

Reducing the Achievement Gap Through District/Union Collaboration:

THE TALE OF TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS



REDUCING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP THROUGH DISTRICT/UNION COLLABORATION:

THE TALE OF TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future is grateful to the NEA Foundation, under the leadership of President and CEO Harriet Sanford, for the generous financial support and assistance in all aspects of producing this report. As a key partner in the Hamilton County reform efforts, the NEA Foundation recognized how important it is to share the story of closing achievement gaps through district/union collaboration. They encouraged the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) to bring the story to a wider audience, and to add a second district's story to the report. NCTAF commissioned George Ann Rice to conduct the research at both sites and write the report. Dr. Rice brought valuable insight to this task, from her role as former Associate Superintendent for Human Resources in Clark County Nevada.

We are also grateful to Carol Edwards and William Miles of the NEA Foundation for facilitating the site visits, providing background materials, and offering guidance. Kathleen Fulton, NCTAF Project Manager for the study, directed the overall project work, with assistance from NCTAF staff Karen Smith, Karen Abercrombie, and intern Stephanie Henderson. As always, NCTAF President Tom Carroll contributed guiding vision and wisdom. Patricia Maunsell, NCTAF Consultant, served as Editor, and Stephanie Lubin provided copyediting. The report was designed by Melissa Chapko. Special thanks go to the many individuals in Clark County and Hamilton County (too many to name) who offered their time and assistance during all phases of researching and writing the report.



The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

2100 M Street, NW, Suite 660

Washington, D.C. 20037

<http://www.nctaf.org>

Telephone: 202.429.2570

Fax: 202.429.2571



The NEA Foundation

1201 16th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

<http://www.neafoundation.org>

Telephone: 202.822.7840

Fax: 202.822.7779

November 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	page 2
Clark County School District, Nevada	page 3
In the Beginning...The History and Background of Collaboration	page 3
Addressing The Problems Through Partnerships and Collaboration	page 4
The Elements and Process of Collaboration	page 6
Outcomes of Collaboration	page 10
Hamilton County, Tennessee	page 11
In the Beginning...The History and Background of Collaboration	page 11
Addressing The Problems Through Partnerships and Collaboration	page 12
The Elements and Process of Collaboration	page 15
Outcomes of Collaboration	page 20
Lessons From the Two Districts	page 22
Continuing Challenges	page 24
Strategies to Support Policy Change	page 25
Concluding Comments	page 26
Appendix 1 – Tables	page 27
Appendix 2 – Selected References	page 32

REDUCING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP THROUGH DISTRICT/UNION COLLABORATION:

THE TALE OF TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future has challenged the nation to assure that every child has "competent, caring, qualified teachers in schools organized for success."¹ It is a goal that has become the law of the land, through the *No Child Left Behind* legislation that requires all schools to be staffed by high quality teachers and all schools to meet adequate yearly progress. These goals are critical to our nation's economic success, cultural advancement, and moral core. Turning goals into reality is no easy task, and districts around the country are struggling every day with this challenge.

In looking for examples of districts that were making gains both in assuring teacher quality and in reducing gaps in student achievement, we continually came to Clark County, Nevada and Hamilton County, Tennessee. While the road to reform and the specific steps each district took were different, they shared a fundamental element – in both districts, success can be directly linked to the collaboration of the local teachers' union and the school district. Single-minded focus on improving student achievement and a willingness to be flexible allowed these two, often adversarial groups, to work together with outstanding results. Their stories are proof that unions and districts can collaborate successfully to improve student achievement. Clark County and Hamilton County also provide guidance to other districts as they seek support in teaching and learning for all.

¹National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. *What Matters Most*. (1996).

CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, NEVADA

IN THE BEGINNING... THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF COLLABORATION

The Clark County story is one that exemplifies what is possible when union and district administrators come together and work toward the common goal of improved student achievement. Moving beyond past differences was necessary and difficult, but the results were worth the effort. By focusing on student achievement, they were able to improve the culture of their schools and make them successful and exciting places to teach and learn. (See Table 1 in Appendix 1)

Clark County is a complex and rapidly changing place. With 303,000 students and 35,000 employees, Clark County School District (CCSD) is the fifth largest school district in the U.S.² Since 1991, it has been the fastest growing school district in the nation, increasing by 12,000 to 13,000 net students each year. At the beginning of the 1990-1991 school year, the district opened 18 new schools on the same day, and continues to open between eight and 18 new schools every year. Time to reflect is a luxury in Clark County—just meeting the day-to-day needs of this continually changing district is an enormous challenge.

A booming economy, business friendly tax policy, and overall population growth created this ever-increasing enrollment challenge and demand for new teachers. Each year the district hires between 1,800 and 2,500 new teachers. Three-fourths of all new hires come from out-of-state (and some from out-of-country), and adjusting to the urban setting is often daunting for these legions of new teachers.

On average, Clark County needs a new school every month, creating a tremendous demand for site administrators. In the

2005-2006 school year, over half of the site administrators were in their first three years as a principal, assistant principal or dean. Lacking experience or expertise in administration, professional development for administrators largely concentrated on operational issues, making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to federal requirements, and using data. There was little opportunity to focus on building professional capacity in staff, empowering teachers, or building and sustaining leadership teams.

The pressures of filling so many empty spaces with new teachers and principals kept CCSD from accomplishing many of its student achievement goals. More than half of CCSD schools have been designated “at risk,”³ and the teacher attrition rate in these schools was particularly alarming. In the Northeast (NE) Region, where many of the most at-risk schools are concentrated, teacher turnover was significant: of the 1,102 teachers who left CCSD in 2004-2005, 211 or 19.2 percent were from the NE Region.⁴

Prior to 2003 the district had made teacher recruitment and hiring its central focus. They had not considered how better teacher retention measures could reduce vacancies created by teacher attrition, or what might be the underlying factors causing greater attrition in some schools more than others. Each year principals and teachers who remained in at-risk schools were faced with a new group of beginning teachers and, in many cases, substitute teachers when vacancies could not be filled with licensed teachers. CCSD’s resources were not great enough to work with new hires, continue to build capacity among second and third year teachers, and support and maintain veteran teachers.

²Clark County School District Website. www.ccsd.net

³Schools are ranked and labeled at risk on the basis of the following factors: number of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunches; rate of student transience; school size; number of English Language Learner students; number of students not meeting proficiency in math and reading tests. If there are limited special resources they are distributed as far down the list as is possible.

⁴Martha Young, Research Consultant, “CCSD 2004-2005 Attrition Study” (2006). Prepared for CCSD Human Resources Division, Las Vegas, NV, p. 28. Cited as “CCSD 2004-05 Attrition Study, 2006”.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Change was imperative—Clark County schools could not continue as they were. Improving teacher quality, dealing with teacher turnover, and assuring the equitable distribution of effective teachers across all parts of the district called for the creation of a new partnership between the district administration and the local education association, the Clark County Education Association (CCEA). Without their working together to overcome past difficulties, change would not have been possible.

During the period 1995-2001, the relationship between the union and the district had been turbulent and divisive. Contract negotiations had come to a standstill in each of the four bargaining years within this time frame. Critical educational issues had to be resolved by arbitration and were decided by a non-educator. In 1997, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service attempted to mediate one of the contract negotiations' impasses. The situation was so strained that the federal mediator assigned to Las Vegas commented to the parties that their relationship was in such a state of disarray that it was preventing them from reaching an amicable agreement.⁵

Under these strained circumstances there was little innovation or positive movement to improve student achievement. The belief that negotiations were not conducted in good faith left teachers feeling that the Board of Trustees did not care about them or their students' needs. The negative atmosphere was obvious to everyone, including the press. The CCEA President reported annually to the Board of School Trustees on the results of a CCEA survey of union members. The survey included members' perceptions of the effectiveness of school leadership and other working conditions. The CCEA survey identified the "worst schools and worst principals." The results were published in the newspaper, clearly inflaming and demoralizing all involved.

Everyone was dissatisfied with the lack of clear direction and the turbulent and hostile environment. Lengthy contract negotiations that ended in arbitration left CCEA with a three-year backlog of unresolved grievances and arbitrations, contract disputes, and contested performance issues. Simultaneously, CCEA had a dramatic loss of support—membership dropped by 1,700 members in two years.

The Board of School Trustees was also frustrated. It had begun to try a new approach for management, using the Carver Strategy of Policy Governance, which moved them beyond a focus on day-to-day operations and focused instead on mission, goals, and expectations for the superintendent. But difficult contract negotiations consumed their attention, and stood in the way of fully implementing the new management goals. In 2000, a new superintendent had been appointed who reorganized the district into five regions with up to 60,000 students in each region. The federal government was demanding adequate yearly progress, and the superintendent and regional superintendents were demanding that schools meet their targets for increased student achievement. And, through it all, between 12,000 and 13,000 additional students continued to enter the district each year.

A new CCSD Chief Negotiator was appointed during the 2002-2003 school year. And, with the support of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the district and the union agreed to adopt Interest Based Bargaining as the tool for collaboration and were trained in its use. The Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) process became the "missing link" between CCSD and CCEA. (See box on page five)

Interest Based Bargaining is a process that enables negotiators to become joint problem solvers. It assumes that when both parties focus on solutions, which satisfy mutual interests (including needs, desires, concerns, or fears), the result is more durable and more satisfying to all parties.

Trust and respect on both sides is critical. Both sides must be forthcoming with relevant information, and willing to share their reasons for believing a particular issue is important. It

⁵LaVonne Ritter, Commissioner of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in Las Vegas, after an unsuccessful attempt to mediate the contract negotiations in 2001. Personal communication. September 23, 2007.

is much more demanding than adversarial negotiations because it requires that all members of the teams be involved in the training, and that all remain involved in the search for creative solutions which will address the interests of both parties.

Through the IBB process, CCSD and CCEA were able to address a range of key issues during negotiations, including working conditions in all schools, incentives for teachers in at-risk schools, incentives to bring special education teachers back from regular education positions, support for new teachers, and increased salaries for all teachers. The local administrators' association and CCSD went on to use IBB in contract negotiations to change the administrative salary schedule and attract strong, effective principals to the most challenging schools. IBB has also been widely accepted by the Board of School Trustees. It has made it possible for the Trustees to focus on creating a vision and implementing policies to support that vision instead of being embroiled in labor disputes. As the IBB process is implemented, the collaborative atmosphere makes it difficult for an observer to identify to which team — CCSD or CCEA— each participant belongs.

The CCEA and the CCSD concurred that change was necessary because, as John Jasonek, Executive Director of CCEA put it, “arbitration became the culture of negotiations.”⁶ IBB helped bring about needed change. “IBB didn’t change the environment – it became a tool as the environment was changing.”⁷ The positive change that resulted was recognized by all involved. Sheila Moulton, a member of the Board of School Trustees in Clark County said that after implementing IBB, “the Board can focus on policy and vision, on getting resources. Teachers can do what they do best, and Board members can do what they do best.”⁸

Four-year contracts now exist, giving financial and labor stability to the CCSD and CCEA. An unforeseen benefit of the new spirit of collaboration was increasing CCSD’s bond rating, which has been especially important in a district that has had to build from 8 to 18 new schools every year since 1990.



The Power of Collaboration: Interest Based Bargaining

To make the difference between interest-based bargaining and adversarial bargaining concrete, the following example uses a tangible object as the focus of negotiations.

Assume there is one orange and four people who want it. In adversarial bargaining, there would be heated discussions of rights and expectations, each side clamoring for the orange, demanding that the other side give in. Each party becomes more and more tied to its position, demanding concessions or surrender from the other. The result would likely require arbitration by an “impartial” arbitrator. The arbitrator would listen to the presentations of both sides and award the orange to one of the parties. One side would win; the other would lose. Only one party’s goals and needs would be met, and there would be no basis for doing anything differently the next time.

In contrast, Interest Based Bargaining begins with the questions, “What are the interests or issues that are important to each party?” and “Why are those issues important?” The parties become joint problem solvers, searching together for workable solutions, which will meet the needs, satisfy the desires, address the concerns, or allay the fears of each party.

If four people want the orange, the first question would be, “Why is having the orange important to you?” Perhaps in that discussion they would learn that one person wants the orange to demonstrate his juggling skill to a friend; the second wants the juice for his child; the third wants the seeds to plant; and the fourth wants the inner skin for a fiber-rich snack. Together they would brainstorm possible ways to meet all of their needs and then apply mutually agreed upon criteria for evaluating all possible solutions.

After going through the process, they might decide to give the first person 30 minutes to use the orange to demonstrate his juggling skill; then cut the orange and squeeze the juice out for the second party; give the seeds to the third party; and give the remaining hull of the orange to the fourth party.

In this case, all parties got what they needed. Everyone’s goals were met and they all came away pleased with the outcome as well as the process. Because they all had a positive experience, they could build upon this trust for the next “negotiations” session and follow the same process.

⁶John Jasonek, Executive Director, CCEA, Personal Communications, March 2, 2007.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Sheila Moulton, Member, Clark County Board of School Trustees, Personal Communications, March 2, 2007.

THE ELEMENTS AND PROCESS OF COLLABORATION

As a result of the switch to Interest Based Bargaining, the union and district were able to agree upon creative solutions to many problems and issues, which previously had been barriers to reform. Several of these are described below and summarized in the box on page seven.

Grievance Resolution: When the CCSD and CCEA began their collaborative partnership in 2002-03, there was a three-year backlog of grievances and labor arbitrations. CCSD and CCEA spent time and professional energy fighting over the backlog rather than solving the underlying disputes. To address this, an informal dispute resolution process was established along with an expedited hearing process to alleviate most of the pending grievances and arbitrations.

Grievance resolution is now a key aspect of the CCSD and CCEA collaboration—most contract disputes are now resolved before they reach the grievance stage. When CCEA believes CCSD has violated a contract article, it communicates specifics about the alleged violation to the district. CCSD researches the facts and provides evidence to CCEA that there has been no violation, or, if it finds a violation, they correct the situation. If a grievance has been languishing for months or even years, the parties sit down to consider the facts and agree upon a resolution. If a resolution cannot be found, they usually agree to an expedited arbitration process, which involves written evidence only, a limited hearing time, and an oral decision by the arbitrator.

A New Waiver Process: The CCEA and CCSD agreed to a waiver process that makes it possible for teachers to move beyond contractual restrictions if they and their administrators agree and believe these changes will positively impact student achievement. One example of the implementation of the waiver process concerns contract language requiring that teachers' preparation periods must be provided during the students' school day. Teachers in a number of schools sought waivers in order to place the preparation period in the

morning before the beginning of the students' day. This change allowed teachers to collaborate with other teachers at their grade level or with all other like-subject teachers.

As another example, the contract provides for a seven hour 11 minute workday, every day of the school week. A number of schools wanted to have a seven-hour day, and accumulate the 11 minutes each day to be used on a Saturday or after school to work together or engage in professional development. The waiver process allowed teachers to rearrange how they used their contracted time in pursuit of supporting teaching and learning.

Assessing the Work Climate: A critical part of any retention plan requires understanding which teachers leave and why, and what keeps those who stay. Focus groups, led by an outside contractor, were used to explore the reasons teachers had chosen to leave the district. The two main reasons given by exiting teachers were: 1) lack of leadership support and low morale and 2) the high cost of living.

These findings led the CCSD, in partnership with the CCEA, to work with the Center for Teaching Quality to adapt the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey and distribute it online to all teachers in the district in 2006 and 2007. The Executive Director of CCEA and the Associate Superintendent of Human Resources for CCSD went on the district's closed circuit TV together to explain the purpose of the survey and encourage all teachers and administrators to complete it. In both 2006 and 2007, over 8,000 teachers completed the survey, almost 50 percent of the teachers in the district.

Surveying teachers about working conditions was not enough. Teachers wanted solutions to the issues raised in the focus groups and surveys. CCSD and CCEA then created Teaching and Learning Conditions Teams to help schools analyze their survey data and improve teaching and learning conditions in their schools. These teams were taught by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to use Interest Based Problem Solving strategies, a process similar to IBB, designed to focus on the resolution of problems outside the



The Power of Collaboration: Achieving Meaningful Reform in Clark County, Nevada

Clark County is a tremendous example of what can happen when the union and district join forces in the name of student achievement. CCEA and CCSD significantly changed school culture by working together to bring about reforms that supported teachers and improved teaching conditions and student achievement. These reforms include:

Grievance Resolution: This key aspect of the CCEA and CCSD collaboration means that most contract disputes are resolved before they reach the grievance stage.

Waiver Process: School staff are able to get waivers on many contract provisions, which creates flexibility to improve instruction and student achievement.

Assessing the Work Climate: The union /district collaboration led to several systems for evaluating and responding to staff concerns.

Creating Empowerment Schools: Functioning as a school design team, principals and teachers in eight schools were given the freedom to make creative use of calendar, staffing, governance, instructional programs, professional development and budget resources. They also designed a “pay for performance” program that was agreed to by CCEA and CCSD.

Addressing Teacher Isolation: Over 100 schools in Clark County are actively participating in developing mentoring and support strategies to help new teachers become part of their school.

Mentoring and Support in the Northeast Region—The Urban Teacher Program: The collaboration of union and district officials led to significant focus and professional development in the area of the county with the largest percentage of minority and low-income students.

Mentoring in 95 High Attrition, At-risk Schools: Mentoring programs were established in these schools thanks to the collaboration of the union and the school district and special state funds made available for this purpose.

Early Transfer/Early Hiring Provisions for At-Risk Schools: Principals of at-risk schools are allowed to begin the transfer and new hire periods two months before other schools, giving them an opportunity to build strong staffs.

Salary Placement for New Teachers with No Experience: The CCEA and CCSD came together to improve starting salaries for teachers, making the district more attractive to high quality, novice teachers.

Creation of the Expanded Salary Schedule: Senior teachers were given financial incentives to achieve advanced degrees, pursue additional course work, and continue working in the district.

bargaining process. In the training, school staffs fleshed out the concerns identified in the surveys. CCSD hopes to support the development of improved teaching and learning and increase teacher retention by understanding and addressing the issues raised by each school.

Creating Empowerment Schools: In the spring of 2006, Empowerment Schools were established. These schools gave teachers and administrators more authority to make decisions directly affecting their students. Four elementary schools have just completed their first year as Empowerment Schools; two were at-risk schools and two were high-performing schools.

Principals and teachers in Empowerment Schools have had an opportunity to become instructional leaders, guides, and team builders. Both CCSD and CCEA have worked to remove mandates not required by state or federal law. This has provided flexibility to the schools in their use of time, calendar, staffing, governance, instructional programs, professional development, and budget resources. Teachers were given additional contractual days and additional minutes per day to work. They could also use the Waiver Process to remove other impediments. One of the innovative components of the Empowerment Schools has been the potential of “pay for performance.” CCSD and CCEA worked together with Dr. Bill Sanders, who created the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment process, to develop a system that was satisfactory to both parties.

At the end of the 2006-07 school year, the approximately 250 teachers in the Clark County Empowerment Schools received between \$250 and \$1,200 in performance pay for “jobs well done.” The decision to award bonuses of between two percent and five percent to all teachers in the four Empowerment Schools was based on the schools’ overall performance.

Student test scores, achieving AYP, parent and student satisfaction surveys and completion of the “Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey” were considered in determining the amount of the award. The CCEA was supportive of these school-wide bonuses, as reflected in this statement by the CCEA President: “The art teacher doesn’t have a test to show they’re accomplishing something in the classroom . . . but

everybody at the school, whether they’re an art teacher or the librarian, has an impact on student performance.”⁹

Empowerment schools appear to be doing what they intended to do—they are empowering students, teachers, parents, and administrators to pursue changes needed to promote and ensure student achievement. As Dr. Karlene McCormick-Lee, Associate Superintendent who oversees the empowerment schools stated, “Student achievement has to be important and that is not negotiable. However, this was an opportunity to demonstrate the other things the district values—climate and working conditions, parent satisfaction, and the quality of the campus management.”¹⁰

Empowerment schools are also viewed with great promise by the state legislature, which has recently mandated increasing the number of empowerment schools to 5% of each district’s total number of schools throughout the state.

Addressing Teacher Isolation: While the empowerment schools have made strides in establishing a norm of faculty collaboration, teacher isolation remains a serious district-wide concern. According to a recent CCSD study, teacher turnover is lowest among teachers who have been prepared in Nevada schools and colleges of education. Unfortunately, Nevada’s higher education institutions have been unable to keep up with the demand. As a consequence, 75 percent of the new hires to CCSD are from out-of-state.¹¹ Today, greater attention is paid to the out-of-state hires, and these newcomers have support from the professional community and the community in general. Over 100 schools are actively participating in developing mentoring and support strategies to help new teachers. Although not a contractual issue, CCSD works with CCEA to address some of the new teachers’ personal needs in such areas as housing, finding jobs for family members, and making connections to groups with similar interests.

Mentoring and Support in the Northeast Region via The Urban Teacher Program (UTP): Clark County’s Northeast Region has a high percent of minority students and serves a large at-risk population. Teacher retention and limited numbers of teachers of color had been major concerns in this region of

⁹Emily Richmond, “Empowerment Teachers Get Little Something Extra,” Las Vegas Sun (August 1, 2007, p. 3)

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹“CCSD 2004-05 Attrition Study, 2006”. p. 55.

the district. The Urban Teacher Program (UTP) was developed to recruit and retain effective teachers in this region, particularly those who reflected the diversity of the student population.

In the first year (2005-06) of the UTP, 167 teachers participated in the program. Teachers who were to begin teaching in one of the schools in the NE region in the fall could attend a five-week Summer Academy. The CCEA agreed that those attending the Summer Academy would move over one column on the salary schedule just as if they had taken 16 credit hours of university classes. Professional Learning Communities were also created at each of the participating NE Region schools. Again, with CCEA support, it was agreed that those new teachers who actively participated in the Professional Learning Communities for the entire school year would move over another column on the salary schedule. Veteran teachers in the NE Region were offered the opportunity to have their fees paid if they sought National Board for Professional Teaching Standards status. This helped mitigate possible tensions between new and veteran teachers.

The Urban Teacher Program also provided a prototype support program for all first year teachers. As a result, mentoring support for new teachers in the region was established, funded in part through a federal earmark (a “set aside” grant) secured by the local Congressman. It specified that each of the schools in the region would have full-time, trained mentors, selected from among current or retired teachers who had demonstrated effectiveness in working in urban, at-risk schools.

After the first year of the UTP, the CCSD commissioned a detailed study to determine patterns of teacher selection and retention. According to the study, *What Makes Teachers Stay, 2006*, there was a steady increase in Asian, Black and Hispanic teachers, with the greatest increase among Hispanic teachers at the elementary school level (a 5.7% increase). (See Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix 1)

Attrition patterns among UTP teachers who resigned during or at the end of their first year with CCSD were also analyzed. Data was collected on their age, gender, years of experience

in teaching, the reason for resigning, place of education, and whether they participated in the UTP Summer Academy or the UTP yearlong Professional Learning Communities.

Mentoring in 95 High Attrition, At-risk Schools: In 2005 the State Legislature provided funds for mentoring teachers throughout the state. One important criterion for receiving these funds was the requirement that a plan for the use of the funds had to be negotiated with each county’s teachers’ association and administrators’ association. CCSD and CCEA agreed that the best use of these funds in Clark County would be to pay a stipend to one administrator, one mentor facilitator, and one mentor for every three first or second year teachers in each of the 95 high attrition, high risk schools (named AB 580 schools after the Assembly Bill 580 which created the program) in the other three regions of the district. (The Northeast Region was not included because the UTP program already provided mentoring in all schools in that region.) This jointly agreed upon design was funded with a \$6.5 million grant and led to an expansive mentoring program that achieved positive results: teacher retention increased by almost 19 percent (compared to 10.5 percent for CCSD overall – See Table 4 in Appendix 1); teacher satisfaction increased by more than 10 percent; and between 15 and 20 percent of the schools increased their staff in critical needs areas, specifically math, science and special education.¹²

Data gathered in the “Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey” were examined to determine if the number of teachers from the AB580 schools staying in 2007 increased by 10 percent, the benchmark goal representing increased teacher satisfaction. The data reported significant growth in retention in the 95 schools served by the grant. (See Table 5 in Appendix 1) The data reflects significant retention patterns in the AB580 schools at all levels, with the exception of high school teachers in the NW region. The mentoring programs at the 95 AB580 schools are considered a key reason for improved retention of teachers in these schools.

Without the collaboration between CCSD and CCEA, the mentoring programs would not have been funded and the CCSD

¹²Follow up Report: AB580 Assembly Bill 580: Programs of Performance Pay and Enhanced Compensation for the Recruitment, Retention and Mentoring of Licensed Personnel, 2007.

would have forfeited the funds available to it under AB580.

Transfer/Early Hiring Provisions for At-Risk Schools: A contractual waiver was negotiated by CCEA and CCSD to give at-risk schools an opportunity to begin the transfer period and the new hire assignment period two full months before other schools. Administrators from at-risk schools who agree to serve as out-of-state recruiters can make early offers for CCSD and for their own schools. Almost every administrator in the at-risk schools has accepted this opportunity to recruit directly and fill their school ranks early with teachers of their choice.

Salary Placement for New Teachers with No Experience:

Despite the growing economy, the starting salary for new teachers in Clark County remains low, especially given the high cost of living in the area. To address this issue, starting in 2003-2004, inexperienced teachers were allowed to begin on step two of the salary schedule the first year of the agreement and step 3 the second year of the agreement. This allowed CCSD to offer new teachers \$3,000 more for each step than provided by the salary schedule. It also meant that the entire schedule did not have to be increased (in CCSD, a one percent increase in the entire salary schedule would cost over \$9 million). This creative adjustment to the salary scale put CCSD schools on a better footing for recruiting new teachers and was a direct result of the collaborative agreements between the union and the district.

Creation of the Expanded Salary Schedule: As the district reviewed turnover data, they found that more teachers left CCSD in the ninth year than at any other point after years one through five. This may have been due to the fact that the salary schedule “topped out” after 14 years of service and a doctorate or Masters plus 32 credits. The parties agreed to add increases for years 15 and 16 to the salary schedule by adding a new column beyond the Masters plus 32 levels. Teachers could attain this level by enrolling in university or college courses specially designed and approved by CCSD through the Center for Teaching Excellence. This innovation was again the result of the collaborative efforts between CCSD and CCEA.

¹³“No Child Left Behind” *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (July 29, 2007, p. 12B).

¹⁴*Ibid.*

OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATION

The positive spirit of collaboration that led to the improvements cited in the sections above has infused the district as a whole. The greater community, and the media, have taken note, and report on the school improvements with great pride. As an example, in the summer of 2007, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (the major city newspaper) sponsored a full-page acknowledgement of CCSD’s recent achievements. “Congratulations to Clark County School District. The CCSD as a district met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) this year.”¹³ The article noted the following achievements:

- The number of schools meeting AYP increased by 12 percent (from 183 in 2005 to 216 in 2006);
- The number of schools not meeting AYP decreased (from 149 in 2005 to 123 in 2006);
- An increase (as high as 14 percent) in proficiency in math and reading in every grade from 3rd to 8th;
- A greater percent of high school graduates passed the Nevada High School Math Proficiency exam, moving from 86.9 percent in 2005 to 88.4 percent in 2006;
- A decrease in the drop out rate for 9th-12th grade students has been reflected in the past three years (from 7.6 percent in 2004 to 5.9 percent in 2006);
- Of the 11,642 students who graduated from CCSD schools, 2,373 earned advanced diplomas and 2,103 honors diplomas were awarded;
- More than \$108 million was awarded in scholarships to 2006 CCSD graduates compared to \$97.5 million in 2005;
- In 2006, 11 CCSD schools were designated “exemplary” compared to six in 2005; and
- The number of “high achieving” schools increased from 34 in 2005 to 44 in 2006.¹⁴

It seems clear from first year data that CCSD has met a major goal of its reform effort: to increase student achievement and maintain consistent gains in student performance. These achievements are the direct result of a combined commitment to excellence, which has been wholly supported by the CCEA and CCSD collaborative.

HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

IN THE BEGINNING... THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF COLLABORATION

Once known as the “Pittsburgh of the South,” Chattanooga was suffering the fate of many other industrial cities in the 1990s. A declining industrial base created unemployment, a decaying urban core and a stagnant economy. Schools were a casualty of this decline. With a high percentage of poor and largely minority students, the city schools had been effectively neglected for years. In 1996, determining that its tax base could no longer pay for the school system, the City of Chattanooga took a decisive step. They would no longer have a city school system. In 1998, after a citywide vote, Chattanooga turned over its schools to surrounding Hamilton County.

Despite the fact that they were contiguous and about the same size—with 19,755 students in the City of Chattanooga district and 23,444 students in the Hamilton County district¹⁵ - the student demographics and achievement levels were markedly different in the two systems. (See Tables 6 and 7 in Appendix 1 for comparison charts):

- 4.1% of students in Hamilton County were African American compared to 62.9% in Chattanooga;
- 6.5% of Hamilton County schools participated in the Title I program compared to 30.8% in Chattanooga. Of these, 92.3% of Hamilton County Title I schools were meeting expectations compared to 20% of those in Chattanooga;
- 19.9% of students in Hamilton County were eligible for free and reduced lunch compared to 59% in Chattanooga.

And while many Hamilton County residents worked in the city, they lived outside of the city and paid no taxes to support the city’s functions. Many in the county believed merging the two school districts would “bring down” the county system. How could two such different districts, with such negative barriers in attitude, be successfully merged?

The two teacher unions, the Chattanooga Education Association (CEA) and Hamilton County Education Association (both NEA affiliates), began working on a plan to merge their associations one year prior to the merger of the two school systems. With the help of the statewide Tennessee Education Association, committees were formed to oversee an officer transition plan, the purchase of new office space and disposal of property, and a new constitution to serve what would become the “new” HCEA.

Of concern was the issue of communications (or lack thereof) in each of the merging systems. For several years, Chattanooga Education Association leaders had worked collaboratively with their school administrators in a negotiations process perfected by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. A “System-Wide Action Team,” made up of CEA officers and central office personnel, met regularly to iron out personnel disputes and other concerns. In contrast, the county school system conducted adversarial bargaining and relations between the union and school board were rancorous.

In 1997 a new superintendent was hired for the soon-to-be merged districts. He immediately faced difficulties including conflicts between existing policies and differences in negotiated contract language across the two systems. Questions around central office staffing, budgets, attendance boundaries, transportation issues, and others also had to be resolved.

In 1998 the Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE) officially became the central administration for the merged district. The superintendent attempted to create an equal number of central office administrative positions from each of the original districts, and negotiated on other potentially contentious merger issues. Each of the two systems had its own administration building, for example, but only one would be needed going forward. This was resolved by selling one building, turning the remaining building into a professional development facility, and housing the central administration in a building provided by the County Commission.

¹⁵Tennessee Department of Education 21st Century Report Card. www.k-12.state.tn.us/arc/rptcard97/index.html

The budget was also an issue. Previously, the City of Chattanooga provided \$8 million annually for the operation of the schools and had agreed to continue to do so in the short term. After the mayoral and city council election, however, the city determined it would no longer provide financial support for the new district, requiring the State and the County Commission to fill the funding gap.

During the first two years, the new superintendent faced the challenge of creating a way to develop a common vision of reform, and of building shared trust around academic, administrative, and financial matters. But there was little progress. Teachers reported chaos in the City's lowest achieving elementary schools. The most effective teachers left these schools and transferred to those with higher achievement levels, while the newest and least-experienced teachers were often placed in the high need, low performing schools. Some of the low performing schools went without a full teaching staff until several weeks into the school year. In this unstable setting of high teacher turnover, administrators were unable to build capacity, teachers felt isolated, and morale was at an all-time low.

A Tennessee Institute of Public Policy Report (2000) confirmed that the schools were among the worst in the state: nine of the lowest performing elementary schools in the State of Tennessee were located in Hamilton County—specifically, within the borders of the City of Chattanooga.

The educational disarray impacted the local economy as well. If it was to move beyond the outdated heavy metal industrial base necessary to revitalize the area's economy, Chattanooga needed strong schools.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The superintendent recognized that the union leadership had to be supportive of the reform plan in order to rally their members to improve teaching and learning. He approached the newly merged HCEA and asked them to work with the district to focus on the low performing schools as the immediate target of reform. The union agreed.

While agreement was a first major step, recent history presented major challenges to collaboration between the union and the district. Two years prior to the merger, the original Hamilton County Education Association and Hamilton County Department of Education had been involved in contentious, negative labor negotiations. At the core of the problem was an interpretation, by the school board's attorney, of a law that the superintendent had the legal authority to ignore existing contract language governing teacher transfers. The union's position was that the contract language still governed transfers. Angry local teachers and representatives from both the state and national association leadership held rallies and picketed school board meetings. The Tennessee Education Association successfully lobbied the legislature for an amendment to the law, which would clarify whether the superintendent had the authority to supercede the existing contract provision on transfers.

It was at this point that the HCEA Executive Uniserv Director suggested that they consider Interest Based Bargaining (see box on page five). She was familiar with IBB and hoped it might offer an opportunity to get beyond the current impasse, and begin to heal the strained relationship between the district and union. All parties agreed and joint training was arranged. HCEA was impressed with HCDE's commitment to finding a better way to work together, demonstrated by the fact that the superintendent attended every training session.

Concerned by the dismal performance of the low performing elementary schools in the district, but encouraged by the new spirit of collaboration beginning to emerge between the HCEA and the HCED, Chattanooga's Benwood Foundation decided to

undertake its first major systemic grant making effort and focus on the nine lowest performing schools in Hamilton County.¹⁶ Working with Chattanooga's well-respected local education fund, the Public Education Foundation (PEF) and HCDE, they analyzed student achievement data and compiled teacher profiles for all nine schools. HCDE and PEF interviewed 60 teachers from these low-performing schools as well as every principal, several dozen parents and the fifth graders in three of the schools. They also conducted focus groups with the community. HCDE and PEF presented a comprehensive plan for reform of the nine schools to the Benwood Foundation based on all of the data collected.

Local leaders interested in working on improving the schools were afforded a unique and ultimately critical opportunity to move forward. In 2000, the National Education Association (NEA) invited HCEA leadership to bring a team of stakeholders, including the superintendent and members of his cabinet and the president of PEF, to the NEA's annual "Challenge of Change" Conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This event provided a venue for representatives of the union, district, and business leadership, to work together away from their individual constituencies, better understand the challenges each faced and begin to establish mutual respect and trust. Discussions during the weeklong conference ultimately became the basis for the district's first strategic plan. Specific issues discussed included transfer policies, reconstitution of both teaching and administrative staff in the lowest-performing schools, rezoning, and the lack of quality professional development.

During that retreat, the superintendent presented the concept (first suggested by the Mayor) of rewarding faculty with bonuses for increasing student achievement. The Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data provided a compelling argument in support of these bonuses, by documenting the devastating impact on students' long-term success that resulted from assigning them to ineffective teachers several years in a row. The HCEA agreed to these bonuses, despite previous opposition, contingent upon what would be an almost six percent pay increase for all teachers.

The HCEA also agreed to a plan to reconstitute the faculties at the schools on which the Benwood Foundation was focusing (these came to be known as the Benwood schools). The union recognized that reconstituting the teaching staff was critical to improving these schools. In turn, the district guaranteed the HCEA that any teacher who was asked to leave a Benwood school would be assured a place at another school in the district.

The HCEA also agreed to publicly support the school board and district administration in funding issues, another departure from past history. The result of the weeklong, facilitated retreat was a commitment to stand together to educate HCEA members about the changes and to join hands in bringing the community and elected leaders along. These were critical first steps in building a strategic plan for the future and in defining the roles for their continuing collaboration.

HCEA has continued to support reform efforts and has worked to ensure that those efforts include the collective wisdom of the district's 3,100 teachers. The HCEA regularly communicates with its members regarding the reasons for various initiatives, and their results. Actively involved in joint planning sessions, the union representatives work closely with district leadership to keep the focus on reform, tackling and solving problems together as they arise.

The relationship between the HCEA and HCDE has continued to grow and their partnership has been fortified by a community-wide collaboration that includes not only the Benwood Foundation and PEF, but also the NEA and a range of other foundations and community groups. The union representatives serve on Foundation steering committees and work with PEF support to provide professional development for teachers who serve as HCEA representatives. One example of the innovative programs crafted with union/district/foundation collaboration is the Intensive Assistance program, which puts marginal and low-performing teachers on notice, with HCEA representatives serving as active members of the teams that assist and support these teachers.

The box on page 14 provides a snapshot of some of the major partners working together in supporting systemic reform in Hamilton County.

¹⁶Shortly before the project began, one of the schools was closed. As a result, the Benwood Initiative involved eight, not nine, low performing elementary schools.



The Power of Collaboration: The Key Players in Hamilton County, Tennessee

PARTNER	ROLE	FOCUS & ACTIVITIES
Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE)	Oversaw the merger of two the districts; responsible for administering schools in the newly combined district.	Began with a focus on high poverty schools. Converted 14 central office positions and used district and federal funds to create 38 school-level positions. Focused upon recruiting and retaining effective teachers, and involving the community and parents
Hamilton County Education Association (HCEA)	Newly merged bargaining unit created out of the two existing teachers' associations in the year before district merger took place; represents teachers and administrators.	Brought Interest Based Bargaining as vehicle for negotiating all contractual issues. Acts as a full partner in the continuing reform efforts.
Benwood Foundation	Local private foundation committed to the academic achievement of the children in the eight lowest performing elementary schools in the City of Chattanooga.	"Adopted" the eight lowest performing elementary schools in City of Chattanooga. These schools became known as the "Benwood Schools" due to their support—\$5 million over five years. PEF raised another \$1.5 million for the initiative. The goal was to ensure all 3rd graders in "Benwood Schools" would read at or above grade level within five years. Extended the grant an additional year in 2006-2007 and in July 2007 announced funding totaling \$7.3 million for these schools plus eight additional elementary schools.
Carnegie Corporation of New York	Schools for a New Society grant focused on high school reform	In 2000 provided Hamilton Co. with a planning grant for the high school reform initiative. In 2001 provided \$8 million grant over 5-year period to improve all high schools. PEF matched this with \$6 million over same period.
Chattanooga Business Education Round Table	Since 2001 provided financial support for reforms	Funding activities included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Funds to recognize and reward high performing teachers in designated low performing schools through group and individual bonuses for growth in student achievement in the Benwood schools. ■ Provided limited free legal services to teachers. ■ Provided up to \$10,000 financial assistance for purchase of a home in the urban neighborhoods.
Lyndhurst Foundation	Local foundation dedicated to revitalization of Chattanooga area. Funding expanded middle school reform to cover all middle schools in Hamilton Co.	Original focus was conservation, environment and private schools, but joined with partnership to focus on improving student achievement in the remaining middle schools. \$6 million grant expanded NEA Foundation middle school reform effort to all 21 middle schools in Hamilton County.

PARTNER	ROLE	FOCUS & ACTIVITIES
NEA Foundation	Through “Closing the Achievement Gaps” grant program, supports union/district partnerships to accelerate the achievement rate for disadvantaged and minority students, while raising achievement for all students. Hamilton County was the first recipient of these grants.	At end of 2003, provided \$2.5 million grant to HCDE and HCEA to collaborate to eradicate achievement gaps in five lowest performing middle schools. This grant, along with positive spirit of union and district collaboration, was leveraged with other funding support to allow reform efforts that impact all middle schools.
Osborne Foundation	Working with the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, created free Masters Degree program for Benwood teachers.	Joined collaborative in 2001. Osborne program has since been expanded to include teachers from five NEA Foundation middle schools. Additional funding from the NEA Foundation, PEF, HCDE, and the BellSouth Foundation also support this program.
Public Education Foundation	Local nonprofit, served as umbrella group for reform efforts.	Catalyst for change in all of the reform efforts. Raised funds from local and national foundations; provided professional development; served as funding agent over-seeing external funding; facilitated collaboration and meetings of all partners.
Tennessee Education Association	Worked with Teachers Association units in Chattanooga and Hamilton County to create one affiliate in the year before the merger.	Helped the two associations write a common constitution, bylaws, policies, and procedures for the merged organization that were presented for ratification by their memberships. Worked with the associations to have a City teacher serve as president the first year and a County teacher as president the second year. After that time, the officers were chosen by a vote of the joint membership.

THE ELEMENTS AND PROCESS OF COLLABORATION

When the reform process began, the obstacles included an underdeveloped and inexperienced teacher force; inexperienced and understaffed school and central office leadership teams; lack of clear focus; limited and inaccessible data; low levels of parental involvement and community support; and inadequate public funding. In the past these would have been insurmountable obstacles, but with the union/district collaboration and the community-wide partnership, improvement at all levels—elementary, middle and high school—became possible.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The 2000 report of the Tennessee Institute of Public Policy, showing that nine of the lowest performing elementary schools in the state were concentrated in Chattanooga, served

as a call to action. These “Benwood schools” were the focus of the first round of reform, and improving teaching quality was the key. The HCEA and the HCDE reached out to the Benwood teachers through focus groups, canvassing, and public relations activities to determine what they believed were the greatest impediments to student success, and to seek their input on what changes, resources and incentives were needed to overcome existing obstacles and improve teacher satisfaction and retention.

Teacher transfer process: Using Interest Based Bargaining, (see box on page five) the HCDE and HCEA negotiated a successful review of contract revisions and resolved a number of highly charged issues including the teacher transfer process. Under the old contract a school vacancy had to be internally advertised for three weeks before a transferring teacher could fill it. The vacancy created when this teacher transferred

would then require another three-week advertising period. This process continued on and on until no more teachers were applying for positions internally. Only then could principals go outside the system to recruit new hires for remaining vacancies. By that time, most of the best new candidates had accepted other offers. This “seniority-driven domino effect” often left high needs schools with un-staffed classrooms for several weeks into the school year.¹⁷

To solve this problem, the HCEA and HCDE agreed on a process in which teachers had to declare their intention to leave in February and indicate up to five choices of schools to which they would like to transfer. This process created greater stability for the whole system, especially the high-need schools, enabling the district to hire new teachers much sooner, and principals to select candidates well suited for their schools.¹⁸

Teacher learning and school-wide communities of support:

Professional development became “embedded” in the teacher workday and time was made during the day to collaborate and focus on teaching and learning. The superintendent also converted 14 central office curriculum positions into school-level positions and, with additional district and federal funds, created 38 school-based instructional support positions. These school-based positions are in every school and include: Consulting Teachers—master teachers who provide instructional assistance (demonstration lessons, lesson planning, and non-evaluative observations) to all teachers; Literacy Coaches who work with students individually or in small groups; and Family Partnership Specialists who work with parents and the community.

Administrators and Teacher Leaders work together focusing on ways to teach literacy, work with adults, facilitate change, create and nurture a positive and cooperative school culture, and facilitate teamwork. Each of the Benwood schools also formed a Leadership Team, which includes teachers, parents and older students, to provide input on scheduling, curriculum, budgets, professional development, and ways to increase parent involvement.

The Public Education Foundation has also provided tremendous support to the Benwood schools, which has included:

- Training the Family Partnership Specialists.

- Recruiting two Leadership Coaches to provide in-school coaching on the effective use of data, and systems management.
- Sponsoring a Data Analyst to provide relevant and understandable data to educators and parents throughout the district (K-12) and provide professional development to principals, change coaches in secondary schools, and the literacy coaches to better understand and analyze data.
- Providing Resident National Trainers who spend up to 20 days per year in each Benwood school modeling lessons and observing and coaching Benwood teachers on implementing specific strategies to improve instruction.
- Hosting a two-day learning exchange for Benwood faculties featuring nationally known speakers on topics such as urban culture and urban learning, literacy, differentiated instruction and effective use of data.

The Osborne Foundation made it possible for Benwood teachers to participate in a master’s degree program, specializing in teaching in an urban environment, through the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. In return, these “Osborne Fellows” agree to remain in their school for four years after receiving their master’s degree. The program includes opportunities to visit school districts around the country that have initiated successful reforms in urban environments. University professors teach the classes, and master teachers from HCDE lead weekly follow-up discussion groups. The last cohort enters its second and final year during the 2007-2008 school year.

Pay incentives: The HCEA agreed to pay incentives for high-performing teachers and administrators only if there was an objective measure for determining these incentives. They agreed that high performing teachers would be identified in one of two ways:

1. For the 4th and 5th grades, high performing teachers are those who have achieved a year average TVAAS score of 115+ on the achievement test. (A score of 100 indicates that a teacher’s class has made a full year’s progress in learning in one year.)

¹⁷Lessons Learned: A Report on the Benwood Initiative. Public Education Foundation. www.pefchattanooga.org, p. 5.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 6.

2. For K-3 teachers and specialists, for whom there is no TVAAS, a committee evaluates high performing status based upon student pre- and post-tests, a skills checklist, teacher portfolios, and an interview.

In Benwood Schools that achieve an overall average minimum TVAAS score of 115, every teacher in the school receives a \$1,000 salary bonus. Principals of those schools receive a salary bonus of \$10,000 and assistant principals, \$5,000. Individual teachers may also earn an annual salary bonus of \$5,000 if they have a three-year TVAAS average score of 115+ or with the recommendation by the K-3 evaluation committee.

The \$5,000 individual salary bonus was used as a tool to recruit teachers with records of high performance and to retain high performing teachers in the Benwood Schools. These pay incentives are now offered to faculties in any school “On Notice” under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Teachers who agree to work in the high needs areas could receive additional incentives. The Chattanooga Business Education Round Table and the business community also raised money to reward and recognize high performing teachers, offering free legal service, and providing a maximum of \$10,000 in financial assistance for the purchase of a home in an urban neighborhood.

The Benwood Foundation, the original catalyst for change at the elementary level, continues to be a major supporter of reform, and in July 2007 announced it will invest \$7.3 million to support eight additional schools, while maintaining support for the original Benwood schools.

HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Although work began with the elementary schools, reform was needed throughout all of the Hamilton County Schools. In the spring of 2000, the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Carnegie) awarded Hamilton County a planning grant for high school reform. The grant encouraged every high school principal, teacher and student in Hamilton County to engage in conversations about how to build an outstanding high school.

In focus groups held throughout the county more than 1,000 parents and community leaders offered ideas and advice. The union was a major participant in these discussions and provided a letter of support for the Carnegie proposal. Using the ideas of the participants, information from national experts, trips to high-performing high schools throughout the country and additional research, teams at each of the 17 high schools prepared plans to transform their high school into a high-performing institution that would provide a quality education for all students.

A Partnership/Leadership Team made up of representatives from HCDE and PEF, together with a number of community leaders, including the mayor of Chattanooga, oversaw the yearlong planning process. Backed by the strong unified support of the union and district leadership, PEF agreed to serve as the fiscal agent for the Carnegie grant and provided a \$6 million match (representing almost one-half of its assets) to the Carnegie funds. As a result of this work, in 2001 Carnegie awarded Hamilton County a five-year, \$8 million grant to reform all the districts’ high schools.

Hamilton County’s high schools were highly diverse by size, location (urban, suburban, rural), design (magnet, neighborhood), race, ethnicity and family income level. The partners recognized that a system-wide vision and set of goals was necessary to unite efforts and best serve all constituents, yet each high school would need to engage in site-based planning to create its own plan for meeting these goals. A “single path curriculum” was implemented, requiring all high school students to complete four math courses, four science courses, two years of a foreign language and a senior project or service learning experiences. Additionally, the grant established four key goals that would need to be a part of each school plan: personalization of instruction and ensuring that each student is well known by several adults; flexibility in meeting all student needs; establishment of learning communities; and rigor and relevance within all courses.

The superintendent made substantial commitments of human and financial resources. He replaced 12 of the 17 principals—each time appointing a stronger instructional leader. The

superintendent used a federal magnet school grant to double the number of high schools open to all county students, creating a school focused on technology and another focused on performing arts. He eliminated central office positions and pooled the funds with others to hire 27 consulting teachers to coach teachers full time. A Change Leadership Group, consisting of the leaders from HCDE (the Superintendent, Associate Superintendent for Secondary and the Director of High Schools), three members from PEF, and a representative from HCEA, was created to monitor progress. PEF has played a critical role by assisting the HCDE in planning and in conducting professional development.

The State Commissioner of Education supported this reform effort by granting special waivers that freed the HCDE high schools of administrative regulations that were barriers to change. Waivers were given that enabled HCDE to increase graduation requirements and give credit for special high school courses.

The plan encouraged each high school to develop at least one academy or small school within a school, with a special academic focus. As of 2007, HCDE now offers 29 different academies in all 17 high schools, which include 9th Grade Success Academies, a Health and Family Consumer Sciences Academy, a World Interest Leadership Development Academy, a Technology Enterprise & Communications Academy, Residential Construction Academies and Engineering Technology Academies, and many others.

Change Coaches were hired to work with the academy administrators. There was concern that these positions would be eliminated at the end of the 2006-2007 school year when the Carnegie grant ended. However, in the summer of 2007 the Tennessee State Legislature made additional funding available to urban school districts and HCDE used a portion of that money to retain their Change Coaches. In addition, the Change Coaches in high schools that are part of a middle school/high school configuration will continue to be maintained through the NEA Foundation/Lyndhurst Foundation funding.

Collaboration and partnership building remain at the heart of reform efforts. Two “vertical” learning communities, composed of all schools in the feeder pattern of two high schools, were

established to ensure that every child entering kindergarten will graduate from high school with his or her classmates.

“Horizontal” networks have also been set up to build capacity among role-alike groups, such as among Change Coaches, literacy leaders, assistant principals, and guidance counselors.

The same team of outside evaluators that works with the Benwood project also guides the evaluation of the high school reform initiatives. They visit each school once a year with a team of eight-10 HCDE leaders. Participation in these teams provides training opportunities for assistant principals and teacher leaders. HCDE and PEF identify a focus to be considered at each school and the high school leadership team may also ask the team to look at particular areas during their visit. The evaluators then give feedback to the school's leadership team. In addition to the evaluation team's feedback, schools receive information annually from focus groups conducted with parents, teachers, and students.

MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

As Hamilton County's elementary and high school initiatives moved forward, the partners were acutely aware of the lack of school reform in the middle grades. The successful track record of existing reform initiatives made it possible for the school system to attract another key player to the partnership. In late 2003, the NEA Foundation invited the HCDE and HCEA to apply for a competitive grant to close achievement gaps district-wide. The grant would focus on the missing link to system-wide reform: middle school improvements.

HCDE and HCEA were invited to compete for this award in large part due to their demonstrated success in working together, as well as for their positive relationships with other stakeholders in the Benwood and the Carnegie initiatives. The proposal submitted in January 2004 set as its goals:

- All 8th graders would read at grade level;
- All students would take rigorous courses, including algebra and science; and
- Teachers in the targeted, high need schools would mirror

the profile of others in the district in terms of years of experience and academic credentials.

The five year \$2.5 million grant the NEA Foundation awarded to HCEA/HCDE in June 2004 made it possible to address the needs of the five lowest performing middle schools. In 2005, after seeing data indicating the impressive gains that these five schools had registered, the Lyndhurst Foundation challenged the district to develop a plan for extending these reform efforts to all the middle schools. Based on this plan, the Lyndhurst Foundation joined the partnership in 2006, bringing an additional \$6 million to the effort over a four-year period. The NEA Foundation and Lyndhurst Foundation support led to the Middle Schools for a New Society (MSNS) initiative—a district wide effort to close achievement gaps in all 21 middle schools. The funds from NEA Foundation were leveraged even further when the Osborne Foundation agreed to allow teachers in the five NEA Foundation middle schools to be participants in the Osborne Fellows program.

The expanded partnership and funds made it possible to enhance their goals and set new benchmarks for all of the middle schools:

- All students (grades 6 through 8) would read at or above grade level;
- All students would perform at or above grade level in math; and
- The number of students rated as “advanced” in reading and math would increase by 5 percent annually. All schools would receive Value Added scores of A in reading and math. Additional goals included addressing transitional needs of students to increase promotion rates and student achievement.

Reform measures that had proven effective at the elementary and high school levels were adopted with the support of the NEA Foundation grant. Leadership teams were created and developed individual school action plans to meet students’ needs. Change Coaches were put in place in the middle schools. The NEA Foundation grant also supports compensa-

tion to Consulting Teachers and Grade Level Chairs trained during the summer and the school year. PEF supports a Literacy Leaders Network made up of middle and high school teachers—both literacy coaches and classroom teachers—who want to develop their strategies for addressing literacy issues in their schools. A PEF supported Data Analyst plays a key role in assisting school teams in modeling how data can be used to inform instruction and then be presented to teachers and parents. To help build better communications with parents, many of whom previously felt unwelcome by the schools, the grant paid for School-based Family Partnership Specialists who encourage family involvement in the target schools.

The HCDE and PEF also provide opportunities for administrators to learn from each other. The middle school principals meet with high school principals to consider what it means to provide students with a relevant and rigorous curriculum and to share what they are learning. They also meet with the Change Coaches to focus on shared leadership, monitoring progress, using formative assessments, and using data to inform practice. The Principals’ Network, which includes all of the middle school principals (there are also networks of elementary principals and of high school principals), works with the union and PEF staff to focus exclusively on instruction and student achievement. They also examine ACT standards for middle schools to align them with the state standards. These standards are measured on ACT’s EXPLORE test for 8th graders, and ACT’s PLAN test for 10th graders.¹⁹ In May 2007, middle schools participated in the “STEP BACK” process, in which teams of principals and teachers from one school serve as critical friends to examine and critique each other’s 2007-2008 school improvement plans.

A standing Change Leadership Group made up of district, PEF, and union leaders meets regularly to ensure that the wide variety of middle school strategies are moving to accomplish each of the reform goals. Emphasis is placed on the fundamental goal of providing every student in every school with a high quality education that prepares them for a rigorous high school curriculum.

¹⁹ACT is a nationally standardized college-readiness test.



The Power of Collaboration: Snapshot of School Reform in Hamilton County, Tennessee

Hamilton County has achieved district wide reforms that improved teaching and learning. These gains were a direct result of the collaboration between the union and the school district and the community-wide partnership that developed to support their work.

- Teacher transfers became more efficient and more supportive of staffing all schools with good teachers, particularly those with a history of low levels of student achievement.
- Pay incentives were implemented to award high-performing teachers and schools.
- Site-based school planning was implemented to support systemic goals, with school leadership teams throughout the district.
- Waivers were granted to allow flexibility at the school level to meet the needs of students.
- Central office positions were eliminated and funds were used to create school-based positions to support teaching and learning.
- Change Coaches were put into place in all middle and high schools.
- Teams were developed across grade levels and within role-alike groups to support teaching and learning.
- Principal networks have been established at each educational level within the district, elementary, middle and high school.
- Family support specialists serve as a liaison between middle schools and families.
- Small learning communities were developed in all high schools.
- High school curricular and graduation requirements were increased for all students.
- A "vertical team" that includes a high school and all of the elementary and middle schools that feed into it, has been established in one feeder alignment to ensure every kindergarten student graduates from high school with his or her classmates.
- Analysis and use of data to support instruction is a norm throughout the district and is supported by analysts whose job it is to support administrators, teachers and families as they seek to understand and effectively use data.
- Evaluation was built into reform, with feedback from all stakeholders collected and valued.

OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATION

Working together to focus initially on the needs of the most struggling schools, the union and district in Hamilton County came together to make a difference district wide. This partnership formed a solid base that inspired confidence in local and national funders who were then willing to invest time, funding, and human capacity to achieve results.

ELEMENTARY OUTCOMES

Schools have improved throughout the district, but truly impressive gains were made in the schools that were most at risk at the start of the reform effort. In 1999, 12 percent of 3rd grade students in the Benwood schools were reading at proficient or advanced levels. By 2003, more than half (53 percent) achieved this level and by 2006, almost three-quarters (73 percent) had reached this goal. Student scores for reading and language arts scores showed equally impressive gains at the fifth grade level. (See Table 8 in Appendix 1)

Additionally, the number of Benwood schools achieving an "A" on the TVAAS, which represents "exceptional gains in student achievement," rose dramatically from 2001 to 2006. In math and social studies, over a 3-year period, all eight schools earned an "A" on the value-added assessments. Science was the weakest area but even here six of the eight schools earned the grade "A." (See Table 9 in Appendix 1)

Greater stability and stronger teaching skills among staff in the Benwood schools were critical factors in student achievement gains. In 2002, the first year in which the union agreed to "reconstitution" of struggling schools and bonuses to attract and retain teachers at these schools, the number of teachers new to their schools reached an all-time high of 31.4 percent. By 2005 that number had dropped to 17.9 percent. (See Table 10 in Appendix 1) With reduced teacher turnover and improved ability to attract veteran teachers from non-Benwood schools, the number of novice teachers declined.

Teachers in Benwood schools are continuing to expand their teaching skills thanks to the "embedded" professional development provided by consulting teachers and time set aside within the week to work with their colleagues. Benwood teachers have also taken advantage of the Osborne Fellows Initiative. In 2001-

2002 only 36 percent of Benwood teachers had Masters Degrees, compared with 49 percent of teachers district wide. Today 51 percent of Benwood teachers have obtained a Masters, nearing the goal of matching the district-wide average (56 percent).

Surveys of parent and teacher satisfaction testify to the success of the reform. In 2006, 90 percent of Benwood parents surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with their children's schools. Surveys of teachers in the Benwood schools, and in traditionally high-performing schools, indicate that the differences in satisfaction that existed in 2004 were eliminated by 2006.

Encouraged by the success in narrowing achievement gaps with the eight Benwood schools, HCDE applied to the Benwood Foundation to expand its work to an additional eight schools, while continuing in the original schools. In July 2007 Benwood announced a new grant of \$7.3 million to support this work.

MIDDLE SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Hamilton County's middle school data show that great strides have been made already in eliminating achievement gaps between the high-needs schools and other schools in the district. Since reform efforts began in 2003, the percentage of middle school students scoring advanced and proficient in reading/language arts has risen across the county, but particularly in high needs schools. A 25.9 percentage point achievement gap in 2003 was reduced to a 19.9 percent gap in 2006. In those three years, the achievement gap in middle school math dropped from 25.8 percent to 17.4 percent. (See Table 11 in Appendix 1)

HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Hamilton County high schools, with the strong, focused union/district collaboration and support from PEF and funding partners, are making gains in promotion rates, on-time graduation rates, and numbers of graduates enrolled in college. The percent of ninth grade students receiving a "proficient" or "advanced" rating on the Algebra Gateway exam rose, as did performance of tenth graders on the English Gateway exams. (See Tables 12 and 13 in Appendix 1)

Hamilton County high school students now compare favorably when compared with other students across the state. Hamilton County high schools scored higher than the state average in five out of seven of the Gateway standards-based tests required for

graduation in 2006. Only ninth and tenth grade math scores did not meet or exceed the state average, although eleventh and twelfth grade math scores were above the state average.

Collaboration and communication are evident throughout the Hamilton County schools. Teachers are working together in new and effective ways to develop as teachers and to support student achievement. One teacher noted: "I am definitely a better teacher. When you are in the urban setting, challenges exist, but I have been able to implement better literacy strategies in the classroom."²⁰ Teachers have input and know that their work is valued. A principal offered this comment: "In HCDE there is now a lot of respect for what they (teachers in the urban schools) are doing and for the knowledge they bring to their work."²¹ A teacher from the same school added, "You would find us doing some of the same things, but you would find us doing them better. We ask every year, 'Did we do the best job possible we could?' Most say 'No'—they want to be even more effective. If they answer 'Yes' it is time to leave."²²

Hamilton County schools continue to make gains because of the collaboration of the HCEA and the HCDE and the community-wide partnership that supports their work. The HCEA remains a supportive, involved contributing partner in all aspects of the reform effort. While performing their traditional function of protecting teachers' rights, they were the first to come to the table to collaborate. Their commitment to work with the HCDE to examine contractual provisions and make revisions to support the reform effort is key to the county's success. Finally, the HCDE has assumed ownership—and devoted resources—for the reform initiatives when outside funds are no longer available. PEF continues to serve as a "critical friend" and principle change catalyst for the reform efforts. Funds from the other key partners—the Benwood Foundation, the NEA Foundation, the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and others supporting the reform initiatives—flow through PEF as the central fiscal agent. This streamlines the process and brings greater coherence to what might otherwise be disparate efforts. The resources of the NEA Foundation and those provided by the Lyndhurst Foundation have been leveraged and combined as one initiative. The achievements in Hamilton County, Tennessee demonstrate that, through collaboration, systemic reform is more than possible—it is a reality.

²⁰Felicia Montgomery, teacher at Woodmore Elementary, personal communication, May 7, 2007.

²¹Emily Baker, Principal of East Side Elementary School, personal communication, May 7, 2007.

²²Allison Barham, a teacher at East Side, personal communication, May 7, 2007.

LESSONS FROM THE TWO DISTRICTS

Clark County and Hamilton County came to reform on different paths, and the reforms they implemented were unique, yet the lessons drawn from their stories will resonate with other districts seeking to improve education for all students. The following points will help guide school districts and teachers' unions as they seek to collaborate and achieve systemic school reform.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

- 1. Systemic reform cannot take place without the active formal and informal involvement of the district administration and the education association.** That point cannot be stressed enough; every other lesson flows from it. These two groups are the core of the reform effort, and their cooperation forms the foundation upon which other partners and funders are willing to invest the time and resources in working with the district.
- 2. All stakeholders must have a comprehensive, common vision that focuses on student learning and is guided by instructional improvement.** This common vision must be the focus of the reform plan, implementation design, investment of resources, professional development, monitoring, and assessments. It must be revisited regularly and modified as necessary throughout the process. The core of this vision for change must be the shared belief that all children—whatever their ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural background or prior academic success—can attain high levels of academic achievement.
- 3. It is extremely useful to create a dedicated time and retreat space where the key stakeholders can initially meet to work out the details of the reform plan.** In the case of Hamilton County, the NEA's Challenge of Change

Conference provided a place away from normal day-to-day operations where the key parties were able to get to know and trust one another. In Clark County, the time together learning to use the IBB provided that time and space.

- 4. Interest Based Bargaining creates a sound structure for working through issues and goals.** IBB shifts the focus of negotiations to the shared goal of student achievement. It is critical that all key stakeholders participate in the IBB training program. Those who find they cannot support the process should withdraw from the process. If a person who must withdraw has a key leadership position (i.e. superintendent, assistant superintendent of instruction, association president or UniServ Director), the capacity to collaborate may be in question and must be reconsidered.
- 5. All stakeholders must recognize and respect the fragile, critical and essential nature of trust relationships and must actively work to protect and nurture this trust, especially at the beginning of the process.** They must be willing to share needed information. If it is not possible to share certain kinds of information, the reasons must be given with honesty. This also means that key stakeholders must be willing to work with their constituents to ensure that they understand the basis for and structure of the collaborative process.
- 6. All parties must keep their constituencies informed of the reform goals and progress.** Other representatives of stakeholder groups who are not operationally involved in the day-to-day working of the initiative (e.g., board members, other members of the superintendent's cabinet, foundation leadership, teachers, parents) should also be kept informed of the reform processes and progress, to ensure continuing support and later sustainability.

- 7. The stakeholder leaders should be ready to approach foundations and outside funders as a team, presenting a common agenda.** When working with funders, leaders should emphasize their common goals, reputation for integrity and cooperation, and history of involvement in quality projects.

In short, building an atmosphere of inclusiveness, trust, and cooperation from the start is essential to the success of the partnership.

IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS

- 1. Assessing the gap between the goals of the project and the current status (and capacity) of available teachers, leaders, resources, data, parental and community support must be done before solutions can be identified and implemented.** District and education association leadership must be personally involved in understanding the current status and implementation of solutions. Relevant stakeholders must collaborate on data collection and analysis throughout the reform process. Teacher recruitment, placement, and retention outcomes, for example, are key data elements that should be reviewed in relation to student achievement data. Teachers and parents should participate in each school's leadership team as it works to identify and implement specific school-based solutions.
- 2. Labor contracts must be examined to identify contractual provisions that could impede the reform efforts.** The district and the education associations must be open to make contractual changes to support reform. Both parties must respect the legal responsibilities of the other in considering contractual changes. Stakeholders must be open to considering all viable solutions, even if they require revision to district or state policies or laws. District and education associa-

tions must be willing to restructure operations, staff assignments, budget allocations, and governance rules and regulations if needed to support the reform effort. In the most successful cases, the labor contract becomes a basis for ongoing negotiations. Issues that arise related to education reform should be negotiated immediately and updated in the contract, either formally or informally. A system of frequent and thorough communications helps to ensure that all parties support these modifications and additions.

- 3. Stakeholders must reach consensus on the selected solutions.** If formalized IBB conversations are undertaken, they should continue until consensus is reached or it is determined that consensus cannot be reached. Consensus should be considered as “reached” when the last few people indicate that, although not totally sold on the solution, they can live with it and support it.
- 4. The reform effort should include:**
- Teachers using data to inform their work, collaborating around goals and instructional strategies, and maintaining a common language for instruction.
 - Professional development that is embedded in the work of the school and based on research on best instructional practices.
 - A supportive induction process aimed at enhancing novice teacher effectiveness.
 - Principals, assistant principals and other instructional leaders who focus on student success as the underlying goal of all activity, in an environment in which teachers hold themselves professionally accountable, and are treated fairly with respect as team members and encouraged to continually learn and improve their teaching.
 - Frequent examination of the research on reform and consideration of how it informs local efforts.

GROWING AND SUSTAINING REFORM

1. **Planning documents must be viewed and accepted as living documents, subject to change as assessments reveal the need for adjustments.** Timelines should be reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary. All stakeholders must understand the outcomes sought and how progress toward those outcomes will be monitored and communicated to the stakeholders. The outcomes of any element of the reform initiative and lessons learned should be closely reviewed as new components or initiatives are planned.
2. **Stakeholders who are not directly involved in the creation and implementation of the reform efforts must continue to be kept informed and reminded of the common vision, the collaborative process, the plan itself, progress in implementing the plan, and the intermediate outcomes in closing the achievement gap.** Stakeholders who are directly involved with the reform must communicate within their individual constituencies regularly and bring concerns to the leadership table before they become problems. This involvement will support the sustainability of the process as the leadership changes over time.
3. **Deliberate and focused efforts must be made to institutionalize the processes and support their sustainability as the leadership of the various partners begins to change.** Objective, trusted professionals who understand the collaborative process need to support and mentor the new stakeholders and re-teach the process to ensure that barriers do not develop in the working relationships.
4. **Strategies and resources must be established to build and sustain the capacity of those involved in the implementation of reform plan.** Elements include:
 - Professional learning communities and networks within schools, job-alike groups, and feeder school

alignments. For example, principals should convene regularly to share challenges, exchange strategies, and learn about emerging issues.

- Job-embedded professional development with coaching and mentoring.
 - University preparation programs for teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators revised and updated to meet the reform goals and challenges.
 - Internal leadership development for aspiring, new, and experienced leaders.
 - Relevant data made accessible to schools on a timely basis, along with professional development to guide educators and administrators on how to analyze and use data to inform their instructional decision-making.
5. **School leadership teams, administrators, and other reform leaders must hold themselves publicly accountable for the implementation of reform initiatives.** Public scrutiny and open reviews of progress and stumbling points are critical in maintaining support for and trust in the integrity of the reform effort.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

The tremendous achievements made by the collaborative efforts of the school district and union in Clark County and Hamilton County does not mean success came easily – it was hard work. And while challenges continue, the payoff is worth the effort. Some of the challenges both counties continue to face include:

Funding. As indicated by the case studies of both Clark and Hamilton Counties, assuring stable and continuing funding to support reform activities is a continuous challenge. The successful collaboration in both districts has enabled them to seek out additional resources and work together to determine creative uses of existing funds.

Communications. Continuous and effective communications are essential yet time consuming especially given that the make-up of the district and the community at large is ever changing.

Stereotypes and negative public perceptions of public education. Stereotypes and negative opinions can severely inhibit progress. The media can be powerful partners in telling the story and in providing effective communications at all levels to help to educate the public. Nonetheless, despite evidence of success, some people may never be persuaded.

Continual engagement of low-performing students. Teachers must be supported to engage their students so that each of them meets or exceeds standards. This work must evolve constantly as each student requires a unique set of strategies and supports, and new students are always entering the schools.

Ensuring that teachers and others effectively use data to inform instruction. New people will need training on the basics and seasoned educators will need retooling to ensure they understand data, make sound decisions based on that data, and share effective teaching strategies.

Changes in leadership. Change is a constant in schools and school districts. Superintendents, union presidents, principals, teachers and others who were instrumental to success retire or move. Embedding the continual transfer of knowledge and leadership development within a school district can be difficult to sustain when faced with the immediate needs of improving student achievement.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT POLICY CHANGE

This work is not easy, and the job is a constant one. But policy is a lever for institutionalizing change. Clearly the achievements made in Clark County and Hamilton County were the result of significant changes in policy brought about

by strong, effective collaboration. The list below highlights some of the partners, their roles and the policies that make change happen.

THE DISTRICT: STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

1. Superintendents and school boards alone are not enough to sustain a reform effort. Creating and building upon a district's vision must, from the beginning, involve the full range of stakeholders: education associations' leadership and members, parents, community members, and outside funders.
2. District leadership must create an expectation among all staff that reforms can and must succeed, demonstrating a commitment to sustain and support the vision and resulting policies and actions over the long haul, irrespective of changes in personnel.
3. The district must be open and willing to share information with stakeholders and to accept them at the table as meaningful partners.
4. Districts must be prepared to review and to reorganize their structure, their staff assignments, their resource allocation methodology, and their data collection and dissemination methods to support reform efforts.

THE ASSOCIATION: STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

1. Education associations must recognize that if reform efforts are going to succeed, they must be ready, willing and able to come to the table to find ways of improving schools for the sake of all children.
2. They must be willing to be active, participating partners in the reform effort—willing to consider contractual changes, pay incentives, changes to transfer procedures, and other key negotiation elements.

3. They must be willing to restructure their operations, staff and governance roles as necessary.
4. Among members and potential members, the association must be ready to establish itself—and its brand—as the trusted source for bringing teachers' professional knowledge to reform efforts and for taking initiative to support teaching and learning conditions that close achievement gaps and improve student achievement.
5. They must be ready to demonstrate to veteran teachers why the association is involved in the new focus of reform and building professional capacity rather than focusing only on hours, money and due process rights.
6. They must be ready to demonstrate to less experienced teachers that the education association is a key partner in helping them to be effective in the classroom and to help their students achieve.

OUTSIDE FUNDERS: STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

1. The leadership from outside funders must be ready to become partners in the effort to improve teaching and learning, ensuring results and equity. From the inception of reform initiatives, this partnership should include the education association.
2. The outside funder should be ready to serve as an objective “critical friend,” convener, facilitator and change agent.
3. Outside funders should work to build their own capacity to be supportive of reform efforts in which they participate and to adapt their own approaches to meet a district's particular circumstance and needs.
4. Outside funders should be willing to join others who come to the table to build a synergy and to leverage the resources available. When national funders consider joining or establishing local reform collaborations, they should first reach out to local funders and work with existing partnerships.

5. Outside funders should make the success of the reform effort their highest priority.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

School district and union collaboration is at the heart of the reform efforts in Hamilton County, Tennessee and Clark County, Nevada. These districts have been successful as they grappled with issues of urban neglect, failed schools, teacher turnover, and the critical need to find a better way to meet the educational needs of minority and low-income students. This look into the processes these systems used offers insights into how collaboration and partner building can occur in a thoughtful, deliberative, and mutually beneficial way.

It is important to note, however, that this kind of collaboration is not limited to those in hard-to-staff schools or school districts with substantial achievement gaps. The examples, strategies and guidelines serve as points to consider in establishing any partnership, large or small, based in high or low achieving schools and districts. In comparing Hamilton and Clark counties, the underlying goals remained constant—to build partnerships that promote and sustain student achievement, teacher and administrator engagement, and civic pride in schools. These should be the goals of every school and community.

At the heart of this report is the challenge of change. School districts must constantly evolve if they are to meet the needs of their changing student body. Change can be chaotic, disruptive, and destructive, or it can be harnessed in a constructive manner. Clark and Hamilton Counties took the latter path, rising to the occasion with creativity and determination to build better schools, ensuring that student achievement would be the ultimate manifestation of their reform efforts. Their stories—the tale of these two districts—stand as evidence that, with strong collaboration among key partners, districts can indeed change for the better and improve the educational fortunes of all the children in their community.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1

Selected Clark County School District Improvements, 2004-2006

	2004	2005	2006
Number of schools Making AYP		183	216
Number of schools NOT meeting AYP		149	123
High school graduates passing the Nevada High School Math Proficiency exam		86.9 %	88.4 %
Drop out rate for 9th-12th grade students	7.6 %		5.9 %
Scholarships awarded to CCSD graduates		\$97.5 m	\$108 m
Schools designated “exemplary” .		6	11
Number of “high achieving” schools		34	44

Source: Based on information provided by CCSD as written about in “No Child Left Behind.” Las Vegas Review Journal. (July 29, 2007, p. 12B)

TABLE 2

Clark County School District Northeast Region Ethnic Profiles (Secondary), 2001-2005

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Other	Total
2004-5	859	156	98	21	16	34	1,184
2003-4	729	115	82	16	13	25	980
2002-3	773	133	64	18	17	20	1,025
2001-2	742	120	54	15	13	20	964

Source: Northeast Region Ethnic Profiles (Secondary): 2001-2005. “What Makes Teachers Stay” 2006, CCSD.

TABLE 3

Clark County School District Northeast Region Ethnic Profiles (Elementary), 2001-2005

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Other	Total
2004-5	1,409	163	127	57	16	50	1,822
2003-4	1,321	158	118	49	15	39	1,700
2002-3	1,271	156	101	43	17	39	1,627
2001-2	1,232	151	89	29	21	31	1,553

Source: Northeast Region Ethnic Profiles (Elementary): 2001-2005. “What Makes Teachers Stay” 2006, CCSD.

TABLE 4

Teacher Retention in CCSD 2006 vs. 2007
Percent of Stayers, Movers, and Leavers

	Stayers	Movers	Leavers
2006	61.60 percent	18.27 percent	20.63 percent
2007	71.15 percent	12.77 percent	16.08 percent
Change	10.05 percent	-5.5 percent	-4.55 percent

Source: Percent of Overall CCSD 2006 and 2007 Stayers, Movers and Leavers. Follow up Report: AB580 Assembly Bill 580: Programs of Performance Pay and Enhanced Compensation for the Recruitment, Retention and Mentoring of Licensed Personnel, 2007.

TABLE 5

CCSD AB580 (High Risk, High Attrition) Schools
Teacher Retention Gains by Region and School Level 2006 vs. 2007

Region	Elementary	Middle	High School
East	4.03 percent	16.19 percent	3.60 percent
NW	16.35 percent	17.28 percent	-3.71 percent
SE	10.82 percent	18.44 percent	6.65 percent
SW	17.88 percent	3.73 percent	11.07 percent

Source: UTP Resignations in Detail. Urban Teacher Program. 2007.

TABLE 6
Hamilton County vs. City of Chattanooga:
Demographic and School Performance Comparisons (1996-97)

	Hamilton County	City of Chattanooga
Caucasian	94.0 percent	34.8 percent
African American	4.1 percent	62.9 percent
Title 1 Participation	6.5 percent	30.8 percent
Title 1 Schools: Meeting Expectations	92.3 percent	20.0 percent
Title 1 Schools: Meeting Language Arts NRT Standard	92.3 percent	30.8 percent
Title 1 Schools: Meeting Mathematics NRT Standard	84.6 percent	30.8 percent
Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility	19.9 percent	59.0 percent

Source: Hamilton County vs. City of Chattanooga: Demographic and School Performance Comparisons (1996-97). Tennessee Department of Education, Report Card 2006. <<http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd06/>>.

TABLE 7
Hamilton County vs. City of Chattanooga
Enrollment, Attendance, Promotion Rates and High School Dropout Rates (1996-97)

	Hamilton County	City of Chattanooga
Enrollment Increases or Decreases	0.9 percent	-2.0 percent
Attendance Rates: Grades K-6	95.59 percent	92.30 percent
Attendance Rates: Grades 7-12	93.99 percent	86.44 percent
Promotion Rates: Grades K-8	95.4 percent	95.5 percent
Dropout Rates: Grades 9-12	4.3 percent	7.1 percent

Source: Hamilton County vs. City of Chattanooga Enrollment, Attendance, Promotion Rates and High School Dropout Rates (1996-97). Tennessee Department of Education, Report Card 2006. <<http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd06/>>.

TABLE 8

Percent of Benwood Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient
In Reading/Language Arts

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Change 2003-2006
3rd Grade Reading/Language Arts: Benwood	53.1 percent	63.0 percent	74.4 percent	73.1 percent	20.0 percent
3rd Grade Reading/Language Arts: District	76.8 percent	83.9 percent	89.1 percent	88.7 percent	11.9 percent
5th Grade Reading/Language Arts: Benwood	61.6 percent	62.5 percent	79.5 percent	80.7 percent	19.1 percent
5th Grade Reading/Language Arts: District	80.7 percent	83.7 percent	91.1 percent	92.0 percent	11.3 percent

Source: Number of Schools Receiving A's in Value Added on the Report Card. Tennessee Department of Education, Report Card 2006. <<http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcard06/>>.

TABLE 9

Number of Benwood Schools Receiving A's in Value Added Assessment
On the Tennessee Report Card
(A=exceptional)

	2001	2006
Reading/Language Arts	4 / 0	7
Math	0	8
Science	5	6
Social Studies	3	8

Source: Percent of Benwood Students Scoring Advanced or Proficient in Reading/Language Arts. PEF/HCDE, 2006. Benwood Initiative. Unpublished data.

TABLE 10

Percent of Benwood teachers new to their schools
(2001-2005)

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
26.2 percent	31.4 percent	23.8 percent	19.6 percent	17.9 percent

Source: Teacher Turnover in Benwood Schools (2001-2005). PEF/HCDE, 2006. Benwood Initiative. [Percentage of Teachers New to Benwood Schools]. Unpublished data.

TABLE 11

Hamilton County Percentage of 6-8th Graders Scoring Advanced & Proficient
(5 high-needs middle schools and all other middle schools), 2003-2006

	2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Reading/ Language Arts	Math	Reading/ Language Arts	Math	Reading/ Language Arts	Math	Reading/ Language Arts	Math
Five High-Needs Middle Schools	56.0 percent	55.8 percent	57.5 percent	60.0 percent	63.6 percent	69.2 percent	69.7 percent	71.6 percent
Other Middle Schools	81.6 percent	81.6 percent	81.6 percent	82.0 percent	88.7 percent	89.2 percent	89.6 percent	89.0 percent

Source: Years of Teaching Experience in Benwood Schools Compared to Hamilton County Overall. PEF/HCDE, 2006. Benwood Initiative. [Teacher Profile]. Unpublished data.

TABLE 12

Hamilton County Improvements on High School Measures (2003-2006)

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Ninth to Tenth Grade Promotion Rates	77.3%	81.2%	83.5%	89.1%
Ninth Grade Algebra Gateway Performance: Proficient or Advanced	65%	65%	66%	67%
Tenth Grade English Gateway Performance	87%	89%	91%	94%
Number of Regular Diplomas Granted	1856	1909	1936	2148
Four-year Cohort "On-Time" Graduation Rates	69%	69.8%	70.2%	73.7%
Number of Graduates Enrolled in College		1313	1324	1499

Source: Tennessee State Gateway Test Results Compared to Hamilton County High Schools (2006). Great Schools: Parent's Guide to k-12 Success. Hamilton County, TN
<http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/tn/district_profile/49>.

TABLE 13

Tennessee State Gateway Test Results Compared to Hamilton County High Schools (2006)

	State Average	Hamilton County
Ninth Grade Reading Language Arts	86	90
Ninth Grade Math	88	80
Tenth Grade Reading Language Arts	97	98
Tenth Grade Math	73	65
Eleventh Grade Reading Language Arts	79	84
Eleventh Grade Math	57	64
Twelfth Grade Reading Language Arts	72	79
Twelfth Grade Math	49	63

Source: Hamilton County Improvements on High School Measures (2003-2006). PEF/HCDE, 2006. MSNS Initiative. [SNS Initiative Metrics]. Unpublished data.

APPENDIX 2

REFERENCES

Contracts

Memorandum of Agreement Between The Hamilton County Board of Education and the Hamilton County Education Association 2006-2007

Negotiated Agreement Between the Clark County School District and the Clark County Education Association 2003-2007

Negotiated Agreement Between the Clark County School District and the Clark County Education Association 2005-2009

DVDs

Learning Matters. *Changes in Chattanooga—The NewsHour Report and Expanded Coverage of the Chattanooga Reform*. Public Broadcasting Service.

The NEA Foundation. (2007, February 1) *Achievement Gaps Grants Project: a video report on Hamilton County, TN; Milwaukee & Seattle*. Washington, DC. The NEA Foundation.

Grant Request For Proposals, Grant Proposals and Grant Reports

Annual Report of Progress for Fifth Year of the Benwood Initiative by Public Education Foundation Submitted by the Hamilton County Schools and the Public Education Foundation Chattanooga, Tennessee, September 29, 2006.

The NEA Foundation Initiative: Hamilton County Middle School Excellence. NEA Foundation Grant Proposal Submitted by Hamilton County Department of Education and Hamilton County Education Association, January 5, 2004.

Progress Report on Hamilton County Urban Middle Schools. Submitted to the NEA Foundation by the Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public Education Foundation, April 12, 2006.

Proposal From the Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public Education Foundation to the Benwood Foundation "Benwood Initiative Phase Two From Good to Great to Exceptional" 2007-2012.

Public Education Foundation. Spring 2007. *High School Reform—Reflecting on the Past and Looking to the Future—*

A look at the Reform Work of Hamilton County's High Schools.

Public Education Foundation and the Hamilton County Department of Education. 2007. *Middle School Reform—Building the Future—A Look at the Reform Work of Hamilton County's Middle Schools During School Year 2006-2007*.

Request For Proposal Responses for Middle Schools for A New Society Grants 2006-2007

Chattanooga Middle Museum Magnet School
Dalewood Middle School
East Lake Academy of Fine Arts
Howard School of Academics and Technology
Orchard Knob Middle School

Request For Proposal Responses for Middle Schools for A New Society Grants 2007-2008
Brown Middle School
Lookout Valley

Schools for a New Society—An Implementation Grant Proposal to the Carnegie Corporation of New York Submitted by Hamilton County Schools and Public Education, Chattanooga, TN August 1, 2001.

Schools for a New Society—Year Four Annual Report for Hamilton County, Tennessee, Submitted by Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public Education Foundation, Spring, 2006.

Summary of Implementation Activities Submitted to the NEA Foundation by the Public Education Foundation April 30, 2007.

Interviews

Hamilton County Department of Education

Dr. Jim Scales, Superintendent 1997-2006
 Dr. Jesse Register, Superintendent 2006-Present
 David Cowan, Director of Middle Schools
 Emily Baker, Principal East Side Elementary School
 Visa Harper, Principal Woodmore Elementary School
 Linda Darden, Principal Dalewood Middle School
 Gary Kuehn, Principal of Hunter Middle School
 Herbert McCray, Principal Orchard Knob Middle School
 John Stewart, Principal Brown Middle School
 Mark Bean, Principal East Ridge High School
 Gail Chewy, Principal Red Bank High School
 Julie Davidson, Assistant Principal Brown Middle School
 Clara Smith, Assistant Principal Orchard Knob Middle School
 Felicia Montgomery, Teacher Woodmore Elementary School
 Susie Hall, Teacher Hunter Middle School
 Jill Hudson, Teacher Hunter Middle School
 Rosa Huntz, Teacher Brown Middle School
 Debbie McMahan, Academic Coach, Brown Middle School
 May Pardlow, Teacher Dalewood Middle School
 Susan Thurman, Change Coach Red Bank High School

Hamilton County Education Association

Sandra Hughes, President
 Ronda Catanzaro, Executive UniServ Director
 Gerry Dowler, Executive UniServ Director, Retired

Public Education Foundation

Dan Challenger, President
 Faye Pharr, Leadership Coach Benwood Initiative
 Ismahen Kangles, Director Middle Schools for a New Society, Middle School Reform Initiative
 Bill Kennedy, Director Schools for a New Society High School Reform Initiative
 Leslie Graitcer, Coordinator Osborne Fellows Program
 Anne Kilcher, Communications
 Deb Vaughan, Data Analyst

Lyndhurst Foundation

Jack Murrah, President Lyndhurst Foundation

NEA Foundation

Carol Edwards, Director of Programs, Retired

Clark County School District

Ruth Johnson, President Board of School Trustees
 Sheila Moulton, Member Board of School Trustees
 Karlene Lee, Associate Superintendent
 George Ann Rice, Associate Superintendent, Retired
 Karyn Wright, Director New Teacher Induction and Teacher Professional Development
 Roseanna Gallagher, Principal Rose Warren Elementary School
 Rebecca Johnson, Principal Kirk Adams Elementary School
 Lisa Primas, Principal Paul Culley Elementary School
 Linda Reese, Principal Lee Antonello Elementary School
 Will Dickerson, Teacher Paul Culley Elementary School
 Karen Kip, Teacher Rose Warren Elementary School
 Ruth Lawrence, Teacher Rose Warren Elementary School
 Brendan McCarthy, Teacher Paul Culley School
 Michelle Mull, Teacher Kirk Adams Elementary School
 Diane Refosco, Teacher Lee Antonello Elementary School
 Heather Somers, Teacher Lee Antonello Elementary School
 Vicki Weathers, Teacher Kirk Adams Elementary School

Clark County Education Association and Negotiations Team

John Jasonek, Executive Director
 Bill Vick, Teacher and Chairman of the Negotiations Team
 Vikki Courtney, Teacher, Member of Negotiations Team and also the Climate Team
 Cindy Johnson, Teacher, Member of Negotiations Team and also the Climate Team
 Phil Palucci, Teacher, Member of Negotiations Team and also the Climate Team
 Carolyn Stewart, Teacher, Member of Negotiations Team and also the Climate Team

Other

Debbie Cahill, Nevada State Education Association
 LaVonne Ritter, Director Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in Clark County
 Martha Young, Professor University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Publications

No Child Left Behind. *Las Vegas Review Journal* (2007, July 29). p. 12B.

Chattanooga Times Articles and Editorials concerning the reform effort February 6, 2004-July 2007

Foster, M. (2005, February 10). *When We Decide To Do Something, We Can Work Together to Get It Done. Collaborating in Chattanooga to Close the Achievement Gap—A Case Study from Philanthropy's Role in Fostering Partnerships: Collaborating with Unions, Schools District's and Communities*. New York City: Grantmakers for Education Member Briefing.

Handley, C. and Kronley, R.A. (2006, May) *Challenging Myths: The Benwood Initiative and Education Reform in Hamilton County*. Chattanooga: Kronley & Associates.

Handley, C. and Kronley, R.A. (2006, May) *Lessons Learned: A Report on the Benwood Initiative, a Supplement to 'Challenging Myths: The Benwood Initiative and Education Reform in Hamilton County*. Chattanooga: Kronley & Associates.

Kaboolian, L. and Sutherland, P. (2005) *Win-Win Labor Management Collaboration in Education*. Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy. Washinton, DC: Education Week Press.

Keller, B. (2006, March 1). Charging the gap. *Education Week*, 25(25), 25-26, 28.

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (1996). *What Matters Most*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Potts, K. and Chatis, C. (2006) *District Approaches to Improving Tennessee's High Priority Schools—Hamilton County Department of Education 2006*. Hamilton County, TN: Offices of Research and Education Accountability, Hamilton County Department of Education.

Public Education Foundation. Selected Press Releases. July 2002 through July 2007.

Public Education Foundation. (2007, May) Brochure series, *Good Things Are Happening at:*
Hamilton County Schools
Dalewood Middle School
Chattanooga Middle Museum Magnet School
Orchard Knob Middle School

East Lake Academy of Fine Arts High School
Howard School of Academics and Technology
Red Bank High School

Richmond, E. (2007, August 1). Empowerment Teachers Get A Little Something Extra. *Las Vegas Sun*, p. 3.

Young, M. (2006). *CCSD 2004-2005 Attrition Study*. Las Vegas: Clark County School District, Human Resources Division. p. 28.

Young, M. (2007). *Follow up Report: AB 580 Assembly Bill 580: Programs of Performance Pay and Enhanced Compensation for the Recruitment, Retention and Mentoring of Licensed Personnel, 2007*. Las Vegas: Clark County School District.


Web Sites

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. *Interest-Based Bargaining*. Retrieved October 18, 2007 from <http://www.fmcs.gov/internet/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=131&itemID=15804>

Spangler, B. (2003, June). *What is Integrative or Interest-Based Bargaining?* Retrieved June 12, 2007 from http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/interest-based_bargaining/?nid=1283

Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture. *The Lyndhurst Foundation*. Retrieved October 7, 2007 from <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=L061>

Tennessee Department of Education. *21st Century Report Card*. Retrieved October 7, 2007 from www.k-12.state.tn.us/arc/rptcrd97/index.html



Portions of this report may be quoted and/or utilized without permission, provided that those portions are used within the context intended and solely for non-profit purposes, and with acknowledgement prominently given to the “National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF).” Limited permission may be obtained from NCTAF for the reproduction of larger portions of the report (for noncommercial purposes only) by educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and public agencies. Storage in any form of electronic retrieval system and/or reproduction of this document for any commercial purpose is expressly prohibited without the written permission of NCTAF.

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy and action organization dedicated to providing every child with quality teaching in schools organized for success. With a network of coalitions in 25 states and links to professional educational organizations across the nation, NCTAF provides leadership for innovation and improvement in teaching and learning in America’s schools. www.nctaf.org.

The NEA Foundation is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization created in 1969 by members of the National Education Association and sustained today by contributions from educators, corporate sponsors and other supporters of public education. The Foundation offers programs and grants that support educators’ efforts to close the achievement gaps, increase classroom innovation, salute excellence in education and provide professional development. www.neafoundation.org