

# Getting Started:

## A First Look at Chicago Annenberg Schools and Networks

### Improving Chicago's Schools



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Research

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A Report of the  
Chicago Annenberg Research Project

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June 1998

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	iv
I. Introduction .....	1
Purpose of the Report .....	2
Organization of the Report .....	3
Sources of Data .....	4
The Baseline Report Series.....	5
II. Characteristics of Annenberg Schools and Their Student Enrollments .....	7
Characteristics of Annenberg Schools .....	7
Numbers and Characteristics of Students in Annenberg Schools .....	10
III. Implementation Networks and How They Function .....	13
Network Characteristics .....	13
Size and Composition .....	13
External Partners and Substantive Foci .....	13
Network Function .....	16
Nature of Working Relationships .....	16
Goal Clarity and Emphasis of Challenge Themes .....	19
School Participation in Network Activities .....	20
Resources for School Improvement .....	24
IV. Initial Accomplishments of Implementation Networks .....	27
School Improvement .....	27
Reducing School-Community Isolation .....	31
Correlates of Initial Reports of Progress .....	33
V. Challenges to Networks and Schools .....	37
The Problem of Time and Resources.....	38
Central Office Policies and Priorities.....	40
Reporting and Accountability Requirements .....	41
Internal School Politics and Working Relationships .....	42
Developing School Ownership .....	43
“Scaling Up” for Whole School Change .....	44

VI. Support for Network and School Activity .....	47
General Support from Groups and Organizations .....	47
Support Provided by the Challenge .....	49
VII. External Perceptions of the Chicago Challenge .....	55
Goals of the Chicago Challenge .....	55
Predictions of Success .....	60
Satisfying Evidence of Success .....	65
Recommendations for the Future .....	68
VIII. Summary and Implications .....	73
Issues for the Challenge.....	77
Development of Networks .....	77
Focus and Coherence .....	78
Relations with the Chicago Public Schools Central Administration.....	79
Education and Cultivation of the External Environment .....	80
Conclusion .....	81
Endnotes.....	82
References .....	83
Appendix: Data Sources, Samples, and Methodology .....	84
School Characteristics Data .....	84
The 1997 Principal Survey .....	84
External Partner and Principal Interviews .....	95
Institutional Actor Interviews .....	96

## **Acknowledgments**

This report was supported with funds from the Chicago Annenberg Challenge and the Consortium on Chicago School Research. We are grateful to a large number of people who offered many helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this report. We especially thank Ken Rolling, Executive Director of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, his staff, members of the Evaluation Committee of the Chicago Challenge, the Directors of the Consortium on Chicago School Research, and the Lead Research Team of the Chicago Annenberg Research Project. We also wish to thank Stuart Luppescu, Jenny Nagaoka, and Anthony Bryk, who assisted in developing and analyzing survey measures used in this study. Loretta Morris and Rebecca Williams helped edit and produce the report. While many persons provided assistance in completing this report, the authors bear sole responsibility for its contents.



## Executive Summary

This first technical report of the Chicago Annenberg Research Project examines six general questions concerning the characteristics, activities, and accomplishments of Chicago Annenberg schools and networks during their first 12 to 18 months of support:

1. What are the characteristics of schools that participate in the Chicago Challenge and the student populations they serve?
2. What types of implementation networks did the Chicago Challenge initially support and how have these networks functioned?
3. What have the implementation networks begun to accomplish during this early stage of work?
4. What challenges do these networks and schools face?
5. What sources of support are available to Annenberg schools and networks?
6. How is the Chicago Challenge perceived in its external environment?

As these questions indicate, the primary focus of this report is on the Challenge's implementation networks, those networks to which the Challenge is devoting most of its resources and which best represent the Challenge "in action."

**1. Characteristics of Challenge schools and student enrollments.** Our findings indicate that the Chicago Challenge has supported about 220 schools or 40 percent of the city's elementary and secondary schools. Approximately 42 percent of all Chicago Public Schools students are enrolled in Annenberg schools. With a few notable exceptions, the demographic characteristics of Annenberg schools and their student enrollments are representative of the school system as a whole.

**2. The networks and how they function.** The Challenge has supported a wide range of implementation networks that vary in size, composition, external partners, and substantive foci. While they differ in these characteristics, many implementation networks function in similar ways. As reported by principals, working relationships among schools and external partners are largely cooperative if not collaborative. External partners play a key role in network function. External partners have been instrumental in forming most implementation networks. Most principals report that they interact more frequently with their external partners than with other schools in their networks. Most principals see their networks as having clear goals, and most report that their external partners exert at least some press on them to address Chicago Annenberg themes of time, size, and isolation. Most report that the Challenge is central to the work of their schools. At the same time, principals acknowledge that the Challenge exists alongside many other programs in their schools. This condition creates potential for fragmentation and competition for teachers' time and attention. Substantial variation exists among schools in the proportions of teachers who participate in network activities. Substantial variation also exists in the frequency with which teachers participate in those activities. In about

half of the schools in implementation networks, most teacher time spent in school improvement activities is devoted to projects other than Annenberg. While a majority of principals report that participation in implementation networks has provided useful resources for school improvement, about 40 percent report that participation has provided few if any useful resources to their schools.

**3. Initial accomplishments.** Most principals in implementation networks report moderate school improvement as a result of working with their external partners and with other network schools. These improvements are primarily in areas of school organizational development that form a foundation for classroom innovation and improvement in student learning. They include the introduction of new curricular programs and practices, new opportunities for teacher professional development, and refocused school goals and priorities. Most principals attribute these accomplishments to opportunities for teacher collaboration within and among schools and to principal networking. Likewise, most principals in implementation networks report moderate reductions in school-community isolation as a result of network participation.

**4. Challenges.** Almost all principals in implementation networks face some level of challenge to network participation. Two major challenges are lack of time for teachers to participate in network activities and lack of resources needed for their schools to benefit substantially from network participation. About one-third of the principals identified conflicts between their networks' priorities and CPS central office policies as another area of challenge. Relatively few principals reported problems or conflicts associated with administrative demands of the Chicago Challenge. External partners point to several other challenges to network participation and progress, including internal school politics and teacher-administrator working relationships, developing school ownership in network goals and activities, and "scaling up" for whole school change.

**5. Sources of support.** In general, principals see few sources of support for network participation. The most frequently cited sources of support are expected ones—Local School Councils, parents, colleges and universities, and foundations. Relatively few principals see the CPS central administration, reform groups, business associations, or community organizations as sources of support. Most principals and external partners find the Challenge leadership and staff to be a source of support; however, a small proportion point to the additional burden administrative demands place on their networks' activities.

**6. External perceptions.** Our findings reveal a wide range of opinions and understandings of the Chicago Challenge in its external institutional environment. They also reveal a substantial lack of knowledge about the Challenge and what it seeks to accomplish. Interviews of leaders and representatives of seven sectors—the business community, community organizations and education reform groups, foundations, government (including CPS, city, and state), higher education, labor, and media—indicate that different understandings exist concerning the goals of the Challenge. Substantial variation exists in perceptions of whether the Challenge will succeed and in the opinions

of how the Challenge should continue its work. Despite these differences, almost half of the responses we received indicated that improvement in student achievement is the primary criterion for determining the success of the Challenge.

While these data indicate that progress is being made in establishing networks, in school development, and in reducing school-community isolation, they also point to several important issues for the Challenge to address. The first issue concerns the ongoing development of networks, particularly increasing teacher participation, ensuring that schools have adequate resources to support participation, and strengthening relationships among schools in networks. The second issue concerns focus and coherence. This issue is manifest at the school level, where the Challenge must compete with multiple programs, and at the level of the Challenge, where its leadership must decide how to allocate its resources among networks and between local and systemic concerns. A third issue concerns the relationship between the Challenge and the CPS central administration. This involves reconciling the potential for conflict between Challenge and network priorities and CPS policies. It also involves cooperation to address common issues faced by schools across the system. A final issue concerns the education and cultivation of the external environment. The Challenge faces the issue of how to deepen understanding and support of its goals, activities, and accomplishments across a wide range of stakeholders. This involves developing meaningful and realistic expectations for its work and progress.

## I. Introduction

In December 1993, Ambassador Walter Annenberg announced a five-year, \$500 million challenge grant to support school reform in the nation's largest cities. Cities wishing to receive funds were invited to submit proposals describing how the funds would be used to stimulate educational innovation and collaboration in their public school systems. A group of Chicago school reform activists and education stakeholders, including parents, teachers, principals, community leaders, and foundation officers, organized to write a proposal to include Chicago among the cities receiving a share of the national challenge grant. This group succeeded. In January 1995, the Annenberg Foundation awarded a five-year grant of \$49.2 million to establish the Chicago Annenberg Challenge.

According to its statement of guiding principles, the Chicago Challenge is designed to improve student achievement by stimulating and supporting intensive efforts to “*restructure* education, to *reconnect* schools to their communities, and to *improve classroom practice*” [italics in the original]. Schools participating in the Challenge are charged with the responsibility to work together and with external partners in networks to identify obstacles to school restructuring and to further systemic change. The Challenge encourages networks to create coherent, rigorous, and supportive teaching and learning environments by addressing three major structural problems of schools: (a) time, (b) size, and (c) isolation.

The problem of time refers to constraints on productive use of time in schools for the teachers' professional growth and the improvement of instruction. According to the Challenge, teachers need time in order to plan, reflect, and study. They need sufficient time for meaningful assessment of student learning and for collegial discussion. The problem of size refers to reducing school enrollments to create smaller, more personal learning communities. Schools-within-schools, houses, family groups, and other measures that break down oversized, unmanageable institutions into workable units are thought to create the conditions for student-centered learning opportunities. Reduction of school size is also thought to promote greater curricular specialization to meet student needs and interests, and perhaps reduce disruptive and violent student behavior by



creating closer relationships between students and adults. Finally, the problem of isolation refers to the disconnectedness and unproductive working relationships among schools; between schools and their surrounding communities; and among educators, parents, and community residents.

In June 1995, after a period of organizing and planning, the Chicago Challenge issued its first request for proposals to schools and external partners to form networks and apply for planning or implementation grants. The first planning grants were offered for up to a year to support at least two schools and an external partner to develop their network, design innovative approaches for school improvement, and establish concrete steps to put those approaches into place. The first implementation grants were offered on an annual, renewable basis to support at least three schools and an external partner in a network. According to the first request for proposals, implementation grants were intended to support networks to implement strong, coherent plans for “deep, fundamental change in schools in relationship to their communities.” Recipients of planning and implementation grants were to address the problems of time, size, and isolation as means of improving student learning opportunities and outcomes. In January and February 1996, the Chicago Challenge funded its first set of planning and implementation networks.

### **Purpose of the Report**

This report serves two general purposes. The first purpose is to identify patterns of characteristics, activities, and accomplishments across Chicago Annenberg Challenge schools and networks during their first 12 to 18 months of support. The second purpose is to identify important issues suggested by these findings that should be considered as the Challenge continues its work. Specifically, this report addresses six major questions:

1. What are the characteristics of schools that participate in the Chicago Challenge and the student populations they serve?
2. What types of implementation networks did the Chicago Challenge initially support and how have these networks functioned?

3. What have the implementation networks begun to accomplish during this early stage of work?
4. What challenges do these networks and schools face?
5. What sources of support are available to Annenberg schools and networks?
6. How is the Chicago Challenge perceived in its external institutional environment?

As these questions indicate, the primary focus of this report is on the Challenge's implementation networks rather than the planning networks. We adopted this focus for two reasons. First, the Challenge has devoted most of its resources to the implementation networks and will invest increasing proportions of its resources in these networks in the years to come. Second, the implementation networks are, in theory, farthest along in their work. They are more likely than planning networks to represent the Chicago Challenge "in action."

This report provides a first look at Annenberg school and network activity. Most of the data we present were collected during the 1996-97 school year, the first full school year of Annenberg funding. As such, this report represents a baseline of information about the beginning "state" of networks and their schools. It does not provide a sound basis for making summative judgments about the successes or failings of the Challenge to date.

### **Organization of the Report**

This report is organized around the six major questions presented above. The first section describes the general demographic characteristics of Chicago Annenberg Challenge schools and their student populations. It examines the extent to which these schools and students are representative of the Chicago Public School system as a whole. The second section describes the implementation networks funded through 1997 and discusses how they are functioning. This section explores the nature of working relationships among schools and external partners, goal clarity within networks, and external partners' emphases on the Challenge's themes of time, size, and isolation. It examines various dimensions of school participation in networks, looking particularly at the centrality of

the Challenge to schools' goals and improvement activities and teacher participation in network activities. This section also looks at whether network participation has increased school access to resources for improvement.

The third section of the report discusses the initial accomplishments of the implementation networks. It examines the extent to which schools see their work with external partners and other schools contributing to school improvement. It also examines the extent to which schools see their work as helping to reduce school-community isolation. The fourth section discusses various challenges to network participation and progress reported by implementation networks and schools. These challenges include conflicts between the priorities of networks and the programs and policies of the Chicago Public Schools central office, lack of time for teacher participation in network activities, and lack of resources to make network participation worthwhile for schools. The fifth section reports external partners' and principals' assessments of the support they receive from various groups and organizations, specifically from the Chicago Challenge leadership and staff. The sixth section examines how leaders and representatives of various organizational sectors in the broader institutional environment view the Chicago Challenge. These sectors include the business community, organized labor, the foundation community, higher education, community groups and education reform organizations, government (from the school system to the state), and the media. This section focuses primarily on how well representatives of these external sectors understand the Challenge, what they expect of it, and how they assess the Challenge's chances of success. It also focuses on how representatives of these sectors think the Challenge should best continue its work.

The report concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion of implications for the Challenge to consider. The purpose of this discussion is to identify and frame important issues for deliberation. It is not to resolve them.

### **Sources of Data**

This report draws on data from five complementary sources. These sources include: (a) school characteristics data from the Chicago Public Schools, (b) the 1997 Principal

Survey developed and administered by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, (c) interviews of 30 external partners of Chicago Annenberg networks, (d) interviews of a sample of 12 principals of schools participating in implementation networks, and (e) interviews of 70 top leaders and representatives of key sectors of the Challenge's external environment. Detailed descriptions of these data sources, the samples of persons from whom data were collected, and the methods used in data collection and analysis are contained in the appendix to this report.

### **The Baseline Report Series**

This report is part of a first series of reports from the Chicago Annenberg Research Project that will be released in 1998. This series draws from baseline survey, interviews, and documentary data collected in late 1996 and 1997, the first full year of Annenberg network funding and the research project's first year of data collection. This series documents and analyzes various "starting points" for the Chicago Challenge. These starting points concern the broader institutional contexts in which the Chicago Challenge was founded and has begun its work, and the conditions of schools and classrooms that the Challenge seeks to improve. These contexts also concern the development of the Challenge as an organization, the establishment and initial function of its networks—the primary organizational mechanism by which the Challenge seeks to promote school improvement—and the resources available to schools that can aid improvement.

Specific reports in this first series focus on: (a) the early history of the Chicago Challenge and its role in the broad context of school reform in Chicago; (b) characteristics of Chicago Challenge networks, with a particular focus on their organization, "theories-of-action," and the roles of their external partners; (c) initial function and accomplishments of Challenge schools and networks (this report); (d) the nature of student learning opportunities found in Chicago Annenberg schools in their first year of participation in the Challenge; (e) social support for student learning and academic press found in these schools during that first year; (f) the quantity and quality of human, social, and organizational resources available for school improvement in



Annenberg schools; and (g) opportunities for teacher professional learning and development as a specific resource for school improvement.

A second series of reports will be prepared in 1999, after the research project has completed a second full round of data collection. This second series will move beyond reports of “starting points” from baseline data and focus on change in Annenberg schools. It will draw on two and one-half years of longitudinal case study data of schools and classrooms and comparative cross-sectional data from 1997 and 1999 teacher, student, and principal surveys. It will document and analyze how schools have developed during their first three years of participation in the Chicago Challenge and how networks may have contributed to that development.

## **II. Characteristics of Annenberg Schools and Their Student Enrollments**

In 1996-97, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge supported a total of 220 schools in 25 implementation and 35 planning grant networks.<sup>1</sup> One hundred and ninety-three of these schools were elementary schools and 27 were high schools. Of all the Annenberg elementary schools, about 54 percent were members of implementation networks and 46 percent were members of planning networks. Of all the Annenberg high schools, 63 percent were members of implementation networks and 37 percent were members of planning networks. In all, 40 percent of the city's elementary schools and 40 percent of the city's high schools were part of networks during this first full school year of funding.

### **Characteristics of Annenberg Schools**

School characteristics data from the Chicago Public Schools indicate that the demographic characteristics of Annenberg schools reflect in large part the general characteristics of the system as a whole. Typically, they are predominantly African-American, predominantly Hispanic, or mixed African-American and Hispanic schools with substantial proportions of low-income and low-achieving students.

Upon close examination, however, some differences can be found between schools participating in the Challenge and other schools across the city. Compared with the city as a whole, a somewhat larger proportion of elementary schools in Annenberg implementation networks have predominantly low-income enrollments (see Table 1, next page). A slightly higher percentage of elementary schools in these networks are predominantly African-American or mixed African-American and Hispanic. While similar proportions of elementary schools in implementation networks and across the city are on academic probation, a somewhat greater proportion of Annenberg schools are low-achieving.<sup>2</sup> Finally, compared with elementary schools across the city, a slightly higher percentage of elementary schools in implementation networks have large student enrollments.

**TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristics of Elementary Schools Supported by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge**

	Implementation Network Schools (N = 104)	Planning Network Schools (N = 89)	Schools Not in Networks (N = 284)	Schools Citywide (N = 477)
<b>School Income Level</b>				
< 35% Low-Income	1%	9%	3%	4%
35% to 90% Low-Income	37%	36%	42%	40%
> 90% Low-Income	62%	55%	55%	56%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Composition</b>				
> 30% White	6%	14%	19%	15%
> 85% African-American	54%	44%	48%	49%
> 85% Hispanic	9%	8%	12%	10%
> 70% Mixed Minority	31%	34%	21%	26%
<b>School Achievement Level</b>				
< 15% At/Above Norms	17%	13%	14%	15%
16% to 35% At/Above Norms	70%	51%	49%	54%
> 35% At/Above Norms	13%	36%	37%	31%
<b>CPS Probation Status</b>				
On Probation	16%	17%	14%	15%
Not on Probation	84%	83%	86%	85%
<b>School Size</b>				
< 350 Students	7%	15%	15%	13%
351 to 700 Students	52%	53%	50%	51%
> 700 Students	41%	32%	35%	36%

*Note.* These data are for the 1995-96 school year, the latest year for which they were available. Low-income students are students eligible for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program. Percent of students at or above national norms is based on the average reading and math scores on the 1996 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Probation status is defined primarily, but not exclusively, as less than 15 percent of students scoring at or above national norms on the reading portion of the ITBS.

**TABLE 2: Demographic Characteristics of High Schools Supported by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge**

	Implementation Network Schools (N = 17)	Planning Network Schools (N = 10)	Schools Not in Networks (N = 40)	Schools Citywide (N = 67)
<b>School Income Level</b>				
< 35% Low-Income	0%	0%	0%	0%
35% to 90% Low-Income	81%	90%	86%	85%
> 90% Low-Income	19%	10%	14%	15%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Composition</b>				
> 30% White	13%	10%	11%	11%
> 85% African-American	62%	30%	42%	45%
> 85% Hispanic	0%	0%	11%	7%
> 70% Mixed Minority	25%	60%	36%	37%
<b>School Achievement Level</b>				
< 15% At/Above Norms	59%	40%	66%	60%
16% to 35% At/Above Norms	29%	20%	26%	26%
> 35% At/Above Norms	12%	40%	8%	14%
<b>CPS Probation Status</b>				
On Probation	47%	40%	68%	58%
Not on Probation	53%	60%	32%	42%
<b>School Size</b>				
< 350 Students	18%	20%	34%	28%
351 to 700 Students	59%	30%	40%	43%
> 700 Students	23%	50%	26%	29%

*Note.* These data are for the 1995-96 school year, the latest year for which they were available. Low-income students are students eligible for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program. Percent of students at or above national norms is based on the average reading and math scores on the 1996 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Probation status is defined primarily, but not exclusively, as less than 15 percent of students scoring at or above national norms on the reading portion of the ITBS.



High schools participating in the Chicago Challenge are similar to high schools across the system in some ways but not others (see Table 2). While high schools in implementation networks are roughly similar to citywide averages in percent low-income students and level of student achievement, they differ in racial/ethnic composition, probation status, and size. Compared with high schools across the city, a larger proportion of high schools in implementation networks are predominantly African-American. A greater percentage of high schools in planning networks are mixed African-American and Hispanic. High schools in planning networks tend to have higher achievement than high schools across the city. Smaller proportions of high schools in implementation and planning networks are on academic probation. Finally, larger proportions of high schools in implementation networks have mid-sized student enrollments while larger proportions of high schools in planning networks have higher enrollments.

### **Numbers and Characteristics of Students in Annenberg Schools**

In 1996-97, approximately 97,100 students were enrolled in schools that were members of implementation networks, and about 73,200 students were enrolled in schools in planning networks. These enrollments combined are 42 percent of all students in the Chicago Public Schools (see Table 3). Challenge schools enrolled 42 percent of all low-income students in the system and a similar proportion of all low-achieving students in the system. They also enrolled 45 percent of the African-American students and 37 percent of the Hispanic students in the system. Because they contain more schools, implementation networks typically enrolled greater proportions of students than planning networks.

Students enrolled in Challenge schools are largely representative of students across the school system (see Table 4). Across all Annenberg schools, 83 percent of the students are low income, the same proportion as the system. Fifty-nine percent of the students in Annenberg schools are African-American and 28 percent are Hispanic. These proportions are similar to systemwide proportions. Finally, 73 percent of the students in Annenberg schools are low-achieving, the same proportion of students systemwide.

Characteristics of students in schools in implementation networks vary somewhat from these general patterns. Implementation networks serve slightly larger proportions of low-income, African-American, and low-achieving students than the systemwide average. Among schools in planning networks, the proportions of low-income and low-achieving students are slightly smaller than systemwide.

**TABLE 3: Percentage of Chicago Public Schools Students in Annenberg Network Schools**

	All CPS Students	All Low-Income Students	All African-American Students	All Hispanic Students	All Low-Achieving Students
<b>All Annenberg Schools</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>42%</b>
Implementation Network Schools	24%	25%	27%	21%	26%
Planning Network Schools	18%	17%	18%	16%	16%

*Note.* Low-income students are students eligible for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program. Low-achieving students are students with an average score below national norms on both reading and math portions of the 1996 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

**TABLE 4: Number and Characteristics of Students in Annenberg Network Schools**

	N of Students	% Low-Income	% African-American	% Hispanic	% Low-Achieving
<b>All Annenberg Schools</b>	<b>170,261</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>73%</b>
Implementation Network Schools	97,095	86%	63%	28%	78%
Planning Network Schools	73,166	79%	54%	28%	67%
All CPS Schools	407,301	83%	54%	31%	73%

*Note.* Low-income students are students eligible for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program. Low-achieving students are students with an average score below national norms on both reading and math portions of the 1996 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.



### III. Implementation Networks and How They Function

In 1996-97, the Annenberg Challenge supported 25 implementation networks. These networks vary substantially in size, composition, the type of external partner, and primary substantive foci. Despite such variation, some common patterns are evident in how these networks have begun to function.<sup>3</sup>

#### Network Characteristics

**Size and composition.** The Challenge's 25 implementation networks range in size from three schools to 12 schools (see Table 5, next page). Eight networks have only three schools, while four have between 10 and 12 schools. The average number of schools within a network is five. These networks also differ in composition. Eleven of the 25 implementation networks are composed solely of elementary schools. Twelve networks consist of a mixture of schools, some elementary and some secondary schools. The primary pattern of mixed networks is multiple elementary schools and one high school or middle school. Only one network consists solely of high schools. Another is composed of small schools within one high school.

**External partners and substantive foci.** A wide variety of external partners are associated with the implementation networks. Approximately one-half of the partners are universities or professional educational organizations (e.g., Chicago Academy of Sciences, Chicago Teachers' Center). The other partners represent a diverse mix of neighborhood organizations (e.g., Logan Square), youth organizations (e.g., Youth Guidance), foundations (e.g., Great Books Foundation), education reform or advocacy groups (e.g., Designs for Change), and museums and arts organizations (e.g., Chicago Children's Museum).

As eclectic as the external partners are, so too are the primary substantive foci of these networks. Beyond their general emphases on curriculum and instruction and teacher professional development, these networks represent a diverse array of literacy, integrated curriculum, and arts and technology initiatives. Several focus on school



**TABLE 5: Characteristics of Implementation Networks, 1996-97**

Network	N of Elem. Schools	N of Middle Schools	N of High Schools	External Partner	Primary Focus
Amundsen	2	0	1	Chicago Academy of Sciences	Community-based ecology curriculum.
Best Practice	5	0	1	National-Louis University	Literacy, child-centered classrooms.
Center for School Improvement	7	0	0	University of Chicago	Literacy, leadership development, social services.
Chicago Comer School	12	0	0	Youth Guidance	Social services, mental health, school-community ties.
Chicago Middle Grades	1	2	0	Association of Middle-Level Schools	Curriculum and instruction—Paideia/Carnegie principles.
Confederation of Essential High Schools	0	0	6	CES Regional Center	CES Common Principles of Restructuring.
Educational Connection	4	0	0	Great Books Foundation	Great Books instruction; arts throughout the curriculum; technology; parent involvement.
Farren, Beethoven, Seward	3	0	0	Erikson Institute	Curriculum integration through the arts; health/science curriculum; integrated technology.
IMPACT	3	0	0	Chicago Children's Museum	Curriculum integration; parent and community involvement.
Julian Center	3	0	1	Metropolitan Family Services	School-to-work transition.
Lakeview Education and Arts	3	0	0	Chicago Teachers' Center	Curriculum integration through the arts.
Logan Square Collaborative	4	0	0	Logan Square Neighborhood Association	School-community ties.

**TABLE 5** (continued)

Network	N of Ele. Schools	N of Middle Schools	N of High Schools	External Partner	Primary Focus
Middle Schools Initiatives	4	1	0	Chicago Teachers' Center	Middle school restructuring, curriculum and instruction, parent involvement.
Network for Leadership Development	5	0	0	Designs for Change	Literacy.
North Lawndale Learning Community	9	0	1	Steans Family Foundation	Curriculum, instruction, assessment, leadership development.
Professional Development	3	0	0	Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center	Teacher professional development.
Small Schools	7	1	3	Small Schools Workshop	Small schools, teacher leadership and professional development.
South Shore African Village	9	0	1	Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore	Social capital development in and among schools, parents, residents, and community organizations.
Stone Soup	3	0	0	Hug-A-Book	Literacy.
Success for All	3	0	0	Johns Hopkins University	Literacy.
Teaching Integrated Learning Through Technology	3	0	1	Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education	Integration of technology and the arts into the curriculum.
Urban Imagination	5	0	1	Imagine Chicago	Reading comprehension through science and social studies curriculum.
Wendell Phillips Academy	0	0	1	Southside Partnership	Small schools.
West Humbolt Park Learning Community	6	1	1	DePaul Center for Urban Education	Standards-based curriculum, arts integration; school-community partnerships.
Woodlawn School/Community	4	0	1	Roosevelt University	Student transition from elementary to middle to high schools.

*Note.* The Wendell Phillips Academy Network consists of small schools within one high school.

leadership development, particularly among teachers. Two aim specifically to support the development of small schools and another seeks to address problems students face in the transition from elementary to middle to high schools. Finally, about half of the networks emphasize parent and community involvement and school-community ties. Two aim specifically to develop social services available to students, families, and schools.

### **Network Function**

The manner in which the implementation networks have begun to function was assessed in several ways, using principal survey data and data from principal and external partner interviews. First, we assessed the nature of working relationships among external partners and schools in the implementation networks. We looked at the perceived clarity of network goals and the extent to which external partners pressed schools in their networks to address problems of time, size, and isolation. We also examined various indicators of school participation in network activities: (a) the degree of alignment and centrality of network activities to school goals, (b) whether network participation is the primary activity or only one of many programs in a school, (c) the proportion of teachers participating in network activities, and (d) the frequency with which teachers participate in these activities. Finally, we assessed the extent to which participation in the Chicago Annenberg Challenge has increased school access to resources for improvement.

**Nature of working relationships.** Most principals characterize their schools' working relationships with external partners and other implementation network schools as largely cooperative and perhaps collaborative. More than three-quarters of them reported on the principal survey that their schools help to plan and run network activities with their external partners and other schools in their networks (see Table 6). Another 17 percent reported that their schools help to plan and run network activities with their external partners but not with other network schools. Only 6 percent reported that the external partner alone plans and runs network activities. Further, about three-quarters of the principals reported on the survey that their schools work closely with other schools in their implementation networks (see Table 7).

**TABLE 6: How Network Activities Have Been Planned and Run**

	By External Partner Alone	By External Partner and This School	By External Partner, This School, and Other Schools
Elementary Schools (N = 77)	5%	18%	77%
High Schools (N = 10)	10%	10%	80%
<b>Total (N = 87)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>77%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 7: “Schools in this network work closely with one another.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 74)	1%	20%	57%	22%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	44%	44%	11%
<b>Total (N = 83)</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>21%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

It is difficult to know from these data how far these working relationships extend. It is likely that principals’ reports are more reflective of their own interactions with other principals and external partners in regular, required planning meetings than of broad, schoolwide working relationships involving teachers and other staff members. Data presented later in this report on levels of teacher participation in network activities suggest that this may indeed be the case.

Beyond these general findings on working relationships, data from the principal survey point to the central role of external partners in the development and function of the networks. According to these data, external partners played a major role in establishing most implementation networks. Nearly two-thirds of the principals reported that their schools were invited to participate in networks by their external partners (see Table 8). Only 17 percent reported that they were invited to join their networks by other schools, while another 19 percent indicated that their own schools were primarily responsible for forming their networks. While indicating that they work closely with other schools in their networks, the principals reported that a great deal of their interaction is with the external partners. About 60 percent of elementary principals and almost 70 percent of high school principals indicated that most of the interactions they have within their networks are with their external partners (see Table 9).

**TABLE 8: How Schools Became Involved in Their Networks**

	Invited by External Partner	Invited by Another School in the Network	Primarily Responsible for Forming Network
Elementary Schools (N = 76)	65%	20%	16%
High Schools (N = 10)	60%	0%	40%
<b>Total (N = 86)</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>19%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 9: “Most of the interaction we have within the network is with the external partner.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 74)	5%	34%	55%	5%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	33%	56%	11%
<b>Total (N = 83)</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>6%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**Goal clarity and emphasis of challenge themes.** Virtually all principals indicated that their networks operate under a clear set of goals (see Table 10). Elementary principals are somewhat stronger but not significantly stronger in their assessment than high school principals.

**TABLE 10: “The Network has clear goals.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 75)	0%	4%	59%	37%
High Schools (N = 10)	0%	0%	80%	20%
<b>Total (N = 85)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>35%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

Along with goal clarity, substantial proportions of principals indicated that their external partners press their schools to address problems of time, size, and isolation (see



Table 11). According to our survey measure of external partner press, about 60 percent of the principals reported that their external partners apply a *moderate press* to address specific issues of time for teacher collaborative work, time for professional development, time for student learning, giving students more personal attention, the number of adults who work with children, the size of instructional groups, and strengthening school-community ties.<sup>4</sup> Another 12 percent of the principals were stronger in their assessment of external partner press. About 27 percent of the principals reported, however, that their external partners exert *minimal* or *no press*. Interestingly, high school principals were more likely than their elementary counterparts to report that their external partners press them on these three themes, although these differences are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 11: External Partner Press on Time, Size, and Isolation**

	<i>No Press</i>	<i>Minimal Press</i>	<i>Moderate Press</i>	<i>Strong Press</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	8%	21%	62%	10%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	11%	56%	33%
<b>Total (N = 82)</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>12%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.

**School participation in network activities.** Substantial variation exists in the role that Annenberg plays in schools and in the extent to which schools participate in network activities, according to principal reports. For many schools, the goals of their implementation networks align with their own goals for improvement. To many principals, Annenberg participation is considered central to their schools' work. At the same time, Annenberg activities exist in most schools alongside many other programs and initiatives. The existence of multiple programs and initiatives creates potential for fragmentation in improvement efforts and competition for teachers' and administrators'

time and attention. Such fragmentation and competition may threaten the coherence, potency, and success of efforts to improve these schools.

In general, the Challenge plays an important role in most Annenberg schools. According to our survey measure, almost 60 percent of the principals see the project as *central* to their schools (see Table 12). These principals perceive that the goals of their networks are clear and coincide with their schools' goals. They do not necessarily think, however, that among all the projects in their schools, teachers spend the most time in Annenberg activities. Another 20 percent of the principals see Annenberg participation as *very central* to their schools' work. Seventeen percent of the principals view participation in the Challenge as only *somewhat central* while about 5 percent see it as *not central*. Significantly greater proportions of elementary school principals than high school principals believe that participation in the Challenge is central to their schools' work.

**TABLE 12: Centrality of Annenberg Participation to Implementation Network Schools**

	<i>Not Central</i>	<i>Somewhat Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Very Central</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 77)	5%	13%	62%	20%
High Schools (N = 10)	0%	50%	30%	20%
<b>Total (N = 87)</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>20%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are statistically significant at .03. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.

Principals' responses to several individual survey items provide more detailed information about the role of the Challenge in implementation network schools. At the same time that most principals reported that network goals align with their schools' goals and that participation is central to their schools' work, most also indicated that Annenberg

exists alongside many other programs and improvement initiatives. Approximately three-quarters of principals indicated that Annenberg is only one of many other programs they have at their schools (see Table 13). Only one-quarter of principals indicated that there are few programs other than Annenberg at their schools.

**TABLE 13: “The Annenberg Challenge is just one of many programs we have at this school.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 75)	1%	21%	57%	20%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	33%	44%	22%
<b>Total (N = 84)</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>20%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

Principals’ reports suggest that other programs and initiatives in their schools compete for teachers’ time and attention and reduce the time teachers have to participate in network activities. Slightly less than half of the principals indicated that among all programs and initiatives at their schools, most teacher time is devoted to Annenberg activities (see Table 14). In addition, there is substantial variation across schools in the proportions of teachers who are reported by principals as participating in network activities (see Table 15). In almost 40 percent of the schools in implementation networks, principals reported that over 60 percent of their teachers participate in some way in network activities. At the same time, however, in almost one-third of the elementary schools in these networks, less than 20 percent of the teachers were reported to participate in network activities. In half of the high schools, less than 20 percent of the teachers participate in network activities. These data indicate that while teacher participation may

be strong in many schools, it is a problem in substantial proportions of others. On balance, however, concentrated efforts with a modest number of teachers initially may be strategic to developing local leadership and building a capacity for long-term school improvement. Only as the Chicago Annenberg Challenge actually unfolds will we be able to discern whether initial efforts deepen and broaden into comprehensive school change.

**TABLE 14: “Of all external projects, most teacher time is devoted to Annenberg activities.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 74)	3%	50%	35%	12%
High Schools (N = 9)	11%	33%	44%	11%
<b>Total (N = 83)</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>12%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 15: Percentage of Teachers Participating in Network Activities**

	Less than 20 %	21% to 40%	41% to 60%	61% to 80%	81% to 100%
Elementary Schools (N = 77)	31%	18%	13%	16%	22%
High Schools (N = 10)	50%	0%	0%	30%	20%
<b>Total (N = 87)</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>22%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

In addition, principals reported wide variation in the frequency with which teachers participate in network activities (see Table 16, next page). About 40 percent of

the elementary principals reported that their teachers participate in network activities at least once a week. Another 23 percent of these principals indicated that their teachers participate two to three times a month. At the same time, almost 40 percent of the elementary principals reported teacher participation at once a month or less. High school principals reported substantially lower rates of teacher participation in network activities. Eighty percent of these principals reported that their teachers participate in network activities about once a month. Only 20 percent indicated that their teachers participate with greater frequency.

**TABLE 16: Frequency with Which Teachers Participate in Network Activities**

	< Once a Month	About Once a Month	2 to 3 Times a Month	Weekly	2 to 3 Times a Week	Daily
Elementary Schools (N = 76)	11%	26%	23%	16%	13%	11%
High Schools (N = 10)	0%	80%	10%	10%	0%	0%
<b>Total (N = 86)</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>7%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are statistically significant at .03.

**Resources for school improvement.** Most principals believe that participation in the Annenberg Challenge has increased their access to resources for school improvement (see Table 17). According to our survey measure, about half of the elementary principals and two-thirds of the high school principals reported *moderate access*, meaning they believe that their implementation networks provide useful resources and that their external partners provide in-kind services and resources that they need. These principals also believe, but perhaps not as strongly, that participating in the Annenberg Challenge has increased their ability to bring additional resources and prestige to their schools. Another 13 percent of the elementary principals indicated *high access*, meaning they

strongly believe that participation has increased their access to all these resources. About one-third of elementary and high school principals reported *low access*. They agree that their networks have brought valuable resources to their schools, but are equivocal in their views that their external partners provide useful in-kind services and resources and that their own ability to bring new resources to their schools has increased. These principals see no additional prestige associated with being an Annenberg school.

**TABLE 17: Access to Resources for School Improvement**

	<i>No Access</i>	<i>Low Access</i>	<i>Moderate Access</i>	<i>High Access</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 78)	4%	36%	47%	13%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	33%	67%	0%
<b>Total (N = 87)</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>12%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.





#### **IV. Initial Accomplishments of Implementation Networks**

Initial accomplishments of implementation networks were examined in two ways. First, we looked at the extent to which working with external partners and other schools in networks was thought by principals to have promoted school improvement. Second, we examined the extent to which working with external partners and other network schools was thought to have reduced school-community isolation. For this assessment, we drew on data from the principal survey, interviews with external partners, and principal interviews. Our findings are based in large part on self-report data. As such, they may be more positive in their estimations than reports by independent observers.<sup>5</sup>

##### **School Improvement**

The principals of schools in implementation networks are generally positive in their views that working with their external partners has helped to promote school improvement (see Table 18, next page). About 60 percent of the principals attributed *moderate improvement* to these relationships. These principals believe that working with their external partners has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into their schools, increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning, led to improved student learning, refocused goals and priorities of their schools, and led teachers to change their classroom teaching. Another 27 percent of the principals were even more positive in their assessments. Only 12 percent of the principals saw *minimal improvement* from working with their external partners. Elementary school and high school principals are similarly positive about the contributions of their external partners.

**TABLE 18: Impact of Working with External Partners on School Improvement**

	<i>Minimal Improvement</i>	<i>Moderate Improvement</i>	<i>Significant Improvement</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 74)	12%	62%	26%
High Schools (N = 9)	11%	56%	33%
<b>Total (N = 83)</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>27%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.

Principals are also positive in their views that working with other schools in their networks has promoted school improvement (see Table 19). Again, about 60 percent of the principals reported *moderate improvement* associated with working with other network schools. Overall, about 30 percent of the principals reported significant improvement. Only about 10 percent saw *some* or *no improvement* attributable to these relationships.

**TABLE 19: Impact of Working with Other Schools in Networks on School Improvement**

	<i>No Improvement</i>	<i>Some Improvement</i>	<i>Moderate Improvement</i>	<i>Significant Improvement</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 75)	1%	8%	60%	31%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	11%	78%	11%
<b>Total (N = 84)</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>29%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.

Data from the external partner interviews provide more detailed testimony of some initial accomplishments in school improvement and how they were achieved. Almost two-thirds of the 30 external partners we interviewed noted some manner of school improvement in their networks. Nearly three-quarters of those who spoke of school improvement pointed particularly to the development of within-school teacher collaboration. They spoke of teachers beginning to work together to identify common issues across their classrooms, to suggest possible solutions, and to gain a sense of solidarity in place of seclusion. One partner described his network's strategy of modeling teaching practices as a method of promoting such working relationships:

[This strategy] can create demonstration sites of practice that are everything from what's occurring at the classroom level to what's occurring at the school level and everything in between. Like a model social service team or a model leadership team. People can go and spend time with those groups of people and say this is what they do. This is how they carry out their work. Here's the nature of how they speak to the issues of benchmarking. Here's how they plan for it programmatically.

Teacher networking between schools was discussed by nearly one-third of the partners who spoke of school improvement. Similar in effect to within-school networking, between-school networking was perceived to give teachers a sense of empowerment as professionals and to provide a forum for discussing common teaching issues. One partner attributed improvements in student learning in his network's schools to the information shared through network activities and to a new sense of community that has grown up around those activities:

We actually meet all three faculties together. Last year we did it twice; then [we] break down by grade levels and work on different kinds of goals. It's making the community smaller. Teachers across schools can talk to each other, across grade levels about what you are doing. It's definitely, the network strengthens these schools' ability to plan curriculum, to plan activities that will help them. And we [external partners] can't take credit for everything that's going on in those schools, in terms of "we" now means the whole partnership.

Several external partners have infused networking activities with new learning opportunities for teachers. Eight external partners cited teacher professional development

as an important aspect of their networks. One partner offered the following description of how his network used collaborative professional development as a focus for network activity:

Isolation, that word, makes a big difference. These schools, for example, by having a shared vision, [are] saying, “Okay, we will integrate the arts to raise student achievement.” They decided together on shared professional development. They put \$5,000 in a year so that we can plan a professional development program for all three schools.

Principal networking was cited by two external partners as an important factor in school improvement. Meetings that bring together principals from network schools provide new opportunities for sharing information and exchanging advice on a range of issues, including how to respond to Chicago Public School board policies and state mandates. One partner argued that principal collaboration has been as important as teacher collaboration for school improvement in his network. Referring to a specific meeting of principals held prior to his interview, this external partner claimed:

There’s just a sense that [if] principals can come together and have time for each other, [it] is as important as it is for teachers. And we saw that this morning, where a couple of ideas were put on the table. Nobody knew what a certain school was doing like on scheduling, or even the very last point that [one principal] made about state Chapter 1 dollars or so on. And you know, there might be certain rallying points that fundamentally affect the schools, particularly when it affects funding or personnel or what not.

Other external partners spoke of how schools in their networks have begun to address the issue of time by rearranging school calendars and time schedules. Five partners described changes in scheduling as a way to expand teacher joint planning time. One partner described his network’s experience as follows:

Some schools have seen a great benefit in that they went to restructured days, which is a way for them to create more time at the local school level for them to be doing planning and staff development and working together. So that’s been a positive move for many of the schools to do that.

It is interesting to note that despite the general benefits claimed, restructuring time has been pursued, according to external partner reports, more on a school-by-school basis than as a network-wide initiative. This is a necessity because restructuring time requires a school-by-school union vote to become effective. It is impossible to do network-wide at the moment without a central policy change.

Similarly, the issue of school and class size has not yet been approached systematically at the network level. Some external partners expressed frustration in their interviews at their inability to effect change in class size because of lack of funding and because of Chicago Public Schools personnel and enrollment policies. Other external partners have worked with individual schools to reduce student-adult ratios in the classrooms by introducing parent volunteers and university student interns. One network used Annenberg funds to create a new teaching position to reduce class size at one grade level. Most external partners who discussed size in their interviews linked lack of progress to problems of physical space. They observed that even with the introduction of parent volunteers or teacher aides, space limitations in schools prohibit the division of classes into smaller learning groups that could engage in separate, more personalized learning activities.

### **Reducing School-Community Isolation**

Principals' assessments of the impact of network participation on reducing school-community isolation are more varied than their reports concerning school improvement (see Table 20, next page). About half of the principals reported on the survey that working with their external partners and with schools in their networks has led to *moderate reduction* in isolation. These principals claimed that these relationships have promoted closer ties to their schools' communities and have increased parent involvement in their schools. These principals also indicated that working with external partners has encouraged participation of other community organizations in their schools. Another 12 percent of the principals attributed *significant reduction* in school-community isolation to working with external partners and other network schools. Twenty-one percent of principals reported only *some reduction*, however. These principals think that



working with external partners and other network schools has helped increase school-community ties and encouraged participation of other community organizations in their schools. These principals do not think that working with their external partners or other network schools has helped increase parent involvement in their schools. Finally, about 15 percent of the principals saw *limited reduction* or little impact of working with their external partners and other network schools on reducing school-community isolation.

**TABLE 20: Impact of Network Participation on Reducing School-Community Isolation**

	<i>Limited Reduction</i>	<i>Some Reduction</i>	<i>Moderate Reduction</i>	<i>Significant Reduction</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 76)	13%	21%	54%	12%
High Schools (N = 9)	33%	22%	33%	11%
<b>Total (N = 85)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>12%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.

Overall, elementary school principals were more positive about network impact on improving school relations with parents and the community than high school principals—although perhaps because of the small number of high schools in the sample, these differences are not statistically significant. Sixty-six percent of the elementary school principals reported moderate to significant impact, compared with 44 percent of the high school principals. Only 13 percent of the elementary principals saw little impact, compared with one-third of the high school principals.

Four of the external partners we interviewed described in detail reductions in school-community isolation that they associated with new parent involvement programs. One partner described how school-community meetings help teachers and principals connect to parents and community members and learn about their students' lives outside

of school. These meetings do more than help teachers and principals learn about their communities. This partner also thought reduction in school-community isolation was reduced by parents and community members hearing from teachers and administrators about how they were working with students and what they were doing to improve their schools. The partner explained:

The first meeting served to break down some of the isolation. I think that telling their stories about what [teachers and administrators] have learned from each other in this network, talking with the community and sharing with it how they are growing as professionals will also help to break down the isolation between school and the community it serves.

As noted earlier, parent involvement programs have been cited as ways to address problems of time and size in schools. Several networks used these programs to bring parents into classrooms, either freeing teachers for planning time or reducing student-adult ratios. One program used parents as “buddy readers” to provide more one-on-one reading time for early primary grade students. Bringing parents into classrooms has provided additional human resources to some schools, and as several external partners noted, it has created new opportunities for school-parent communication. According to the external partners we interviewed, these programs have created new opportunities for teachers to learn about students and their communities and for parents to learn about their children’s schools.

### **Correlates of Initial Reports of Progress**

The importance of teacher participation, time, resources, and coherence to the effectiveness of networks, and thus to the Challenge’s progress, is illustrated in the results of correlational analyses displayed in Tables 21 and 22 (pages 35 and 36). These analyses were performed using items and measures from the principal survey that are reported in Tables 13-20 and Table 24. The percentage of teachers within a school who participate in network activities and the frequency of their participation are related positively and significantly to principals’ reports of school improvement and reductions in school-community isolation. Lack of time for teacher participation in networks is negatively and significantly related to principals’ reports of school improvement. There are also

significant positive relationships between the adequacy of school resources to support worthwhile network participation and reports of school improvement and reductions in school-community isolation attributable to network participation. Positive, statistically significant relationships exist between reports of school improvement and reductions in school-community isolation and the time teachers devote to Annenberg activities relative to the time they devote to other programs in their schools. Among elementary schools, the multiplicity of programs in schools is related positively to principal reports of school improvement and reductions in school-community isolation. Given the reasoning above, this counterintuitive finding suggests that, at least among these elementary schools, the number of programs in a school may be less important than whether those programs complement or conflict with one another in helping a school to improve. We will be able to examine this possibility more fully in our case study data.

This does not appear to be the case among high schools, where the relationship between the multiplicity of programs and school improvement from network participation is negative (see Table 22). This relationship suggests greater fragmentation and conflict among programs in high schools than in elementary schools. As is the case in elementary schools, however, lack of time for teacher participation in networks, the adequacy of school resources for worthwhile network participation, and the relative devotion of teacher time to Annenberg activities are all significantly related to outcomes of working with external partners and other network schools.

**TABLE 21: Correlations Between Factors Related to Network Participation and Initial Outcomes: Elementary Schools in Implementation and Planning Networks (N = 112 to 140)**

	Impact of Working with External Partners on School Improvement	Impact of Working with Other Network Schools on School Improvement	Impact of Network Participation on Reducing School- Community Isolation
Percentage of teachers participating in network activities.	.385 **	.360 **	.183 *
Frequency of teacher participation.	.295 **	.212 **	.203 *
Lack of time for teacher participation.	-.212 *	-.242 **	-.099
Adequacy of school resources to make participation worthwhile.	.373 **	.359 **	.456 **
Multiplicity of programs at school.	.275 **	.304 **	.221 **
Relative devotion of teacher time to Annenberg activities.	.293 **	.374 **	.277 **

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

*Note.* These analyses were performed using items and measures from the principal survey that are reported in Tables 13-20 and Table 24.

**TABLE 22: Correlations Between Factors Related to Network Participation and Initial Outcomes: High Schools in Implementation and Planning Networks (N = 14 to 16)**

	Impact of Working with External Partners on School Improvement	Impact of Working with Other Network Schools on School Improvement	Impact of Network Participation on Reducing School-Community Isolation
Percentage of teachers participating in network activities.	.087	.116	-.237
Frequency of teacher participation.	.173	.253	-.289
Lack of time for teacher participation.	-.312	-.460 *	-.538 **
Adequacy of school resources to make participation worthwhile.	.436 *	.474 *	.561 **
Multiplicity of programs at school.	-.517 **	-.494 *	-.269
Relative devotion of teacher time to Annenberg activities.	.709 ***	.684 ***	.430 *

\*  $p < .10$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

*Note.* These analyses were performed using items and measures from the principal survey that are reported in Tables 13-20 and Table 24.

## V. Challenges to Networks and Schools

Chicago Annenberg networks and schools face a number of challenges in their work. These challenges come from several different sources and manifest themselves at different levels of intensity. Perceptions of these challenges, as reported in the principal survey, are summarized in Table 23. Overall, 71 percent of the principals perceived *moderate challenge* to their schools' participation in networks. For them, this challenge comes primarily from lack of time for teacher participation and lack of resources needed for participation to be truly worthwhile. Sixteen percent of the principals perceived *significant* or *serious challenge* to their schools' participation. In addition to citing a lack of time and resources, these principals believe that central office priorities conflict with those of their networks and that administrative demands of the Challenge take time from network activities. Principals who saw *serious challenge* to their networks also perceive that the Challenge makes requests that conflict with network plans. They think that the Challenge leadership is generally unavailable to support their networks when needed.

**TABLE 23: Challenges to Effective Network Participation**

	<i>No Challenge</i>	<i>Moderate Challenge</i>	<i>Significant Challenge</i>	<i>Serious Challenge</i>
Elementary Schools (N = 76)	13%	71%	13%	3%
High Schools (N = 9)	11%	78%	0%	11%
<b>Total (N = 85)</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant. See Appendix for a detailed description of the questions that make up this measure category.

Principals' responses to individual survey items provide more detailed perspectives on the challenges schools and networks face. It is important to note that



some challenges are identified by principals and external partners much more frequently than others. By exploring each in some detail, we do not mean to imply that these challenges are experienced similarly by all schools and networks. Even when reported in a small number of cases, these challenges represent important roadblocks to change.

**The Problem of Time and Resources**

When asked specifically whether enough time is available for teachers to participate in network activities, almost 40 percent of the principals reported on the principal survey that little time is available (see Table 24). When asked whether their schools have enough staff, time, and other resources to make participation worthwhile, approximately 45 percent expressed concern that a lack of resources will compromise the benefits of network participation (see Table 25).

**TABLE 24: “There is little time for teachers to participate in network activities.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	7%	56%	30%	6%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	33%	44%	22%
<b>Total (N = 82)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>7%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 25: “This school has enough staff, time, and other resources to make participation in the Annenberg network really pay off for this school.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 72)	1%	40%	44%	14%
High Schools (N = 9)	11%	56%	11%	22%
<b>Total (N = 81)</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>15%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

Half of the principals we interviewed reported specific challenges to network participation related to time. Their concerns reflect those reported in the principal survey. These principals each pointed to a lack of time to attend network meetings themselves or to send members of their staffs. While these principals find their network meetings generally worthwhile, they explained that hiring the substitute teachers necessary to release faculty members has been difficult and expensive. One principal summed up the sentiments of others this way:

My biggest problem is to free up enough of my cadre to attend the monthly [network] meetings. We can't always free them up. Some are classroom teachers, so you have to be concerned about how to get coverage.

Several other time-related issues were raised by these principals. One issue concerned the number of meetings scheduled by their networks and the total amount of time attendance would require. Another issue concerned the amount of time required to complete the network reports required by the Challenge (see page 41). A third issue concerned the geographical proximity of these principals' schools to other schools in the network. The distances that some have to travel to meet with other schools or to attend network meetings at different school sites created a drain on available time and posed a constraint on network participation, particularly working with other schools.

### Central Office Policies and Priorities

Another challenge concerns schools' relationship with the CPS central office. When asked whether central office priorities often conflict with those of their networks, 28 percent of the principals agreed or strongly agreed that there is conflict (see Table 26). Most principals do not see the central office as a major impediment.

**TABLE 26: "Central office priorities often conflict with those of our network."**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 74)	5%	68%	20%	7%
High Schools (N = 9)	11%	56%	33%	0%
<b>Total (N = 83)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>6%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

One-fifth of the 30 external partners we interviewed cited problems in carrying out their networks' activities in the face of changing policies of the Chicago Public Schools central office. According to these partners, the system's elimination of student social promotion, tying promotion to standardized test performance, mandatory summer school for low-achieving students, and the threat of academic probation and reconstitution have disrupted their work and distracted schools from long-term network goals. One external partner described the changing policy environment and its effects on his network program this way:

We wrote the planning proposal almost two years ago. The political and management administration of the Chicago Public Schools is totally different now. So, we're now operating in a totally different and rapidly changing school district environment. So, you have the bridge program. You have the graduation requirements. . . You now have the requirements mandating three years of math and science in the high school, those kinds of things. The environment has changed so rapidly that the principals and teachers again are reverting back to

being so involved in trying to implement these [CPS] changes, they're using their old skill base and just sort of still trying to implement them in the old paradigm. And some of this stuff and the way it's coming down is still supporting the old paradigm. So the biggest problem has been the bigger issue of reform.

### Reporting and Accountability Requirements

Another type of challenge examined on the principal survey concerns the administrative demands and program requests made of networks by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge leadership and staff. About one-fifth of the principals in implementation networks think that the Challenge's administrative demands compete for time to participate in network activities (see Table 27). Fourteen percent believe that Challenge leadership makes requests that conflict with their networks' plans (see Table 28, next page).

**TABLE 27: "Administrative demands of the Annenberg Challenge often take time away from network activities."**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 72)	1%	76%	18%	4%
High Schools (N = 8)	0%	88%	13%	0%
<b>Total (N = 80)</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>4%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 28: “Challenge leadership often makes requests that seem to conflict with the plans of our network.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	10%	75%	12%	3%
High Schools (N = 8)	0%	100%	0%	0%
<b>Total (N = 81)</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

Most of the external partners we interviewed expressed no criticism of the Challenge’s administrative requirements; however, five partners expressed concern that the requirements for reporting and accountability were too demanding. These partners considered the number of reports required and the type of questions asked to be overly burdensome. One partner went so far as to suggest that the reporting process communicated distrust on the part of the Challenge leadership.

First of all, the whole reporting process has been a real pain. It’s almost as if it’s a sense of distrust between the Chicago Annenberg Challenge and schools in the network. And this is represented in two ways. Number one, the improvements in the reports and secondly, in the way they’re allocating funding. They give you a total amount for a grant, in terms of funding, and then they hold on to part of it and you have to say our second grant now is just to get us on the calendar that they wanted. It’s a six-month grant; they only gave us part of it. We have to go back and do a report, so we had to hire somebody just to do this.

### **Internal School Politics and Working Relationships**

In addition to issues of time, central office priorities, and administrative demands from the Challenge, several external partners identified other challenges to their work. One of those challenges is dealing with politics and problems of trust at the school level. Five of the 30 partners we interviewed discussed how adversarial and non-supportive working

relationships between teachers and principals in some of their schools have compromised teacher participation in network activities. Several partners indicated that if a network program was advocated by the Local School Council without support of the principal, the external partner faced successive roadblocks in attempting to work with or around the principal.

Most external partners stressed the need to develop strong trust relationships with local school actors. They indicated that these trust relationships are more easily and readily formed in schools where the actors have already established positive working relationships with one another. As one partner noted, “The relationship that the principal has to her faculty and staff is absolutely intricately bound up with however successful you are going to be at the school.” This partner indicated that she has two principals in her network who have “incredibly good” relationships with their faculties and one principal who does not. The partner attributed most of the differences among these schools in network participation and program implementation to this factor.

### **Developing School Ownership**

Another challenge mentioned by a number of external partners concerns promoting school ownership of networks and their activities. Five partners spoke of themselves as facilitators of a bottom-up school development process. They noted, however, that many of the schools they are working with are looking to be told what to do rather than taking initiative themselves. One of these partners observed that lack of dedication among school staff to the network program has resulted in the partner directing network activities rather than facilitating them:

While they know this is supposed to be driven by the schools, they know the external partner was really in the driver’s seat. And that to me was the other frustration, that we kept trying to push as much as we could, that schools need to take ownership of this. The schools need to take this on. The schools need to really be running this network. They’re still looking for us to do it.

When schools do not take ownership or when schools do not have positive working relationships between teachers and administrators, as described earlier, external partners have difficulty developing a common vision within schools and among schools

in their networks. Without a common vision, participation in network activities is compromised. According to one partner:

Reaching agreements concerning goals and priorities, that's a disaster at the moment. We went in. . .saying we were going to do what we've done. A lot of those things. . .such as bringing in outside resources, we did all that. But especially from the high school side, they haven't done anything. They haven't kept up with what they said they were going to do in the first place.

Lack of school ownership, coupled with difficulties of communication within schools, has also caused problems of overextension among external partners in five implementation networks. One partner described how she must use teachers to coordinate network activities because of logistical and communication demands and the lack of a network staff support. She observed:

All I hear is what the principals and the teachers tell me about the activities that are going on. The biggest problem I would say was not having a staff that was responsible for coordinating the activities of [all the] buildings, not having a staff that was dedicated to that, having to rely on teachers in the building to do much of the work without them having release time.

The external partner claimed to be delegating administrative tasks to already overburdened teachers in the network. This administrative work does not reflect the type or level of school engagement in substantive goals and activities sought by the partners.

### **“Scaling Up” for Whole School Change**

A final challenge identified by several external partners concerns “scaling up” the work that they are doing with small groups to promote whole school change. Two partners spoke specifically of the difficulty of moving their particular programs beyond a core group of teachers. While these partners believe that they have been successful in implementing their programs with the initial groups of teachers participating in their networks, they do not consider themselves successful in moving their innovations beyond these groups. One of these external partners explained:

There's been a tendency to become introverted and turn inward, just talk to ourselves, meaning to the core teachers in the network, and not finding ways to



expand the influence of the network and to really impact whole school change. A lot of the teachers in the network are very autonomous and are much more single-mindedly concerned about creating a wonderful learning environment for their kids, which is great. But how to get beyond that and try to impact the teachers in the whole school?

Two other external partners discussed a related problem of using their programs to create coherence in a school full of programs and interventions. Consistent with findings of the principal survey discussed earlier, these partners observed that their network activities compete with many other initiatives for time and attention in their schools. In some schools, competing initiatives have been adopted to appease opposing factions. In these cases, external partners who attempted to promote whole school change found that they had limited influence. One partner explained the constraint he confronts this way:

I think that new schools that get into this don't understand [a program] as an organizing principle. All schools now need to have many initiatives to be able to fund the different things that they want to have happen in their school. It can't be from one place. But this is an organizing area as opposed to some of the cosmetic grants that they would use; but still, even in our network, they don't understand that yet. [They think] it's an addition. It's something else to do, not a way to organize a school. . . And hopefully, through networking, they will see that, will take another step toward, "Oh, this is how I'm going to organize all my initiatives and which ones I want to be a part of and which ones our school just doesn't fit into."



## **VI. Support of Network and School Activity**

In this section, we examine external partners' and principals' views of the support they receive for network activities from various groups and organizations, including the Challenge leadership and staff.

### **General Support from Groups and Organizations**

In general, most principals whose schools participate in implementation networks see few sources of assistance and support for network activity (see Table 29, next page). Two of the most frequently cited sources of support, according to the principal survey, come from Local School Councils (LSCs) and parents. The other two most frequently cited sources of support are local colleges and universities and foundations. That principals might cite these sources is not particularly surprising, given the importance of LSCs and parents to local decision making and the role of colleges, universities, and foundations as traditional “suppliers” of human and financial resources for school improvement. It is important to note, however, that while principals considered these groups and organizations their strongest sources of support, only a minority indicated that these groups actually made network activities easier. Approximately 60 percent of the principals indicated that these groups and organizations have no real effect on network activities. Only with regard to parent support were elementary principals significantly different from high school principals in their assessments. These findings suggest that Annenberg networks are not yet well integrated into the basic organization and governance structures of local schools.

Relatively few principals of schools in implementation networks saw the CPS central office, the CPS regional offices, school reform groups, and business associations as strong sources of support. Eighty percent or more of these principals indicated that these offices and organizations have no real effect on their networks' activities. Seventy-two percent reported that community organizations have no real effect either. Of all these potential sources of support, only one was identified by a noticeable group of principals as making network activities more difficult—the CPS central office (see earlier discussion on page 40).

**TABLE 29: Effects of Groups and Organizations on Network Activities**

	Made Work More Difficult	No Real Effect	Made Work Easier
<b>Local School Council</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 76)	3%	61%	37%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	67%	33%
<b>Total (N = 85)</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Parents</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 76)	0%	54%	46%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	89%	11%
<b>Total (N = 85)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Community Organizations</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	1%	71%	27%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	78%	22%
<b>Total (N = 85)</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>CPS Central Office</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	11%	80%	10%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	78%	22%
<b>Total (N = 82)</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>CPS Regional Offices</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 74)	3%	87%	11%
High Schools (N = 9)	0.0%	78%	22%
<b>Total (N = 83)</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>School Reform Groups</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	3%	86%	11%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	78%	22%
<b>Total (N = 82)</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>12%</b>

**TABLE 29** (continued)

	Made Work More Difficult	No Real Effect	Made Work Easier
<b>Business Associations</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	0%	82%	18%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	89%	11%
<b>Total (N = 82)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Local Colleges and Universities</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 73)	0%	62%	38%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	56%	44%
<b>Total (N = 82)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Foundations</b>			
Elementary Schools (N = 72)	0%	63%	38%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	56%	44%
<b>Total (N = 81)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant, except for differences concerning the effects of parents. Those differences are statistically significant at .05.

### **Support Provided by the Challenge**

Principals of schools in implementation networks are generally positive about the support they receive from Challenge leadership and staff. Data from the principal survey indicate that about 88 percent of the elementary and high school principals perceive the Challenge leaders to be available to support their networks (see Table 30, next page). These data indicate that overall, about half of the principals of schools in implementation networks think that the Challenge leadership has made the work of their networks easier (see Table 31, next page).

**TABLE 30: “The Challenge leadership is usually available to support our network.”**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Elementary Schools (N = 72)	0%	13%	69%	18%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	11%	67%	22%
<b>Total (N = 81)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>19%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 31: Overall Effect of CAC Leadership on Network Activities**

	Made Work More Difficult	No Real Effect	Made Work Easier
Elementary Schools (N = 71)	3%	52%	45%
High Schools (N = 9)	0%	33%	67%
<b>Total (N = 80)</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>48%</b>

*Note.* Differences between elementary and high schools are not statistically significant.

This sense of support reflected in principals’ responses to the survey is also apparent in interviews of external partners and principals of implementation networks. These external partners and principals are generally satisfied with the support they receive from the Challenge leadership. Of the 10 principals who discussed Challenge and external partner support, all agreed that the amount of support they receive is adequate or more than expected. Of the 14 external partners who discussed the matter, eight feel that the Challenge is extremely responsive to their needs whenever they make requests. One of the external partners commented that he has always found the Challenge leadership and staff supportive:

They're always available. If I call up, they're all lovely. They've all been wonderfully responsive.

A few external partners interviewed were not so positive. The interview data reveal some of the details of their concerns. Six of the 14 partners who discussed Challenge support reported that the leadership and staff has not fully satisfied their expectations. Most of these partners said they want the Challenge to take a more proactive role in guiding the networks. One external partner described the role she envisioned for Challenge leadership and staff this way:

I think I would have liked to have them contact us earlier, come out and say, "Where are you at?" . . . I guess I just feel if somebody had come out and said, "Look, how are you doing?" I guess held our hand a little bit a little earlier on. Whether that means having the workshops earlier or having an individual [from the Challenge] call us, I don't know.

Two of the six dissatisfied partners would like leadership and staff to visit more schools. As one external partner advised:

I think it's really important for the program officer to visit at least some of the schools. We don't expect them to visit all of the schools. That's too hard, and we know how many schools [they] operate. But at least to visit some of the schools so the program officer can really also stand on the ground to see some of the questions. Otherwise when they come here, they say this, this, and this, and they don't even know what's going on. So our reporting and their personal experience is a lot different.

Even among the most satisfied partners, most raised concerns about several administrative issues. Over three-quarters of these concerns related to communication between the external partners and the Challenge leadership and staff. The partners noted a lack of clarity in reporting guidelines and insufficient advance notice of Challenge activities and proposal and report deadlines. One partner pointed to the rapid pace of work and change at the Challenge office as a contributing factor:

It's just that I feel that they're so much in flux all the time, it's just the name of the game. They're so much in flux that we get caught up in the middle of the flux. In two weeks, I could probably call back and ask if you have any information about when the proposal is due and what the guidelines are. They may not have



them—it wouldn't surprise me at all if we don't have any guidelines until two weeks before the proposal is due, given my experience.

This partner also attributed communication problems to staff shortages and overload:

They're always catching up. It's not their fault. It's the fault of insufficient funding in that line of activity. I figure they are very hard working and good people. There's a lot of integrity there, so it's just a question of being overwhelmed in this work.

Nearly half of those external partners who expressed dissatisfaction with the Challenge's leadership cited lack of support for networking among the external partners. One partner suggested a detailed directory as a starting point:

As far as I know, there is not a brief description of what the other networks are doing or what they're about or who's involved, you know, what schools. We have a one page contact list of the outside partners. That's quite honestly the only information. I couldn't tell you one thing that another network is doing.

This comment and others like it indicate that while most external partners believe that they have a good relationship with Challenge leadership and staff, most think that they could receive additional support from one another. They hope to learn from other partners' experiences in working with the schools and in working with the Challenge itself. It should be noted that the first of two descriptive directories of implementation networks was developed and distributed by the Challenge staff in September 1997, after these interviews were conducted.

Several external partners recommended in their interviews that the Challenge should organize meetings for the external partners. One of the three partners who made this suggestion proposed meetings that break into common groupings based on network program or grade-levels served:

One thing [we have] suggested all along is that the networks' external partners get together to share what they have done. Let's learn from each other, that kind of thing. Because we have common goals, common issues, and common problems probably and we never get together, except that [time, size, and isolation] workshop. . . We have very different issues here and I think we would like to meet some more with those who worked with primary, early childhood schools,

something like that so we have more similar issues. And, I think that kind of meeting would be more beneficial.

Data from the external partner interviews indicate that the time, size, and isolation workshops sponsored by the Challenge leadership during spring 1997 were very positively received. The seven external partners who commented in detail on these workshops indicated that they were well-designed and worthwhile. Several issues were raised, however, with the timing of the workshops. One external partner noted that while it was good to hear what implementation networks were doing and to talk with members of planning networks, it would have been more helpful if this experience had come earlier in the process.

Other external partners expressed concern about the timing of these events and their conflict with important system- and school-level activities. One partner pointed out that the workshops were scheduled near the school system's administration of the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) tests. According to this partner, this created problems at the school and limited their participation. In an interview that took place the day before the workshops, this partner observed:

We're not going tomorrow because it's just so hard, and this week especially, it's IGAP week. It's a really frightening time for schools, and you just can't pull out classroom teachers at this time. So that was frustrating because I felt embarrassed to go to the principal and say, "Do you remember you agreed to do this training and I need somebody to train?" I felt myself holding my breath because I felt embarrassed to ask them.

Two other partners noted that holding workshops during the school day presented problems for school personnel. One of these partners wondered:

I can't understand why they ask for classroom teachers to come to their meetings during the day, when that means having to put a substitute in the rooms. We had to take some teachers because we were [presenting at the workshop]; otherwise we would not have gone.

We turn now from these assessments of support provided by the Challenge to an examination of how the Chicago Challenge is perceived by its external stakeholders.



## **VII. External Perceptions of the Chicago Challenge**

Interviews with top leaders and representatives of key external groups and organizations reveal a wide range of opinions and understandings of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. They reveal different expectations for the Challenge and varied predictions for its success. These interviews also show a substantial lack of knowledge about the Challenge and what it is trying to accomplish. This may limit the prospects of success for the Challenge because these groups and organizations represent important sources of support. Their leaders and representatives will also, sooner or later, develop judgments about the effectiveness of the Challenge and may play a role in whether the work of the Challenge is sustained over time. Without clear and consistent understanding, then, ongoing support from these sectors may be difficult to obtain. Furthermore, without clear understanding of the Challenge and what it seeks to accomplish, the bases on which judgments are made will be weak.

To review, we interviewed 70 leaders and representatives of seven organizational sectors of the Challenge's external environment. These sectors include the business community, community organizations and education reform groups, the foundation community, government (CPS, city, and state), higher education, organized labor, and the media. In this section, we present our findings from these interviews as they relate to four general areas. The first area concerns perceptions of the Chicago Challenge's goals. The second concerns predictions of whether the Chicago Challenge will succeed. The third area considers the evidence that leaders and representatives of these sectors would find satisfactory to indicate that the Challenge is successful. The final area concerns the advice that these leaders and representatives have to offer about the next stages of the Challenge.

### **Goals of the Chicago Challenge**

The leaders and representatives of external groups and organizations we interviewed held different conceptions of the goals of the Chicago Challenge. These perceptions are arrayed by organizational sector in Table 32 (next page). The columns in this table report the percentages of all responses given. The total number of responses includes multiple responses that might have been provided by an individual respondent.

**TABLE 32: External Perceptions of the Goals of the Chicago Challenge**

Sector of Response (N of Responses)	Improve Schools and Student Learning			Garner New Resources for Schools		Reorient and Refocus the School System
	Continue 1988 Governance Reform	Extend/ Refocus Governance Reform	General	Local Resources Through Partnerships	External Funds	
Business (N = 5)	20%	0%	40%	0%	0%	40%
Community/Reform Groups (N = 11)	18%	18%	9%	45%	9%	0%
Foundation (N = 6)	0%	50%	17%	17%	17%	0%
Government (N = 9)	0%	22%	33%	44%	0%	0%
Higher Education (N = 10)	50%	20%	20%	0%	10%	0%
Labor (N = 5)	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
Media (N = 4)	0%	0%	50%	25%	0%	25%
<b>Total (N=50)</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>

Four general perceptions of goals emerged from the interviews. A relatively small proportion of responses described the primary goal of the Challenge as continuing and legitimating the 1988 Chicago decentralization reform. These responses focused on the role the Chicago Challenge might play to reinforce the political goals of the 1988 reform, notably the redistribution of power and authority from the central office to the local school and community level. Illustrative of this perspective is the following observation made by a higher education representative. This person argued that among the founders of the Chicago Challenge, there were those who saw the grant as a way to continue to work toward a radical decentralization of the school system:

If you can get a couple of schools working together and (an) outside partner and get that stirring in different places across the city. . . , something good will come out of that, maybe not in every location, but . . . [they] saw it as a grassroots sort of thing, something to further confuse, tangle, disrupt the system.

Another small proportion of responses described the primary goal of the Challenge as reorienting and refocusing the school system. This perspective is rooted in perceptions of system failure. According to one business leader, the Challenge is supposed to “energize the system. . . , provide resources to recast its mission. . . , and move schools toward the achievement of that mission.” Similarly, another business leader saw the school system operating under an array of disjointed programs and initiatives. The Challenge and the principles that undergird it were seen by this person as a model to bring coherence and improvement to the system:

When you give a chunk of money like [this], it causes a tension and then it provides a focus to other programs that are already in place. So the idea was to focus the system.

Several responses suggested that a new model to orient the system would come not from the broad principles that guided the Challenge but from the local, school- and community-level initiatives that the Challenge supported.

The greatest proportion of responses we received indicated that the primary goal of the Chicago Challenge is to improve schools and student learning. About half of these

responses framed this goal as extending or refocusing the 1988 reform beyond governance to school improvement. These responses generally acknowledged the importance of decentralized governance but suggested that it was not enough. According to one respondent from higher education, the task is to figure out what will “drive teachers and Local School Councils to do the next thing.” According to a representative of the foundation community, the Challenge offers an opportunity to rethink the 1988 reform “in the classroom sense.” According to another higher education representative, the Challenge became a way “to support reform, reform from an instructional point of view, not reform from only a political point of view.” As such, these responses framed the primary goal of the Challenge as improving schools and student learning by taking the 1988 governance reform the next logical step.

The other half of the responses identifying school improvement and student learning as the Challenge’s primary goals spoke of them more generally. Several of these responses suggested that the 1988 governance reform had failed to improve student learning and that the Challenge represents an alternative solution. One community organization representative argued:

Here we have school reform, here we had autonomy to a great extent. Here we had an opportunity to make some drastic changes in these schools, and it wasn’t happening. It wasn’t happening to the extent that many of us thought was possible. This, the Annenberg Challenge, was intended to change that.

Most of these responses disconnected the goal of the Challenge from the 1988 reform altogether. The goal was simply to make schools better and improve student academic achievement.

An important distinction is made in these responses between school improvement as a means to improving student achievement and school improvement as an end in itself. A number of responses suggested that the goal of the Challenge is simply to evoke invention in organizational structure by addressing creatively the themes of time, size, and isolation. According to one community organization representative, the goal is to encourage schools to “break the mold.” But according to others, such a goal is



inadequate. For them, improved student learning should be the Challenge's ultimate goal. A higher education representative mused:

At first I thought [the goal] was student achievement, but then when they said small schools was the answer, I can show you a lot of small schools here with some really low [achievement] scores. So, it's obvious to me something else has to happen besides small schools. . .It's not the panacea, that's for sure. Something else has to happen.

The second largest group of responses indicated that the primary goal of the Challenge is to garner new resources for schools. Most of these responses focused on bringing local resources to schools through partnerships and networks. These responses pointed to the importance of promoting collaboration among schools and between schools and their communities. This perspective views collaboration as a way to bring new intellectual, human, and organizational resources to aid schools. As a central office administrator articulated:

Through sharing you could have a better chance at success. . .Other organizations in the city certainly wanted to be involved, and this is a mechanism to help those organizations get involved in the school.

Similarly, a representative of the media indicated that it is the responsibility of the Challenge to help schools and organizations to "look outside themselves." According to this person, the primary goal of the Challenge is to:

Find ways [to] create synergies and bring together like-minded people with different skills, so that they actually begin to understand that there are other ways to do things and that collaborations really are effective ways to get things done. This is a really important lesson for public schools to understand.

Relatively few responses indicated that the primary goal of the Challenge is simply to bring external funds to Chicago, to get some of the national Annenberg money.

There are several important similarities and differences in perceptions of Challenge goals across sectors. The greatest proportions of responses from the business, foundation, labor, and media sectors framed the goals of the Challenge in terms of improving schools and student learning. In contrast, greater proportions of responses

from community and reform groups and the government sector framed the goals of the Challenge in terms of garnering new resources for schools through local partnerships. Finally, the greatest proportion of responses from the higher education community saw the goal of the Challenge as continuing the 1988 governance reform. Such variation in perceptions portrays complex multiple pictures of what the Challenge is trying to accomplish.

It is important to note that 21 persons, or 30 percent of the 70 persons we interviewed, said that they did not know what the goals of the Chicago Challenge are. More than half of the persons from the business sector with whom we spoke said they did not know them. Almost half of the officials we interviewed from Chicago Public Schools, city government, and state government did not know. About one-third of the media representatives and nearly 30 percent of representatives of organized labor could not identify them either.

### **Predictions of Success**

Substantial variation exists in external perceptions of whether the Chicago Challenge will succeed. Twenty-six percent of those we interviewed offered no response to our query. Nearly three-quarters of the sector leaders and representatives we interviewed offered predictions (see Table 33). About 17 percent of the responses indicated that the Challenge will in some way be successful. Almost a third of the responses were pessimistic, predicting that the Challenge will probably fail to meet its objectives. It should be noted that these negative forecasts did not suggest that the Challenge will achieve nothing. Rather, they suggested that even though the Challenge might achieve a number of positive things, it will not likely be completely successful either because its goals are very ambitious to start or because its strategy for accomplishing its goals is not sufficient. The remaining half of the responses were equivocal, suggesting that the success of the Challenge will depend on a number of factors.

A relatively small proportion of responses were confident about the success of the Challenge and suggested that it had already begun. These responses pointed to perceived

**TABLE 33: External Predictions of Whether the Chicago Challenge Will Succeed**

Sector of Response (N of Responses)	Yes		It Depends			No	
	Already Begun To Succeed	Likely to Succeed at Least in Part	On How Success is Defined	On Challenge Leadership And Staff	On CPS Support	Goals Too Ambitious	Incomplete Strategy
Business (N = 11)	0%	10%	18%	18%	9%	0%	45%
Community/Reform Group (N = 6)	0%	33%	0%	0%	17%	33%	17%
Foundation (N = 6)	17%	0%	17%	17%	17%	33%	0%
Government (N = 24)	0%	0%	33%	42%	0%	0%	25%
Higher Education (N = 9)	11%	22%	11%	22%	11%	0%	22%
Labor (N = 5)	0%	40%	20%	20%	0%	0%	20%
Media (N = 3)	0%	67%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%
<b>Total (N=64)</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>23%</b>

progress in connecting external organizations to schools through networks and “creating a conversation” across the city about how to develop different school structures. A larger number of responses suggested that the Challenge will succeed, but perhaps only in part. These responses expressed faith in the concept of networking and in the benefits of addressing the organizational problems of time, size, and isolation in schools. The reservations expressed in these responses mostly concerned whether the Challenge could succeed across the large number of schools that it supports. Most thought that success will come to some, perhaps most sites. One government representative argued, “If a quarter of the projects. . .do some good, we’re doing pretty good.”

Other responses expressed concern about whether the success that might be achieved in the short term could be sustained over time. These responses acknowledged that the Challenge was putting relatively little money into the system and spreading it very thinly across a large number of schools. If, as one respondent observed, the Challenge is trying to “seed changes and hopefully create some models that can be replicated over time,” the successes are likely to be fragile at first. As a labor leader opined, “The piece I worry about is institutionalization.” Finally, some responses indicated that while the Challenge might well succeed in promoting some organizational change in schools, these changes might not translate into improved student learning opportunities and outcomes.

The most pessimistic predictions suggested that the Challenge will fail to achieve its objectives for two primary reasons. The first reason is that its goals are too ambitious. Most responses in this vein indicated that the Challenge will make some positive contributions but not fulfill its original expectations. According to a representative of the foundation community:

I think it probably won’t, but that’s not negative. . .I think the goals were ambitious, and you always learn something. You can have the best ideas in the world, and you learn a lot as you begin to implement it that modifies and changes what your original notions were.

A second reason given for why the Challenge would likely fail was that its strategies are incomplete. Most of these responses suggested that the basic strategies of

networking and addressing problems of time, size, and isolation are important but would stop far short of addressing major problems in schools, particularly those related to student learning opportunities and outcomes. As one community organization representative argued, “It’s addressing a very, very small part of. . .much larger kinds of issues.” Some responses indicated that the problems of schools go well beyond the reach of the networks and types of organizational changes sought by the Challenge. These responses question the “potency” of the Challenge strategy to bring about significant change. This sentiment was represented in the following remarks made by a higher education representative:

I think [the Challenge] has been successful in creating partnerships and seeing some nice things happen in some schools. I don’t think it’s adequate to address the lack of will in most schools. I think it’s an incentive-based approach to will that may, at the margin, tip the balance in some schools where the group that wants to make change and the group that is resisting change are relatively even. The opportunity to get an Annenberg grant can tip the balance in favor of those who want to make change. I don’t think it’s nearly powerful enough to overcome intransigence.

A representative of city government offered a similar observation:

Those three areas [time, size, and isolation] are aspects of an environment that have to be addressed. They’re. . .very different than what I articulated as an outcome that we’re hoping to see—an overall performance of Chicago Public Schools which has really improved education outcomes. I think that all the rest of this stuff is essential to that question, but I don’t think that in and of itself it’s enough.

Some responses suggested that the strategy to fund such a large number of schools and such a wide variety of initiatives will lead to some successes. At the same time, the Challenge’s strategy to support independent, idiosyncratic initiatives was considered limited in its potential to bring about large-scale change across a substantial portion of schools.

A small group of respondents predicted failure for the Challenge because they see its strategy as inextricably linked to the same progressive perspectives that had failed to bring significant change under earlier reforms. To them, the Challenge strategy is therefore fundamentally flawed. This perspective is represented in the words of one government representative who argued:

Same damn players around the same damn table. . . This influx of money done with good intent is. . . going down a black hole because it's once again going to the same players and it's going to peripheral fragmented reforms. It will make us all, all of us who are about reform and educational research look terrible in the long run, because someone is going to say, "Look, even with the infusion of these kinds of dollars, we can't make a difference."

Most responses were much more tempered about prospects for the Challenge's success. These responses generally held out hope that the Challenge will succeed, but they indicated that it will depend on several different factors, including how people define success and how they can attribute changes to the Challenge or to other programs and policies. Most suggested that success will take time to develop. If expectations are set unreasonably high and assessed prematurely, the Challenge will likely be judged a failure. Other responses contended that the success can only be defined and assessed incrementally. That is, while achieving gains in student learning might take a substantial amount of time, the Challenge can be judged in the short term by the development and function of networks and by organizational changes in schools that presumably will lead over time to improved student learning.

A significant number of responses suggested that the Challenge's success will depend fundamentally on its leadership and staff and the strategic decisions they make. Several of these responses pointed to the importance of the Challenge staff providing guidance to networks. Others pointed to the importance of effective program administration. Still others identified the importance of sharpening the Challenge's focus and creating a clearer definition of goals. Perhaps the most specific aspect of Challenge leadership that was discussed in these responses was the importance of making sound decisions to fund schools and networks and to renew their support over time. A member of the foundation community captured the importance of rigor in deciding which networks receive assistance:



Now initially, they . . . gave out a number of grants which they had very little substantiation for solid proposals. And the feeling was they had to get their money out the door. Fortunately, there has been far more critical look at that funding. They're drawing back and they're getting more rigorous in their evaluation of proposals and encouraging groups to go through a planning process and making sure . . . that there's some real substance behind the proposal, that is, that there is some evidence that these people understand what best practices are, that they have some idea about what one needs to do in order to have a kind of staff development that will turn things around.

This observer was optimistic that the Challenge leadership and staff will continue to be rigorous in their assessments of proposals: "We're not there yet, but I'm hopeful that we will get there." A labor leader described the responsibility of the Challenge leadership to decide which schools and networks to support over time this way:

The Challenge staff has the hard task of going in to see that the work is actually being done and to choose which networks have come far enough in their thinking to really make [things] happen, and to pull the plug on those that aren't going in that direction.

Finally, several responses indicated that the success of the Challenge will depend on how it is supported by the Chicago Public Schools' central administration. Most of the people who spoke to this issue saw conflict between the goals of the Challenge and the policies of the central administration. As a higher education representative expressed it, "You're bucking city hall." A community organization representative also suggested: "I think that there has been enormous hostility from the new [CPS] administration to the Annenberg goals, and that's slowed them [the Challenge] up quite a bit." To most persons who raised the relationship with CPS central administration as an issue, the Challenge will succeed only if the larger policy context of the school system remains hospitable to the networks and what they seek to accomplish.

### **Satisfying Evidence of Success**

The expectations external groups and organizations hold for the Challenge are further illuminated by leaders' and representatives' views of what would constitute satisfying



evidence of the Challenge's success (see Table 34). Somewhat surprisingly, 46 percent of those we interviewed did not know what they would consider satisfying evidence of success. This finding is another indicator of the ambiguity that characterizes external knowledge and perceptions of the Challenge. Among responses that were offered, the greatest proportion identified student achievement gains and improvement in other student outcomes as the most satisfying evidence of the Challenge's success. This is not surprising given the strong perceptions, described above, that the primary goal of the Challenge is to improve student learning. To most, the bottom line is improved scores on standardized student achievement tests. Other responses looked beyond test scores to broader indicators of student achievement and improved behavior. These included increased attendance rates, students' liking of school, and improved retention and graduation rates. With the exception of the foundation community, the greatest proportions of responses from each sector pointed to gains in student outcomes as the most important evidence of the Challenge's success.

Beyond improved student outcomes, several other forms of evidence to judge the Challenge's success were identified. Several responses suggested that the Challenge can demonstrate its success through evidence of increased capacity and increased engagement of teachers and parents in working with children. According to one response, this means improvement in "the technical ability of teachers and principals." According to another, this means "engaging the imagination and energies of teachers and administrators and Local School Councils to try to really make their schools work for kids." Other responses indicated that success can be inferred from evidence that new structures and patterns of schooling have been put in place. The types of structures and patterns of schooling coincide with the Annenberg themes of smaller environments for learning, more personalized instruction, increased networking among schools and among educators within schools, and greater involvement of parents in schools. Finally, a few responses suggested that satisfying evidence of success will be if educators themselves believe that they are more effective in their work.

**TABLE 34: External Perceptions of Satisfying Evidence of the Challenge's Success**

Sector of Response (N of Responses)	Gains In Student Achievement, Other Outcomes	Increased Capacity and Engagement of Teachers and Parents	Educators Feel Better about the Jobs They Are Doing	New Structures and Patterns of Schooling	Findings of Formal Research
Business (N = 7)	57%	0%	0%	14%	29%
Community/Reform Group (N = 9)	44%	22%	11%	11%	11%
Foundation (N = 8)	25%	13%	13%	0%	50%
Government (N = 8)	63%	13	0%	13%	13%
Higher Education (N = 8)	25%	13%	25%	25%	13%
Labor (N = 5)	40%	0%	0%	40%	20%
Media (N = 2)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total (N=47)</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>21%</b>

It is interesting to note the number of responses that pointed to the importance of formal research in judging the success of the Challenge. Most of these comments did not identify particular indicators of success but referred to research generally as defining and providing evidence of appropriate indicators of success. A number of responses specifically mentioned this research project as the primary source of evidence for making judgments about the work of the Challenge. This suggests an important distinction that some respondents are making between anecdotal, internally derived evidence and more systematic, externally generated evidence for assessing the Challenge. Among these respondents, the latter type of evidence is considered more credible and useful. One labor leader described the distinction this way:

I think probably evidence of success will [come from] first-hand observations that the Challenge staff see in the schools. I think the reports of external researchers will let them know if they really are seeing a change or if it's enthusiasm without a real change.

### **Recommendations for the Future**

While significant proportions of respondents whom we interviewed did not know the goals of the Challenge, could not assess its prospects for success, and could not indicate what evidence would satisfactorily demonstrate its success, virtually all the respondents (94 percent) offered advice about how the Challenge should use its remaining resources, and some made more than one suggestion (see Table 35). Their recommendations provide another perspective on external perceptions of the Challenge's early progress and what they think it should accomplish.

A few responses recommended that the Challenge maintain its present course, using its resources as it has to date. Another small set of responses recommended no change in how the Challenge is organized and makes decisions but suggested that resources be used to disseminate information about effective practices and accomplishments to Challenge schools, networks, and the public at large.

The bulk of the responses recommended some change in Challenge priorities or strategies. Some suggest that the Challenge could be improved by shifting resources to address a broader range of issues. Several argued that the Challenge should broaden its

**TABLE 35: External Advice for Using Remaining Annenberg Resources**

Sector of Response (N of Responses)	Maintain Current Course	Disseminate Information About CAC, Effective Practices	Address Systemic vs. Local Issues	Systemwide Development of Educators, Parents	Focus More on Raising Student Achievement	Support Fewer, Successful Networks	Align with CPS Programs and Priorities
Business (N = 10)	0%	0%	10%	10%	20%	10%	50%
Community/Reform Groups (N = 10)	20%	20%	20%	30%	0%	10%	0%
Foundations (N = 10)	30%	0%	0%	40%	0%	20%	10%
Government (N = 20)	10%	5%	15%	30%	10%	10%	20%
Higher Education (N = 12)	25%	17%	17%	8%	8%	25%	0%
Labor (N = 6)	17%	0%	0%	17%	34%	17%	17%
Media (N = 5)	0%	40	0%	40%	0%	20%	0%
<b>Total (N=73)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>

focus beyond time, size, and isolation to deal with other problems in schools. According to a higher education representative:

Those three constructs have really constrained some of the kinds of things that can be done. . . There are a lot of problems out there that need addressing and they're not all size, isolation, and time.

Other responses suggest that the Challenge identify issues that are problematic for schools across the system and support more systemic efforts to address them. Two issues that were identified include leadership development and investment in a larger, more effective infrastructure to support school improvement. These recommendations were peppered with criticisms that the idiosyncratic, local change initiatives now supported by the Challenge would not likely lead to much significant, long-lasting change.

One of the most important areas that respondents identified for Challenge investment was the systemwide development of educators and parents. Almost one-quarter of all responses pointed to such "capacity building" as an area of improvement widely acknowledged to have been underemphasized by the Chicago Public Schools. Importantly, the need for investing in parent education and professional development of teachers and principals is recognized across sectors. Representatives of the business community, the school system, city government, the foundation community, higher education, and the media all encourage the Challenge to channel more resources in this direction.

Another quarter of all responses encouraged the Challenge to rethink its strategy of funding a diverse range of initiatives across large numbers of schools and networks. Two general recommendations were made. The first was to tighten the focus of the Challenge and spend money in ways that have more of a direct impact on student achievement. The second was to invest more resources in a smaller number of effective networks. These recommendations coincide with current thinking within the Challenge. According to the Challenge's Executive Director:

We're already on the narrowing path and we probably will be narrowing more. Certainly by the first of the year [1998]. . . we will know pretty much who we're

going to run with for the next two to three years before we close the door [to new initiatives].

A final set of recommendations encouraged the Challenge to align itself more directly with Chicago Public Schools programs and priorities and work more closely with the system. These recommendations come from persons inside and outside the school system, most notably from the business community. They reveal three important things. The first is a perception that the school system has set a productive course toward improvement. The second is a perception that more can be accomplished if the Challenge and the school system pool their resources and work together. The third is that the Challenge should not work independent of or in competition with the central administration. It should be working for the general enhancement of the system. Most responses that address this issue stress cooperation and synergy of effort. Typical of these responses are the following comments offered by a member of the Chicago Public Schools central administration:

If we pool our resources on common strategies that connected up with student achievement, we could have the capacity to help more of our failing schools, more of our schools period. And we're not doing that; we are not working together. . .I would like for the Annenberg Board and the [CPS Reform] Board to come together on some common goals for the city that can be supported through the district and through Annenberg funds and for that to be the beginning point.





## VIII. Summary and Implications

We conclude this report with a summary of findings organized around the six major questions posed in the introduction and with a discussion of implications they suggest to the Challenge.

### *1. What are the characteristics of schools that participate in the Chicago Annenberg Challenge and the student populations they serve?*

In 1996-97, 220 schools, approximately 40 percent of all elementary and high schools in the Chicago Public School system, were members of Annenberg implementation and planning networks. These schools enrolled about 42 percent of all students in the system.

The demographic characteristics of elementary and high schools in Challenge networks generally reflect the demographic characteristics of elementary and high schools citywide. Typically, Annenberg schools are predominantly African-American, predominantly Hispanic, or mixed African-American and Hispanic schools with substantial proportions of low-income and low-achieving students. Compared with schools citywide, slightly larger proportions of elementary schools in implementation networks are predominantly African-American and mixed minority. Somewhat greater proportions of elementary schools in implementation networks have large student enrollments. In addition, higher proportions of elementary schools in implementation networks are moderately low-achieving schools rather than the lowest-achieving schools. Greater proportions of high schools in implementation networks are predominantly African-American than citywide. Smaller proportions of Annenberg high schools are on academic probation. Greater proportions of Annenberg high schools have large enrollments than high schools citywide.

The student populations across Annenberg schools are largely representative of students across the system in percent low-income, race and ethnicity, and level of academic achievement. Schools in implementation networks enroll somewhat larger proportions of low-income, African-American, and low-achieving students than schools in planning networks; however, these differences are not large.

**2. *What types of implementation networks did the Challenge initially support and how have these networks functioned?***

The implementation networks supported by the Chicago Challenge vary substantially in size, composition, type of external partner, and primary substantive foci. Working relationships among schools and between schools and their external partners are characterized by most principals as largely cooperative and perhaps collaborative. This finding may be more reflective of relationships among principals and external partners and their work at regular network planning meetings than of broader relations among school faculties and staffs.

External partners play a key role in the implementation networks. They have been instrumental in forming most networks. Over 60 percent of the principals report that it is their external partners with whom they have the most interaction within their networks. Most principals see their implementation networks as having a clear set of goals, and most report that their external partners press them to address the Chicago Challenge themes of time, size, and isolation. A small but substantial proportion of principals see no press from their external partners on these themes.

Most principals see the Chicago Annenberg Challenge as central to the work of their schools. At the same time, they acknowledge that it exists alongside many other programs in their schools. Substantial variation exists among schools in the proportions of teachers who participate in network activities. Substantial variation also exists in the frequency with which teachers participate in those activities. In about half of the schools in implementation networks, most teacher time spent in school improvement activity is devoted to projects other than Annenberg. A majority of principals think that participation in implementation networks has provided useful resources for school improvement. At the same time, about 40 percent of the principals report that participation has provided few if any useful resources to their schools.

**3. *What have the implementation networks begun to accomplish during this early stage of work?***

Most principals in implementation networks report moderate school improvement as a result of working with their external partners and with other network schools. Such improvement includes the introduction of new programs and practices, new opportunities

for teacher professional development, and refocused school goals and priorities. Most principals attribute these accomplishments to opportunities for teacher collaboration within and among schools and to principal networking. Likewise, most principals in implementation networks report moderate reductions in school-community isolation.

#### ***4. What challenges do these networks and schools face?***

Almost all principals in implementation networks report some level of challenge to network participation. Two major challenges schools face are lack of time for teachers to participate in network activities and lack of resources needed to benefit substantially from network participation. About one-third of the principals identified conflicts between their networks' priorities and policies of the Chicago Public Schools central office as another area of challenge. Relatively small proportions of principals reported problems or conflicts associated with administrative demands of the Chicago Challenge's leadership and staff. Other challenges to network participation and progress include internal school politics and teacher-administrator working relationships; developing school ownership in network goals and activities; and "scaling up" for whole school change.

#### ***5. What sources of support are available to Annenberg schools and networks?***

In general, principals see few sources of support for network participation. The most frequently cited sources of support are Local School Councils, parents, colleges and universities, and foundations. Relatively few principals see the Chicago Public Schools central office and regional offices as sources of support. Relatively few see reform groups, business associations, or community organizations as making network activities easier. Only the CPS central office was identified by a noticeable proportion of principals as making network activities more difficult.

Principals and external partners generally see the Challenge leadership and staff as a source of support. For the most part, they find workshops and networking opportunities provided by the Challenge to be important and worthwhile. A relatively small proportion of principals and external partners are critical of the support they receive from Challenge. Some wish for more support. Others think administrative requests and accountability requirements are too demanding. Still others point to communication and scheduling problems. Most principals and external partners do not think, however, that the Challenge's requests conflict with network plans or take time away from network activities.

*6. How is the Chicago Challenge perceived in its external institutional environment?*

Our interviews of leaders and representatives of organizations in the Challenge's external environment document a wide range of opinions and understandings of the Challenge. They also reveal a substantial lack of knowledge about the Challenge and what it is trying to accomplish.

Four general perceptions of Challenge goals are evident in the data. Nearly half of the responses given by organizational leaders and representatives consider the primary goal of the Challenge to be to improve schools and student learning. Another third of the responses suggest that the primary goal is to garner new resources for schools, either through partnerships and networks or through the national Annenberg Challenge. A relatively small proportion of responses describe the primary goal of the Challenge as continuing and legitimating the 1988 Chicago decentralization reform. Another small proportion of responses describe the primary goal of the Challenge as reorienting and refocusing the school system. The largest proportions of responses across sectors point to improving schools and student learning and garnering new resources as the Challenge's primary goals.

Substantial variation exists in external perceptions of whether the Challenge will succeed or fail. About 17 percent of the responses suggested that the Challenge will be in some way successful. Over half were equivocal, suggesting that the success of the Challenge will depend on how success is defined, the strategy and decisions of the Challenge leadership, and the support of the Chicago Public Schools central office. Almost one-third predicted that the Challenge will fail to meet its intended objectives because its goals are too ambitious or its strategy is not adequate.

Just over half of the leaders and representatives we interviewed offered opinions about what evidence would satisfy them that the Challenge had succeeded. Forty-five percent of their responses identified student achievement gains and improvement in other student outcomes, underscoring the importance that is placed on the ability of the Challenge to improve student outcomes. Beyond student outcomes, several other forms of evidence were identified, including increased capacity and engagement of teachers and parents in working with children, the introduction of new structures and patterns of schooling, and

whether educators themselves felt better about their own effectiveness. About one-fifth of the responses pointed to the importance of formal research, not anecdotal evidence, in judging the success of the Challenge.

Recommendations for how the Challenge should use its remaining resources reveal varied perceptions of how well the Challenge is doing and how it could be improved. About one-quarter of the recommendations suggested that the Challenge is on course. Many of these individuals suggested nonetheless that the Challenge could benefit from disseminating more information about successful practices among its networks and to the public at large. Another third suggested a refocusing of the scope of the Challenge. Some of these responses indicated that the Challenge should be devoted toward systemic as opposed to local issues, while a greater number recommended that the Challenge invest in systemwide parent education programs and professional development for teachers and administrators. In contrast, another quarter of the responses suggested that the Challenge narrow its focus to support strategies that show the greatest prospects for improving student achievement and to support a fewer number of successful networks. A small but significant proportion of responses, particularly from the business community, recommended that the Challenge work more closely with the Chicago Public Schools and align with the system's priorities.

### **Issues for the Challenge**

These findings suggest several issues for the Challenge: (a) the ongoing development of networks, (b) focus and coherence, (c) relations with the Chicago Public Schools central administration, and (d) education and cultivation of the external environment. The emergence of these issues is predictable given the complexity and ambitiousness of the Challenge, its long-term agenda for change, and its development in a school system that is accountability minded but is not always clear about its own programmatic direction. These issues are also predictable in Chicago's fragmented and often contentious political and sociocultural environment.

**Development of networks.** Three aspects of network development seem particularly important. The first is teacher involvement. Our findings suggest that for many schools the small proportions of teachers who participate in network activities and the infrequency with which they participate may be inadequate to promote broad-based school



development. Also at issue is the problem reported by several external partners of “scaling up,” of expanding the scope of network activities from small groups of teachers to larger groups of teachers and whole school change.

The problem of teacher participation is related to the second aspect of network development—ensuring that schools have adequate resources to make participation worthwhile. Time for teacher participation is crucial. There simply isn’t enough time in the regular school day (8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) for sustained adult development to occur. A number of other resources also appear important. These include adequate staff to assist external partners in their work with schools and staff or substitutes to assist teachers in meeting their school responsibilities and participating in network activities. They also include intangible, social resources. School-level ownership of network activity, social trust between external partners and schools, and supportive, collegial working relationships within schools all seem to help promote network participation and progress.

The third aspect involves strengthening relationships among schools in networks. There is reason to believe that relationships among network schools are substantially weaker than relationships between schools and their external partners. Indeed, data from our forthcoming report on networks suggest that the predominant model of Chicago Annenberg networks is a “hub-and-spokes” structure.<sup>6</sup> In this structure, the external partner is the hub of the network, linked to individual schools by spokes. Few, if any schools in these networks are linked to one another. If reducing isolation among schools is considered an important mechanism for school improvement, the issue becomes how to increase the contact and improve working relations among schools in networks. How can school-to-school relationships be extended beyond principals and school-site Annenberg coordinators to involve more significant numbers of teachers? How can networks move from a “hub-and-spokes” model to a “web”? Addressing these issues of network development will likely require additional support of the external partners, and bolstering the relatively sparse resources they now have to work with schools in their networks.

**Focus and coherence.** Focus and coherence is an issue at the Challenge and school levels. In the data we have reported, the issue of focus and coherence manifests itself in decisions about whether the Challenge should continue to support a wide range of idiosyncratic initiatives or move toward supporting a smaller number of networks that hold the greatest promise for addressing problems of student achievement effectively. It is also

manifest in decisions about whether the Challenge should continue to support diverse local initiatives or address broad issues that face the system as a whole, such as the professional development of teachers and administrators, parent education, and developing an infrastructure for school improvement. As indicated earlier, the Challenge seems to be narrowing its focus and reducing its scope to support a smaller number of networks concerned specifically with student learning. Still, it will likely face competing pressures to sustain breadth over depth in its support of network and school activity.

At the school level, the issue of focus and coherence manifests itself primarily in multiple programs found in most schools. Multiple programs create the potential for conflict and competition over teachers' time and attention. Multiple programs also create potential for fragmentation that can compromise overall school improvement efforts.<sup>7</sup> It is possible, of course, that a school may have multiple programs, including Annenberg network activities, that complement each other and work in synergy toward school improvement. While we will be able to speak to this issue in much greater depth in future reports, the evidence we have already assembled in this report suggests that some networks face strong competition from other programs for teachers' time and attention. There is also evidence that in some schools multiple programs create fragmentation that impedes network participation and accomplishment. In these circumstances, the Challenge leadership and external partners face the task of helping schools to narrow the range of programs in which they are involved and to participate only in programs that bring coherence to their improvement efforts. This may be difficult, especially if principals, Local School Councils, and the central administration measure success by the general accumulation of programs and other resources, rather than by their strategic acquisition, implementation, and outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

**Relations with the Chicago Public Schools central administration.** While almost three-quarters of the principals indicated on their surveys that central office priorities did not interfere substantially with their networks, there is enough evidence from the survey and from interviews of principals and external partners to show that conflict can and has occurred. Our evidence suggests that one of the areas where the potential for conflict is greatest is the system's high-stakes accountability policies. These policies, which include school academic probation, reconstitution, and student grade retention, are likely to affect substantially the attention schools give to Annenberg activities. Some evidence indicates



that when schools are placed on probation or when they are on the cusp of probation, they are likely to turn their attention to their most immediate concern—raising standardized test scores. This may make it more difficult for external partners to engage schools in network activities. It may increase the difficulty of gaining teacher participation and of implementing new programs, especially if such new programs are not perceived as having direct, immediate impact on test scores. There is an irony here. The strategies that schools use to increase test scores in the short term may interfere with efforts to make more fundamental change aimed at gains in student learning over time. The Challenge faces a very important issue of how to help its schools negotiate and comply with the expectations of the system and at the same time “buffer” them so that they may participate in the Challenge and work toward significant, long-lasting change.

A related aspect of relations with the Chicago Public Schools concerns how the Challenge might work more closely with the central administration to develop the most productive programs, policies, and priorities for the system. From its inception, the Chicago Challenge has operated independent of the central administration. At a minimum, conflicts felt at the school level between network priorities and central administration policies and priorities should suggest greater efforts at coordination. In addition, as several leaders in the business and government sectors suggested, the time may soon be coming for the Challenge and the central administration to develop greater alignment and synergy in their efforts to promote improvement across the system.

**Education and cultivation of the external environment.** A fourth issue concerns the education and cultivation of the Challenge’s external environment. As we discussed in the previous section, our interviews with leaders and representatives of external organizations showed a wide variety of opinions about the Challenge. They also reveal a substantial lack of knowledge about some issues. These sectors represent important sources of support for the Challenge. Their leaders and representatives will likely be among those who judge the Challenge and play a role in whether its work is sustained over time.

For at least these reasons, the Challenge faces an issue of how to deepen understanding and support of its goals, activities, and accomplishments across a wide range of stakeholders. This involves making the work of the Challenge more visible and promoting more accurate understanding. It also involves developing meaningful and

realistic expectations for the work and accomplishments of the Challenge. A representative of the city government explained the issue this way:

[The Challenge] has no visibility. I don't have a sense of what it's doing. I don't have a sense of what it's accomplished. . .It's like it had its announcement, you know, there was the big check in the school. . ., and that's the last we heard of it. Part of the process of becoming effective is you need to communicate what you've done. . . You need to say what you are going to do, do it, and say what you've done . . . It was created and then never heard from again. . .

## **Conclusion**

The Chicago Challenge is a large, ambitious, and complex program for change. This first look at the Challenge's schools and networks is encouraging. We are beginning to see evidence in some schools and networks of organizational changes, new programs for students, and new ways of working for teachers. And this is probably the most that can be expected from the first 12 to 18 months of such a major initiative.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the Challenge faces some very important issues—its own challenges. The issues of network development, focus and coherence, relations with the Chicago Public Schools central office, and the education and cultivation of the external environment will likely play a significant role in the next stages of the Challenge's work. How these issues are addressed will be an important focus of our next look at the activities and accomplishments of the Chicago Challenge.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> These numbers reflect the numbers of schools and networks receiving support from the Chicago Challenge during the 1996-97 school year. These numbers may differ from those of previous and subsequent periods because of decisions to find new networks or discontinue funding of existing networks.

<sup>2</sup> Probation status is determined by low scores on the reading portion of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Low achievement is defined according to both math and reading scores on the ITBS.

<sup>3</sup> Additional information about the Chicago Annenberg networks may be found in a forthcoming report by Kathleen Hall and her colleagues. That report will examine in more detail network structure, “theories-of-action,” and roles of external partners. Future analyses will assess network function and accomplishments according to typologies of networks and external partners suggested by this report.

<sup>4</sup> See the Appendix for detailed explanations of the questions that make up this and other measures. The names of measure categories in this report are indicated by italics.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the findings reported here, we compared schools in implementation networks with schools that do not participate in the Challenge on principals’ reports of change between 1995 and 1997 in four general areas: (a) student attitudes and academic achievement, (b) teachers and classroom instruction, (c) sense of school community, and (d) school-community relations. This analysis revealed few significant differences between Annenberg and non-Annenberg schools. This general finding is not unexpected. Because the implementation networks had only 12 to 18 months of Annenberg support at the time of our data collection, because Annenberg schools are generally representative of schools citywide, and because of the complex and long-term nature of changes sought by the Challenge, we would have been surprised to find many significant differences between these groups of schools.

<sup>6</sup> See Hall (Forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> See Bryk, Easton, Kerbow, Rollow, and Sebring (1993).

<sup>8</sup> See Shipps, Kahne, and Smylie (1998), and Smylie, Crowson, Chou, and Levin (1994).

<sup>9</sup> See Fullan (1991).

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Data Sources, Samples, and Methodology**

Five general sources of data were used for this report. These sources include: (a) school characteristics data from the Chicago Public Schools, (b) the 1997 Principal Survey developed and administered by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, (c) interviews of external partners of Chicago Annenberg networks, (d) interviews of principals of schools participating in implementation networks, and (e) interviews of leaders and representatives of major organizational sectors that comprise the broad institutional environment of the Chicago Challenge. These data sources, the samples of persons from whom we collected data, and the methods we used in data collection and analysis are described below. Additional information about the research methodology used in this project and copies of specific data collection instruments are available upon request from the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

#### **School Characteristics Data**

The data we used to describe the demographic characteristics of schools participating in the Chicago Annenberg Challenge were drawn from annual public reports issued by the Department of Research, Analysis, and Assessment of the Chicago Public Schools. The reports used in this analysis are entitled “Elementary Schools at a Glance, 1996,” and “High Schools at a Glance, 1996.” These reports contain data from the 1995-96 school year.

#### **The 1997 Principal Survey**

In the winter and spring of 1997, the Consortium on Chicago School Research conducted surveys of all principals in the Chicago Public Schools. Items for this survey came from three primary sources: (a) the Consortium’s 1992 Principal Survey; (b) principal surveys administered as part of other research projects across the country; and (c) participants of a stakeholder consultation and review process who suggested particular issues and items for inclusion.

Like those processes used to develop previous Consortium surveys, the stakeholder consultation and review process used in developing this survey involved meeting with groups of principals convened by the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association and with Chicago Public Schools central office staff to discuss the content and logistics of the survey. It also involved meeting with members of the Evaluation Committee of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. Consistent with Consortium procedures, two of the Consortium's standing committees also provided advice and assistance in developing this survey. These two committees are the Steering Committee and the Constituent Advisory Board. The 20-member Steering Committee consists of faculty from area universities and research staff from the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Teachers Union, local education advocacy groups, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, and the Illinois State Board of Education. The Constituent Advisory Board is composed of approximately 50 teachers, parents, principals, and civic and political leaders. Recommendations made by these groups were incorporated into the final version of the survey wherever possible.

In the survey, principals were asked to answer questions on the following topics about their schools: (a) leadership and governance, (b) nature of the principal's work, (c) faculty and staff, (d) orientation toward teaching and learning, (e) school change between 1995 and 1997, (f) roadblocks to school improvement, (g) social trust, (h) principal professional development, (i) relations with the central office, and (j) school participation in networks and partnerships, including the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. Three hundred and ninety-eight of the system's 544 principals completed the survey for an overall return rate of 73 percent. Eighty-three percent of the system's elementary school principals and 70 percent of system's high school principals returned surveys.

One hundred and seventy-three or 79 percent of the principals of schools receiving Annenberg support participated in the survey. Eighty-one percent of the elementary school principals in implementation networks and 89 percent of the elementary school principals in planning grant networks returned surveys. Sixty-five percent of the high school principals in implementation networks and 70 percent of the high school principals in planning grant networks returned them. The demographic characteristics of

Annenberg schools from which principals returned surveys are almost identical to the demographic characteristics of all Annenberg schools (see Table A.1). The only exceptions are slight differences in achievement levels at the high school level.

Principal survey data were analyzed by computing frequency distributions of responses to particular items and to Rasch measures. The Rasch model is a member of the family of item response trait (IRT) models. Using a set of carefully selected survey items, it produces instrument-free person measures of attitude or ability, and person-free measures of item difficulty on the same interval scale. The scale units are logits (log odds units), which, unlike raw scores, are linear and thus suitable for simple statistics.

Differences in response distributions between elementary and high school principals were tested for significance using the Chi-square statistic. Response categories of each measure used in this report are defined in Table A.2. More detailed information about the construction and psychometric properties of these measures is available from the Consortium upon request.



**TABLE A.1: Demographic Characteristics of Schools in Implementation Networks from Which Principal Surveys Were Returned**

	Elementary Schools		High Schools	
	% of Schools Returning Surveys (N = 84)	% of All Schools (N = 104)	% of Schools Returning Surveys (N = 7)	% of All Schools (N = 10)
<b>School Income Level</b>				
< 35% Low Income	1	1	0	0
35% to 90% Low Income	35	37	100	90
> 90% Low Income	64	62	0	10
<b>Racial/Ethnic Composition</b>				
> 30% White	6	6	14	10
> 85% African American	52	54	29	30
> 85% Hispanic	10	9	0	0
> 70% Mixed Minority	32	31	57	60
<b>School Achievement Level (ITBS)</b>				
< 15% At/Above Norms	18	17	29	40
16% to 35% At/Above Norms	69	70	29	20
> 35% At/Above Norms	13	13	43	40

**TABLE A.2: Definitions of Measure Response Categories**

Measure	Response Categories
<p>External Partner Press on Themes of Time, Size, and Isolation</p>	<p><i>Strong Press:</i> Principals strongly agree that the external partners of their networks press them to address issues of time for teacher collaborative work, time for professional development, school-community ties, time for student learning, giving students personal attention, reducing the number of adults who work with children, and the size of instructional groups.</p> <p><i>Moderate Press:</i> Principals agree or strongly agree that the external partners of their networks press them to address issues of time for teacher collaborative work, time for professional development, school-community ties, time for student learning, and giving students personal attention; they agree that their external partners press them to address the number of adults who work with children and the size of instructional groups.</p> <p><i>Minimal Press:</i> Principals are as likely to agree as disagree that their external partners press them to address issues of time for teacher collaborative work, time for professional development, school-community ties, time for student learning, and giving students personal attention; they disagree that their external partners press them to address the number of adults who work with children and the size of instructional groups.</p> <p><i>No Press:</i> Principals disagree or strongly disagree that their external partners press them to address issues of time for teacher collaborative work, time for professional development, school-community ties, time for student learning, giving students personal attention, the number of adults who work with children, and the size of instructional groups.</p>

TABLE A.2 (continued)

Measure	Response Categories
Centrality of Annenberg Participation to School	<p data-bbox="661 402 1885 532"><i>Very Central:</i> Principals strongly agree that the goals of their networks are clear and coincide with their schools' goals; they agree or strongly agree that Annenberg activities are central to the work of their schools and that of all external projects in which their schools participate, teachers spend the most time on Annenberg activities.</p> <p data-bbox="661 573 1864 703"><i>Central:</i> Principals agree or strongly agree that the goals of their networks are clear and coincide with their schools' goals; they agree that Annenberg activities are central to the work of their schools; they are as likely to agree as disagree that of all external projects in which the school participates, teachers spend the most time on Annenberg activities.</p> <p data-bbox="661 743 1896 873"><i>Somewhat Central:</i> Principals agree that the goals of their networks are clear and coincide with their schools' goals; they disagree that Annenberg activities are central to the work of their schools and that of all external projects in which their schools participate, teachers spend the most time on Annenberg activities.</p> <p data-bbox="661 914 1875 1044"><i>Not Central:</i> Principals disagree or strongly disagree that the goals of their networks are clear and coincide with their schools' goals and that Annenberg activities are central to the work of their schools; they strongly disagree that of all external projects in which the school participates, teachers spend the most time on Annenberg activities.</p>

**TABLE A.2** (continued)

Measure	Response Categories
Access to Resources for School Improvement	<p data-bbox="655 412 1871 509"><i>High Access:</i> Principals strongly agree that their network provides useful resources, that working with their external partners provides in-kind services and resources they need, and that participation in the Challenge has increased their ability to bring additional resources and prestige to their schools.</p> <p data-bbox="655 553 1871 678"><i>Moderate Access:</i> Principals agree or strongly agree that their networks provide useful resources and that working with their external partners provides in-kind services and resources they need; they agree that participation in the Challenge has increased their ability to bring additional resources and prestige to their schools.</p> <p data-bbox="655 722 1871 847"><i>Low Access:</i> Principals agree that their networks provide useful resources; they are as likely to agree as disagree that working with their external partners provides in-kind services and resources needed, and participation in the Challenge has increased their ability to bring additional resources into their schools; they disagree that participation in the Challenge has brought prestige to their school.</p> <p data-bbox="655 891 1871 1024"><i>No Access:</i> Principals disagree or strongly disagree that their networks provide useful resources, that working with their external partners provides in-kind services and resources they need, and that participation in the Challenge has increased their ability to bring additional resources and prestige to their schools.</p>

TABLE A.2 (continued)

Measure	Response Categories
Impact of Working with External Partners on School Improvement	<p><i>Significant Improvement:</i> Principals strongly agree that working with their external partners has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into their schools, and increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning; they agree or strongly agree that working with their external partners has led to improved student learning, refocused goals and priorities of their schools, and led teachers to change their classroom teaching.</p> <p><i>Moderate Improvement:</i> Principals agree that working with their external partners has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into the school, increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning, led to improved student learning, refocused goals and priorities of the school, and led teachers to change their classroom teaching.</p> <p><i>Minimal Improvement:</i> Principals are as likely to disagree as agree that working with their external partners has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into their schools, and increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning; they disagree or strongly disagree that working with their external partners has led to improved student learning, refocused goals and priorities, and led teachers to change their classroom teaching.</p>

TABLE A.2 (continued)

Measure	Response Categories
Impact of Working with Other Schools in Networks on School Improvement	<p><i>Significant Improvement:</i> Principals strongly agree that working with other schools in their networks has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into their schools, increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning, and provided impetus for school improvement.</p> <p><i>Moderate Improvement:</i> Principals agree that working with other schools in their networks has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into their schools, increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning, provided impetus for school improvement, led to improved student learning, refocused priorities of their schools, and led teachers to change their classroom teaching.</p> <p><i>Some Improvement:</i> Principals agree that working with other schools in their networks has provided new opportunities for teacher professional development, brought new ideas for improved teaching and learning into the school, increased teacher interaction about teaching and learning, and provided impetus for school improvement; they disagree that working with other schools in their networks has led to improved student learning, refocused goals and priorities of their schools, and led teachers to change their classroom teaching.</p> <p><i>No Improvement:</i> Principals disagree or strongly disagree that working with other schools in their networks has led to these outcomes.</p>

**TABLE A.2** (continued)

Measure	Response Categories
Impact of Network Participation on Reducing School-Community Isolation	<p><i>Significant Reduction:</i> Principals strongly agree that working with their external partners has promoted closer ties with their schools' communities and encouraged participation of other community organizations in their schools, while working with other schools in their networks has also promoted closer ties with their schools' communities; they agree or strongly agree that working with both their external partners and other schools in their networks has increased parent involvement in their schools.</p> <p><i>Moderate Reduction:</i> Principals agree that working with their external partners has promoted closer ties with their schools' communities and encouraged participation of other community organizations in their schools, while working with other schools in their networks has also promoted closer ties with their schools' communities; they also agree that working with both their external partners and other schools in their networks has increased parent involvement in their schools.</p> <p><i>Some Reduction:</i> Principals agree that working with their external partners has promoted closer ties with their schools' communities and encouraged participation of other community organizations in their schools, while working with other schools in their networks has also promoted closer ties to their communities; they disagree that working with either their external partner or other schools in their networks has promoted parent involvement in their schools.</p> <p><i>Limited Reduction:</i> Principals disagree or strongly disagree that working with their external partners has promoted closer ties with their schools' communities and encouraged participation of other community organizations in their schools, while working with other schools in their networks has also developed closer ties with their schools' communities; they also agree that working with both their external partners and other schools in their networks has promoted parent involvement in their schools.</p>



**TABLE A.2** (continued)

Measure	Response Categories
Challenges to Effective Network Participation	<p><i>Serious Challenge:</i> Principals agree or strongly agree that there is little time for teachers to participate in network activities; there is not enough staff, time, and other resources to make participation in their networks pay off for their schools; central office priorities conflict with those of their networks; administrative demands of the Challenge takes time away from network activities; Challenge leadership often makes requests that seem to conflict with network plans. They disagree or strongly disagree that the Challenge leadership is usually available to support their networks when needed.</p> <p><i>Significant Challenge:</i> Principals agree that there is little time for teachers to participate in network activities; there is not enough staff, time, and other resources to make participation in their networks really pay off for their schools; central office priorities conflict with those of their networks; administrative demands of the Challenge take time from network activities. They disagree that Challenge leadership often makes requests that seem to conflict with plans of the network and agree that the leadership is usually available to support their networks when needed.</p> <p><i>Moderate Challenge:</i> Principals are as likely to agree as disagree that there is little time for teachers to participate in network activities and there is not enough staff, time, and other resources to make network participation really pay off for their schools. They disagree that central office priorities conflict with those of their networks and administrative demands of the Challenge take time from network activities. They disagree or strongly disagree that Challenge leadership often makes requests that seem to conflict with plans of their networks and agree or strongly agree that the Challenge leadership is usually available to support their networks when needed.</p> <p><i>No Challenge:</i> Principals disagree or strongly disagree that there is little time for teachers to participate in network activities and there is not enough staff, time, and other resources to make participation in their networks pay off for their schools. They strongly disagree that central office priorities conflict with those of their networks, administrative demands of the Challenge take time from network activities, and Challenge leadership often makes requests that seem to conflict with plans of their networks. They strongly agree that Challenge leadership is usually available to support their networks when needed.</p>

### **External Partner and Principal Interviews**

In-depth external partner and principal interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 1997. We interviewed all external partners of networks with implementation grants during that period (N = 21). We also interviewed approximately one-quarter of the external partners of networks with planning grants (N = 9). The sample of external partners from planning grant networks was selected randomly. Principals from 12 schools were interviewed. These schools were those sampled from the six implementation grant networks selected for the first cohort of the project's longitudinal field work.

The interviews, which lasted between one and two hours each, were conducted by university faculty or advanced doctoral students. Interviewers followed a standard protocol that included among a variety of queries a series of open-ended questions about the development and function of networks, network accomplishments, challenges to network activities, support from Challenge leadership and staff, and changes respondents would like to see in how the Challenge is administered. Sample interview questions relevant to this report are shown in Table A.3 (next page). The interviews were tape-recorded (with consent), transcribed into written form, and scanned into computer files to expedite searches for key themes and words.

Categorical and thematic methods of classification were used to analyze these data. Responses were first sorted by specific interview question and by emergent response theme. Word searches were conducted to identify elements of responses to other questions that might be germane to the analysis. After this initial sorting, responses were reread and initial classifications were checked for accuracy. Frequencies and percentages of responses within classifications were then calculated to determine the prevalence of particular types of responses. Specific quotes were identified as illustrative of common types of responses.

**TABLE A.3: Sample Questions From the External Partner and Principal Interviews**

Subjects	Sample Questions
External Partners	<p data-bbox="639 449 1398 520">What is working particularly well in your network and what impact is this having on the schools?</p> <p data-bbox="639 562 1279 634">What are some of the difficulties your network has encountered during the past year?</p> <p data-bbox="639 676 1382 821">Can you describe your organization’s working relationship with the Chicago Annenberg Challenge during the past year? What support have they provided to your organization and network?</p> <p data-bbox="639 863 1377 968">Have you encountered any difficulties in working with the Challenge? What changes, if any would you like to see in how the Challenge is being administered?</p>
Principals	<p data-bbox="639 1045 1386 1190">Have you encountered any significant difficulties in working with your Annenberg or the Annenberg Challenge leadership? If so, what were these difficulties and how were they addressed?</p> <p data-bbox="639 1232 1386 1339">Have you received the support, training, and assistance you thought you would be receiving from your external partner and from the leadership of the Annenberg Challenge?</p>

**Institutional Actor Interviews**

Data concerning external perceptions of the Challenge were drawn from interviews of 70 institutional actors. These actors are leaders and representatives of seven sectors of the Challenge’s external environment: business, labor, foundation, higher education, community organization, government, and media. The foundation sector included the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, and the government sector included the Chicago Public Schools, the Mayor’s Office, the state legislature, the Governor’s Office, and the Illinois

State Board of Education staff. The individuals who were interviewed were chosen because they held positions in key groups and organizations that make up a particular sector. Each was nominated and vetted against three criteria: (a) Did this person represent an organization of some size, importance, and longevity in the relevant sector? (b) Did this person's title and authority permit him or her to speak for the organization? and (c) Was this person knowledgeable about school reform issues in Chicago?

Nominations were garnered from a broad range of informants, including members of the Consortium for Chicago School Research's Directors and Steering Committee and highly visible community leaders across the seven sectors. In addition, informants were asked to nominate additional individuals at the conclusion of their interviews. In this manner, an initial set of 50 nominations grew to a sample of 81, from which 70 interviews were conducted. Eleven sector leaders declined or proved unavailable to be interviewed. In all, we interviewed 11 members of the business community, 11 members of community organizations and education reform groups, seven members of the foundation community, 16 leaders of the Chicago Public Schools and city and state government, 12 members of the higher education community, seven labor representatives, and six media representatives.

Initially, no attempt was made to nominate interview candidates based on their reputed relationship to the Chicago Challenge. Even so, sector leaders identified by our selection criteria included nearly all of those who played key roles in organizing the Challenge and developing its original proposal for funding, four Annenberg Board members, 11 of 20 Collaborative members, 12 Annenberg grant recipients, 11 rejected grant applicants and two semifinalists for the position of Challenge Director. In addition, 27 of the 70 informants claimed in interviews to have either influenced Ambassador Walter Annenberg to make a grant to Chicago, persuaded Mayor Daley or the Chicago Public Schools to sign on to the original proposal, attended the first set of meetings to design the proposal, or been involved in helping to select the first round of Annenberg networks.

These interviews were conducted in the summer and fall of 1997. Like the external partner and principal interviews, they followed a standard protocol. The

interviews contained open-ended questions about the 10-year history of and 5-year prognosis for Chicago school reform, the school system's current challenges, how local institutions and organizations have positively affected schools in Chicago, and informants' views about how school change happens and the best sources of information about Chicago school issues. The specific interview questions focused upon for this report include:

1. What do you understand to be the goals of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge?
2. Do you think the Annenberg strategy will meet its goals?
3. What evidence of success will satisfy you?
4. What do you think is the best use of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge's resources in the future?

Virtually all of the interviews were conducted in face-to-face sessions although four were conducted over the telephone. All but 11 were conducted "on the record." Most interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and several extended two hours or more. Like the external partner and principal interviews, these interviews were tape-recorded (with consent), transcribed into written form, and transferred to computer files to expedite searches for key themes and words.

Analysis of these interviews proceeded in much the same manner as analyses of the external partner and principal interviews. Responses were sorted by specific interview questions and by emergent response themes. Word searches were conducted to identify elements of responses to other questions that might be germane to the analysis. After this initial sorting, responses were reread and initial classifications were checked for accuracy. Frequencies and percentages of responses by sector within classifications were then calculated to determine the prevalence of particular types of responses. Specific quotes were identified as illustrative of common types of responses.



# Consortium on Chicago School Research

## Mission

The Consortium on Chicago School Research is an independent federation of Chicago area organizations that conducts research on ways to improve Chicago's public schools and assess the progress of school improvement and reform. Formed in 1990, it is a bipartisan organization that includes faculty from area universities, leadership from the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Teachers Union, education advocacy groups, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, as well as other key civic and professional leaders. The Consortium does not argue a particular policy position. Rather, it believes that good policy is most likely to result from a genuine competition of ideas informed by the best evidence that can be obtained.

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# Improving Chicago's Schools

Sponsored by  
the Chicago Annenberg Research Project  
with assistance from  
the Consortium on Chicago School Research

The Chicago Annenberg Research Project is a five-year program of the Consortium on Chicago School Research to document and analyze the activities and accomplishments of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. The project focuses on four related areas of inquiry.

1. **Outcomes for students.** Change in academic achievement, including basic skills and higher levels of learning. Also change in social attitudes, conduct, and engagement among students in Annenberg schools.
2. **School development.** Improvement in key organizational conditions of Annenberg schools that affect student learning. These conditions include school leadership, parent and community partnerships, student-centered learning climate, professional development and community, and quality instruction, as well as the Challenge's organizational themes of time, size, and isolation.
3. **Networks.** How networks, their external partners, and other change mechanisms promote the development of Annenberg schools.
4. **Larger contexts needed to support school development.** How the Challenge develops as an organization to support networks and school development. How the broader institutional contexts of Chicago affect the development and accomplishments of the Challenge.

The project's research design includes longitudinal surveys and case studies, multiple levels of analysis, and comparison groups. Data are collected from several sources including surveys of teachers, principals, and students; observations of schools and classrooms; classroom tasks and student work products; interviews; documents of Challenge activities; and administrative records from the Chicago Public Schools.