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School Networks Receive \$18.5 Million to Strengthen Efforts to Prepare Students for College and Career Success

Gates Foundation Also Announces Appointment of Don Shalvey to College-Ready Team

SEATTLE—The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation today announced grants totaling \$18.5 million to five school networks that have shown progress in increasing student achievement and preparing students for college and career success. These investments will focus largely on classroom-level improvements, including student data systems to assess academic performance, teacher resources, and professional development opportunities. The grants will also support the creation of a small number of new schools.

All five school networks— the Asia Society, Aspire Public Schools, Commonwealth Corporation’s Diploma Plus program, EdVisions Schools, and IDEA Public Schools—have previously partnered with the foundation in their efforts to increase America’s high school graduation and college-readiness rates.

“We are excited about this opportunity to deepen our work with some of our most effective school network partners,” said Vicki L. Phillips, director of education at the Gates Foundation. “We have learned a lot about what works in schools from them, and we are optimistic that this set of investments will give their schools and teachers more tools and support to help all their students achieve at high levels.”

The foundation also announced today that Don Shalvey, co-founder and CEO of Aspire Public Schools, has accepted an offer to join the foundation’s education team, where he will work closely with Phillips and John Deasy, a deputy director of education and former superintendent in Prince George’s County, Maryland. As a widely recognized leader in the public school reform and charter school communities, Shalvey brings 40 years of experience in public education to his new position.

“Under Don Shalvey’s leadership, Aspire has grown into a network of 21 schools in California, serving students with great needs and achieving great results,” said Phillips. “We are eager to take what he has learned and accomplished to help students all across the country to prepare for college and career success.”

According to *Education Week’s* Diplomas Count 2008 report, nearly a third of American students do not graduate from high school on time. Other studies have found that half of those

who do graduate are not ready for college, with only one in three ninth graders graduating college-ready. For African American and Hispanic students, it is closer to one in five.

The investments made to these five school networks support the foundation's goal to help ensure that 80 percent of high school students graduate college-ready, with a focus on low-income and minority students. The work will range from the expansion of the EdVisions, IDEA, and Asia Society school networks to the creation and development of Diploma Plus and Aspire Public Schools data systems, so students can be assessed and instruction targeted where it is needed most.

"These grants will help each organization to both grow and strengthen their work with low-income and minority students nationwide," said William Diehl, executive director of Diploma Plus. "Ultimately, our success is contingent on what happens in the classroom. By providing the right conditions for student achievement—including curricular improvements, real-time student data, and teacher and student supports—we can help even more students realize their educational goals."

The foundation believes that a college degree is a fundamental prerequisite for equal opportunity and economic security. All young people, regardless of their background, deserve a rewarding education that results in the ability to earn a degree or credential with real value in the labor market. The foundation and its partners work together to ensure that all students, especially low-income and minority students, attend schools from kindergarten through college that make this vision a reality. Since 2000, the foundation has invested more than \$4 billion in grants and scholarships to improve schools, raise college-ready graduation rates, and increase college completion rates.

School Network Grants

[Asia Society](#) (**\$7.75 million over five years**) to strengthen and expand the International Studies Schools Network, the first national network of small, internationally focused secondary schools successfully accelerating achievement in primarily urban, low-income and minority communities. This grant also will allow Asia Society to complete the Graduation Portfolio System, a performance assessment that enables students to demonstrate competencies required for success in college and the workplace, as citizens in a global era. Asia Society is a leading global and pan-Asian organization, working to strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders and institutions of Asia and the United States.
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[Aspire Public Schools](#) (**\$2.9 million over three years**) to accelerate the implementation of Aspire's Early College High School model by providing stronger academic support for students and enhanced curricular support for teachers so that Aspire students can meet the rigorous demands of a college education while still in high school. In addition, Aspire Public Schools will enhance its network-wide data system so that teachers get better access to information that will improve student learning. Over the past six years, Aspire has opened 21 high-quality charter schools to make "College for Certain" for over 6,000 students in California's low-income neighborhoods.
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[Diploma Plus](#) (**\$3.1 million over three years**) to improve literacy, numeracy, and English Language Learner services; enhance teacher professional development and use of data to

improve practice; offer targeted grants to schools and teachers for action research projects that increase the schools' capacity to implement the Diploma Plus model; and increase graduation rates and access to college and careers. Diploma Plus partners with school districts and communities to develop and sustain innovative small high schools that provide rigorous and student-centered alternatives for youth failed by the traditional system. The 23 Diploma Plus schools across the country have demonstrated success in engaging young people, nurturing their power as learners, and enabling them to complete high school college- and career-ready. Media Contact: Renée Graef, 617-821-8047

[EdVisions Schools](#) (**\$1.2 million over two years**) to strengthen its existing network of schools and build the business capacity to implement a new five-year plan. In addition to supporting the creation of another 100 new small innovative high schools, the grant will specifically support network activities including institutes, workshops, online micro-university courses and on-site technical assistance to schools. EdVisions is a non-profit charter development organization based in Minnesota that helps create and sustain a network of small, innovative high schools across the country.

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[IDEA Public Schools](#) (**\$3.4 million over three years**) to launch three new schools in high-need communities across the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, support students through the transition from middle school to high school, and help the Texas High School Project develop a new statewide P-16 tracking system for students. IDEA operates a system of tuition-free public charter schools with a focus on college-readiness, culminating in 100 percent of IDEA students attending a four-year college or university. In 2008, *US News & World Report* named IDEA College Preparatory in Donna, Texas, one of the top 20 schools in the nation.

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Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.