

# INSIDE The Annenberg Challenge

A public-private partnership improving education for 1.5 million urban and rural public school students



*Inside the Annenberg Challenge* highlights recent accomplishments in the eighteen sites across the country that were awarded funds under Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg's \$500-million "Challenge to the Nation" to improve its public schools, especially for underserved urban and rural students.

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## Up Front

▶ **The Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) has been awarded a second five-year grant of \$10 million by the Annenberg Foundation.** In support of Boston's commitment to strengthen instruction in every classroom, the grant will underwrite literacy and math coaches in all schools, including new "lab-site" coaching in 26 Effective Practice schools that work with BPE, and three new district Instructional Leaders who will serve as "coaches" to principals, support the district's quasi-independent Pilot Schools, and expand the number of parent liaisons. The Foundation's \$10-million Annenberg Challenge award to Boston in October 1996 was matched by \$25 million in public and private funds. Although the new grant makes no specific match requirements, Chad Gifford, President and CEO of FleetBoston Financial who chairs the BPE Board of Trustees, has committed to raising additional funds from the corporate community.

For information: Tel: (617) 227-8055; Web: [www.bpe.org](http://www.bpe.org)

▶ **Detroit's Schools of the 21st Century has released the results of an external evaluation showing marked progress in almost every important educational area.** The evaluation of the second year of programming in 40 Leadership Schools was prepared by a team of 14 experts from Western Michigan University at Kalamazoo and agencies in Cambridge (MA) and Detroit. The report highlights progress in implementation of reform models, increased parental involvement, staff buy-in and development, outreach to external partners, safe and clean schools, an inclusive school decision-making process, and collaboration with other model schools. The report indicates that 75 percent of Leadership Schools are making steady progress and showing improvement on several indicators of success.

For information: Tel: (313) 871-3515; Web: [www.s21c-detroit.org](http://www.s21c-detroit.org)

▶ **The most recent evaluation report on the Houston Annenberg Challenge, entitled "Sounds of Learning," shows promising results.** According to the report, written by researchers from the University of Texas, the University of Houston, and Rice University, teachers at Houston-area schools supported by the Challenge use innovative instructional practices leading students to deeper levels of understanding and raising their academic achievement. Houston Annenberg's Beacon Schools led all other area schools in academic achievement in reading and mathematics over the last four years. Student achievement in many of these schools is also increasing at faster rates than at comparable schools, and minority students are closing the achievement gap with their nonminority counterparts.

For information: Tel: (713) 658-1881; Web: [www.houstonannenberg.org](http://www.houstonannenberg.org)

“We're looking for a level of professional development and leadership training that will enable schools to maintain this work, even if the resources of the initiative are no longer available.”

Pamela James, Executive Director,  
Schools of the 21st Century

“This [report] confirms that Ambassador Walter Annenberg's \$20-million investment and subsequent matching donations by Brown Foundation, Houston Endowment, and many, many others are well spent.”

Jonathan Day, Chair, Board of the  
Houston Annenberg Challenge

## ▼ Impacting Students, ▼ Schools & Systems

“Evaluators from Stanford University have found an inverse relationship between poverty and the amount of support districts provide for reforming schools. As part of its mission, BASRC wants to help these schools and their districts narrow the achievement gap between richer and poorer schools.”

Merrill Vargo, Executive Director, Bay Area School Reform Collaborative

“Within the next five years, we will see dramatic improvements in student achievement as a result of Carnegie’s strategic investment of financial and human resources in our high schools.”

Dan Challener, President, Chattanooga Public Education Foundation

“It is critical that we foster relationships between home, school, and the community that can enhance the academic achievement of all students. Our partnership with Families in Schools has been invaluable in helping us to achieve this goal.”

Richard Alonzo, Superintendent, Local District F, LA Unified School District

**The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) will offer new two-year grants to improve teaching and learning** in a dozen high-poverty schools this spring. The announcement comes on the heels of a child welfare report decrying the record gap between rich and poor families in the Bay Area and calling for new investment to close the achievement gap between rich and poor students. The grants – \$50,000 a year for elementary and middle schools, \$75,000 a year for high schools – are open to K–12 public schools in districts with currently funded local BASRC collaboratives. Tel: (415) 348-5500; Web: [www.basrc.org](http://www.basrc.org)

**Hamilton County Schools and the Challenge-funded Chattanooga Public Education Foundation hosted a January celebration of the Carnegie Corporation’s launch of Schools for a New Society** and its \$8-million grant to better Hamilton County high schools. The grant will fund programs that grew out of dialogue among teachers, principals, and students at every Hamilton County high school about how to provide an outstanding education for all students. Programs will include creating small learning communities, eliminating low-level courses, and increasing the number of low-income and minority students taking rigorous academic courses. The grant will also support teacher and principal professional development. Tel: (426) 265-9403

**Parents as Learning Partners (PLP), created by the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), has leveraged over \$10 million in funding from the LA Unified School District** to scale up its work in parental

engagement with all the School Families in two LAUSD subdistricts. The scale-up will sustain the work of current PLP schools and serve as a catalyst for creating systemic change in parent engagement in both these subdistricts. By 2006, PLP – the founding initiative of LAAMP’s successor, Families in Schools – will be working with 125 schools serving nearly 140,000 students. Tel: (213) 484-2870; Web: [www.familiesinschools.org](http://www.familiesinschools.org)

**Minneapolis Public Schools, in partnership with the Perpich Center for Arts Education, has received a three-year \$700,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education** that will expand the Challenge-funded Arts for Academic Achievement initiative. Four schools will participate in a program to study how full immersion of the arts in the classroom affects achievement for students living in poverty. Major program elements include: using student achievement data to drive arts infusion, forming deep partnerships between schools and arts organizations and artists, sustaining the program long enough to see authentic change, engaging the arts community, and continually improving the model. Tel: (612) 668-5333; Web: [www.mpls.k12.mn.us/annenberg](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/annenberg)

**The Center for Arts Education is accepting applications for a new round of arts education partnership grants totaling \$3 million** for New York City’s public schools. Up to 30 three-year grants of \$100,000 each will be awarded in June to city schools, arts and cultural institutions, and community-based organizations. Proposals from schools must include Five Guiding Principles essential to developing and implementing effective arts education programs:

arts as part of the core curriculum, partnership and collaboration, professional development, school change through the arts, and evaluation and assessment. Tel: (800) 721-9199; Web: [www.cae-nyc.org](http://www.cae-nyc.org)

**The Houston Annenberg Challenge has awarded \$4.39 million in direct grants to the 88 schools in six school districts** that participate in the organization’s whole-school reform initiative. After this fourth (and final) round of grants, each school and district will be responsible for sustaining the funding for the programs and initiatives begun through their work with Houston Annenberg. Tel: (713) 658-1881; Web: [www.houstonannenberg.org](http://www.houstonannenberg.org)

**Project MIND (Math Is Not Difficult), a South Florida Annenberg Challenge program, is being introduced in all Palm Beach County elementary schools.** Project MIND seeks to increase students’ positive responses toward math instruction by providing resources to support innovative teaching methods and encouraging students to create original work – math songs, poems, art, stories, games, puzzles, brainteasers – based on concepts taught in class. In Broward and Miami-Dade schools, Project MIND has contributed to raising fifth-grade test scores between 30 and 50 points on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in Mathematics. Tel: (305) 377-9909; Web: [www.sfannenberg.org](http://www.sfannenberg.org)

## ▼ Building Expertise ▼ & New Partnerships

**The Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) is piloting a new “lab-site” approach to coaching in 26 Effective Practice schools.** Since 1996 BPE/Boston Annenberg Challenge has provided schools with coaches in school reform or literacy one day a week. The new approach – Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) – involves an entire school faculty in six-week cycles focused on a specific strategy. Guided by the coach and the principal, faculty members work in teams on a literacy strategy (e.g., guided reading), watch a demonstration by the coach, practice the strategy with students as colleagues observe, and debrief the session. The coach follows up with over-the-shoulder help in the classroom. Since its inauguration in October, CCL has won high praise from participants, and the district is considering it as a model for coaching in all schools. Tel: (617) 227-8055; Web: [www.bpe.org](http://www.bpe.org)

**The Houston Independent School District, ExxonMobil Foundation, and the Houston Annenberg Challenge are expanding their \$1.3 million, three-year K–5 mathematics initiative** after SAT 9 results suggested that mathematics achievement at participating schools is improving. The initiative began last year with five math specialists working in eight elementary schools to help teachers and administrators improve their understanding and instruction in mathematics. Five more schools and ten more math specialists are being added, and a new Parents as Partners outreach program will invite greater family and community involvement in math. The George Foundation has awarded Houston Annenberg \$25,000 to expand the work into Fort Bend County. Tel: (713) 658-1881; Web: [www.houstonannenberg.org](http://www.houstonannenberg.org)

**The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) has launched a new strategy to promote effective change in its funded Local Collaboratives.** Local Collaborative Coaches, from both school and district levels, are coordinating collaborative reform work, serving as change facilitators or coaches with school and district staff, and acting as primary liaisons with BASRC. BASRC staff work with the Local Collaborative Coaches to facilitate meetings, solve problems, and manage the change process. In addition, BASRC convenes monthly meetings of the coaches to build their skills and knowledge as effective change agents. Tel: (415) 348-5500; Web: [www.basrc.org](http://www.basrc.org)

**Detroit’s Schools of the 21st Century (S21C) has published a booklet to help engage parents, families, and communities in supporting and being accountable for improved student achievement.** *Achievement for All: Families and Community Working Together for High Standards* informs parents, teachers, and other stakeholders about the importance of academic standards as well as ways to encourage standards-based student achievement. The guide – part of S21C’s collaboration with the Detroit Public Schools on a year-long campaign to generate community support for academic standards in city schools – was distributed to all Detroit public schools and every student household. Tel: (313) 871-3515; Web: [www.s21c-detroit.org](http://www.s21c-detroit.org)

**The Center for Arts Education has awarded nearly \$300,000 in Parents as Arts Partners grants to 98 public schools in New York City.** The recipients, principally elementary and middle schools, will each receive \$3,000 to support family arts events in partnership with city arts organizations and cultural institu-

tions. Events will reflect children’s classroom studies and may include evening or weekend trips: a partnership between Snug Harbor and PS 52 on Staten Island will include a live performance about the Underground Railroad and the creation of quilts and books based on stories from the children’s own family histories. The Center has awarded over \$1 million for Parents as Arts Partners programs over the past four years. Tel: (800) 721-9199; Web: [www.cae-nyc.org](http://www.cae-nyc.org)

**The Wallace–Reader’s Digest Funds has awarded a planning grant of \$50,000 to the Rural Trust to improve rural school leadership in the “Black Belt” states** of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. With this grant, the Rural Trust hopes to strengthen the abilities of rural administrators to improve student learning and teacher quality and to create a network of support, mentoring, and training for rural school leaders. The grant is part of the Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds’ Ventures in Leadership program to help nonprofit organizations and public schools test innovative ideas for improving educational leadership. Tel: (202) 955-7177; Web: [www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org)

**The South Florida Annenberg Challenge (SFAC) recently launched a new, interactive Website for principals.** The site – [www.PrincipalPortal.net](http://www.PrincipalPortal.net) – provides school administrators from Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties with easy access to information, resources, school policies, and contracts to help them make informed decisions using district, state, and federal resources. The site was developed through an SFAC partnership, the Professional Development Initiative (PDI), that promotes innovative principal leadership development. Partners include the Florida Department of Education, Bell South, and the tri-county school districts. Tel: (305) 377-9909; Web: [www.sfannenberg.org](http://www.sfannenberg.org)

“The bottom line is student achievement. The partnership with S21C works to enhance public involvement. It’s not just what we collectively do: it goes back to the concept of ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’ We really cannot do this alone.”

Kenneth Burnley, Chief Executive Officer, Detroit Public Schools

“Parents directly involved with school arts programs often become advocates for arts education because they’ve had rewarding arts experiences with their children, schools, and schools cultural partners. They see firsthand the role the arts play in their children’s learning.”

Laurie Tisch Sussman, Chair, The Center for Arts Education

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c/o Annenberg Institute for School Reform  
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Providence, RI 02912

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Prov. RI 02912

## ▼ Collaborating ▼ Across Projects

### **The Boston Plan for Excellence/Boston Annenberg Challenge hosted a two-day meeting in mid-November focused on learning from its Collaborative Coaching and Learning model**

being piloted in 26 Effective Practice schools in Boston. Fifteen participants from the Bay Area, Chelsea (MA), Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, and South Florida Challenge sites met for a welcoming dinner with Boston Public Schools (BPS) superintendent Tom Payzant and Boston Annenberg Challenge codirectors Ellen Guiney and Tim Knowles, who is also Boston's Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. After meeting with literacy coaches engaged in the new collaborative approach, they visited classrooms, talked with principals and teachers, saw literacy coaches in action, and debriefed with key BPE and BPS policy makers.

**The Annenberg Institute hosted a meeting in early February on closing the achievement gap in secondary schools**, attended by more than 120 participants from Challenge sites (Bay Area, Boston, Chattanooga, Detroit, Houston,

Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York Arts, Salt Lake City, and South Florida ) and Carnegie Schools for a New Society districts (Providence, RI and Worcester, MA). Representatives from three urban districts (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC, Evanston, IL, and Fort Wayne, IN) that have made significant progress in lessening the achievement gap shared what they have learned about raising achievement for all students, especially children of color and those from low-income families. Small-group sessions included developing parent, school, and community partnerships; building peer support for academic success; creating equitable opportunities to learn; using data to inform improvement; and job-embedded professional development.

Web: [www.annenberginstitute.org/convening/gap\\_summary.html](http://www.annenberginstitute.org/convening/gap_summary.html)

**The Houston Annenberg Challenge hosted a meeting in early April that focused on how Challenge sites can provide and support ongoing learning for district leaders** through professional development. Participants from the Bay Area, Chicago, Houston, Salt Lake City,

and South Florida shared insights on promising strategies around professional development for central office administrators and explored conditions, situations, and policies that foster effective district leadership.

**The Annenberg Institute's Leadership initiative has begun working with Detroit's Schools of the 21st Century (S21C) and the New York Center for Arts Education (CAE).** The Institute provided planning assistance and cofacilitated a meeting for principals of the S21C Leadership Schools in October and will provide ongoing support for S21C's efforts to implement self-assessment processes, peer review processes, and professional learning communities in the schools. The Institute is supporting the CAE's efforts to create professional learning communities among principals of schools receiving partnership grants and will provide technical support for meetings focused on professional development and work with school leaders to build capacity.

**Visit us on the Web:**  
[www.annenbergchallenge.org](http://www.annenbergchallenge.org)

“For 25 years I taught, and I never went anywhere. I never, ever was able to share with other educators the ideas that I knew would work. With Annenberg, a whole new door opened for us. We can be a voice, go places, and present what we know works. We can exchange ideas so we can start bending other people's minds.”

Elementary school teacher,  
Houston, Texas