



## Alliance for Excellent Education Fourth Annual High School Policy Conference

*From No Child Left Behind to Every Child a Graduate*

Washington Court Hotel · Washington, DC · October 4–5, 2007

### Student Voices

At intervals throughout the conference, you will hear from those directly impacted by high school reform—*students*. Prior to the conference, the Alliance for Excellent Education took a film crew to T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, which had just opened a state-of-the-art “green” campus under the leadership of principal Mel Riddile. We combined material from that filming with material from previous filming to capture the thoughts, questions, frustrations, and hopes high school students have about education in America. We also let a few of their teachers and principals join the conversation.

These video clips make it clear that students recognize many of the challenges facing schools and students in the context of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and they want both high standards and rich support to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. Students and teachers alike had strong opinions that they wanted us to hear as we gather to discuss the way the federal government should improve high schools through NCLB.

The Alliance for Excellent Education thanks the students and faculty of T.C. Williams High School, César Chávez Public Charter High Schools for Public Policy, Theodore Roosevelt Senior High School, Bell Multicultural High School, Thomas Alva Edison/John C. Fareira High School, and members of Urban Debate Leagues from around the country for sharing their ideas.

**T.C. Williams High School** opened in Alexandria, Virginia in 1965. Its 2,000 students reflect the diversity of its community—43 percent are African American, 25 percent are Hispanic, 7 percent are Asian, and 24 percent are white. T.C. Williams offers a curriculum of 188 courses and more than 55 clubs and organizations in which students may participate. With its media center and fiber-optic network, a completely automated library, and connections to the Internet, T.C. Williams is taking its place as one of the best technologically equipped schools in the country.

Founded in 1998, **César Chávez Public Charter High Schools** are charter schools with a focus on public policy. The schools’ model is designed to prepare students to succeed in college. Nine hundred students are enrolled at Chávez’s two campuses in Washington, DC. The student body is 65 percent African-American and 33 percent Latino. Eighty-one percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. All Chávez students participate in a unique public policy program that aims to develop students into engaged citizens able to affect change in the world around them. Public policy themes are incorporated into the curriculum in every subject, and Chávez students participate in three-week-long fellowships at public policy institutions and are required to write a public policy thesis during their senior year.

**Theodore Roosevelt Senior High School** has educated students in Washington, DC for almost seventy-five years. Roosevelt is a traditional, comprehensive high school serving students in grades 9–12. Of the 793 students who attend Roosevelt, 79 percent are African American and 20 percent are Latino. Fifty-six percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The school offers opportunities for students to participate in athletic, extracurricular, and cocurricular activities.

Located in Washington, DC, **Bell Multicultural High School** is committed to multicultural and multilingual academic and career education. Because of the various social, economic, educational, and linguistic backgrounds of its students, the school addresses students' social and economic needs as well as their individual learning styles. Bell views language development, in both first and second languages, as the cornerstone of a curriculum that develops necessary skills in communication, interpersonal relationships, career development, health, problem solving, mathematics, science, and technology. Its ultimate mission is to help every student develop marketable skills which will lead to success in the world of work and post-secondary education.

**Thomas Alva Edison/John C. Fareira High School** is located in north Philadelphia and has close to 3,000 students. Roughly 75 percent are Latino, 20 percent are Black, 5 percent are Asian, and 1 percent are white. It is the largest multiracial school in Philadelphia. In 1988, the original school was replaced by a new coeducational facility named for its late principal, John Fareira. The Edison/Fareira complex is now a combined academic high school and vocational skills center currently led by Dr. Jose Lebron.

**Urban Debate Leagues** (UDLs) aim to provide urban youth with the academic and social tools they need in order to become engaged and responsible citizens. A signature goal of UDLs is to use academic debate as a mechanism for urban education improvement—to increase equity and excellence in urban public schools by helping students become effective advocates, and to improve skills in critical and analytical thinking, oral and written communication, research, computer literacy, and conflict resolution. Research indicates that debate students in urban high schools receive higher grades than comparable nondebaters. Debaters graduate from high school as motivated and intellectually curious young adults and are much better prepared to pursue a postsecondary education. UDLs currently exist in fourteen of the nation's largest cities, encompassing 221 urban public high schools and 40 middle schools. Since 1997, more than 12,000 urban public school students have competed and more than 700 urban educators have received professional development.