EVALUATION REPORT

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Fouts & Associates

Alternative High Schools Initiative

YEAR 5 INITIATIVE SUMMARY REPORT

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Executive Summary

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Alternative High Schools Initiative is designed to "increase the number of alternative schools and improve programming of alternative schools while aligning policy and systems issues."[1] In 2003, the foundation awarded grants to six intermediaries, or school model developers, to improve existing schools and to open new schools. The intermediaries were: Black Alliance for Educational Options, Communities In Schools of Georgia, Center for Youth Development and Education/Diploma Plus, National Association of Street Schools, See Forever Foundation, and YouthBuild USA. They also awarded grants to The Big Picture Company and the National League of Cities to serve as coordinaries, facilitating network development and supporting intermediaries in their expansion and replication efforts. Although other organizations subsequently joined the AHSI Network, the foundation initially selected these eight organizations for this specific initiative, and they are the subject of this evaluation. The grant provided funding, technical assistance, and professional development for these eight organizations to form a learning network and to meet initiative goals. This evaluation was designed to examine evidence of grant implementation and evidence of grant impact during the five-years of this initiative. Specific evaluation questions guided evaluation activities, which included biannual site visits, interviews and focus groups, data collection and analyses, document review, observation of network activities, and presentations.

Data gathering procedures targeted three levels: schools, intermediaries, and coordinaries. A total of 48 schools were studied for this evaluation (45% of initiative schools), including 20 existing schools and 28 startup schools. Ten existing schools and all 28 of the startup schools received site visits, completed student questionnaires, and provided outcomes data. The remaining 10 existing schools completed student questionnaires only. Intermediaries and coordinaries received fall and spring site visits and provided implementation data and other documentation. Evaluators observed a sample of the network's biannual meetings, phone conferences, and mini-convenings.

In this evaluation, there was clear evidence of grant implementation. At the intermediary level, five of the six organizations met grant goals for opening new schools and for converting and improving existing programs. The sixth intermediary revised goals in conjunction with foundation staff and obtained a no-cost extension to meet those goals.

This initiative began with 29 existing schools in Year 1. By Year 5, this number had grown to 107 grant supported schools. Prior to the end of the five-year AHSI grant, two intermediaries extended this momentum, procuring funding to establish additional schools. In the intermediary organizations and in their schools, there was evidence of implementation of the AHSI Distinguishers or intermediary-specific principles aligned with the Distinguishers.

At the coordinary level, the two grantees developed a collaborative relationship to oversee and organize network events, to facilitate development of a network identity, to create network products, and to provide technical assistance and professional development to intermediaries. Their work was critical to the formation of the network and to its direction and accomplishments.

This evaluation also obtained clear evidence of initiative impact. At the school level, student data revealed improvements in several positive attributes of the existing schools, such as personalization and the use of active inquiry and performance assessments. Startup schools also showed improvements in these areas, as well as in school climate, high expectations, and respect and responsibility. In the early grant period, startup schools showed similar or lower levels of key attributes in comparison with existing schools. Later in the grant period, however, startup

[1] http://www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/alternativehsrationale030312.pdf

programs surpassed existing schools in several areas pertaining to instruction and to school environment. Taken together, these results suggest both existing and startup programs grew in positive attributes, with startup programs out-performing the existing schools in some areas by the end of the grant.

In addition, several indicators pertaining to students' attitudes toward college and plans for college attendance showed improvement or alignment with initiative goals. While there is room for growth in students' perceptions of their schools and in their perceptions about college, these results reflect positive impact from the intermediaries' efforts to improve their programs, their program models, and their outcomes for students. Although the magnitude of these changes is relatively small, it is noteworthy that they appeared so immediately.

There is also evidence of impact at the intermediary and network levels. Intermediaries built organizational capacity, reviewed and clarified their models, and opened and improved schools. They engaged with the systems, agencies, and communities local to their schools as they implemented diploma-granting programs. This work affected the intermediaries and built their expertise in addressing systemic issues. The intermediaries also formed a network, through which they further developed their skills, built knowledge, and acquired tools. Through the leadership of the coordinaries, this network organized around policy activities and around strategic implementation of place-based partnerships in several locations across the country. The network members generated a set of policy conditions favorable to expansion of alternative education and disseminated information to raise awareness of education reform in municipalities throughout the country. The place-based partnerships emerging at the end of the grant were manifestations of the network's practitioner-driven policy. The AHSI grant started with six organizations independently sponsoring one or more schools for disconnected youth. Five years later, these organizations had grown in capacity, created new opportunities for youth, created a national network, and begun to change the education landscape in targeted geographic locations.

At the end of the initial five-year grant period, intermediaries raised several concerns. There was general agreement that five years was not enough time to accomplish the tasks essential to creating quality schools and to assessing the success of those schools. Most said they needed additional time to strengthen their support for schools and for evaluating school implementation. There was also general concern about the sustainability of the network in the absence of infrastructure and independent financial resources. Intermediaries acknowledged that, without funding for intermediaries to participate and without network leadership, the network would likely dissolve. Finally, the efforts to collect common data were moving slowly, and some intermediaries were concerned the lack of data would be a barrier to establishing place-based partnerships.

On the basis of these findings, there are several recommendations for maximizing the impact of this initiative. It is recommended that future funding of this or similar grants require and fund alumni tracking, common data collection, intermediary financial planning, and student scholarships. In addition, a number of supplementary investigations would support this initiative, maximize its impact, and extend the learning. AHSI intermediaries and schools wrestle with issues that confront schools daily, and they are innovating around these issues. It would be highly beneficial to the field of education to study this unique project for additional contributions and to bring light to emerging practices. The recommended studies focus on longitudinal outcomes, college and career readiness, school accountability, and organizational capacity building. Given current demands on intermediaries' organizational capacity, it would be essential to provide technical assistance and financial support for participation in these studies.

Alternative High Schools Initiative

YEAR 5 INITIATIVE SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes five years of evaluation findings for six intermediaries and two coordinaries that received the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Alternative High Schools Initiative (AHSI) grant. The six intermediaries are the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), Communities In Schools of Georgia (CISGA), Center for Youth Development and Education/Diploma Plus (CYDE/DP), National Association of Street Schools (NASS), See Forever Foundation (SFF), and YouthBuild USA (YB USA). The two coordinaries are The Big Picture Company (BPC) and the National League of Cities (NLC). Although there are other organizations participating in the AHSI Network[2], the foundation selected these eight organizations in February 2003 for this specific initiative. More about this initiative and these grantees is recorded in the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Year 1 Evaluation Findings Alternative High School Initiative Grantee Summary Report* (Fouts & Associates, March 2004).

This Year 5 report also serves as a summary of this phase of the initiative. It provides an overview of the evaluation of the initiative and describes grant progress pertaining to building organizational capacity to support schools, to improving existing schools, and to opening replication schools. The report also describes the relationships between the coordinaries and the intermediaries and the technical assistance provided by the coordinaries. Specifically, this report describes the purpose of the evaluation, provides evidence of implementation and evidence of impact, discusses lessons learned and promising practices, and concludes with a summary and recommendations. Additional information may also be found in previous evaluation reports for Years 1 and 3 of the initiative.[3]

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation was structured around three main goals. First, the evaluation was intended to add to the knowledge base of the foundation and of the profession about the unique nature of alternative schools and how best to improve and expand them. Second, the evaluation was designed to add to the national evaluation database being created by the American Institutes of Research and SRI International. Coordination with other national evaluators improves statistical power and generalizability, therefore enhancing the utility of the findings for the policy-level interests of the foundation. Finally, the evaluation was intended to provide formative feedback to the intermediaries and their schools for the purpose of program improvement and to allow the foundation to monitor intermediary activities.

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[2] Additional intermediary organizations not included in this evaluation: Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, EdVisions, Gateway to College, and Good Shepherd Services.

[3] See "Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Year 1 Evaluation Findings Alternative High School Initiative Grantee Summary Report March 2004" and "YEAR 3 REPORT"

Evaluation Design Overview

The evaluation design for the Alternative High Schools Initiative used a three-level approach: the eight grantees (coordinaries and intermediaries); the sub-grantees (schools), and; the students (see Figure 1). At each level, data was gathered to answer specific evaluation questions.

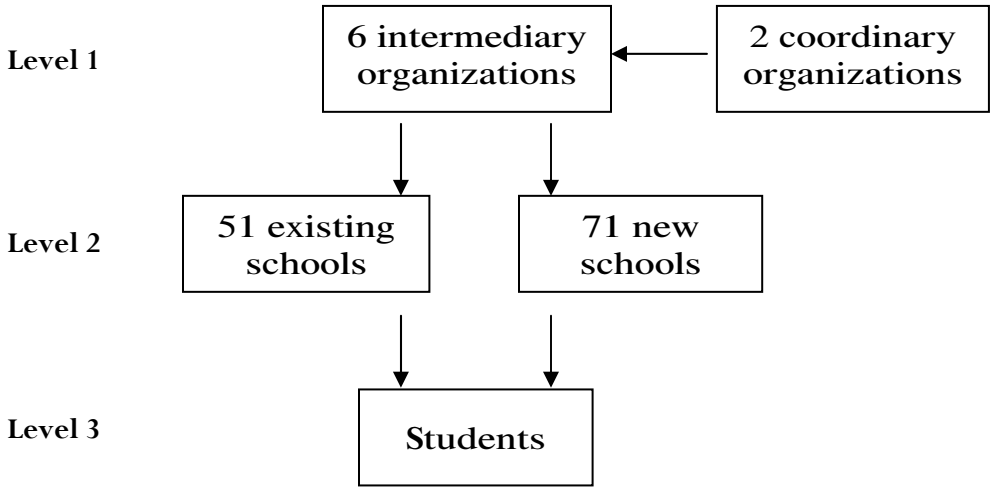


Figure 1. **Multi-level Evaluation Approach**

Level 1—8 Individual Grantees. Within this level, there are two distinct groups of grantees: the six organizations charged with improving existing schools and/or creating new alternative high schools and the two coordinary organizations charged with providing technical assistance and policy support. The following research questions guided evaluation of grantees:

1) Are the grantees making satisfactory progress?
2) What strategies are the grantees pursuing?
3) What role or assistance are the coordinary agents providing?
4) What contextual factors are helping or hindering the process?

Level 2—Sub-grantees (Schools). Level 2 included samples of existing and new or conversion schools of the six intermediary organizations. The following research questions addressed sub-grantees progress:

5) What are the characteristics of the existing alternative schools?
6) What strategies are the existing schools pursuing for school improvement?
7) How have the existing schools been improved?
8) What are the characteristics of the new schools?

Level 3—Students. Level 3 included students of the sample schools. The following questions guided research pertaining to students:

9) How do students perceive the school environments?
10) How do the schools affect student outcomes?

Evaluators obtained information and data from the coordinaries and from intermediaries through semi-annual visits, progress reports, and reviews of published and unpublished documents from each grantee. Evaluators also conducted site visits and collected data from a sample of existing and startup schools for each intermediary. In addition, evaluators were present for network convenings and a sample of phone conferences to observe the activities of the network.

School Samples

After initial meetings with the intermediaries during spring 2003, schools were selected from each intermediary for in-depth study. Each year, schools participated in a full evaluation, which included a site visit, student questionnaires and other outcomes data collection or just the questionnaire and outcomes data collection. Because of the large number of schools projected to open (over 120 by the fifth year) and limited evaluation funds, two samples of the schools were chosen. A sample of intermediaries' existing schools was studied to determine intermediaries' success in improving existing schools. A sample of new and conversion schools was studied to determine intermediaries' success in creating schools aligned with the characteristics of effective schools outlined in the foundation's theory of change. The schools selected for study represented a broad sample, drawn from all intermediaries based on location and focus. Group 1 represented the existing "flagship" schools, whereas Group 2 represented existing schools of no particular distinction. Groups 3-5 were the first 28 replication schools opened within the grant period. Forty-eight schools participated in evaluation activities, as delineated below and in Table 1.

Group 1. 10 existing schools—Full in-depth study for change over time (site visits, focus groups and interviews with students and teachers, student questionnaires, student outcomes).

G*roup 2*. 10 existing schools—Overview using annual student questionnaires and student outcomes.

Groups 3-5. 28 new or conversion schools—In-depth study for school characteristics in first, second, or third year of existence (site visits, focus groups and interviews with students and teachers, student questionnaires, student outcomes).

Table 1.
Schedule of schools sample data collection

Schools	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Group 1 10 Existing	Full	Questionnaires & outcomes	Questionnaires & outcomes	Full	Questionnaires & outcomes
Group 2 10 Existing	Questionnaires & outcomes	Questionnaires & outcomes	Questionnaires & outcomes	Questionnaires & outcomes	Questionnaires & outcomes
Group 3 10 New & Conversion			Full		
Group 4 9 New & Conversion				Full	
Group 5 9 New & Conversion					Full

Data gathering procedures for the schools undergoing in-depth study included the AIR/SRI student questionnaire; site visits and observations; and interviews and focus groups with teachers, administrators, and students. Throughout the life of the grant, 37 schools received site visits. Nine of these existing schools received two site visits (Year 1, Year 4) to determine impact of the grant over time, yielding a total of 46 site visits. An additional 11 existing schools provided student questionnaire and outcome data yearly. Student outcomes data were solicited annually from 20 schools during Years 1 and 2 and from 30 schools during Years 3 through five. The data requirements were determined in consultation with AIR/SRI to bring the data collection into agreement, as far as possible, with the other national collection efforts.

EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION

These eight recipients of an AHSI grant made variable progress over the five years of the grant. Each excelled in some areas and was still developing in others as the five-year grant period ended. The major areas of focus for each intermediary varied, based on the individual needs of the organization and its schools. As a result of the AHSI grants, the number of intermediary schools grew from 29 to 107, increasing opportunities for the populations they serve (see Figure 2 and Table 2). Similarly, the number of students served by the network grew from 2,884 to over 11,000 (see Figure 3 and Table 3).

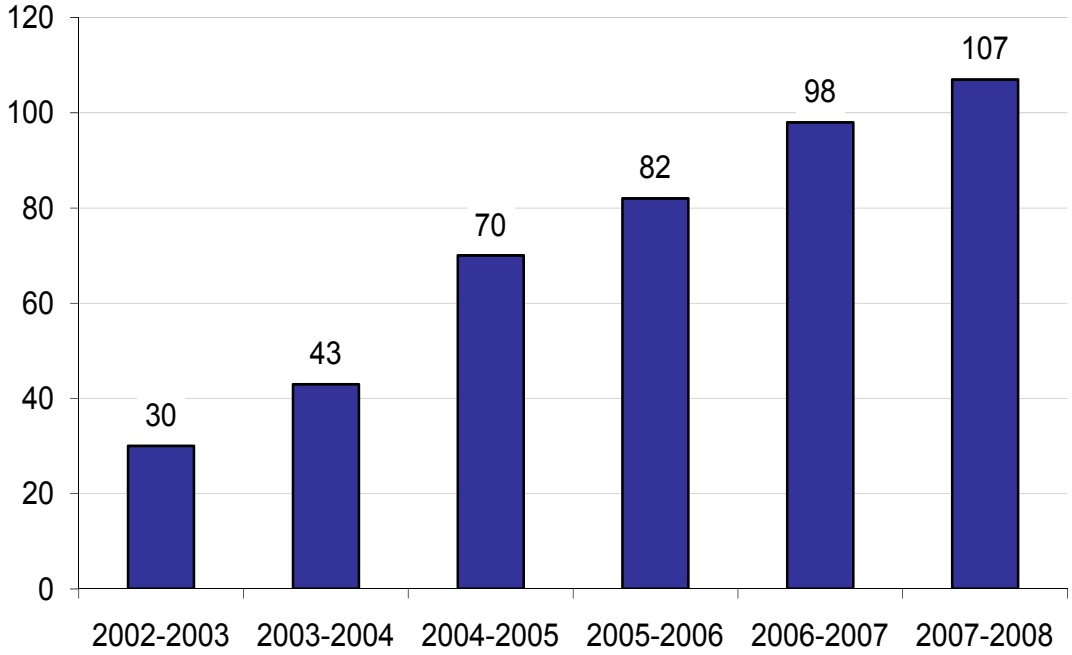


***Figure 2*. Number of Schools Supported by Intermediaries**

Table 2.
AHSI Schools Over Time

Intermediary	Existing Schools	Startup Schools					
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
BAEO	1[1]	0	1	1	0	1	4
CISGA	2	6[3]	9[4]	8	6	0	31
CYDE/DP	3[2]	0	7[5]	0	1	2	13
NASS	9	8	2	3	2	1	25
SFF	1	0	1	0	0	2	4
YB USA	13	0	7	0	7	3	30
Total	29	14	27	12	16	9	107

[1]Started with two schools, but one affiliation dissolved.
[2]Originally had five schools.
[3]Started seven schools, but one closed due to a lack of cooperation with the local school district.
[4]The equivalent of nine schools are housed in seven buildings.
[5]This includes three New York City schools that did not receive Gates funding during Year 2.

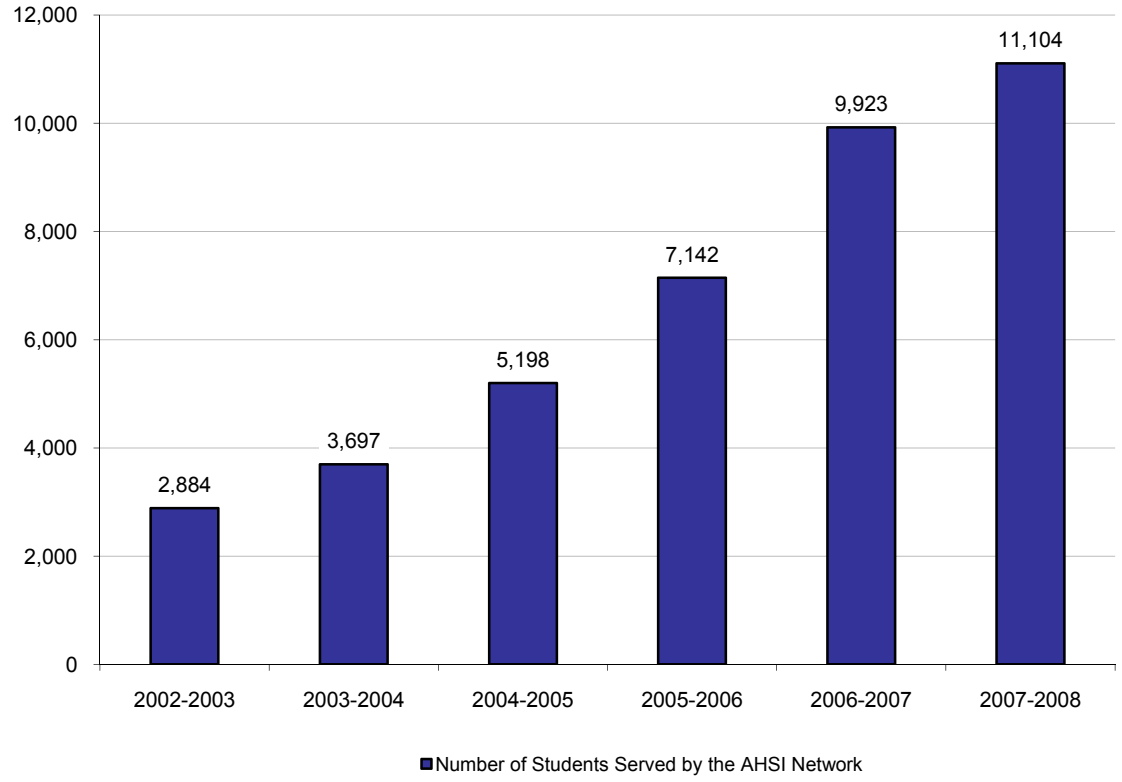


Figure 3. **Number of Students Served in AHSI Schools**

Table 3.
AHSI Student Enrollment Over Time[4]

Intermediary	Pre-grant existing schools	Existing plus startup schools				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
BAEO	0	142	135	355	277	331
CISGA	165	441	1,236	1,900	2,500	3,000
CYDE/DP	401	461	949	1,800	1,911	2,300
NASS	605	915	821	950	2,500	2,500
SFF	85	110	185	337	235	473
YB USA	1,628	1,628	1,872	1,800	1,800	2,500
Total	2,884	3,697	5,198	7,142	9,923	11,104

Intermediary support for existing and startup schools varied due to differences in school models and in organizational capacity. However, all intermediaries provided general technical assistance, offered professional development opportunities, assisted with curricular and instructional improvement, and assessed program improvement needs. Some intermediaries (CISGA, NASS, CYDE/DP, and YB USA) used more formalized approaches to support existing and startup schools. The approaches of intermediaries with fewer schools (SFF and BAEO) were initially less structured and incorporated school-to-school support early on to bolster development. Table 4 indicates specific types of support intermediaries provided to existing and startup schools.

Table 4.
Intermediary Support for Existing and Startup Schools

Intermediary	Support for Existing and Startup Schools
BAEO	• General technical assistance • Site-specific assistance with school model development aligned with BAEO principles • Funding • Site visits • Professional development • Coaching • Evaluation • Summer institute • BAEO school networking • Community networking • Materials to support implementation of BAEO principles

[4] Enrollment numbers are self-reported by grantees annually.

Intermediary	Support for Existing and Startup Schools
CISGA	• School model and instructional framework, online curriculum • Funding • Site visits • Overarching, specific support to school districts • Field operations specialists assist with implementation, assessment, and evaluation of the PLC model • General assistance with fundraising and public relations • Professional development activities including Summer Training Institute, Winter Conference for Learning Facilitators, and Fall/Spring Roundtables for Academic Coordinators • Liaisons between school and community • Intermediary with state educational concerns • State-wide PLC networking • Tools to support implementation of PLC program components
CYDE/DP	• School model and instructional framework • General technical assistance (strategic planning, resource support) • Funding • Site visits • Regional school networking • Policy advocacy to support schools • Curricular and professional development • Coaching (literacy, math, and pedagogy) • Intermediary with school districts and state education offices • Tools to support implementation and assessment of DP school model • Access to DP.net system for competency-tracking, assessment, and shared materials
NASS	• Guiding principles for school development • Funding • Assistance with Continuous Improvement Plans • Ongoing professional development • Site visits and service calls • Immediate technical assistance • Materials to support alignment with NASS principles • General advocacy • Networking with peer schools and local agencies

Intermediary	Support for Existing and Startup Schools
SFF	• General school framework • Site visits • Financial development and support • Policy advocacy to support schools • Internal school leadership development • Facilities procurement • Public and alumni relations • Local networking among schools and within community • Liaison with local school system
YBUSA	• General school framework • Funding • Coaching and training • Site visits • Phone conferences • National conferences • Development of handbooks and toolkits • National school network

The two coordinaries provided support by facilitating network interactions and by helping intermediaries build organizational capacity to create and to sustain effective small schools. The Big Picture Company served as the lead coordinary for the network and facilitated network interactions. BPC personnel coordinated biannual conferences, organized monthly intermediary phone conferences, convened monthly coordinary phone conferences, organized mini-convenings, and supported many other related activities. BPC staff members also conducted school site visits and provided specific technical assistance to intermediaries and schools around organizational or instructional issues as needed. The National League of Cities collaborated with BPC on network activities, provided individualized technical assistance to intermediaries on an as-needed basis, cultivated the Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN), facilitated exploration of place-based partnerships, produced tools for the network, led policy discussions for the network, and identified policy conditions that support AHSI expansion.

Incorporation of AHSI Distinguishers

The goal of the AHSI was to create effective, student-centered, small high school alternatives where youth voice, participation, and leadership development drive the learning process. AHSI schools provide an alternate route to high school graduation and preparation for postsecondary opportunities. The AHSI intermediaries adopted a set of universal Distinguishers that should be evident in the design, development, and assessment of all AHSI schools. They are summarized as follows.

Authentic Learning, Teaching, and Performance Assessment. AHSI schools feature a number of strategies and activities to create real and relevant contexts for learning. Common instructional strategies include project-based learning, experiential learning, cross-curricular integration, competency-based curricula, service-learning projects, internships, portfolio development, and presentation of work to real audiences. Schools incorporate community resources and opportunities into curricula, creating real-world connections for content and instruction. Ongoing professional development has helped teachers develop expertise in creating learning experiences that are meaningful and relevant to students.

Personalized School Culture. AHSI schools provide personalized education in a small school environment that focuses on developing positive relationships with students. The small school environment allows teachers to provide individualized and small group instruction to meet students' learning needs. Students in AHSI schools participate in advisory and mentorship programs and often have individualized learning and transition plans as well as tutoring. AHSI schools also provide supports and services to help minimize students' barriers to learning, such as those presented by adverse life circumstances.

Shared Leadership and Responsibility. The small school environment fosters a sense of community conducive to shared leadership and responsibility for students and for staff members. Student voice is intentionally developed. Students at AHSI schools have opportunities to participate in student government, student organizations, and community service projects. School principals/directors often serve as instructional leaders, and teachers are typically involved in school leadership activities.

Supportive Partnerships. AHSI schools work closely with local businesses, community organizations, and governmental agencies to provide opportunities for students. They develop partnerships with community agencies and businesses to provide student support services, internships, mentors, and community service projects. Many AHSI schools collaborate with local colleges to provide transitional services and postsecondary opportunities.

Future Focus. AHSI schools prepare students for a successful transition to adulthood and emphasize that all AHSI graduates leave high school prepared to access and to achieve in postsecondary learning. The intermediary organizations, the schools, and the community partners focus on maximizing and facilitating postsecondary opportunities and attainment for students. Students at AHSI schools explore college and career options, create transition plans, participate in internships, conduct community service projects, work with mentors, and take advantage of postsecondary opportunities while still in high school.

Each of the six intermediaries used a range of strategies to support the development and incorporation of the Distinguishers. Typically, the Distinguishers were embedded in a set of principals or values prescribed by and specific to the intermediary, using language common to the intermediary's organization. In some cases, the Distinguishers were also presented in parallel to the intermediary's stated school attributes. All intermediaries were reported commitment to the values and principals represented by the Distinguishers. Implementation strategies for the Distinguishers varied according to the unique school design of each intermediary and according to the stage of model development. Table 5 provides examples of how each intermediary incorporated the AHSI Distinguishers into their programs.

Table 5.
Intermediary Incorporation of AHSI Distinguishers

Intermediary	Authentic Learning, Teaching & Performance Assessment	Personalized School Culture	Shared Leadership and Responsibility	Supportive Partnerships	Future Focus
BAEO	Project-based learning; presentations to real audiences; community as classroom.	Small schools (<400 students); advisory program; safe environments; strong interpersonal relationships.	Focus on intergenerational issues; student involvement in grant activities; student organizations; collaborative teaching.	Community involvement in schools.	Focus on self-efficacy and personal empowerment to create a foundation for transition.
CISGA	Project-based learning to enhance NovaNET curriculum; service learning projects; internships; dual enrollment; career capstone project	Small school (75-150 students); 15:1 student to teacher ratio; morning motivation; advisory; self-paced learning; individualized learning plans; Charting for Success program; mentors.	Students plan and run morning motivation; student run activities and service projects; Academic Coordinator is the instructional leader of the school.	Community mentors; internships at local businesses; unify community resources to support students.	Charting for Success Program; Future Force Leadership Institute.
CYDE/DP	Competency-based curriculum, instruction & assessment; portfolios for promotion & graduation; senior seminar (college/career exploration); senior projects; internships; postsecondary coursework.	Advisory program; partnering with Educators for Social Responsibility to create safe, caring, respectful, and productive learning environments.	Professional development activities to foster instructional leadership.	Utilize partners to improve model and expand organizational capacity; community partners for plus phase activities (internships, community action projects, postsecondary enrollment).	Career/college exploration; internships; senior projects; postsecondary enrollment.

Intermediary	Authentic Learning, Teaching & Performance Assessment	Personalized School Culture	Shared Leadership and Responsibility	Supportive Partnerships	Future Focus
NASS	Understanding by Design utilized as an instructional framework; career development; economic literacy.	Small school environment; 10:1 student to teacher ratio; individualized Student Learning Plan; student advocates (mentor).	Student development of Code of Honor; School Handbook; presentation of student work to the community; student-run businesses; service learning projects.	Community partners to provide job shadows, internships, and community service projects; national partners to increase organizational capacity.	Career development program (economic understanding, employability skills, college awareness, college prep); MAPP Assessment; job shadows, internships, service projects; transition plans.
SFF	Work experience program; cross-curricular lessons; performance-based learning & assessments; portfolios.	Housing programs; meal service; tutoring; evening and summer activities; differentiated instruction; advisory.	Schools have autonomy from SFF; teachers share in decision-making; student organizations.	Community volunteers serve as tutors & mentors; job placement; partnerships with school district & universities.	Transitions class for seniors; SAT prep; college advising.
YBUSA	Home construction/remodeling ; project-based learning; ongoing professional development for teachers.	Small school environment; small group & individualized instruction; counseling; referral to outside services.	Young Leaders Council; YB National Alumni Association; community service; student involved in program governance.	Utilize community support services; cooperation with local business & government on building projects; partner with postsecondary. institutions	Development of a college transition toolkit; improved curriculum to meet college entrance requirements; partner with postsecondary institutions.

Coordinary Grant Activities

The AHSI grant structure included two coordinaries whose role was to facilitate activities that would build the network and support the intermediaries in their efforts to grow schools. As coordinaries, BPC and NLC personnel used a range of strategies and provided network leadership to accomplish these goals. BPC served as the lead coordinary for the network and provided various opportunities for intermediaries to participate in network-related activities. NLC personnel supported the network activities of BPC and directly supported the network through activities related to their expertise in working with municipalities and policy.

At the beginning of the grant, the roles of the coordinaries were not clearly defined. This changed over time as grant expectations unfolded and as the attributes of each organization emerged. By Year 3, the role and contributions of BPC became evident through the leadership and activities they provided, and the intermediaries readily responded to the activities facilitated by BPC personnel. The role of NLC took somewhat longer to emerge. Initially, it was anticipated that NLC personnel would play a significant role in site selection for startup schools through "city scans." However, many intermediaries had moved beyond their site selection phase by the time the AHSI Network organized. The demand for city scans was therefore small, and the role of NLC in site selection was minimal. NLC personnel believe this was due, in part, to timing. During Year 3, intermediaries began reporting a clearer understanding of the role of NLC, even if they did not receive NLC services. In Years 4 and 5, NLC's contributions in other areas, such as policy concerns and place-based partnerships, become much more prominent as intermediary's expansion needs emerged. By the end of the five-year grant period, the two coordinaries and the intermediaries understood their respective roles and contributions.

There is clear evidence that BPC personnel effectively facilitated network interactions. They coordinated bi-annual conferences, periodic mini-convenings, monthly intermediary phone conferences, and monthly coordinary phone conferences. BPC personnel also conducted school site visits, made presentations at national conferences, and worked to utilize evaluation data gathered by the Parthenon Group and by Fouts & Associates. BPC staff members also generated a number of processes and products related to AHSI Network activities. BPC personnel rewrote the AHSI Network's mission and vision statements and created a strategic plan for AHSI Network activities. They worked on a number of projects related to network identity and public relations, including developing an AHSI identity, creating the AHSI website (www.ahsi.info), and producing an informational brochure. BPC staff members also developed a number of functional products for network activities. Some of these included school site visit protocols, a needs assessment for youth development organizations, and a consultancy process to support intermediaries' challenges around quality scale and sustainability issues. They assisted in gathering information on the necessary conditions and policy priorities required by each intermediary to work with a city or school district.

During the final years of this grant period, BPC staff members convened and led intermediaries in a quest to establish and collect common data from network schools. BPC personnel fostered the development of youth voice in AHSI by supporting the founding of the Organized Youth for

Educational Alternatives (OYEA). Toward the close of the five-year grant, they also began facilitating an evaluation process for the AHSI Network and its members. To promote sustainability, they were seeking additional funding and establishing new AHSI staff positions.

BPC personnel were particularly instrumental in coordinating the efforts of network participants in developing the AHSI Distinguishers. They successfully facilitated the completion of the *AHSI Distinguishers* document and prompted intermediaries to use the document as a field instrument when visiting schools. According to reports from grantees, the Distinguishers provided a common language for their work and created clarity around their school models. Additionally, BPC filmed examples of the Distinguishers at schools for an informative and instructional video for use at conferences and in training.

Although BPC took the lead in coordinating AHSI Network activities, NLC personnel worked with BPC to support and cultivate the network. Personnel from NLC participated in and presented at all AHSI conferences, created tools for the network, and made site visits to network members. They also assisted in the development and definition of the AHSI Distinguishers and circulated them among intermediaries, among mayors' education policy advisors nationally, and to cities receiving NLC technical assistance. The NLC personnel took a clear leadership role in the network's policy considerations. They synthesized intermediary policy concerns and led the AHSI Policy Small Group to identify network policy priorities. From this work, they assisted the network in identifying, documenting, and publishing Seven Key Policy Conditions that support the success of intermediary and network expansion. In the final years of this grant, they also spearheaded the network's exploration of place-based partnerships. Before the close of the five-year grant period, they facilitated discussions between key stakeholders in Indianapolis and several AHSI intermediaries in preparation for proposing an AHSI portfolio of schools targeting that city's education needs. They also advanced policy conversations with members of the California state legislature, coinciding with AHSI intermediary interests in that state. As the five-year grant period closed, they were identifying additional sites for place-based partnerships.

According to personnel from both organizations, the relationship between BPC and NLC evolved as each organization developed and distinguished its roles and responsibilities. Both BPC and NLC staff members described the relationship between the organizations as good. The organizations established regular contact for planning and alignment of goals and activities. Both participated in bi-weekly calls and monthly network calls. While members of both organizations acknowledged the time and effort required to establish their collaborative and respective roles as co-coordinaries, they also believed the AHSI Network benefited from the unique expertise and national networks associated with having two coordinaries.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

At the end of Year 5, it is clear the AHSI grant had impact on the coordinaries, on the intermediaries, and on their schools. This impact is evident in variety of ways, including general grant outcomes, the nature of existing and startup schools, and student perceptions of school and of college. In addition, there was clear development in a number of areas, including organizational capacity, the AHSI Network, student voice, exploration of place-based partnerships, and engagement in policy matters.

General Grant Outcomes

By the end of Year 5, the six intermediaries had supported 29 existing schools and 78 startup schools. In addition, the number of students served by the intermediaries in the AHSI funded schools was almost four times the number at the beginning of the grant. These data are positive indications of network progress. Throughout the life of the grant, evaluators tracked student outcomes data from a sample of existing, new, and conversion schools, including student attitudes toward college, student attitudes toward their school, and college attendance and persistence rates. These data were provided back to schools and to intermediaries for formative feedback. The results of these indicators are summarized in the body of this report (see "Impact on Students' Experience of School" and "Impact on Students' Plans for College") and are presented in detail in the Appendix.

Impact on Existing Schools

With the exception of BAEO, each intermediary had one or more existing schools prior to receiving the AHSI grant, and these schools served as the models for replication. Across grantees, these schools shared several fundamental characteristics including small enrollments, a focus on students who were not effectively served in traditional schools, and programming and services designed to support student success.

The AHSI grant provided funding and other support for intermediaries to develop their replication models. While these schools possessed many of the attributes reflected in the AHSI Distinguishers, each had room for growth in key areas. Raising academic rigor, preparing students for college, and improving instruction were among the biggest changes for these programs. A number had focused on shorter term goals, such as ensuring students attended school regularly. Efforts to improve classroom instruction were often secondary to a focus on social support services, credit retrieval, and job readiness. Some were transitioning from granting GEDs to granting high school diplomas, which had a huge impact on curriculum and on administrative infrastructure. Not surprisingly, a number of these programs encountered difficulties commonly faced by schools during periods of focused improvement, such as struggles with staff buy-in, issues around reallocation of resources, and the need to build staff capacity for change. Intermediaries supported these schools in meeting the goals of the grant by providing a range of assistance, including funding, coaching, technical assistance, site visits, and cross-site meetings. In essence, they were providing resources for the model schools to replicate the *ideal* model.

As the replication schools came into existence, these new schools often reflected the intermediary's ideal model more closely than the existing schools. In some intermediary networks, the existing schools began to replicate the practices of the new schools. While few existing schools reported a loss of resources or attention secondary to intermediary expansion, several acknowledged pressure to change in light of the new programs.

Impact on Startup Schools

During the life of the grant, each intermediary supported the creation of new schools and/or conversion of schools in alignment with their replication model and with the AHSI Distinguishers. The new schools came into existence through the intermediaries' implementation of the AHSI grant and often through the efforts of grassroots organizations or school systems. The conversion schools were already in existence but adopting the intermediary school model. Each intermediary developed a process for site selection and for allocating various types of support. The extent of their oversight ranged widely. Some were hands-off, providing technical assistance and funding to otherwise autonomous schools. Others were integral to school development, participating directly in school processes such as staff hiring.

As the first replication schools came into existence, most intermediaries were still defining their school models, implementing new site selection and granting procedures, and building organizational capacity. Schools that came on board later benefited from the learning that occurred through these early startup schools. A few early replications closed or no longer have associations with intermediaries due to lack of alignment or due to mismanagement, and intermediaries attributed this to difficulties with the early site selection process and/or to lack of clarity in early model development. It was clear intermediaries improved their ability and capacity to facilitate startup implementation as the grant continued. Of the three types of schools – existing, new, and conversion – the new schools tended to implement the model more easily because they were not reorienting an existing culture or processes. Of the schools that were studied, those with strong leadership and strong local commitment and resources made the clearest gains. In these schools, leaders set clear and measurable goals, intentionally built school culture, and developed staff capacity in alignment with school improvement goals. Commitment and resources from local communities included a wide range of supports, such as volunteer tutors, fund raising assistance, opportunities for internships, partnerships that supported programming (e.g. gym access at the YMCA), low cost facilities, and partnerships with public school and college systems.

Impact on Students' Experience of School

Students' perceptions about school were obtained through focus groups and through surveys. Across focus groups, students consistently described their schools as very personalized and their teachers as extremely caring and invested. Most believed their school had significantly redirected their lives or had provided access to opportunities that otherwise would have eluded them. Students believed their schools set high expectations for behavior, which they believed were essential to students' success. Further, they perceived the teachers as providing the support and environment necessary for meeting these expectations. In fact, they often described personal intervention from staff members that prevented students from falling through the cracks, and they were grateful for this.

Students' anecdotal reports of instruction and academic engagement varied more broadly. Most believed their teachers were aware of their personal learning styles and academic challenges, and they described staff members as willing to provide individualized support. However, their personal sense of ownership and responsibility for learning was less prominent. Some believed their school set high academic expectations, while others did not. They also described a wide range of instructional techniques, from worksheets to highly integrated projects. Those who had experienced learning through integrated activities, in the context of high expectations and self-directed learning, tended to speak enthusiastically about their achievement and about their experience at school. These students were often quick to say they had never perceived themselves as capable of or interested in academic achievement, and their success led them to consider new alternatives for the future. Many, though, still struggled to find a place of engagement and relevance with their academic work.

Data obtained from surveys on students' perceptions of school support and augment these results. Each winter, students at a sample of schools completed the Gates Educational Initiative Survey (GEIS). Detailed information about the surveys, as well as the results, graphs, and analyses of the surveys, are presented in the Appendix (see Figures 4 through 13). The results of these surveys reflect fairly positive student perceptions of the school climate, the level of personalization, and the level of respect and responsibility. Perceptions pertaining to learning and to instruction showed slightly more ambivalence. This was evident in the areas of in-depth learning and active inquiry. Students were less satisfied with their schools' efforts to teach reading, writing, speaking, and math skills and to develop their skills as independent learners.

Interestingly, differences emerged between the existing and startup schools, which mirror intermediary reports that startup schools often became models for performance. Statistical comparisons of students' perceptions on the GEIS revealed a number of differences between existing and startup schools. In the areas of high expectations, climate, and respect and responsibility, existing schools showed no change over time. In contrast, early in the grant period, startup schools were lower than existing schools in these attributes, as perceived by students, but increased over time and surpassed the existing schools by the end of the grant. To a lesser degree, similar patterns were observed for other areas including, personalization, school satisfaction, and a sense of belonging. For both existing and startup schools, students reported increased use of active inquiry and performance assessment over the life of the grant, with startup schools consistently stronger in these areas than the existing schools. Please refer to the Appendix for additional information .

Impact on Students' Plans for College

In focus groups, students discussed their plans for the future, including post-secondary education. Many students planned to attend some form of post-secondary training, whether an apprentice certification program or an academic college program. All intermediaries implemented activities to support college and career planning, and in all focus groups participants reported creating plans for the year after they graduated. In schools that provided skills, practical planning, and a clearly identified path for transitioning to work or to college, students were able to lay out the steps

necessary for achieving their goals. Although these students tended to have higher goals, they appeared less daunted by the future due to knowledge of resources and to having a plan in place. Almost invariably, students who were planning to attend college said it was almost entirely a result of the college and career readiness activities provided through school. These activities included assistance with interviews and applications, job shadows, preparation for college entrance exams, and college tours. The depth of implementation of college readiness activities varied across schools, even within grantee networks. In a majority of schools that were visited, however, students understood that college was an option and believed they had access to the resources necessary to attend college if they made that choice.

The GEIS also assessed student's perspectives on college. Please refer to the Appendix for details of the results (see Figures 14 through 17). Survey data obtained on the GEIS showed the majority of students believed college is necessary to obtain a successful job. However, somewhat fewer students intended to attend college. Of those who intended to go, the majority planned to attend a four-year college, with a smaller number planning to attend a two-year college. The majority of students believed their teachers expected them to attend four-year colleges.

When examined more closely, some interesting patterns were evident for existing and startup schools. Over the five-year evaluation period, between 78% and 83% of students in existing schools indicated college was important for a job, and between 68% and 74% believed their career depended on college. A slightly smaller percentage (63% to 69%) planned to attend college. Between 57% and 71% believed high school prepared them for college. On all four of these measures for the existing schools, the percentages obtained at the end of the evaluation period were higher than those obtained at the beginning. Student responses from startup schools were more variable over time and also showed a slight drop-off between 2005 and 2008 on three measures. In 2005 and 2008, the percentages of students in startup schools indicating college is important for a job were 91% and 85%, respectively. At the same time points, 83% and 77% believed their career depends on college, and 78% and 71% planned to attend college. The percentage of students in startup schools who believed high school prepared them for college increased between 2005 (57%) and 2008 (80%). As of 2008, the results from existing and startup schools were very similar. The percentage of students planning to go to college, believing college is important for a successful job, and believing their future careers depend on college were within three percentage points across the two groups. A slightly larger difference between existing and startup schools was evident in students' beliefs that high school prepared them for college (71% and 80% respectively). For both groups, the percentage of students planning to attend college was less than the percentage believing college is important for a successful career (13% difference for existing schools, 14% difference for startup schools).

The survey also assessed college attendance plans specifically for two-year and four-year colleges. At the outset of the evaluation period, the percentages of students in existing schools planning to attend two-year colleges (31%) and four-year colleges (32%) were equal. By the end of the grant, the percentage of students planning to attend two-year colleges (25%) decreased slightly while the percentage planning to attend four-year colleges rose (45%). This trend follows in the direction of students' perceptions of teachers' expectations, which favored four-year colleges (51% to 57%) over two-year colleges (18% to 22%) throughout the evaluation period. Students in startup schools showed a much stronger bias toward four-year colleges. The percentage of students planning to

attend two-year colleges ranged from 11% to 22%, while the percentage planning to attend four-year colleges ranged from 53% to 67%. Similarly, more students believed their teachers expected them to attend four-year colleges (53% to 68%) than two-year colleges (6% to 19%).

College tracking data was obtained for 2000 to 2006 for graduates from the 13 AHSI schools that participated continuously in the evaluation and that graduated seniors throughout the evaluation period. The percentage of students attending college within one year of graduation showed no clear pattern between 2000 and 2003, but a slight upward trend emerged from 2004 to 2006 in (18% to 25%). There was a consistent pattern for a greater percentage of these students to enroll in 2-year colleges as opposed to four-year colleges. The percentage of students attending four-year colleges ranged from 14% (2005) to 44% (2001). The percentage of students attending two-year colleges ranged from 56% (2001) to 86% (2005).

The college persistence rates of these students were also obtained. The most noticeable trend was a consistent dropout rate from the first year of college to the second year, for all years of available college enrollment data. During the years studied, between 6% and 13% of the college-attending graduates had dropped out by their second year of college, which in many years was roughly half of those who had entered college. Generalization of the college enrollment and persistence data to all AHSI schools must be done with caution due to the small number of schools for which this data was available.

Development of Intermediary Capacity

To support the improvement and replication of existing schools, each intermediary took intentional steps to build organizational capacity. They added administrative and support staff, expanded physical offices, and built local support bases and networks. Each intermediary reviewed and revised their organizational and business models with the assistance of the Parthenon Group or the Bridgespan Group. To directly support schools, they expanded their professional development offerings and aligned them with elements of the Distinguishers. Some facilitated the growth of stronger networks among their schools (e.g. through cross-site meetings), and many focused on processes for developing and selecting school leaders. The intermediaries also worked on developing their capacity to collect and use data, to assess student progress, and to monitor school outcomes. As part of this, most had implemented or were planning to implement a system to track alumni.

The expansion of the intermediary staffs and services was vital to effectively supporting improvements of existing schools, supporting school startups, and meeting the goals of the grant. Each intermediary has significantly grown in some way to achieve the goals of the AHSI grant. While most believe they will ultimately be able to maintain their larger staffs, the increased administrative requirements, and the larger number of schools, they felt unprepared to do this at the close of the five-year grant. Most were preparing to focus greater attention on sustainability after their new systems, staffs, and programs stabilized. In the meantime, however, several intermediaries are notably concerned about autonomously supporting the organizational growth created by the grant.

Development of AHSI Network

There is clear evidence that a network formed among AHSI intermediaries over the five years of the grant. Initially, the intermediaries expressed doubt about the prospects for developing a viable and useful network, given the differences among their programs. By Year 3, however, they reported on the value of communication among intermediaries at convenings and on phone conferences and requested additional structured opportunities to meet with network colleagues. Direct communication among intermediaries increased and occurred outside organized network activities. Intermediaries shared tools, expertise, and resources, and collaborations began to form around areas of interest or implementation. A clear example of network potential emerged when the See Forever Foundation prepared a proposal to assume leadership of a school at a juvenile justice facility. The authors of the proposal drew on the specific areas of expertise of the various AHSI members. Similarly, staff members of Diploma Plus assisted YouthBuild USA personnel in mapping curricula to meet California content standards. By Year 5, a clear network identity had developed around certain key elements, including a focus on serving an underserved student population; an academic mission that targets that population, as described by the Distinguishers; and an interest in expanding the availability and influence of alternative education.

The intermediaries attributed the development of the network to a variety of factors. They cited BPC's role in coordinating communication, in overseeing the development of the Distinguishers, in organizing the conferences, and in facilitating the tool shares. The process of developing the Distinguishers and the resultant shared language also contributed to the growth and identity of the network. The members' efforts to establish common ground around data and place-based partnerships required collaboration and greater awareness of each other's organization, further facilitating and deepening the perception of a true network.

Development of Student Voice and Organization

At the center of this initiative is the welfare of the individual student, and particularly those who are overlooked or who are underserved by traditional educational models and institutions. The intermediaries chosen to participate in this initiative were selected, in part, for their personalized attention to students and to students' needs. The centrality of these values is evident in the Distinguishers, which identify student engagement and student voice as fundamental to a meaningful education. Most AHSI schools provide avenues for student voice and leadership. Through the AHSI Network, through BPC, and with (non-monetary) assistance from the Gates foundation, a national student-led organization also formed. The Organized Youth for Educational Alternatives (OYEA) includes students and alumni from AHSI Network schools. OYEA has a web presence (www.oyea.info) and is seeking to provide advocacy and empowerment for students within their schools and as they plan for their futures. Like many students at AHSI schools, members of OYEA reported a history of feeling disenfranchised in school and society and few saw themselves as leaders prior to involvement in AHSI programs. The fact that these same students are now leaders is a clear indicator of the direct impact AHSI has had on students. At the end of the grant period, they were seeking independent funding to support and expand their activities.

Development of Place-Based Partnerships

In Years 4 and 5, the AHSI Network began considering place-based partnerships as a means of expanding the network and of providing more opportunities for students who are underserved by traditional high schools. These partnerships are collaborations with municipalities interested in expanding options for their students and in working with the AHSI Network of programs. Before the end of the grant period, one such partnership began to emerge with Indianapolis. NLC staff members convened key municipal stakeholders and several AHSI intermediaries to explore an AHSI portfolio of schools appropriate to the city's educational needs. At the close of the five-year grant, they were taking steps to solidify this partnership and to investigate similar partnerships with other municipalities.

Development of Policy Awareness and Action

The AHSI grant had an impact on policy awareness and advocacy among grantees. Early on, some network members believed the intermediaries were not prepared to take on policy considerations due to limitations of scope, knowledge, or resources. Over time, however, individual intermediaries began to consider the impact of policy on their programs, as well as the possibility of influencing policy as a national network. With NLC leadership, AHSI members contributed to the identification of policy conditions that support expansion and success of their programs. NLC personnel also facilitated the AHSI Policy Small Group to explore policy and advocacy options for the network. By the end of this grant period, intermediaries were more actively considering local, state, and national policy agendas, with an eye towards "practitioner-driven policy." In addition, they began integrating policy and practice as they advanced place-based partnerships and regional expansions. This was most evident in the conversations occurring between network members and officials in Indianapolis and California around AHSI expansion.

Several conditions moved this initiative beyond replication of school programs and into policy considerations. First, participants came together, saw value in shared support, and formed a network. Second, NLC staff members provided essential leadership, expertise, and connections in municipalities nationwide. Individual intermediaries did not have resources to pursue these policy efforts without NLC guidance. Finally, as intermediaries expanded operations, they began to see benefits in working collectively on common policy issues, such as seat time and dual enrollment, in the targeted areas of expansion. These conditions made it possible for the AHSI Network to address policy matters as part of their work.

LESSONS LEARNED

A number of lessons emerge from this initiative and from the work of the AHSI Network. They pertain to the intermediaries and the school development, to the AHSI Network, and to the initiative.

Intermediaries and Development of Schools

Replication or School Improvement? The experience of AHSI intermediaries demonstrates that replication necessarily requires and results in a thorough review of the model being replicated; in order for a model to be replicated, it must be defined. As intermediaries studied their existing schools for the purpose of replication, those programs came under close scrutiny, and what started as a replication effort often became a focus on school improvement. This need for school improvement added an unpredicted layer to the grant, requiring additional time and resources. Given the grant timeline, many intermediaries struggled to simultaneously define their model, improve their existing school(s), and open new schools. Separating these tasks into sequential phases would have enabled intermediaries to focus attention on each stage, building and solidifying their work as they scaled up. This solid foundation supports the viability of schools and sustainability of the intermediary.

***School Models*:** Across intermediaries, the school models varied considerably, particularly in how prescriptive they were. Some developed tightly structured models with "non-negotiables" that were essential to their programs. At the other end of the spectrum, intermediaries provided guidance and support, but school personnel determined the school model. Each approach has benefits and challenges. The tightly structured models are "transportable" with distinct components that schools implement. Assessment of implementation is straightforward because expectations and structures are clear. Intermediaries can anticipate the needs of school personnel because the implementation process is predictable. Coaching and technical assistance can target multiple schools simultaneously because they face similar challenges. With these models, there is less flexibility for school personnel to make major modifications in accordance with their school's context. These models work well when there is strong alignment between the needs of the community and the goals of the model.

Models with less structure have the advantage of broader adaptability. They are responsive to local interests and therefore can have strong buy-in from the community. They also have flexibility to tailor their programs directly to the needs of the specific population they are serving. As each school has its own model, technical assistance and coaching must be tailored to program needs in order to be relevant to staff members. Assessment of implementation must also be individualized, and in some cases, it can be difficult to determine program effectiveness. These models work well in communities with a specific need or target population and when experienced educational personnel establish the schools.

***Accountability for Schools*:** Accountability is necessary to ensure fidelity and quality of program implementation. Accountability for school implementation and outcomes differed across intermediaries in terms of intent, execution, and effectiveness. Level of intermediary authority and responsibility over the schools also differed, and some schools were accountable to their governance bodies rather than to the intermediary. In other cases, AHSI funding was the intermediary's only leverage to encourage school personnel to implement the program with fidelity and to provide outcomes data to the intermediary. Intermediaries took steps to address this through several mechanisms, such as pacing funding allocations, creating a fee-for-service structure, developing an accreditation process, and conducting site visits. However, lack of alignment or mismanagement in some schools ultimately led some intermediaries to break associations with those schools. Because accountability affects outcomes, accountability measures are necessary for grant success and for sustainability of schools. For example, effective accountability measures pertaining to student outcomes (e.g. graduation rates, college readiness measures) direct school improvement efforts toward those outcomes. Such accountability measures identify priorities for grant outcomes, supporting grant success and sustainability of outcomes.

School Governance/Authorizing Entity: The schools of the AHSI Network fall under or have connections to a broad range of governance bodies, including public charter boards, public school districts, and state agencies, while others are private or independent schools. The schools must respond to different requirements depending on their governance context. These requirements range broadly and can pertain to seat time, graduation requirements, standardized testing, curricula, grade reporting, confidentiality, union negotiations, hiring, and fiscal matters. The differences in governance contexts initially made it difficult for intermediaries to find common ground and later made it challenging to identify common data points that could be collected across programs.

There is value to the schools in building connections with governance bodies. For example, partnerships with school districts can provide predictable funding streams as well as other resources, such as access to professional development, technological resources, and facilities. School charters and accreditation provide credibility to schools, opening doors to additional resources and strengthening community standing. To participate in these partnerships, however, schools must often adhere to the requirements of the governance bodies or must negotiate alternative paths for meeting those requirements. These requirements may compete with intermediary expectations or may exceed school resources or expertise. In several cases, intermediary intervention was instrumental to schools navigating governance requirements. For example, some intermediaries worked with school systems to obtain seat-time waivers or authorization to participate in staff hiring in schools.

***Organizational Capacity Development*:** The ability to effect school improvement and to replicate schools is directly linked to organizational capacity, which must be developed in advance of, or at least apace with, replication. For many grantees, their work with the Parthenon Group or the Bridgespan Group identified clear directions for capacity building. In addition to helping define their models, it clarified their organizational mission and tied it to outcomes. These were essential first steps to building capacity truly directed to supporting school improvement and replication.

The ability to sustain this organizational growth is fundamental to enduring change. Organizations sometimes flourish and grow with an infusion of external resources, only to collapse under the weight of the expanded infrastructure once external supports are removed. While all intermediaries made efforts to build capacity that is sustainable, some began to worry they were "out on a limb" at the end of the grant period. The direction, rate, and sustainability of organizational growth of these organizations are key factors to long-term progress and viability.

***Financial Planning and Stability of Funding*:** The funding base for intermediaries and schools must be stable for them to be viable. Most intermediaries said their expanded programs required additional financial resources but were concerned about finding time and personnel to manage fundraising. While fiscal planning is critical, not all organizations have the capacity or the expertise for financial development. Similarly, unstable funding of these alternative schools makes them as vulnerable as their students. A lack of stable funding results in uncertainty about the future and an inability to plan for improvement. Professional development and technical assistance in fiscal planning for grant recipients would cultivate sustainable organizations.

AHSI Network

Network Composition and Development: The intermediaries of the AHSI Network differed widely on many dimensions, including size, location, specific target population, academic model, governance structures, and authority bases of their schools. Initially, these differences made it difficult for members to coalesce into a functional network. Over time, however, common goals and shared challenges emerged, and intermediaries valued the network and their colleagues as resources. The Distinguishers helped highlight the commonalities and provided shared language, while site visits to AHSI programs helped them consider a common vision and refine their thinking on their own models. As they considered the network in retrospect, intermediaries said there were benefits and drawbacks to a having diversity among members. While the differences made it difficult to find common ground, members were exposed to a range of new ideas and had the benefit of broader resources and experiences. Structured and funded opportunities to meet face-to-face were necessary for the network to develop.

Network Organization: The organization of the AHSI Network around coordinaries, intermediaries, and schools provided a certain efficiency, as well as autonomy for the grant recipients to function as a body. Coordinaries provided technical assistance and support for the network, which enabled a higher level of responsiveness to the needs of network members. In the case of the AHSI grant, however, the role of the coordinaries did not develop until well into the grant period. They were simultaneously discerning their respective roles, developing a collaborative relationship, and supporting the intermediaries. This made it difficult for them to assume their roles as coordinaries at full capacity early in the grant period.

While the coordinary is critical to the structure of this initiative, several considerations emerged. Coordinaries would benefit from lead-time. Bringing the coordinaries on in advance of the intermediaries would enable them to develop their collaboration and their respective responsibilities prior to conducting network activities. It would also provide time for coordinaries to learn about each intermediary prior to convening. Therefore, it may be advisable to phase in

grantees according to their roles, with coordinaries coming on board several months in advance of the intermediaries. During this period, coordinaries could build relationships with intermediaries through site visits, reviews of grant plans, and needs assessments.

***Network Leadership and Sustainability*:** There are questions about the longevity of the AHSI Network. To be sustainable, it requires leaders to convene and to organize activities, and it needs a clear mission. Although leadership capacity exists among the grantees, in the absence of external funding and pressure, it is doubtful leadership will emerge. Intermediaries have made it clear that AHSI activities were superimposed over the demands of their programs, which will always take priority. Several observed that even the smallest of barriers or impediments, such as out-of-date contact information, prevented them from utilizing the network. In the absence of structure and support, leadership will likely be ephemeral, bringing sustainability into question.

AHSI Initiative

***Data*:** During the second half of the grant, the AHSI intermediaries and BPC staff members struggled to identify a rationale and common data points for network-wide data collection. Differences among programs and their contexts made this process very difficult. For example, local and state laws and policies pertaining to confidentiality dictate the information that can be requested from students, and individual program goals influence the data collected by each organization. Intermediaries also differed in their data collection capacity and in their willingness to provide data to the network in the absence of a clear end purpose. However, if they intend to function as a network and to promulgate their portfolio of schools as an answer to struggling educational systems, they will need collective data. Incorporating expectations for data collection into the grant, providing resources for capacity building around data collection, and providing a common data collection system would enhance the network's ability to gather data. Mandatory common data collection associated with specific grant goals and supported through grant funding and technical assistance would strengthen the impact of this and of similar initiatives.

***Scope of Goals, Range of Impact*:** This initiative focused on preparing students to graduate from high school ready to pursue post-secondary education. This differs significantly from many alternative programs across the country, where the focus remains largely on the immediate goals of keeping students safe and of helping them obtain GEDs or diplomas. There was debate among intermediaries about the primacy of post-secondary education outcomes. While they wholeheartedly wished their students to achieve the highest levels of success possible, there was concern that efforts to increase academic rigor and achievement would recreate the environments in which students had been unsuccessful. Intermediaries were also concerned about fostering unrealistic expectations or setting students up for failure. Many students come to AHSI schools with very low academic skills, needing much remediation, and they questioned the wisdom of encouraging these students to consider college. The solution for intermediaries was to embed strong college and career readiness in the program (e.g. college and career readiness classes, college tours), to promote college as an option, to strengthen academic rigor in their programs, and to commit to individualized future planning with students. However, concerns remained about those students who lacked skills and resources in spite of the school's efforts to fill the gap.

For many people at the school and intermediary levels, there is significant value in moving a student beyond his or her circumstances, even if it falls short of college. They see value in a student obtaining a diploma, steady employment, and stable housing when these were not part of his or her family of origin. Taking the longer view, these students may be served better by intermediate goals that are attainable and that create stability and productivity, thereby building a solid foundation for the next generation.

PROMISING/EMERGING PRACTICES

Several promising practices have emerged out of this initiative. Highlighted here are intermediary networking, college and career readiness, alumni tracking and support, and cultivating municipalities and a portfolio of educational options.

Intermediary Networking

As a result of this initiative a network formed, and the collective resources of that network are substantial. All intermediaries acknowledged consulting with other network members, developing new perspectives and ideas through interaction, and counting on the network as a resource. For most, meeting with colleagues was a key benefit of AHSI conferences. Intermediaries also built networks among their schools by providing referrals, by supporting cross-site visits, and by providing shared trainings. School personnel understood they were part of a school network. For both intermediaries and schools, these networks stand in sharp contrast to the sense of marginalization and isolation experienced in many alternative education programs. Like grantees, they utilized these connections to further their programs.

College and Career Readiness

All intermediaries incorporated a strong future focus into their programs. This distinguishes AHSI schools from many alternative programs. Each intermediary implemented college and career planning, as well as personal goal setting. Other activities included college visits, college and career readiness curricula, college and career presentation programs, college application and entrance testing support, college transition programs, alumni support, scholarships, job shadowing, internships, and dual enrollment. They also cultivated relationships with local colleges and post-secondary training opportunities. The intentionality of these alternative programs and the higher expectations they set for students raises the bar in alternative education in the United States.

The work of the intermediaries and the schools also demonstrates the willingness of post-secondary institutions to work directly with alternative education programs. Some schools have established relationships with college admissions officers and advisors who manage all students from that school. Students encounter a level of familiarity and understanding through the high school to college or career transition, as well as advising based on knowledge of their educational background. These institutional relationships are key to building bridges for students whose persistence in college may be tenuous. The success of these relationships serves as a model for alternative high school programs.

Alumni Tracking and Support

A number of AHSI schools have implemented alumni services and are tracking alumni progress. Students who attend AHSI schools often have unstable housing, so tracking graduates can be a labor-intensive process, even in small schools. Alumni services, such as practical assistance with college and career transitions, support graduates through the transition to college or careers and helps keep alumni connected to the schools. This facilitates tracking of graduates and collection of outcomes data.

Cultivating Municipalities and Portfolio of Educational Options

Nationwide, municipalities are dealing with failing school systems and high dropout rates. Through the efforts of National League of Cities personnel, this initiative has made progress in educating municipal leadership around school reform and in cultivating relationships to support school expansion. There is a clear case to be made, and equally clear potential, for partnerships between intermediaries and municipal leaders for expanding educational options. In addition, AHSI Network members are developing a process to create a portfolio of AHSI schools in collaboration with municipal leaders. The first steps toward this have been taken in Indianapolis and other locations are under consideration.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Alternative High Schools Initiative was intended to "increase the number of alternative schools and improve programming of alternative schools while aligning policy and systems issues."[5] In 2003, the foundation awarded grants to six intermediaries to improve existing schools and to open new schools. The intermediaries were: Black Alliance for Educational Options, Communities In Schools of Georgia, Center for Youth Development and Education/Diploma Plus, National Association of Street Schools, See Forever Foundation, and YouthBuild USA. They also awarded grants to two coordinaries, The Big Picture Company and the National League of Cities, to organize and oversee the activities of the initiative. Although other organizations subsequently joined AHSI Network, the foundation selected these eight organizations for this specific replication initiative, and they are the subject of this evaluation. The grant provided funding, technical assistance, and professional development for these eight organizations to meet initiative goals. This evaluation of their progress during the five years of the grant included annual or biannual site visits, interviews and focus groups, data collection and analyses, document review, observation of network activities, and presentations.

In this evaluation, there was clear evidence of grant implementation. At the intermediary level, five of the six organizations met grant goals for opening new schools and for converting and improving existing programs. The sixth intermediary revised goals in conjunction with foundation staff and obtained a no-cost extension to meet those goals. This initiative began with 29 existing schools. By Year 5, this number had grown to 107. Prior to the end of the grant, two intermediaries extended this momentum, procuring funding to establish additional schools. In the intermediary

[5] http://www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/alternativehsrationale030312.pdf

organizations and in their schools, there was evidence of implementation of the AHSI Distinguishers or of intermediary-specific principles aligned with the Distinguishers. At the coordinary level, the two grantees developed a collaborative relationship to oversee and organize network events, to facilitate development of a network identity, to create network products, and to provide technical assistance and professional development to intermediaries. Their work was critical to the formation of the network and to its direction and accomplishments.

This evaluation also obtained clear evidence of grant impact. At the school level, student data revealed improvements in several positive attributes of the existing schools, such as personalization and the use of active inquiry and of performance assessments. Startup schools also showed improvements in these areas, as well as in school climate, in high expectations, and in respect and responsibility. In the early grant period, startup schools showed similar or lower levels of key attributes in comparison with existing schools. Later in the grant period, however, startup programs surpassed existing schools in several areas pertaining to instruction and to school environment. Taken together, these results suggest both existing and startup programs grew in positive attributes, with startup programs out-performing the existing schools in some areas by the end of the grant. In addition, several indicators pertaining to students' attitudes toward college and plans for college attendance showed improvement or alignment with initiative goals. While there is room for growth in students' perceptions of their schools and in their perceptions about college, these results reflect positive impact from the intermediaries' efforts to improve their programs, their program models, and their outcomes for students. Although the magnitude of these changes is relatively small, it is noteworthy that they appeared so immediately. Data on college enrollment and persistence was collected from a sample of AHSI schools during the evaluation period. During all but one year, the percentage of students attending college within one year of graduation ranged from 16% to 25%, with a clear majority of these students attending two-year colleges. This data also showed that, in all but two years, at least half of the students who had enrolled in college dropped out before entering their second year of college.

There is also evidence of impact at the intermediary and network levels. Intermediaries built organizational capacity, reviewed and clarified their models, and opened and improved schools. They engaged with their systems, agencies, and communities local to their schools as they implemented diploma-granting programs. This work impacted those entities and built intermediary expertise in addressing systemic issues. The intermediaries also formed a network, through which they further developed their skills, built knowledge, and acquired tools. Through the leadership of the coordinaries, this network organized around policy activities and around strategic implementation of place-based partnerships in several locations across the country. The network members generated a set of policy conditions favorable to expansion of alternative education and disseminated information to raise awareness of education reform in municipalities throughout the country. The place-based partnerships emerging at the end of the grant were manifestations of the network's practitioner-driven policy. The AHSI grant started with six organizations independently sponsoring one or more schools for disconnected youth. Five years later, these organizations had grown in capacity, created new opportunities for youth, created a national network, and began to change the education landscape in targeted geographic locations.

At the end of the grant period, intermediaries raised several concerns. There was general agreement that five years was not enough time to accomplish the tasks essential to creating quality schools and to assessing the success of those schools. Most said they needed additional time to strengthen their support for schools and to evaluate school implementation. There was also general concern about the sustainability of the network in the absence of infrastructure and independent financial resources. Intermediaries acknowledged that, without funding for intermediaries to participate and without network leadership, the network would likely dissolve. Finally, the efforts to collect common data were moving slowly, and some intermediaries were concerned the lack of data would be a barrier to establishing place-based partnerships.

Recommendations

On the basis of these evaluation results, there are several recommendations for maximizing the impact of this initiative. The first three pertain to implementation, addressing alumni tracking, financial planning, and student scholarships. These are followed by recommendations for additional investigations that would support the work of the AHSI Network and would also provide valuable contributions more broadly to alternative education and to other efforts to replicate programs.

Future funding to intermediaries should require alumni college and career tracking: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the AHSI intermediaries emphasize the importance of college and career outcomes for these students, many of whom have few resources beyond their own motivation. These outcomes are absolutely central to this initiative and to the work of the grantees. All intermediaries acknowledged the value of knowing their students' outcomes. The foundation could require the alumni tracking and support it through initiative-level professional development, technical assistance, and funding for implementation. To be sustainable, this requires effective program and financial planning.

Future funding to grantees should require and support strategic financial planning: Grantees expressed much concern about sustainability of programs and about the financial future of their organizations. Few non-profit organizations that target social issues *start* with strategic financial planning, and most likely, the grantees could benefit from resources to support financial planning. Future grant awards could require financial planning and provide support, such as initiative-level professional development to intermediary staffs and boards and funding to work with a consultant. For current AHSI members, this would be a natural outgrowth of their work with the Parthenon Group. Due to differences in intermediary structures and needs, an individualized approach may yield stronger results and better buy-in.

Future funding to grantees should require and support common data collection: To assess impact at the intermediary and initiative level and to target improvements, implementation and outcomes data are necessary. This is similar to teachers' use of data to improve the outcomes for students, both individually and collectively. In addition, the current educational climate requires performance data. Individuals in school systems, communities, and municipalities have become more knowledgeable about student and school outcomes. In order to support AHSI expansion and place-based partnerships, intermediary and network level data will likely become necessary. While intermediary involvement in the stages of identifying data targets and in creating data definitions is

highly important, the expectations for providing data should be set at the beginning of the grant period and supported with technical assistance and professional development throughout. In addition, grantees should have access to their own data and to the aggregated data of their network. A common data collection system is necessary for these efforts.

***Funding for student scholarships should be explored*:** The vast majority of students in AHSI schools have little or no resources for attending college. As intermediaries embedded college readiness into their programs, students encountered the realities of accessing college. Providing scholarships for graduates of AHSI schools would provide incentive for students to meet the higher expectations and remove a barrier to their continued education.

Additional research projects should be explored. A number of supplementary investigations would maximize the impact of this initiative and extend the learning. AHSI intermediaries and schools wrestle with issues that confront schools daily, and they are innovative around these issues. It would be highly beneficial to the field of education to mine this unique project for additional contributions and to bring light to emerging practices. Given current demands on grantees' organizational capacity, it would be essential to provide technical assistance and financial support for participation in these studies.

Study of longitudinal outcomes is necessary. Breaking the cycle of poverty is neither accomplished nor demonstrated by sending an impoverished youth to college. The real impact of this work lies farther down the road and is assessed by outcomes such as employment and housing stability. Although AHSI schools are attempting to track graduates into college and careers to determine outcomes, it is a labor-intensive process and not likely to have the temporal reach to assess the long-term outcomes. A longitudinal study following AHSI students over a decade would be seminal in this field and would provide powerful insights regarding the impact of the education received by students in AHSI schools.

Study of college and career readiness would be appropriate. Each intermediary incorporated college and career readiness into their models, but there are notable differences in focus, intensity, and activities. Some of the variables include college visits, college and career curricula, presentation programs, college application entrance support, transition programs, alumni support, and college liaisons. A detailed and separate study of the different college and career preparation programs at AHSI schools, together with outcomes data, would be informative for this evaluation. The findings would also be more broadly useful for alternative and small schools nationwide as they consider raising goals and expectations.

Study of accountability measures may help strengthen certain models. The internal accountability systems intermediaries use to monitor and ensure school progress vary widely and impact outcomes and sustainability. Among the systems, there are financial reins, efforts to develop accreditation processes, and site visits. An investigation of the different models of accountability in conjunction with outcomes and sustainability measures would inform these intermediaries as well as other organizations with networks of schools. In addition, it would provide insight for structuring the granting process, both at the foundation level and at the intermediary level.

Study of organizational capacity building is critical to sustainability. Many grants require organizations to build capacity. The success and sustainability of grant activities rest on the approach to capacity building. AHSI grantees used a variety of strategies, including adding personnel to the central office, expanding field staff, creating networks, seeking additional funds, consolidating and expanding services, as well as many others. Some of these approaches have been more successful than others for generating sustainability and program quality. Information obtained from a study of grant-related capacity building would provide insight for structuring of the grant process and for guiding organizations toward sustainable growth.

APPENDIX - DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This appendix presents the quantitative data findings for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI). Evaluators collected school and student outcomes throughout the grant, including student attitudes toward school, student attitudes toward college, and college attendance patterns. This report includes data from the Gates Educational Initiative Survey (GEIS)[6] and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

Gates Educational Initiative Survey

During the five years of the grant, students at a sample of existing and startup schools completed the GEIS, a 57-item survey designed to assess students' attitudes and perceptions about high school and college. This survey contains 10 factors reflecting both school and classroom attributes. These factors include Respect & Responsibility, Active Inquiry, In-Depth Learning, Performance Assessment, School Climate-Orderly, Satisfaction-1, Satisfaction-2, Sense of Belonging, High Expectations, and Personalized. Table 7 details the items that comprise each factor, along with the alpha loading for each factor and the factor score for each item.

More than 6000 surveys were completed across 48 AHSI schools over the 5 years of the grant (see Table 6). The survey was administered annually in the winter to students at a sample of AHSI existing and startup schools. No surveys were administered to startup schools in Year 1 (2004).

Table 6.
Number of GEIS Surveys Completed Annually by Existing and Startup Schools

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Existing	750	753	756	854	807	3920
Startup	N/A	87	520	762	854	2223
Totals	750	840	1276	1616	1661	6143

Table 7.
AIR/SRI Student Survey Factors and Items

Factor: Respect & Responsibility		α = .84
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	Agree or disagree: Many students don't respect one another	0.539
	Agree or disagree: There are groups of students who don't get along	0.511
	Amt of students feel it's okay: to make racist/sexist remarks	0.708
	Amt of students feel it's okay: to cheat	0.771
	Amt of students feel it's okay: to get into fights	0.801
	Amt of students feel it's okay: to steal from other students	0.822
	Amt of students feel it's okay: to destroy/steal school property	0.805

[6] The GEIS combined the previously administered College Awareness Survey and the AIR/SRI Student Survey.

Factor: Active Inquiry		**α = .74**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	How often teachers: encouraged students to find multiple solutions	0.757
	How often teachers: let students decide on projects to work on	0.841
	How often teachers: let students decide how to work on projects	0.831
Factor: In-Depth Learning		**α = .60**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	How often: student able to spend enough time on topic to understand it	0.724
	How often: teachers expect student to learn enough to teach others	0.733
	How often student: wrote paper of >5 pgs on topic student researched	0.551
	How often student: solved problems based on real life	0.689
Factor: Performance Assessment		**α = .70**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	How often teacher: showed students student work as example	0.737
	How often teacher: made clear what studs should know and do	0.827
	How often teacher: assigned projects that let studs show what learned	0.800
Factor: School Climate-Orderly		**α = .91**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	Frequency in school: fighting	0.819
	Frequency in school: destroying property	0.839
	Frequency in school: verbal bullying	0.846
	Frequency in school: physical bullying	0.869
	Frequency in school: cheating	0.808
	Frequency in school: theft	0.826
Factor: Satisfaction-1		**α = .84**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	How well taught: be a good reader	0.810
	How well taught: speak clearly and effectively	0.851
	How well taught: write clearly and effectively	0.833
	How well taught: analyze and solve math problems	0.649
	How well taught: learn effectively on own w/little help from others	0.768
Factor: Satisfaction-2		**α = .86**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	How well taught: be responsible member of community	0.785
	How well taught: understand rights and responsibilities of Americans	0.802
	How well taught: respect opinions of people from diff backgrounds	0.809
	How well taught: prepare for work world or attending college	0.800
	How well taught: think critically about ideas/probs./current events	0.806

Factor: Sense of Belonging		α = .68
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	Agree: I feel like I'm a real part of this school	0.712
	Agree: I don't fit in with most other students	0.585
	Agree: I participate in a lot of activities in this school	0.648
	Agree: people at this school are like family to me	0.702
	Agree: I feel like an outsider at this school	0.666
Factor: High Expectations		**α = .71**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	Teachers at school: believe all students can do well	0.703
	Teachers at school: have given up on some students	0.692
	Teachers at school: care about only smart students	0.738
	Teachers at school: expect very little from students	0.536
	Teachers at school: make sure students are learning	0.739
Factor: Personalized		**α = NA**
	Item Description	**Factor Score**
	How many adults would: extra help	NA
	How many adults would: personal problem help	NA
	How many adults would: really care	NA
	How many adults would: help grad plans	NA
	How many adults would: help future plans	NA

Figures 4 through 13 present annual results for the GEIS factors for existing and startup schools throughout the grant period. Multi-year comparisons were done but must be interpreted with caution due to inconsistent sampling and return rates across years. While there was some variation in the schools participating from year to year, the results represent the collective progress of existing schools and of startup schools across the grant.

To determine if there were differences between the students of existing schools and the students of the startup schools on the 10 factors over time, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance was conducted with type of school (existing, startup) and year (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) as independent variables and the 10 factors as dependent variables. A significant interaction was obtained for type and year, and significant main effects were obtained for type and for year (all $p<.01$). These results indicate that existing and startup schools differed over time and from each other on the 10 factors. Follow-up analyses of type and year for each factor obtained significant interactions ($p<.05$) on seven factors: High Expectations, Personalized, Respect and Responsibility, School Climate-Orderly, Satisfation-1, Satisfaction-2, and Sense of Belonging. These significant interactions indicate that the existing and startup schools had different patterns over time on each of these factors. Significant main effects ($p<.01$) for type and for year were obtained for Active Inquiry and for Performance Assessment. These main effects indicate there were differences between the groups and that there were changes over time, but the overall patterns on these factors were similar for existing and startup schools. The effect sizes of these results ranged from 0.1 to 0.4, indicating the differences are relatively small, even if significant.

To determine the nature of the significant interactions for each of the seven factors, post hoc analyses were conducted for year and for type. The most interesting results were obtained for Respect and Responsibility (Figure 6), High Expectations (Figure 4), and School Climate-Orderly (Figure 7). For each of these factors, the analyses showed no change over time for existing schools, but a significant increase ($p<.01$) between 2005 and 2008 for startup schools. For each factor, there were statistically significant differences between groups at various time points. For Respect and Responsibility, existing and startup schools differed on all four years ($p<.01$). For High Expectations, the groups differed in 2006, 2007, and 2008 ($p<.01$). For School Climate-Orderly, he groups differed in 2005 and 2007 ($p<.01$), with 2006 and 2008 approaching significance ($p=.06$ and $p=.07$, respectively). Taken together, these data suggest the existing schools showed little change over time on these factors, while the startup schools increased over time. Further, while startup schools initially showed lower levels of each of these three factors, they ultimately surpassed existing schools by the end of the grant period.

The patterns obtained for Personalized and for Satisfaction-2 were somewhat similar. For Personalized (Figure 5) and Satisfaction-2 (Figure 12), existing and startup schools increased significantly between 2005 and 2008 ($p<.05$). For Personalized, the groups differed in 2005, 2006 and 2008 ($p<.01$). For Satisfaction-2, the groups differed in 2005 and 2008 ($p<.01$). These data suggest that both existing and startup schools increased over time on these two factors. Similar to the results obtained in the first set of post hoc analyses, the existing schools were initially stronger on these factors but were surpassed by the startup schools by 2008. This is most pronounced for the Personalized factor.

A slightly different pattern was observed for Satisfaction-1 (Figure 11) and for Sense of Belonging (Figure 13). Both existing and startup schools showed statistically significant increases over time ($p<.01$). For both factors, the groups differed in 2008 ($p<.01$). These results suggest the groups showed similar improvements over time but, by the end of the grant, the startup schools exceeded existing schools.

Post-hoc analyses of the main effects for year for Active Inquiry (Figure 8) and for Performance Assessment (Figure 10) revealed increases for existing and for startup schools between 2005 and 2008 ($p<.01$). This, together with the significant effect for type for both factors ($p<.01$) indicated that the groups showed similar patterns over time but at different levels, with the startup schools being higher.

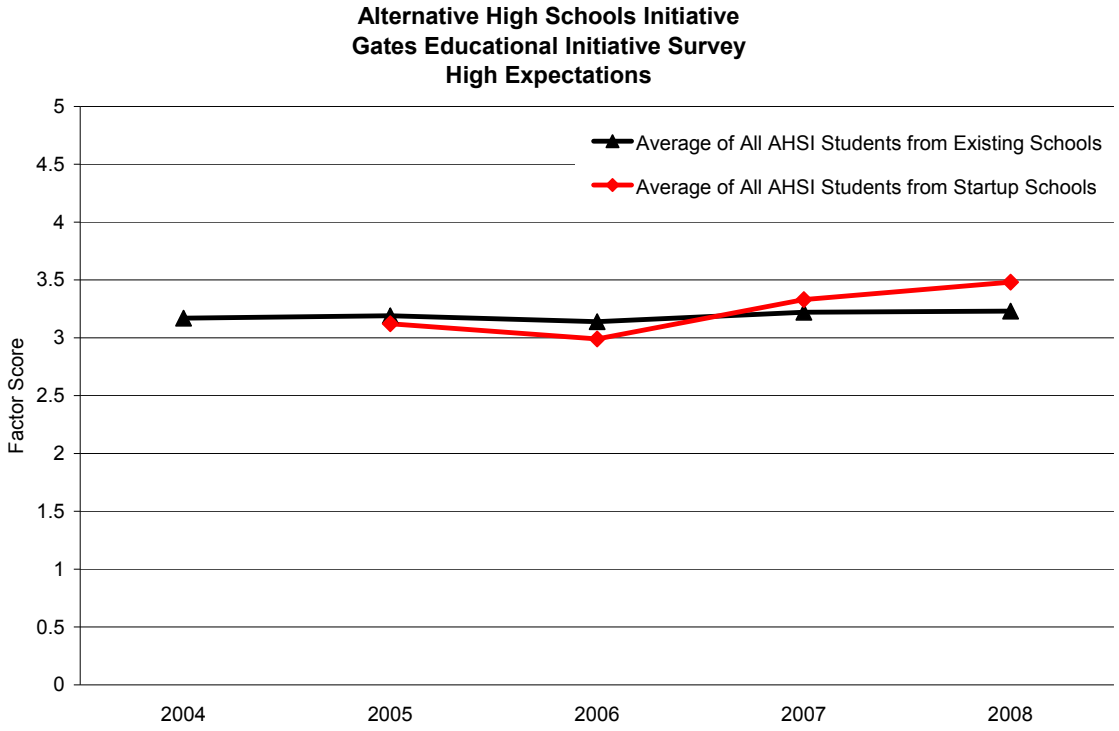


Figure 4. **GEIS 2004-2008, High Expectations**

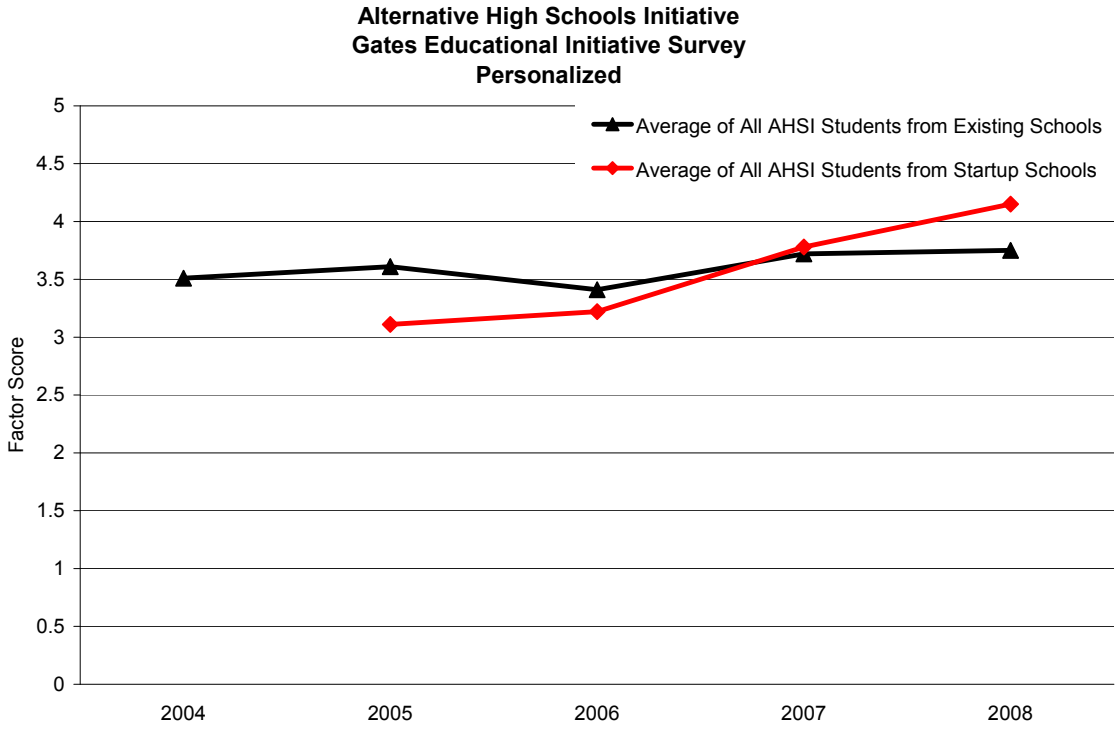


Figure 5. **GEIS 2004-2008, Personalized**

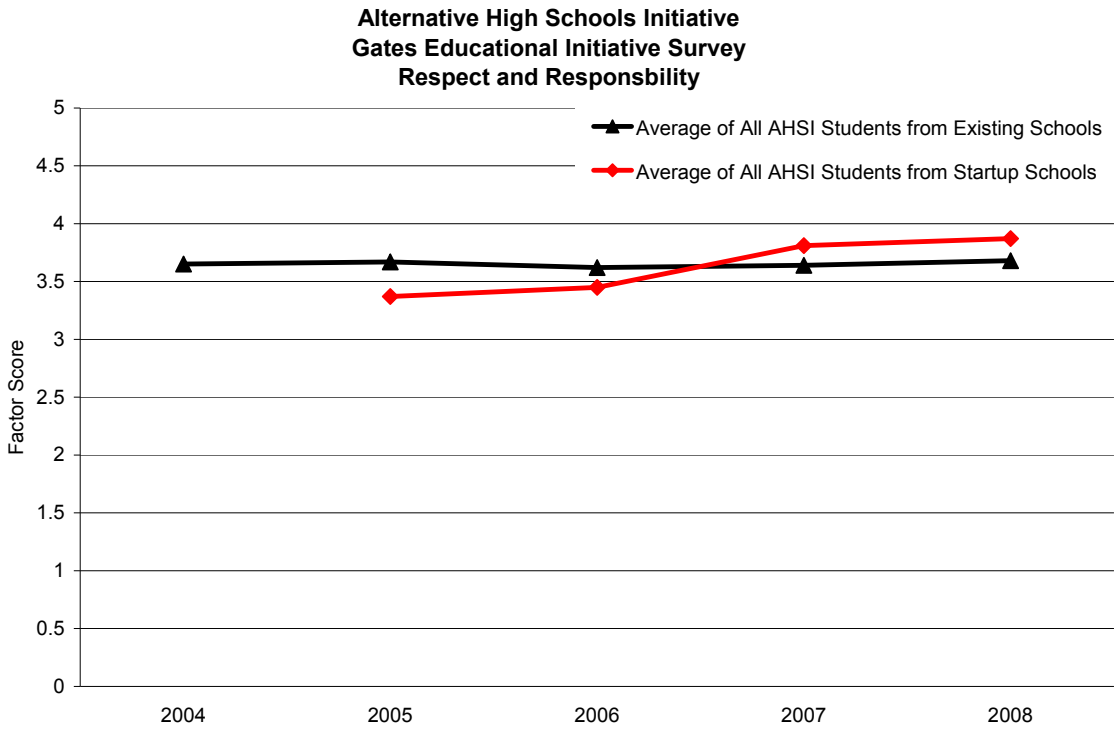


Figure 6. **GEIS 2004-2008, Respect and Responsibility**

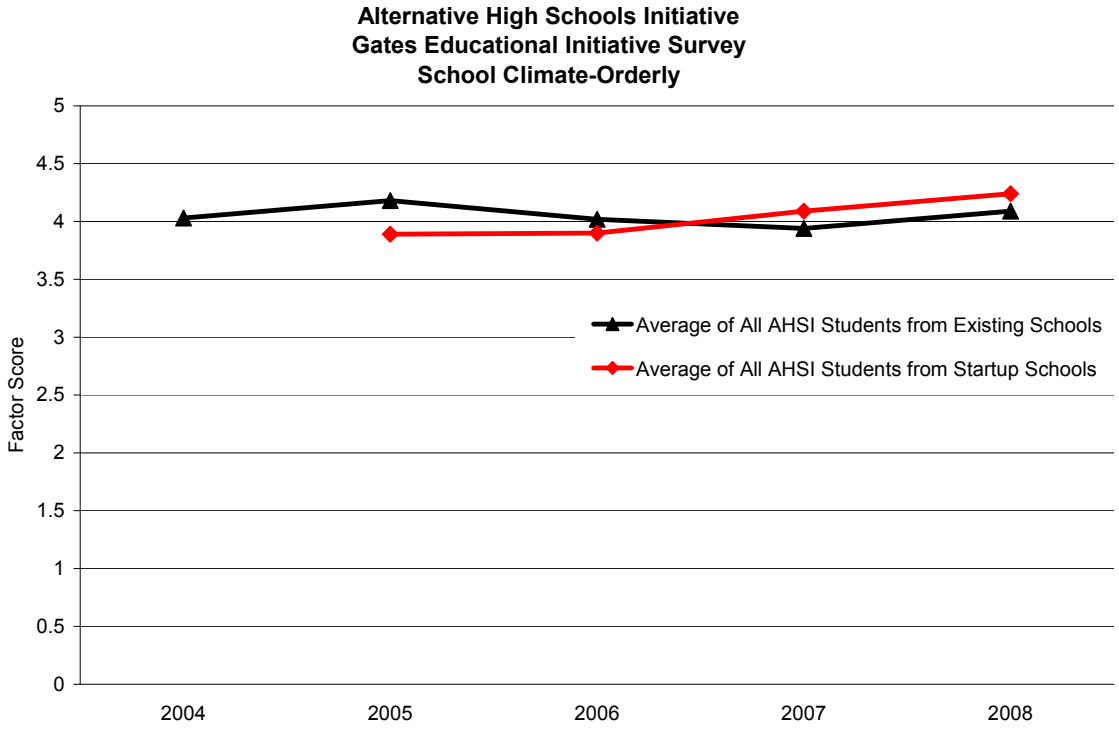


Figure 7. **GEIS 2004-2008, School Climate-Orderly**

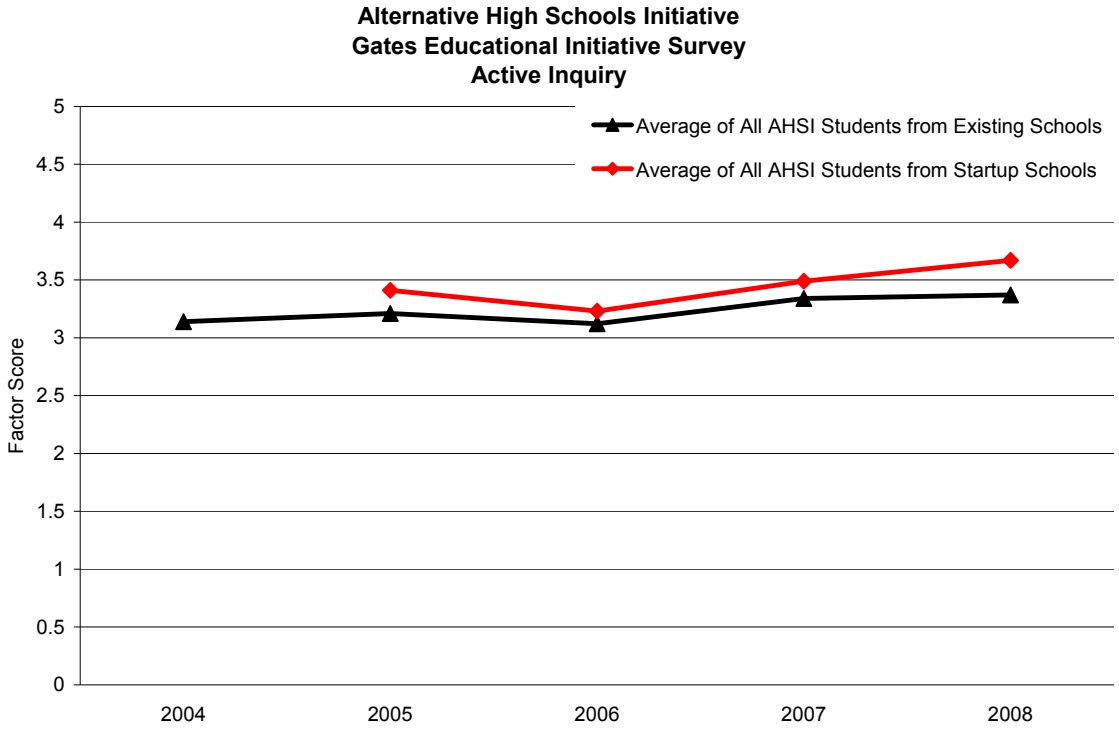


Figure 8. **GEIS 2004-2008, Active Inquiry**

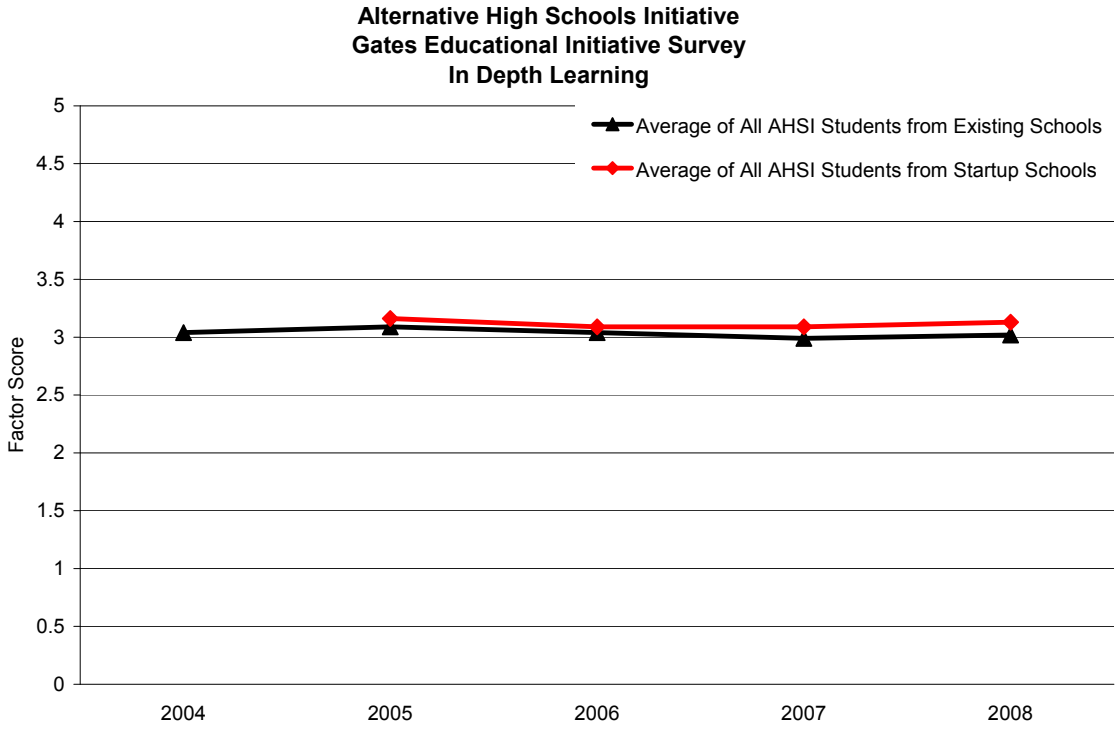


Figure 9. **GEIS 2004-2008, In Depth Learning**

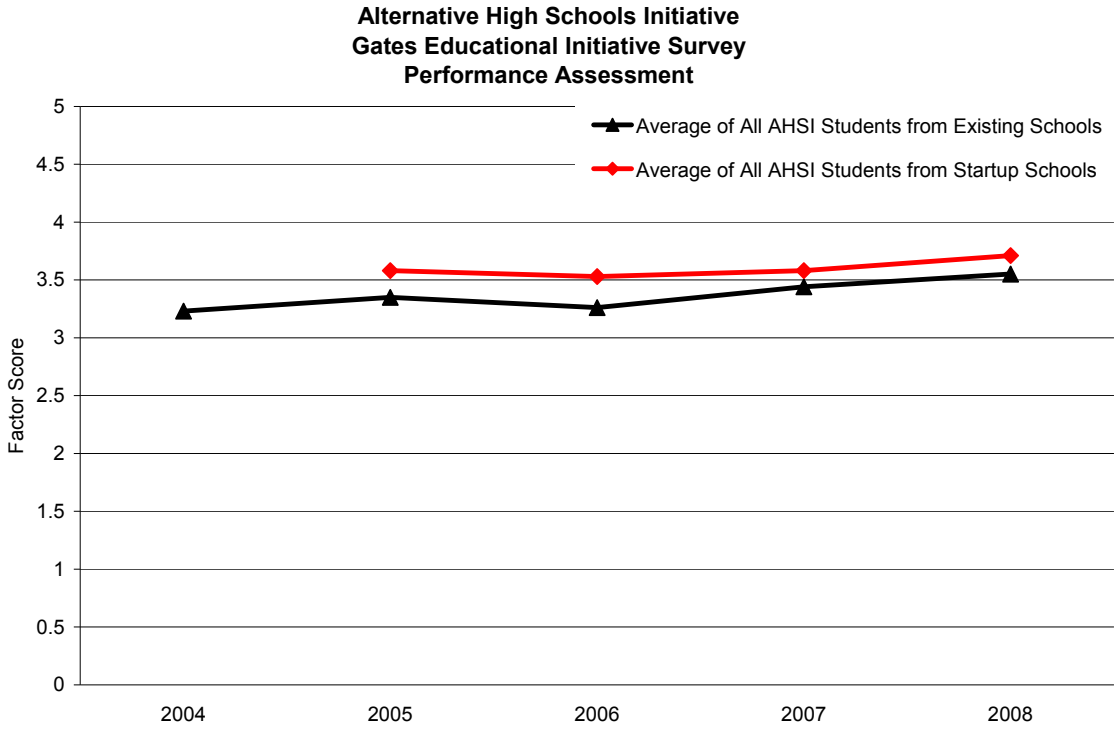


Figure 10. **GEIS 2004-2008, Performance Assessment**

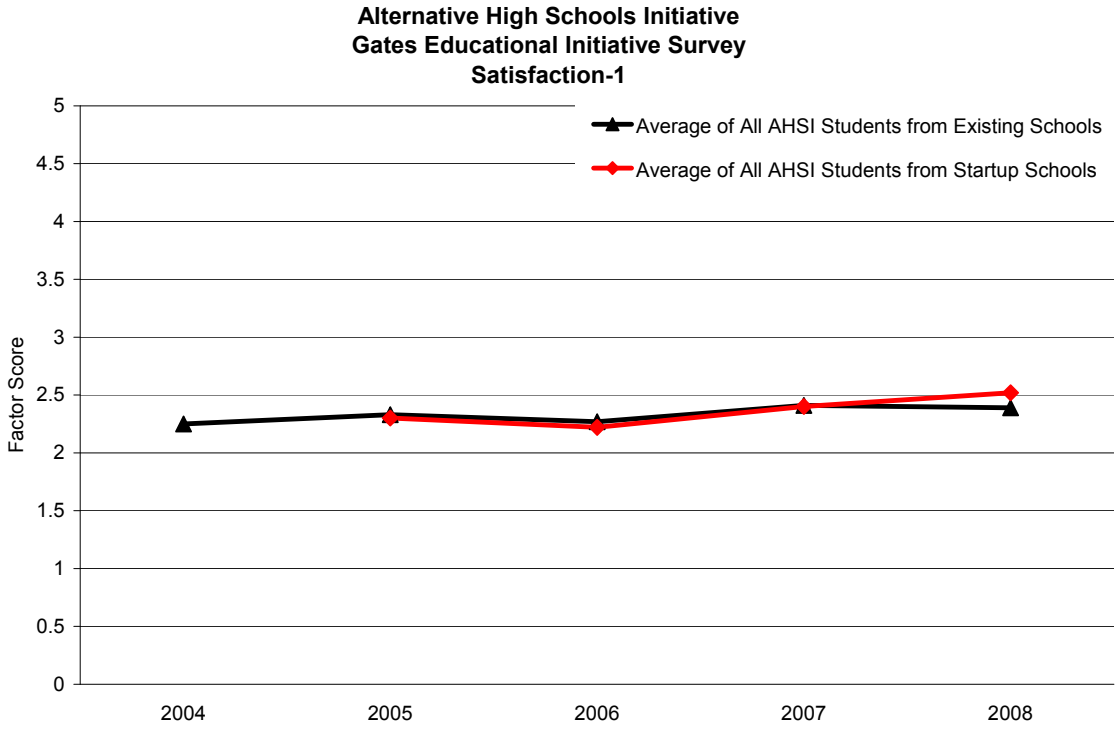


Figure 11. **GEIS 2004-2008, Satisfaction-1**

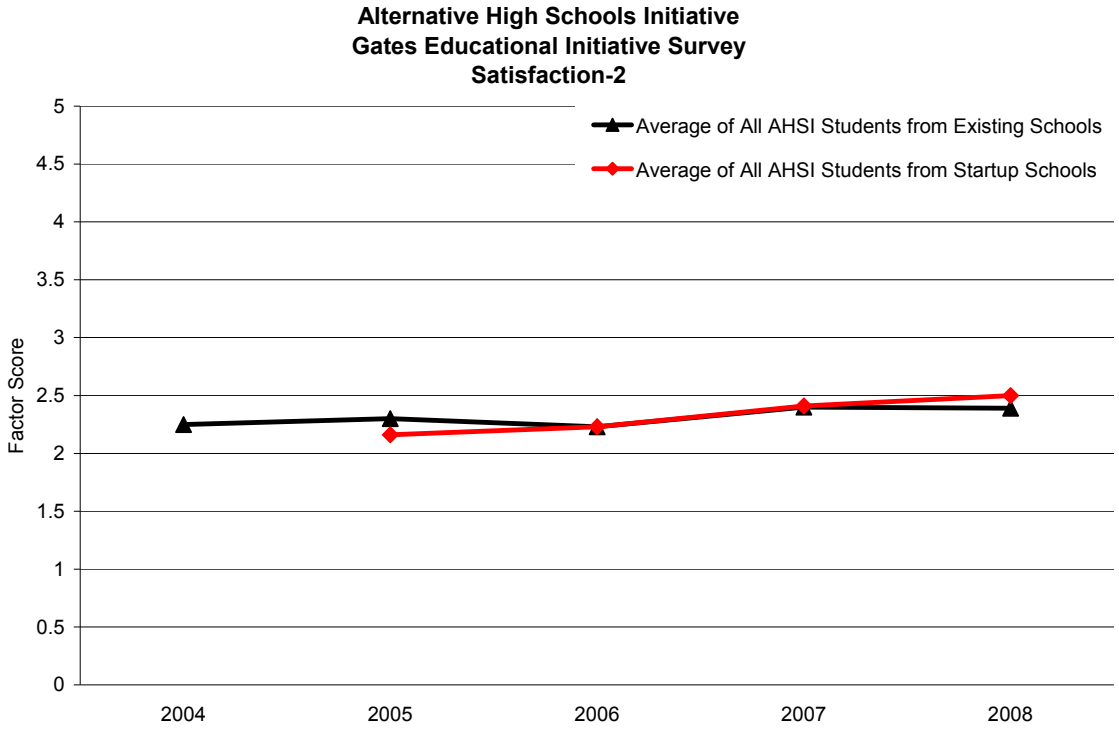


Figure 12. **GEIS 2004-2008, Satisfaction-2**

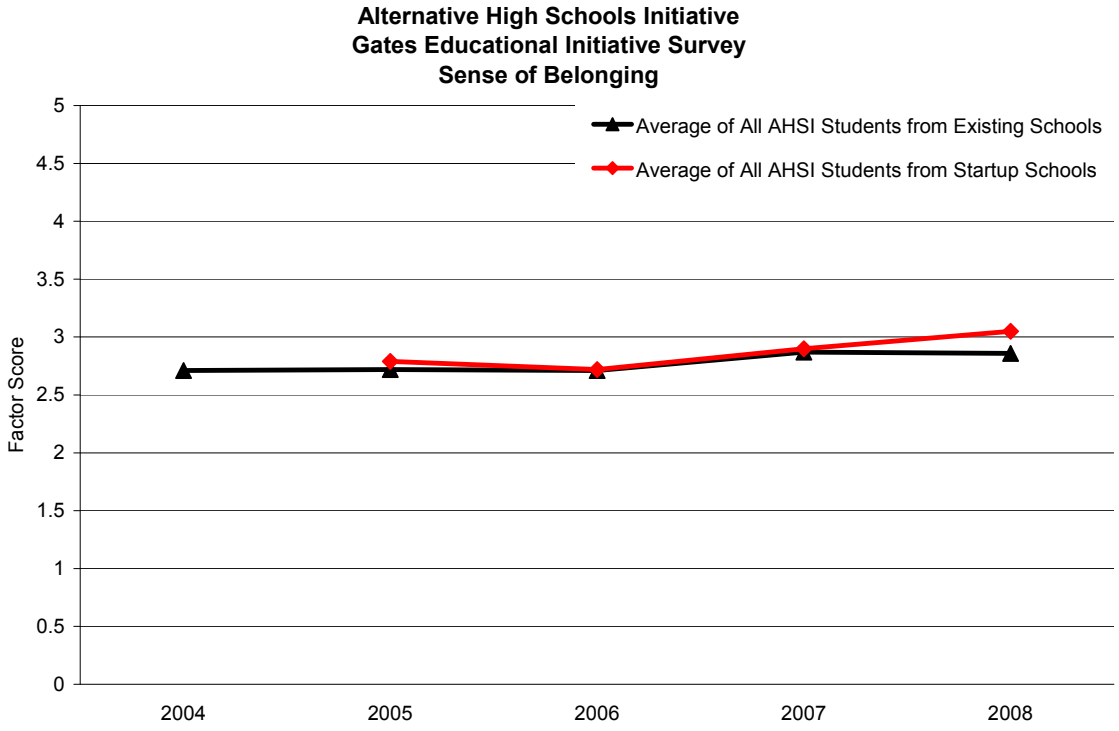
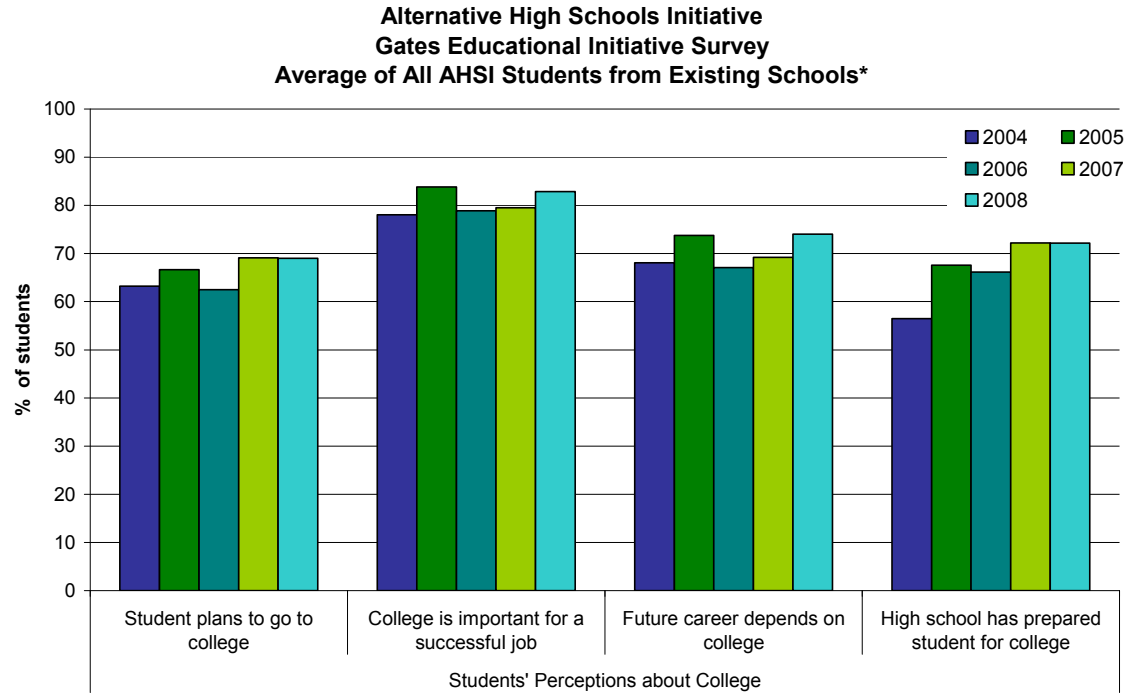


Figure 13. **GEIS 2004-2008, Sense of Belonging**

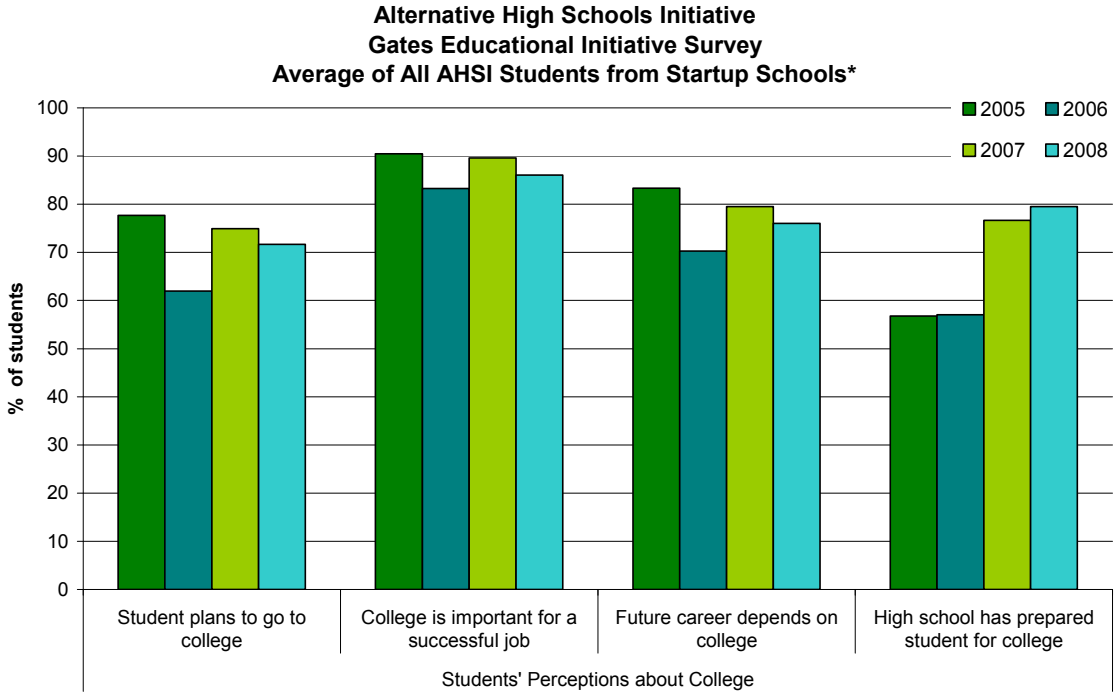
The GEIS also includes 12 items designed to assess students' attitudes and perceptions about college. The results for these items are presented in Figures 14 through17. Because these are single items, statistical analyses were not performed. Figures 14 (existing schools) and 15 (startup schools) compare students' plans for college attendance to their perceptions of the importance of a college degree, to how much they believe their future career depends on going to college, and to their belief their high school has prepared them to succeed in college. For existing schools, each of these items showed a general upward trend over time. This is particularly apparent for the students' perceptions that high school has prepared them for college. Over the years of the grant, between 78% and 83% of the respondents indicated college is important for a job. A slightly smaller percentage (63% to 69%) plan to attend college. The startup schools showed more variability over time and within item. However, as of 2008, the results from existing and startup schools were very similar. The percentage of students planning to go to college (72%) was somewhat less than the percentage of students believing college is important for a successful job (86%), with the other items falling between.

Figures 16 (existing schools) and 17 (startup schools) reflect the surveyed students' responses to questions about their plans for the year after they graduate from high school and about their perceptions of teacher's expectations for college. At the outset of the grant, the percentages of students planning to attend two-year colleges (31%) and four-year colleges (32%) were equal. By the end of the grant, the percentage of students planning to attend two-year colleges (25%) decreased slightly while the percentage planning to attend four-year colleges rose (45%). This trend follows in the direction of perceptions of teachers' expectations, which favored four-year colleges (51% to 57%) over two-year colleges (18% to 22%) throughout the grant period. Students in startup schools showed a much stronger bias toward four-year colleges. While there was some variability over time, the results obtained at the end of the grant reveals students' plans for college and their perceptions of teachers' expectations were highly similar. The percentage of students planning to attend four-year colleges (54%) was greater than the percentage planning to attend a two-year colleges (17%). Similarly, more students believed their teachers expect them to attend four-year colleges (64%) than two-year colleges (17%).



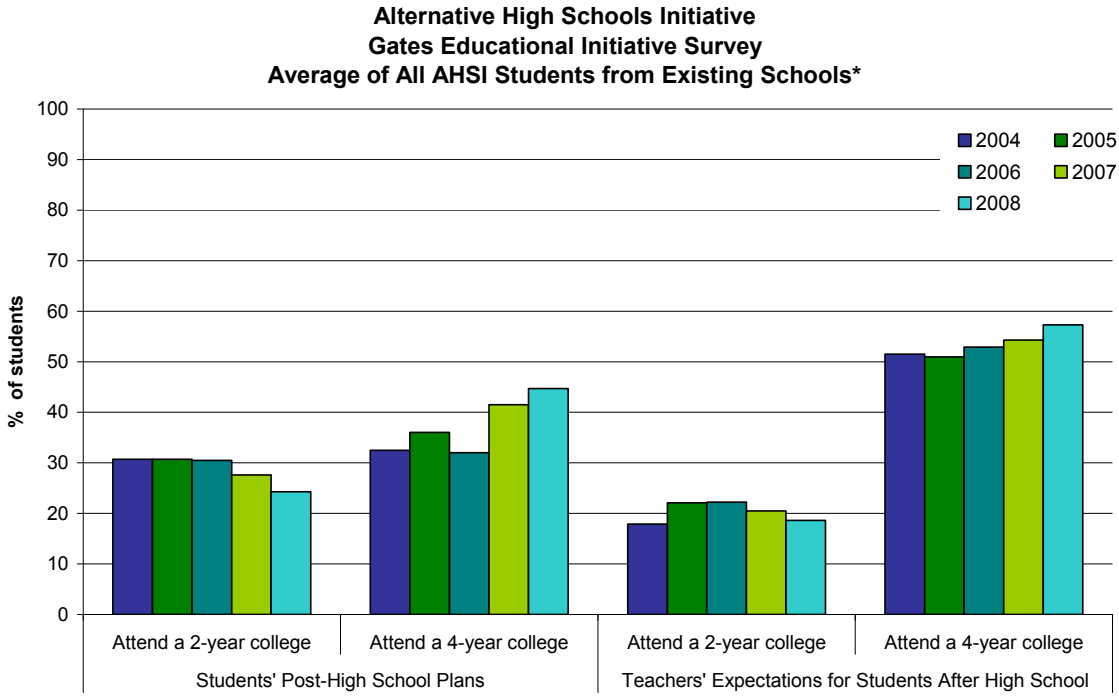
* Students from schools with data for all five years only

Figure 14. **GEIS 2004-2008 Existing Schools, Students' Perceptions About College**



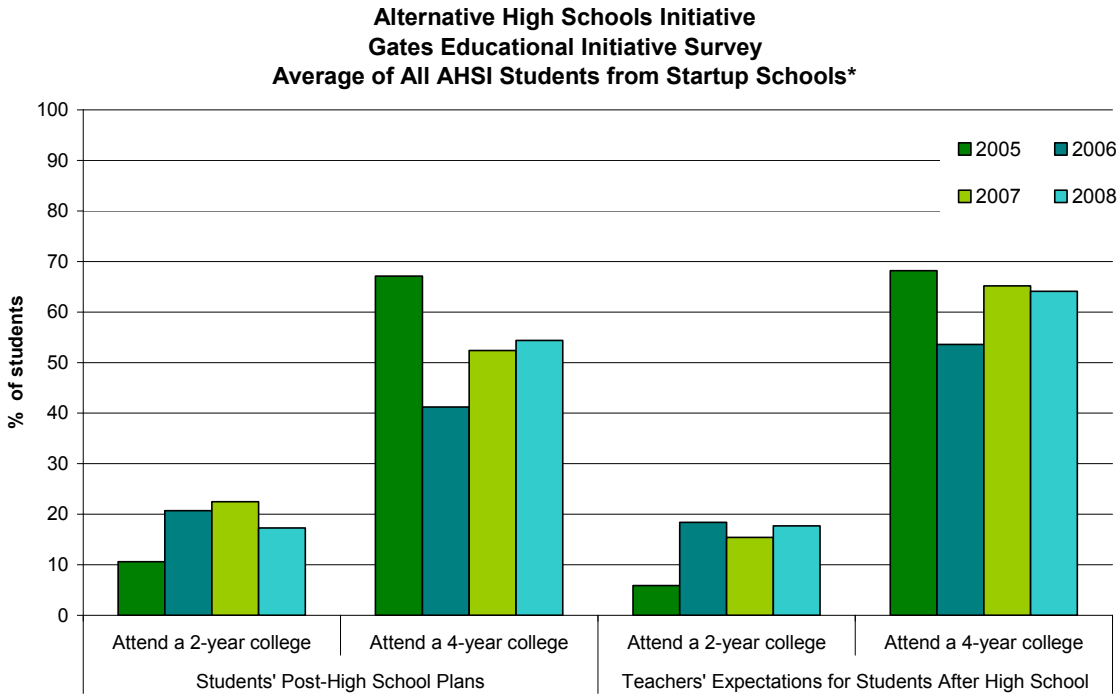
* No startups were administered an initial assessment in 2004

Figure 15. **GEIS 2005-2008 Startup Schools, Students' Perceptions About College**



* Students from schools with data for all five years only

Figure 16. **GEIS 2004-2008 Existing Schools, Students' Plans for College**



* No startups were administered an initial assessment in 2004

Figure 17. **GEIS 2004-2008 Startup Schools, Students' Plans for College**

National Student Clearinghouse

College enrollment, persistence, and graduation data were obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for 2000-2007 graduates from 13 AHSI high schools. We submitted lists of the names, birth dates, year of graduation, and high school attended, among other data, to NSC to be matched with the college reported enrollments. We then compiled and analyzed these yearly enrollment records to determine college enrollment and persistence rates for the AHSI high school graduates.

We defined "college direct" students as high school graduates who attended either a two- or four-year college any time in the academic year immediately following their high school graduation. The aggregated college direct rates for graduates of AHSI high schools from 2000 through 2007 are presented in Figure 18. The percentage of college direct students has been consistently ranged between 18% and 25% from 2002 to 2007. The aggregated percentages of college direct AHSI graduates attending two- and four-year colleges between 2000 and 2007 are presented in Figure 19. While there is clearly variation over time, these data indicate a consistent pattern for a greater percentage of students to enroll in 2-year colleges as opposed to 4-year colleges. (Note: The combined percentages for a given year may total more than 100% because of dual enrollments of some students.)

The college persistence rates of the college direct AHSI graduates in 2000-2006 are presented in Figure 20. We defined "persisting in college" for college direct AHSI graduates as being enrolled anytime in a given year following high school graduation *or* having received a 4-year college degree. For example, 24% of the 2002 AHSI graduates were enrolled in college in the 2002-2003 academic year, the first year after graduation. In the second year after graduation, 11% of the high school graduates were still enrolled in college ("Attended Y1 and Y2"). By the third year after graduation, less than 10% of the 2002 AHSI high school graduates were enrolled in college ("Attended Y1 and Y3"). The most noticeable trend in Figure 20 is the consistent dropout rate from the first year of college to the second for all years of available college enrollment data.

The aggregated percentage of college direct AHSI graduates attending 2- and 4-year colleges from 2000 to 2007 by student ethnicity are presented in Figure 21.

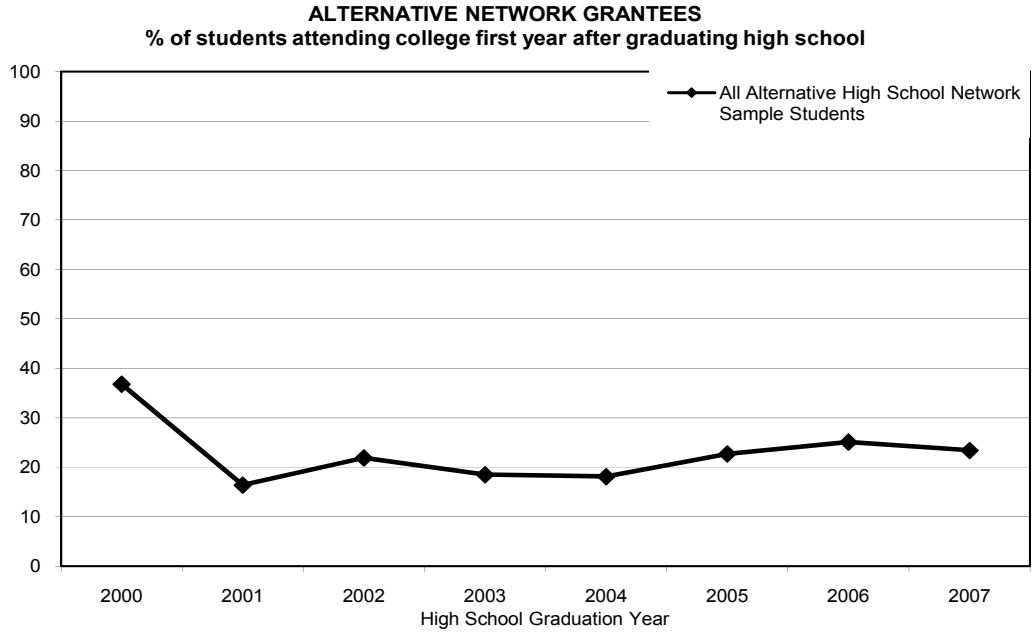


Figure 18. **Students Attending College Directly After Graduating High School 2000-2007**

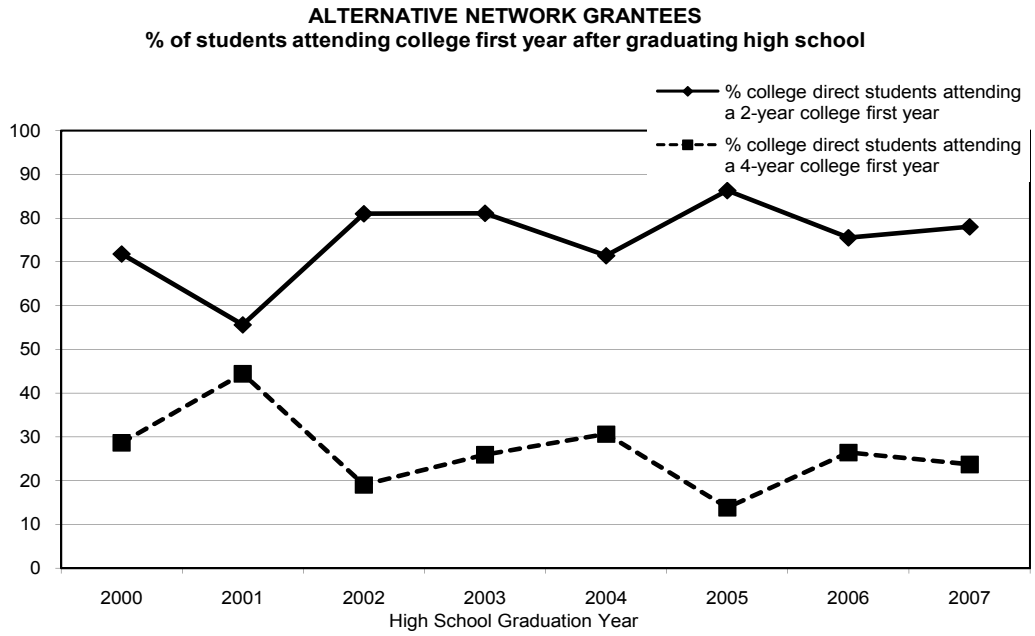


Figure 19. **Students Attending College Directly After Graduating High School 2000-2007, 2-Year versus 4-Year**

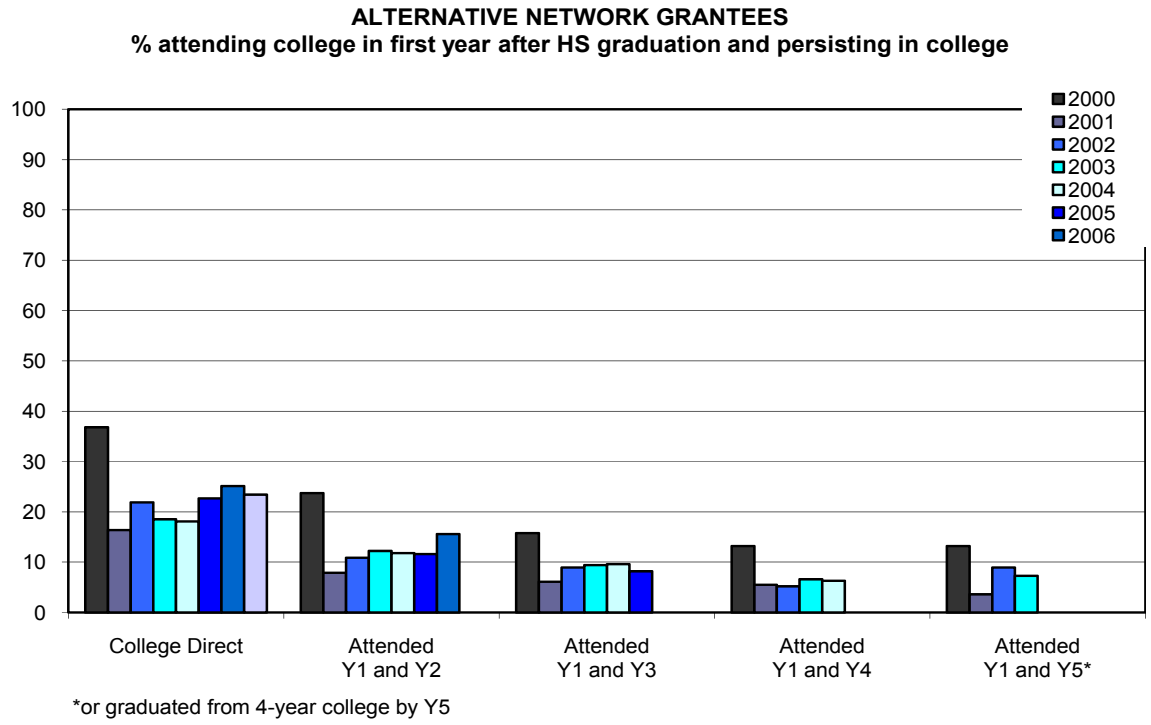


Figure 20. **College Persistence, 2000-2006**

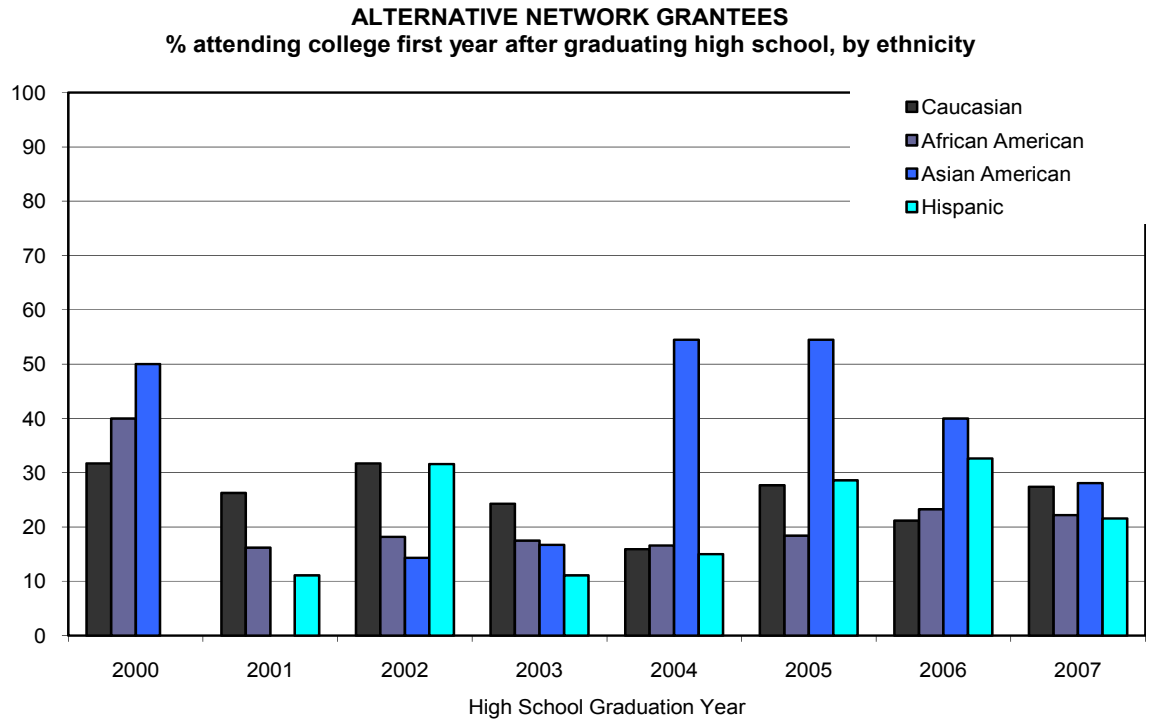


Figure 21. **Students Attending College Directly After Graduating High School 2000-2007, by ethnicity**

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