

PARTNERSHIP & INNOVATION
NEW CENTURY HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK

A Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York

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The Youth Development Institute at the Fund for the City of New York was created in 1991 to increase developmental opportunities for young people and strengthen the capacity of communities to serve youth. YDI works to insure that youth policies, practices, and programs at all levels of government and in all funding streams reflect a positive model of youth development. At the core of YDI's vision is the integration of family, school, and community to create a consistent and continuous system of support in young people's lives. In its work with high schools, YDI integrates youth development concepts and practices into school settings. The expanding national interest in small high schools with personalized environments, rigorous and engaging learning opportunities, and meaningful youth participation offers fertile ground for the application of youth development practices within schools and in school collaborations with a wide range of partner organizations.

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New Visions for Public Schools manages the New Century High Schools Initiative.

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PARTNERSHIP & INNOVATION

NEW CENTURY HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK

In September 2002, 17 New Century high schools opened their doors to students as part of an ambitious, citywide initiative to make the high school experience relevant, engaging, and productive for New York City youth. Deliberately sited in Department of Education-designated low-performing high schools, these schools enroll students who are often unengaged in and unprepared for high school-level work. A core team provides oversight of the initiative and ensures ongoing support and involvement of key stakeholders. The team includes the New York City Department of Education (DoE), the United Federation of Teachers, the Council of Supervisors & Administrators, New Visions for Public Schools (New Visions), and the supporting foundations – the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Open Society Institute. This governance structure reflects the strong political and financial support that the initiative enjoys, with initial funding of more than \$30 million dollars from the three foundations. New Visions has managed the initiative since its launching in 2001.

The initiative continues to grow at a rapid pace. In fall 2003, new developments included: the opening of 24 new schools, for a total of 41 NCHS in operation; further funding in the amount of more than \$29 million from the Gates Foundation for development of 30 additional new high schools over two years; and statements from both the mayor and schools chancellor describing small schools as an important component of the broader effort to reform the New York City public school system.

This is the first of a series of papers based on a documentation study of the implementation of the New Century high schools. In particular, the study is examining how a central NCHS strategy – school-level partnerships between DoE and non-school organizations – is being enacted as partners work to create and lead each of the new small schools.

I

BACKGROUND

The New Century High Schools Initiative (NCHS) unites three, often unconnected strands of school reform efforts, interweaving these strands in a extensive effort to transform large, centralized high schools into small schools. The first strand emphasizes small school environments to promote strong, individualized academic and social supports for students. This includes innovative curricular approaches to ignite student interest, ongoing assessments of learning and teaching, close student-adult relationships, and heightened peer interaction within a safe, comfortable, and stimulating setting. The second strand highlights work to create and support school-level partnerships between the DoE (“school”) staff, mainly teachers and principals, and staff of external organizations to co-design, -implement, and -operate the new small schools.

The third strand involves efforts to create region-level and citywide structural change to help foster and sustain reform in schools throughout the system.

Each of the three strands plays a vital role in the NCHS design, much like the legs of a three-legged stool. In many ways, however, it is the concept of a partnership of equals, with the shared responsibility to create, lead, and maintain each school, which distinguishes the NCHS initiative from other small school reform or transformation efforts.¹

Documentation Study of Community-School Partnerships

As the partnership notion moved into action in the initial cohort of New Century schools, staff at the Youth Development Institute at the Fund for the City of New York (YDI), in collaboration with New Visions, recognized the importance of documenting how school and organizational partners develop as teams and establish their schools. With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, YDI, a major technical assistance provider for NCHS partnerships, contracted for the documentation study.

The study is a three-year exploration of the implementation and development of the third strand of NCHS: the partnerships between school-based educators and organizational staff. The study, which primarily employs fieldwork methodology,² asks: How do NCHS partnerships actually unfold in the schools? Are school and

¹ A number of initiatives and reform movements play variations on small schools, including, for example, the charter school movement, the schools as centers of communities movement, and New Visions Schools, but none has mandated school-level partnerships that are charged with joint responsibility for creating and leading the schools. The Carnegie Corporation's Schools for a New Society initiative employs a strong partnership strategy with its small schools, but the focus there is to develop strong partnerships at the system/district level.

² Fieldwork consists mainly of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with principal actors in selected partnerships and observations of central events, such as meetings, program activities, and trainings. Fieldwork for the paper began in mid-February 2003, into the first year of the operation of New Century high schools, and continued through September 2003. During this 8-month period, I conducted two levels of data collection. With the agreement of school and organizational partners, I carried out in-depth fieldwork at the Bronx Guild and Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School, two schools in the Bronx that New Visions and YDI identified as strong candidates for the study. In addition, throughout this period, I interviewed staff from New Visions, YDI, and the then small schools office of the Bronx high schools superintendency; interacted informally with a number of school and organizational partners; participated in New Visions meetings regarding partnership support and development; and reviewed materials generated by various groups involved in enacting the initiative. I also attended meetings and workshops for partners. Sometimes these gatherings brought together members of half the partnership equation (e.g., the Bronx high schools superintendency's small schools principals' meetings or the initial New Visions network meetings for organizational partners). Particularly during year 1, organizational partners felt the need at times to meet with each other, and asked New Visions to sponsor organizations-only meetings; this is discussed further in the paper. At other times, meetings included all partners (e.g., YDI's advisory workshops, the Bronx high schools superintendency's lunch meetings focusing on particular topics such as English Language Learners in small schools, and New Visions' principal-partner meetings, small schools retreats, and other initiative-wide events). School and/or organizational staff members took part in such gatherings as presenters, panelists, and active participants in small group discussions. These fieldwork venues together provide a textured view of the complexities, potentials, and challenges of the partnership strategy and how it is being enacted in schools. The researcher, a trained anthropologist, is conducting both the data collection and the data analysis.

organizational staff able to translate the concept of partnership into meaningful practice? What do these partnerships look like, and how do they operate? What are the critical supports for fostering and helping to sustain such partnerships?

Working Paper I

This first paper attempts to capture, in broad strokes: the early evolution of the NCHS partnership strategy; ways New Visions has conveyed the meaning of the strategy to school and organizational partners, principally through guidelines, training sessions, and other support mechanisms; and initial partnership practices and challenges in the schools.

As the research proceeded, it became clear that the partnership *strategy* and actual partnership *practices* in schools are interlocking pieces of the initiative, often operating in dynamic tension. The strategy's assumptions, priorities, and aims comprise a major context for understanding how partnership is enacted in schools and in larger communities. At the same time, partners' efforts to establish their schools help shape the meaning of the strategy and the supports for its implementation. Within short-term frameworks, strategy and practice have sometimes been in synch with each other, and at other times, at variance. Within longer timeframes, however, the dynamic interaction between strategy and practice has meant an evolution of each as participants in both realms influence the growth and perspectives of each other.

School creation is hard work. The study is learning about partnerships as partners are in the midst of meeting the multiple demands of building and running schools, engaging and teaching students, solving numerous logistical snags, and developing themselves and their staffs in the ways of effective small schools *and* of collaborative work. At the same time, New Visions staff and DoE district (later regional) administrators are supporting the creation of new small schools at a greater scale and faster pace than ever before attempted in New York City. They are working to establish new definitions of teaching and of learning, to develop the theoretical framework and applied dimensions of the partnership strategy, and to create accepted practice and policy regarding implementation of the initiative's principles, all within the politically-tinged arena of systemic change and reform.

This is meant as a working paper for audiences close to the NCHS work: New Visions and YDI, the organizations deeply engaged in helping develop and support partnerships; the Carnegie Corporation of New York, supporter of the documentation work; staff of the former Bronx high schools superintendency's small schools office, who worked closely, from the earliest planning stages through implementation, with the NCHS in the Bronx; and NCHS partners themselves. Why a "working paper"? First, working papers are part of the process of learning about partnership. They aim to stimulate reflection and discussion among the range of participants about the concept and practice of partnership, including feedback that critiques, elaborates, corrects, and extends the analysis. Second, the paper describes a study in progress; it is the first of

several to be produced over three years of observing and interacting with the initiative. Third, later publications, meant for broader public release, will cull and articulate lessons learned about NCHS partnerships, including reactions to the working papers. Given this paper's purpose and audiences, it assumes that readers have a basic understanding of the NCHS initiative and its partnership strategy.

This paper is built around analytic themes drawn from the field data and uses illustrative examples as appropriate. The paper falls into three substantive sections. "The Partnership Strategy" (section II) and "Supporting Partnerships" (section III) flesh out the context for the partnership work. "The Partnership Strategy" discusses the development of partnership as an idea and strategy (pages 4-10). "Supporting Partnerships" outlines the kinds of supports and assistance provided by New Visions and YDI for partners, both school and organizational, to convey the concept of partnership (pages 11-15). Within this context, "Practicing Partnership" (section IV) looks at how partnership is actually practiced and begins to explore the various roles of partners, relevant organizational attributes, and development of partnerships (pages 16-24). Future papers will draw on this early thematic exploration.

II

THE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

The New Century High Schools initiative attempts fundamental shifts in the conception, practice, and policies of high school education in one of the largest school systems in the nation. The overarching goal is to improve student outcomes across a range of arenas – academic, civic, social, and personal – thereby reflecting more effective teaching and learning. The initiative argues that community partners will increase the availability and improve the quality of critical opportunities and supports for young people in small schools. The joint resources of schools and organizations working together will change high school education in constructive, creative, and meaningful ways. The partnership strategy at the core of the initiative aims to provide a *means* to achieving solid outcomes in these arenas. Moreover, in realizing vital school-community links and joint commitment to educating youth, the strategy aims to signal an important initiative *result*. Since 2001, New Visions has been sharpening and focusing the strategy, based on youth development research and the experiences of early initiative planning and implementation. This program development work has encountered ongoing challenge because of the rapid pace of new school creation as well as the uniqueness of the venture.

Before getting into the evolution of the partnership strategy, however, one should note a seemingly simple but continuing quandary: What to call the "non-school" partner? The new school is to be the product of the partnership, but one partner comes with the legitimacy of traditional roles in schools. It is important that the title for the organizational partner helps evoke an equal stake and role in the partnership – instead of the separateness implied in such terms as "external," "non-school," "lead organization," indicating the role as fiscal agent for initiative funds, or simply "partner," as distinguished from the school. "Community partner" has been a title from the start but

ran into the snag that all partners are not community-based organizations or, indeed, located in the community or even borough of the school. Nor are they meant to be. In part, “community” here signifies the larger “non-school” community and highlights two notions. First, that all stakeholders are responsible for the education of the city’s youth, and second, that school and “community” partners can break the isolation that traditionally has been part of schools and the education process. The term “community,” however, can convey other connotations, raising expectations and confusion, especially as community engagement and community organizing are increasingly approaches to achieving school reform.

The title dilemma is significant for three reasons. First, it reflects the innovative nature of the partnership notion. Second, the dilemma encapsulates, in a shorthand way, the challenges of carrying out the new roles and structures that partnership implies. Third, the dilemma suggests the shifts in perspective and practice that are key to partners – both school and organizations – working together to create a new institutional entity. The challenge is not only *capturing* new relationships with old language, but of *creating* new relationships out of old paradigms. In this paper and more generally, I use the term “organizational partner” as a neutral, descriptive, if inelegant, term.

The Evolving Partnership Strategy

The NCHS partnership strategy is akin to but different from previous working relationships between schools and organizations. As in earlier configurations, organizations are sources of expertise, practice, and resources that can complement school offerings. The partnership strategy, however, eschews the traditional limits that restrict organizations to peripheral roles in outside-of-school hours or to service provision, such as social supports or remedial learning. These are roles and services that might complement but generally do not affect the teaching and learning work that occurs during the school day. Instead, the NCHS strategy, as it has evolved, squarely emphasizes an integrated work relationship between partners that results in the joint development, implementation, and leadership of a new school and the shared responsibility for student learning.

From the beginning, New Visions NCHS staff acknowledged and worked with the innovative nature of the partnership strategy. The cutting-edge aspect has impelled, at times, a scramble to meet rapidly developing challenges, define changing parameters, and look for ways to support partners as they move into new territory. At the same time, the strategy provides New Visions and YDI staff with a creative opportunity. Partnerships can be entry points into fundamentally re-conceptualizing the meaning of a “quality high school education.”

Since spring 2001, with the issuance of the first Request for Proposals (RFP) for NCHS planning grants, and still ongoing, the partnership strategy has been evolving. During the 30-month period between spring 2001 and fall 2003, two cohorts of school teams have gone through planning phases, submitted proposals, and opened NCHS

schools.³ Taking an overall view of this period, two things stand out about the strategy. First, there has been a continuous core of publicly articulated themes and beliefs about the value of partnerships to the transformation of high school education in New York City. Second, New Visions has gleaned and then used its experiences to refine the notion of partnerships, developing greater clarity about the roles and expectations of the DoE and organizational staffs, their partnerships, and the schools they create. As a backdrop to exploring how partnerships are enacted in the creation and maintenance of NCHS, it is useful to consider briefly (1) the ongoing core assumptions and expectations of partnerships and (2) major stages of development of the strategy.

Continuing Core Tenets of the Partnership Strategy

Although there have been shifts in emphases and clarity of articulation, the continuous beliefs include the following:

- *Partnership is an essential part of the NCHS initiative.* Schools alone cannot provide quality education, particularly for youth who have been underserved, underachieving, and turned off of school. Organizations alone cannot provide quality education either. However, schools and organizations together can create quality schools.
- *At the school level, partnership means collaboration* between Department of Education staff (teachers, principal, often counselors) and organizational staff.
- *The organizational partner can be from any area,* including institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, cultural institutions, social service providers, youth development organizations, and so forth.
- *The organizational partner may play a variety of roles in schools,* including provider of “direct services to students and [their] families,” supporter of the “curriculum and pedagogy of the school,” and source of the necessary “political will and organization to . . . stretch the realm of [educational] possibility.”⁴
- *There are many different ways of structuring the partnership,* for example, creating co-leadership approaches, or bringing in multiple organizational partners, or having a principal candidate who is identified by the organizational partner, or distinguishing particular areas in which each partner works.
- *The organizational partner serves as the fiscal agent for the initiative funds.* This was a strategic decision to help create leverage for the organizational partner, who also receives some initiative support for its work in the school.

³ The paper relies on initiative-generated documents and interviewees’ memories of the NCHS work in order to flesh out the period from the start of the initiative in 2001 through early 2002, when fieldwork began.

⁴ Agenda for the November 8, 2001, meeting “Open Discussion for Interested Community Based Organizations, cultural Institutions, colleges and Businesses,” hosted by the South Bronx Churches for the Bronx New Century High School Initiative, p 2.

Phases of Development of the Partnership Strategy

Between mid-2001 and early fall 2003, three phases in the development of the partnership concept stand out. These are not sharply defined periods, but, instead, phases that built on each other, as initiative staff incorporated their experiences and insights.

- *Phase 1: An early focus on partnerships as a means for simultaneously establishing deep systemic roots, transforming existing campuses into multiple small schools, and creating new individual schools.* The first planning grant RFP, issued in spring 2001, envisioned two different levels of partnerships. At the broadest level, the RFP required the formation of “district-community” collaborations, defined as collaborations between a school district or high school superintendency with “outside education stakeholders.”⁵ At this broad level, collaboration had two manifestations. One kind of partnership, between a district and an organizational partner, aimed at transforming an entire large high school into several small schools. This route was attempted in Brooklyn and not at all in the Bronx. The second kind of partnership, between a superintendency and an organizational partner, meant to act as a funnel for engaging and assisting school-based education and organizational staffs to work at more local levels, “creat[ing] new small high schools or expand[ing] existing schools to include high school grades.” Moreover, the charge to organizational partners seemed to extend beyond school creation. The initial RFP also specifies that “external partners”: (1) discuss how they will help solve “problems identified by the district and school,” such as students’ health and counseling needs or the lack of appropriate training for teachers; (2) describe how they “will contribute to the overall mission” of the new school; and (3) commit to supporting needed changes “with the political will required to sustain the effort”⁶

Neither the concept of partnership as a vehicle for total large school transformation nor as a funnel for engaging partners in small school creation has continued. By the third round of planning, the emphasis was squarely on the efforts of school and organizational staff, working in teams, engaged in individual small school creation.

- *Phase 2: Increased highlighting of school-level partnerships; multiple arenas in which organizational partners might work; and ways New Visions and YDI might support organizational partners and their adoption of significant NCHS roles.* In early 2002, there was growing recognition that organizational partners needed clarity about and support for their roles as they moved toward implementation of the first cohort of new schools. In addition, organizations looked for indications that their involvement as partners would be long-term and sustained, not only in terms of financial support but in terms of school leadership support that would survive the kind of turnover endemic to the school system. In response to organizations’ concerns, New Visions explored the possibility of developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between organizational and school partners. The MOU was seen as a possible means for providing organizational partners with the legitimacy

⁵ New Visions for Public Schools, Request for Proposals for Planning Grant Applications, spring 2001, p. 6.

⁶ New Visions for Public Schools, “Request for Proposals for Planning Grant Applications,” spring 2001, pg. 7.

and structural support necessary to gain some equity of authority in their relationships with school partners. “There is a big difference between rules that ‘permit’ [organizational partners’] involvement as opposed to ‘requiring’ their involvement.”⁷

At issue was discovering ways to make two partners into a viable, sustainable working partnership. This demanded a redefining of roles and responsibilities on both sides. In addition to exploring the MOU possibility, New Visions used other venues to promote such redefinition. For example, the “Vision of Partnership” presentation at a mid-summer 2002 meeting for both school and organizational partners touched on a wide range of partnership roles, most broadly as co-creators of schools, sharing common visions and missions with their school partners. Other arenas included participation in teaching and learning (e.g., developing curricula and professional development), daily operations of the school, engaging students, families, and communities in schools, providing new opportunities and resources, and shaping the school environment.

Ultimately, the MOU route was not pursued. Instead, as the partnership teams moved closer to opening new schools in the fall 2002, some of the concepts and language were taken out of the MOU’s legal framework and incorporated into a specific section of the implementation plan that asked partners to discuss how they intended to enact their partnerships. The aim was to stimulate further discussion on and clarification of roles and expectations of both partners; development of policies and practices that support “partners’ joint commitment to and responsibility for implementing the school design;” and creation of a “written record of understanding.”⁸

Overall, the MOU issue points out just how radical the NCHS initiative is in its demand for rethinking the shape, content, and means of educating youth. The need to rethink roles, responsibilities, and sustainability remain critical concerns for the initiative.

During this phase, New Visions and YDI also began helping organizational partners articulate assets that could be valuable in educational settings, in part laying a foundation to strengthen credibility for their participation in schools. The exercise also meant to identify potential points – what some call “connecting points” – through which organizational partners could enter into schools and the educational process. YDI writes:

We recognize that [organizational] partners bring a wide range of assets that can help in the classroom, non-school hours and in building connections to the community. . . . We would like to be sure to identify these, and help communicate them. NCHS is an opportunity to strengthen the external

⁷ Private summary notes from February 2001 meetings that included NVPS and organizational partners.

⁸ New Visions for Public Schools, “Implementation Plans,” June 2002, p. 2.

partner contribution so that they are not involved just in addressing the problems and pathologies that emerge in schools – a traditional role for many, such as student behavior issues – but are building learning opportunities and creating more positive opportunities for youth.⁹

Increasingly, New Visions moved more toward framing the work of both partners as developing the whole child, thereby aiming to place students, instead of schools, at the center of discussion. The question slowly became: What are the needs, interests, and strengths of students that partners together – school and organization – can meet, engage, and utilize in the education process? A mid-2002 working memo on partnerships says: “Young people, families and communities are essential partners in creating and building new kinds of educational settings. Young people are at the center of these [NCHS] efforts. . . . [Partnerships] entail close working relationships, joining of assets and sharing of responsibility. These efforts will be designed to create kinds of learning opportunities that address the full richness of adolescent interests, strengths and needs.”¹⁰

- *Phase 3: Emphasis on the “integration” of both partners’ efforts in major realms of school life.* These realms include curriculum, teaching and learning, school environment, and student assessment. A widely-circulated draft document, “A Vision of Partnerships” (May 2003), clearly outlines the kinds and degrees of integrated effort expected of partnerships: “To truly meet the needs of all high school students, we must re-envision not simply the roles partner organizations play but the nature of school-community partnerships themselves. Educators and other groups in the community . . . must share responsibility for student success.” In the same document, guiding principles for partnerships include the following:
 - All partners are accountable for student success.
 - The work of all partners is integrated into every aspect of the school’s design, development and operation.
 - The work of all partners has a direct impact on teaching and learning: they help students grow intellectually, personally and socially.
 - Partnerships work to change relationships between schools, the community and the school system as a whole.¹¹

Subsequent New Visions’ tools and report formats stress the integration of partners’ work with each other and in the school. For example, the “Tool for Partner

⁹ Youth Development Institute, internal memorandum “Questions for Community Organization Leaders,” June 14, 2002, p. 1.

¹⁰ Youth Development Institute, internal “Mission Statement on Partnerships” summarizing strategy discussions with New Visions for Public Schools, May 2002.

¹¹ New Visions for Public Schools, “New Century High Schools: A Vision of Partnerships,” Draft, May 2003.

Involvement,” distributed to school and organizational participants in the 2003 New Visions Summer Institute, asks respondents to fill in information about their partners on questions such as: “Thinking about the [summer Institute] class you are taking, describe how your partner might work with you to plan work with students; work in the classroom; work with students outside the classroom – in projects that take place in the field; assess work with students.”¹² Such questions convey the assumption that partners regularly work together, engage in core education endeavors, and know each others’ strengths well enough to anticipate the shape of future joint efforts. The format of the “Partnership-Planning Report” follows the same strategy, asking, for example, in the area of teaching and learning:

- What opportunities does the community partner have to participate in professional development for DoE instructors and for DoE instructors to participate in the professional development opportunities of the community partner?
- What opportunities does the community partner staff have to participate in classroom-based learning activities and for DoE staff to participate in learning activities initiated by the community partner?¹³

In brief, several significant developments in the partnership strategy occurred during the approximately two-year period under review (mid-2001–September 2003). These include the shift of the center of focus from schools to students and the educational process; a growing emphasis on the necessary and legitimate role of organizations as central to rethinking schools as educational arenas for youth; the deliberate, shared emphasis on academic rigor and social support as the joint pillars of the new schools; and the spoken expectation that partners will work together in all areas of the school, with improved student outcomes as the ultimate justification of the partnership strategy. An important reflection of these shifts occurred during the engagement of potential partners for the third cohort of new schools (2004-05). Here, New Visions was more intentional and systematic in the recruitment and preparation of potential organizational partners. New Visions and staff of the Regional Offices of Small Schools (ROSS) worked together to support the recruiting, engaging, training, and guiding of potential school and organizational partners in the development of concept paper applications for planning grants. This approach highlights and makes visible (1) the leadership role of New Visions and (2) the joint work of New Visions and the small schools offices in five of the participating school system regions.

¹² New Visions for Public Schools, “Tools for Partner Involvement,” July 2003.

¹³ New Visions for Public Schools, “New Century High School Initiative: Partnership-Planning Report,” July 1, 2003, p. 2.

III

SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership support provided by New Visions, YDI, and the then Office of the Bronx High School Superintendent, particularly the small schools staff, during the 2002-03 school year also reflects a similar evolutionary path.

In this context, and before looking at some of the supports, it is useful to recall that the deep reform introduced by NCHS has been taking place during a period of substantial, centrally-conceived transformation – bureaucratic, political, curricular, tactical, and conceptual – throughout the school system, from elementary through secondary grades and across all geographic areas of the city. Although this systemic transformation did not go into implementation until mid-2003, planning, announced changes, rumors of change, and feelings of uncertainty began much earlier. Perhaps the changes with the most immediate effect on the NCHS initiative has been the transformation and consolidation of the former 32 school districts into ten regions and the elimination of the high schools superintendencies. The first New Visions planning and implementation grants, for schools opening in 2002, were predicated on partnerships between school districts or superintendencies and organizational partners. These schools continue to operate but, especially for the Bronx high schools, no longer fall within the same bureaucratic unit in the school system: instead of being part of a network within the Bronx High Schools superintendency, they now fall across three different regions. Originally, the Office of the Bronx High Schools Superintendent’s small schools office had served and helped guide these new high schools.

When the Department of Education (formerly the Board of Education) made no provisions for small school offices within the new regions, New Visions helped create and now supports such staff within the six regions with low-performing high schools targeted for redesign.¹⁴ Specifically, New Visions is funding, for a limited time, positions in each of the six regions that focus on partnerships and community engagement and on small schools development. In each region, these staff members constitute a “Regional Office of Small Schools” (ROSS), are accountable to both New Visions and the office of the regional superintendent, work closely with regional staff and the regional superintendent, and are charged with supporting the emerging new schools. New Visions’ goal is to build regional commitment to the new schools and to ensure school system capacity to support and develop the new schools.

A brief review of some of the partnership supports helps trace their overall path of development. Some examples of the supports include the following:

- *Bronx school district’s work in 2001.* The Office of Bronx High Schools created a “Professional/Proposal Development Workshop” to help develop teams toward the opening of the first cohort of New Century high schools in fall 2002. The workshop,

¹⁴ The six regions with New Visions supported small school staff are: 1 and 2 (both in the Bronx), 4, 5, and 6 (all three in Brooklyn), and 9 (Manhattan and South Bronx).

comprised of a series of weekly informational sessions on the requirements and demands of creating and operating new schools covered such topics as “Creating a School Mission and Educational Philosophy,” “ Staff Development and Evaluation,” and “Setting Student Assessment Standards and Processes.” During the series, interested organizations, parents, students, community residents, and Board of Education teachers and principals were able to network and form planning teams. The series aimed most immediately to prepare teams to write concept papers and full school proposals in pursuit of planning and implementation grants, respectively. In the longer-term, the aim was to build a foundation for small school creation and operation.

- *Meetings for organizational partners.* During fall 2002, with the opening of the first cohort of New Century high schools, New Visions sponsored various gatherings at the request of organizational partners so they could meet without their school partners. Organizational partners wanted to share strategies and air difficulties and concerns. For example, the Bronx Steering Committee meetings, co-facilitated by New Visions and the Bronx High School Superintendent’s small schools office, provided the arena for organizational partners to discuss basic school-related issues such as student safety. Organizational partners also wanted meetings devoted to the possibility of establishing a memorandum of understanding, discussed earlier. Ongoing themes in all these organizational-partners-only meetings included their efforts to gain legitimacy as full partners in the schools and explorations of ways to clarify and support their roles.
- *New Visions’ “Network Meetings.”* New Visions has sponsored network meetings from the first year of NCHS implementation. These meetings have always emphasized networking, aiming not only to create a time, place, and hospitable atmosphere in which colleagues could meet and share mutual interests, but also to foster an active network of NCHS participants. Organizational partners generally host the meetings in their facilities. Typically, partners make presentations, although occasionally there is an outside speaker. Recently, the meetings have included small group discussions around school issues or mini-workshops on topics such as building literacy or tapping into resources.

The concept of "network" has evolved with time and experience. In fall 2002, with the opening of the first cohort of new schools, New Visions held "Community Partners Network Meetings," arenas in which organizational partners could meet, share strategies and ideas, and discuss issues. For example, at the January 2003 network meeting, Good Shepherd Services, the organizational partner at South Brooklyn Community High School, gave a presentation on the school’s organizational structures and how these support partnership.

By spring 2003, the concept of "network" had evolved to include principals along with organizational leaders. The first "Principals-Partners Network Meeting" occurred in April at the Bronx Museum of Art. New Visions opened the event by saying:

We are excited to have both partners and school leaders here this evening at this meeting. We realize how important it is to create as many opportunities

as possible for the partners and principals to come together and discuss the issues related to their partnerships and schools.¹⁵

The opening remarks articulated the expectation that organizational partners be fully integrated into their schools and into the pursuit of new learning opportunities and personalized educational experiences for young people. The school and organizational partners from three schools – Bronx International High School, Discovery High School, and Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School – presented strategies and practices of their partnership work in classrooms, bridge programs, and governance of their schools.

This first meeting broadened the focus from the organizational partner to an emphasis on the partnership between school and organizational partners. Since then, New Visions has held Principals-Partners Network Meetings on a quarterly basis. The aim has been to foster discussion and problem-solving between partners, promote networking among partnerships, and strengthen the broad and growing network created through partners' shared commitment, work, and challenges.

- *Asset mapping.* New Visions' strategy of asset mapping was designed with a number of aims in mind: to help build relationships between New Visions staff and organizational partners; foster organizational legitimacy and confidence in undertaking full partnership roles; and perhaps most vital, pushing the thinking of organizational partners – and by extension, the thinking of the partnerships – about the definitions and practices of high school education. Most directly, the strategy aims to assist organizational partners in thinking intentionally about and articulating their capacities, experiences, and knowledge within the framework of creating and operating the new schools and identifying potential entry points for their work in the new schools. Such points of entry might include, for example, a youth development perspective, specific programs and supports, expertise at creating and maintaining organizational structures and processes, and experience in engaging familial, community, and foundation support.
- *YDI's "Literacy Dialogues."* In many ways, the creation of the "literacy dialogues" by YDI and the City University of New York, in cooperation with New Visions, was a watershed point in NCHS technical assistance. The dialogues, which began in March 2003, moved the assistance focus to partnership teams – partners together – working on a concrete task related to teaching and learning, an area that traditionally has offered few entry points for the involvement of non-school entities. The dialogues, a series of meetings on challenges of and strategies for youth literacy, culminated in an evening of presentations in which each team described its literacy project and how it had been implemented. Audience participants included the then Board of Education, New Visions, and foundation staffs.

¹⁵ New Visions for Public Schools minutes, Principals-Partners Network Meeting, April 1, 2003.

In terms of partnership dynamics, the dialogues provided support focused on an issue – development of student literacy – that all involved in NCHS agree is critical to the success of students, the schools, the partners, and the initiative. The structure of the dialogues framed the technical assistance in a new way, joining the concept of partnership to concrete work at the core of the school. The dialogues created a neutral venue, both an arena and time, in which partners could work as professionals to develop a specific new approach to a difficult and serious educational challenge. Participants appreciated that they *worked* together; they didn't *talk* about working together. As YDI looked to developing the series for the 2003-04 school year, the issue of institutionalizing the team approach to literacy, perhaps through the involvement of principals and organizational leaders, became a prime concern.

- *New Visions' "Support Sessions for Concept Paper Preparation."* In the early fall 2003, New Visions structured and led seven sessions that presented the NCHS initiative to potential partners – both DoE educators and organizational staff – who would form the third cohort of new schools. New Visions framed the multi-week series as professional development, the initial stage in creating new assumptions about and expectations for high school education and in encouraging potential partners to engage in open and creative exploration of approaches and structures. The first meeting of the series included an overview of the concept and role of partnership, highlighting the centrality of the strategy in the initiative and expectations for an integrated approach to teaching and learning in each school. The series also included such topics as school culture and curriculum as well as DoE regulations and assessment requirements. A pivotal aspect involved networking so attendees could meet, identify kindred interests, and form school-organization teams. The series culminated in 109 team concepts for new schools. Based on these concepts, each regional core team made recommendations regarding schools proposed for its region to the DoE regional office, which, in turn, made the final decisions for awarding planning grants.¹⁶ Across the six regions with targeted schools, the offices made grants to a total of 57 teams, with two additional grants to be decided by year's end.

The fall 2003 support sessions departed from the original 2001 Bronx High School Superintendent's series in a number of ways. First, as discussed above, during summer 2003, New Visions helped create and provided support for the six regional offices of small schools. The ROSS staff aimed to play similar although extended roles originally undertaken by the Bronx High School superintendency during the

¹⁶ The papers went through several levels of appraisal. Initially, staff from the appropriate Regional Office of Small Schools and New Visions read the submissions and sent their recommendations to the relevant Regional Core Team. Team members generally included representatives from the regional office, local instructional superintendent, United Federation of Teachers, Council of Supervisory Administrators, parents, and organizational partners. Teams read and assessed the proposals and sent their recommendations to the DoE regional office, which made the final decisions.

first two years of the initiative. New Visions staff, now organized by regions to match the new school structure, and small schools staff housed in regional offices together conducted the support sessions. Second, New Visions and ROSS staff members together emphasized the partnership strategy of the initiative in a variety of ways, for example, in discussing the role of advisories or family groups in schools. As in the 2001 meetings, the series process served as a venue in which DoE staff and staff from potential organizational partners could network in order to identify and connect as partners. Third, New Visions framed the series as professional development, aiming to foster the habits of mind and structural underpinnings to develop new small schools through partnerships. Fourth, New Visions highlighted the interlocking areas of academic rigor and social supports as the essential means for fostering the development of literate, capable youth engaged in their own growth.

In addition, New Visions could now draw on the experiences of school and organizational partners working in existing New Century high schools. At an October citywide partnership meeting for potential partners, organizational partners from three operating schools helped flesh out the theory of partnership strategy, lending their insights on the demands and challenges of creating and operating the new schools. Some of these challenges included overcoming the skepticism of organizational boards about the initiative, unexpected demands on organizational resources, difficulties in carrying out fiscal agent responsibilities regarding initiative funds, and the ongoing task of creating structures of partnership, such as lines of communication and decision-making processes. The initiative had moved into a new phase as it could now engage practitioners to help initiate potential newcomers with on-the-ground insights into the challenges and rewards of new school creation.

In a general sense, assistance to initiatives and/or projects frequently aims to meet multiple, often overlapping ends. In the NCHS initiative, examples of assistance that provide support in diverse ways include:

- *Meeting needs of the schools within the context of partnership.* For example, sponsoring the Literacy Dialogues to enhance the ability of partnership teams to meet students' literacy needs, but at the same time, strengthening the role of organizational partners in teaching and learning by drawing on organizations' expertise and youth development perspectives.
- *Building organizations' awareness of their skills and knowledge so they can intentionally employ those skills in their schools.* For example, engaging organizational partners in asset mapping exercises and at the same time furthering the partnership strategy in order to strengthen schools' educational process.
- *Developing capacity and new ways of thinking within partners and within the schools system more generally.* For example, seeding small school and partnership strategies among central and regional DoE staff, community-based and citywide organizations, parents, students, and community residents, and other key stakeholders, thereby promoting the institutionalization and sustainability of effective new high schools.

III

PRACTICING PARTNERSHIP

Unlike the development of the partnership strategy and implementation supports, to date no clear path or set of paths have become evident for the ways partnership is practiced and matures. There are beginning to emerge, however, some preliminary themes that characterize NCHS partnerships and their work. At the same time, partnerships use their various strategies to undertake common work and challenges. Some of these variations and commonalities are discussed below.

Range and Diversity of Partnerships

Range and diversity are important hallmarks of NCHS partnerships – in partner characteristics, partnership histories, and partnership practices, all discussed below.

Diversity Among Partners

- *Areas of expertise and focus.* Organizational partners bring great diversity in expertise and interests, a strength that was expected but is still striking. For example, organizations bring to their schools: expertise in the arts, drawing on theater groups, studio arts, musicians, and museums and galleries; research and historical perspectives, including archival work; community-based skills, concerns, and legitimacy, gained from their experiences as settlement houses and community organizing groups; knowledge and skills of service provision, including hospitals and social service centers; youth development expertise that supports the engagement of youth and development of environments that are safe, supportive, personal, and inviting; and access to the world of higher education. School partners also bring particular foci, for example, Bronx International High School’s focus on students who are recent immigrants.
- *Size and venue.* Organizational partners range in size and venue, from community based organizations working in particular neighborhoods to borough-wide groups to citywide organizations to out-of-state institutions. Some organizational partners have national status or are part of national organizations or networks. (Examples are, respectively, South Bronx Churches and Mosholu Montefiore Community Center; Bronx Museum of the Arts and Brooklyn Botanical Garden; Lehman College and Roundabout Theatre; the University of Vermont; Lincoln Center Institute, Outward Bound, and YMCA of Greater New York.)
- *Experience in small school creation.* Many organizational partners come with deep experience with the school system, having worked either in schools (such as Outward Bound, East Side House Settlement, and the University of Vermont) or in after-school programs. Others are new to the arena of the public education system. A few organizational partners, such as Gateway, Good Shepherd Services, South Bronx Churches, and Urban Assembly, come with histories in developing and implementing new, small schools or school programs.

- *Target population.* All NCHS are located in high poverty areas of the city, and many organizational and school partners bring experience working with underserved, underachieving students. In addition, a few partners and partnerships focus on particular segments of this student population, such as students with high truancy records in high school (Good Shepherd Services and South Brooklyn Community High School) and court-involved youth (Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services and Community Prep School).

Variations in Partnership Histories

- *School partner impetus.* Some new schools are based on plans that were essentially developed by DoE staff. The plan for the Bronx Guild, for example, draws heavily on the vision and experiences of the principal and the teachers who made up the first year faculty. This team then selected the organizational partner for the school.
- *Organizational partner impetus.* Other schools, such as the Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School, began with strong impetus from the organizational partner, East Side House Settlement, which took the lead in building the planning team, developing the school plan, and identifying a candidate for the principalship.
- *Already established schools.* A few schools, such as the Bronx International High School and the South Brooklyn Community High School, grew out of already established schools or school programs. The Bronx International High School, which accepts only immigrant youth, is modeled on the plan developed in the Queens International High School. The school was a year old when it joined the NCHS initiative. The principal took the lead in engaging the Bronx Museum of Art as the organizational partner because the school plan envisioned a strong art component in the school's teaching and learning processes as one way of engaging students in academic work and providing an arena for joint effort among students from a wide range of cultural, national, and linguistic backgrounds. The South Brooklyn Community High School grew out of a 20-year old program in which Good Shepherd Services developed and managed a school program in collaboration with John Jay High School. The school, as did the preceding program, only accepts and provides services for students with proven records of excessive high school truancy. The Gateway Institute has a developed model for creating new, small high school that it has already put into practice. The Institute brings this model to its work within the NCHS Initiative in its partnership at the Gateway Academy for Science, Mathematics and Research and the Gateway School of Environmental Research and Technology, both programs that opened in 2003 in the Bronx.

Multiple Arenas of Partnership Work

Partnerships across the schools engage in common arenas of work that are multiple, layered, and intersecting. Although these arenas often present simultaneous demands, it is useful to delineate them analytically. The arenas of work help make evident possible points of collaborative effort as well as various challenges of new school creation. The arenas of work include:

Creating New Schools

Work here might include, but is not limited to, participation in such tasks as identifying staff, enrolling students, dealing with facilities issues, securing equipment, and understanding and meeting DoE requirements.

Creating New Schools that are *Good, Effective Schools*

This requires a grasp of the principles of youth development that underpin the NCHS theory of change and an ability to translate those principles into practice. This might mean, for example, structuring a learning culture at the school by infusing youth development principles into roles, relationships, high expectations, scheduling, course format and parameters, and curricula, as well as providing appropriate professional development and support. Another aspect of the NCHS theory of change envisions situating schools within strong social networks that include engaged parents and strong community-school links.

Creating New Effective Schools that Meet the Challenges of *Small Schools*

Small size is a component of good, effective schools, but also carries particular challenges. Given the small number of staff, for example, schools must develop strategies to meet numerous demands on time and skills, such as attending meetings or fulfilling DoE and NCHS requirements, creating schedules that allow for common planning time and all-staff meetings while satisfying class requirements, and building staff capacity to wear multiple hats in the school without burning people out.

Creating the Means for *Collaborative Work*

This is the effort that is intrinsic to turning two partners into an effective partnership and includes, for example, defining and instilling partnership expectations in DoE and organizational staff members; building and supporting mechanisms that foster collaboration, such as effective means of sharing information, keeping abreast of each other's work, and making decisions; defining arenas of joint action; and developing agreed-upon roles and common expectations among involved staff of all partners.

Weight of the School in Partnership Work

Although the term “partnership” implies a relationship of equals, in fact, the school partner often enters a NCHS partnership as the “weighted partner,” carrying significant authority comprised of legitimacy, knowledge, convention, responsibility, and institutionalized support. Such weight poses challenges when organizational and school partners try to rethink and reframe the components, structure, roles, and processes of effective, small high schools. In addition, the weight of school partners often presents hurdles in developing working partnerships in, for example, identifying arenas for joint work, especially in the classroom, or in positing credence in joint decision-making. As is often the case in any kind of weighted partnerships, it is commonly left to one partner (in this instance, the organizational partner) to figure out such hurdles or, at the least, press the issue with the weighted partner.

For partnerships aiming to build schools, the inherent authority of the school partner arises from several factors, including the following.

“Institutional Character of the School”

According to David Tyack and Larry Cuban, the weight of schools arises from two mutually reinforcing aspects of schools’ “institutional character”. The authors cogently sum these up in their book *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*:

During the last century, there has been much continuity in the structures, rules, and practices that organize the work of instruction. These organizational regularities, the grammar of schooling, include such familiar practices as the age-grading of students, the division of knowledge into separate subjects, and the self-contained classroom with one teacher. At the core of the school – in classroom instruction – change was slow. Reforms took place, but they were largely accretions around that core. . . . Most Americans have been to school and know what a ‘real school’ is like. Congruence with that cultural template has helped maintain the legitimacy of the institution in the minds of the public. . . . Both general beliefs in the broader culture about what a ‘real school’ was and the hold of standard operating procedures on staff and students put a brake on innovators who sought basic changes in classroom instruction.¹⁷

At times, the work of school staff and sometimes both partners together reflect the effort demanded to rethink the often unspoken assumptions and expectations inherent in schools’ institutional character. Such conversations often center on mundane, concrete aspects of a school day because it is precisely those aspects that demand consideration and require action. For example, a partnership team, including the principal and director who share leadership in the school, the teachers and the advocate counselors, work together to develop a school-wide, cross-partner approach to preparing for the Regents examinations. Another team, in a discussion framed by the principal but including the organizational partner, considers how to define, within city and state regulations, “what’s worth a credit” in the school, taking into account the workplace internships and expeditions that form a part of the curriculum as well as classroom work. In still another discussion, mainly school staff members struggle to create an effective schedule that will incorporate both mandated classes and classes with the organizational partner that carry out the school’s theme.

School as the Locus of Action

Schools carry weight as the centers of action, the heart of the enterprise. School district educators traditionally are fundamental to this enterprise. Organizational partners must establish the legitimacy of their presence and create their school roles, within the joint vision of the new school. One way of accomplishing this is for organizational staff

¹⁷ David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Harvard University Press) 1995, pp. 8-10.

to be part of daily school life. In some instances, these staff members are in the schools on a full-time basis; in other schools, staff members are in school on a regular but part-time basis.

Institutionalized Support for School Partners

There is an inequality of resources that support the work of each partner, both in terms of the amount of available funding and the guarantee of future funding. In each school, the school partner has guaranteed, and in fact mandated, support for many staff members, including administrators, teachers, a school counselor, and others. The organizational partner can draw on fewer resources and often must take the initiative and responsibility to raise additional monies in order to participate as envisioned. In addition, the lack of guaranteed continued support for the organizational partner creates a sense of uncertainty regarding the future of the budding partnership. Organizational partners feel such uncertainty most sharply, but it can also affect the commitment of school partners to the difficult work of collaborating and rethinking high school education.

New Visions recognizes the pressure of resource questions on efforts to institutionalize partnership work and sustain it over time. Part of its role is to identify and help develop strategies for addressing the financial sustainability of the partnership model. This has happened, for example, in the successful application for a \$5 million 21st Century grant for after-school enrichment programs.

Collaboration and the Diversity of Partnership Practices

Efforts to collaborate can be difficult and demanding. The collaborative process requires partners to define new roles for themselves and create relationships with their partners, including the means to communicate, interact, and make joint decisions. Such work requires a perception that collaborating is worthwhile because it will repay the effort demanded. Within the NCHS context, such repayment focuses on improved student outcomes, but may also include development of organizations in new directions, greater satisfaction among teachers, and stronger school-community links. Effective integrated partnership also requires the intentional nurturing of a collaborative habit of mind – that is, the ability and willingness to think reflexively in collaborative terms – and the systematic development of mechanisms and routines that structure, facilitate, and promote collaboration.

Collaboration is often spoken of as a strategy to reduce program redundancies or to create efficiencies of scale, or to stretch resources by drawing on multiple organizations. In the NCHS initiative, partners are being asked to achieve perhaps the most exciting and challenging form of collaborative effort: incorporating the work and capacities of two different groups of actors and their very different institutional homes and achieving new, integrated – not add-on – program components and practices within the new schools in their efforts to co-create more engaging and effective learning environments. For the NCHS partners, this has meant finding ways to collaborate in the midst of starting and running their schools.

There is great diversity in the organizational arrangements that partners put into place in their schools. The term “organizational arrangements” refers to the instituted social relationships and practices through which organizations conduct their work. Pivotal arrangements for any organization include internal communications and information sharing, authority and reporting relationships, and decision-making processes and leverage. The development of organizational arrangements in the new schools often entails ongoing negotiating between partners and reflects the variety of interests and aims among partnerships. Broad arrangements reflect conceptions of partnership and help set the parameters within which specific practices play out. Examples of such arrangements include the institutionalization of leadership roles, in-school presence of organizational staff, school use of organizational sites, and the range of arenas through which organizational partners enter into the daily life of schools.

Shared Leadership of Schools

A few partnerships explicitly practice a shared-leadership model in their schools. For example, South Brooklyn Community High School has a DoE principal and a Good Shepherd Services director. The two leaders have regular daily meetings as well as more spontaneous huddles when specific issues or tasks demand. The two staffs – teachers and advocate counselors – carry complementary responsibilities for students’ progress in terms of academics, social supports, and personal growth. Other NCHS partnerships have a variety of processes that support shared leadership and decision-making, although the structures may not be as intentional as they are at South Brooklyn.

In-School Presence of Organizational Staff

Some schools have full-time organizational staff teams on site, such as the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services team at Community Prep School and East Side House Settlement staff members at Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School. Other schools have an organizational staff member on-site for two or more days a week, as in the classroom work and planning with teachers of the Bronx Museum of Art studio artist at the Bronx International High School, or in the Expeditionary Learning and curricular work of the Outward Bound staff person at the Bronx Guild. At times, schools start without an on-site organizational staff member, but over time the organizational partner recognizes a value in having such a presence. For example, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, the organizational partner in the Bronx Aerospace Academy, raised funds to support an in-school staff person during the second year of the school’s existence. In another instance, ASPIRA of New York, Inc., utilized a match of state and federal monies to create a team of youth workers, one coordinator and three youth workers, to be on-site at the Marble Hill School for International Studies.

School Use of Organizational Sites

In many instances, the utilization of an organizational partner’s staff experts and facilities is an integral part of schools’ academic and social support program. Strong examples of such use are the South Brooklyn Community High School, which is housed in Good Shepherd Services’ new school building, and the New York Harbor School’s daily use of a classroom at the South Street Seaport Museum. In other examples, the Brooklyn Academy for Science and the Environment’s science classes take place at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens and Prospect Park and involve organizational experts in the

curriculum. In a similar fashion, several schools with art organization partners regularly use partners' facilities and staff experts for classes. Examples here include Discovery High School and Manhattan Class Company Theater, Bronx Theatre High School and Roundabout Theatre Company, Bronx High School for the Visual Arts and Lehman College Art Gallery, and Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music and Lehman College. In other instances, students make site visits to the organizational partner in order to benefit from special facilities and expertise, such as Pelham Preparatory Academy's trips to the University of Vermont or Bronx Guild's use of the climbing wall at Outward Bound. Another use of organizational sites is to mark special events; for example, the annual school-community festival of the Bronx International High School held at the Bronx Museum of Art.

Organizational Partners' Entry Points and Arenas of Activity in the Daily Life of Schools

Entry points and arenas of activity – as other aspects of the NCHS initiative – are in the process of discovery and growth, and organizational partners are frequently engaged in a mix of activities. Arenas range across the entire spectrum of school facets, from support for the school as an organization and for the principal as the school leader, to engagement in the school's curriculum and in the teaching and learning of students and faculty, to promotion of positive school culture, to providing social supports to students and teachers, to opening up access to a great variety of additional resources. Moreover, the roles of school and organizational partners change and shift as they respond to students' interests and needs, develop their partnership, and refine their notions of schools and education.

Brief Illustrative Example

The mixture of partner characteristics and partnership practices vary from school to school. The Bronx Guild and Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School (Mott Haven Prep), two New Century high schools in the Bronx that opened in fall 2002, help illustrate the range of NCHS partners and partnerships. The two partnerships share both significant similarities and differences, and in many ways can serve as bookends of the partnership strategy in practice. The two organizational partners – Outward Bound at the Bronx Guild and East Side House Settlement at Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School – are similar in the following ways:

- Each is a well-established, successful organization with a strong sense of mission.
- Each has had previous connections with schools. Outward Bound provided its Expeditionary Learning curriculum and resources in schools during the regular school day. East Side House Settlement ran an after-school program in a middle school and also provided its Youth Leadership Program to high school students from a variety of schools.
- Each sees engagement in the NCHS initiative as a way to have positive impact on youth and to improve students' academic, civic, social, and personal learning and growth.
- Each has a clear and articulated sense of self-interest in becoming a partner for a New Century high school. Outward Bound wants to integrate its curriculum and perspectives on teaching and learning within the school and move toward developing

Outward Bound high schools. East Side House Settlement sees the relationship with schools as an extension of its community mission – a way of being in and of the community that simultaneously is future oriented (working with youth), fosters and supports community-building efforts, and establishes deep ties with a critical institutional arena in the community.

- For both partners, the partnership work opens the possibility of establishing an institutional sphere within which to operate and exercise influence.

At the same time, within its partnership and school, Outward Bound and East Side House Settlement began at different starting points and have been enacting different, albeit constantly evolving, roles and practices, as described in the table below.

OUTWARD BOUND (OB)	EAST SIDE HOUSE SETTLEMENT (ESH)
DoE principal and teachers created the NCHS proposal for Bronx Guild. Initially, OB was not part of the planning team	ESH executive director drew together and was a major player on the planning team, which created the NCHS proposal.
DoE principal selected OB as the organizational partner.	ESH executive director identified the NCHS principal, who was a planning team member
OB is a citywide organization with the main office located in a different borough.	ESH is a community-based organization located nearby the school.
Principal knows OB, having previously taught in a school with an OB program.	Principal knows ESH and worked for the settlement in the past.
OB initially had little role in the school's organizational development, but this role has been evolving. OB now participates in teacher hiring, leadership meetings with the principal, and monthly council meetings with school and organizational staff.	ESH began with and continues to exercise a strong role in the organizational development of the school and support of the principal as the school leader.
OB envisions strong involvement in teaching and learning through its Expeditionary Learning program. Participates in joint committees and council meetings that address issues such as student assessment standards, curriculum, and school culture	ESH states that curricular/pedagogic issues are the purview of the principal and faculty. But makes clear its expectation of students' high academic achievement within the overarching goal of students going on to college.
Involvement in social support for students and development of student-faculty relationships through wilderness and other Expeditionary Learning experiences.	Involvement in social support for students through on-site counseling, after-school discussion groups, coaching teachers on advisory groups.
OB staff is regularly on-site although not located at the school; no full-time OB staff.	ESH Youth Leadership staff members are located at the school on a full-time basis.
OB provides a range of resources, including: an OB staff member who facilitates monthly council meetings of school and organizational staff; Expeditionary Learning staff expert; wilderness and other Expeditionary Learning experiences in curriculum; and slots at the OB summer Expeditionary Learning camp.	ESH provides a range of resources, including: use of ESH facilities; extensive fund-raising for programs, staff development/teacher training, and technology support; staff to lead in-school classes re test prep and youth concerns; and work on a variety of administrative tasks, such as development of a school brochure.

IV. CONCLUSION

The overall feeling in the initiative has been – and continues to be – one of great hope tempered by the sense, as in any cutting-edge social experiment, of feeling one’s way. In practice, all involved staffs are dealing with challenges, glitches, and unexpected consequences as they experience pressure to get things going. At least at the start, there have been few guidelines and no models. School and organizational partners, working to create the schools they envision, are refining educational foundations and structures in the midst of teaching students, forming school expectations and cultures, and dealing with limited resources and difficult, sometimes resistant, school bureaucracies. New Visions and YDI are working to support partnerships in their work, devising and refining the supports in the midst of implementation. Throughout the early fieldwork period, the atmosphere has been, for all involved groups, one of intense work, challenge, trial and success/error, efforts to maneuver strategically through bureaucratic and political mazes, innovative change, and, at times, confusion and frustration. For the documenter, it has been a time of immersion in shifting and evolving ideas, efforts to relate ideas to implementation details, and kaleidoscopic overlaps, as well as disconnects, in roles and goals of multiple partners at city, district (now region), school, and organizational levels.

As the discussion above demonstrates, the partnership concept has been changing since the start, as have efforts at supportive assistance. One aspect of the evolution here stands out: the learning of all involved about the potential of partnership. New Visions staff members have honed their ability to be flexible in their approach to partnership – to learn from practice and translate that learning into refining concept and support. At least some DoE regional staff members have gained a respect for the partnership strategy and its practice as well. One says:

[T]he partnerships have come to be far more effective than we had ever imagined. They are, of course, very different in different schools, but, in general, the organizational partners have taken on substantial responsibilities with regard to their schools and, in some cases, really have become ‘co-responsible.’ They have, in fact, brought a valuable and different perspective to the work and often have forced the school-based leaders to be far more thoughtful than they would have been otherwise. There is often a tension in the relationships created, but most often it has been a constructive tension.

The NCHS work itself pushed the concept of partnership, allowing the support organizations and partners themselves to begin learning what partnership could mean – for students, schools, and partner institutions. The concept evolved as the work proceeded. The refined concept set new expectations and provided examples so partners might glean possibilities through the work of their colleagues. Assistance and supports were reshaped to better meet the needs of an enhanced idea of partnership. This dialectical dynamic continues apace today between conception, practice, and support, between the theoretical shape of partnership and the many ways the strategy is being played out on the ground.