

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families



LEADERSHIP KEYS FOR PROGRAM INNOVATORS^Y

What can leaders of innovative programs do to encourage mayors and other municipal leaders to expand alternatives for high school?

Leaders of innovative programs like those belonging to the Alternative High School Initiative (<http://www.ahsi.info>) stand to benefit from reaching out to mayors and other municipal leaders to promote and expand alternatives for high school. While mayors have the authority to implement strategies independently and in partnership with school superintendents and other members of the private and public sector, program innovators have the expertise to demonstrate how to achieve results through high quality alternative high schools. It is not safe to presume that local leaders are aware of alternatives for high school or that they are familiar with recent innovations in programming that have enhanced the academic competitiveness of some of these programs. Local program innovators are particularly well-positioned to engage with mayors and other municipal leaders to pursue shared interests in contributing to better outcomes for students not well served in traditional high school settings.

<i>Leadership Key</i>	<i>Types of Strategies</i>
<p><i>Make connections with mayors and other municipal leaders to inform them of local alternatives for high school.</i></p>	<p>1. Inform members of the mayor's staff and other municipal leaders of progress made and results achieved by local alternatives for high school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange briefings with the mayor or county/town executive and her/his staff members to provide information on alternatives for high school (i.e., program model(s), locations, evidence of success, and future directions). • Include the mayor or county/town executive and staff members when issuing press releases, circulating news articles, and sharing success stories about students and programs. • Identify and recognize local elected and appointed officials, school district leaders, and other champions of alternatives for high school. Acknowledgement by constituents is valuable to local leaders. • Inform the mayor or county/town executive and staff members of awards, grants, and other recognition bestowed upon local programs. Often, those outside the local area are first to acknowledge and commend program innovators for achieving success.

<p><i>Engage in policy advocacy as a component of ongoing program development.</i></p>	<p>2. Identify policy priorities for local alternatives for high school and incorporate a policy advocacy agenda, as needed, into the overall program plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and document any policy barriers the program addressed and how they were handled to ensure innovators would be able to implement a high-quality program. • Reflect upon and articulate in writing the broader policy implications (for high school, K-12, and/or higher education reform) of successfully implementing an innovative program model.
<p><i>Leadership Key</i></p>	<p><i>Types of Strategies</i></p>
<p><i>(continued) Engage in policy advocacy as a component of ongoing program development.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify allies in the field who support alternatives for high school and/or share common policy interests. Work together to develop and implement local and statewide policy advocacy. • Convene briefings with local city council members and other elected officials to provide them with information on how alternatives for high school contribute to the community at-large. Determine potential policy levers, such as bond measures or changes to regulations governing building and facilities, likely to create win-win opportunities for both parties. • Identify other leaders in the community, city, and state who have an influence on local and/or state policy. Provide them with information about policy priorities that would help expand alternatives for high school locally.
<p><i>Selectively participate in partnerships and collaborate with a variety of relevant stakeholders to broaden the audiences and bases of support for alternatives for high school.</i></p>	<p>3. Actively (but selectively) participate with city, school, and community leaders in partnerships and other formal or informal collaborative efforts that might benefit alternatives for high school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider leading or joining community mobilization, parent organizing, and other local efforts that stimulate public engagement in education and civic life. These efforts often are the underlying reason for success with such policy strategies as bond measures. Voters are more likely to support efforts that are familiar to them. • When partnering with others, consider the value of formal partnership agreements for heightening accountability for partners to deliver on stated commitments. • Participate in statewide, regional, or national networks of innovators who share a commitment to expanding alternatives for high school. Often these networks provide information, new connections, and assistance from peers for improving local program efforts.

[¥] Hill, Talmira, *Setting the Stage for New High Schools: Municipal Leadership in Supporting High School Alternatives* (Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities - Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, 2007).