The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) is a national policy research and reform-support organization, headquartered at Brown University, that collaborates with school districts, communities, and other education stakeholders to improve the conditions and outcomes of urban public schools, especially those attended by traditionally underserved children. AISR’s vision is the transformation of traditional school systems into “smart education systems” that develop and integrate high-quality learning opportunities in all areas of students’ lives—in school, at home, and in the community. AISR conducts research; works with a variety of partners committed to educational improvement to build capacity in school districts and communities; and shares its work through print and web publications.

Established in 1993 by education reform leader Theodore (Ted) Sizer, the founder and chair of the then-Brown University-based Coalition for Essential Schools, the organization was renamed shortly thereafter to honor philanthropist, former diplomat and publisher Walter H. Annenberg, following the Annenberg Foundation’s $50-million donation to endow AISR. A University Corporation-appointed Board of Overseers, chaired by Brown’s president, governs the organization, which is one of the largest among the 40 programs, institutes and centers at Brown University. Michael Grady, Ed.D., is interim Executive Director of the Institute; Warren Simmons, Ph.D., is Senior Fellow and the former executive director.

For more than two decades, AISR has been an influential national leader in public education reform. AISR’s research has provided an important evidence base to inform public discourse and decision-making in a national climate too often driven by ideology. AISR has also regularly been sought out as a convener and technical assistance provider by district and state education stakeholders and consistently attracts grants from major funders. AISR’s publications, including research reports, a high-traffic public website, online tools, videos, and its award-winning flagship journal *Voices in Urban Education* (VUE), are extensively cited and reach a broad cross-sector national audience of education opinion leaders, policymakers, funders, researchers, the media, and community leaders, among others. The VUE website receives more than 27,000 visitors per year, while the AISR site attracts over 25,000 visitors annually.

AISR has been in the vanguard of thinking about school districts for over 15 years. In 2000, AISR formed a national task force to examine the education-reform role of urban school districts, and was among the first to conclude that district redesign and transformation is essential to the achievement of equity and school improvement at scale—contrary to the prevailing discourse of the time that districts should simply be dismantled and schools reformed one by one. Through its District & Systems Transformation (DST) practice, AISR currently collaborates with urban districts to build capacity to strengthen their schools and students, with active participation of the community and other partners, while working toward the goal of a smart education system. AISR has developed an array of tools to support districts and their partners, including a widely disseminated series of resources on college readiness.

AISR has also been in the forefront of thinking about urban communities as powerful allies and assets rather than problems. In 2006, AISR formed the Community Organizing & Engagement (CO&E) practice by incorporating the Community Involvement Program, formerly based at New York University, and opening a New York City office. CO&E supports community organizing for education reform by helping youth, parent, and community groups to develop sufficient power to drive and sustain improvement in low-performing urban school districts. Research and technical assistance from AISR was instrumental in helping community organizations in New York City develop an equity-driven education agenda that was embraced across all candidates in the 2013 mayoral elections, and CO&E staff are currently informing national education reform discussions.

AISR’s Research and Policy (R&P) staff engage in a range of projects to inform both AISR’s own work and the fields of district-level reform and community organizing for school reform. This includes original research, documentation and evaluation of reform efforts, analyses of current education policies, and the development of tools to share lessons and best practices. The impact of AISR’s research is felt locally and nationally, within academia and beyond, in the worlds of local, state, and federal policy, district administration, philanthropy, and community leadership. In 2014-15, R&P, in collaboration with the Boston Public Schools, and the Center for Collaborative Education, conducted a two-phase, multi-method research project which described the increasing diversity of enrollment of Black and Latino males in the district, as well as a troubling, systemic opportunity gap facing these students; the second phase employed case studies to identify promising school practices as well as “unfinished business,” or a lack of cultural competency and willingness to address race and gender within schools. In 2009, AISR published an extensively cited, groundbreaking series of research reports, as part of the first study to demonstrate the positive impact of community organizing on school improvement. Other major research projects have produced advances in the field of public education in significant areas of national interest such as expanded learning time. A portion of the R&P team is Los Angeles based.

In collaboration with Brown’s Education Department, AISR established a Master’s Program in Urban Policy (UEP) in 2006. The tightly focused, 12-month academic curriculum, integrated with a nine-month internship, is designed to impart a set of core skills and competencies necessary for successful careers in urban education policy. To date, degrees have been conferred on over 200 graduates. In 2012, AISR’s Board of Overseers established the Ruth J. Simmons Urban Education Policy Scholarship, a permanent annual award for UEP Master’s degree candidates that honors the University’s retired president and former AISR board chair.

AISR also serves as a bridge from Brown to Providence and the state, providing support for the Providence Public School District, the R.I. Department of Education, and the Central Falls School District, and it hosts the Providence Children & Youth Cabinet. In 2008-09, AISR supported the Governor’s Urban Task Force, a key factor in Rhode Island’s successful Race to the Top application. Furthermore, in partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation, AISR sponsored a series of eight forums in 2011-14 focused on “Building a 21st Century Education System” in the Ocean State.

Additional information can be found at: http://www.annenberginstitute.org/
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Helvetica was used instead of Arial.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.