

## Urban Education Study Tour

### *Exploring Grantmaking Strategies for Urban School Reform in Baltimore, Boston and Pittsburgh*

The Urban Education Study Tour is a unique learning opportunity designed for experienced grantmakers who are currently funding K-12 education reform efforts in urban districts, seeking to learn from other cities engaged in similar initiatives and interested in sharing and exploring new ideas, information and experiences with colleagues to take their work to the next level.

The study tour is organized as a series of three 1-1/2 day gatherings in 2008—one in each of the three participating cities—that include conversations with local education leaders and grantmakers. Through dialogue with key players involved with the work, participants will analyze each district's reform strategies and the ways that education grantmakers are engaging in the reform process, while comparing and contrasting lessons from related strategies led by grantmakers working in other cities. Study tour participants are expected to attend all three gatherings, and to help to organize the gathering in their city.

The study tour will include groups of up to 10 funders from each of the three host cities (Baltimore, Boston and Pittsburgh), as well as up to 10 experienced urban K-12 grantmakers from other cities across the country. Total registration is limited to 40 participants to enhance discussion opportunities and provide continuity across the meetings.

This project is designed to strengthen participant's efforts to improve urban school systems by:

- Providing an in-depth comparative analysis of the significant reform strategies, challenges and successes as they vary across the three cities.
- Generating a deeper understanding of the roles that grantmakers can play to effectively advance education reform.
- Highlighting different models for how groups of funders work together to advance reform in their community.
- Offering participants the chance for peer feedback and advice on their local efforts, while also exposing them to different approaches from other cities.

Study Tour participants will be exposed to a range of roles and models for how grantmakers can effectively impact education reform, capturing valuable lessons for their craft. For grantmakers from the three focus cities, this program will bring a source of outside perspective and counsel, offering the chance for peer feedback and advice on their local efforts, while also exposing them to different approaches from other cities. For grantmakers from other cities, the program offers a nuanced behind-the-scenes look at both the specific education reform strategies and the ways that grantmakers engaged with districts in the reform process.

By sharing what's worked—promising practices, successes and learning across sites—as well as exploring setbacks and challenges, your individual understanding will deepen as the group's knowledge grows.

#### **Program Details**

**Meeting dates:** Baltimore, April 2-3, 2008  
Boston, June 3-4, 2008  
Pittsburgh, September 9-10, 2008

**Cost:** \$300 per individual plus travel and lodging

**Registration Timing:** Registration opens Monday, December 17, and the deadline is January 15, 2008; space is limited, and we will consider the order in which applications are received.

Register online at:

<http://www.edfunders.org/programs/listevent.asp?id=195>

**Who should register?** Experienced grantmakers who are currently supporting reform strategies in an urban school district, and who can commit to participating in all 3 meetings. If interest exceeds program capacity, we will consider the order in which applications were received, the applicant's experience, and for funders working outside the 3 focus cities we will give priority to GFE members.

Participants will act as both teachers and learners by offering questions, feedback, and advice as well as uncovering their assumptions about their change efforts. The relationships built during the Study Tour can be tapped for learning and exchange long after the study tour ends.

This program is a pilot effort that was designed by the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers and Grantmakers for Education and developed in collaboration with Associated Grant Makers and representatives from the Heinz Endowments and the Pittsburgh Foundation. Depending on the feedback we receive during the program, we may organize future study tours in other cities, and/or with other issues as the program focus.

To create an effective peer learning experience, we are trying to assemble a group of funders that provides a rich mix of experiences and perspectives to contribute to one another's learning. The program registration form (which will be posted on Monday, December 17 at <http://www.edfunders.org/programs/listevent.asp?id=195>) will include a few brief application questions to help us learn more about your experiences and interests. If demand for the program exceeds the program's capacity, we will consider the order in which applications were received, the applicant's experiences and interests, and—for funders working outside the 3 focus cities—we will give priority to GFE members. On the registration form, applicants should provide brief responses to the following questions:

1. Please describe briefly the experience you have acquired working in urban school reform (noting which city/cities you worked in and whether your role was as a grantmaker or an educator).
2. What lessons or insights do you feel that you can offer to others in the study tour?
3. Which 1-2 education issues do you most want to discuss with your colleagues? Which 1-2 grantmaking issues or challenges do you most hope to discuss?

The three cities were chosen because they offered valuable learning opportunities about how philanthropy can engage with districts in education reform, and because they were roughly comparable in student and district characteristics. A brief profile of each district is provided in an accompanying document (Profile of Study Tour Districts).

Please note: the program registration fee of \$300 is to be paid in full upon registering for the program. The fee is intended to help underwrite the costs for the three city convenings, and it is considered a lump sum tuition for the program (and thus will not be pro-rated for participants who cannot attend one of the three gatherings). Program registrants may cancel their registration with a \$30 processing fee before January 31, 2008; after that the registration fee is non-refundable.

### **What to expect on the Study Tour:**

The agenda for each meeting will be developed by grantmakers from the local site working with the project coordinator. While each gathering's agenda will highlight some of the most significant education issues and challenges of that particular district, the discussions will also be responsive to the issues prioritized by the broader group of study tour participants. Each meeting will include an examination of the local district's reform efforts, informed by district officials and other key actors, an examination of the role of grantmakers and the relationship of philanthropy to the reform work, and a broader discussion of how the highlighted education issues or strategies are playing out in other cities.

Before departing for each meeting, you will receive an agenda and selected readings to provide a context for your learning experience. Each stop on the tour will begin over lunch with a briefing on the education reform effort to-date and a meeting and dialogue with key actors in the city's reform effort. Day one concludes with a group dinner. Activities on day two may include a site visit, small and large group conversations and comparisons of how specific reform strategies or challenges play out in different urban contexts. We will end each day reflecting on lessons learned. The Study Tour will end at lunchtime on the second day.