



Changing
our schools...
**Changing
our future!**

*Celebrating Five Years of High School Reform
in Hamilton County Schools*



Partners for Strong Schools



A GREAT START to a New Society

Common Goals, Uncommon Plans

Hamilton County's road to high school reform began with the submission of a grant request by the Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public Education Foundation to the Carnegie Corporation. After reviewing 24 proposals from around the country, Carnegie awarded grants to seven recipients, Hamilton County among them.

PEF added \$6 million to Carnegie's \$8 million grant, and Hamilton County schools had the foundation they needed to begin thinking of and studying innovative ways to engage students and improve their learning and achievement levels. Sixteen school communities went to work.

First, common goals were established for each school:

- 1 Establish a more challenging, relevant and engaging curriculum (rigor);
- 2 Improve teaching by providing more professional development for teachers, leaders and staff (professional learning communities);
- 3 Create a more personalized and engaging experience for students; and
- 4 Allow more flexibility to meet student needs more effectively.

From the common goals grew school-specific plans as teams of teachers, administrators and parents worked together to create ambitious yet achievable strategies for their own learning communities. Planning grants allowed teams to travel to places like Boston and New York to study effective reform efforts. *continued next page*

Something very exciting is happening in Hamilton County's high schools. Test scores are up, on-time graduation rates are increasing, and more graduates than ever before are heading off to college.

There are lots of reasons for these happy trends: caring and committed teachers, focused principals, engaged parents, hard-working students and business partners interested in elevating the quality of the work force. They are all part of a five-year initiative called **Schools for a New Society** that has changed the way Hamilton County high schools go about the business of education. Designed by the teachers, students, parents, community partners, and administrators at each of 16 Hamilton County high schools, the SNS initiative was funded by generous five-year grants from the Carnegie Foundation and Chattanooga's own Public Education Foundation. Beyond the funding commitment, PEF has been an indispensable partner in the reform work – training teachers and principals, and collecting and analyzing the data needed to honestly assess the initiative's success.

The dynamic partnership between PEF and the Hamilton County Department of Education has fueled great success. As we mark the fifth anniversary of this groundbreaking work, a brief retrospective seems in order so that all of us can better understand just how far we have come. And as we look back, applaud the teachers, principals, parents, students, friends and supporters who have worked to bring innovation to Hamilton County classrooms.

About the Public Education Foundation

PEF was created in 1988 to provide a conduit for community contributions to the Hamilton County Department of Education in order to improve public schools. As a partner to the school system, PEF's mission is to challenge, support and improve Hamilton County public schools so that all students succeed in learning and in life. Over the years, PEF has offered teacher and principal training and has been an

advocate for classroom innovation. PEF has been successful in the important work of raising private contributions to fund initiatives in support of Hamilton County public schools, especially from national funding sources. Since 2000, PEF has brought over \$40 million to the Hamilton County public school system, including contributions from local individuals and corporations and local and national

foundations, including the Annenberg Foundation, the Benwood Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, the Lumina Foundation, the Lyndhurst Foundation, the National Education Association Foundation, and the Osborne Foundation.



Prescriptions for Change, School by School

A sampling of how the *Schools for a New Society* grant generated sixteen approaches to the common goals.

Brainerd

Five years ago, Brainerd High School had an enormous challenge and they knew it. Most of their incoming freshmen were reading below 4th grade level, and the school's leaders knew that problem had to be solved first. The SNS grant enabled the Brainerd Leadership Team to identify an existing model called "Talent Development," and then to see the program in action by traveling to Baltimore. Brainerd hired a full time literacy coach and placed every high school student in a literacy period, beginning with freshmen but eventually expanding it to the entire student body. The results speak for themselves: the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the Gateway English exam increased from 65% to 84%, and on the Gateway Math exam from 39% to 70%. The number scoring advanced rose from 8% to 26% on English and from 4% to 21% on Math.

Central

Central High School was the first school to introduce a 9th Grade Academy to address the daunting challenges students face moving from middle school to high school. The SNS grant enabled the school's entire faculty to travel to New York City's District 2, where some of the most innovative classroom work was happening. Central added three career academies, and the Senior Exit Project and Oral Defense (SEPOD) became a rigorous graduation requirement. As a result of Central's work, the percentage of students successfully completing the 9th grade and moving on to 10th grade increased from 83% to 94%, the number of students scoring "advanced" on the Gateway English exam increased from 48% to 70%, and, in 2006, 90% of Central's seniors were headed for post-secondary education.

Center for Creative Arts

As its name implies, CCA is unique in its approach to educating high school students through an arts-based curriculum. But the school's leadership wondered whether its delivery of the creative arts might not be coming at the expense of some other aspects of a requisite high school education. The SNS grant allowed CCA to conduct an innovative audit, directed at the existing student body as well as the school's recent graduates, asking them, "What aren't you getting or what didn't you get?" The responses were both candid and complimentary. But respondents wanted CCA to offer a curriculum as ambitious and rigorous as the arts training they were receiving. Consequently, CCA adjusted its curriculum, and it has produced results, including 100% of students passing the Gateway English exam in 2006, with 89% scoring "advanced."

Chattanooga School for the Arts & Sciences

Chattanooga's original magnet high school was founded on the Paideia principles of rigorous academic pursuit and life-long learning, but the SNS grant prompted the school community to take a closer look at the entire school experience, and all agreed – including the CSAS alumni – that the 12th grade year was more relaxed than it should be. CSAS instituted protocols for extending rigor through the end of the senior year, most notably through the institution of a senior project that the students had to present as they might have to defend a college dissertation. Gateway scores have jumped: from 2003 to 2006, the number of students scoring "advanced" in Algebra went from 43% to 61%; the number scoring "advanced" in English went from 74% to 90%.

The academic rigor being provided for students was being matched by the rigorous preparation of their teachers. Special attention was given to professional development for faculty and administrators. PEF worked with the school system to design and produce training institutes to help teachers and principals hone their skills and make the innovations as effective as possible.

Schools employed "change coaches" – veteran teachers who worked with all faculty members to make sure reforms were put in place and that teachers received the support they needed. Other important strategies include eliminating low-level courses, increasing the number of rigorous academic courses, providing advisory classes for all students and expanding the use of literacy coaches to increase reading skills of all students.

And college counselors were hired to help students understand and navigate their post-secondary options.

Central to the work was the Public Education Foundation, helping to fund the initiative, conducting teacher and principal institutes, tracking performance to make sure schools were moving forward, and, in general playing the role of supportive partner and critical friend in the work of building stronger schools.

Sixteen schools, sixteen plans. Some of the school-by-school SNS highlights follow, along with the results they produced. (see charts on page 8)

continued from previous page Several schools instituted academies – smaller learning communities that create an environment of personal attention while combining academic studies with real-world experiences to deliver a more relevant learning experience for students. From medical to financial to technical to teaching to construction, the academy concept successfully captures students' imaginations, engages them in ways they have not been before and keeps many students enrolled in school – students who, by their own admission, might have otherwise dropped out.

Meanwhile, the school system instituted a single-path diploma with tougher graduation requirements to prepare all students to receive a diploma that would qualify them to enroll in a four-year college or obtain a higher job skill.

Because 9th grade is known to be a make-or-break year, many schools instituted freshman academies, and all schools conducted summer transition programs to give students more personal attention during this critical year.

Increased Literacy



East Ridge

The creation of high school academies – smaller learning communities within the traditional high school structure – has been one of the most successful reform strategies in Hamilton County, and it was East Ridge High School that led the way. Their Construction Academy represented the first example of a curriculum designed in partnership with a community group, in this case the Associated General Contractors. By aligning their curriculum with the expectations of the construction industry, East Ridge not only created an effective learning community, it also changed the nature of school/community partnerships; and it has made a huge difference. In addition to being recognized as having the national Academy of the Year in 2004, East Ridge has seen graduation rates increase by 17 percentage points. The number of students successfully completing 9th grade and moving to 10th has jumped by 20 percentage points; and the dropout rate is 8.1% – well below the state average.

Hamilton County High School

Implicit in the Schools for a New Society goals was the desire to see more Hamilton County students graduate from high school. Unfortunately, there were many who had already dropped out of high school with little or no hope of returning. From the SNS grant grew the innovative idea to create a high school aimed specifically at that group, to encourage their return to high school and, hopefully, their successful completion. Hamilton County Adult High School was established at the site of the former Harrison Bay Technical School, and it has graduated 446 students in three years. Not only were these students given a second chance at a high school diploma, but 48% of those graduates have gone on to post-secondary education.

Hixson

The Hixson High School community used their planning grant to address the challenge of retaining 9th graders and successfully promoting them to 10th grade, moving 9th graders into their own space and instituting an innovative approach to 9th grade registration. Hixson changed their registration process to include face-to-face meetings with incoming students and their parents to lay out the challenges and expectations of freshman year and help the families plan for it. The 9th Grade Pride Academy's success paved the way for three 10-12 career academies: Math, Science and Health; World Interest Leadership Development; and Technology, Enterprise, Communication. Ninth- to 10th- grade promotion has increased from 80% to 86% and "advanced" scores on the English Gateway went from 48% to 65%.

Howard School of Academics and Technology

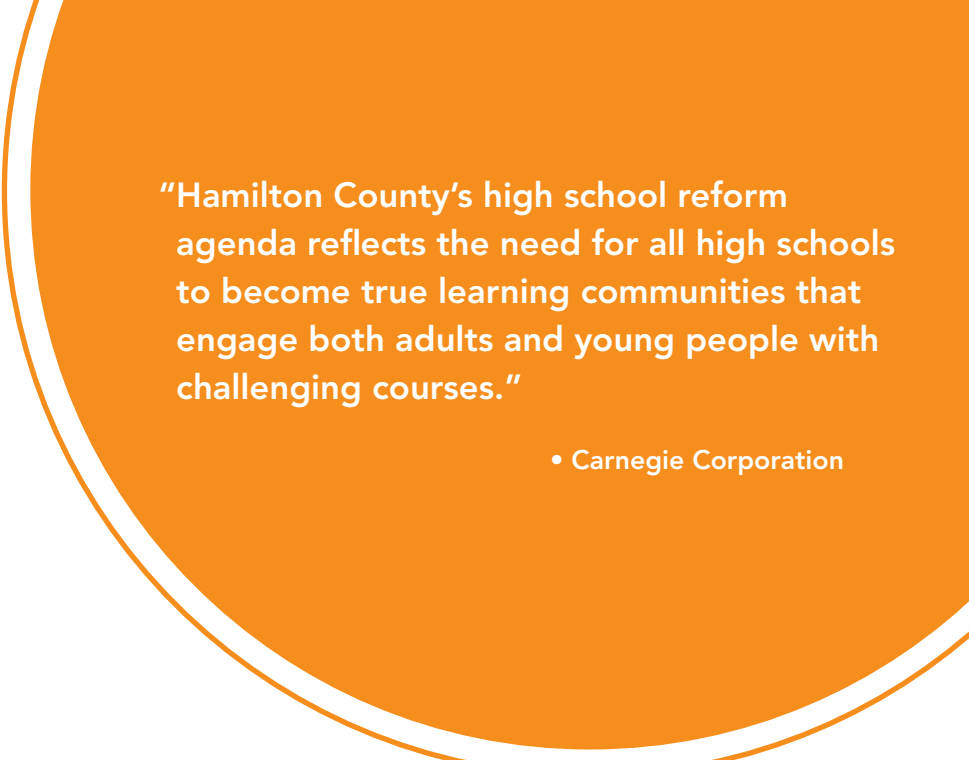
Howard was in a state of transition. An extensive building renovation, a change in school leadership, and a magnet school grant positioned the school well for SNS innovation, and they jumped in early with the creation of a 9th grade academy to support their transitioning freshmen and smooth their path into 10th grade. One goal was clear: the Howard community wanted to increase both the expectation that graduating seniors would go on to college and the opportunity to do so. That culture shift prompted school leaders to institute school reform beginning in the 6th grade and carrying through to senior year. Howard's test scores are showing improvement, but the all-important gauge of 9th graders successfully moving on to 10th grade has jumped from 52% to 80%.

Lookout Valley

Lookout Valley used its SNS grant to make technology more than just a peripheral tool; instead, they incorporated it into their classrooms as a comprehensive teaching strategy. Lookout Valley became the first Hamilton County school to institute a mobile teaching lab, and teachers have become adept at using the Internet and PowerPoint® as teaching tools while students have become equally comfortable applying technology to course work and projects. Above all, Lookout Valley realized that technology without training is just another bell or whistle, so significant resources were devoted to providing the staff development necessary to make the most of the new hardware and software. It's working: information technology students won first place in the Tennessee Skills USA competition, and every one of Lookout Valley's seniors graduated in 2006.

Ooltewah

One hallmark of the Schools for a New Society initiative has been the use of data to determine school needs and measure progress and success, and no one has done that better than Ooltewah High School. The school's leadership explored the data and realized that popular programs like Owl Camp – the summer transition program for 9th grade students – were leaving some of the school's sub-groups underserved. Ooltewah used that data to reorganize and to institute a more aggressive literacy initiative that has helped increase the number of students completing 9th grade and moving on to 10th. Moreover, Ooltewah has seen the number of students scoring "advanced" on the Gateway English exam improve by thirteen percentage points to 79%.



"Hamilton County's high school reform agenda reflects the need for all high schools to become true learning communities that engage both adults and young people with challenging courses."

• Carnegie Corporation

Red Bank

As Red Bank high school leadership committed to the idea of smaller learning communities, they decided it would be best to proceed one academy at a time and learn from their successes before implementing the next ones. With welcome input from students, they established a Health Careers Academy, founded on a strong partnership with Chattanooga's healthcare providers. And they sure did get it right. The academy enjoys a 95% attendance rate; 98% of the students are on-time graduates; and 94% of those are being accepted to college. Today, Red Bank boasts additional academies, and their Teaching Academy was recognized as the National Academy of the Year in 2006. The school's overall graduation rate, which was 66% in 2003, rose to 79% in 2006.

Sale Creek

Sale Creek bought into the idea that smaller learning communities could enhance achievement levels. The thing was: they were already a small learning community. With 400 students in grades 6-12, the school leadership realized they would have to apply small community learning goals to a larger population. They focused on connecting with students individually, personalizing instruction, and knitting the school community together. They were aggressive about including all students in the reform efforts, and they tackled the challenge of changing the community's culture about college-going. They aligned the curriculum to prepare students for the ACT so that more Sale Creek graduates would have the opportunity to move on to higher education. From 2003 to 2006, Sale Creek saw a 38% increase in the number of students taking the ACT exam.

Higher Test Scores

"Hamilton County is to be applauded for moving to a single path diploma. They can be a model for school systems around the country."

• Johnny Isaakson
United States Senator
Georgia



Smaller Learning Communities

Sequoyah

Sequoyah High School was nothing short of an extreme makeover. SNS funding enabled what had been strictly a vocational-tech school to become a comprehensive high school with a focus on career technology opportunities. All at once, Sequoyah became a better vehicle for its students and more attractive opportunity for teachers focused on academics. The goal of the 16 career and technical programs is simply stated: to make sure that learning is integrated with and relevant to students' lives every day. Additional funding from the Carl Perkins Consortium and articulation agreements with Chattanooga State Technical Community College have helped to create a teaching and learning track at Sequoyah that is sending graduates forth with better training, better opportunities and better expectations than ever before.

Soddy-Daisy

Soddy-Daisy High School's leadership team used SNS grant funding to get a 9th grade academy in place, but they went a step further by aligning not just the classrooms but the entire staff to ensure students had attentive, personalized support as they tackled freshman year. The result has been an eye-popping increase in 9th- to 10th- grade promotion: from 74% to 95% in the last three years. Soddy-Daisy has also led the way in the creation of Networked Learning Communities by creating strong associations between the elementary and middle schools that feed Soddy-Daisy High School. By establishing a continuum of education in the community, the school has eased student transitions, resulting in a 13-percentage-point increase in on-time graduation.



Changing for the Better

Schools for a New Society has been very much about change at the school level, taking individual learning communities of teachers, administrators, students and parents and creating plans they are all willing to get behind and work on. Collectively, though, these school plans have resulted in perceptible system-wide improvements in important measures like test scores and graduation rates.

As these charts present so graphically, Hamilton County's key indicators are moving upward. High school reform is working, and the students are the beneficiaries!

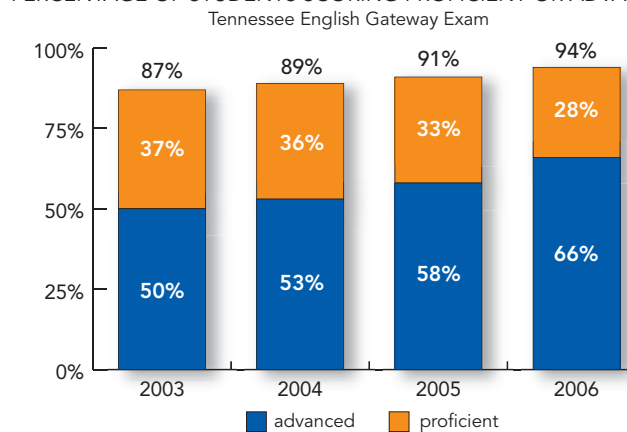
21st Century Academy

A magnet school founded on the concept of service learning, 21st Century Academy used the SNS grant to explore new ways to integrate the service philosophy into its school fabric more fully. Since the school was already relatively small, it didn't need to break down into smaller learning communities; so the leadership team decided to apply the concepts of service in a global society across all its grades, from K through 12. Furthermore, 21st Century asked its 12th graders to elevate their community service to a new level through senior projects. In the past three years, the number of students scoring "advanced" on the Gateway English exam has gone from 48% to 74%, graduation rates have increased from 81% to 93%, and the number of 9th graders successfully moving on to 10th grade has rocketed from 68% to 100%.

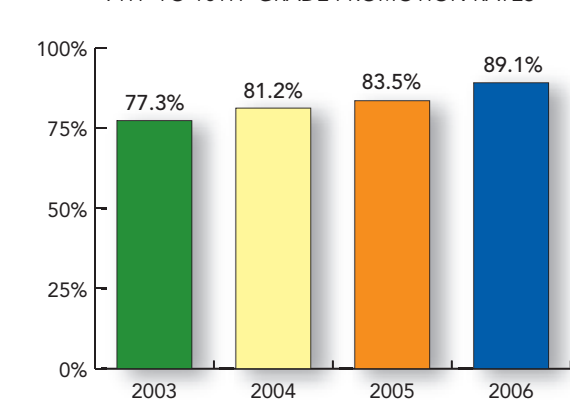
Tyner

SNS funding for professional development complemented Tyner's theme as a zoned magnet school focused on Math, Science, and Technology. A freshman academy prepped ninth graders for new rigor delivered in three career academies in Communications, Engineering, and Science; and partnerships with institutions of higher learning and local businesses emphasized the academies' real world connections. Students have been able to explore technology and medical fields, and Project Lead the Way has created an exciting new entrée into engineering. Problem-Based Learning and other interactive strategies were introduced to encourage student growth and deepen their understanding. In addition, Tyner focused on senior projects to keep students engaged through their 12th year and to create momentum for their post-secondary experiences. Graduation rates are up from 78% to 83% and the critical 9th- to 10th-grade promotion rate has gone from 80% to 91%.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS SCORING PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED

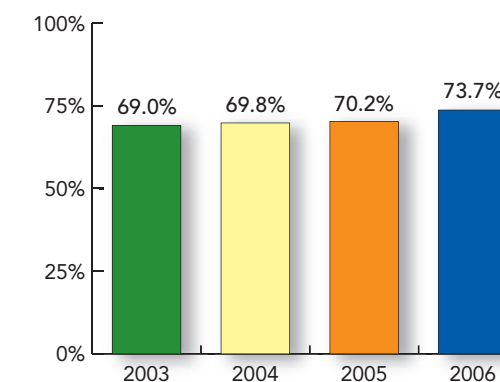


9TH- TO 10TH- GRADE PROMOTION RATES

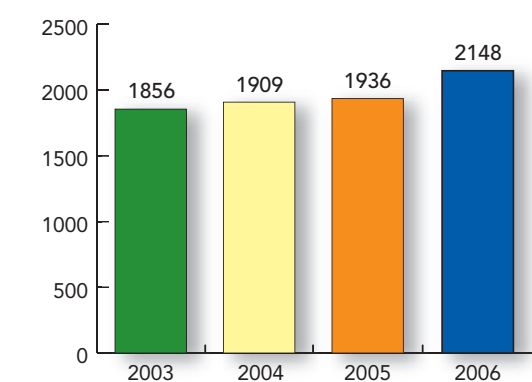


The chart on the left shows increases in Gateway English exam test scores by Hamilton County high school students, and it reflects the emphasis that the Schools for a New Society grant put on literacy. The chart on the right depicts the all-important rate of promotion from 9th to 10th grade. Studies show this to be one of the most turbulent times for teens, and promotion from 9th to 10th grade is a key indicator of eventual success in high school.

4-YEAR "ON TIME" GRADUATION RATES



NUMBER OF DIPLOMAS GRANTED: HAMILTON COUNTY, TN



These two graphs capture some of the most meaningful impact of the SNS work. The chart on the left depicts the increase in students staying in school and graduating on time. The chart on the right shows the dramatic increase in the number of students receiving high school diplomas, including those who had fallen behind.



"Nowhere is the comeback of vocational education more evident than in Southern Tennessee, where the small-school academies in [Hamilton County] combine academic rigor with real-world skills."

• Teacher Magazine

High Hopes, Higher Education

One of the best things about the increasing levels of student achievement in Hamilton County high schools is the impact it's having on college-going by local students. In one year, from 2005 to 2006, the number of high school seniors moving on to post-secondary education – pursuing either a baccalaureate degree or an associate's degree – has increased by 13%.

Schools for a New Society helped to bring college into reach for more students by promoting the idea that Hamilton County high schools should incorporate college-going as part of their reform plans.

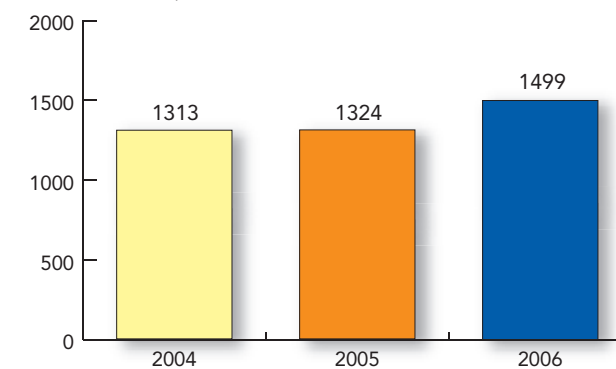
And why does it matter? Our economy is changing and the jobs of the future will require a college education. Furthermore, labor statistics show indisputably that a person's income is dramatically affected by his or her level of educational attainment. High school graduates can expect, on average, to earn \$1.2 million in their working life, while those with a bachelor's degree can earn \$2.1 million and people with a master's degree, \$2.5 million.

Hamilton County high schools give all students the opportunity to go to college.

The Partnership for College Access and Success working through the Public Education Foundation and the Hamilton County Department of Education is dedicated to helping Hamilton County students explore and understand their college options. Furthermore, they are working to match students with the colleges that provide the best fit for their skills and ambitions. When students and colleges fit together, the students are more likely to stay enrolled and earn their degree.

With scholarships and financial aid, a college degree is within the grasp of most Hamilton County seniors. The good news is that more and more of them are pursuing that dream.

NUMBER OF HCDE GRADUATES ENROLLED IN COLLEGE AFTER GRADUATION
As reported by the National Student Clearinghouse



About PCAS

Established in 2005, the Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS) is an innovative collaboration among the Hamilton County Department of Education, the Public Education Foundation, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga State Technical Community College and the Chamber of Commerce, Hunter Museum of American Art, Girls and Boys Club and the College Access Center, all of whom are committed to the goals of getting more public school graduates going to college, staying there, and earning a degree.

Funding from a variety of sources – including local and national foundations – has enabled PCAS to support a variety of programs for students and professional development programs for college counselors. Camp College helps sophomores and seniors navigate the college application process as well as financial aid and scholarship opportunities. And summer interns return from college to help students at high schools prepare for college and anticipate the challenges they will encounter during their first year. The net effect is keeping kids in school longer.

Meanwhile, PEF, the College Access Center and all their PCAS partners are working diligently to get college counselors placed in each Hamilton County high school in the belief that on-site counselors are one of the best strategies for keeping students focused and motivated about higher education.

Much of PCAS' work has been made possible by funding from the Lumina Foundation, the Community Foundation and PEF, but the local collaboration is ensuring that college going remains an important part of the education continuum in Hamilton County.

A Continuum of Change

High school reform by itself would be an important but insufficient accomplishment, since secondary school represents only one stop on a student's track from early-learning through pre-kindergarten and elementary school, into middle and high school and then, on to college and beyond. Here in Hamilton County, innovative public/private partnerships are creating meaningful change all along the line. With guidance and support from the Public Education Foundation, two initiatives are ensuring that students will enter high school better prepared than ever before.

The Benwood Initiative

Studies have shown beyond dispute that a child who cannot read at grade level by the end of third grade has very little chance of success in school. Driven by a simple objective of having all Hamilton County students achieving that third grade reading standard, Chattanooga's Benwood Foundation in 2001 awarded \$5 million over 5 years to the Public Education Foundation to tackle the challenge in the system's lowest-performing schools. The Benwood initiative funded professional development programs, established model classroom teaching programs, and engaged principals as instructional leaders in their schools. The results have been dramatic, and the reforms initiated in the Benwood schools are now being applied to other schools across the county. In July 2007, the Benwood Foundation announced a grant of \$7.2 million to fund Phase Two of the work, taking the initiative into suburban and rural schools where student achievement has room to grow.

Middle Schools for a New Society

The Lyndhurst Foundation and the National Education Association Foundation have stepped up to complete the philanthropic continuum, funding a middle school initiative patterned after the Schools for a New Society work. The \$8.5 million commitment has begun with leadership teams of students, parents, teachers and administrators at each of Hamilton County's 21 middle schools coming together to study effective methods for school improvement, and then developing plans focused on the unique needs of their own school. The goals are ambitious, including having all students scoring "proficient" or better on state exams in reading and math, and eliminating all achievement gaps. After just one year of planning, middle schools have shown increases in the percentage of students scoring "advanced" in reading/language arts and math.

Hamilton County schools are benefiting from extraordinary vision fueled by extraordinary generosity, and our schools and students are progressing from good to great to exceptional.



Partnering for Strong Schools

The Public Education Foundation partners with Hamilton County schools – from K through 12 – to help our students succeed in school and in life by:

- offering professional training and coaching for teachers, principals and administrators;
- providing human and financial resources to promote research-based innovation throughout the school;
- tracking and reporting the results in order to enable and promote continuous achievement; and
- bringing millions of dollars in supplemental, philanthropic funding to the system.

If you would like to support this important work, contact the Public Education Foundation at 423-265-9403 or visit the PEF website.



Partners for strong schools.

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