

National Partnership For Educational Access *Charter*

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I. Overview

Since the mid-twentieth century, a growing number of community-based organizations have worked to expand educational opportunity for traditionally underrepresented students at college preparatory schools across the United States. This unique community of organizations and school-based programs share many characteristics, including common stakeholders, a commitment to high-quality support for motivated schoolchildren, and a core set of values anchored in educational access and equity.

In 2007, the National Partnership for Educational Access (NPEA) was designed by a committee of organizational leaders to support the quality, success, and growth of such institutions. Through professional development, information sharing, research and data analysis, and the dissemination of best practices, NPEA is working towards a day when all students have equal access to high-quality education and opportunities for college and beyond.

II. Key Drivers

Beginning with the early efforts of The Boys' Club of New York, A Better Chance, and Prep for Prep, as well as several other organizations, there has been a growing movement to expand educational access for low-income and underserved students at college preparatory schools for a half-century. As of 2007, at least 38 organizations and school-based programs work in partnership with college preparatory schools to support students for educational opportunities that lead to college. These organizations and programs operate throughout the United States and are almost exclusively privately funded.

While not all 38 entities share the exact program model (some provide out-of-school preparation while others do not; some exclusively serve students of color while others do not; some offer school placement counseling as an indirect or secondary service, while others focus on school placement), these organizations and school-based programs share many of

the same stakeholders, have a commitment to continuous learning and evaluation, and struggle with some of the same challenges that may be addressed through information-sharing and collective professional development.

Despite the similarities amongst these organizations, little-to-no national communication or collaboration has existed in this field. While local and regional efforts, such as the Independent School Placement Alliance, have worked to increase peer discussion, the pioneering individuals who launched these initiatives faced the challenge of running their own organizations and facilitating cooperative activities. In short, capacity (and in some cases, a perceived sense of competition) prevented sustainable efforts from fostering dialogue and sharing of best practices across similar organizations.

In 2005, John Klingenstein approached The Steppingstone Foundation to coordinate a national meeting of access organizations as part of the 2006 NAIS conference. As measured by the overwhelming attendance at the inaugural *Ready. Set. Connect.* “summit” and a follow-up survey to those in attendance at the event (95% of those who responded indicated interest in ongoing activities and information-sharing), there was a serious interest to continue national organizing activities. The Steppingstone Foundation launched a research phase in partnership with a planning council of peer representatives to design and implement a national coalition (please see section VII for a list of planning council members). Building on nearly 30 organizational interviews conducted between January and May 2007, the planning council worked through summer and fall of 2007 to frame a collaborative dedicated to fostering quality, success, and growth amongst potential member organizations.

In addition to “internal” interest and activism to create a national collaborative, a collective bank of best practices is increasingly important as a result of external variables. In the *NAIS Opinion Leaders Survey: Forecasting Independent Education to 2025*, NAIS recommends that independent schools focus on a multi-pronged approach to long-term success including “demographic sustainability” by working to become “more inclusive and representative of the school-aged population and less unapproachable financially and socially” (p. 1, 2005). As many independent schools work to become more diverse learning environments and the United States experiences a shift in demographic trends, there promises to be a greater need for strategies to prepare and support traditionally underrepresented students at college preparatory schools in the coming years.

Launched in late 2007, the National Partnership for Educational Access (NPEA) is an initiative designed to encourage long-term success for member organizations as well as the dissemination of best practices to allied schools, institutions, and individuals who share a commitment to educational access and opportunity. The research and early implementation phases of NPEA have been made possible through the support of the Goldman Sachs Foundation, the Esther A. & Joseph Klingenstein Fund, and The Steppingstone Foundation.

III. Vision and Mission

Vision:

The National Partnership for Educational Access (NPEA) is a learning community of organizations committed to increasing educational opportunities for motivated underserved students across the United States. NPEA is working towards a day when all students have equal access to high-quality education and opportunities for college and beyond.

- We believe high-quality education is a right not a privilege;
- We believe that high-quality education empowers individuals, families, and communities to break cycles of poverty;
- We believe the best learning communities are diverse learning communities;
- We are dedicated to the development of future leaders as made possible through high-quality education;
- We are committed to promoting and sharing innovation, continuous learning, and superior support for the staff and students served by our organizations.

Mission:

The National Partnership for Educational Access is a membership organization for programs working in collaboration with college preparatory schools to provide underrepresented students with academic preparation, placement services and counseling, and ongoing support to ensure enrollment at and graduation from four-year colleges. NPEA is dedicated to fostering quality, success, and growth amongst member organizations, partner schools, and communities committed to educational access.

IV. Goals

NPEA has five key strategic goals to achieve its mission:

Goal #1: *Share best practices, successful programmatic innovations, and lessons learned amongst member organizations*

- Identify practice leaders (inside and outside NPEA) to share expertise on topics of interest via training, technical assistance, and/or resource development (e.g. evaluation, admission and student outreach, curriculum development, school relations, fundraising, etc.)
- Catalogue notable service providers and distributors (e.g. curriculum developers, book distributors, etc.)
- Develop and maintain a resource repository (e.g. intranet) for members to share templates – e.g. evaluation tools, outreach materials, curriculum, data, and other tools to assist member program implementation and organizational development efforts
- Administer and maintain network systems of communication (monthly electronic newsletter, list-serve, etc.)
- Develop member case studies in order to demonstrate lessons learned and successful activities and/or approaches to common challenges and/or issues of interest.

Goal #2: *Provide professional development opportunities for staff through training, peer-to-peer dialogue, etc.*

- Sponsor or co-sponsor an annual conference for NPEA members and non-members
- Network information sharing and topic-based conference calls (e.g. conference call series, regional meetings)
- Identify, inventory, and distribute links to publications, journals, articles, conference information, funding opportunities, speaker profiles, etc.

Goal #3: *Leverage resources and national partnerships to benefit members*

- As opportunities arise, negotiate reduced fees/cost-savings for services or products on behalf of members. Possible examples include:
 - SAT preparation,
 - Memberships to educational associations and other relevant associations,
 - Other organizational-specific resources (e.g. information management systems, software, etc.)
- Pursue policy opportunities to benefit members (e.g. secondary school admission, financial aid, issues of college access, etc.)
- Develop an inventory of proven and well-known college access resources for program alumni

Goals #4: *Identify and disseminate key lessons and successful strategies in expanding educational opportunities for underserved students*

- Work with member practice leaders and other stakeholders to document and distribute successful strategies, innovative programming, and other practices which support underserved students and families in successfully accessing educational opportunities
- Possible dissemination activities and products include conference presentations, training modules, case studies, resource manuals, and data analysis
- NPEA will work to disseminate information to members, public and independent college preparatory schools, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders and champions committed to educational access

Goal #5: *Maintain general communication to assist collaboration and networking among members (e.g. job postings, opportunities for alumni, etc.)*

- Develop and distribute an annual directory
- Maintain an inventory of job openings across member organizations on NPEA website
- Develop an inventory of job resources and opportunities for program alumni
- Maintain systems of communication across member organizations (monthly electronic newsletter and list-serve; see goal #1)

V. Membership

NPEA members work to provide, promote, and expand educational opportunities for underserved students in communities across the United States. Specifically, members provide their participants with rigorous academic skill development, placement services to college preparatory schools, and ongoing support to ensure enrollment at four-year colleges.

NPEA will work to support and represent the learning community of not-for-profit organizations, school-based programs, and other institutions across the United States that:

- Support underserved motivated students;
- Provide supplemental academic preparation and support;
- Provide college preparatory school application and placement support or counseling;
- Provide support to students including college counseling to ensure successful graduation and matriculation to a college or university;
- Are committed to a complementary philosophy of partnership based on collaborative sharing, learning, and listening; respect; individual and organizational accountability; and trust.

Membership Categories

Organizational Membership:

- Not-for-profit organizations and school-based programs that fit the criteria outlined in section V, Membership
- Benefits: Please see section VI, Member Benefits and Responsibilities
- Fee: waived until June 2009 (fees will be based on a sliding scale)

Supporting Corporations:

- Corporations and businesses committed to NPEA's mission
- Benefits: special rate for annual conference, NPEA newsletter, and directory
- Fee: \$1,500

Supporting Institutions:

- College preparatory schools (independent and public), higher education institutions, and other non-profit organizations dedicated to educational access and committed to NPEA's mission
- Benefits: special rate for annual conference, NPEA newsletter, and directory
- Fee: waived until June 2009 (fee will be \$1,000)

Supporting Individuals:

- Benefits: NPEA newsletter and directory
- Fee: \$100

VI. Member Benefits and Responsibilities

NPEA will implement a customer service model and will direct organizational structure, processes, and activities to better serve its membership community.

The primary benefit to membership is access to and participation in a learning community of peers committed to expanding educational access for underserved students. NPEA member services and activities will be determined by data collection (including member feedback), and information analysis, as well as access to resources. In addition, NPEA members will benefit from an increased awareness by common stakeholders on issues relating to the preparation and support of students for elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational opportunities (stakeholders may include college preparatory schools and higher education institutions, for example).

NPEA Organizational Members receive benefits from participation. Benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

Professional development

- Invitation to an annual conference (with a reduced registration fee)
- Invitation to participate in industry-related web-based conference calls; calls will focus on topics of professional development, industry trends, and other issues of interest as indicated by NPEA membership;
- Invitation to regional professional development and networking events.

Communication and information-sharing

- Invitation to join NPEA list-serve for the purposes of professional exchange on industry topics and organizational/program management;
- Monthly electronic newsletter with industry-related articles, events and conferences, announcements, and job openings;
- Access to member-only web-based resource inventory (the intention is to build a password protected web-based inventory where members may share templates, training materials, etc.);
- Annual directory of member organizations and supporting institutions and individuals;
- Access to student alumni (post-high school) resource inventory on NPEA website (scholarship information, internship announcements, job opportunities, and other career-related information);
- Ability to post job openings on NPEA website.

Opportunities for strategic partnerships and increased visibility:

- When possible, access to external services and memberships at a reduced rate (e.g. conference registrations, publications, organizational management tools, etc.);
- Increased visibility within stakeholder markets, such as the independent school community, college preparatory public school community, educational/college access, and the higher education community:

- When possible, opportunities to jointly present at targeted regional and national conferences (e.g. NAIS, PoCC, TABS, SSATB, regional independent school associations, NCAN, NACAC, etc.);
- When possible, opportunities to contribute to and be recognized within dissemination resources such as case studies and resource guides;
- Web-links from NPEA website.

Research:

- Access to industry data and statistics, and sector best practices.

NPEA Organizational Membership includes expectations and opportunities for participation. These include, but are not limited to the following:

Expectations:

- Annually update web-listing on the NPEA website;
- Provide organizational data (such as number of students served, program retention, placement rates, high school graduation, college matriculation, etc.) within a reasonable amount of time to specific requests (and as applicable to individual organizations);
- Executive leadership and organizational NPEA liaison (if different) participate in an annual “state of the network/NPEA” meeting (web-based conference call);
- Pay a membership fee (waived until June 2009). The NPEA membership fee will include a sliding fee scale based on the size of the member organization’s budget. Fees shall be determined based on overall member input and discussion;
- Complete an annual survey to evaluate member services, NPEA activities, and overall satisfaction with participation.

Opportunities:

- When possible, attend regional and national professional development events and opportunities;
- When appropriate, provide job opening announcements for the electronic newsletter and posting on the NPEA website;
- When possible, participate on conference panels with other NPEA members and/or NPEA staff;
- When possible and appropriate, participate in case study research and documentation (with reasonable requests for information);
- When beneficial and appropriate (for the member), promote membership and participation in NPEA to relevant audiences and/or stakeholders;
- Other responsibilities to be determined and approved by members as NPEA evolves.

VII. Leadership, Governance, and Member Representation

NPEA is an initiative of The Steppingstone Foundation (TSF), a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. The initiative is managed by

professional staff accountable to the TSF President and Board of Directors, which has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for all aspects of the organization.

NPEA governance reflects a commitment to communication and frequent needs assessment. The multi-tiered structure will work to capture member interest, needs, and feedback through leadership, committee structures, and specific initiatives.

Advisory Board: The Advisory Board will represent the leadership of NPEA along with the TSF Board of Directors and the Director. Advisory board members will include member representatives and interested organizations such as independent schools and/or independent school associations, policy leaders, higher education representatives, the business community, and/or funders. Advisory Board membership: *in development*.

Director: A full-time staff position with the responsibility of both convening the Advisory Board (see below) and actualizing the work that fulfills the mission of NPEA.

Planning Council and Advisors: A working group of program leaders and stakeholders who committed to the development of the vision and charter in the early stages of NPEA's development. These individuals served as advisors and strategic planners in order to frame the various components of the charter, including but not limited to NPEA mission, services and activities, and membership criteria.

Planning Council members included:

- Rhonda Auguste, Executive Director, The Wight Foundation, Newark, NJ
- Cammy Dubie, Co-Director, the Aspire Program at Hathaway Brown School, Shaker Heights, OH
- Steve Filosa, Director, Prep@Pingree, Hamilton, MA
- Tasha Green, Executive Director, High Jump, Chicago, IL
- Danielle Heard, Executive Vice President of Programs and Operations, The Steppingstone Foundation, Boston, MA
- Natalie Herring, Executive Director, REACH Prep, Stamford, CT
- Andy Hoge, Director of Placement and Alumni Services, NJ Seeds, Newark, NJ
- M. Scott Knox, Vice President of National Expansion, The Steppingstone Foundation, Boston, MA
- Colin Lord, Associate Director of Admission, Choate Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, CT
- Calvin Lyons, Executive Director, Rainier Scholars, Seattle, WA

Advisors included:

- Richard Barter, Consultant, The Esther A. & Joseph Klingenstein Fund
- Pat Bassett, President, National Association of Independent Schools
- Gene Batiste, Vice President Leadership Education and Diversity Team, National Association of Independent Schools
- Steve Clem, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools in New England

- Bob Sandoe, Co-Founder, Carney, Sandoe and Associates
- Jay Sherwin, Vice President of Programs, The College Access Foundation of California
- Meade Thayer, Executive Director, Pacific and Northwest Association of Independent Schools

Executive/Founding Sponsors: These leaders do not serve in a governance or decision-making capacity but they have been involved in conceptualizing, planning, and/or funding the development phases of NPEA. Executive/Founding Sponsors include the Esther A. & Joseph Klingenstein Fund and The Goldman Sachs Foundation.