



REDESIGN SCHOOLS FOR BETTER LEARNING

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that more than 5,000 schools, serving approximately 2.5 million students nationwide, are “chronically failing,” which means that the students are at risk of failing to master the skills required to progress through school, graduate, and go on to college or a job.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Support effective **whole school reform** designed to maximize learning time for students and teachers, make the curriculum more rigorous and engaging, and address issues such as school leadership, teacher recruitment, professional development, and evaluation, which are critical for teacher effectiveness and student success.

HIGH IMPACT OPPORTUNITY: Several whole school reform programs in charter and regular public schools have had excellent results. Students at [Green Dot](#), a California-based charter organization serving high-need populations, showed greater growth in learning and a 12 percent improvement in graduation rates over students in comparable schools. 86 percent of graduating students went on to attend two- or four-year colleges. In New York, [Generation Schools](#), a design for restructuring a regular public school, outperformed a comparison group of schools on various student achievement measures and graduated 90 percent of seniors on time even though only 20 percent started ninth grade at grade level. 90 percent of graduating students were accepted to college, compared to the national average of about 68 percent.



TAKE ACTION: You can support Generation Schools or Green Dot, both of which plan to expand to other communities. While not all whole school designs are effective, you can identify other strong whole school reform programs by checking out our short list on page 57 of [High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality](#). You can also take advantage of the due diligence performed by venture philanthropy firms such as the [NewSchools Venture Fund](#) and [SeaChange Capital Partners](#). Further information on high performing schools serving low income students is available on the web sites of the [Department of Education’s Blue Ribbon Awards](#) program and the [Effective Practice Incentive Community \(EPIC\)](#).

TIPS: Costs vary with design and locality, but after the start-up phase — when philanthropic capital is usually most needed — many whole school reform designs have the same per-student costs as other schools in the district or state.

For more tips and discussion of models, see pages 46-58 of [High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality](#) and pages 40-47 of [Pathways to Student Success](#).