

# What Works Clearinghouse



## The New Century High Schools Initiative

**Effectiveness** No studies of the *New Century High Schools Initiative* that fell within the scope of the Dropout Prevention review meet WWC evidence standards. The lack of studies meeting WWC evidence standards means that, at this time, the WWC is unable to draw any conclusions based on research about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of *New Century High Schools*.

### Program Description<sup>1</sup>

The *New Century High Schools Initiative* is a program designed to improve large, underperforming high schools by transforming them into small schools with links to community organizations. *New Century High Schools* each have about 400 students; the small size is intended to foster strong relationships between students and educators. These schools commit to a broad set of educational principles, but are free to make their own choices about curriculum. Typically, schools choose a curriculum that has a theme or career focus, such as engineering, health science, or theater. Each New

Century High School is designed in partnership with a community organization that can participate in curriculum development, school management, after-school activities, or other operational aspects of the school. These organizations include arts and cultural institutions, universities, and social service groups. Partnership with community organizations is intended to bring schools additional expertise and resources related to the school theme or career focus. *New Century High Schools* are expected to maintain benchmarks of 80 percent on-time graduation rates and 92 percent attendance rates.

### The WWC identified 12 studies of the *New Century High Schools Initiative* that were published or released between 1988 and 2008.

Four studies are within the scope of the review and have an eligible design, but do not meet WWC evidence standards.

- Three studies do not establish that the comparison group was comparable to the treatment group prior to the start of the intervention.
- One study only includes outcomes relevant to the review that are measured in a way that is inconsistent with the review protocol.

One study is out of the scope of the review because it has an ineligible study design that does not meet WWC evidence standards. Specifically, it has no comparison group.

Seven studies are out of the scope of the review, as defined by the Dropout Prevention protocol, for reasons other than study design.

- One study does not measure the effect of the *New Century High Schools Initiative* in outcome domains identified in the review protocol.
- Six studies are not studies of the effectiveness of the *New Century High Schools Initiative*.

<sup>1</sup>The descriptive information for this program was obtained from a publicly-available source: the program's website ([www.newvisions.org/schools/nchs](http://www.newvisions.org/schools/nchs), downloaded August 2008). The WWC requests developers to review the program description sections for accuracy from their perspective. Further verification of the accuracy of the descriptive information for this program is beyond the scope of this review.

**References** Studies that fall outside the Dropout Prevention protocol or do not meet evidence standards

- Brand, B. (2005). *Enhancing high school reform: Lessons from site visits to four cities*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine the effectiveness of an intervention.
- Foley, E. M., Klinge, A. & Reisner, R. (2007, revised 2008). *Evaluation of New Century High Schools: Profile of an initiative to create and sustain small, successful high schools*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because the intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent at baseline.
- Galiatsos, S. (2007). *Reforming high schools*. New York, NY: New Visions for Public Schools. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group.
- Hirota, J.M. (2005). *Reframing education: The partnerships strategy and public schools*. New York, NY: Youth Development Institute, Fund for the City of New York with the assistance of New Visions for Public Schools. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine the effectiveness of an intervention.
- Huebner, T. A. (2005). *Rethinking high school: An introduction to New York City's experience*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because the intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent at baseline.
- Huebner, T. A., Calisi Corbett, G. & Phillippo, K. (2006). *Rethinking high school; Inaugural graduations at New York City's new high schools*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because the intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent at baseline.
- Melcher, M. (2006). *New Century High Schools and the small schools movement in New York City*. New York, NY: New Visions for Public Schools. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine the effectiveness of an intervention.
- New Visions for Public Schools with L. Kurgan. (2005). *From large school buildings to small school campuses: Orchestrating the shift*. New York, NY: New Visions for Public Schools. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine the effectiveness of an intervention.
- Policy Studies Associates. (2006). *Evaluation of the New Century High Schools Initiative: Report on the third year*. Washington, DC. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because it only includes outcomes that are over-aligned with the intervention or measured in a way that is inconsistent with the protocol.
- Reisner, E. R., Rubenstein, M. C., Johnson, M. L., & Fabiano, L. (2003). *Evaluation of the New Century High Schools Initiative: Report on program implementation in the first year*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine the effectiveness of an intervention.
- Rubenstein, M. C., Reisner, E. R., Coon, M. J., & Fabiano, L. (2005). *New Century High Schools: Evaluation findings from the second year*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. The study is ineligible for review because it does not include an outcome within a domain specified by the protocol.
- Theroux, K. (2007). *Small schools in the big city: Promising results validate reform efforts in New York City high schools*. Carnegie Reporter, 4(3). New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine the effectiveness of an intervention.