



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Schools are a core part of our cities and neighborhoods, inextricably linked to and affected by the surrounding urban environment. Urban issues of disinvestment, poverty, demographic and neighborhood change have had a profound impact on city schools. It is critical to explore this connection since schools have a potentially important role within community development and urban revitalization, and communities can have a significant role within schools to promote and support reform efforts. Developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships are central to this school-community connection.

### **Project Overview**

The Communities & Schools Research Project is a collaboration between the San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD), Urban System Program (USP), the School to Career (STC) Office, UC Berkeley's Department of City Regional Planning and Interactive University Project. Providing students with meaningful work-based learning experiences is central to establishing successful Career Academies. SFUSD seeks to accomplish this in part by encouraging the formation of partnerships between schools and resources in their communities. As one step in this process, the district partnered with a graduate seminar at UC Berkeley taught by Dr. Deborah McKoy and four public high schools to look in detail at their particular communities. The goal was to begin a broad-based dialogue around school and community partnerships, while also thinking about specific ways community resources can support school-to-career programs in these various high schools.

Working primarily with the STC Office and the partner high schools, graduate student teams conducted community-based research to explore how the community can better support local school reform efforts. Several sub-questions addressed included:

- *What are the community supports available around school sites to support STC activities?*
- *What are the communication pathways that exist? What are the barriers?*
- *What is the community perception of the school and what do they want to see?*
- *Who is the community?*

First, the school teams conducted a detailed community profile focusing on community resources and potential partnerships. Second, they developed strategic recommendations and specific strategies for community partnerships. These recommendations were presented to a diverse panel to solicit feedback. The final reports reflect this process of collaborative research, feedback and dialogue.

## Common Themes

While the schools we partnered with represent diverse student populations, distinct school cultures and histories, and very different geographies, some common themes emerged:

### 1. Defining community

- Range of definitions and types of community from the school community, the immediate neighborhood, to the city at large.

### 2. Building sustainable relationships

- Local and district-wide mechanisms for communicating at multiple levels
- Mutually beneficial activities and incentives for both schools and businesses/ organizations to reach out.

### 3. Identifying social and physical barriers to participate in STC activities

- Common language and consistent definitions to talk about core aspects of School-to- Career, e.g. career academies, community partnerships, internships, work-based learning.
- Transportation and physical distances between school, home, jobs.

## Strategic Recommendations

Each school team developed strategic recommendations, based on the collaborative research they conducted and the community profiles developed in the first phase of the research. They generally offer a starting point to begin discussion and action on strengthening and developing partnerships between high schools, particularly career academies, and the broader community. Implementation of these recommendations will require additional resources and support from the SFUSD, teachers, parents, and explicit commitment and understanding of expectations between schools and community partners. These strategic recommendations are summarized in the Introduction and discussed in detail in each school profile.

The four high schools we worked with are: Philip and Sala Burton High School, Galileo Academy of Science and Technology, Abraham Lincoln High School, Mission High School.