

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



LEADERSHIP KEYS FOR MAYORS & OTHER MUNICIPAL LEADERS¹

What can mayors do to expand alternatives for high school?

Mayors and other municipal leaders are well-positioned to support and help expand alternatives for high school. Mayors have implemented an array of strategies that vary depending upon unique characteristics of the local policy environment. Effective local policies take into account such factors as the formal and informal roles of the mayor, school board, and school superintendent, and the relationship between the state education agency and the school district, among others. In any policy environment, well-informed municipal leaders will be able to identify strategies likely to succeed in their cities, counties, and towns.

<i>Leadership Key</i>	<i>Types of Strategies</i>
<p><i>Make and fulfill commitments to enhance education for all students by supporting and helping expand alternatives for high school.</i></p>	<p>1. Use the “bully pulpit” to raise awareness of the need for alternatives for high school and to promote positive perceptions of these alternatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include high school graduation and college success as mayoral priorities when education is a component of the mayor’s agenda. • Feature local alternatives for high school when citing success stories about students and programs. • Identify and recognize local students, school district leaders, and program leaders engaged in alternatives for high school.
	<p>2. Implement policies and programs within the city that support positive high school reforms at the state and local levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify municipal policies that might impede alternatives for high school (i.e., zoning restrictions for school buildings, transportation access, etc.), by searching the city charter, local ordinances, city/county/town council resolutions and legislative records, and work with local elected officials to change them. • Use municipal leadership to launch pilot programs that implement strategies relevant for alternatives for high school, such as Mayor Shirley Franklin’s Mayor’s Youth Program in Atlanta, and former Mayor Gonzalez’ support of Downtown College Prep in San Jose.

Leadership Key	Types of Strategies
<p><i>Make and fulfill commitments to enhance education for all students by supporting and helping expand alternatives for high school. (cont.)</i></p>	<p>3. Promote the use of data, research, and evaluation to manage by results, particularly increasing high school graduation rates and reducing dropout rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate measurable results for student achievement and program improvement for alternatives for high school as Mayor Nickels of Seattle and Mayor Perez of Hartford have done. • Support independent evaluations of alternatives for high school to help ensure strong accountability and document evidence of success.
<p><i>Utilize city, county, and/or town resources to invest in alternatives for high school and to leverage additional resources for these innovations.</i></p>	<p>4. Identify and offer space (i.e., buildings and facilities) for alternatives for high school to locate their programs in local communities and neighborhoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and offer existing space within the city/county/town for use by programs to operate independently or in conjunction with other activities. <p>5. Pursue financial incentives to expand alternatives for high school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local elected officials and advocates to introduce bond measures that raise money to support alternatives for high school, as former Mayor Gonzalez of San Jose was able to do in securing a \$4 million bond to support San Jose Unified School District’s use of an elementary school building to house Downtown College Preparatory School. • Propose and garner public support for voters to pass a tax levy that would generate independent funds that can be used by the mayor to support alternatives for high school and to leverage broad education reforms, as did former Mayor Norm Rice of Seattle in establishing the Families and Education Tax Levy. • Raise funds independently of the school district that can be used to leverage state, federal, and private sector matching grant funds. Mayor Gordon of Phoenix spearheaded the city’s 2006 Bond Program, which raised \$6.8 million in bond funds to build small high schools. The Phoenix Union Bond totaled \$878.5 million, of which a significant amount will support a competitive process for small school development.

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<p>Partner with school superintendents and leaders of alternatives for high school to achieve positive results.</p>	<p>6. Convene and partner formally and informally with key community leaders to expand local alternatives for high school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host education summits with parents, teachers, and community members to inform constituents of the progress of alternatives for high school and to generate ongoing support for them. Mayor Henry Garrett and City Manager George (Skip) Noe of Corpus Christi continue to convene “Even One Dropout is Too Many,” a community forum series launched by former Mayor Samuel L. Neal, Jr., to galvanize the entire community in support of alternatives for high school. • Create a formal Memorandum of Understanding or Partnership Agreement requiring partners to sign as an expression of their willingness to be held accountable for fulfilling their commitments and those of their agencies or organizations. Mayor Greg Nickels of Seattle has a formal partnership agreement with the superintendent of Seattle Public Schools regarding their joint commitment to close the achievement gap among students during the seven-year period beginning September 1, 2005, and ending August 31, 2012. The City Council adopted a resolution approving collaboration between the City of Seattle and Seattle School District.
<p>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a conference or institute on alternatives for high school in partnership with the school district and other interested audiences. Invite the AHSI network to present information on their efforts. Consider hosting representatives of the AHSI network in conjunction with ongoing professional development activities led by the school district. Consider the potential for inviting these alternatives for high school to expand their networks by opening sites in new cities, counties, and towns. • Identify nationally acclaimed alternatives for high school, including those supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the Alternative High School Initiative, and learn about how they might share knowledge and expertise with local alternatives for high school.
	<p>7. Create incentives for programmatic reform, particularly when the school district and mayor’s office operate independently of one another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Office of Education within the city, county, or town (or appoint capable individuals to lead an existing municipal department) that assumes responsibility for promoting incentives for alternatives for high school, similar to action taken by Mayor Gordon in establishing the Phoenix Youth and Education Commission. Ensure that the office is led by someone appointed to a cabinet-level position, and provide support for a staff liaison who is able to engage regularly with the school superintendent. • Launch new programs that heighten awareness of and attention to existing programs. Mayor Shirley Franklin’s Mayor’s Youth Program in Atlanta highlighted the Hope Scholarship as an existing statewide program funded by the state of Georgia lottery to pay full college tuition for students graduating from high school with a 3.0 grade point average or better. As a result, high-achieving students from lower-income families who otherwise were unaware of the program have now taken advantage of it to pursue postsecondary education.

	<i>Types of Strategies</i>
	<p>8. Participate in school district planning and decision-making processes that promote alternatives for high school, particularly when the mayor exercises an official role in providing oversight of the school district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cities with close collaboration between the mayor and school superintendent, it is highly possible for these leaders to maximize effectiveness in promoting programmatic reform. In Boston, for example, the mayor and school superintendent developed and implemented a common vision for education that embraces and expands alternatives for high school. • Collaborate with leaders of State Education Agencies and school districts to implement policies and practices that enable students attending alternatives for high school to secure state and/or local shares of per pupil funding.

[¥] 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).