Dear Colleagues, Friends and Supporters:

Perhaps most gratifying about my job as Chief Executive Officer of Partners in School Innovation (PartnersSI) is witnessing how each of our successes drives us closer to our long-term goal of closing the achievement gap. The promising student results achieved for the second straight year in 2010-11 are particularly notable because they validate the power of our approach to school and district transformation. The nine PartnersSI schools with which we have worked for at least two years achieved an average 10.1 percentage-point gain in the number of students testing proficient or advanced on the California Standards Test–English Language Arts (CST-ELA), more than tripling the state’s average gain over the same period.

During the past year, we enabled 22 partner schools in three districts throughout the San Francisco Bay Area to implement our school transformation approach successfully. Through leadership development networks, we also contributed to strengthening 52 more schools. The performance of our schools continues to outpace growth at both the state and district levels and demonstrates what a more focused, better-prepared and well-supported teaching force can accomplish. These results are a great tribute to the efforts of our school and district partners, our staff members and the many individuals and organizations committed to supporting our work.

Having secured a strong and stable presence in the Bay Area, we are excited to also begin capitalizing on demand for our work in new opportunities across the country. We are expanding our network of local and national funders and partners who share our commitment to improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children and who are willing to invest in our growth. With the assistance of one such funder, we are engaging in a large-scale partnership with Chicago Public Schools to build the capacity of their more than 100 district coaches to support hundreds more schools. We also recently won the Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2) education grant competition, which will help us to strengthen our own organizational capacity as we prepare to scale our services nationally.

As you read this annual report, I invite you to join with us in celebrating our successes from the past year. We thank you for your steadfast support of our students, and the teachers and administrators who remain dedicated to preparing our nation’s children for a challenging and ever-changing future.

Sincerely,

Derek S. Mitchell, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

Partners in School Innovation helps transform teaching and learning in the lowest-performing American public schools so that every child, regardless of background, thrives in school.
WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

Partners in School Innovation believes that the greatest moral, social and economic imperative of our generation is to ensure that every child receives a full opportunity to learn, grow and succeed in school.

America’s public schools are in trouble. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, by the 4th grade, African American and Latino students are, on average, nearly three academic years behind their white peers. By 2023, the U.S. student population is predicted to reach a “minority-majority.” Yet minority students are the most underserved students in the public school system.

Transforming an education system that prepares our diverse student population with the skills they will need to succeed in a global knowledge economy is not easy—but it is absolutely necessary. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan put it quite simply:

“The countries that are beating us in the classroom today will beat us in the workplace tomorrow—so this is a matter of economic and national security.”

While the challenges are daunting, closing the achievement gap is possible. There are enough examples of schools serving primarily students of color and English Learners in low-income communities that have made significant progress toward closing the gap to dispel the notion that the problems are insurmountable. PartnersSI firmly believes that every public school can be a place of learning and inspiration and we are helping districts and schools make this a reality.

Gaps in U.S. educational achievement have affected GDP more severely than have all recessions since the 1970s.

PartnersSI was founded in 1993 to create systemic improvements in low-performing public schools. While our strategies have evolved over the years, we continue to fill a unique space in the education reform community, distinguished by the following qualities:

- **Multi-year partnerships**: We work side-by-side with our school and district colleagues over a 3-5 year period.
- **Focus on existing human capital**: We work to strengthen the capability of those teachers and leaders who are already in the system.
- **Data-driven, results-oriented, continuous improvement**: We build the capability of teachers and leaders to use data to set goals, plan, implement, assess, reflect and adjust in cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement.
- **Sustainable systems change**: We build essential knowledge and skills at multiple levels to ensure improvement practices are aligned, embedded and sustained across the system.

Key to our effectiveness are our staff members, many of whom come to us as experienced educators and change agents – teachers, coaches, principals and district leaders – who have achieved extraordinary successes in their own classrooms, schools and districts. We know firsthand that excellence in teaching and leadership yields outstanding results in student learning.

**WHO WE ARE**

Partners in School Innovation is a leading nonprofit organization committed to transforming America’s urban public schools and eliminating the achievement gap.

- **29 Staff Members**
- **107 Total Years of Teaching Experience**
- **150 Total Years of School and District Reform Leadership Experience**
- **59% Have an Advanced Degree**
Partners SI staff work alongside our school and district colleagues to achieve significant gains in student achievement as well as build the organizational capacity required to sustain these results. We partner to:

- **Build** a strong core instructional program, ensuring that all students learn at high levels;
- **Create** an integrated system for professional learning so that all teachers are able to deliver excellent instruction;
- **Strengthen** leaders’ ability to focus on student outcomes and align school resources, structures and ways of working to achieve their goals.

We work in partnership with school and district leaders to create vibrant school environments where teachers can continually grow as professionals and students of color and English Learners can excel as young scholars, college- and career-bound.

“I value the transparency with which Partners SI team members operate, which helps all of us learn the strategies and processes they use – from the classroom to the board room. The model is grounded on building capacity and not dependency. Not only are our schools benefiting from the support, but from a systemic perspective, the entire district leadership team is as well.”

– Richard A. Carranza, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Innovation and Social Justice, San Francisco Unified School District

**WHAT WE DO**

**Partners in School Innovation** applies a research-based, systematic approach to achieving school and district transformation.
Partners in School Innovation believes that by building the capability of school and district leaders to implement the essential practices, skills and habits of mind needed to transform low-performing schools, they will achieve and sustain breakthrough student learning results.

**WHO WE SERVE**

**TEACHERS**

“PartnersSI brings teachers into a common focus and guides us through a systematic process of reflection and analysis. We are constantly looking at different ways to improve our practice in order to accelerate our students’ learning.”

– 5th Grade Teacher
San Francisco Unified School District

**PRINCIPALS**

“PartnersSI supported me with the implementation of our vision for RISE Community School. They kept me focused on the end result – making sure that all of our students become proficient readers and thinkers.”

– Connie Tillman, Principal
RISE Community School
Oakland Unified School District

**TEACHERS**

“The Applied Materials Foundation is proud to invest in PartnersSI's game-changing educational reform efforts. This extraordinary organization has found an approach to school reform and leadership effectiveness utilizing best practices in business and embedding them into the culture and structure of public school systems. PartnersSI’s results speak for themselves. Few organizations enjoy this caliber of success and it reinforces the value of our Foundation’s support for an organization that’s improving outcomes for students, families and communities.”

– Mark Walker, Managing Director
Global Community Affairs
The Applied Materials Foundation

**FUNDERS**

“PartnersSI's work is clearly a powerful national model for school transformation; but what might be the most lasting benefit for us is how the PartnersSI approach works to build the capacity of our leaders at the district level. As a result of this partnership, we will know more, have better tools and more adaptive skills to support teachers in our most challenged schools. For that we are profoundly grateful.”

– José L. Manzo, Superintendent
Alum Rock Union Elementary School District

**DISTRICT LEADERS**

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– Mark Walker, Managing Director
Global Community Affairs
The Applied Materials Foundation
Since Partners in School Innovation’s founding in 1993, we have partnered with 12 public school districts and 62 public schools to accelerate student achievement.

We deepened our partnership with the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District in East San Jose to support the superintendent and his team in transforming eight of the district’s lowest-performing schools. We worked with the district’s Director of School Transformation to create the conditions necessary for sustainable change across the district by aligning assessment, curriculum and professional development systems. We also worked alongside school leaders and teachers to implement the essential practices that are necessary to successfully lead whole school improvement efforts.

We partnered with three schools in the Oakland Unified School District, building the capacity of school leaders to strengthen their instructional leadership and facilitate effective teacher collaboration. We also led a professional development series in which principals across East Oakland (Region 3) analyzed and reflected on student achievement data using PartnersSI tools and inquiry methods.

We were selected by the San Francisco Unified School District as the lead transformation partner for the “School Improvement Grant” schools located within the Superintendent Zone in the Mission and Bayview neighborhoods. We worked with school leaders and teachers to set goals, plan, take action, monitor and adjust their practices. As with Alum Rock, we employed a cohesive district approach that included strategic consultation to Zone leaders around the alignment of the assessment, curriculum, instruction and professional development systems. Separately, we also completed a three-year engagement with three schools outside the Zone, helping their staff transition the work of sustaining the implemented reforms into their own hands.
The primary way we measure our impact is by looking at student achievement outcomes. On the 2011 administration of the California Standards Test—English Language Arts (CST-ELA), PartnersSI schools had an average of 5.4 percentage-point growth in students testing at or above proficient, more than triple the California average of 1.6 percentage-point growth and more than double our partner districts’ average of 1.9 percentage-point growth.

Subgroups in our partner schools also outperformed their California peers: English Learners testing at or above proficient on the CST-ELA experienced an average 4.2 percentage-point gain (vs. an average 2.5 percentage-point gain for their cohort statewide); Latino students had 5.1 percentage-point growth (vs. 2.6); and African American students had 3.8 percentage-point growth (vs. 2.1).

We also measure how well we are building each school’s capacity to engage in and sustain the practices that accelerate student learning. Twice a year, we use our School Transformation Rubric (STR) in our partner schools to assess growth in adult capacity to utilize specific, research-based best practices in leadership, instruction and teacher professional learning. We look specifically at the percentage closure of the “transformation” gap between where a school is and where it should be. Across all of our partner schools, we measured closure of the gap in results-oriented leadership by 38% (vs. 35% goal), 27% in instruction (vs. 30% goal) and 27% in professional learning systems (vs. 30% goal).

Finally, we closely monitor our program implementation in order to understand how well we are executing each of the elements of our approach. This data allows us to adjust our support for each school to ensure the highest quality of program implementation. We are extremely pleased to report that all of our partner schools exceeded our 90% target for program implementation in 2010-11.

**Partners in School Innovation** schools achieved literacy gains greater than those of their respective districts and more than three times that of the state of California.
A SUCCESS STORY


PartnersSI launched an intensive partnership with John Muir Elementary School in San Francisco in the fall of 2010. From the start, we were invested in veteran principal Christopher Rosenberg’s mission “to improve the unacceptably low achievement of African American and Latino students at Muir.”

Newly assigned to Muir, Rosenberg had been given a three-year, $5 million federal grant to help transform the school, named one of the 188 lowest-performing in California. We partnered with him to build the capacity of his staff to turn the school – and the fortunes of his students – around. Among our first collaborations was creating a school leadership team that established and promoted rigorous instructional goals centered on literacy.

We then teamed up with Muir leaders to design a professional development plan to support teachers in using data, deepening relationships with their students and implementing best practices for literacy instruction. To ensure teachers would be set up for success, we worked with Rosenberg to carve out regular time for critical grade-level collaboration meetings.

Rosenberg says, “PartnersSI staff are consistent, dependable and have a high level of follow-through, all of which makes the quality of our work at the school better. I enjoy working with them and deeply value their thought partnership because it allows us to focus on the essential work.”

Monitoring changes in adult practice using our School Transformation Rubric, we saw tremendous growth in the ability of school leaders and teachers to engage in practices that accelerate student learning. Muir also averaged an impressive 12.8 percentage-point growth in students testing at or above proficient on the 2011 CST-ELA, eight times the California average of 1.6 percentage-point growth. The school is particularly proud of more than doubling the proficiency rates of its African American students.

We look forward to building on these early successes and achieving another year of outstanding results for the students and staff at John Muir Elementary School.
In preparation for scale, PartnersSI invested in enhancing and strengthening our program and services in the following key areas:

**Support for Middle Schools:** Having recognized a clear need, in 2010 PartnersSI decided to adapt and pilot our transformation approach in middle schools, arguably an urban school district’s greatest challenge. Performance in our partner middle schools was among the strongest of all of our schools (7.8 percentage-point growth in students testing at or above proficient on the CST-ELA). We are encouraged by these results that demonstrate that our approach can be just as powerful in low-performing middle schools.

**A Deliberate District-Level Approach:** In both San Francisco and Alum Rock, PartnersSI worked closely with district leaders to successfully implement a district-wide approach to school transformation. Understanding its role as key to ensuring sustainability of any reform, each district committed the resources needed to implement leadership networks and professional learning communities. These structures enabled district administrators, school leaders, coaches and teachers to come together to share best practices and support one another’s efforts to increase achievement, especially for students of color and English Learners.

**Support Outside of the San Francisco Bay Area:** Over the course of the year, PartnersSI worked with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Area 9 leaders and coaches through a series of professional development sessions. We focused on building the capacity of schools’ instructional leadership teams and establishing more effective teacher collaboration processes. CPS leaders found our support so effective that they decided to take our partnership district-wide for the 2011-12 year, so that we could reach a far greater number of leaders and coaches.

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**2010-11 HIGHLIGHTS**

With an eye on increasing our impact, **Partners in School Innovation** broadened our own capability in several important ways.
We have invested the last several years integrating what we have learned about achieving and sustaining breakthrough results in our most challenged urban schools into our innovative School Transformation Framework. Our successes have not gone unnoticed. Growing demand for our work has emboldened us to aggressively pursue strategies that will enable us to serve even greater numbers of educators and students.

We spent the last year packaging individual or “discrete” components of our transformation approach so that our services may be delivered more broadly as the market for our work continues to expand. We are also in conversation with major national funders who, having witnessed our success in California, recognize our potential to transform the public education system nationwide.

We are well on our way to achieving our vision that by 2021 PartnersSI will have:

- Enabled the successful transformation of at least three diverse urban school districts outside of the San Francisco Bay Area;
- Helped to train 10,000 educator change agents in districts across the country;
- Informed federal, state and local policy arenas on district, school and teacher effectiveness.

Our Vision: We envision a thriving system of urban public schools that fosters the growth of all of its students and works to eliminate the achievement gap by creating vibrant places to teach, learn and grow, with rigorous standards and an unwavering focus on results.

Looking Forward

Partners in School Innovation is becoming a leader in the education reform space and, more specifically, in school and district transformation.
Partners in School Innovation spent approximately $3.24 million during the 2010-11 fiscal year, 100% of which amount was funded by contributed, earned and other revenues of $3.29 million. Net assets at year-end were estimated at $460,000.

Audited figures for the 2010-11 fiscal year will become available in November 2011.

OUR FINANCIALS

During fiscal year 2011, Partners in School Innovation spent 78 cents of each dollar on program services.
THANK YOU

Partners in School Innovation is deeply grateful for the continued support of our long-time funders, and we look forward to forging productive partnerships with our many new donors.

Partners in School Innovation acknowledges those who generously invested in our work between August 1, 2010 and July 31, 2011. Thank you for your demonstrated commitment to providing a high-quality public education for all children.

$300,000+
Applied Materials Foundation

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I work for Partners in School Innovation because I am passionately committed to ensuring that students in low-income areas, in particular African American and Latino students, receive a high quality education that prepares them for success in high school, college and life. I value the true partnerships that we forge with schools and have learned a tremendous amount about school transformation by combining my previous experience as an educator with the PartnersSI approach.

– School Innovation Partner

Imagine a future in which a child’s success in school is not predetermined by skin color, zip code or first language.

Join us to transform America’s public schools today.