please visit www.newschools.org.

About the NewSchools Network

The NewSchools Network is a nationwide, bi-partisan community of education, nonprofit, policy and business leaders who work together to accelerate the process of education reform and improve academic outcomes for children. The objectives of the NewSchools Network are to:

- Mobilize “hybrid” leaders across the business, public education, policy and nonprofit sectors to build high-achieving, performance-driven systems of public schools;
- Develop and disseminate intellectual capital, to strengthen our team, our portfolio and the field of “hybrid” leaders; and
- Leverage financial capital, human capital, and partnerships to support NewSchools mission and portfolio organizations.

Through our Network, NewSchools seeks to catalyze change in public education toward a system that is performance-driven and results-oriented.

About the NewSchools Summit

The NewSchools Summit is an invitation-only gathering of education, business, and policy leaders who are passionate about the power of entrepreneurs to transform public education for underserved children.

Tackling and solving complex problems in K-12 public education requires a creative combination of expertise and resources across education’s many and varied stakeholders. The NewSchools Summit brings a select group of these “hybrid” leaders together to share ideas, resources and connections. Participants also gain a greater appreciation for the visionary education entrepreneurs that are fueling dramatic change throughout the public school system.