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STREET SCHOOL MODEL REVIEW DEEMED A SUCCESS

Denver, CO –Nearly 40 representatives from high school reform models around the country visited the Denver Street School April 6-8, 2005 to study its effectiveness with students most vulnerable to educational failure.

Representatives from the Big Picture Company, Communities In Schools of Georgia, EdVisions Cooperative, Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), See Forever Foundation & Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools, Diploma Plus, YouthBuild USA, The BERC Group, National League of Cities and Jobs for the Future joined host member National Association of Street Schools for the semi-annual Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) network gathering.

As part of its effort to improve the nation's sagging high school graduation rates, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has supported AHSI, committing \$30 million to creating a network of 150 alternative schools. The schools, based on proven models of success, serve students who struggle to find success in traditional, large, comprehensive high schools.

During the three-day meeting, attendees visited classes, talked with students and alumni and interviewed faculty members. The goal was to assess Denver Street School's effectiveness as an alternative school model and whether recent program modifications had been successful.

With assistance from the National Association of Street Schools (the organization that grew out of the Denver Street School to replicate the Street School model nationwide), DSS leadership made two significant modifications for the 2004-2005 school year. These included instituting a block schedule to allow for students to interact daily with their faculty "advocate," and incorporating a new career transition program called "Career Pathways," which includes personal interest inventories, job shadowing and internships.

"The results of the visit were overwhelmingly positive," said Todd Goble, Vice President of Education for the National Association of Street Schools. "Our fellow AHSI network members are making incredible strides in education, and have developed strong models for meeting the diverse educational needs of America's youth. We were really pleased with the feedback we received from people whose opinions we value highly."

The AHSI network have identified five "distinguishers" key to effective alternative high schools. Evaluators analyzed how DSS demonstrates the following distinguishers:

- 1) Authentic learning, teaching and performance assessment
- 2) Personalized school culture where each student has an individual plan for academic success
- 3) Shared leadership and responsibility
- 4) Supportive partnerships with other community organizations to provide additional social services
- 5) Future focus

“The culture of Denver Street School stands out: helping the students succeed is so engrained in the faculty, and that is where CIS wants to go,” observed Louise Reeves, Vice President & COO of Communities In Schools of Georgia, “The teachers seem to eat, drink and sleep student advocacy.”

Lawrence C. Patrick II, President & CEO of Black Alliance for Educational Options, summarized, "I was impressed with the powerful culture the school has established," adding that every student he spoke to had a clear plan for what they wanted to do after graduation. “It was clear that the Street School is really making a difference in the lives of these young people,” Patrick said. “Truly inspiring.”

Across the country, America's high school graduation rates have stagnated. According to research conducted by the Manhattan Institute, between the ninth and twelfth grades, more than 1 million students will leave school without earning a diploma. For Hispanics and African Americans, the statistics are grimmer, with only 50 percent graduating.

Education still remains a primary means of attaining more equal economic opportunity. According to a 2004 report by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and The Urban Institute, at a minimum adults need a high school diploma if they are to have a reasonable opportunity to earn a living wage. In addition, a community where many parents are dropouts is unlikely to have stable families or social structures. The Alliance for Excellent Education reported in 2002 striking differences in employment rates based on level of education: while 8 in 10 adults with bachelor's degrees are employed, only 4 in 10 high school dropouts are employed.

About Denver Street School

The Denver Street School, founded in 1985 in Denver, Colorado, is a faith-based, alternative secondary school serving troubled youth who have dropped out or been expelled. The Denver Street School is dedicated to the belief that a quality education is the most effective means of transforming many disenfranchised members of society into productive citizens. DSS helps students toward self-sufficiency through education and faith. For more information visit: www.denverstreetschool.com

About the National Association of Street Schools

The National Association of Street Schools (NASS) is working nationwide to meet the needs of at-risk youth by developing a network of schools around the U.S. that provide personalized education, a moral code and tools for self-sufficiency. Founded in 1996 in Denver, Colorado, NASS helps local leaders and school administrators replicate the Street School model in their own communities. NASS has 44 operating member schools nationwide. For more information visit: www.streetschools.com