

Funding to Improve Educational and Vocational Outcomes for At-Risk Youth

For its grants targeting the needs of at-risk youth, the Foundation facilitates partnerships to develop innovative service delivery models and implement evidence-based and promising alternative education programs. Nicholson's specialists collaborate with government agencies, school districts, educational institutions, community organizations, and other foundations in developing these initiatives. They also identify other financial resources and provide technical assistance in applying for these funding opportunities.

For more information on select programs, click on the program title below.

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 - Juvenile Reentry Mentoring and Support Services
 - Replication of the YE²S Center Model
 - Transportation Services

- ❖ Street Warriors—Peace in the Streets (PITS)

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation	
Academy of Educational Development (AED)–Youth Mapping Project	<p>AED provides training and technical assistance to implement Newark’s Youth Mapping Project. Youth in Newark’s Summer Youth Work Experience Program canvas their neighborhoods to collect data on services and supports available in their communities, such as academic and job opportunities and health, mental health and social services. Youth Mapping provides experiences in teamwork, community relations, and data analysis.</p> <p>The information gathered by Newark Youth Mappers is entered into a local website — www.newarkyouthmapping.org — and a national Youth Mapping database and added to a map of the City’s community resources using GPS technology. Youth Mapping is a collaboration of the City of Newark, AED and The Nicholson Foundation.</p>

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Communities in Schools of New Jersey (CISNJ)

Communities in Schools (CIS), a national organization with local chapters, fosters connections between schools and community resources to help young people stay in school and prepare for adulthood. CISNJ focuses on youth in New Jersey, providing services through various centers. The Foundation provides funding for the following CISNJ services.

CISNJ Coordinator for Newark Workforce Development Institute (NWDI) /Performance Learning Center (PLC)

NWDI/PLC is an alternative high school for students who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out. It is a small, non-traditional high school emphasizing personal support and focusing on work-based learning. NDWI/PLC enables its students to complete high school while gaining valuable work experience through employment-based internships for which they receive academic credit. The school, located at the [YE²S Center](#), utilizes self-paced online academic curricula, supported by learning facilitators from the Newark Public Schools Office of Alternative Education. Job readiness training, career exploration, and workplace learning are integrated into the curriculum. Referrals are made for services—such as counseling, health care, and mentoring—needed to support the students’ educational and career goals. The program coordinator from CISNJ manages the day-to-day operations of the school and helps the students with non-academic issues that affect their educational progress.

NWDI/PLC was founded by a partnership of the Newark Public Schools Office of Alternative Education, CISNJ, and The Nicholson Foundation.

CISNJ Job Developer for NWDI/PLC

In addition to academic coursework and other educational activities, [NWDI/PLC](#) students participate in employment-based internships to develop the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. The CISNJ job developer recruits employers that provide internships and other employment opportunities. To ensure the internships are successful, the job developer maintains contact with the employers throughout the academic year. The job developer facilitates linkages with key organizational partners including the Mayor’s Office of Employment and Training and the Newark Public Schools to maximize employment opportunities.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Communities in Schools of New Jersey (CISNJ)

CISNJ Mentoring Success Center

The CISNJ Mentoring Success Center matches youth who are served by the [YE²S Center](#) and other organizations serving at-risk youth with an agency that provides mentors to improve their chances of educational and vocational success. The Mentoring Success Center also provides these agencies with technical assistance on best practices, monitors and coordinates mentoring programs within Essex County, recruits new mentors, and matches each with an appropriate mentoring organization.

In collaboration with the Newark Mentoring Coalition, the CISNJ Mentoring Success Center is developing a web-based mentoring platform that will facilitate the recruitment and placement of mentors, support an interactive on-line mentoring community, and provide updated information on mentoring activities in Essex County.

CISNJ Site Coordinator and Data Management Coordinator for the YE²S Center

The [YE²S Center](#), a one-stop resource for at-risk youth, is a collaborative effort of the Newark Public Schools Office of Alternative Education, CISNJ, Rutgers University, other government and community-based agencies, and The Nicholson Foundation. The CISNJ site coordinator facilitates the integration of services offered by the on-site YE²S Center agencies. The site coordinator also establishes linkages for off-site community-based health and social services necessary to help the students achieve their educational and vocational goals.

The CISNJ data management coordinator oversees the use of the CIS data management system by all education programs and service providers at the YE²S Center. This unified data system facilitates administrative tracking and reporting and is an evaluation tool that helps administrators improve the operation of each program as well as the overall service delivery of the YE²S Center. The data management coordinator is working cooperatively with [Rutgers Center for Women and Work](#) on the evaluation of the YE²S Center.

CISNJ Virtual High School (VHS) Services Coordinator

The [VHS](#) is one of a number of Newark Public Schools' (NPS) alternative education programs that help at-risk youth complete high school. The students use a self-paced, computer-based academic curriculum and receive support from NPS teachers. The CISNJ services coordinator has responsibility for implementing and expanding the VHS, including developing links to health and social service programs to help students overcome obstacles to achieving their educational and vocational goals.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC)

The **New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC)** is the State agency with responsibility for the care and custody of juvenile offenders, the support of local efforts to provide services to at-risk and court-involved youth, and the supervision of youth on juvenile parole.

The New Jersey JJC AmeriCorps Junior Mentoring Program

The New Jersey JJC AmeriCorps Junior Mentoring Program helps youth who have completed one of the JJC’s programs—and demonstrated leadership qualities and a desire for further education—to become junior mentors. Junior mentors provide one-on-one mentoring to juveniles entering JJC-affiliated residential community homes or community programs. The mentors offer the benefit of their experience to help newcomers adjust to the requirements of JJC programs and to take advantage of the services available. The mentoring experience is an opportunity for the junior mentors to make a positive difference, both for their mentees and themselves. Junior mentors also work with community-based agencies by organizing community service projects such as establishing food banks and coordinating neighborhood clean-ups. Along with the support of The Nicholson Foundation, the program receives matching funds from the New Jersey Commission on National & Community Service.

The New Jersey JJC Juvenile Reentry Initiative

The New Jersey JJC Juvenile Reentry initiative is designed to enhance reentry planning for Essex County juveniles incarcerated in JJC facilities. Nicholson Foundation funded social workers train JJC staff to identify a juvenile’s post-incarceration service needs and complete applications for income support and Medicaid benefits. Prior to the juvenile’s release, the JJC staff expedites post-release access to these benefits and makes referrals for needed services, such as health, mental health, substance abuse treatment, job training, and job placement. This pre-release planning ensures that a safety net is available to the juvenile, facilitating a successful transition to the community.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Newark Public Schools (NPS) Office of Alternative Education

NPS Office of Alternative Education (OAE) serves Newark students who are not succeeding in or who have dropped out of NPS's middle and high schools. The OAE develops and operates innovative alternative education programs designed to improve school attendance and academic performance as well as increase the high school graduation rate. The OAE provides students with comprehensive assessments, placements in appropriate education programs, and linkages to needed support services.

NPS Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) Coordinator

An NPS AHSI coordinator is spearheading the planning and implementation of this initiative, which was awarded to Newark by the National League of Cities to expand educational opportunities for at-risk youth. The AHSI-Newark partnership provides technical assistance to the City's educators and community stakeholders, helping them adopt promising school reform models being implemented in other urban settings. The coordinator also works with AHSI and NPS Office of Alternative Education to facilitate professional development for teachers and administrators, strengthen school accountability and evaluation practices, and improve the community's perception of Newark's alternative education programs.

NPS Dropout Prevention Coordinator

To improve the NPS high school graduation rate, the Office of Alternative Education has developed a comprehensive Dropout Prevention Initiative. Each of Newark's middle and high schools has a Dropout Prevention Team that identifies students at risk for dropping out and provides school-based counseling and service referrals to help them stay in school. If the Team is not successful, the Office of Alternative Education is notified. In collaboration with the Dropout Prevention Task Force, the coordinator reaches out to these students, arranges educational and social assessments to determine the most appropriate educational program and other service needs, and facilitates their placement in the alternative program to help them re-engage in school. The coordinator also facilitates in-service training for staff.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Newark Public Schools (NPS) Office of Alternative Education

NPS Educational/Aging-Out Coordinator

NPS is collaborating with the Essex County Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) to improve continuity of education for adolescents in out-of-home placements. The educational/aging-out coordinator, who is located at the [YE²S Center](#), serves as the liaison between NPS and DYFS. The coordinator works to minimize disruptions in the education of youth placed out of their homes and collaborates with DYFS on the development of a comprehensive service plan for those who are aging out of the child welfare system. The coordinator also maintains a central registry of mentoring services and, when indicated, matches adolescents with a mentor.

New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign

In collaboration with America's Promise Alliance—a national organization committed to helping children succeed educationally and vocationally—the State of New Jersey, with the support of NPS Office of Alternative Education, has initiated a year-long New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign to increase the number of New Jersey students graduating from high school. Commencing in the fall of 2008 with a statewide Leadership Symposium and continuing with five Regional Forums, the Campaign brings together stakeholders from government agencies, school districts, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, business groups, and foundations. It encourages collaboration among all stakeholders, facilitates local education reform, and identifies best practices in dropout prevention. The Campaign will culminate at a summit in the fall of 2009 with the goal of reaching a consensus on statewide policy recommendations and specific action plans to support New Jersey's at-risk youth in completing high school and improving their readiness for post-secondary education and employment.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Newark Public Schools (NPS) Office of Alternative Education

NPS Virtual High School (VHS)

The VHS enables youth who have dropped out, are at risk of dropping out, or are unable to attend a traditional school program to complete high school. The students use a computer-based curriculum that allows them to work toward a high school diploma from sites as varied as their homes, alternative high schools, and residential facilities. The core components of the VHS include the use of NovaNET®, which is a self-paced online high school curriculum; the support of learning facilitators; career exploration and job readiness training; and social and supportive services. The Nicholson Foundation is funding an academic coordinator and a guidance counselor as well as infrastructure development.

In the pilot phase of the VHS, teen mothers who are no longer attending school have been provided with laptops allowing them to complete their high school requirements at home, while also receiving weekly in-person support from learning facilitators at the [YE²S Center](#).

The VHS is being implemented by a partnership of the NPS Office of Alternative Education, Communities in Schools of New Jersey, and The Nicholson Foundation.

NPS VHS FutureSelves

The [VHS](#) is incorporating FutureSelves into its on-line program. FutureSelves is an Internet-based curriculum with lesson plans, workbooks, and computerized questionnaires designed to improve students' motivation, performance, and decision-making by helping them become aware of their unique skills, interests, and career goals. FutureSelves is designed to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the work world and to help them discover the role that education plays in that preparation.

NPS VHS Teacher Training and Membership in VHS Network

The [VHS](#) enables at-risk students to complete high school using NovaNET®, a self-paced computer-based curriculum. The students are supported by learning facilitators, who are teachers with the NPS Office of Alternative Education. The Nicholson Foundation is funding training for the facilitators that is designed to improve teaching skills in on-line instruction. The Foundation is also funding membership in the VHS Network, which provides access to an enhanced on-line curriculum by adding electives and advanced placement courses as study options. The expanded curriculum is approved for education credit by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Newark Public Schools (NPS) Office of Alternative Education

NPS Young Women’s Health Support Center (YWHS)

The YWHS Center, which is located at the [YE²S Center](#), works to reduce the number of teens who drop out of school during pregnancy or after giving birth. The YWHS Center is developing an infrastructure to systematically identify pregnant teens and new mothers, to assist them in obtaining needed services including prenatal and post-partum care, and to refer them to appropriate alternative education programs to facilitate their continued school engagement.

NPS Youth Education and Employment Success (YE²S) Center

The YE²S Center is a one-stop resource for Newark’s youth who have dropped out of school, are at-risk of dropping out, or have been referred by the Juvenile Justice System. The Center, which is an integral part of the NPS Office of Alternative Education, provides programs and supports, many of which are located on-site, to help at-risk youth complete high school and prepare for post-secondary education or obtain employment. YE²S participants receive referrals for health and social services to help overcome barriers to achieving their education and career goals. The Nicholson Foundation shares the cost of the rent for the Center with NPS.

The YE²S Center is a partnership of Rutgers University’s Transitional Education and Employment Management (T.E.E.M.) Gateway, which functions as the lead agency; the City of Newark; NPS; Communities in Schools of New Jersey; Essex County; the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission; The Nicholson Foundation; and numerous community-based organizations.

Pearson NovaNET[®]— Enhancement of Newark Public Schools Virtual High School (VHS) for TANF Students

The [VHS](#) enables youth who have not succeeded in or are unable to attend a traditional school to complete high school using NovaNET[®], a self-paced computer-based curriculum. The VHS program is providing laptops to teen mothers to access NovaNET[®] at home to continue their education while caring for their newborns. Since many of these teens are receiving welfare and must participate in a work or education program to receive benefits, the Essex County Department of Citizen Services has approved participation in the VHS as an education activity. Pearson is facilitating the development of a system to transmit documentation of the teens’ participation and progress in VHS courses to the Essex County Department of Citizen Services.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

Rutgers University Center for Women and Work (CWW)—Evaluation and Research Department

The **CWW**, located in Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, focuses on employment-related issues and conducts research on public and workplace policies. The Evaluation and Research Department conducts empirically grounded evaluations of programs that are funded by government agencies and private foundations, such as youth education and training, workforce development, and prisoner reentry.

Pathways to Graduation

Rutgers CWW is conducting research to identify and rank the risk factors associated with students dropping out of Newark’s high schools. The CWW is analyzing retrospective educational and social variables such as age, attendance patterns, family circumstances, grades, and test scores. From these analyses, the researchers will be able to identify the factors that impact graduation rates, develop profiles of different groups of at-risk students, and characterize their needs. This information will enable the Newark Public Schools to develop more effective programs and interventions to improve graduation rates.

Research Evaluation of the YE²S Center, Virtual High School (VHS) and Newark Workforce Development Institute (NWDI)

Rutgers CWW is conducting process and outcome evaluations of three Nicholson-funded initiatives for at-risk youth: the [YE²S Center](#), a one-stop resource center; the [VHS](#), a computerized self-paced distance-learning program; and [NWDI](#), a work-based alternative education program.

The process evaluations are examining the collaboration among the partner agencies involved in each initiative and the experiences of students and staff. The outcome evaluations are assessing the effectiveness of each initiative in improving graduation rates and employment and post-secondary education outcomes and in decreasing recidivism among youth involved with the Juvenile Justice System. Based on the evaluation results, CWW will also report on the best practices in serving Newark’s at-risk youth that may be applicable to other New Jersey urban school districts.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

**Rutgers University
Transitional Educa-
tion and Employment
Management
(T.E.E.M.) Gateway**

T.E.E.M. Gateway is part of the Youth Development component of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. Working with community partners, T.E.E.M. Gateway helps Essex County youth who are involved with the Juvenile Justice System by providing education and employment assistance, juvenile mentoring, and comprehensive support services.

YE²S Center Coordination of Juvenile Justice Services

T.E.E.M. Gateway provides comprehensive services for youth referred to the [YE²S Center](#) by the Juvenile Justice System. The program collaborates with parole and probation officers to support the youths' reentry plans, with the goal of reducing recidivism. T.E.E.M. Gateway social workers conduct comprehensive social and educational assessments, develop individualized service plans, and connect the youth to appropriate education programs, employment preparation services, and needed supports such as health care, counseling, family services, and mentoring.

Coordinator for Newark's Youth Mapping Project

T.E.E.M. Gateway is maintaining and updating the Newark Youth Mapping Project's database to have up-to-date community resource information available to support various youth initiatives at the [YE²S Center](#). The T.E.E.M. Gateway coordinator verifies the data, works with community-based organizations to update resource information, and collaborates with the [Academy of Educational Development](#) to expand Newark's Youth Mapping website.

Juvenile Reentry Mentoring and Support Services

T.E.E.M. Gateway offers comprehensive services at the [YE²S Center](#) to youth referred by the juvenile justice system. In addition, during 2007, T.E.E.M. Gateway managed Nicholson funded mini-grants to six community-based agencies to provide mentoring and support services to help these youths stay in school, find employment, and avoid gang activities. These mini-grants served as incentives for community organizations to collaborate with T.E.E.M. Gateway and the other YE²S Center partners.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

**Rutgers University
Transitional Educa-
tion and Employment
Management
(T.E.E.M.) Gateway**

Replication of the YE²S Center Model

T.E.E.M. Gateway is spearheading the replication of the [YE²S Center](#) model based on its success in Newark. The replication is commencing in Union and Mercer Counties and will expand throughout New Jersey. With the addition of a new site coordinator at the Newark center, the Director has been able to assume a statewide role, coordinating the development of a strategic plan for the expansion of the model in New Jersey, and working closely with local stakeholders to develop and implement additional YE²S Centers.

Transportation Services

As part of its management responsibilities as the lead agency at the [YE²S Center](#), T.E.E.M. Gateway coordinates transportation services for the youth served by the center. Since transporting the youth facilitates their compliance with appointments, van service is available for job interviews, counseling sessions, court appearances, and other program-related activities.

**Street Warriors—
Peace in the Streets
(PITS)**

The Street Warriors' PITS program works with youth who are involved with the Juvenile Justice System and are enrolled in alternative education programs to reduce their gang activities and improve their academic engagement and job opportunities. The youth participate in a community work experience during the summer months and in training/support workshops during the school year. To encourage participation, the youth receive a weekly stipend while in the program. Along with the support of The Nicholson Foundation, the program receives matching funds from the City of Newark.