

New Visions for Public Schools New Century High School Initiative 2006-07 Annual Report September, 2007

OVERVIEW

During 2006-07, New Visions for Public Schools continued to demonstrate that improving graduation rates for traditionally underserved students in New York City is possible. In New Visions' New Century High School Initiative (NCHSI), the first two cohorts of schools recently posted 70% graduation rates for 2007—rates that are expected to increase once data on student completion during last summer is confirmed. The 2007 NCHSI graduation rate follows on the heels of a 78.5% graduation rate for 2006 and both are within striking distance from the NCHSI goal of an 80% graduation rate. The NCHSI graduation rate is 20 percentage points higher than the citywide graduation rates.¹ Moreover, the NCHSI schools are closing the achievement gap between white and minority students. Hispanic students in the 2007 NCHSI cohort graduated at almost the same graduation rate of Caucasian students citywide.²

Through our focus on using student data, New Visions has gained significant insight into the practices and emerging challenges of transforming schools. Policy Studies Associates' (PSA) final report, *Evaluation of New Century High Schools: Profile of a Large-Scale Initiative to Create Small, Effective Schools*, contributes to the understanding of the Initiative's results by employing both statistical and qualitative methods to examine school features associated with student outcomes. Among the findings on the practices of New Century High Schools during 2005-06, PSA indicates that certain school-level factors are consistently high across the Initiative and influenced achievement outcomes—strong personal relationships between teachers and students; high expectations for students; agreement on the school's educational focus; professional collaboration and effectiveness of principal leadership.³ Additionally, there was an increase of instructional alignment with the New York State Regents exams over time.⁴

At the same time, the PSA evaluation and recent NCHSI data also point to two emerging challenges. First, while the NCHSI graduation data suggests significant progress toward the goal of 80% of students graduating on time, many of these students are not yet college ready. Of the 2006 NCHS graduates, 52.4% received a local diploma and 43.6% received a Regents diploma. If an advanced Regents diploma is used as an indicator for college readiness, the challenge is even more pressing: only 2.6% of the 2006 graduates received an advanced Regents.⁵ Second, the NCHSI data also indicates that there continues to be a core group of students who are still not performing at high academic levels despite the effective practices of small schools.

In the upcoming years, New Visions will address both of these challenges as a Partnership Support Organization (PSO) to the New York City DOE. As described in our mid-year report, the DOE has deepened its Children First reforms to provide principals with more autonomy, authority and flexibility, releasing them from mandates and providing them with the ability to select school support organizations

¹ Please note that going forward the graduation rates will shift as the DOE moves toward adopting the state methodology of calculating graduation rates. Even when looking at the 2007 graduation rates using the state methodology, NCHSI schools' graduation rates continue to be 20 percentage points higher than the citywide graduation rate.

² Most recent data as of 2006.

³ Policy Studies Associates, Inc. *Evaluation of New Century High Schools: Profile of a Large-Scale Initiative to create Small, Effective Schools*. June 2007. i and 74.

⁴ Ibid. i.

⁵ Ibid. ii.

that best meet the needs of their schools and students. The DOE has identified New Visions as one of nine external organizations—PSOs—from which schools can select supports and services. This spring, 63 schools, almost half of them small schools, have chosen to partner with New Visions, making us the largest of the PSOs. Through the DOE’s accountability system, both the schools and New Visions will be held accountable for improved student performance. Schools will be graded publicly based on a number of indicators, including student performance on state assessments, academic progress of students since they entered the schools and parent/student/teacher satisfaction.

New Visions’ 2006-07 report provides an overview of recent results from NCHSI, as well as an introduction to our next stage of school improvement as a PSO. This report includes a close look at:

- I. NCHSI Goals and Progress to Date:** Presents evidence of meeting the NCHSI’s goals of school creation and systemic change, as well as emerging evidence of student performance and findings from the NCHSI evaluation by Policy Studies Associates;
- II. The New Visions PSO:** Introduces the New Visions PSO and sets our goals, role, strategies and metrics as a Partnership Support Organization;
- III. Baseline Data on the New Visions PSO:** Provides baseline data and further information on the New Visions PSO schools, many of them new to New Visions and our work, as well as the PSO students; and
- IV. Levers of Change:** Describes New Visions’ focus on key levers of change—school leadership, instruction and school practices, public engagement and school creation and support—that will result in school and student success.

I. NEW CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE GOALS AND PROGRESS TO DATE

Since its inception in 2001, the NCHSI has had two overarching goals: 1) create new small high schools; and 2) develop the systemic capacity to support the schools. New Visions, the DOE and other stakeholders are clearly accomplishing the goal of school creation as evidenced by the 86 NCHSI schools that have been established to date, as well as the additional schools that are scheduled to open in 2008 through this Initiative, and New Visions’ transfer school creation efforts. Moreover, we have made strides in creating the systemic capacity to support the new schools, as well as secondary school improvement on the whole, by establishing:

- A system for new school creation, a process tested through NCHSI and now led by the DOE through its recently established Office of New Schools;
- A new school-level autonomy and accountability system through the DOE’s Children First plan to accelerate school improvement;
- New roles for New Visions and other intermediaries as Partnership Support Organizations dedicated to providing ongoing supports for improvement to schools that select to work with us;
- New data systems and tools that support schools in collecting and analyzing student data;
- An action research methodology, adopted from the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model, that helps school leaders and faculty develop the skills to use data to drive school improvement; and

- New levels of civic engagement, including 225 community partners working with schools and a financial commitment from the City Council to support the school and community partnerships as NCHSI schools move off their original grants.

Continued work in these areas is outlined in the Levers for Change section below.

Most importantly, there continues to be emerging evidence that the new schools and systemic changes prompted by NCHSI are positively impacting student performance. First and foremost, the NCHSI schools are posting strong graduation rates. Both the 2006 and 2007 NCHSI graduation rates are 20 percentage points higher than the citywide graduation rate. The most recent PSA evaluation, which analyzes the 2005-06 school year, notes that “the difference in graduation rates derives from both lower dropout rates in NCHS schools (3 percent versus 15 percent) and faster completion rates (19 percent five-year holdover rate in NCHS versus 27 percent citywide).⁶ The report also concludes that the “NCHS schools achieved these results without hijacking more experienced teachers or advantaged students from the school system at large.”⁷

At the same time, recent NCHSI data and the PSA evaluation also point to emerging challenges. While these challenges are specific to the New Century High Schools, they point to more global issues of school improvement that is reflected in New Visions’ new PSO schools, described in detail in the next section. These include:

1. Maintaining or improving graduation rates over extended periods of time;
2. Better meeting the needs of the 20-25% of students still not performing in small schools; and
3. Ensuring students are well prepared for success in college upon high school graduation.

We have attached the NCHSI data presentation, which provides a comprehensive look at the achievements and challenges of the NCHSI schools.

II. THE NEW VISIONS PSO

The new century High School Initiative has set the stage for New Visions’ new role as a Partnership Support Organization (PSO) to the DOE. As a PSO, New Visions both supports and shares accountability with 63 schools that have selected to work with us. The lessons, strategies and tools that have emerged from our work during the past six years are at the core of how we will operate as a PSO to foster school improvement efforts.⁸

The New Visions PSO serves approximately 30,000 students at every grade level and in a variety of school structures including:

- 31 small high schools
- 5 large high schools
- 6 elementary schools

⁶ Policy Studies Associates. *Evaluation of New Century High Schools: Profile of a Large-Scale Initiative to Create Small, Effective Schools*. June 2007. 48.

⁷ Ibid. 73.

⁸ It is important to note that New Visions provides services to all NCHSI schools, regardless of the supports structures they selected (i.e., PSO, DOE or empowerment), throughout their start-up years until funding is complete and schools are prepared to operate autonomously.

- 14 6-12th grade schools
- 7 transfer schools

Our schools are located across the city—from the Bronx to Staten Island—and the student body is highly diverse, with a majority of students from populations historically underserved by New York City public schools. Current data shows that at New Visions PSO high schools, 57% of students receive free or reduced lunch and 78% are either African American or Hispanic.⁹

How We Work

The goal of the New Visions PSO is for all of our students to graduate from high school college and career ready, with at least 80% of students achieving this goal by 2011. To reach and eventually exceed this target, New Visions is incorporating methods and strategies from NCHSI and the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM), both of which were made possible by the Foundation. Based on what we have learned, we are working from a theory of action that postulates that the following strategies will change adult behavior in schools in ways that result in improved student outcomes:

- *Data: Moving data to action;*
- *Capacity: Building school capacity to establish systems that support continuous improvement; and*
- *Focus: Removing distractions to maintain a focus on student achievement.*

To put these strategies into practice with schools, New Visions employs an action research methodology adopted from SAM and based on British educator David Hargreaves’ theory of “disciplined innovation” in which educators innovate together, carefully evaluating and researching their work and refining their strategies in response to student results. The entire school community focuses on using student data and producing real gains in student achievement. Implemented and tested in 17 schools during the past three years, the process follows a set of rigorous, well defined steps in which practitioners research, assess and improve their own practices by:

- Using data (e.g. formative and summative assessments, low inference observations) to identify a group of students who are not successful;
- Identifying specific skills that students need to develop in order to improve their performance;
- Identifying short- and long-term mastery goals by which students demonstrate the skill;
- Figuring out how, when and where to teach them the skill using research-based and promising practices and resources, external expertise when needed and newly invented strategies;
- Developing, adopting or adapting assessments to measure progress toward mastery on the specific skill set;
- Collecting and analyzing resulting data;
- Identifying distractions and obstacles that may be blocking student progress;
- Modifying teaching strategies, as well as systems (e.g. policies, procedures) within the school, in response to the new assessment data; and
- Institutionalizing the process through new systems within the school so that over time more and more students become successful.

This methodology is grounded on the premise that every school has a sphere of success—some students are within it, while others are outside. By working through this process, each school team systematically

⁹ Please see the PSO Preliminary School Report attached for further information.

expands its sphere of success to include more and more students who are not well served by the school's current approach.

New Visions theory of action and methodology underpins our Levers of Change described in detail in the upcoming sections: school leadership; college-readiness instruction and practices; public engagement and school creation and supports. These levers of change have been developed and tested in much of the work undertaken in NCHSI and SAM.

Measuring Our Success

New Visions looks at three critical pieces of information to measure our success and inform our work moving forward:

1. *Progress toward the New Visions PSO target of 80% of students graduating college ready;*
2. *Evidence that New Visions' PSO strategies are changing adult behavior and results for students; and*
3. *Performance as measured by the New York City DOE accountability system.*

1. *Progress toward the New Visions PSO target of 80% of students graduating college ready.* New Visions is in the process of creating one- and four-year benchmarks that will track the results of our efforts in supporting schools in meeting the target of 80% of students graduating college ready. As we learned from the New Century High School Initiative, it is critical to set up explicit metrics that measure and track how students are progressing toward a goal. The metrics help us, our partners, schools, students and families to be clear on where students need to go, where they are now and what they need to achieve along the way in order to reach the overall goal of graduating college ready. Moreover, the metrics force all stakeholders to align resources and efforts toward a common goal: student success.

Based on what we have learned from NCHSI, we are recalibrating the metric we developed for progress toward graduation to show progress to a new, higher bar: students graduating college ready. New Visions has launched this effort by developing a college readiness metric, with targets at each high school grade level. Based on research and consultation with university partners, this draft metric is well above the minimal standards established by New York State for high school graduation in the key content areas. Reports by the Education Trust, ACT, the Bridge Project, and others indicate that all high school students should pursue well-aligned, three- or four-year sequences of courses in mathematics, science, social studies, and English in preparation for college enrollment and success.¹⁰ In addition, many states and independent organizations recommend that students aim for specific, higher-than-minimal scores on the SAT, ACT, or state-administered standardized exam to prepare themselves adequately for college or job success.¹¹ For example, at the City University of New York (CUNY), where 50% of New York City public school students attend college, students are only able to enroll directly into college-level courses if

¹⁰ Patrick M. Callan et al., *Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improved College Readiness and Success*. The Bridge Project, 2006; Andrea Venezia et al., *Betraying the College Dream: How Disconnected K-12 and Postsecondary Educational Systems Undermine Student Aspirations*. The Bridge Project, 2003. *A New Core Curriculum for All: Aiming High for Other People's Children*. Education Trust, Winter 2003. *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?* ACT, Inc., 2006. Retrieved April 2, 2007 from www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf

¹¹ ACT, whose college entrance exams are widely regarded as reliable indicators of future college success, has analyzed college and workforce training readiness levels (as measured by vocationally geared WorkKeys assessments and ACT tests in reading and mathematics) and concluded that they are comparable, indicating that students will face rigorous expectations whether they attend college or enter a workforce training program or college after high school graduation. Developed with input from employers, labor organizations, educators, and policymakers, ACT's WorkKeys tests are criterion referenced tests anchored to the skills needed for workforce readiness in nine areas. Jobs are profiled using the same levels to assess individuals' workforce readiness skills. An individual's readiness for a particular job can be compared to the requirements of the job, as defined through the job profiling process. *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?* ACT, Inc., 2006. Retrieved 4/2/ 2007 from www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf

they achieve a 75 or above in the ELA Regents and a 75 or above in the Math Regents or meet the university's established targets on the SAT or ACT.¹² Moreover, feedback from CUNY indicates that students should also achieve a 75 or above on the Math B Regents in order to be successful at entry-level college math courses.

Based on this research, by 2011, we want 80% of our students to graduate and meet two "college ready" benchmarks—75 or higher on the English language arts Regents exam and 75 or higher on the New York State Math A Regents exam or its equivalent—and two of the four following benchmarks:

- Participation in an advanced math course and completion of the Math B Regents exam or its equivalent;
- Participation in a chemistry, physics or other advanced science course and completion of a second science Regents exam in this subject area;
- Participation in a multi-year sequence of foreign language courses and completion of a foreign language Regents exam; and/or
- Five credit sequence meeting industry standards in a selected field.

Ultimately, New Visions seeks to create a series of metrics that, when fully developed, will provide benchmarks for student performance from grade 3 through post-secondary that are back-mapped from what is expected from students by post-secondary institutions. These metrics will track student progress toward preparing for high school ("high school readiness"), then college ("college readiness") and then student success in college ("post-secondary success"), beginning with looking at student completion of credits by the end of their first year in college and enrollment into their second year. Moreover, we will also develop performance metrics specific to the transfer schools, which are unique in their role in serving only overage, under-credit youth.

2. Evidence that New Visions PSO strategies are changing adult behavior and results for students.

New Visions will be engaging an external consultant to conduct an extensive evaluation of all New Visions' schools. We are in the process of finalizing the scope of the work and will be issuing an RFP. The evaluation is expected to focus on three areas related to changes in adult behavior and results for students:

- 1) Data-driven decision-making;
- 2) Capacity building; and
- 3) Focus of work.

The evaluation will build on the work of PSA on NCHSI, as well as Dr. Joan Talbert's evaluation of the action research methodology adopted from SAM.

3. Performance as measured by the New York City DOE accountability system.

The New Visions PSO schools operate within the New York City DOE's new accountability structure, which will provide our schools and us with important performance and diagnostic data. New Visions will work with the school team to prepare for the collection, analysis and use of the data sources provided through the following components of the accountability system:

¹² If a student fails to meet the Regents or ACT/SAT score requirements, he/she must pass CUNY's placement examinations. Data indicates, however, that the majority of students who achieve below a 75 on the Regents Mathematics or English Language Arts exams do not pass the CUNY placement examinations.

- Progress Reports. Every school receives an overall letter grade (A–F) and subscores that compare it both to similar schools and to the City’s best schools. The school’s grade will be based on performance (i.e., numbers of students at or above proficiency on tests in reading and math), progress (i.e., how much learning has taken place since the student entered the school), and the school environment (i.e., attendance, safety, and parent/student/teacher satisfaction). Schools will get additional recognition for improving the learning of low-performing students, making progress toward closing the achievement gap between them and other students;
- Quality Reviews. All schools are evaluated by skilled, external educators who spend up to three days observing the teaching that occurs in classrooms and interviewing the principal, teachers, parents, and students. A short report summarizes the observations, gives each school an overall score and scores subcategories of special focus; and
- Periodic assessments. Schools will measure student progress in all grades four or five times a year through periodic assessments. These diagnostic assessments provide results reflecting each student’s strengths and needs and are designed to help teachers adjust their instruction when there is still time to make a difference.

A Laboratory for College Readiness: Sharing Practices

With 63 schools that serve over 30,000 students, the New Visions PSO is larger than the majority of school districts across the country. Its number and diversity of students, neighborhoods, school grade configurations and sizes, and diversity of the schools’ past improvement efforts make it an ideal laboratory for school improvement. Our mix of PSO schools—both size and grade configuration (i.e., small and large high schools, 6-12 schools, elementary schools and transfer schools), as well as a mix of NCHSI schools, New Visions schools and schools new to our work—allows us to test, document and track the impact of strategies that have emerged from our NCHSI work within different types of schools, thinking through tough systemic questions of school reform. For example, what personalization strategies developed by small schools could be implemented in larger schools? What do transfer schools teach us about low-level literacy instruction that needs to be applied to prevent failure in small and large schools alike? By transferring the practices and knowledge of improvement across sites, we seek to accelerate improvement efforts within each school.

New Visions has been able to build our capacity to accelerate school improvement across schools through KnowledgeBase, an on-line knowledge management system. Designed as a collaboration space and a vast and an open source repository of school-generated and user-validated materials, it will serve to pilot, test and disseminate the work of the PSO lab and assemble resources (such as lesson plans, curriculum units, interim assessments, and other documents and tools) from the schools and other intermediaries for use, testing and customization by interested practitioners. KnowledgeBase will be a convenient, real-time tool for educators wishing to learn and work directly from peers engaged in the effort to prepare students for college.

III. BASELINE DATA ON THE NEW VISIONS PSO

New Visions has collected new, initial baseline data on our PSO students and identified three overall challenges to reaching the target of graduating students college ready. While these challenges are similar to the ones identified by PSA and the recent data on NCHSI, they are intensified due to the increased

number of students who need to be supported in order to be “on-track” toward graduating college ready. The attached PSO Preliminary School Report provides a detailed look at the data on each of these points, as well as further information about the performance of the New Visions PSO students.

- *Progress toward graduation needs to be improved:* Only 58% of all New Visions PSO high school students are on track or almost on track toward graduation. For next year, the challenge is to put in place key supports, programming and instructional strategies that will help more students bolster their skills, accumulate course credits and pass Regents Exams so they become on-track toward graduation. (Please see page 4 in the PSO Preliminary School Report.)
- *Large numbers of students are severely struggling to meet graduation requirements:* Approximately 26% of students in the 2008 cohort are severely behind toward graduation due to passing few or no Regents Exams and accumulating few course credits. Intentional strategies need to be put in place to support these students and provide them with an array of different, yet rigorous, learning experiences than the ones they are currently experiencing. (Please see page 10 in the PSO Preliminary School Report.)
- *Few students are college ready:* Preliminary data indicates that few students in the New Visions PSO are college ready upon graduation. For the 2007 PSO cohort, for example, only 20% of students achieved a score of 75 or above on the ELA and Math Regents. Looking at the needs of our upcoming cohorts, we need to help schools ensure that course offerings, programming and teaching and learning are aligned with college readiness, instruction is rigorous, and school supports are available, in order to prepare more students for college. (Please see page 12 in the PSO Preliminary School Report.)

New Visions is collecting additional baseline data and information on our PSO students and their performance levels.

IV. LEVERS OF CHANGE

Informed by our work over the past six years, as well as by baseline student data of the New Visions PSO, New Visions is focusing our efforts on four levers for school change: Leadership; Instruction; Public Engagement; and School Creation and Support. By supporting improvement in school practices in each of these areas, New Visions seeks to foster highly effective schools across our PSO and high achieving students who meet the goal of graduating college ready.

Implementing our theory of action and action research methodology, New Visions works with four levers of change all focused on meeting the goal of students graduating college ready:

- I. Leadership
- II. Instruction and School Practices
- III. Public Engagement
- IV. School Creation and Support

Levers of Change: Leadership

It is widely established in the education field that if schools are going to improve so that all students graduate college ready, schools need leaders who have the skills, expertise and knowledge to lead improvement efforts. Moreover, improvement efforts cannot rest solely with the principal—there is simply too much to do and too much resistance if principals alone are directing change. The leadership of ensuring all students are college ready must be shared across roles and positions. Yet, currently, few

principals or other school leaders have been prepared by certification programs to lead the changes necessary to improve student performance and achieve the bold goal of college readiness.¹³

Drawing from successful leadership development through SAM, principal coaching and other efforts through NCHSI, New Visions supports the improvement of New Visions PSO schools by:

1) Developing the capacity of school leadership teams at our PSO schools to lead improvement efforts and meet the target of at least 80% of students graduating college ready. New Visions employs four supports to leadership teams at each PSO school to build their capacity in leading their own improvement efforts:

- School-based coaching focused on the specific needs of each site. Using the action research methodology, New Visions facilitators work on site with school principals and teams to build their ability to analyze and use data to drive improvements in programming and instruction. Their efforts follow the action research model—using various forms of data (e.g. periodic assessments, School Quality Reports and others) to identify target populations of students (e.g. low performers who are way behind in their progress toward graduation or students who are progressing toward graduation but are not college ready) and analyze their key learning needs. Then, working with the New Visions facilitators, schools will develop, implement and assess an action plan that meets student needs, specifically looking at instructional strategies, systems of the school and obstacles that might be blocking student learning. From there, the facilitators will help school leadership teams to revise their strategies, establish the necessary systems and work to remove distractions to their focus on teaching and learning. As needs are identified by the leadership team, the New Visions facilitators also will help schools access other expertise to support their improvement effort—such as working with literacy or math coaches in building students’ skills in particular subject areas. Schools make the results of this work available for review and comment to other practitioners via KnowledgeBase.
- School clustering to accelerate improvement across sites. As schools identify challenges, needs, priorities and interests, they will begin to form clusters around shared issues. A New Visions facilitator will work with the cluster to share and test each participants’ practices based on a critical question developed from their school-based diagnostic work. In a facilitated process, school leaders will work through strategies related to their shared, critical question, return to their schools to implement practices, host peer schools for low inference observations and feedback, and then revise their work. Clusters will maintain continuous contact—sharing information and resources, answering questions, tracking implementation of interventions and gathering/comparing data via KnowledgeBase. Through this effort, schools will begin to both support and push each other in order to accelerate improvement across New Visions PSO schools.
- Operational supports to remove distractions that interfere with the schools’ focus on teaching and learning. New Visions also will provide schools with individual and group guidance, in the form of a School Support Center, to address operational and logistical issues that pull leaders’ focus away from instruction. The School Support Center services will include:
 - Immediate assistance to schools through a call center, open 7 am- 7 pm during the school year with abbreviated summer hours, that helps schools

¹³ Levine, Arthur. *Educating School Leaders*. March 2005.

to resolve immediate issues around operations and compliance and advocates with the DOE.

- Capacity building for leaders through need-driven workshops (on issues such as budgeting, attendance, etc) and providing access to targeted assistance from expert coaches.
 - School-based coaching, as needed, to assist school teams in responding effectively and efficiently to emerging issues.
 - Knowledge sharing via KnowledgeBase that provides a centralized source and user-friendly access to deadlines, opportunities and mandates.
- *Creating a pipeline of new school leaders with expertise in school improvement through the development and certification of new principals.*

New Visions, in partnership with Baruch College, will provide 20 schools in our PSO with the opportunity to participate in the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM) to develop and certify new school leaders through the work of school improvement. Funded by The Carnegie Corporation and The Petrie Foundation, this effort will create a pipeline of 116 new school leaders certified and prepared for the principalship or other school leadership positions when they successfully complete the program. In this degree granting strand of our work, aspiring principals will participate in daily apprenticeships, in which they work with other colleagues in the action research methodology. The SAM apprenticeship is bolstered by weekly graduate-level classes in which participants study change theories that shed light upon their daily efforts of school change; inter-visitations in which they conduct low inference observations on each other's work and provide feedback to SAM colleagues; and summer intensives in which they work with their colleagues to create school action plan.

Levers of Change: Instruction and School Practices

Achieving the goal of college readiness for all students is no small feat—particularly when many of the students are not tracking toward the goal, as baseline data on the PSO indicates. To reach the target of 80% of students graduating college ready by 2011, the New Visions PSO schools must align all of their practices around preparing students for college. This means creating a school-wide context for college readiness and preparation, as well as putting in place different types of learning supports and experiences to accelerate the learning of struggling students.

To do so, each and every classroom must have a teacher who is highly knowledgeable and skillful in content, instruction and assessment. Similar to the challenge of leadership preparation and development, the challenges here are also widely known: new teachers who are not prepared by university programs to teach in schools in the midst of intense improvement and high rates of teachers new to the profession. Within the New Visions PSO, for example, 39% of teachers have one to three years of teaching experience. At the same time, most systems provide little opportunity for teacher growth once they are in a position, as well as little opportunity to transfer the knowledge and skills of experienced and effective teachers to others in order to positively impact more students. In effect, teachers at different stages of their careers, with different levels of expertise, should be doing different work.

To meet these challenges and use college-readiness practices as a lever for change, New Visions draws upon research, lessons and successful practices from the New Century High School Initiative, the PSA evaluations and past practitioner networks. In the upcoming year, New Visions will guide the New Visions PSO schools by:

1. *Creating a professional pathway for teachers focused on building their expertise to ensure students are college ready.* New Visions is designing and implementing a comprehensive teacher preparation and development model that spans the teaching continuum—from aspiring teachers, to novice teachers, to experienced teachers. Components of this effort are:
 - Teacher Preparation and Certification: As an extension of our SAM leadership development work, New Visions, partnering with the National Coalition of Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) and a local university, proposes to pilot an ambitious human capital strategy to deepen the pipeline of teachers entering urban schools while improving outcomes for children. Based on the medical residency model and successful pilot programs in Boston and Chicago, the New Visions Teacher Residency (NVTR) aims to train the next generation of teachers, create schools that get results for children and retain the talent they develop, and change the human resource systems supporting our public schools. Aspiring teachers will be placed in a year-long, in-school residency in which they practice and hone their pedagogical skills alongside effective veteran teachers at our sites. Residents also will participate in specialized seminars and summer sessions, tailored to the schools' reform agenda and standards, and earn a Master's Degree from a partnering university and their teaching license, in addition to partial credits towards dual licensure in special education. Residents must commit to teach three years within the system after their residency is completed. Graduates of the program will receive one-three years of support, differentiated to meet their needs, helping them develop from novice to teacher leader.
 - Teacher Development: New Visions also will support the professional growth of our current teachers in implementing college-ready instruction and accelerating student learning. New Visions PSO facilitators will work with school teams to identify the content area knowledge and skills that students are struggling to master. Based on the priority needs they have identified, schools will be able to select to participate in professional development for practitioners that is connected to teachers' every day classroom needs, and is differentiated to reflect the different needs of teachers at different stages of their careers. Through a combination of classroom-based coaching and cross-school clusters, practitioners will focus on data analysis and action research, the design, testing and assessment of curriculum units and sharing teachers' innovations through KnowledgeBase. New Visions is launching this work through a new math initiative in partnership with the Charles Dana Center at the University of Texas and Agile Mind. Using SAM as the core methodology, we will work with a targeted group of schools to improve student performance by creating a cadre of leaders, classroom teachers and students with a much deeper understanding of mathematics. With the end goal of increasing college readiness, we will focus our efforts on the critical course of Algebra I. New Visions' work with schools will be supported by the Dana Center and Agile Mind online tools and interim assessments for strengthening performance in Algebra I. The training, tools, and technical assistance provided by the Dana Center and Agile Mind will be integrated into New Visions' work with schools at the leadership, classroom teacher and student levels.
 - *Helping to create a school-wide context for college readiness and preparation.* The work of ensuring students are college-ready is not only about strong instruction in each classroom, it is also about creating an overall school context for college readiness and preparation. This means creating school-wide expectations and supports for students so that they have access to college and are successful once they are there. First, New Visions will help schools set school-wide expectations for college readiness and preparation by providing the data that

shows how their students perform once they are at the college level. New Visions is working with CUNY to create a longitudinal database that will track the college performance of our PSO graduates and provide continual feedback to our schools on the success and challenges of their graduates in order to inform their work of continuous improvement.

Secondly, New Visions will help our PSO schools implement the necessary supports that contribute to a school-wide context for college readiness and preparation. This means creating a unified school-wide approach to college preparation. New Visions' Citigroup College Bound program will set the foundation for this work by supporting a cadre of 20 schools in two networks, in creating College Access Teams comprised of a guidance counselor, teacher, parent and community partner representatives. These teams will help integrate the college preparation process—taking the appropriate courses and exams, completing essays, filling out application forms and more – into every aspect of the school. New Visions will also offer college preparation workshops to all PSO schools as well as college fairs and college bound materials and publications. These efforts will be bolstered through New Visions' KnowledgeBase in which counselors can share and access information.

Levers of Change: Public Engagement

One of the key lessons from our work with the New Century High School Initiative is the importance of community and family engagement to the sustainability of school improvement efforts over time. The work of moving all students to college ready cannot be done by schools alone. Schools, parents and the community need to coordinate and leverage efforts, supports and services in ways that remove barriers to student learning and create opportunities and experiences that will help them access college and be successful there and beyond.

To support our PSO schools, New Visions will use public engagement as a key lever for changes by:

1. *Strengthening parent involvement around college readiness.* New Visions will work with schools to lead a campaign focused on engaging families of 9th graders in helping their students become college ready. The campaign will provide guidance to parents on: setting expectations for college readiness; monitoring their students' progress, particularly the accumulation of 11 credits by the end of 9th grade; and advocating for their students. New Visions will work with parent coordinators at the school sites to ensure that the campaigns are coordinated and put into action at the school level.
2. *Increasing the alignment of school and community resources through extended learning opportunities around college readiness.* Building upon lessons on school and community partnerships from documentation and studies of NCHSI, New Visions is undertaking a multi-pronged effort that will increase the alignment of school and community resources around the academic, social and developmental challenges students face as they prepare for success beyond high school. New Visions will continue to engage and educate city and community stakeholders to ensure that improvement efforts and recently founded schools are sustained over time. Our objectives are three-fold:
 - Build the capacity of schools, through workshops, resources and tools, to advocate effectively for themselves with elected officials;

- Build existing and new relationships with stakeholders and officials to raise awareness around school needs and educational policies; and
- Build upon existing relationships and develop new ones with leaders and stakeholders around college and career readiness.

New Visions is commissioning research that will generate principles, artifacts, tools, processes and agreements to be disseminated throughout our PSO, New York City and other settings.

Levers of Change: School Creation and Support

Thanks to the significant investment of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the New Century High School Initiative was developed to create 90 new small schools. To date, New Visions has opened 86 schools through the Initiative, including three new schools which opened this fall. The 2007 schools include:

- Lyon's Community School, serving students in grades 6-12 when at full capacity. The school is partnering with the Brooklyn Historical Society and focusing on the theme of community to facilitate students conducting field work and understanding the communities that surround the school;
- Archimedes Academy, serving students in grades 6-12 at full capacity. Located in Region 2 in the Bronx, the school is partnering with Vision Ed and focusing on college preparatory in math, science and technology; and
- Khalil Gibran International Academy, partnering with Arab American Family Services, will serve students in grades 6-12 at full capacity. The school seeks to become a dual language school in the future and is intended to enroll 50% of Arabic speaking children and 50% non-Arabic speaking children, although the current student population does not reflect that mix yet. In the throngs of intense public debate about the school, international media attention and heavily watched change in school leadership, the school successfully opened for the 2007-08 school year and is exhibiting high levels of commitment from the school leadership, faculty, students and parents to its mission. New Visions staff spent an enormous amount of time working with the DOE; school leadership, staff and families; the surrounding community; and the media to create a common understanding of the intent of the school to promote dual language development, cross-cultural understanding and high levels of student achievement.

In addition, the Civic Leadership Academy, focusing on the development of youth and leadership, has been formally approved as a New Century High School and will open in the fall of 2008.

To complete the Initiative, New Visions has committed to opening three additional New Century High School for the 2008-09 school year and has identified five potential prospects. Pending funding we anticipate approval of all of the schools to open in 2008. The five potential schools include:

- Queens Public Library
- Film and Television School
- Global Neighborhood Secondary School
- Collegiate Preparatory Academy
- HS for Innovation in Advertising and Media

For New York City, small schools creation continues to be a critical component of a larger strategy of secondary school reform because they contribute to a broader array of high quality choices for students and families based on their interests and aspirations. New Visions works in three areas of school creation simultaneously:

- *Leading a planning and selection process with prospective leadership teams for future new small schools.* Building upon lessons from NCHSI school creation, New Visions has refined our school planning and selection process by beginning with the selection of principals. Interested school leaders apply to New Visions, submit a concept paper, resume and references and participate in interviews. Once the principal candidates are vetted, they work with New Visions to identify, vet and invite strong organizations to join the planning team as partners. This effort helps to find organizations that are appropriate for and aligned with the principals' visions of the schools. Then, New Visions both supports and monitors the prospective school teams through one-on-one coaching, professional development sessions and more. Teams complete an executive summary, school plan and interview sessions as part of the DOE's selection process.
- *Facilitating the opening and providing supports for new small schools once they are selected.* Once schools are selected New Visions continues to provide intensive one-on-one coaching, professional development sessions, coaching in specific areas and other supports as the teams plan for school opening, progress through the start-up stage and add additional grades until they are at full capacity and move off of the school creation grant.
- *Plans for future opportunities for school creation and support based on the needs of the DOE.* New York City is committed to adding a significant number of new small schools over the next few years. Building upon our expertise and learnings from NCHSI, New Visions seeks to help the DOE lead this effort. Using data and evaluations from NCHSI, as well as student and system needs identified by the DOE, New Visions is planning to create a large cadre of new small schools that continue to expand the choice students and families have in accessing high quality secondary school experiences. In particular, we seek to establish multiple pathways that lead students to success in college and careers by creating career-themed and/or Career and Technical Education schools that tap into student interests and connect them to future opportunities in industry right here in the city. New Visions is seeking support for the research and development of career-theme school model.

Conclusion

By creating 86 small schools to date and opening four more schools next year, and, as a consequence, improving performance of the students involved, NCHSI is showing that an urban system can create an effective portfolio of schools that serves large numbers of students. NCHSI is also fostering long-lasting systemic changes in the ways that the DOE and intermediaries like New Visions support schools and are held jointly accountable for student performance. Moreover, the lessons and strategies stemming from NCHSI—such as the SAM pilot at NCHSI sites—are changing the day-to-day work at schools across the system by focusing on data-based decision making and disciplined innovation with the goal of improving student performance. These strategies are the basis of New Visions' new role as a PSO and have also affected the way the DOE supports schools.