



PHASE I

1996-2001

Bay Area School Reform Collaborative
Summary Report
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Center for Research on the Context of Teaching

Research for *Bay Area School Reform Collaborative: Phase One (1996-2001) Evaluation* was conducted by the **Center for Research on the Context of Teaching** (CRC) at Stanford University. CRC was funded in 1987 to investigate ways in which conditions in teachers' professional community, district and state contexts, and national and local reform initiatives shape teaching and learning.

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Requests for copies of this report or the full five-year evaluation report should be directed to:

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BASRC History and Goals

The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative was formed in response to a national challenge from philanthropist Walter Annenberg and his \$500 million gift to American public education. William Hewlett and the Hewlett Foundation offered \$25 million dollars to support the creation of a regional education reform initiative and the Annenberg Foundation matched Hewlett’s gift with another \$25 million. The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) was created in the spring of 1995 to design and manage the Hewlett-Annenberg Challenge initiative. By the fall of 1999, this \$50 million had been matched by \$62 million more in public and private funds.

BASRC aims to enhance educational quality for all Bay Area students attending public schools and to close the achievement gap between students of different race, class, and language backgrounds in BASRC schools.¹

During its first five years, from 1996 to 2001, BASRC pursued its mission by making grants to support schools’ reform work and by establishing a regional collaborative of member schools, districts, support organizations, and funders. The Collaborative’s design reflected two broad purposes: First BASRC would be a source of funding, support, and pressure on inquiry-based, whole school reform for its grant-funded “Leadership Schools.” Second, BASRC would be a vehicle for scaling up reform in the region by spreading knowledge of successful reform practices within and beyond a larger, regional collaborative of affiliated schools.

BASRC’s design drew upon research-based knowledge and experience with whole school and inquiry-based reform. However, BASRC’s strategy for scaling up regional education reform, and the “intermediary organization”² created to foster it, were without

¹ BASRC did not overtly call for schools to close the achievement gap until its third year; BASRC changed its mission statement to reflect this goal in 2002.

² Researcher Joseph P. McDonald defines an intermediary organization as one that lives at the boundaries of the educational system, neither “of” the system nor wholly outside it. It enjoys license—at least on a temporary basis—to cross the organizational boundaries dividing parties whose actions affect children in schools and to serve as a catalyst for change; it is presumed free of ordinary interest and political pressures. The Annenberg Challenge assumed that changing a large and entrenched system like public schooling required an “irregular” organization because the “regular” organizations—schools, districts, states, universities—were too caught up in the status quo to refocus and reform agendas that included their own. As an intermediary, BASRC faced the challenge of developing non-regulatory incentives and accountability for school reform.