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**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND WORK AHEAD**

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The NAS designs are attempting to change the academic lives of students and the professional lives of teachers in difficult environments. The baseline information provided here shows clearly that the NAS design teams began assisting some very challenged schools when they started implementing the designs during NAS's scale-up phase. For the most part, NAS designs entered schools that were primarily urban, low-performing, poor, and minority.

The NAS schools also have more difficult climates than most of the nation's schools do. In comparing the NAS school climate indicators to a national sample, we find that NAS principals report greater problems related to diverse student populations—poverty, difficulty with the English language, racial tension, and school readiness. The schools in which the NAS designs were being implemented were also facing challenges associated with engaging students and teachers (as indicated by student and teacher absenteeism, student verbal abuse, and student disrespect of teachers).

The vast majority of the NAS schools are in low-performing, urban districts. For the most part, except in Washington State, the NAS designs entered schools that were performing at or below the district average on the mandated tests administered in each jurisdiction. In short, the NAS designs are not assisting a set of socially or academically advantaged schools. Rather, the schools being assisted are facing significant challenges.

Whether designs and the assistance they provide to these schools improve the educational opportunities and outcomes for the students is a crucial question. To address this question, our assessment,

described in this report, is drawing on a variety of data, indicators, and analyses. Blending these together is a difficult and analytically complex undertaking. However, examining the relationships among implementation, school and student performance, and related social and organizational factors is critical for understanding comprehensive school reform and its promise for our nation's future.