

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUCCEED
IN COLLEGE AND BEYOND

THE CONNECTION STRATEGY

Stories and [Results](#) from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Education Investments



Acknowledgments

The “Connection Strategy” in schools and neighborhoods of Atlanta’s Neighborhood Planning Unit V emanates from the work of many individuals and organizations, each committed to helping young people achieve the aspirations their families have for them. This report draws on interviews with many individuals, and on materials they provided to describe their work.

They include: J. P. Champion, Lisa Falco, Kweku Forstall, Robin Gittens, Katrina Green, Michelle Hampton, Gail Hayes, Elizabeth Kelly, Roberta Malavenda, Joanne Pascal, Liz Price, MacArthur Randolph, Major Gloria Reagan, Armstead Salters, Marcene Thornton, Christopher Waller, Sandra Ward, Jackie Williams, and Mtamanika Youngblood. Thanks to all for working toward a vision for young people in the community, and for sharing their valuable time.

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today’s vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation’s website at www.aecf.org.

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FOREWORD

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's mission is to improve outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable young people and families. Its education program advances this mission by supporting programs and initiatives that are committed to the following core result:

One day—all young people in tough neighborhoods will achieve the aspiration that their families have for them: to graduate from school prepared for adult success and well-being in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.

Achieving this core result involves supporting efforts that create quality school choices for young people and their families along with providing the supports and services that these young people and their families need to ensure that they succeed in school and in adulthood. This publication chronicles the stories and some of the results achieved by the Foundation's investment partners in Atlanta. It describes how some of the Foundation's education grantees are working to mend the pipeline for young people in their communities by connecting standards and expectations for learning from early childhood to college entry and providing needed services, supports, and partnerships that add value to the work of schools.

I am grateful to my colleague and Casey consultant Jeanne Jehl for her work in writing this publication. And I am grateful to all those individuals in Atlanta who assisted us by telling their stories about how they are preparing young people from their earliest years for adult success in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship. We believe this approach—which we have called the connection strategy—holds great promise for improving long-term outcomes for young people and their families in the nation's toughest neighborhoods.

Bruno V. Manno
Senior Associate for Education, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

I. OVERVIEW

For many young people, the “pipeline” to educational and economic success is truly broken. In the global information economy, most new jobs in the United States—about 67 percent of new jobs in 2007—require some education or training beyond high school, and the rate is expected to increase.¹ But the current educational system is failing young people, especially low-income African-American and Hispanic students. Across the nation, 30 percent of high school students (and nearly 50 percent of black and Hispanic students) fail to earn a diploma. Even students who graduate from high school and enter college often lack the knowledge and skills they need to be successful: 30 percent of incoming first-year college students are required to enroll in remedial courses, and only a minority of these students end up earning a degree.²

Young people growing up in tough urban neighborhoods are least well served by the current system. Too often, they are consigned to schools that fail them systematically: fail to keep them safe, to challenge them to learn at high levels, to enable them to develop a vision of possibility for themselves in the world beyond their neighborhoods. Students may progress from grade to grade and from school to school without mastering key subjects and developing the skills they need to graduate from high school, be successful in college, and participate in the economy. For these young people, the educational pipeline—the sequence of continuous learning from early childhood through elementary, middle, and high school grades and postsecondary education and training—has failed to deliver.

This report describes how some of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s education grantees in Atlanta are working to mend the pipeline for young people in their communities by connecting standards and expectations for learning from early childhood to college entry or the workforce and providing needed services, supports, and partnerships that add value to the work of schools. This connection strategy, known as P–16—linking education strategies from preschool through college graduation—is gaining increasing attention across the country, primarily through changes in state policies.³ In local communities, there is also growing momentum to ensure continuity for children and families despite transitions from one school to another, and to hold high expectations that young people will go to college and be successful there. Casey staff in Atlanta, for example, work in a close and growing partnership with schools, community organizations, and other funders to build a network that extends from early care and education to college.

This report discusses P–16 content and state policy strategies, and describes Casey’s local work in Atlanta as one example of what schools and community organizations can do to strengthen the pipeline. It should interest funders, school district leaders, and others in local communities, especially in urban neighborhoods, where few young people graduate prepared for adult success and well-being. Following this introductory section, Part II of the report provides a brief overview of P–16 concepts and implementation at state and local levels, while Part III provides a description of the Casey Foundation’s vision for education investments, including those that work to strengthen the P–16 pipeline in their communities. Part IV describes the overall Atlanta context, and discusses Casey’s role in Atlanta as a local intermediary organization, working to create a P–16 network of schools that serve young people in a low-income neighborhood. Part V offers some lessons from the progress in Atlanta for other community intermediaries working to connect and strengthen schools so that more young people graduate prepared for adult success. Parts VI and VII provide a summary of the P–16 connections in Atlanta, and of the impact, influence, and leverage for Casey’s education investments there.

II. WHAT IS THE CONNECTION STRATEGY?

Public education in most U. S. communities looks more like a puzzle with some pieces missing and others that don't quite fit than an orderly progression of expectations, opportunities, and supports and services aligned to ensure that young people are prepared for educational success. Young children spend their learning hours at home and in a variety of care arrangements; they often lack access to high-quality early care and education programs. Most public school programs begin with kindergarten and continue through twelfth grade, and even children who remain in the same neighborhood will attend several schools during that period. If they are not taught to high and consistent standards, with aligned expectations for learning as they move through the grades, they will fall short of developing the knowledge and skills they need to graduate from high school prepared to enter college and be successful there.

Ensuring that more young people can be successful learners as they progress through the grades and through college will require new kinds of work at all levels. At the state level, policymakers are focused on aligning systems P–16 and strengthening accountability for schools and school districts. While these policy changes are necessary to drive change at the local level, they may not be sufficient to quickly change practice in tough schools and communities. At the local level, strengthening schools requires intensive, intentional school- and district-level work, especially in underresourced schools. Improving students' success also requires connecting these young people and their families to supports they need to attend school regularly and master challenging curriculum.

PROMOTING P–16: STATE POLICIES

For nearly a decade, national policy leaders have called attention to the need for systems to guide practices P–16. Since each state has responsibility for developing its own education system, much of the work of system building must occur at the state level, with attention to four elements of the P–16 approach. States need to develop systems capable of providing consistent information and tracking progress on key indicators of student achievement; strengthen and align standards for learning to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and expand the supply of teachers with the subject-level knowledge and skills to enable students to achieve benchmarks for learning as they move across the grade levels. Although work in the early years of this decade focused on policies and practices from kindergarten through college entrance, new focus and state investments in expanding access to quality early childhood education programs have led many states to include prekindergarten as part of their public education system.

In 1999, 14 state education heads issued a statement declaring:⁴

Our nation is no longer well served by an education system that prepares a few to attend college to develop their minds for learned pursuits while the rest are expected only to build their muscles for useful labor. In the twenty-first century, all students must meet higher achievement standards in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools and thus be better prepared for the challenges of work and civic life.

The Education Trust, which receives support from Casey's education program, has played a leadership role in advocating for P-16 policies. In 2001, the Education Trust proposed five lessons for systems involved in developing K-16 (now P-16) standards:

- We need high and consistent standards to guide learning.
- Assessment and accountability systems must provide honest information and signal needed improvements.
- All students must have a challenging curriculum aligned with standards.
- Every child deserves good teaching. Poor and minority students get more underqualified teachers.
- Provide extra time and instruction for those who need it.⁵

At the core of the Education Trust's advocacy is an understanding that schools frequently shortchange low-income students and students of color. They do this by failing to track students' progress and graduation rates with data systems that can uncover differences in achievement for students of specific ethnic groups; failing to expect that students can learn challenging material and providing them with the teaching they need to be prepared to enter college; and failing to hold all schools and school systems accountable for the results of their efforts.

Efforts to improve state P-16 policies fall into four broad categories:

- **Data and systems:** requiring states and localities to collect and use accurate data to track progress on key indicators at all levels. To track student progress over time, states need to develop systems that provide an individual identifier for each student, while ensuring the confidentiality of student records. Data challenges also include the need to arrive at common definitions and measures within and across states for key indicators such as graduation rates.
- **Standards and accountability:** aligning state standards to ensure common expectations for students across levels of schooling so that students are able to make steady and continuous progress from early childhood through college. Standards for P-12 are designed to meet the entrance requirements of postsecondary institutions, with aligned expectations, especially in reading, writing, and math, for the elementary, middle, and high school grades.
- **Teaching quality:** improving the quality of state-funded teacher education programs and ensuring that these programs produce enough teachers who are fully prepared to teach in critical areas such as math and science.
- **Quality educational options:** expanding options for students and their families, including making significant improvements in existing schools as well as establishing and supporting new schools. Quality options frequently include innovative curriculum that helps young people connect to postsecondary programs and career opportunities.

Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan nonprofit organization created by the nation's governors and business leaders, has helped states benchmark their standards, testing, and accountability systems against the best examples in the United States and around the world. In 2007, states surveyed by Achieve reported considerable progress toward making the P-16 continuum a reality:

- Twelve states have aligned high school standards with postsecondary expectations and 32 more are in the process or planning to do so.

- Thirteen states require all students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum to earn a diploma, while 16 others report plans to adopt college- and work-ready requirements for all students in the future.
- Nine states administer college readiness tests to all high school students as part of their statewide assessment systems, and 21 additional states report plans to do so in the future.
- Five states have developed longitudinal data systems to allow them to track students' progress through the years.⁶

Achieve has created the American Diploma Project (ADP), an alliance of states working to close the gap between expectations for high school students and those they will encounter in college and the workplace. In 2007, the ADP included 29 states that enroll 60 percent of the nation's public school children.

At least 30 states have launched councils or initiatives to foster collaboration across different levels of education, according to the Education Commission of the States. Several states are taking additional steps to align curriculum and expectations for young people and bridge the gap between K-12 and higher education. In Utah, for example, the governor has appointed the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who oversees K-12 programs, to the state Board of Regents, which supervises the state's higher education system. In addition, district superintendents will have seats—with voting rights—on the governing boards of local colleges, to streamline students' progression from kindergarten to college, and to broaden the perspectives of K-12 and college officials.⁷ In Kentucky, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, which has traditionally focused on grades K-12, has initiated advocacy for expanding access to quality preschool programs. The Prichard Committee will also work with the state's Council on Postsecondary Education, with support from the Lumina Foundation, to create the Kentucky College Access Network (Kentucky CAN) to double the numbers of Kentucky citizens with bachelor's degrees by 2020.⁸

PROMOTING P-16: SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PRACTICES

Changes in state policies are essential to aligning expectations across levels of schooling and creating common definitions and data systems to support improved practice. But, especially in schools and communities where resources are scarce, policy changes must be supplemented by efforts to reduce barriers in thinking and persistent practice that create challenges to students' making continuous progress through the levels and stages of education. There are four primary barriers to preparing students from these communities for higher levels of adult success.

1. THE EARLY LEARNING GAP

Young children are learning from their earliest weeks and months, and they thrive in a safe and nurturing environment that provides them with opportunities to learn. Without that environment, they lose opportunities for language and cognitive development that is the basis for later formal learning. While the average 4-year-old in a family receiving temporary assistance from government has heard about 13 million spoken words, a child from a working-class family has heard about 26 million, and a child from a professional family almost 45 million.⁹ Research has demonstrated that participation in intensive, high-quality early childhood education can improve school readiness and close the gap

in early language development, and that poor and minority children benefit most academically from attending high-quality early childhood programs.¹⁰

2. LOW EXPECTATIONS FOR LEARNING

When children come to school with lower levels of language and cognitive development, teachers frequently expect less from them, rather than providing them with a rich, challenging curriculum and supports for learning. The cycle of low expectations continues when students who are considered less able are required to read less and asked to recall only simple facts and events, while “more able” students are challenged to use more advanced cognitive skills. Reduced expectations are institutionalized as tracking practices during high school, where general track students often receive only the most basic instruction in math and science, for example.¹¹

3. LACK OF CONTINUITY ACROSS LEVELS OF SCHOOLING

Many young people experience difficulty in the transition from one level of schooling to another. A child who has not had a high-quality preschool experience may find it difficult to focus attention on learning in kindergarten, and a student who has not become a competent reader by the end of third grade will struggle to complete more complex tasks in upper elementary and middle school. Students who have not learned to manage their time and possessions may founder when they move to larger middle schools and must change classrooms and teachers several times a day; young people who become disconnected from school at this time are at increased risk of failing to complete high school.

When students enter ninth grade—the first year of high school—with poor academic preparation, they face formidable barriers to success. More students fail courses in ninth grade than in any other high school year, and suspensions and expulsions are at their highest rate in the first semester of ninth grade. Students who fail ninth grade carry a high risk of dropping out of high school.

Frequently, students who graduate from high school and enter college still face a challenging transition: while they may have earned high grades in high school without being held to high standards, they are not prepared for college work. Students who must enroll in remedial courses when they enter college are less likely to graduate.

4. OUTDATED EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In many low-income communities, few adults have completed high school, and even fewer have completed college. Adults in these communities may have grown to expect little in the way of academic achievement from their young people. Expanding the community’s aspirations for learning requires helping families understand how much their children are able to achieve; helping families and community leaders understand the level of education that will be necessary to earn a living in the 21st Century; and providing families as well as young people with opportunities to learn about college and experience life on a college campus.

III. CASEY'S VISION AND WORK IN EDUCATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's education investments reflect the important roles schools, families, and communities play in the lives of young people, and are designed to advance this core result:

One day—All young people in tough neighborhoods will achieve the aspiration that their parents have for them: to graduate from school prepared for adult success and well-being in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.

From Casey's perspective, achieving this core result involves providing support for creating quality educational options for families and young people, as well as access to the services, supports, and opportunities that are needed to ensure that children succeed in school and are prepared for adult success. This broad approach recognizes that young people's educational achievement is essential to the future economic well-being of neighborhoods and cities, and that all community stakeholders play important roles in ensuring that young people are successful. By strengthening community organizations and connecting them to schools, Casey seeks to expand and align resources available to young people and their families and support them in realizing their aspirations. Casey's education program supports a group of community-based nonprofit organizations—many with national affiliations—that work in partnership with schools in the neighborhoods and cities where the Foundation is involved.

A recent report from the Bridgespan Group, *Reclaiming the American Dream*,¹² examines the challenge of increasing the numbers of low-income and minority students who make successful transitions to postsecondary education. The report, based on analysis of data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), outlines strategies that are most effective in this effort, in addition to providing high-quality education programs. They include:

- Helping students understand that they will need a bachelor's degree to pursue the career they want to have at age 30;
- Developing a peer group of friends who also plan to attend college; and
- Visiting at least one college together with a parent.

Several school-community partnerships are working, with support from Casey's education program, to increase the number of young people from tough neighborhoods who participate successfully in postsecondary education. Examples include:

The George Washington Community School in Indianapolis, where college students provide college preparatory activities in social studies classes beginning in the seventh grade. These activities help students to understand their strengths and interests and envision themselves in careers that use those strengths. They then find out what education is required for careers that interest them and begin making plans to attend college.

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) recognizes that "college is unfamiliar territory" to many of its students who come from tough neighborhoods. HCZ has developed the College Success program to work with students who have graduated from high school-level programming. College Success

coordinators check in frequently with students and provide supports, including academic and life skills counseling, internship placements during summer and winter breaks, financial assistance, and assistance with transportation.

HCZ is serious about expanding expectations that its children will attend college: Baby College is a nine-week series of workshops offered to parents of children between the ages of 0–3. Instructors teach parents about the specific stages of child development that their child is experiencing and what to expect next. As a follow-up to the classes, outreach workers organize monthly get-togethers for graduates to help parents form special relationships with other parents in the community while gaining valuable child health information.

KIPP DC—which operates three middle schools serving low income students, grades 5–8, in the lowest income areas of the District of Columbia—has developed the KIPP to College program, setting a goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate for its graduates as well as an 80 percent postsecondary completion rate (including 2- or 4-year college graduation or completion of an apprenticeship program). To support students' continued achievement even after they leave the KIPP schools, high school placement counselors teach high school preparation classes for seventh and eighth graders to help them develop and practice higher order thinking skills, understand the consequences of their choices and actions on their prospects for the future, and set career goals and map their path to achieving those goals. Counselors provide intensive support to students through the high school application process to ensure that they gain admission to competitive high schools, and support them all through high school, making personal contacts with students at least twice each month and developing summer internship opportunities in the community.

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) of the Fund for the City of New York provides support for a network of Beacons (which are community centers based in schools) in all of New York City's boroughs, and helps individual Beacons meet community-identified needs. Many Beacons are now turning intensive attention to “returning students”—young people ages 16 - 24 who have dropped out of school or are in danger of dropping out. In a partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY), individual community-based organizations are forming local “community networks” with CUNY colleges to enable young people to enter CUNY, while remaining connected to Beacons and other community-based services. YDI defines the issues as *engagement*, *capacity*, and *continuity*.¹³ community-based organizations provide instruction in math and literacy to help students catch up on the academic background they need to stay enrolled and earn a certificate of General Educational Development (GED) and move on to college-level work. Because Beacons are at the center of their local communities, they act as a launching platform for young people who want to enroll in college but need help in staying connected.

IV. CASEY'S EDUCATION WORK IN ATLANTA

Atlanta is one of the Casey Foundation's Civic Sites: a "home town" where the Foundation has a long-term commitment to improving the futures of at-risk children and families. Casey has developed close relationships in Atlanta, which has served as the corporate headquarters of UPS since 1993. Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, created the Foundation and named it after his mother. Through its investments, Casey works to provide the city and the region with thought, practice, and policy leadership in three overarching strategic areas: Family Economic Success, Neighborhood Transformation, and Education Achievement.

Casey's work in Atlanta is closely connected to citywide business, civic, and educational leadership. Following Casey's commitment to place-based philanthropy, the Civic Site focuses its work in Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V), where many of Atlanta's most vulnerable children are concentrated in the neighborhoods of Adair Park, Capitol Homes, Mechanicsville, Peopletown, Pittsburgh, and Summerhill.

Once, these historic neighborhoods were home to many of the city's leading African-American families. Today, indicators of family economic success, school readiness, student success, and affordable housing are all considerably lower than those for the city of Atlanta as a whole: according to U.S. Census data, 59 percent of children in NPU-V live in poverty, compared to 38 percent in Atlanta overall; 53 percent of adults have a high school diploma or the equivalent, compared with 77 percent in Atlanta overall; and 22 percent of adults have postsecondary education, compared to 54 percent in Atlanta overall. Fifty-four percent of babies in NPU-V are born to mothers with less than a twelfth grade education, compared to 33 percent in Atlanta overall.¹⁴

Affordable housing in NPU-V is a particular concern: in 2007, 43 percent of the housing units in the neighborhoods were vacant. As the housing market boomed and then receded, homes have turned over rapidly and many homes have absentee owners. High rents and a shortage of housing for low-income renters forces families to share living quarters. The problems include families losing their homes to foreclosure and sharp declines in property values, especially in lower-income and working-class neighborhoods.¹⁵

Casey's Civic Site is working to close the gap in key indicators between NPU-V and the city of Atlanta overall by 2010, when the next U.S. Census is conducted.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ATLANTA

The Atlanta Public School District (APS) enrolled approximately 50,000 students in 100 schools and other educational programs during the 2006–2007 school year. More than 86 percent of the district's students are African American, and 75 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Under the leadership of Dr. Beverly Hall, who has served as superintendent since 1999, student achievement in Atlanta has improved steadily. The school district embraces several strategic initiatives focused on transforming achievement, especially for its lowest-income students. These include Project GRAD Atlanta, Single Gender Academies, the Math and Science Initiative, and High School Transformation.

Casey's involvement in school readiness and education includes schools and neighborhoods in the elementary and middle school feeder pattern for the New Schools at Carver, including Gideons and Dunbar elementary schools and Parks Middle School, as well as support for Project GRAD Atlanta and Tech High School, a charter high school east of downtown Atlanta. These schools, with the exception of Tech High, are part of the New Schools at Carver cluster, and are served by Project GRAD Atlanta.

PROJECT GRAD ATLANTA

Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) Atlanta is a national K–12 comprehensive school reform model that operates in 31 schools within APS. The strategy works with elementary, middle, and high schools in neighborhood clusters to improve graduation, college entrance, and college completion rates.

In elementary and middle schools, Project GRAD provides intensive professional development and support for teachers in curriculum and instruction, as well as supports for children and families. Its program components include:

- MOVE IT Math (Math Opportunities, Valuable Experiences, and Innovative Teaching);
- Success for All (a schoolwide reading and writing program that emphasizes early intervention to make sure that every student succeeds in reading);
- Consistency Management Cooperative Discipline (a program that builds shared responsibility for learning and classroom organization between teachers); and
- Communities In Schools (an approach to services and supports that provides guidance, counseling, and case-management services for children and families).

Curriculum and classroom management innovations are implemented through continuing professional development and coaching, with resource staff on-site to support implementation. Both Gideons Elementary School and Parks Middle School in NPU-V have been implementing Project GRAD for five years, and teachers—especially those who have been in the schools throughout this period—are growing in understanding the models and in implementing the curriculum. The schools' improving scores attest to their success, and staff and the community are responding positively to the results.

Project GRAD provides coordinators from Communities in Schools (CIS) Atlanta in elementary and middle schools—one coordinator in each elementary school and two in each middle school. These coordinators provide a consistent supportive presence for students and their families, connecting them to services and supports, as well as resources and opportunities for enrichment. Hands-On Atlanta, a nonprofit organization, coordinates AmeriCorps volunteers who serve as tutors at the elementary and middle schools.

Project GRAD works closely with the Atlanta Public Schools, and the district has now assumed full responsibility for implementation in elementary and middle schools. Project GRAD will maintain a relatively small staff for quality control in these schools, and shift its focus toward high schools and supports for students in college.

In high schools, Project GRAD develops contracts with students: If a student attends school regularly, participates in summer programs for two years during high school, and graduates with a “C” average, Project GRAD guarantees scholarship assistance for college. Summer programs take place on college campuses in the Atlanta area, and students reside on campus while attending the programs so they can gain a better idea of what it would be like to live on campus. During the school year, students are encouraged to take advanced classes and Advanced Placement courses.

Project GRAD also conducts trips for students and their families to college campuses to help them envision themselves attending college and living on a campus. In 2007, students toured the Washington, DC/Virginia area, including Georgetown, Howard, Hampton, and Virginia Commonwealth Universities, as well as historical monuments in Washington. A group of parents toured several campuses in the Atlanta area to gain a more complete perspective on campus life.

At graduation time in May 2007, Project GRAD recognized 188 new George W. Brumley Jr. Scholars: students who had graduated from APS high schools in four years with at least a 78 percent average, attended two summer enrichment programs, taken the ACT or SAT college entrance exam at least once, and successfully completed APS requirements for college or technology/career preparation diploma. These students are guaranteed financial support to attend college.¹⁶

With more graduates now in college, Project GRAD staff is aware that they are working with the group of students most likely not to complete an undergraduate degree. “Over time, we expect to see about a thousand students a year in colleges around the country,” says Kweku Forstall, director of Project GRAD Atlanta. “We need to develop supports for students in college so we can improve the retention rate.” Project GRAD is working carefully to ensure a good match between students and colleges to reduce the number of students who decide to transfer, and building relationships with administrators on college campuses so they can support and guide students. As the number of students grows on some campuses, Project GRAD may develop peer mentoring programs.

CONTEXT

SCHOOL READINESS: CHILDREN 0-5 AND THEIR FAMILIES

Casey staff are leading a vibrant, growing community partnership, the Early Learning Partnership, to improve young children's readiness for school in NPU-V, especially in the Adair Park and Pittsburgh neighborhoods served by Gideons Elementary School. The Early Learning Partnership includes the Salvation Army's Evangeline Booth College, Quality Care for Children, and other community organizations. The work is school-linked, and is closely connected to Gideons Elementary School, where the CIS coordinator provides a consistent, caring point of contact and support for families.

With just one child care center in the neighborhood, most infants and toddlers are cared for at home by grandparents and other family members, or by friends and neighbors. It is difficult to identify and reach many young children. In late April 2007, a door-to-door Countdown to Kindergarten outreach effort, sponsored by the Early Learning Partnership together with the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA), distributed information to families about the importance of early childhood development and provided backpacks and school supplies for children. All families in the community were invited to join in a Family Fun Day.

The intensive outreach effort identified 25–30 children ages 0–5, including some living with grandparents who were not aware of the community efforts. Countdown to Kindergarten efforts began that day, and the school continued to register children for kindergarten throughout the spring and summer.

To serve families in the community and increase young children's readiness for school, the Early Learning Partnership sponsors Play and Learn groups that involve families and caregivers in activities to support children's early literacy. The Salvation Army, working in collaboration with the National Center for Family Literacy, sponsors an extensive family literacy program, conducted in family supportive fashion—with dinner provided for the whole family and supervised activities for children. Other efforts include programs to improve the child development skills of parents and caregivers, and a quality improvement program for neighborhood child care centers. Young children have access to immunizations and to hearing, vision, and health screenings.

The growing collaborative effort benefits from the on-site leadership of the CIS coordinator and consistent support from Casey Team Leader Roberta Malavenda and the Salvation Army. "The Salvation Army is a community anchor. They help with anything they can," says Armstead Salters, principal at Gideons Elementary School. The Salvation Army staff manage a source of flexible funding to respond to family emergencies and support special events, and officers-in-training provide volunteer support. Members of the Early Learning Partnership reach out to individuals and organizations, expanding the circle of those who are involved in supporting families as well as the services and supports that are available.

Gideons is the hub for these efforts, as it is for the community itself. The school's inclusive culture welcomes entire families: for example, an awards ceremony for students with perfect attendance has become a celebration dinner, honoring families as well as students. The school welcomes and

supports families with young children as well as those with school-aged children. Gideons has operated a prekindergarten program for many years, and standards for children's learning in prekindergarten are aligned with those for kindergarten and first grade.

Casey's Civic Site invests in improving young children's readiness by expanding opportunities for learning before children enter school. Incoming kindergarten students who have not been enrolled in an organized preschool program attend "transition camp" sessions, while children entering prekindergarten have a summer camp session. Recognizing the importance of successful transition into kindergarten, the Early Learning Partnership will work with school staff to develop a portion of the school's No Child Left Behind plan, engaging in a self-study to strengthen the transition.

GRADES P-5

CHARLES R. GIDEONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"Gideons is special because it is a school with open hearts, open arms and an open door where all staff members have high expectations for all the students. Students are valued and expectation for high achievement is evident." The school's vision statement captures the culture and climate of the child-centered, family-supportive school that has served the Pittsburgh community under the same leadership for 28 years. Teacher turnover is very low: "I don't just let anyone work with my children" says principal Armstead Salters, who recruits from a pool of those who have excelled as student teachers at Gideons.

With 95 percent of its approximately 500 students eligible for free or reduced-price meals, Gideons maintains stellar academic standards: it was named a Georgia School of Excellence in 2006. In 2007, the school was one of just seven nationwide to be honored with an "Excellence in Education" award from San Diego State University's National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST). Criteria for the award include high attendance rates, low suspension rates, and attainment of national Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for academic achievement across all subgroups of students. "These schools have attained a level of achievement more typically seen in schools that serve very affluent communities," said the director of the NCUST.¹⁷

Gideons incorporates the elementary components of Project GRAD across the school (see p. 11). The CIS coordinator provides consistent, personalized connections for students and families to community supports. If a family comes to her with a need better met somewhere else, she will talk to someone at another agency—or take the parent there herself. "I don't want people to think, 'I went to that school and I didn't get anything,'" she says.

Casey Civic Site staff maintain close personal and professional ties to Gideons. Gail Hayes, Atlanta Site Team Leader, served as Gideons' Co-Principal for a Day in 2007, along with Major Gloria Reagan, Director of Campus Services for the Salvation Army's Evangeline Booth College.

GRADES 6-8

PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Until 2005–2006, Parks was a failing school—one that had not achieved its goals for academic achievement for over five years. Leadership turnover was high, and an interim principal had been in

place for a year. The school had a reputation for poor discipline and poor achievement. Under provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), students who chose to leave Parks were entitled to free transportation to another middle school, and many took advantage of that opportunity.

The school's transformation—it met AYP criteria in seven out of seven areas in 2005–2006, with 87 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards—came as a result of focused leadership, including a new principal; support from the Georgia State Department of Education; a new sense of staff teamwork through renewed emphasis on professional development; and support from community partners, including Casey.

The elements of Project GRAD are actively applied at Parks:

- Two CIS coordinators (a man and a woman) work to remove barriers to students' full participation in school. They spend time in classrooms to support students; act as mentors and confidants for students who are struggling; visit the homes of students with unsatisfactory attendance; and arrange trips and special events as incentives for attendance and positive behavior. CIS coordinators sponsored two special events for families in 2007–2008, with several hundred adults in attendance at each. And they work closely with community organizations including the PCIA, the community recreation center, and the local Fatherhood Initiative.

Through the work of school staff, CIS coordinators, and community partners, Parks students attend cultural and professional sports events in Atlanta, and travel beyond their neighborhood and city. In 2006–2007, two groups of Parks students traveled to New Orleans to participate in work projects. “When the kids saw the mass destruction from Katrina, they were sobered,” said a CIS coordinator. “They think more now about their education and their future.” A group of eighth-grade students traveled to Toronto, Ontario—the first airplane trip for many and the first trip outside the United States for all of them. CIS staff and Parks leadership believe that these events, which expose students to new environments and new possibilities, are an important source of inspiration and vision of for the future.

- The Success for All (SFA) reading program is employed across the curriculum, with a full-time facilitator who serves as a resource for teachers and students. “I ask myself what I need to do to help this teacher,” says Sandra Ward, Success for All facilitator. Ward coaches teachers in using SFA's research-based approach, knowing that the structured lessons will help students to be more successful, and works with teachers to develop students' critical thinking skills. By the end of the 2006–2007 school year, all Parks teachers were qualified to teach reading, with training provided and paid for the by school district.

Parks' principal, Christopher Waller, who completed his second year at the school in May 2007, is visible everywhere—in the school's halls, on the campus, and in the community. Early in his tenure, with the help of the Salvation Army, he connected with the community's Ministerial Alliance, and heard their frustration about the difficulty of involving the Pittsburgh community. As a result, the school and the Ministerial Alliance cosponsored a block party welcoming the community to the school. Later, at Waller's request, the Salvation Army hosted a family dinner as a prelude to the school's holiday concert. The response was overwhelming, the Salvation Army was able to feed the crowd, and family involvement at Parks remains strong.

Waller is committed to providing Parks students with enrichment and acceleration, and to providing them with experiences in the world outside their neighborhood. “The harder part of improving achievement,” he says, “is getting kids to believe in themselves.” In this intense work, in a community context that is often unstable and sometimes unsafe, Elizabeth Kelly, Casey’s Student Success Team Leader is the principal’s lead partner, demonstrating her commitment to young people and their potential by paying attention to needs and finding ways to support staff and students, and by forging connections with other partners who add value to the work.

Casey brings support and commitment to preparing students for successful transitions: for rising sixth-graders who may be intimidated by the size and complexity of the middle school environment as well as eighth-graders who must be prepared to succeed in high school when they leave Parks. In earlier years, young people who had met standards at Gideons and other elementary schools in the community were often not challenged to master a rigorous curriculum at Parks. Working with staff from the Education Trust, a Casey grantee, to align the curriculum across grade levels and include more challenging content, Casey staff helped the school to strengthen teaching practices. Teachers are now trained to teach to the higher-achieving students in the class, rather than aiming their lessons toward lower achievers. Tutoring and afterschool sessions enable more students to become successful learners.

Casey also has linked with partners to strengthen afterschool and summer programs for students at Parks. In partnership with the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Casey brought the After School All Stars program to Parks and is adapting it to meet the needs of students. More recently, Casey took the lead in developing a successful proposal for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Casey staff makes good use of connections in the larger Atlanta community, engaging resources such as Digital Connectors, a program that teaches students computer-related skills and pays them a stipend to improve computer literacy for families in the community.

Partners now include Digital Connectors-One Economy, Georgia State University, Hands-On Atlanta, Mendez Foundation, the Ministers’ Alliance, Music Matters, Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association, Salvation Army’s Evangeline Booth College, and community associations.

GRADES 9–12

THE NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER

Built on the campus of the former George Washington Carver High School in NPU-V, the New Schools at Carver, which opened with a freshman class in 2005, have become the prototype for high school transformation in Atlanta. The open, modern, inviting campus stands as a contrast to many crowded, poorly maintained structures in the area.

Students from Parks and other middle schools can enroll in any of Carver’s four small semi-autonomous high schools: Early College High School, School of the Arts, School of Health Science and Research, and School of Technology. Each school completed its second year of operation in May 2007; when they expand to include all four grades, the four schools will total no more than 1,600 students. A fifth small school, the School of Entrepreneurship, enrolls current juniors and seniors who previously attended Carver High School.

Curriculum in all four schools reflects a commitment to ensure that students will be successful in college. Students in the Early College High School at Carver, for example, can earn high school and college credits simultaneously, enabling them to accumulate as many as 60 college credits by the time they graduate from high school. Students begin to enroll in classes at Georgia State University in their sophomore year, taking freshman English and beginning psychology classes. A Georgia State doctoral student coordinates the program, spending several days each week with Early College High students to help them apply and gain admission, monitoring them in class at Georgia State, and helping them learn to solve the inevitable problems as they arise.

Early College High School continues Parks' commitment to broadening students' perception of themselves and their place in the world. Students travel to Tuskegee University in Alabama during their first year to visit George Washington Carver's laboratory and understand the rich academic and scientific history that underlies their school's name. At the end of their sophomore year, students are involved in a service project in Costa Rica and Panama. The school also organized a trip to North Carolina to visit a wide range of public and private schools, including Duke University, North Carolina Central University, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

In its first year of operation (2005–2006), Early College High organized a PTA and established active parent engagement. The school achieved AYP in attendance for that year. The Early College High School at Carver was the first of its kind in the state of Georgia, and has been designated as a model for additional schools in the state. Leaders from the five existing schools, along with the director of Early College in Georgia, are continuing to refine the program, even as it grows and enrolls more students.

PRINCIPALS WHO LEAD IN THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

Principals of three schools in NPU-V are community leaders as well as school leaders, working to connect the school with its surrounding community.

Armstead Salters, principal of Gideons Elementary, has worked with three generations of children from some of the same families, and led the school in developing an enduring family-centered culture. The high-achieving school hosts events from a communitywide back-to-school celebration to tax preparation assistance for community members, and families say that “If Dr. Salters says it can happen at the school, it must be OK.” He works closely with the Salvation Army, which provides volunteer tutors, sponsors dinners, and provides emergency support for families in crisis. The principal watches over the children and families entrusted to his care: “I don’t let just anyone work with my children. We develop them in a very particular way. We have to be mothers and fathers while their parents are working two or three jobs.” His concerns extend to what happens when children move beyond his school—he worries that too many of them fall through the cracks in middle school.

Christopher Waller came to Parks Middle School as a first-time principal, new to the Atlanta Public Schools. He quickly established relationships in the community, working with the local Ministerial Alliance to sponsor a block party on the school grounds, and going into the community to make visits to the homes of students. Turning his focused energy to the challenging task of raising expectations for students and adults at Parks, he turned for help to a range of community partners, from Casey to the Salvation Army to organizations that work with students in afterschool programs and those that provide incentives for improving academic achievement. Waller acknowledges that running a middle school in an urban district can be a very lonely job. “I’m fortunate to have many community partners,” he says. “Elizabeth Kelly [Casey’s Student Success Team Leader] became one of us by believing in our children.” Waller believes that schools can be a powerful force in transforming communities. With help from its partners, Parks will bring a marching band—the only middle school marching band in Atlanta—to the streets of Pittsburgh in 2007–2008.

Marcene Thornton had worked in the Capitol View community within NPU-V before she became principal of Early College High School. When she was principal at Capitol View Elementary, the high poverty school was honored as a National Blue Ribbon School for its high levels of academic excellence. But Thornton believed she had done all she could at Capitol View and wanted to make high schools more responsive to the learning needs of adolescents. At Early College High School, she has worked to form a pioneering partnership with Georgia State University, developed close connections to parents and exposed young people to experiences that will help them be successful. Thornton is passionate about young people’s potential for success, and she exhorts families to send their young people to college: “You don’t hurt anything by trying. Somewhere, sometime this family has to turn the corner. Let it be with this child.”

THE CONNECTION STRATEGY

TECH HIGH SCHOOL ATLANTA

Tech High School's mantra is "No excuses." Leaders from the Georgia Public Policy Foundation and the Technology Association of Georgia created the charter school because too few graduates of Atlanta Public Schools qualified for admission to technology-focused postsecondary institutions. Without a group of qualified applicants from the urban area to Georgia Tech and similar institutions, it will be difficult to grow and sustain a high-tech workforce in Atlanta.

Tech High's approach to learning is based on inquiry rather than textbook assignments, and the staff engages students to develop their critical and independent thinking skills. The school's founders recruited staff who share real-world experience and a commitment to helping students learn and explore the high-tech world. Students are encouraged to apply their leadership skills to solve problems at school and in the community.

The school, which began its fourth year in fall 2007, enrolls about 250 students, nearly all African American, and 78 percent eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Students follow a technology-rich preparatory curriculum for two years, then choose one of four areas of specialization: medical science, information technology, engineering, or entrepreneurship/leadership, for their final two years. They may choose to complete a certification program at Atlanta Technical College, earning college credits while they are enrolled in high school. If they decide not to enter a four-year college, their certification from Atlanta Technical College attests to their training and competency in their chosen field. In coming years, Tech High seniors will have opportunities for internships and work experience with high-tech employers.

About a third of students are below grade level in reading and/or math when they enter Tech High, and they must complete a program of intensive remediation before they can move on. The school's low student/teacher ratio—about one teacher for every 17 students—guarantees that students will receive attention to their academic needs, a first for some of these young people. Students and teachers also develop strong personal relationships that encourage learning and inquiry. With Casey support, the school provides summer and afterschool programs.

Tech High School is challenged by the limited funding available to charter schools under Georgia law, and staff must constantly raise funds to provide the essentials and ensure a quality program. As the school prepares to graduate its first class in 2008, its leaders take particular pride in developing young people who are independent thinkers, prepared to succeed in college and the high-tech world.

BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL: THE MAYOR'S YOUTH PROGRAM

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, first elected to her post in 2001, is committed to making sure that the city's high school graduates are able to make a positive transition to the future and contribute to its future economy. Because many young people enter this time of transition without support from

family members, “It can be overwhelming,” says Joanne Pascal, who directs the Mayor’s Youth Program. “Kids who are getting ready to get out of high school just shut down.”

Mayor Franklin allocates her personal time and connections to help students who are preparing to graduate from high school. Each fall, she goes to every high school in the city with a pledge: Students who stay engaged in high school during their senior year, stay out of trouble with the law, and stay away from drugs will be eligible for help in getting into college or into a job with career potential. On “Saturdays with the Mayor,” Franklin meets with students individually, to learn about their hopes and dreams, and about what they need to accomplish those dreams. Members of the mayor’s staff listen to the conversations and take notes, then maintain the connections with individual students to help them move ahead. In the graduating class of 2005, 300 students citywide were admitted to college through this process; the number jumped to 700 for the class of 2006, and to more than 1,000 for the class of 2007. Franklin works to ensure that low-income students complete their applications for financial aid, and that their unmet needs are met, even finding laptop computers for students if they are required by the college or university they enter. She raises the funding for the initiative herself, from individuals and corporate donors.

As part of her commitment to ensuring positive transitions for students after high school, the mayor also developed a summer program for young people, with a focus on those who will enter the workforce directly, or combine work with enrollment in a trade school or a 2-year or 4-year college. Using a combination of funding sources, including those from the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the City of Atlanta placed 1,000 young people in internships in 2007. During the school year, the mayor’s staff worked with the corporate and business community to develop internship opportunities that would provide opportunities for hands-on learning.

AN INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATION IN THE COMMUNITY

The Atlanta Civic Site has developed a well-connected intermediary organization and catalyst for transforming education in NPU-V. Casey staff introduce effective practices, build partnerships, identify gaps and fill them, and support and sustain changes that will result in outcomes for young people and their families. Although staff have access to a range of resources, they are introduced only when there is a strategic “fit” between the resource and the need—and when Casey staff are convinced that the partnership will benefit the school and the students. “You don’t meet with me until Elizabeth [the Student Success Team Leader] is convinced that you will add value. She brings partnerships that add value to what we do,” says Christopher Waller, principal of Parks Middle School. This conscious, strategic approach to partnership building distinguishes the Civic Site effort from many school-community efforts, which often measure success by the number of partner organizations and monetary value of their donations, rather than their contribution to students’ and families’ success.

Because of its clear goals and easy-to-understand approach to “closing the gap” between NPU-V and Atlanta as a whole, the Civic Site effort has an unusual level of transparency and accountability for outcomes. Community residents and partner organizations alike can understand the need for their involvement and the progress that has been made so far.

Civic Site staff have deep connections to powerful and visible leaders and constituencies in Atlanta and across the state, bringing credibility to the work in a low-income community. “Gail Hayes [Manager of the Atlanta Civic Site] is an Atlantan,” says Armstead Salters. “She’s one of us.” Connections to the mayor, key members of the business community, and statewide education reform leaders enable the Civic Site to be opportunistic and make the best use of resources and connections.

The Civic Site’s broad goals—including early care and education, educational success, family economic success, and community building—bring it credibility with families and increase the resources available for families and young people. “This teaches us to believe in the community. Families trust the schools and it helps children to learn more,” says Major Gloria Reagan of the Salvation Army. In locating the Center for Working Families—a comprehensive center that provides access to earned benefits, career training and placement, and other supports—in an underutilized recreation center, the Civic Site brought families back to that part of the neighborhood, making it a safer, more stable place. The close relationship between the Civic Site and the Salvation Army will contribute to families’ economic success: when the new Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center is built in NPU-V, the Salvation Army will hire from the community for construction jobs through the Center for Working Families. The Kroc Center will provide an additional resource for neighborhood transformation, with space for family, school, and community events, including literacy programs, exercise programs, and places for Play and Learn groups for families and children.

The Atlanta Civic Site is developing a place-based system of services and supports to ensure that more young people are prepared for college and adult success, including changes in governance, funding, structure, and accountability. Elements of the system are shown in the chart below:

THE CONNECTION STRATEGY: DEVELOPING P-16 NETWORKS OF EDUCATION AND SUPPORTS IN THE ATLANTA CIVIC SITE

	MODEL A CITY-BASED EMPHASIZES	MODEL B NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED EMPHASIZES
GOVERNANCE	Centralized	Strong resident engagement
FUNDING	Categorical and fragmented by programs and services	Integrated and coordinated by goals and outcomes
STRUCTURES	Uniform	Pluralistic
ACCOUNTABILITY	Diffuse and imposed	Focused and mutual

V. LESSONS LEARNED IN ATLANTA

1. **Start early.** *Don't wait until children enter kindergarten to address the learning gap.*

Young children in low-income neighborhoods like Pittsburgh can lose out on early opportunities for development, and the gap between their verbal and cognitive development and the skills of more advantaged children can be hard to overcome. The Pittsburgh Early Learning Partnership employs a variety of strategies, including intensive outreach in the community, Parents as Teachers, Play and Learn groups, and Family Literacy opportunities to reach young children in the community.

The state of Georgia set the standard for the nation by providing universal access to quality preschool experiences for four-year-olds, and Gideons has provided prekindergarten programs for many years. Families who are involved with their young children's learning are more likely to stay engaged when their children reach school age.

2. **Serve two—and even more—generations at once.** *Build community around children while supporting and educating the adults who care for them.*

Children do better when their families do better, and families in Pittsburgh and Mechanicsville can benefit from education and training, access to jobs that pay a living wage, and housing supports. Because many families have low levels of education, GED and workplace literacy programs are essential. As young people reach their middle school and high school years, efforts that help parents understand the importance of a college education are essential to helping young people enter—and succeed in—college.

Since many children in NPU-V live with grandparents and other relatives, outreach and support efforts must also be tailored to the needs of older adults. The Salvation Army's Kroc Center will provide additional supports, including exercise rooms that seniors can use, and Play and Learn groups to help them provide early literacy experiences for young children in their care.

3. **Support young people during times of transition.** *Help children and older youth navigate changing expectations for learning and development.*

Transitions—times of change in what is expected of young people and the way they are supported—increase the risk that they will not reach their full potential. The Civic Site and its partners have invested in supports for children and their families during times of transition, with “camps” for young children entering prekindergarten and kindergarten, orientation trips to Parks for rising sixth-graders to help them and their families understand class schedules, lockers, and navigating a large building. Most recently, the U.S. Department of Education awarded \$480,000 for a mentoring program at Parks to serve approximately one-fourth of sixth-grade students who need additional academic, social, and organizational support to be successful in middle school. Supports during the transition include helping rising ninth-graders choose among options for high school programs at the New Schools at Carver, Tech High School, and elsewhere. Project GRAD and the Mayor's Youth Program provide supports in the major transition from high school to college and the world of work.

4. Build enduring relationships. *Deepen trust and understanding so the work can grow.*

In tough schools and communities, many positions of responsibility carry a heavy load of loneliness. Relationships convey the sense of respect and teamwork that enables people to continue the hard work of supporting staff and students. As relationships grow and mature over time—and provide a sense of mutual support—they help people understand that they need not work alone.

School staff may be especially in need of trusting relationships with people and organizations from the community. Continuing pressure for test score improvement can isolate them from those outside the schools.

5. Hold high expectations for everyone. *Build a shared vision of success and understand what it will take to attain it.*

Schools can only hold children to high expectations when they do the same for the adults who work there. Improved student achievement at Parks followed a period of intense staff training and development. The entire staff is now certified to teach reading—an important step in improving literacy levels across the curriculum.

Staff and community partners have been especially attuned to providing incentives for improved performance. When the Parks staff attended a meeting of all APS staff to honor schools with improved achievement, they wore blazers in the school's colors, donated by community partners to honor their teamwork and professionalism.

6. Incorporate needed supports and opportunities. *Do “whatever it takes” to remove nonacademic barriers to learning.*

Many young people and their families need support in order to be successful in school. CIS coordinators at schools in NPU-V work with families and community organizations to keep children in school and learning, by visiting homes and working with young people in classrooms to keep them on track.

These coordinators provide the essentials, and help develop young people who can navigate new environments, creating visions of possibility for young people by taking them to art exhibits and performances, organizing trips outside the city and the state, and coordinating events to honor and strengthen the bonds between young people and their families.

7. Work to “connect the dots” for young people and their families. *Many disconnected young people live in disconnected communities.*

Although the neighborhoods in NPU-V are close to downtown Atlanta, many young people and adults are unfamiliar with the rest of the community. Much of the work in NPU-V is about connections: connecting low-income grandparents to supports for young grandchildren, and enabling high school students to experience success and build social networks on the campus of Georgia State University.

Connections are critically important in helping young people achieve the aspirations their parents have for them. Parents and other family members often play key gatekeeping roles in enabling young

people to enter college and be successful there. Casey is supporting opportunities for families to visit colleges with high school students and understand that their children can be successful there.

8. Engage resources from the larger community. *Ensuring success for low-income young people is in the community's economic interest.*

Casey adds value to the Pittsburgh community through its connections to individuals and organizations from the Greater Atlanta area. Working with the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, staff have leveraged opportunities for afterschool programs at Parks, and there is growing interest among the business and scientific community in upgrading the school's outdated and inadequate science laboratories.

Support for Tech High School comes from Georgia Tech graduates and others in high-tech businesses across the area, who recognize that a source of educated, technologically savvy high school and college graduates is the key to the area's long-term economic viability in a high-tech economy.

9. Expand opportunities for continuous learning. *Learning takes place in the classroom and beyond it.*

To reach levels of learning that will enable them to be successful in college and adulthood, young people need extended opportunities for learning—a longer school day and year, support and bridging during transitions, learning opportunities during the summer, and opportunities beyond school, including cultural events, trips, and college experiences.

10. Maximize the power of partnerships. *Connections focused on achieving results can improve outcomes for kids and families.*

Neighborhoods in NPU-V are blessed with the involvement of two key partners: Casey and the Salvation Army's Evangeline Booth College. In coming years, the Salvation Army will expand its presence in the community when it opens the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center in the Pittsburgh neighborhood. Community residents and staff are deeply engaged in planning for the Kroc Center, which will serve as a center of the community.

The Kroc Center is just one in a growing array of partnerships that will benefit the community. As young people's success grows, partnerships are expanding, attracted by a growing possibility for success...for young people and their families.

The chart on pages 26 and 27 is a graphic representation of the Connection Strategy in NPU-V. It depicts the array of connections, including programmatic supports and partnerships, that strengthen schools so that young people in NPU-V can move successfully through the educational pipeline.

VI. A P–16 NETWORK OF EDUCATION AND SUPPORTS

Details of impact, influence, and leverage for the education program in Atlanta are provided in the chart below.

QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	AGES 0–5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION	GRADES P–5 GIDEONS AND DUNBAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	GRADES 6–8 PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL
INVESTMENTS IN PROGRAM QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and Learn Groups • Parents as Teachers • Quality Improvement Project • Kindergarten transition planning at Gideons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD reading and math curriculum, classroom management training, and professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD reading and math curriculum, classroom management training, staff development
SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to health, vision, and hearing screenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD: Communities In Schools coordinators • Hands-On Atlanta tutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD: Communities In Schools staff • Hands-On Atlanta tutors • Afterschool and summer programs
SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Literacy • Salvation Army 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities in Schools • Salvation Army 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIS • Salvation Army
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation • Casey Foundation Communities In Schools • Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association • Quality Care for Children • Salvation Army • Child Protective Services • Fulton County Departments of Health and Family and Children's Services, and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casey Foundation • Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association • Salvation Army 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casey Foundation • Salvation Army • United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta • Digital Connectors • 21st Century Community Schools (U.S. Dept. of Ed.)

VI. (CONTINUED)

QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	GRADES 9–12 NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER; TECH HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL	GRADES 13–16 POSTSECONDARY CONNECTIONS
<p>INVESTMENTS IN PROGRAM QUALITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD counseling for college preparation, enrollment, and retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early College High School: students earn credits on campus at GSU • Tech High students can earn certification at Atlanta Technical Institute
<p>SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD college counseling and summer programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor’s Youth Program provides resources and work experiences to enable young people to make the transition to college and/or employment
<p>SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD meetings and college tours <p>The Center for Working Families provides access to income supports, GED and workplace literacy programs, job training and placement.</p>	
<p>PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casey Foundation (Tech High) • Georgia State University (Early College High School) 	

VII. IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE IN ATLANTA

Casey's investments are designed to achieve results in three areas: impact, influence, and leverage. Although not every grantee will demonstrate results in all these areas, the commitment to accountability for results is central to the grantmaking strategy in the education program. Grantees work to:

Create visible *impact* in select communities.

To achieve impact, the education program works with other education improvement advocates in a set of local communities to advance initiatives with real potential to improve educational outcomes for young people. Examples of impact investments include grants to help open new schools that provide quality options for families in tough neighborhoods; grants to parent and community organizations to advocate for better schools; and grants to programs that provide technical assistance and other enhanced services to students, families, schools, and community organizations to help young people graduate prepared for adult success.

Influence behavior through evidence of improved results.

Impact sets the stage for influence, affecting the behavior of a wider audience. The education program's influence strategy begins with documenting evidence of improved results achieved through these investments, along with careful analysis of success factors and pitfalls, information that can help other communities as they implement similar approaches. Next, the education program identifies target audiences and the individuals or organizations that can reach them to inform them about the activity or collection of activities that have led to improved outcomes, and creates messages or products to reach those audiences. Finally, the education program works to engage its audiences so that these messages reach them effectively. Examples of investments here include grants to organizations that influence individuals and organizations through advocacy, building public will, replication of successful programs, publications, and a variety of other approaches.

Leverage additional funding.

These efforts are designed to encourage decision-makers to work collaboratively to improve results in tough neighborhoods. Specifically, they create conditions for financial supporters of education improvement—those with public and private dollars—to co-invest with Casey in advancing its mission of improving outcomes for families and young people. In education, these co-investments support organizations that provide extensive opportunities in multiple communities and/or model innovative and effective practices in school/family/community partnerships.

IMPACT RESULTS

AGES 0–5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION	GRADES P–5 GIDEONS AND DUNBAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	GRADES 6–8 PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outreach campaign identified more than 25 children ages 0–5 who were not being served by any program and provided families with information about Countdown to Kindergarten. • Nearly 100 children participated in summer camp activities designed to enhance school readiness. • 100 families are being served by Parents as Teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gideons is designated as a Distinguished Title I school, with 87.5% of its students meeting or exceeding standards in 2005–2006. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks Middle School was successful in achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the second year in a row in 2006–2007, and is no longer considered a school in need of improvement. The achievement is a mixed blessing: The school stands to lose as much as \$144,000 in Title I school improvement funding, as well as a coach for teachers provided by the Georgia State Department of Education. • Math proficiency rates at Parks have increased from 42% proficient in 2001–2002 to 70% in 2005–2006. • All but two of 135 members of the 2006–2007 eighth grade class at Parks moved on to the ninth grade in fall 2007. • Results of early benchmark tests for the 2007–2008 school year show that 90% of sixth-grade students are reading on grade level. • This is the first class to have been part of the Project GRAD reform model for their entire school career.

GRADES 9–12 NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER; TECH HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL	GRADES 13–16 POSTSECONDARY CONNECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early College High School:</i> ECHS has established a PTO and has strong parent involvement. • In 2005–2006, the New Schools at Carver exceeded the district in the percentages of students passing statewide tests in 9th grade literature, Algebra, Geometry, and Biology. • In 2005–2006, Early College High School made AYP in attendance. • <i>Tech High School:</i> Tech High School achieved its goals for AYP for the third consecutive year, and was designated a “school of distinction.” • Tech High was one of only three high schools in APS to achieve AYP in 2006–2007. • In 2005–2006, Tech High’s overall scores were the highest in the APS system for the second consecutive year. • Tech High students taking the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) for the first time outscored all other first-time test takers in the Atlanta Public Schools. • Three Tech High students participated in the prestigious six-week <i>Mathworks</i> camp program at Texas State University in summer 2007. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project GRAD works with 31 schools and serves approximately 14,000 students and 1,000 certified teachers. • 252 graduates of Project GRAD participating high schools received Brumley-GRAD Scholarships in 2006; 193 received these scholarships in 2007. • 67% of eighth-grade students in Project GRAD participating schools met state standards in math in 2007, nearly equaling the pass rate of 69% for APS as a whole. • The number of students graduating from the New Schools at Carver increased from 54 in 2006 to 60 in 2007. • In 2005, 300 students citywide were admitted to college with help from the Mayor’s Youth Program. The number jumped to 700 in the class of 2006, and to more than 1,000 for the class of 2007. • The City of Atlanta placed 1,000 young people in summer internships in 2007.

INFLUENCE RESULTS

AGES 0-5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION	GRADES P-5 GIDEONS AND DUNBAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	GRADES 6-8 PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Learning Partnership will expand to Dunbar Elementary School. • The APS superintendent has agreed to form an executive-level team to plan for transition to kindergarten, including the Casey School Readiness Team Leader for NPU-V. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gideons has been honored as a Georgia Distinguished School and honored with the “Excellence in Education” award by San Diego State University’s Center for Urban School Transformation. 	
GRADES 9-12 NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER; TECH HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL		GRADES 13-16 POSTSECONDARY CONNECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early College High School:</i> Early College High School (ECHS) at Carver has been designated as a model for the state of Georgia. • <i>Tech High School:</i> Tech High School was recognized for excellence in an editorial in the <i>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>. • U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings visited Tech High and noted that it is “a proven model that works.” • Tech High School staff are working to share successful strategies with the APS High School Transformation Project. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report on the No Child Left Behind Act by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) cited Project GRAD Atlanta as an effective model for increasing test scores and rates of college attendance. • The Atlanta Public Schools is in negotiation with the national Project GRAD organization to use Move It Math across the district. • Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue cited the success of Communities In Schools and Project GRAD Atlanta in advocating for a new “graduation coach” position in every Georgia high school. The plan was approved by the GA General Assembly in 2006.

LEVERAGE RESULTS

AGES 0-5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION	GRADES P-5 GIDEONS AND DUNBAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	GRADES 6-8 PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Learning Partnership has generated commitments from local foundations and organizations, including \$3.4 million from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, \$1.6 million from Atlanta Public Schools, and \$320,000 from the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks has received a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant of \$120,000 from the U.S. Department of Education. • The U.S. Department of Education also awarded \$480,000 to create a mentoring program for incoming sixth-graders at Parks. • The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta has committed \$40,000 per year for three years to support afterschool programs, including trips to colleges and to arts and cultural events. • The Georgia Department of Human Resources has provided \$100,000 for afterschool and summer programs at Parks. • Funding from numerous stakeholders has leveraged two dollars for Parks for every dollar of Casey funding.
GRADES 9-12 NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER; TECH HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL		GRADES 13-16 POSTSECONDARY CONNECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tech High School:</i> In addition to contributions from Casey, Tech High has received contributions from more than 30 individuals, businesses, and foundations, including the UPS, Wachovia, and Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and the Technology Association of Georgia Foundation, as well as in-kind contributions from 18 additional organizations. • The New Schools at Carver receive support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Arthur Blank Foundation, and other funders. • <i>Early College High School:</i> The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has provided a total of nearly \$2 million to develop and launch a comprehensive secondary reform plan for the Atlanta Public Schools. The Gates Foundation noted that “the plan was built on the impressive progress at the former George Washington Carver High School.” 		

EDUCATION PROGRAM FUNDING FROM THE CASEY FOUNDATION

AGES 0-5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION	GRADES P-5 GIDEONS AND DUNBAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	GRADES 6-8 PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Project GRAD Atlanta:</i> \$1,330,000 since 2002 for general support of the Atlanta Public Schools Project GRAD district implementation effort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Parks Middle School Curriculum Project:</i> \$180,000 since 2006. • <i>Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta:</i> \$100,000 since 2006 for an Atlanta Casey school improvement coordinator.
GRADES 9-12 NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER; TECH HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL		GRADES 13-16 POSTSECONDARY CONNECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tech High Foundation:</i> \$300,000 since 2004. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Atlanta Workforce Development Board:</i> \$123,000 since 2005.

VIII. RESOURCES / ENDNOTES

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ENDNOTES

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³Education Trust, 1999.

⁴Education Trust, 1999.

⁵Education Trust, 2001.

⁶Achieve, 2007.

⁷*Education Week*, July 18, 2007.

⁸Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, 2007.

⁹Quality Counts, 2007.

¹⁰Quality Counts, 2007.

¹¹Education Trust, 1999.

¹²Bedsworth, et al., 2006.

¹³Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007.

¹⁴Annie E. Casey Foundation Atlanta Civic Site, 2005.

¹⁵*New York Times*, July 9, 2007.

¹⁶Atlanta Public Schools, 2007.

¹⁷National Center for Urban School Transformation, 2007.

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