

viewpoints

# NCREL viewpoints 13



## Perspectives on High School Reform



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CD Contents

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# Perspectives on High School Reform

## Introduction

*Viewpoints* is a multimedia package containing two audio CDs and a brief, informative booklet. This volume of *Viewpoints* focuses on issues related to high school reform.

The audio CDs provide the voices, or viewpoints, of various leaders from the education field with expertise in high school reform issues. Their voices represent perspectives on high school reform from policymakers, researchers, and practitioners.

This booklet offers background information explaining the issues surrounding high school reform with perspectives from research, policy, and practice. It also provides a list of resources to assist educators with high school reform.

## THE ISSUE

During the last five years, a plethora of reports have been issued about the challenges facing U.S. high schools. Large foundations, business leaders, and federal and state officials are calling for dramatic improvements in the quality of high school education for all students. In order to adequately prepare U.S. students for the demands of the 21st century, we need to dramatically change instructional practice in the classroom and in the relationships that currently exist between teachers and students. We must strengthen our efforts to keep all of our students in school, enable them to be successful with a challenging curriculum, and actively engage them in intellectual dialogue.

## THE BOOKLET: A GUIDE TO CONTENTS

This essay, “High School Reform: Perspectives From Research, Policy, and Practice,” serves as a companion to the CDs. It reviews the research related to high schools, presents policy proposals from national policymakers, and highlights the recommendations of the experts we interviewed about how to advance the high school reform agenda. It also suggests resources that can assist educators as they strive to improve the quality of high school education for all students. You may find it helpful to read the booklet as an introduction to the topic before listening to the interviews presented on the CDs.

# High School Reform: Perspectives From Research, Policy, and Practice

*By Peggie Klekotka*

*Program Associate, Learning Point Associates*

National attention has been increasingly focused on high school reform efforts. During the last five years, a plethora of reports have been issued about the challenges facing U.S. high schools. Large foundations, business leaders, and federal and state officials are calling for dramatic improvements in the quality of high school education for all students.

The experts we interviewed for the companion CD—researchers, policymakers, and practitioners—agreed that policy shifts are necessary, but stressed that the hard work of high school reform will take place in the classrooms and schools themselves. In order to adequately prepare U.S. students for the demands of the 21st century, we need to dramatically change instructional practice in the classroom and in the relationships that currently exist between teachers and students. We must strengthen our efforts to keep all of our students in school, enable them to be successful with a challenging curriculum, and actively engage them in intellectual dialogue. This essay reviews the research related to high schools, presents policy proposals from national policymakers, and highlights the experts' recommendations about how to advance the high school reform agenda.

## Challenges Facing U.S. High Schools

According to a number of different indicators, high schools in the United States are in need of dramatic improvement. International measures indicate that U.S. students need to compete more effectively with their international peers. In 2003, countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) tested more than 250,000 15-year-old students in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). When compared with students from other countries, U.S. students fared poorly. For example, out of 40 participating countries with sufficient data, students from the United States placed 28th in mathematics and 29th in problem solving (see accompanying table, "PISA 2003 Mean Score Rank").

## PISA 2003 Mean Score Rank

### Mathematics

1. Hong Kong
2. Finland
3. Korea
4. Netherlands
5. Liechtenstein
  
28. United States

### Problem Solving

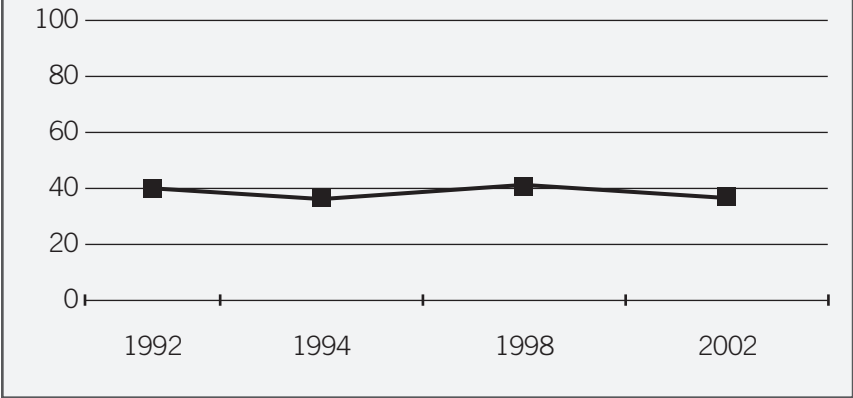
1. Korea
2. Hong Kong
3. Finland
4. Japan
5. New Zealand
  
29. United States

Adapted from PISA 2003 Highlights. National Center for Education Statistics website. PISA 2003 Summary–Figures. ([nces.ed.gov/Surveys/PISA/PISA2003HighlightsFigures.asp?Quest=1&Figure=10](http://nces.ed.gov/Surveys/PISA/PISA2003HighlightsFigures.asp?Quest=1&Figure=10))

National measures of student achievement also present a cause for concern. Achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is categorized into four levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. From 1992 to 2002, NAEP scores indicate that 60 percent or more of 12th graders performed below the Proficient level (see accompanying graph, “12th-Grade NAEP Scores”). It is even more disturbing to note that these low performance levels are typical of students who were enrolled in high school. Thus, these numbers do not account for students who dropped out of high school.

## 12th-Grade NAEP Scores

**Percentage of students at or above proficient in reading,  
Grade 12: 1992–2002**



Source: The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2002, by W.S. Grigg, M.C. Daane, Y. Jin, and J.R. Campbell. ([nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2002/2003521a.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2002/2003521a.pdf))

These challenges point to one message: We must improve the quality of high school education to better prepare our students for the demands of the information-based economy of the 21st century. In order to better understand the challenges and potential solutions for high schools, we interviewed a number of nationally recognized experts. They proposed a range of recommendations to support high school improvement efforts in three categories: research, policy, and practice. These three categories provide an organizing framework for this essay. For each category, background information and a synthesis of the experts' recommendations are provided.

### More Research Required

Despite the challenges faced by our high schools, there is little high-quality research to inform the work of practitioners in high schools. Although there is a great deal of research that is suggestive about policy implications, only the best controlled studies eliminate ambiguities and rival interpretations. Some existing research suggests that certain programs might be effective, but only random assignment permits clear, causal inferences. In fact, only three studies about high school programs have employed random assignment, which is considered the "gold standard" in educational research.



Stern and Wing (2004)—both with the University of California-Berkeley—reviewed these three research studies. The first one examined the Quantum Opportunity Program, which significantly increased high school completion rates and resulted in additional positive outcomes. The second study evaluated the Upward Bound program and found that it significantly increased the rate of four-year college attendance among student participants who had not expected to earn bachelor's degrees at the time the evaluation began. The third study of career academies revealed that academy students who reported receiving more support while in high school were more likely to combine academic and technical courses and were more likely to work in jobs connected to school. Four years after scheduled graduation, there was no difference in educational attainment between the control and academy student groups, but there was a significant impact on employment and earnings for academy students. These studies provide practitioners and policymakers with high-quality evidence about the effectiveness of these programs for high school students.

There also have been a few studies that have used rigorous quasi-experimental methods. Among them is MDRC's recent evaluation of the implementation of the Talent Development High School model, which employs smaller learning communities, increased rigor of the curriculum, development of positive school climate, professional development, and increased parent and community involvement. In their study of five low-performing Philadelphia high schools using the Talent Development model, Kemple, Herlihy, and Smith (2005) reported that first-time ninth graders achieved substantial gains in attendance, academic course credits, and promotion rates. The improvements in credits earned and promotion rates were sustained as these students progressed through high school. The researchers also found a positive impact on high school graduation rates and mathematics test scores for 11th graders. While this information is valuable for practitioners and policymakers because it demonstrates that the intervention is effective and improves student outcomes, more high-quality evidence is essential to help school leaders make informed decisions about high school improvement efforts.

Because of the dearth of rigorous high school-specific research able to inform policymakers and practitioners, Learning Point Associates hosted a high school research forum in May 2005 to identify opportunities for high-quality research and to mobilize the research community to address the issue of improving high schools. Titled “Research on Improving High Schools: A Forum for Advancing the Research Agenda,” the meeting's

overarching goal was to help frame a research agenda that links high school reform to student achievement using rigorous research. During the forum, the participating researchers reviewed existing high school research, highlighted gaps in existing research about high schools, and raised a number of questions to guide the next phase of high school research. The dialogue at the forum informed the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences as it developed its High School Reform initiative, which was launched in June 2005. During the next five years, this initiative will support a variety of studies designed to identify ways to improve the quality of high school education for all students. Further information about this initiative is available online ([www.ed.gov/programs/hsresearch/applicant.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/hsresearch/applicant.html)).

At the research forum, the panelists noted a number of methodological issues that will be important to consider in future research. First, in educational settings, measuring the impact of interventions is difficult because treatment and control groups are often not available. Finding comparison schools or districts with the same desire to change is difficult but critical because the desire to change may contribute significantly to outcomes. Second, nonrandom initial selection and student mobility undermine the validity of claims of causality. Even in the few studies in which high school students have been randomly assigned to programs, nonrandom selection of teachers may have contributed to the impact. Third, it is essential to analyze the quality of high school record keeping and data collection. Data necessary for high school research must be collected accurately and consistently within and across schools. Fourth, all too often, reforms are "black boxes," and their components are not easily understood. When educators implement a program, they must know the crucial elements: What must be included? What can be modified? What adaptations are acceptable?

In addition, the research forum panelists argued that the current calls from state and federal leaders for high school reform require a strong commitment to research and evaluation in order to identify effective intervention strategies. Schools and districts across the country are facing major financial strains, and reform efforts can be quite expensive. The panelists contended that researchers need to be clear about cost/benefit analyses to help state- and district-level policymakers identify the interventions with the greatest returns. The panelists also identified a number of areas in which state and federal policymakers should fund additional, rigorous research about high schools.

## *Recommendations for Further Research*

### **Longitudinal Research**

The panelists called for additional federally funded longitudinal research studies designed to better understand the high school completion process. This research will be helpful, as it is often difficult for local schools to follow their students over long periods of time. The federal government has the resources and expertise to make these studies successful. Panelists agreed that any effective large-scale study on the high school completion process needs to include students who drop out in ninth grade in order to identify experiences and conditions that contributed to their decision to drop out. Moreover, to support these studies, the federal government needs to develop a set of research-based high school completion indicators that are capable of reliably capturing aspects of the high school completion process that will allow for accurate cross-state comparisons and longitudinal analysis.

### **Impact of Small Schools**

The panelists recommended further investigation of the impact of school size on student achievement. The growth of small schools and schools-within-schools has been rapid in recent years, but this strategy is not supported by rigorous research. Although a great deal of research suggests that small schools have a positive impact on student achievement, there are ambiguities in this research, and other interpretations are possible. For example, in the audio interviews that accompany this essay, David Stern, Ph.D., from the Graduate School of Education, University of California-Berkeley, argues that current studies of small schools involve schools with teachers and students who chose to be at those schools. This student and teacher choice may have had an impact on the outcomes. Therefore, carefully controlled random-assignment studies are needed. Further, the cost of restructuring schools can be formidable, but without studies that randomly assign teachers and students, there isn't enough proof to warrant such expenses. Panelists argued that much more needs to be known about small schools: Do they work? How do they work? Under what circumstances do they work better, and for whom?

### **Evidence to Support Practitioners**

The panelists also called for three sets of studies that will provide practitioners with research-based tools. The first set of tools would focus on the transition to high school. These tools would quickly identify entering high school students who have achievement deficits and match those student needs to appropriate interventions and supports. The second

set of studies would identify the supports and conditions necessary for schools to simultaneously increase both high school graduation and college readiness rates. These studies would focus on what specific programmatic interventions, or combination of interventions, lead to increased student achievement and improved student engagement, and for which students. Within this second set of studies, course content, sequence, prerequisites, and pedagogy also would be examined further. The third set of studies would identify research-based strategies that increase access to and completion of postsecondary education for all high school students.

## Exploring New Approaches to Policy

Although it will take some time to improve the quality of the research base related to high school improvement strategies, policymakers and practitioners continue to forge ahead with the development of innovative efforts to improve the quality of high school education in their states, districts, and schools. High school reform efforts are receiving increased national attention.

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education launched “Preparing America’s Future,” the Secretary’s High School Initiative, in October 2003. In conjunction with this initiative, the U.S. Department of Education hosted regional summits in the spring of 2004 and national summits in October 2003 and December 2004. The themes of this initiative are high expectations, student engagement and options, teaching and leadership, and accelerated transitions. The Education Department’s Web page includes links to research and examples of programs, as well as a number of papers and materials developed specifically for the initiative ([www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/index.html)).

A second significant advocate for national high school reform efforts has been the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The foundation is committed to improving the quality of high school education and expanding the development of small schools through a grant program that is being implemented across the country. Nearly \$1.2 billion has been invested in high school improvement efforts. The goal of the program is to improve high school graduation and college preparedness rates by fostering dynamic high schools that help all students prepare for college and work through a rigorous and challenging curriculum, stronger relationships between students and teachers, and more relevant coursework.

Spurred by the leadership of the National Governors Association (NGA), state leaders also have been actively involved in high school reform. NGA recently launched a yearlong initiative to improve U.S. high schools called “Redesigning the American High School,” emphasizing many of the same themes as the U.S. Department of Education. Further information about this initiative is available online ([www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.1f41d49be2d3d33eacdcbeeb501010a0/?vgnnextoid=01c48cc156de1010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD](http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.1f41d49be2d3d33eacdcbeeb501010a0/?vgnnextoid=01c48cc156de1010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD)). In partnership with the Gates Foundation, NGA also recently announced high school redesign grants that will provide a significant amount of funding for 10 statewide high school improvement plans in Arkansas, Delaware, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island, and Virginia.

### **A Comprehensive High School Improvement Plan for States**

To prepare high school graduates for postsecondary education and for work, the National Governors Association recommends that state leaders implement the following improvement policies:

#### **Restore value to the high school diploma.**

- Anchor high school academic standards in the real world.
- Upgrade high school coursework.
- Create college- and work-ready tests.

#### **Redesign high schools.**

- Reorganize low-performing high schools first.
- Expand high school options in all communities.
- Provide support to low-performing students.

#### **Give high school students the excellent teachers and principals they need.**

- Improve teacher knowledge and skills.
- Provide incentives to recruit and keep teachers where they are needed most.
- Develop and support strong principal leadership.

#### **Set goals, measure progress, hold high schools and colleges accountable.**

- Set goals and measure progress.
- Strengthen high school accountability.
- Intervene in low-performing high schools.
- Strengthen postsecondary accountability.

#### **Streamline and improve education governance.**

- Enable K–12 and postsecondary systems to work more closely together.

*Source:* An Action Agenda for Improving America’s High Schools, by Kristin Conklin, Bridget Curran, and Matthew Gandal. Reprint with permission from Achieve Inc. and National Governors Association. ([www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0502actionagenda.pdf](http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0502actionagenda.pdf))

The policy recommendations of the experts featured on the accompanying CD overlap with several of NGA’s action items. NGA and the *Viewpoints* experts agree that policymakers should increase the rigor of the high

school curriculum, provide additional services for low-performing students, and support educators who are experimenting with innovative high school programs. However, the experts on our CD focused on the classroom as the critical arena for change while NGA has targeted its recommendations to state-level policymakers.

The recommendations from the experts we interviewed fall into three general categories: accountability, innovation, and funding. Details about these recommendations are discussed in the section that follows.

### *Federal- and State-Level Policy Options*

#### **Accountability**

- **Raise standards and expectations for all students.** Judy Jeffrey, the Chief State School Officer in Iowa, argues that state leaders need to engage the community to raise awareness and create a sense of urgency about the need for high school reform. Such dialogue with key stakeholders would build the political will necessary to raise standards at the state level to ensure that U.S. high school students become competitive with their international peers.
- **Decrease dropout rates.** Several experts highlighted the dropout crisis that affects many U.S. high schools, particularly those in urban areas. States and districts need to develop programs that will prevent dropouts, increase student engagement, and provide a variety of options for out-of-school youth to successfully complete a high school diploma and continue on to postsecondary education.
- **Develop long-term goals.** Hilary Pennington, of Jobs for the Future, contends that federal and state policymakers need to focus less on the results of annual tests and more on the long-term goal of increasing the number of students who complete college. This long-term goal should drive education policy at the state level.

#### **Innovation**

- **Federal and state policies to support innovation.** Pennington argues that students should have access to a variety of different pathways to complete a postsecondary degree or credential. All of these pathways should hold students to high academic standards but also should provide them with choices that meet a variety of student interests and needs. In order to encourage educators to think outside the box of the traditional high school, state and federal policymakers should develop grant programs that fund educators who would like to experiment with a variety of high school models. The funding agency would then evaluate

the impact of these innovative models and disseminate the results to allow other educators to build on the successes of the models.

- **District support for innovation.** Pennington contends that districts can provide schools with more autonomy over budgets and staffing to promote innovation at the school level. Chris Steinhauser, superintendent of Long Beach (California) Unified School District, highlights the positive outcomes that resulted from his district's success with allowing principals considerable autonomy in return for meeting the district goals of raising expectations for all students, providing support for students in mathematics and reading, and expanding access to Advanced Placement courses.
- **Develop innovative teacher preparation programs.** Ellen Guiney, of the Boston Plan for Excellence, has developed a teacher preparation model at the district level to prepare teachers in Boston Public Schools for the challenges of working with low-performing students in an urban school system. This model offers inservice training, mentoring, and support with curriculum materials that are tailored to the school system's goals. States and districts should engage institutions of higher education in a dialogue about teacher preparation programs to ensure that teachers have command of their content and are highly skilled with a wide array of pedagogical methods that will enable all students in their classrooms to be successful with a challenging curriculum.

## Funding

- **Target additional resources to those schools with low-performing students.** Robert Balfanz, Ph.D., of the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University, argues that state and federal policymakers need to increase funding and revise policies to ensure that additional resources are targeted to both elementary and secondary schools that serve large numbers of low-performing students who need extra support. In return, schools should be held accountable for using resources wisely.
- **Identify opportunities to coordinate K–12 and postsecondary funding streams.** In most states, average daily attendance (ADA) funds finance high schools. If high school students are participating in a program at a local community college, the high school may lose ADA funding because students are not present at the high school for the entire day. In contrast, colleges and universities typically receive state funds based on full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment. However, four-year colleges may not be able to claim FTE student enrollment reimbursement for students who are still in high school. Pennington contends that policymakers should explore opportunities to fund a variety of programs that will allow high school students to earn college credit while in high school.

## Innovations in Practice

Although many of the experts we interviewed agreed that changes are needed in federal and state policies, they argued that the critical arena for high school reform is the classroom. High school educators need to receive professional development and support to enable them to prepare their students for success in the global, information-based economy of the 21st century.

In order to advance high school reform at the classroom level, the experts focused on two central themes. First, practice at the classroom level needs to change dramatically. Many high school teachers rely predominantly on one pedagogical technique, the lecture. Teachers need to receive training to become highly skilled in the use of a variety of instructional methods that will teach students not only the content but also how to think and actively engage in intellectual dialogue. Although high school teachers are often experts in their content area, they may need additional training and support to learn how to best serve the whole child in the classroom. The second related theme focuses on changing the nature of relationships in high schools. High school teachers are often largely isolated from their colleagues. In contrast to the traditional model of one teacher in each classroom, the experts we interviewed encouraged schools and districts to restructure the school day to provide teachers with more time to work with students individually and to work with other teachers to share information, resources, and strategies to better serve their students.

James McPartland, Ph.D., of the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University, summed up the challenge for many high schools, particularly those with large numbers of low-performing students. He noted that these changes will have to be radical and comprehensive, but “it can be done. It’s not easy. It’s not cheap. It’s not quick. But it is possible. And there should be no excuse that we give up on high school kids as we are doing often with these high-poverty, low-performing places.”

The school and classroom policy recommendations from the experts we interviewed fall into three general categories: rigor, relationships, and support. Details about these recommendations are discussed in the section that follows.



## *District-, School- & Classroom-Level Policy Options*

### **Rigor**

- **Provide a rigorous curriculum as the default curriculum for all students.** Tracking should be eliminated, and all students should be placed in a college-preparatory curriculum. Students should be provided with supports to succeed, but all students should be enrolled in a more challenging curriculum. Researchers such as Adelman (1999) have demonstrated that the best predictor for completion of a postsecondary degree is completion of a challenging high school curriculum.
- **Raise the level of expectations for all students.** Although all of our experts did not agree that a narrowly defined rigorous curriculum was the best choice for all students, they did agree that all students should be expected to achieve at high standards and that current expectation levels in high school need to be raised dramatically.

### **Relationships**

- **Encourage teachers to focus not only on their content area, but also on the needs and interests of their students.** Dr. McPartland and Hugh Burkett, Ph.D., director of the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, stressed the need for teachers to change their instruction at the classroom level to enable all students to be successful with a challenging curriculum. Because many teachers rely on lectures as their main instructional method, they need research-based tools and professional development to become highly skilled with a wide range of instructional strategies that will enable all of their students to meet content standards, develop critical thinking skills, and engage in the intellectual dialogue of the discipline.
- **Create teams of teachers and students to increase the level of personalization for students and begin to change the culture of isolation for teachers.** Although the Gates Foundation has strongly supported small schools as a way to increase personalization, many of the experts we interviewed noted that small schools are not a magic bullet. In fact, Dr. Stern and Valerie Lee, Ph.D., of the School of Education at the University of Michigan, stressed that the implementation of small schools can actually increase stratification and inequality and might not provide students with access to all of the courses they will need for college admission. These challenges can be met, but they must be anticipated and confronted with programmatic responses. More importantly, within the structure of either small schools or large comprehensive high schools, educators need to develop a range of support strategies for students, provide high-quality professional development for teachers, and create teams of teachers and students who work together to ensure that all students are successful.

## Support

- **Explicitly instruct students in reading.** Michael Hock, of the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas, stressed that improving adolescent literacy is key to high school reform because students will not be successful with the content if they cannot comprehend it. Hock has identified specific methods to teach reading at the high school level to make up certain kinds of deficiencies within short periods of time. Explicit instruction is necessary to enable students to work effectively with a variety of different types of text. Because many high school teachers have not been trained to teach reading, they need high-quality professional development about effective instructional strategies that will enable their students to improve their reading skills in the content areas.
- **Develop a range of supports for students.** Dr. Balfanz painted a stark picture of schools with high dropout rates that serve disproportionate numbers of low-performing students. He argues that districts and schools need to provide a range of appropriate supports to engage these students in school and increase their proficiency levels. Schools need to develop comprehensive programs that address attendance, course failure, and student motivation and effort.

## Conclusion

Improving the quality of high school education is a difficult but essential goal to better prepare our students for the demands of the information-based economy of the 21st century. The experts we interviewed proposed a range of recommendations to support a comprehensive high school improvement plan. The federal government can fund high-quality research that will provide practitioners and policymakers with strong evidence to inform their decisions. Federal and state policymakers can raise standards and expectations and direct additional resources to support innovative high school reform efforts. At the school and district levels, school leaders should develop a range of strategies to support students who are enrolled in a rigorous curriculum, explore opportunities to restructure the school day to provide teachers and students with more time to work collaboratively, and provide teachers with high-quality professional development that will enable them to become highly skilled in the use of a variety of instructional methods that will teach students not only the content but also how to think and actively engage in intellectual dialogue.

## Learning Point Associates High School Resources

Learning Point Associates has created the Center for High School Excellence, whose goal is to join with educators and policymakers across the nation to address the challenges associated with ensuring that all high schools enable their students to achieve the highest levels of academic excellence.

Growing numbers of American high school graduates are not prepared for the demands of the 21st century—whether these demands come from postsecondary education or the workforce. To address this challenge, the Center for High School Excellence at Learning Point Associates provides research-based information that identifies critical challenges facing American high schools and aligns this research with strategies that can be implemented for measurable results.

### Print and Online Resources

#### Center for High School Excellence Website

[www.chse.org](http://www.chse.org)

This site acts as a portal to information on existing high school research, high school policies at the federal and state levels, resources that move research into strategies for action, and Learning Point Associates services specific to high schools.

#### Adolescent Literacy Online Resources

[www.ncrel.org/litweb/adolescent](http://www.ncrel.org/litweb/adolescent)

The Center for Literacy at Learning Point Associates has compiled a wide range of research, strategies, and commissioned papers by leading experts on a variety of topics related to adolescent literacy.

#### Quick Key No. 10, “Using Student Engagement to Improve Adolescent Literacy”

[www.ncrel.org/litweb/adolescent/qkey10/qkey10.pdf](http://www.ncrel.org/litweb/adolescent/qkey10/qkey10.pdf)

This brochure provides educators and policymakers with action options to improve adolescent literacy using the elements of student engagement in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. In addition, the guide provides a list of resources and suggested readings.

**Quick Key No. 9, “Strategies to Improve High Schools”**

[www.chse.org/qkey9/index.pdf](http://www.chse.org/qkey9/index.pdf)

This publication examines the challenges educators face to improve the quality of education in high schools. The timely resource includes information on high school research, planning for improvement, using data, and funding. It also provides a list of national organizations focused on high school improvement.

**Policy Issues No. 18, “Beyond High School: Improving Transition Programs for Postsecondary Education”**

[www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/pivol18/](http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/pivol18/)

This edition of Policy Issues focuses on how practitioners and policymakers can help students improve the transition from high school to a variety of postsecondary educational options. This issue reviews a number of transition programs and highlights policy recommendations in the areas of student preparation, funding, and governance.

**Professional Development & Evaluation Services**

Learning Point Associates is dedicated to building partnerships with schools, districts, and states to support sustained school improvement. Professionals work with clients to define needs, assess challenges, identify and implement strategies and programs, and build local capacity to achieve high-quality teaching and learning. Details about the organization’s high-quality professional development services are listed.

**Data Retreats**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pagelD=128](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pagelD=128)

As a two-day experience, a Data Retreat provides school leadership teams with a unique opportunity to analyze and uncover patterns in their school’s data and to develop strategies that will improve student achievement.

**Leadership and Improvement Planning**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pagelD=114](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pagelD=114)

Workshops and technical assistance are available for schools seeking to design, implement, and evaluate high-quality professional development.

### **Adolescent Literacy Workshops**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=14](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=14)

These workshops help educators translate the current research and best practice in content-area reading strategies into practices that will improve student literacy skills. The sessions enable educators to enhance their skills with vocabulary instruction, strategic processes in reading, differentiating instruction, and using multiple texts.

### **Lesson Study**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=121](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=121)

Workshops are available for schools that want to form small teams of teachers that work together to plan, teach, observe, debrief, and refine a single lesson concept that is difficult to teach and difficult for students to understand.

### **Examining Student Work**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=119](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=119)

This combination of workshops and coaching sessions provides a protocol-driven approach to professional development that supports increased student learning through collaborative teacher teams. The teams use different models to critically examine student work in specific content areas and plan for changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

### **Online Teaching Facilitation Courses**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=82](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=82)

These courses build capacity and provide the tools, technology, and training necessary for practitioners to become online professional development specialists.

### **Evaluation Services**

[www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=43](http://www.learningpt.org/page.php?pageID=43)

The services provided are critical for equipping administrators and policymakers with the measures to make investments in impact decisions affecting their students and community.

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## Audio CDs: A Guide to Contents

*The CDs provide various perspectives on issues related to high school reform.*

### CD 1—INTERVIEWS (in order of appearance)

1. **Robert Balfanz, Ph.D.**, research scientist, Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University and codirector of the Talent Development Middle and High School Project.
2. **Hugh Burkett, Ph.D.**, director, Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.
3. **Dr. Balfanz** (additional excerpts).
4. **Michael Hock, Ph.D.**, research associate, Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas.
5. **Martha McCarthy, Ph.D.**, Chancellor's Professor and director of the High School Survey of Student Engagement, School of Education, Indiana University.
6. **David Stern, Ph.D.**, professor, Graduate School of Education, University of California-Berkeley.

### CD 2—INTERVIEWS (in order of appearance)

1. **Valerie Lee, Ph.D.**, professor, School of Education at the University of Michigan, and faculty associate, Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.
2. **Hilary Pennington**, vice chairman, cofounder, and senior advisor on education, Jobs for the Future.
3. **Ellen Guiney**, executive director, Boston Plan for Excellence.
4. **James McPartland, Ph.D.**, research professor of sociology, Johns Hopkins University; director and principal research scientist, Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University; codirector of the Talent Development Middle and High School Project.
5. **Chris Steinhauser**, superintendent, Long Beach (California) Unified School District.
6. **Judy Jeffrey**, director, Iowa Department of Education.



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