



National Network of Constituent Organizations (NNCO)

Overview

The National High School Alliance (HS Alliance) will convene a network of its partners and national constituent organizations representing key stakeholders at the state, district, school, and community levels in order to cultivate cross-policy level engagement in the policies and practices that will produce significantly improved outcomes for all youth. The network will focus primarily on organizations funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to do work in the states participating in the Honor States Program, a grant initiative being administered by the National Governors Association to raise high school graduation and college readiness rates. These organizations are:

- The Council of Chief State School Officers, representing leaders who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states;
- The National Association of State Boards of Education, representing leaders who design and influence state-level education policy;
- The National Conference of State Legislatures, representing leaders who enact state-level education policy;
- The State Higher Education Executive Officers, representing the leaders serving statewide coordinating and governing boards of postsecondary education;
- The National Association of Secondary School Principals, representing principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders responsible for leading change at the school level; and
- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, representing communities dedicated to ensuring social, economic, and educational justice for all people.

Over the next two years, the HS Alliance will convene the NNCO on a quarterly basis. The purpose of these meetings will be for the network members to share what they are learning through their initiatives in the Honor States, and to identify opportunities to leverage and align resources and strategies among the organizations.

Strategy and Rationale

The HS Alliance will play a critical role in fulfilling the need for a “hub” entity to help inform, mobilize, and align the activities of the national education constituent organizations, each of which represents a critical “spoke” in the wheel of the public education system as it operates at the national, state, district, and school levels.

In the complex and highly decentralized realm of public education, there are many constituents and stakeholders, but weak structures to coordinate their movements within and across policy levels. Now that the nation’s top leaders have brought the need for high school redesign to the forefront of the public’s attention, alignment and collaboration among constituents will be critical in determining whether the system can achieve the ambitious goals set forth. In order to build the political and public will for high school redesign, it is critical that the constituent groups work together within and across levels. However, because these organizations typically work in isolation from one another, there is a

great need for a national network that can mobilize the national leadership to set a new standard for collaboration and alignment around a focused set of goals and objectives for the nation’s youth.

While leadership from the highest policy levels is essential, lessons from past waves of systemic reforms indicate that top-down policies have difficulty taking root without engagement and ownership from the bottom-up. At the local level, community stakeholders and practitioners who are closest to the work of high schools and youth are truly the “connective tissue” of the system’s capacity to support and sustain change; absent their involvement and investment in policy, reforms vanish when the political winds or investments shift.

Not surprisingly, the fragmentation endemic at the local and State levels is also evident among leaders at the national level. In the absence of a forum designed specifically to facilitate discourse and collaboration, national organizations—particularly those structured to focus on the concerns of specific constituent groups—often work independently of one another’s agendas for improved policy and practice. At a time of heightened urgency for, and investment in, significantly improved academic and social outcomes for the nation’s youth population, the need for a national forum focused specifically on high school redesign is great.

Goals and Objectives

The HS Alliance will convene a network of its partners and other national constituent organizations representing key stakeholders at the state, district, school, and community levels to accomplish the following goals:

- Align and leverage the resources and strategies of national organizations working to support systemic high school redesign in the Honor States; and
- Leverage the networks of the NNCO, the HS Alliance, and other national constituent organizations to transfer knowledge from the Honor States to other states.

Objective #1: Provide opportunities for the national leaders of the Honor States Program (Gates and NGA) to inform the NNCO, the HS Alliance partners, and other national constituent organizations about the progress of, and promising practices emerging from the Honor States;

Objective #2: Provide opportunities for the NNCO, the HS Alliance partners, and other national constituent organizations to inform the national and state leaders of the Honor States Program about their resources, strategies, and perspectives on systemic high school redesign;

Objective #3: Facilitate forums for the NNCO members to explore key issues emerging in the Honor States, and to identify strategic opportunities to work together at the national, state, school, and community levels to create a coherent network of support that aligns and leverages high school redesign initiatives in the Honor States and in other states;

Objective #4: Facilitate the exchange of ideas, resources, and strategies around the principles for systemic high school redesign outline in the *Action Agenda/Blueprint for Improving America’s High Schools* (NGA), and *A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth* (HS Alliance).



Dissemination

Following each of the national forums, the HS Alliance will prepare a meeting summary as well as a National Status Report documenting feedback on the progress reports and action steps identified by the participants. These documents, as well as the other resources produced for the project, will be shared with the state leadership in the Honor States, disseminated electronically through the HS Alliance listserv and website, and provided to all participating organizations for distribution among their members and networks.

Contact Information

For more information about this work, contact the HS Alliance staff at hsalliance@iel.org, or visit www.hsalliance.org.