

# [president's message]

## TRANSLATING PUBLIC CONCERNS

## INTO A Shared Responsibility

BY WENDY PURIEFOY

“America will only get the high-quality public schools its children deserve when individuals in local communities are willing to do whatever is necessary to create those schools. That is one of the clearest lessons to emerge from the past 15 years of reform. PEN is putting its resources and energies in the right places by supporting what research says works: better teaching, higher standards, accountability, student motivation, equitable school finance, and community involvement.”

RONALD A. WOLK

founder *Education Week* and *Teacher Magazine*  
and a member of the PEN Board

Five years ago, Robert D. Putnam, a professor of public policy at Harvard University, put into words the conditions of urban life with which many of us were all too familiar. In his book, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, Putnam chronicled the steady decline of civic involvement in America on a wide scale—a fall in the memberships of unions, the Boy Scouts and the Red Cross, and a drop in church attendance and, yes, even a fall in the percentage of Americans who participate in bowling leagues.

Not all civic or grassroots organizations saw their numbers decline, but Putnam noted that most of the groups experiencing growth were non-participatory, mass-membership organizations in which members have very limited contact with each other. In other words, one isn't expected to attend meetings or contribute time but to share ideas and give financial resources.

My purpose in mentioning Putnam's book is not to lament prevailing social trends, but to offer some context for the opportunity that lies before us. For if ever there were an issue that had the potential to galvanize communities and help to break this disturbing trend of disengagement, it is public education. The opportunity is clear, given that for weeks leading up to the recent national elections, Americans repeatedly identified education as the issue that was most important to them. Further evidence of this opportunity can be seen across the country in the many people who are already involved in improving school quality and who are helping to move their communities from a state of “concern” to a shared sense of responsibility.

Indeed, in Putnam's message I find not simply a declaration, but a challenge: to translate the concern that the public feels about public education into social capital that engenders this shared sense of responsibility and helps to raise student achievement. The communities in which our 55 local education funds (LEFs) are active attest to the fact that this kind of engagement is possible.

However, there are many communities without LEFs or any other vehicle to facilitate and build social capital. Far too many people feel isolated from the decisions and events that determine how the public schools in their communities operate. Many others are willing to vote in school board elections or buy candy to support a school fundraising project, and

they may even believe that these activities mean they are “playing a role.”

It is time we raised the bar and let the public know that we need them to play a much more critical role than this. LEFs have been working diligently to help send this message and engage the public. Moreover, LEFs have been major initiators and facilitators of reform—coordinating and funding meaningful reforms, meeting staff development needs of teachers and other staff, and convening and brokering with other community groups to build consensus for reform efforts. The evidence of LEFs' success lies in the impressive results from the resources they bring to their communities on behalf of better public education. Since 1991, LEFs have raised and distributed nearly one billion dollars to support school reform efforts designed to increase student achievement and build community support to advance student learning. In fact, in 2000 alone, LEFs contributed over \$15 million to support high quality professional development for teachers in low-performing schools.

In addition to being tireless advocates for quality, LEFs have long served as a clearinghouse for critical information—data that enable parents and the public to learn more about how their schools function, as well as helping them to make informed decisions. Over the past year, the Metropolitan Nashville Public Education Foundation researched, printed and disseminated *Common Cents: An Independent Guide to Metro Schools Budget*, providing reader-friendly information about how the school system spends taxpayer dollars and demystifying the financial jargon that confuses the public.

Providing more and better information is a task to which LEFs are deeply committed. Many LEFs have hired additional staff to research educational issues and communicate more frequently with the public. In doing so, we recognize that a better-educated public is more able and willing to explore the roles it can assume in helping disadvantaged children in their communities. Last school year, the Bridgeport (Connecticut) Public Education Fund provided grants and assistance to 11 schools that participated in the *Neighborhood School Conversation Project*. These moderated conversations have enabled teachers, counselors, parents, and other members of the school community to start an open, constructive dialogue about school improvement.

Yet, with all of the impressive programs that LEFs are undertaking, I believe that we are only beginning to realize the potential of LEFs as engines of community involvement. LEFs are the perfect organizations to reach out—both to other groups and to each other to help rebuild the social capital in communities across this nation.

Every community across this land is concerned about the quality of its public education system. If we are to give poor and minority children in America the opportunity they both need and deserve, we must join the isolated interests and concerns of Americans into a common and shared cause to build a movement—not unlike the civil rights movement of the 1960s. And we should take a lesson from that movement.

Civil rights leaders realized that racial equality was not just a Southern issue—it was every American's issue. And, the leaders seized the opportunity to build social capital around this issue by reaching out to other Americans who understood fairness and opportunity and embraced this noble cause. The point is that when the rest of the nation began to consider Birmingham's problem and Selma's problem *its* problem, the civil rights movement was infused with the energy and resources of an entire nation. And, on that basis the battle was waged and won. We could not have a better lesson to guide our footsteps in the years ahead.

Public institutions are governed by consent of the people. Without that consent, no institution can govern justly or effectively. This is as true for public education as it was for public accommodations such as restrooms, public buildings, and public transportation. Today, our challenge is to reconnect Americans with the most vital public institution—public education. We are reminded that people cannot consent to an institution they don't know and don't understand, and in too many communities this is the case.

LEFs are the "window" through which a local community sees and hears what is happening in its schools, the reforms that are being initiated, and the expectations that are articulated for students and adults. Now, more than ever, the nation's poor and disadvantaged children need more LEFs in more communities to keep them informed and offer a vehicle for their participation.

Over the next several months, the Public Education Network (PEN) will be undertaking three activities to raise both the scope and the profile of our network, and help encourage the kind of dialogue in every community that advances quality public education by building public knowledge and understanding.

First, PEN has formed a partnership with *Education Week* that includes a national survey of Americans on the subject of community involvement in public education. I believe that the information gathered in this survey will offer important insights on how the public views its role and what factors create, obstruct, or discourage the public from getting more involved. Under our partnership, this national survey will be conducted each year for the next five years. The first survey will be released in February.

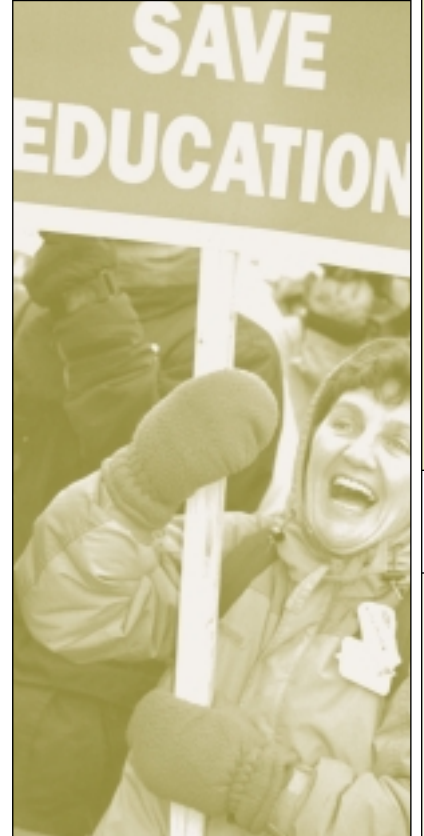
Second, just as civil rights leaders "nationalized" their movement, so too must we. This is precisely why PEN is ambitiously targeting 56 communities across the country for establishing new LEFs. In many of these cities and towns, we will explore granting LEF status to fledgling groups that are independent, supportive of wide-ranging reforms, and broadly representative of their communities. Our goal is to have at least one LEF in each of our 50 states.

Third, the results from the national survey will help to launch PEN's *National Campaign for Public Education*. This will be a national effort that is focused on drawing attention to the needs, issues, and best practices of public schools around the country. In the course of this campaign, PEN will stress the importance of maintaining the valued role of public schools in our democratic society. The campaign's activities will help to put the work of individual LEFs in the spotlight.

This is PEN's resolve: to cast our net wider and to reach even deeper into communities. Robert Putnam's book reminds us that harnessing social capital isn't easy—but it's absolutely critical, especially if our schools are to succeed.

*Wendy D. Puriefoy*

Wendy D. Puriefoy  
President, Public Education Network



# · [making it happen] ·

## BUILDING “Social Capital” THROUGH ADVOCACY, ALLIANCES & FORUMS

BY PAUL T. HILL

Policy makers have devoted considerable attention to the issue of public schools and financial capital. However, “social capital”—the resources of public involvement and public support—can have a major impact on the kind of learning environments that exist in these schools. Yet, only a relatively small number of researchers and activists have explored the dynamic of social capital and attempted to examine ways in which public school systems can build—or sacrifice—public involvement and support.

The connection that parents and the public feel to schools is not to a universal set of schools that covers all four corners of a school district, but to individual schools that their children attend or that are a focal point of the very neighborhoods in which they live. Communities are more likely to build social capital for education when these schools are adapted to the needs and values of the people they serve.

Local education funds (LEFs), by the nature of the work they do, have learned quickly what others have taken so long to comprehend—that parents and the public feel connected to schools by shared values and interests, and by a common mission. Too often, however, the politics of decisionmaking around contentious issues, such as whether to teach “phonics” or “whole language” or how to teach sex education, often pit different value systems against one another. The typical outcome presumes winners and losers. Whether the battle is played out at the school board or at some other forum, the resulting struggle is sure to be a source of great acrimony that both drives a fault line through communities and, even worse, siphons energy from broader initiatives to improve public education. Worst of all, when a parent feels alienated from the decisions that determine what kind of learning environment exists for his or her child, a large measure of social capital is lost.

How can LEFs and other community groups and school districts work together to ensure community oversight of schools in a way that is not so intrusive that it denies parents the ability to realize their most basic values and aspirations?

LEFs can help communities design options—choices among schools—that reflect a full range of interests and values held by parents and other local stakeholders. While state standards and other means to measure progress and hold schools accountable must remain just as integral to school reform efforts as they are today, we need to establish a public school system in which a district becomes a portfolio of schools that address and appeal to a broad range of public needs and interests.

How can LEFs encourage this kind of change? By acting as a thoughtful, moderating force—both as a “convener” that doesn’t get trapped by ideology, and also as a builder of productive alliances that respect the LEFs’ advocacy role.

While every organization talks about building alliances, the essential value of forging these links is sometimes forgotten. For LEFs, the value of an alliance lies in sharing certain interests with a school board or superintendent and working to advance those interests without remaining silent about their differences over other issues.

If an LEF were to masquerade honest concerns, it would reduce public engagement to public relations. On the other hand, it is also important for LEFs to avoid becoming part of a hardened opposition that challenges school authorities in a knee-jerk fashion. Neither approach to alliances is tenable because each is likely to alienate potential LEF allies, such as foundations and the business community. In fact, business leaders are much more likely to lend their support and resources to an LEF that shows that it is capable of both supporting what works and critiquing what does not.

Stepping past the political and partisan land mines takes a certain amount of savvy and experience. But I believe that most LEFs have the capacity to find the proper balance and act as supportive critics and advocates for change. My experience with LEFs on the West Coast suggests this is already happening.

LEFs must also act as convening and mediating institutions to sort out political issues and address common problems that affect broad constituencies. By

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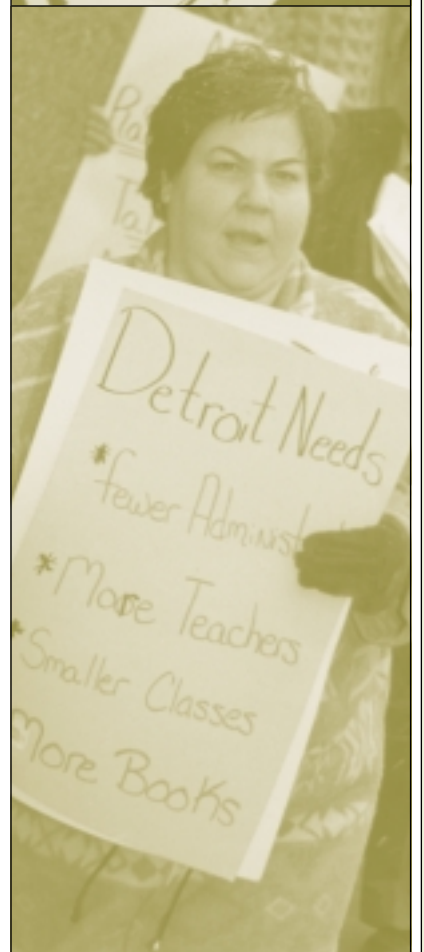
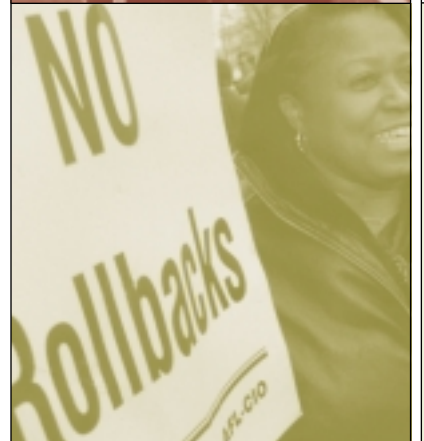
creating forums for honest and broad consultation with their communities about important issues, LEFs can address highly charged and controversial issues that political institutions such as school boards typically stumble over. The racial achievement gap is one issue that school boards and interest groups do not seem to be able to address constructively. LEFs can provide forums for discussion of action alternatives and their pros and cons, rather than about assignment of blame.

Likewise, LEFs can act as conveners to identify ways in which parents and the public feel disconnected from their schools and what can be done about it. For example, the Portland (OR) Schools Foundation under the leadership of Cynthia Guyer has brought people from the school system, civic institutions, the business community, higher education, and foundations into a serious dialogue about what the community wants from its schools and how these goals can be accomplished.

The Portland LEF has been very honest—basically, saying they’re not getting the student outcomes they’d like to and asking where they should go from here. They have identified the right problems and set up some specific task forces to try to tackle these issues.

Balancing the need for democratic oversight with the need for diverse schools that meet different needs is not an easy task. In the future, LEFs will need to assume the roles of alliance builder and convener and think broadly about how to create schools—including new kinds of schools that emerge from new connections with community resources such as museums, libraries, orchestras, and corporations—that meet needs in the service of young people. I feel confident that LEFs can help move us closer to this reality and, by so doing, help save and restore the social capital that is essential for public education to succeed.

Paul Hill, a research professor at the University of Washington’s Graduate School of Public Affairs, also directs the Center on Reinventing Public Education, which helps communities adopt alternative governance systems for public K-12 education. His recent work has focused on the reform of public elementary and secondary education, urging that public schools be operated by independent organizations under contract with public school boards, rather than by government bureaucracies. He currently leads studies of school choice plans, charter schools, and school accountability.





## WORKING WITH SCHOOL Leadership

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID W. HORNBECK

David W. Hornbeck, chair of PEN's Board of Directors, is former superintendent of the school district of Philadelphia where his Children Achieving program raised student achievement by 40% while expanding volunteer and philanthropic resources. A firm believer in the need for community involvement and public participation in the schools, Hornbeck offered valuable insights about Philadelphia's experiences, as well as suggestions for other districts and the national movement to improve the schools.

**Q. During your tenure in Philadelphia, there was a dramatic increase in volunteerism and community support for the city's public schools. What exactly did you do to encourage the community to step forward and become more involved, as individuals and as a community?**

**A.** We took several major initiatives to increase volunteerism and community support for the city's public schools.

First, we set an early goal of increasing the number of school volunteers by 10,000 in five years. We actually increased the number by 15,000 in three years. We used three primary strategies: a) we simply asked people to help us; b) we had training for the volunteers; and c) we had important things for the volunteers to do.

Second, we established school councils and gave parents a major role in this important governance structure. The parents selected their own representatives. No Council was certified until 35% of the children's households had participated in its election. We also established Cluster Resource Boards comprised of businesses, community groups, and educators. The chair always came from a major Philadelphia corporation or university. We were not interested in their money as much as in their willingness to provide ideas for the improvement of schools.

We established strong relationships with hundreds of businesses that provided thousands of internships, apprenticeships, and summer jobs for students that were tied to the regular curriculum. 25,000 students were involved in student service learning for credit. Many worked in community placements whereby the community became deeply involved in the school and learned that students really are able and responsible.

Also, every school in Philadelphia established a partnership with one or more faith communities in the area of the city served. Those partnerships took many forms from advocacy to after-school programs to safety corridors for students to go to and from school.

**Q. Was there any strategy that you wished you had tried to reach deeper into the community? And do your experiences in Philadelphia offer any lessons for Local Education Funds or other school leaders?**

**A.** I regret we were not more aggressive in building an advocacy infrastructure, block by block, of support for children and schools. Parents, faith communities, and others who believe in children should have the opportunity in an organized fashion to advocate for children in the halls of government and to insist that their schools produce good results with their children. This advocacy should arise out of a simultaneous, hands-on engagement with the school to help the educators get the job done.

In a similar vein, I particularly regret not moving earlier into seeing students as vehicles of change, not just the objects of school change. In the fourth, fifth and sixth year, we created huge numbers of opportunities for students to be engaged in student service learning. We set service learning as a promotion requirement from elementary school, from middle school and as a graduation requirement. We supported and encouraged student advocacy groups. We provided the opportunity for hundreds of high school students to be Freedom School leaders. We simply did not take these initiatives as early as we should have.

**Q. What's the best way for LEFs and other community organizations interested in improving the quality of education to approach a school superintendent and seek to build a two-way, working dialogue?**

**A.** Assuming the LEF agrees with the basic agenda of the superintendent and/or district, the LEF should work with the superintendent to agree on particular

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pieces of the agenda to which the LEF can make a significant contribution. If the LEF has important differences with the superintendent, they should try to find areas on which they do agree and work on those, hoping that the superintendent will then listen a bit more attentively to their opinions in the areas where they disagree. In both of these first two situations, the LEF ought to look for ways to fight for or defend a superintendent or district publicly around controversial issues. If the superintendent/district are simply going, hopelessly, in the wrong direction, fight them aggressively in order to secure leadership with a vision that will work for children.

**Q. Given all that is going on in schools—from increased public interest in quality to concerns about high-stakes testing—do you think this is a good time to be a school superintendent or to be involved in efforts to revitalize and transform public schools?**

**A.** This is a magnificent time to be a superintendent or to be involved in school transformation efforts—but you need to have a strong stomach, persistence, and an abiding belief in children, including those with whom we have historically failed. There has never been more interest in education; nor has education ever been more at a crossroads. Now is the time we must be involved for—if public education is seriously eroded in the name of alternative education schemes, however well intentioned—it may be generations before we recapture the vision of an educational system that is for all students. In saying this, I do not mean public education as we often practice it; I mean it as we know how to practice it on behalf of all children.

**Q. From your experience, what do you think is the link between community involvement and improved student achievement?**

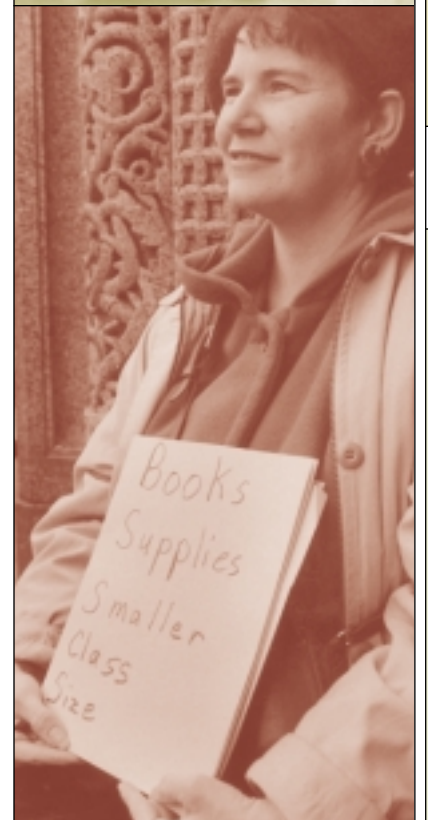
**A.** The community, through businesses providing worksite learning opportunities tied to the school curriculum, helps kids learn how to read, write, and do math and science—that is they support regular academic achievement. Student service learning teaches citizenship skills, but it also, if done correctly, will contribute to regular academic performance.

Community advocacy for public education is the only way real support will be generated. Democracy actually works pretty well. For better or for worse, our elected officials do reflect the wishes of people. We have given them permission to have low expectations of students. We tolerate underfunding poor children or not providing quality preschool. When we withdraw that permission they will stop the mistreatment of children. To paraphrase Ron Edmonds, we can educate every single child we decide we want to educate.

**Q. You've been a state superintendent, developed state improvement plans that really launched the standards movement, and you've served as superintendent of one of the largest school districts in the country. What's next for you?**

**A.** I will have two major areas of involvement over the next two or three years. I am going to do some writing. I am working on a book about school and school district transformation. I will also do some writing in the student service learning student-as-citizen arena. Finally, I want to reflect more about and, perhaps, write about the variety of ways that faith communities and schools should be connected.

The other part of my time will be devoted to helping build a movement for children nationally and in Pennsylvania. Nationally I will do that through PEN and my role as board chair at the Children's Defense Fund. In Pennsylvania, I will be working with people across the state who seek to establish fair opportunities to learn for children in high-poverty districts throughout the state.



# · [making it happen] ·

## LEFs: A Proud History

### OF EVOLVING TO MEET CHALLENGES

BY JANICE PETROVICH

Since the inception of local education funds (LEFs), the goal that has driven the programs and activities of LEFs has been incredibly consistent—to help improve the public schools that serve diverse, disadvantaged students. What has changed is the *way* in which LEFs have sought to achieve this goal. Over the years, LEFs have demonstrated a new level of sophistication and maturity, both programmatically and tactically. Reflecting on their decade-long history can give LEFs an important sense of context, as well as an enhanced ability to anticipate and adapt to new challenges in the years ahead.

Unlike Western Europe and Japan, America has an educational system in which organizational dynamics and governing policies are largely a local phenomenon. For this reason, the Ford Foundation was deeply interested in the fledgling, nonprofit local groups that it saw operating in select communities—working at a level at which they could have a genuine impact on educational quality.

As Foundation staff looked more closely, we found that these emerging voluntary, self-governing institutions were already doing some exciting things: for example, providing grants to teachers who developed promising and innovative programs or who were delivering instruction in a different way.

These voluntary institutions were created by groups of citizens who had no axe to grind except to help their public schools improve. As outside advocates and observers, they had the independence and community backing to exert pressure for change. Most significantly, they were unified with a singular purpose: to improve schools in their communities. Needless to say, Ford recognized their potential and moved quickly.

The Ford Foundation provided “seed money” to the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, which had a fledgling education fund in Pittsburgh that was started by LEF pioneer David Bergholz. This was followed by a \$2 million grant to help support or establish LEFs in up to 50 urban communities across the country as part of a five-year project.

After the five years were up, Ford, Bergholz and other LEF leaders reached the consensus that this was no time to fold up the tent. There was a central coordinating function that someone needed to play in order to provide technical assistance to the LEFs, as well as to help these newly-formed LEFs talk to each other and learn from each other. This led to the creation of the organization that today we know as the Public Education Network (PEN).

With PEN’s resources and assistance, LEFs have grown and matured in some exciting ways. They have moved from a mainly “charitable” approach—a one-shot approach in which grants and financial awards are given directly to specific teachers and schools—to a more “philanthropic” approach by working systematically and using strategies that can be maintained over the long term to leverage public support and public involvement on behalf of school improvement.

It has been heartening to see LEFs evolve toward this more systemic approach. A perfect example of this is the work of New York City’s LEF, which is called New Visions for Public Schools. It was New Visions that helped to pioneer the “small schools” movement in New York, which is now very active throughout the country. By the 1970s and ‘80s, many school systems had become a series of large, sprawling high schools and middle schools in which students increasingly became anonymous and which impeded the capacity of schools to inspire a sense of community.

New Visions helped leverage support to create new schools that helped to recapture this sense of community and alleviate the alienation that many students felt on large campuses. In doing so, New Visions kept its perspective and avoided being overly prescriptive—after all, there’s no set definition of how small is small enough. (I heard one principal say that the definition of an appropriate size for a school was the maximum number of students’ names that he could remember.)

As a result of New Visions’ relentless efforts, New York City now has dozens and dozens of schools that provide different curricular themes—including

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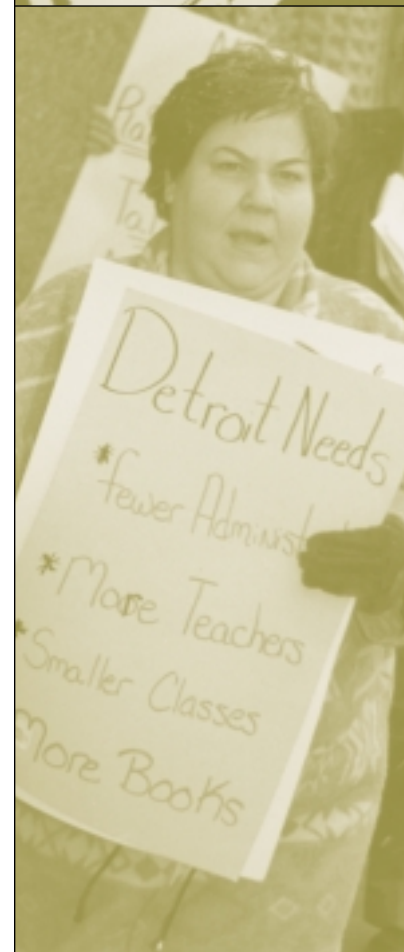
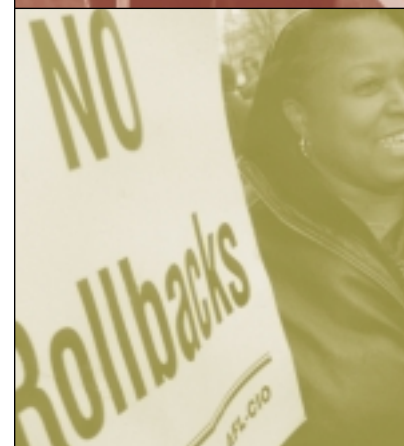
L E A D E R S H I P

schools with an emphasis on the arts, social justice, and the environment. And, generally speaking, these schools have a pretty good track record of educating and graduating students. But, the most compelling aspect of New Visions' efforts is the focus on driving broad, systemic, and lasting reforms, as opposed to short-term projects of limited reach and doubtful potential for sustainability.

Indeed, whatever the issue has been, throughout their history LEFs have provided mechanisms for people to come together, and they've channeled money from foundations, businesses, and individuals to support public school improvement efforts like the one championed by New Visions. In doing so, LEFs have also developed a more complex and nuanced understanding of what it takes to create and sustain good public schools. For example, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) Education Foundation helped develop a publication and a workshop for people wanting to fully understand the school district's budget. We're talking about a lot of money in these large urban school systems. Understanding that process gives citizens more than the often-cited "buy in." Creating a greater understanding of the process empowers the public to take the dialogue about a school budget to a whole new level, sharing its views about budget priorities.

The history of LEFs is a proud history. It's a history that many who are new to the movement may not know about, but it's something that LEF leaders really need to be aware of. In the months and years ahead, LEFs will need to be attentive—carefully observing the dynamics in their school communities and evolving constantly to stay true to their mission as advocates for both quality public schools and engaged communities as both our schools and communities continue, inevitably, to change.

Janice Petrovich is Director of Education, Knowledge and Religion at the Ford Foundation. She holds a Ph.D. in education policy from University of Massachusetts-Amherst.





# · [annual survey] ·

## NEARLY HALF OF LEF Funding GOES TO TEACHER QUALITY

ANNUAL SURVEY OF LEFS REVEALS EXPANDED OUTREACH AND ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS

### LEFS BY THE NUMBERS

- Number of LEFs in the Public Education Network: 55.
- Number of school districts reached by LEF programs and initiatives: 290.
- Number of staff employed by the 55 LEFs across the country: 610, working in 27 states and the District of Columbia.
- Estimated number of hours contributed by LEF volunteers for school improvement: 180,000.
- Total amount of revenues of all LEFs in the year 2000: \$65 million.
- Share of each LEF dollar that goes directly to programs and services: 87 cents.

### LEFS BY THEIR IMPACT

- The programs of LEFs reach and serve nearly 6 million poor and/or minority children in more than 6,600 public schools.
- LEFs are actively working in public school districts in which a majority of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches—significantly higher than the national average of 35%.
- The work of LEFs impacts nearly one in 10 of America's public school children.
- LEFs have raised nearly \$500 million for school improvement programs in the past five years.
- The Network's "Library Power" initiative provided \$45 million to support and encourage reading in 19 cities.
- Out of an 8-hour workday, LEF staff spend an average of 3 hrs., 31 minutes on teacher quality issues.
- 95 percent of LEFs conduct community forums on educational issues.
- In 1999, LEFs in eight cities sponsored 60 community forums on the critical, related issues of education and race.

Local education funds (LEFs) are dramatically increasing their capacity to develop programs and leverage dollars to advance their critical mission: assuring a high quality of public education for all children.

In the past five years alone, LEFs have not only contributed nearly half a billion dollars to support public schools and the communities they serve, they have worked to convert this financial capital to social capital by reconnecting parents and other stakeholders to key issues confronting public schools.

According to a report on this year's annual survey of LEFs conducted by the Public Education Network, nearly half of the \$65 million raised by LEFs for programs last year—roughly \$29 million—was invested in programs to advance or support teacher quality. About a quarter, \$16 million, was devoted to programs bolstering standards and assessments, a key vehicle for school accountability.

Not only are LEFs promoting accountability, they are thoughtfully examining their own accountability. More than six out of 10 LEFs conduct a formal assessment of their executive directors, and more LEF boards are relying on strategic plans to help them set clear benchmarks and achievable goals. Other LEFs are using retreats and other self-assessment procedures to ensure that decisions reflect organizational priorities.

LEFs are using their money and resources in a focused and efficient manner. This year's survey shows that LEFs are keeping administrative costs low, allocating nearly nine of every 10 LEF dollars for programs and services.

"LEFs have matured from their once-predominant role of fundraising to playing critical roles in school reform," notes Wendy Puriefoy, president of the Public Education Network (PEN). "In an environment that frequently can be divisive, LEFs are helping to build consensus around the need for, and direction of, education reform."

For example, LEFs research school reform strategies and report on the extent of their impact, offer training for school board members, and contract for needed services such as staff development for teachers and principals.

"Local education funds are putting resources to use to improve schools, and they are recognizing that

knowledge is power in their communities. To increase public involvement for the benefit of young people, LEFs are increasing the flow of information available to the public to explain what the research says works best to improve student achievement."

The latter point is borne out in PEN's annual survey, which shows there has been a 20% increase in the number of LEFs that provide research and other information to the media. In addition, LEFs continue to increase their efforts in organizing community forums and joining coalitions made up of other stakeholders.

This increasing knowledge that LEFs are sharing may explain their success in tapping the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers. This year, volunteers are contributing 180,000 hours of their time to LEF programs and activities.

Other findings:

■ **LEFs Exemplify Diversity.** From the scope of their efforts to their staffing, LEFs are diverse organizations serving local needs. LEF budgets range from a low of \$25,000 to a high of more than \$9 million. More than four out of 10 staff are racial or ethnic minorities, and LEFs continue to explore ways to be more inclusive in their membership, leadership, and outreach.

■ **Revenue Sources Expand.** Foundations continue to serve as the largest source of funding, but LEFs are increasingly turning to other sources, such as corporations, individuals, investments, or fees-for-service. Corporate funding has slowly increased to make up 15 percent of LEF funds, and funding from individuals has risen significantly—from 5% of all LEF revenues in 1996 to 12% this year.

■ **Endowments Enhance Funds.** Endowments are also an important source of funding for LEFs. Today, seven out of 10 LEFs have endowments, and the median endowment is more than \$90,000.

■ **Base of Leadership is Broadening.** Only a few years ago, two-thirds of the members serving on LEF boards were from the business community. However, diversity has improved considerably as LEFs benefit from the special insights offered by those from non-profit organizations, school districts, government agencies, and the academic community.