



Effective Alternatives to School Closings

TRANSFORMING STRUGGLING SCHOOLS IN NYC

The challenge of transforming the lowest-performing schools has moved to the center of school reform policy across the country. In New York City, the educational reforms of the last decade have remade the public school system, but there has been no targeted and comprehensive strategy to improve the lowest-performing schools serving the highest-need communities. In those schools, the primary strategy has been to close the schools down and replace them with new small schools. Advocacy groups and education leaders are responding with new ideas for how New York City can develop the capacity, expertise, and resources to help the most struggling schools, and the New York City Department of Education has begun experimenting with federal models for school improvement. With 202 middle and elementary schools where less than one in four students meet state standards and 213 high schools where less than half of students graduate with a Regents diploma in four years, New York City is in urgent need of a school transformation strategy that goes beyond closure.

For the first time in New York City, the *Effective Alternatives to School Closings* conference brings together school leaders, teachers, parents, students, school partner organizations, researchers, and elected officials to learn from successful models of school transformation, identify the obstacles to transformation efforts, and discuss the policy changes necessary to transform more of the city’s most struggling schools.

Conference Program

MORNING SESSION

Districts in the Lead: How School Districts Create the Conditions for Transformation	
<p>What is the role of districts in creating the conditions for school transformation? How does a district culture have to change to sustain transformation? In this workshop, leaders of urban systems discuss how they reorganized their districts to support and improve their lowest-performing schools.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Clark <i>Chief Academic Officer, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</i> • Jesse Register <i>Superintendent, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools</i> • Respondent: Marc Sternberg, <i>Deputy Chancellor, New York City Department of Education</i>

MORNING SESSION CONTINUED

Comprehensive Student Supports: The Other Half of the Equation	
<p>As critical as good teachers are to improving student achievement, students cannot learn to their full potential when they are hungry, exhausted, or ill, when their parents cannot support them at home, or when they feel unsafe or disrespected in school. The necessary other half of school transformation is providing students with comprehensive supports in order to remove the barriers to learning. In this workshop, a principal and leader of an intervention project discuss how their efforts to address students’ mental and physical health needs contributed to school transformation.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greg Greicius <i>Senior Vice President, Turnaround for Children</i> • Ted Husted <i>Principal, PS 85, Bronx</i>
Not Just More of the Same: Adding Time to Help Transform Low-Performing Schools	
<p>While federal policy is increasingly encouraging more time in school, districts and schools are largely on their own in determining how that additional time is used. Rethinking the entire school day and year with an expanded schedule that meets students’ needs – rather than just adding more of the same – is critical. A growing body of work across the country points to how expanded learning time can be used as a catalyst to improve teaching and learning conditions in low-performing schools. In this workshop, leaders of prominent expanded learning time models discuss how they create new school cultures and improve instruction through adding time.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adele Fabrikant <i>Managing Director, Generation Schools</i> • Nancy Mullen <i>Principal, Kuss Middle School, Fall River, Massachusetts</i> • Emily Raine <i>Manager of Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time, National Center for Time and Learning</i>
Successful School Transformation in New York City: Principals Speak from Experience	
<p>How do strong school leaders go about turning around the lowest-performing schools? What are the key strategies they use without changing the staff or students? What are the challenges in getting students and professionals to think about their work differently? New York City principals discuss how they are transforming instruction and culture and raising student achievement in their schools.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nyree Dixon <i>Principal, PS 12, Brownsville</i> • Deirdre DeAngelis <i>Principal, New Dorp High School, Staten Island</i>

MORNING SESSION CONTINUED

Tapping the Power of Parents, Students, and Community	
<p>The potential to create, implement, and sustain school change depends on the active participation of parents, students, and organized communities. Yet too often, they are left out of the development and implementation of school transformation plans. What roles can organized parents and students play in school transformation? How do they ensure they are at the table? How can they make their voices heard?</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlene Johnson <i>Parent leader, Oakland Community Organizations, California</i> • Rosa Ramos <i>Youth leader, Young Voices, Providence, RI</i> • Youth leader <i>Youth United for Change, Philadelphia</i>
Union Leadership: How Teacher Professional Growth Systems Can Help Transform Schools	
<p>Teacher unions can play a key role in spearheading school transformation by advocating for and helping to design systems for instructional improvement and accountability. Union-led “professional growth systems” like those in Montgomery County, Maryland, and St. Paul, Minnesota, wrap professional development, career ladders, intensive support for new and struggling teachers, teacher home visits, and evaluation into a holistic approach to nurture, support, and rigorously evaluate teachers. Hear union representatives discuss Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) and other strategies to institutionalize a culture and practice of professional growth and excellent instruction.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonnie Cullison <i>Delegate to the Maryland State Legislature and former President of Montgomery County Education Association</i> • Nick Faber <i>Secretary, St. Paul Federation of Teachers, Minnesota</i> • Respondent: Michael Mulgrew, <i>UFT President</i>

LUNCHTIME DISCUSSIONS

Plenary: Conversation with New York State Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch

The Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, together with State Education Department Assistant Commissioner Ira Schwartz, will talk about New York State's initiatives to support transformation of the lowest-performing schools. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and share perspectives on how the state can most effectively catalyze and support significant school improvement in New York City.

BECAUSE OF SPACE, LIMITED TO 100 PEOPLE.

INFORMAL CONVERSATION GROUPS

Raising Achievement for Black and Latino Boys

Charles Payne, *University of Chicago*

Making Transformation Work for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities

Kim Sweet and Gisela Alvarez, *Advocates for Children*

Restart and Transformation Schools in New York City

New Visions for Public Schools; Edward Hui, NYC Department of Education

The Role of Federal Policy in Transforming Low-Performing Schools

Charese Jordan Moore, *Community for Excellent Public Schools*

AFTERNOON SESSION

Fixing Schools without Firing Teachers	
<p>Successful and sustainable school transformation is most effective and affordable when developed in collaboration with school stakeholders, not simply imposed from outside. When existing school staff is given the opportunity to reorganize and improve instruction, their commitment to the change creates on-the-ground accountability for results. In this workshop, presenters will share two examples of transforming a school without removing teachers or principals, by leveraging instructional and curriculum reform.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Simmons <i>President, Strategic Learning Initiatives, Chicago</i> • Michele Conners <i>Social Studies Chair, Brockton High School, Massachusetts</i>
Money Matters: Sustaining Funding for School Transformation	
<p>In an era of diminishing budgets and competitive access to federal dollars, how can districts and states ensure that funds are available to sustain ongoing transformation? A panel of state and city elected officials and advocates discuss strategies to ensure stable funding for school improvement.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Nolan <i>New York State Assembly Member and Education Committee Chair</i> • Robert Jackson <i>New York City Council Member and Education Committee Chair</i> • David Sciarra <i>Director, Education Law Center</i>
The Newark Global Village School Zone: School Change in Action	
<p>Recent educational reforms have consistently failed to address poverty as a strong influence on student academic outcomes and school quality. Constructed as an alternative to these reforms, a demonstration model for the Broader, Bolder Approach to Education – the Newark Global Village School Zone (NGVSZ) – is under way in Newark, New Jersey. Based on the premise that educational reforms must be designed to counter and mitigate the effects of social and economic conditions in the local environment, this work is presented as an alternative. This workshop examines the efforts of two NGVSZ schools, presenting the strategies two school leaders are utilizing to deeply root comprehensive school change within their schools and communities.</p>	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ras Baraka <i>Principal, Central High School</i> • Erskine Glover <i>Principal, Quitman Street School</i> • Lauren Wells <i>Director, Broader, Bolder Approach to Education, Newark</i>

AFTERNOON SESSION CONTINUED

Research on School Closings and School Transformation	
A nationally prominent policy analyst reviews the research on how school closings affect students, schools, and districts, and what are the necessary ingredients for transforming the lowest-performing schools.	PRESENTERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren Simmons <i>Executive Director, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University</i>
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