



THE CENTER FOR
EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY

a nonprofit organization

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YouthTruth Gives Students Greater Voice in Education Reform

*More Than 71,000 Students Join National Survey Project,
Adding Their Voice to School Improvement Efforts*

CAMBRIDGE, MA—The Center for Effective Philanthropy announced today that an innovative program bringing student voices forward into the education process has been implemented in more than 100 communities nationwide. The program, called YouthTruth, is a national survey project that provides comparative data to schools, districts, education networks and funders summarizing students' perceptions of what is working and not working in their high school experience.

YouthTruth, funded initially by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also announced it has gained the support of seven foundations, further evidence of the project's growing impact as philanthropic organizations recognize the critical role students can play in shaping education reform.

"The work of Youth Truth is achieving real momentum," said Phil Buchanan, president of the Center for Effective Philanthropy, which launched YouthTruth in 2008. "This is a testament to the power of listening to the ultimate beneficiaries of reform efforts—the students themselves—and it is a milestone for the use of rigorous research and data analysis to drive education reform efforts across the country."

During the 2010-2011 school year, the YouthTruth project worked with 118 schools across 15 districts and school networks, and tripled the number of students surveyed over the previous academic year.

"We increased our impact in the 2010-2011 school year work by surveying students from districts and networks as varied as Miami Dade County Public Schools to High Tech High to the Oakland Unified High School District," said Valerie Threlfall, vice president with the Center for Effective Philanthropy and director of the YouthTruth Initiative. "We are thrilled to have added such a diverse mix of schools to our growing comparative dataset."

The YouthTruth survey is designed to measure students' perceptions about a wide range of issues from school culture and academic rigor to instructional relevance and teacher performance. Student feedback enables teachers and administrators to better understand how youth are experiencing their education and, as a result, to improve the student experience in pursuit of better student outcomes.

School leaders nationwide have been impressed by YouthTruth's ability to inform school improvement efforts. Principals describe the process used by YouthTruth as extremely powerful and say the data received informs and catalyzes action on their part.

"Issues with school culture as well as academic rigor and student-teacher relationships are all going to manifest themselves through test scores and attendance rates and graduation rates, but that is slow and very indirect," said Peter McKnight, principal of South Atlanta High School of Law & Social Justice. "Surveys like YouthTruth help provide direct insight into these issues."

In 2010, researchers at Brandeis University evaluated the impact of Youth Truth among school leaders who had participated in the program. Their findings included the following:

- 91 percent agreed that YouthTruth was better than most other survey efforts at their school;
- 98 percent had already made specific changes in their school based on YouthTruth data or had plans to make changes based on the findings;
- 100 percent would recommend that other schools participate in YouthTruth.

But it's not just adults who are convinced that YouthTruth is different. Students themselves consistently say that YouthTruth is better than other surveys they have completed.

"In the beginning, I thought that it was just going to be another survey," said a student from Phoenix, Arizona who participated in Youth Truth. "As I was in the middle of the survey I realized that the questions I was being asked really mattered."

Current YouthTruth funders include The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The California Endowment, the East Bay Community Foundation, the Foundation for the Mid South, Knowledgeworks Foundation, the Stuart Foundation and, the W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation. Some funders are supporting the effort nationally, while others have stepped forward to support the implementation of YouthTruth in specific communities.

About YouthTruth

YouthTruth, an initiative of The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP), is a national survey project that provides comparative data to schools, districts and networks, and education funders summarizing students' perceptions of their high school experiences. The goal of YouthTruth is to demonstrate the power of comparative feedback from students – the ultimate beneficiaries of school improvement efforts – and to create insights that will enable those who manage, lead, and fund schools to increase their effectiveness and impact. YouthTruth builds on CEP's 10 years of experience gathering comparative feedback on behalf of philanthropic funders. Youth Truth is currently

recruiting schools, networks and districts to participate in YouthTruth 2011-2012. For more information about YouthTruth, see www.youthtruthsurvey.org.

About The Center for Effective Philanthropy

The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide data and create insight so philanthropic funders can better define, assess, and improve their effectiveness and, as a result, their intended impact. CEP received initial funding in 2001 and has offices in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and San Francisco, California. For more information on CEP's work, including its research, publications, and assessment tools, see www.effectivephilanthropy.org.

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