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Report to the Honorable Charles B. Rangel, House of Representatives

October 2000

AT-RISK YOUTH

School-Community Collaborations Focus on Improving Student Outcomes

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Abbreviations

GEAR-UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
GED	General Educational Development
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
MDRC	Manpower Demonstration and Research Corporation
STRUT	Students Recycling Used Technology
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
USC	University of Southern California

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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

October 10, 2000

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Rangel:

In this time of historic economic prosperity, youths from disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities may be left behind because they lack many aspects of a support network that those from more advantaged communities take for granted. For example, disadvantaged youths may not receive regular medical checkups, have help in addressing family problems, participate in cultural or recreational activities, or have ready access to businesspeople and community leaders who can act as mentors or successful role models.

To better provide the support youths need to succeed in school and beyond, and to strengthen their families and communities, some schools and school districts have intensified their collaboration with businesses, community agencies, and other neighborhood organizations. These efforts, which go substantially beyond the usual links between schools and other agencies or organizations, go by such names as "extended-service schools," "full-service schools," "community schools," or, more generally, "school-community initiatives." The federal government plays a role in these initiatives because of the funding and support it provides through a variety of programs serving youths who are disadvantaged or at risk of school failure.

You asked us to provide information on school-community initiatives and what they are accomplishing. More specifically, you asked the following questions:

- What are the goals and program strategies of school-community initiatives?
- What is known about the extent to which these initiatives meet their goals?
- What role can the federal government play to facilitate such initiatives?

To help us in preparing our response, we established an advisory panel of national experts. Our methodology, which is explained in more detail in appendix I, included on-site reviews of initiatives in five states throughout the country.[1] We also contacted officials from three other initiatives by telephone.[2] These initiatives—which include efforts implemented at the school, school district, city, and state levels—provided most of the specific examples cited in the report. Additionally, we interviewed representatives from three corporations that collaborate with schools to provide students with work-based learning opportunities. We conducted our study between September 1999 and July 2000 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

In general, school-community initiatives have a dual goal not unlike that of all schools—enhancing academic achievement and preparing students to become self-sufficient adults. The way in which they differ from traditional schools is that they combine three strategies to help children achieve in school and realize a successful future: (1) developing innovative and nontraditional approaches that emphasize academic achievement, such as extended after-school or weekend classes for which students are rewarded for good attendance with part-time jobs; (2) creating links to future employment opportunities, for example, through structured, career-oriented school programs; and (3) blending community services such as mental health, social services, and recreation into the school environment.

For the most part, these initiatives have not been rigorously evaluated to determine their effect on student academic achievement or success later in life. Most of the initiatives we reviewed pointed to improvements in some form of student outcome, such as better attendance or higher graduation rates, but could not link the improvements directly to the initiative. So far, one approach that has been evaluated is the career academy, a "school-

[1]The five states were California (Urban Learning Centers, Los Angeles), Colorado (Neighborhood Centers and Beacons adaptation, Denver), Kentucky (Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, Lexington and Richmond, and University of Kentucky West Philadelphia Improvement Corps adaptation, Lexington), Missouri (Caring Communities/Local Investment Corporation, Kansas City), and New York (Beacons Center and Children's Aid Society Community School, New York City).

[2]We conducted detailed telephone interviews with officials of three initiatives: the School-Based Youth Services Program in New Jersey, a state-sponsored program; a set of programs administered by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, Florida; and the United Way's Bridges to Success in Indianapolis, Indiana.

within-a-school" that allows students to be exposed to and participate in an array of careers in a given field. A 10-year ongoing evaluation has found that such academies are particularly helpful for students considered at high risk of school failure. The academies significantly increased students' school attendance rates and number of credits earned toward graduation and significantly cut dropout rates. The evaluation has not yet addressed the effect of such academies on students' lives after leaving school, but it did find that students were better prepared for postsecondary education.

Various federal agencies have supported school-community initiatives through individual programs and other efforts that facilitate and enhance initiative activities and services. The federal government has a number of funding sources that can be used by school-community initiatives. While most initiatives we reviewed were funded primarily with local, state, or private monies, federal sources formed part of their funding and ranged from a program that provides discretionary grants specifically for reducing drug use and alcohol abuse, to formula grants programs that provide funding for a broad range of services. The Department of Education administers a number of these funding programs, and its 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is becoming one focal point for federal collaboration efforts for school-community initiatives and information dissemination activities. Officials from the school-community initiatives we visited suggested that in addition to providing funding, the federal government could assume a leadership role, for example, in making information available about best practices and funding sources and by sponsoring conferences and an information clearinghouse.

Background

School-community initiatives have their roots in a long-standing approach of providing a wide range of services and activities at a single location to youths, parents, and the general community. This approach can be traced back at least to the urban settlement houses at the end of the 19th century. Various studies have documented that in low-income neighborhoods, many students need more than just instructional services to succeed in school. In virtually any setting, psychosocial and mental health problems can affect a student's ability to learn and perform effectively at school. However, in poorer communities, problems such as gangs, violence, and drugs are often more pervasive than in more affluent communities, and supports within traditional family structures may be more limited. In such situations, the school offers a place to provide these supports.

While the exact number of school-community initiatives is not known, they have increased significantly in recent years. They vary in size and have been initiated by different entities—school districts, city and state governments, private, nonprofit organizations, and universities. As the number and kinds of school-community initiatives have grown, they have gained the attention of researchers, who have made some observations. For example, in 1998 the Institute for Educational Leadership studied 21 school-community initiatives nationwide and found that while they differ in many ways—funding amounts and sources, kinds of governance and management, number and kinds of participants, and range of activities—they all share a common belief. Specifically, if schools—as the physical centers of their communities—connect with other community resources and work together through partnerships and collaborations, they can help young people learn and develop more successfully and strengthen families and communities.[3] Further, experts in the field agree that even though school-community initiatives may differ in name and form, they typically strive for a set of common elements including the following:

- Services and activities are tailored to community needs and resources and have the flexibility to change as community needs change.
- Parent participation and individual attention from caring adults are highly valued and encouraged.
- Support for the family is seen as integral to improving outcomes for children and youth.
- Parents, students, community members and organizations, and other stakeholders play an active role in guiding policy and practices through entities such as advisory committees and governance councils.
- Continuing emphasis is placed on the importance of collaboration and communication among school and community partners.

[3]Martin J. Blank and Atelia Melaville, *Learning Together: The Developing Field of School-Community Initiatives* (Flint, Mich.: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation,1998), p. 6.

School-Community Initiatives Use Multiple Strategies to Enhance Student Achievement and Career Opportunities

The goals of school-community initiatives are similar to those of other schools and emphasize both the achievement of positive school-related outcomes and the preparation needed to become self-sufficient adults. However, these initiatives differ from other schools primarily in the three major strategies they employ to meet these goals. First, their strategies for promoting academic achievement tend to include innovative and nontraditional approaches such as rewarding good attendance with job opportunities. Second, these initiatives often create linkages to community businesses and establish opportunities such as career-focused training and employment opportunities. Third, initiatives attempt to blend community services that may not be readily available in the community, such as health and social services, into the school environment.

Goals Are Both Present- and Future-Oriented

Schools with a large number of disadvantaged students often struggle to both educate their students and prepare them for further education or a career. The goals of the school-community initiatives we reviewed center on helping students achieve in school and readying them for life after graduation. The goals of these initiatives, as stated in their publications, vary somewhat but have common themes in their support for schools and their students. For example,

- The goal of the citywide Beacons initiative in New York City is "to link community-based youth organizations with schools and communities, thereby increasing the supports and opportunities that will help students build academic and social competencies and enable them to become economically self-sufficient, successful adults."
- The goal of Kentucky's statewide Family Resource and Youth Services Centers is "to improve academic achievement by removing noncognitive barriers to learning by providing resources to public school districts to support families in ways that strengthen and enhance the growth and development of the individual members and the family unit."
- The goal of New Jersey's statewide School-Based Youth Services Program is "to provide adolescents and children, especially those with problems, with the opportunity to complete their education, to obtain skills that lead to employment or additional education, and to lead a mentally and physically healthy life."

Strategies Take Three Main Forms

School-community initiatives that we reviewed combine three main types of strategies to address their goals of helping students to achieve in school

and to realize a successful future: (1) developing innovative and nontraditional approaches that emphasize academic achievement, (2) creating links to future opportunities, and (3) blending community services such as health, social services, and recreation into the school environment. Individual initiatives use many different kinds of activities and services as part of these strategies.

Developing innovative ways to emphasize academic achievement is the first strategy used by school-community initiatives. While many of the features of school-community initiatives center on services and activities outside of the classroom, one of the primary purposes of these programs is to improve the academic achievement of the participants. Many of the initiatives we visited encouraged and promoted student performance in a variety of ways, such as by offering students special opportunities if they improve or maintain good grades and show positive student behavior and by developing partnerships with local colleges and universities to enhance their school's academic programs. For example,

- Under the Beacons Futures program at Countee Cullen School in New York City, middle and high school students are given extended learning opportunities through academically oriented activities after school, on weekends, and in the summer. Students that continuously participate in these academic activities are rewarded with part-time summer jobs with local businesses, for which they receive a stipend from Beacons of $40 to $50 per week. At the Apollo Theater in Harlem, for example, youths work in concessions, as ushers, and in setting up productions. About 35 to 40 youths participate in the Futures program.
- Foshay Learning Center, in inner-city South Central Los Angeles, is one of five schools that are part of the University of Southern California's (USC) Neighborhood Academic Initiative. Students, who enter this 6-year program in the seventh grade, generally have C averages and the potential to improve their performance. They sign a contract agreeing to take early-morning English and math courses on the USC campus, attend after-school and Saturday tutoring classes, and adhere to a strict dress code. Their parents receive training to learn what is required of students and how parents can help. After completing the program, students that meet USC criteria for admission can attend the university for free. Fifteen students from Foshay's 1998 graduating class enrolled at USC.

The second strategy used by these initiatives relates to the challenge schools face in helping their disadvantaged students envision a successful

future beyond the boundaries of their neighborhoods. Most initiatives we visited are taking steps to provide students with a connection not only to their own community but also to their city and beyond. Many of these initiatives provide career readiness skills such as résumé writing and interviewing. Some of the initiatives we reviewed had incorporated a career-oriented, structured educational program—called a career academy—that provides academic and career-related course work and direct job experience to students.

A career academy is a small high school learning community, organized as "a school-within-a-school," that aims to (1) create a more personalized and supportive environment for students and teachers and (2) provide career-oriented course work and experience. For example, at Foshay Learning Center in Los Angeles, all students in grades 10 through 12 are in one of the three career academies, where they are paired with the same group of teachers over the 3-year period. Each academy has a different career theme—business and finance, information technology, or health—and provides both academic and career-related courses in an effort to enhance both the rigor and the relevance of the high school curriculum while still satisfying college entrance requirements. Among the schools that we visited, we found two that used a full academy approach; that is, all high school students participate in a career academy.Two other schools we visited incorporated components of the academy approach into their traditional academic program, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Examples of Career Academies

Program	Location	Overview
Full academy approach used		
Foshay Learning Center and Elizabeth Learning Center	Los Angeles, California	All students in grades 10 through 12 participate in a career academy as part of their academic program. Local businesses and agencies provide work experience through internships and job shadowing. Foshay has health, finance, and information technology academies; Elizabeth has health and information technology. The academies attempt to provide graduates with the skills and knowledge that prepare them to • enroll in a university and pursue an advanced degree in the selected academy focus, • enroll in a technical or vocational school and pursue a career in the selected academy focus, or • obtain an entry-level job in the selected academy focus.

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Program	Location	Overview
Selected academy components used		
Children's Aid Society Community School	New York, New York	Students select an academy upon entering the school, and generally stay with the same group of students, teachers, and staff through their middle school years (grades 5 through 8). There are four academies: • Expressive Arts. Students put on seasonal performances and special cultural events throughout the year. • Math, Science and Technology. Students sponsor programs that encourage other students to use science and technology to spur their creativity. • Community Service. Students undertake community projects such as tutoring younger students, and also organize the school's annual book fair and community garden. • Business Studies. Students engage in entrepreneurial activities, which include a school store, and they sponsor an annual career day. This approach is not a full academy because students are in grades 5 through 8 rather than in high school.
Bryan Station Traditional Magnet High School	Lexington, Kentucky	In addition to their traditional academic program, students can participate in the following career programs: • Academy of Hospitality, Travel, and Tourism • Medical/Health Sciences Academy • Aerospace Academy • Culinary Arts/Commercial Foods program • Business Cooperative Education, Mentoring, Internships • Bryan Station Commerce and Trust (student operated) This approach is not a full academy because the career programs are elective classes taken in addition to the academic curriculum.

When academies forge partnerships with local employers, the businesspeople can help plan and guide the program and serve as a source of mentors and work internships for the students. The two career academy school-community initiatives we reviewed had partnerships with local businesses such as hospitals, technology companies, and financial institutions that provided work experience to students as well as the opportunity to learn about a variety of career options in a specific career field. According to an official at Foshay Learning Center, there are challenges in getting business involved in these partnerships, and schools must be willing to reach out to make the necessary contacts with potential business partners. Business officials associated with these academies said that they were persuaded to become involved because they saw an opportunity both to support their community and to identify and develop potential future employees.

While the tie to careers is perhaps the most unique aspect of the academy, another benefit is providing a small-group focus within the larger school. One principal said that the advantage of the academy approach is that it makes a large high school seem small. He also said that students tend to identify with their academy rather than the larger school and, because they

are with the same group of teachers for several years, students have an opportunity to develop a sustained, close, and positive relationship with an adult.

While only some initiatives we reviewed used career academies to link students with possible careers, many provided some activities to help prepare students to get jobs after graduation. Activities ranged from résumé writing to shadowing business and professional people. Other activities included experiences in job-interviewing skills, mentoring from local business representatives, and career guidance classes. For example, a Youth Services Center we visited in Kentucky provides a summer program with activities to help students identify their career interests. The center also participates in a biennial career fair that includes representatives from about 100 businesses and professions in the community.

The business partners in these initiatives also share a unique perspective on their role in assisting students to make the transition from difficult circumstances to productive employment. A recent study by Columbia University researchers[4] surveyed about 300 employers that participated in work-based learning programs at five schools. It found that philanthropy played a strong part in many employers' decisions to participate. The two most common motivations cited by participating employers were improving the public education system and contributing to the community. However, the study also said that many of the firms reported that business-oriented reasons are the most important reasons for their participation. In other words, while the programs gave students experience, they also gave employers access to workers who could contribute to the output of the firm. As a way of determining what might attract additional employers to participate, the study also surveyed about 300 other area employers that were not participating in work-based learning programs. It found that these employers would most likely be attracted if such bottom-line motivations were more compelling.

Business officials that we talked to echoed these dual motivations. Representatives from Cisco Systems, Candle Corporation, and Motorola all viewed such partnerships as ways to give back to the community and to develop future employees. For example, Cisco Systems has established the

[4]T. Bailey, K. Hughes, and T. Barr, "Achieving Scale and Quality in School-to-Work Internships: Findings From Two Employer Surveys," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 2000), pp. 41-63.

Cisco Network Academy program in over 3,600 schools in the United States and 64 countries, where students are taught how to design, build, and maintain computer networks. One Cisco official said the academy effort began as a way to support the community, but also to supply qualified workers in the face of a worldwide shortage of people trained for information technology positions. (For more specific information about the partnership programs operated by these corporations, see app. II.)

Officials at several of the school-community initiatives we reviewed said they would like to do more in connecting students to jobs and career opportunities but are limited in their ability to do so because of limited funds and difficulties in identifying appropriate jobs for youths in the community. In addition, there may be few opportunities for employment in rural areas and in inner cities, where students have to compete with adults for job opportunities. Finally, one official said that establishing and maintaining relationships with businesses that might participate in youth development activities—such as providing employment opportunities—can be time-consuming.

The third strategy used by most school-community initiatives we reviewed is offering an array of supportive services to the students and their families, including mental health counseling, primary health care, adult education, and recreation programs. In some cases, these services were delivered on site; alternatively, the initiatives linked participants to community health and social service providers. Table 2 shows the kinds of services and programs that were offered at the initiatives we reviewed. Initiatives also offered other site-specific services—such as child care and anger management, and tobacco awareness and prevention programs—depending on the students' particular needs. Some schools with large numbers of students that were recent immigrants also provided adult education programs—for the students' parents and other community members—with classes in such areas as English as a second language, citizenship, General Educational Development (GED), parenting, and computers. If services were already available, initiatives did not try to duplicate them. For example, the Horace Mann Middle School's Neighborhood Center in Denver offers programs with primarily an academic and community enrichment focus, such as tutoring and English as a second language classes, for both children and adults, but not health, mental health, and recreation services, which were already available in the surrounding community.

Table 2: Community Service Programs

Program/service	Example of service
Primary health care	In Kansas City, Missouri, and the surrounding county, school and neighborhood health centers have been created at seven Caring Communities sites. Through these facilities and in cooperation with area health care organizations, children, parents, and neighbors have immediate access to primary health care and screening.
Mental health/family counseling	New Jersey requires that the sites for its School-Based Youth Services Program employ a full-time mental health provider to counsel students and their families, provide group counseling, and work with other program staff and collaborating agencies to provide appropriate referrals.
Adult education	The Elizabeth Learning Center in the Los Angeles Unified School District has an on-site family center that, in addition to other services, provides classes in such areas as English as a second language, citizenship, computers, and parenting for more than 400 adults each day. On-site child care is provided for parents taking classes.
Recreation	Winburn Middle School has a partnership with the Lexington Parks and Recreation program in Lexington, Kentucky. Parks and Recreation provides after-school recreation activities to the entire community from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. each weekday and from 12 noon to 6 p.m. on Saturdays.

Officials from the initiatives we reviewed said they believe that providing these types of supportive services to the students and their families is as important as their academic programs. They said these services are a critical prerequisite for academic achievement. One high school principal said that he thought the addition of the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers to Kentucky schools was the single most important step that the state legislature had taken to improve education. He said that these centers provide services to students that can remove barriers to learning—such as social and health problems. In addition, he said that because the program gives students access to professional staff, such as social workers, he feels less pressure to perform a social work role and is able to spend more time as the instructional leader of the school.

Most Initiatives Have Not Been Rigorously Evaluated

At the time of our study, few initiatives we reviewed had conducted rigorous evaluations that linked student improvements directly to the initiative. Several experts we spoke with cautioned that such evaluations are difficult for a number of reasons, including the complex and comprehensive nature of school-community initiatives and the lack of funds. However, several initiatives are collecting information on student progress and student behavior. Initiative officials said they believe that the services and activities they offer are having a positive effect in the lives of the program participants, but that it is often difficult to measure the success of such initiatives. Most initiatives do report student outcome data such as attendance or dropout rates. Few initiatives reported academic

outcomes or outcomes related to student self-sufficiency later in life. Additionally, only a few initiatives compared participant outcomes with the outcomes of nonparticipants, and such comparisons were typically limited in scope. However, one strategy used by some of the initiatives we visited—career academies—has been the subject of a rigorous national evaluation. The portions of this evaluation completed to date show that for students at high risk of failure, the academy approach has helped lower dropout rates, improve attendance, and promote earning more credits toward an on-time graduation. Data on success after graduation will not be available for some time.

Available Information Centers on Attendance and Graduation Rates

Outcomes most often reported by initiative officials as indicators of initiative success were improvements in school attendance and high school graduation rates. Researchers said they regard these measures as meaningful because, if students are not in school, they are missing opportunities to learn and achieve. Further, if they do not graduate, their future employment opportunities are reduced. Only a few of the initiatives we reviewed reported academic outcomes such as test scores. Examples of outcomes reported included the following:

- *Student attendance*. The Foshay Learning Center in Los Angeles reported that the average daily attendance rate was about 90 to 94 percent, up from about 80 percent in 1990. At the school served by the Richmond, Kentucky, Youth Services Center, the average daily school attendance is about 93 percent. Of the 7 percent who are absent, only 1 percent are truant.
- *Graduation rates*. In Kentucky, the state's overall high school graduation rate moved to a national ranking of 30th in 1999, up from 36th in 1991, when they created the Youth Services Centers as part of a statewide school reform effort. At the Elizabeth Learning Center in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the graduation rate for students entering in the sixth grade was 98 percent, and for those entering in the ninth grade as freshmen the graduation rate was 100 percent, according to a school official. By comparison, a neighboring high school with a similar population but no school-community initiative had a graduation rate of about 50 percent.
- *Test scores*. At the Children's Aid Society program we visited in New York City, the percentage of students who tested at their grade level, as measured by a citywide achievement test, was almost twice as high for math and 3 times as high for reading as the percentages for similar student populations, and had increased over a 3-year period.

Several initiatives reported information on participation rates as a measure of success. Others have used social outcome measures such as teen pregnancy rates, incidents of violence, and self-reported feelings of the students regarding their behaviors and habits.

Few Rigorous Evaluations Have Been Conducted

Few initiatives have conducted rigorous evaluations of their programs comparing program participants with similar groups of students. According to some initiative officials and other experts, evaluating initiative effectiveness is difficult for several reasons. They believe there is limited access to funding to measure success, and they are often reluctant to divert money from direct services to conduct an evaluation. Also, initiative participants and residents of the surrounding community are often transient—in one school the transient rate was nearly 100 percent in a school year—making it difficult to track the success of the program in having positive impacts on students' lives. One evaluation expert noted that the complex and evolving nature of many initiatives poses several challenges for evaluators. Among them, these efforts have multiple program components offered by different organizations, and the level of involvement by participants often varies greatly. As a consequence, no single student will receive the same "treatment" as another while participating in the program. In addition, many of these initiatives are open to all interested students and their families in a community, thereby making it difficult to construct adequate comparison groups. Also, the capability of these initiatives to collect, organize, and store student data varies considerably. Finally, officials at two long-standing initiatives said they believe it is important to stabilize and institutionalize an initiative before rigorously evaluating its effectiveness.

Two initiatives we reviewed have been the subject of evaluations. The New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program was the subject of a recently published longitudinal study.[5] The study compared student survey responses and school data for students in six schools who participated in the program and those who did not, controlling for a number of factors including differences in student behavior and background. The study found that the program had a significant positive effect on 11 student behaviors and attitudes, including academic aspirations, credits earned, and feelings of anger, destructiveness, sadness, and depression. Among participants, the

[5]Constancia Warren and Cheri Fancsali, *New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program: Final Report* (New York: The Academy for Educational Development, 2000).

study also reported a reduced incidence of vandalism and other negative behaviors. Another initiative, Beacons in New York City, is conducting a two-phase evaluation. Phase I presented data on such things as patterns of participation, development and evolution of the program, and a participant survey.[6] Phase II, now under way, is an outcome study evaluating the effect of the initiative on the youths and their parents, the host schools, and the surrounding communities.

Some officials we spoke with noted that although their programs have not been fully evaluated, they have engendered sufficient positive results to have strong community support. For example, the Beacons program in New York City, which began in 1991, has one or more community centers in each of the city's 32 school districts and has become a fixture in the various neighborhoods. According to initiative officials, after a change in mayoral administration several years ago, there was concern that the new administration would eliminate or significantly cut back on program resources. City officials convinced the administration not to downsize the program—and in fact, the program has expanded. Similarly, the statewide Family Resource and Youth Services Centers program in Kentucky, while not yet assessed through a rigorous evaluation, enjoys strong bipartisan support in both houses of the Legislature, according to a program official.

Evaluation of Career Academies Shows Positive Results

The career academy—a strategy used by some of the initiatives we visited—has received an in-depth evaluation. In a 10-year, ongoing national evaluation[7] of nine career academies conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), evaluators compared the performance of 959 students who participated in career academies and 805 similar students who applied to but did not attend an academy. The initial phase of the three-phase study examined the extent to which career academies changed the participants' high school environment, as indicated by differences between academy and nonacademy students' experiences during high school. The most recently completed phase compared the school outcomes of academy participants with the outcomes of

[6]Constancia Warren, Prudence Brown, and Nicholas Freudenberg, *Evaluation of the New York City Beacons: Phase 1 Findings* (New York: Academy for Educational Development, 1999).

[7]James J. Kemple and Jason C. Snipes, *Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2000).

nonparticipants, using three primary sources of data: school transcript records, a student survey, and a standardized math and reading achievement test. The next phase, not yet completed, will follow the students for up to 4 years after their scheduled high school graduation and collect data on whether they actually graduated and about their postsecondary education and employment.

The study found that among students at high risk of school failure, career academies significantly cut dropout rates and increased attendance rates, credits earned toward graduation, and preparation for postsecondary education. For example, while 32 percent of the nonacademy students dropped out of high school, only 21 percent of the academy students did. Further, attendance rates for the nonacademy students averaged 76 percent, and for the academy students they averaged 82 percent. Finally, while only 26 percent of the nonacademy students earned enough credits to meet district graduation requirements, 40 percent of the academy students earned enough to meet requirements.

Federal Collaboration Is Emerging

Federal agencies such as the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Agriculture, and Justice have supported school-community initiatives through individual funding programs and other efforts that facilitate and enhance initiative activities and services. Most of the initiatives we reviewed used some federal funding, but were primarily funded at the local or state level or by private organizations. One federal program—Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers—is emerging as a focal point for federal collaboration through its efforts with a number of other federal programs that support school-community initiatives. Education officials we spoke with agree on the importance of collaboration among programs and identified a number of ongoing collaborative efforts. Officials from several initiatives we reviewed told us they would like the federal government to play a more focused leadership role that includes providing access to information about best practices and available resources and increasing communication among programs.

Federal Funds Support Initiatives, but Are Not the Primary Funding Source

Education and other federal agencies support discretionary and formula grant[8] programs and other efforts that address the academic, health, and social service needs of disadvantaged and at-risk children and youths—the same population served by many school-community initiatives. Table 3 shows the major agencies and examples of the related grant programs and efforts they administer. Some efforts, such as the informational Web site created through the Federal Support to Communities Initiative, involve collaboration between two or more agencies.

Table 3: Examples of Federal Efforts That Support School-Community Initiatives

Department	Effort	Description
Education	21st Century Community Learning Centers	Discretionary grants for school-based programs that provide educational, recreational, cultural, health, and social services to community members. The primary focus is enriched learning opportunities and other activities for children and adults outside of regular school hours.
	Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities	Discretionary and formula grant program—the federal government's major initiative to prevent drug abuse and violence in and around schools.
	Partnership for Family Involvement in Education	Initiative to promote connecting families with schools, community organizations, religious groups, and employers to support student learning through national and grassroots activities.
	"Bringing Education into the After School Hours"	1999 publication listing materials available from the department and providing ideas for integrating activities that promote student achievement.
	Schools as Centers of Community	1998 symposium on designing schools to serve as centers of the community, resulting in a publication to guide schools and communities in those efforts.
Health and Human Services	National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth	Information on youth development resources and publictions, as well as links to related Web sites.
Labor	Youth Opportunity Grants	Funding to increase the long-term employment of youths who live in high-poverty areas.
Justice	Communities in Schools Grants	Funding to address dropout prevention through a model that includes a variety of social, employment, and mental health services and activities for youths and their families.

[8]Discretionary—or project—grants support research, evaluation, and demonstration or service projects and are awarded for specific periods of time—usually 1 to 5 years. Formula grants are usually awarded on the basis of population or other demographic indicators, and most go to state agencies for ongoing services through block grants or categorical programs.

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Department	Effort	Description
Agriculture	National School Lunch Program—After-School Snacks	Reimbursement to schools for snacks served to children taking part in after-school enrichment and educational programs.
Multiagency Collaborations		
Education, Justice, and HHS	Safe Schools/Healthy Students	Grants to school districts and their mental health and law enforcement partners to promote healthy childhood development and prevent violent behavior.
17 Federal Departments and Agencies	Federal Support to Communities Initiative	Initiative to promote improved coordination of federal efforts to support delivery of after-school services including an informational Web site—Afterschool.gov—that provides a wide range of federal after-school program information and links to related Web sites and other resources.

Officials from most initiatives we reviewed said the majority of their funding comes from the local or state level or from private sources. Most said they use some federal funding but that it is not their primary funding source. For example, New York City's Beacons program is funded mainly by the city, and the New Jersey and Kentucky programs are funded mainly by their respective state governments. The Children's Aid Society Community Schools in New York City are funded by a mix of private grants, government reimbursements, and user fees. However, officials at most initiatives said they had accessed either federal discretionary grant or formula grant programs to support their activities. For example, many reported using 21st Century Community Learning Centers program funds.[9] Other federal programs that initiatives used included Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities and Safe Schools/Healthy Students (listed in table 3), as well as Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP)—a grant program that provides outreach and support services as well as postsecondary scholarships to students at risk of dropping out—and Bilingual Education. Formula funding streams that officials mentioned included Medicaid (which reimburses initiative health clinics for the care of eligible students) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which can be used for support services, including child care and transportation, needed to attain and maintain employment. Additionally, some initiatives we reviewed serve schools with children from low-income families and are able to enhance initiative activities with funding provided through title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

[9]The Department of Education reports that—unlike most of the school-community initiatives we reviewed—the majority of 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees do receive most of their funding from federal sources.

Department of Education Program Is Emerging as a Focus for Federal Collaboration

Education has efforts under way to bring more coordination and a more centralized focus to federal programs and activities related to school-community initiatives. A number of these efforts have involved a particular program, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. While this program's primary emphasis is on expanded learning opportunities—after-school, on weekends, and during the summer—its goal and strategies are similar to those of school-community initiatives. Described by Education as a key component in the effort to keep children safe and help them learn during out-of-school hours, it funds programs set up by public schools. The department reports that the rural and inner-city schools that house 21st Century program sites collaborate with other public and nonprofit agencies, local businesses, postsecondary institutions, and other community entities and use the school buildings to provide educational, recreational, cultural, health, and social services to students and community members. Funding priority is given to programs that offer broadened learning opportunities and contribute to reduced drug use and violence.

An Education official told us the program is beginning to expand to include more parent and other adult services. The official noted that the agency's annual performance plan calls for more than 85 percent of the Community Learning Centers to offer services to parents, senior citizens, and other adult community members.

The 21st Century program was first funded in fiscal year 1995 at about $750,000 and has grown to nearly $454 million in fiscal year 2000. The department reported that, as of May 2000, a total of 903 grantees support programs in about 3,600 schools. According to officials, several of the school-community initiative sites we reviewed had received a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant to enhance their after-school programs.[10]

The 21st Century program is becoming an unofficial gateway for federal collaboration on efforts that support school-community initiatives,

[10]The Department of Education told us that it has contracted for a rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of the program, which will study both academic and out-of-school behaviors. Data collection will begin in the fall of 2000 and will include surveys, school records, reading test scores, and participation records. Three reports are planned; one on each of the school years 2001 and 2002 and a summary report synthesizing evaluation findings.

according to a program official. These collaboration efforts, along with others in Education, have addressed such matters as the following:

- *Accessing federal funds*. For example, HHS officials have arranged to make presentations at conferences for 21st Century grantees to explain how grantees' programs could use TANF funds for such efforts as after-school and summer recreation activities that provide supervision and services for children and youths while their parents work, or counseling services that concentrate on teen pregnancy prevention. The 21st Century program also partnered with the Department of Agriculture to promote awareness among grantees that their programs could be reimbursed—under Agriculture's school lunch program—for the after-school snacks served to students in the 21st Century program.
- *Providing technical assistance and information on resources and best practices*. Education has formed a public-private partnership with the C.S. Mott Foundation to provide training and technical assistance to 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Additionally, Education collaborated with a group of representatives from 17 federal departments and agencies to plan and implement a Web site (Afterschool.gov). The Web site was launched in 1999 and provides information on after-school programs as well as other topics and resources that support school-community initiatives. These include information on more than 100 federal grants and programs, best practices, and links to publications and other Web sites. The department has also published reports in collaboration with other agencies that address school-community initiative issues. For example, *Safe and Smart: Making the After School Hours Work for Kids*,[11] authored in conjunction with the Department of Justice, discusses the benefits of high-quality after-school programs and presents best practices, successful models, and available resources.

Initiative Officials See Benefit in Expanded Federal Leadership Role

Many school-community initiative officials and experts we spoke with believe that the federal government—in addition to providing support through funding programs and other efforts—has an important leadership role to play in providing access to information and increasing coordination

[11]Department of Education and Department of Justice, *Safe and Smart: Making the After School Hours Work for Kids* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Education and Department of Justice, June 1998).

among federal programs. These officials and experts suggested that the federal government should

- develop a clearinghouse of best practices, resources, and other information about initiatives across the country, which would be helpful to them in both implementing and managing initiatives;
- sponsor conferences to share information and provide technical assistance;
- convey expanded information on youth employment programs and methods to better manage federal and other funding streams; and
- establish interagency communication and collaboration at the federal level that would address—on an ongoing basis—issues important to school-community initiatives.

Conclusions

The current period of economic prosperity and the resulting expanded job market present an unparalleled opportunity to build new pathways to self-sufficiency for students at risk of school failure. The Department of Education recognizes that school-community initiatives can provide an important starting point for these youths. Education has implemented a variety of efforts that facilitate school-community initiatives and has begun to establish a framework for coordination and collaboration among the federal entities that support the services and activities of such initiatives. These activities represent a good foundation from which to continue to build a focused and cohesive strategy to promote collaboration and information sharing among all that have an interest in implementing, improving, and evaluating this approach.

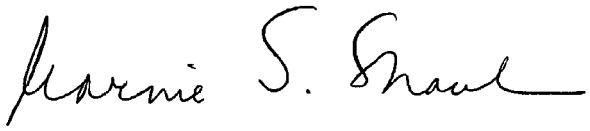
Agency Comments

The Department of Education provided technical comments on the report, which we incorporated where appropriate.

We will send copies of this report to the Honorable Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education, to program officials in California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, and New York, and to the members of our advisory panel of experts. We will also make copies available to others on request.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me at (202) 512-6778. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,



Marnie S. Shaul
Director, Education, Workforce,
and Income Security Issues

Scope and Methodology

We reviewed the literature and interviewed national and local policy and practice experts and researchers to identify best practices, common characteristics, current issues, studies, reports, additional experts, and highly regarded initiatives. We interviewed Department of Education officials in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement, Office of Interagency and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Office of the Secretary to identify programs and activities that facilitate school-community initiatives.

We assembled an advisory panel of national experts to assist us in identifying key studies, reports, books, and other publications, as well as selecting sites to visit and identifying key common program factors. Panel members included:

Martin Blank, Institute for Educational Leadership
Michelle Cahill, Carnegie Corporation of New York
Joy Dryfoos, author and researcher
Matia Finn-Stevenson, Yale University, Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy
Starla Jewell Kelly, National Community Education Association
Richard Murphy, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development
Jane Quinn, Children's Aid Society

We conducted site visits to interview school and initiative officials and staff at seven initiatives in five states:

Elizabeth and Foshay Urban Learning Centers, Los Angeles, California
Countee Cullen Community Center (Beacons), New York, New York
Children's Aid Society Community School, I.S. 218, New York, New York
Caring Communities/Local Investment Corporation, Kansas City, Missouri
Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Centers Program, Lexington and Richmond, Kentucky
University of Kentucky West Philadelphia Improvement Corps adaptation, Lexington, Kentucky
Neighborhood Centers and Beacons adaptation, Denver, Colorado

We conducted detailed phone interviews with officials from three additional initiatives—the state School-Based Youth Services Program in New Jersey, the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, Florida, and the United Way's Bridges to Success in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Business Partnerships With School-Community Initiatives

Candle Corporation

Candle Corporation, an information technology firm in Southern California, has partnered with one school in the inner-city South Central area of Los Angeles. Candle has developed an innovative program that combines technology education with on-the-job experience through internships. According to the program manager from Candle, he helped to design the curriculum for the school's Information Technology Academy and also teaches classes for the program. Currently, Candle employs up to 45 of the students as interns. They receive experience in all aspects of the business, such as network administration, business operations, and research. The primary reasons cited for partnering with the school were to give back to the community and to address concerns about the spiraling cost of information technology professionals. A Candle official said that they developed the program specifically for disadvantaged students, to give them a more positive outlook on life. The official said that the students they hire produce well for the company and that their partnership with the school had saved the company $287,000 in the first 5 months of 2000 because the company did not have to hire temporary workers to do the work that the student interns performed.

Cisco Systems Corporation

The Cisco Network Academy program, sponsored by Cisco Systems, Inc.—in partnership with schools—teaches students how to design, build, and maintain computer networks. According to Cisco officials, when Cisco began an initiative to design practical, cost-effective networks for schools, they found that teachers and other personnel were not available to support the system, so they trained the students themselves to provide that support. Building on the success of this project, Cisco developed a formal on-line curriculum and the support activities needed to establish the Network Academies in high schools and postsecondary schools. For high schools located in an officially recognized Empowerment Zone,[1] Cisco donates the laboratory equipment[2] and the curriculum to the school, and the school provides the classroom, computers, and an instructor. Other schools can purchase the curriculum, equipment, and technical support for a fee.

[1]Empowerment Zones are economically distressed areas of inner city or rural America eligible to receive funding to create jobs and business opportunities under the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Initiative administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

[2]The laboratory equipment includes five routers, two LAN switches, software, and cables, as well as first-year product support.

Students that complete the program are qualified to take the Cisco Certified Networking Associate examination, which can position them for jobs or college studies in engineering or science. According to Cisco officials, in the 3 years since implementation, the program has grown to over 3,600 schools in the United States and 64 countries around the world. Cisco officials said the Network Academy program began as a way to give back to the community, but also to supply qualified workers in the face of a worldwide shortage of people trained for information technology positions.

Motorola Corporation

Motorola Corporation has been involved with school partnerships for over 10 years, according to a corporation official. It participates in several projects. For example, through the Students Recycling Used Technology (STRUT) program in Phoenix, Arizona, Motorola instructors teach students how to repair computers. Motorola also participates in a national competition that teams high school students with Motorola engineers to build robots. The students join the engineers at their workplace and also go through a series of Motorola employee classes on such topics as team building and establishing priorities. According to one official, workforce development is the primary reason for Motorola's education outreach activities. She said that in about 1990, Motorola recognized that there could be a shortage of information technology workers and began to pursue extensive workforce development activities to create a pool of workers, including working with schools. Another official said that participation in partnerships with schools is a way to give back to the community and improve the education system, but it is also a way to recruit talented new employees.

GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individuals named above, Nancy R. Purvine, Dianne L. Whitman-Miner, and Stanley G. Stenersen made key contributions to this report.

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