With high expectations, New American Schools (NAS) launched its efforts for whole-school reform in 1991. In an ambitious attempt to overcome the piecemeal approach to school reform that had largely proven ineffective, NAS aimed to develop, support, and disseminate “break the mold” school designs across the nation. As a private nonprofit organization, NAS’s mission is to help schools and districts significantly raise the achievement of large numbers of students with both whole-school designs and the assistance that design teams provide during the implementation process.

This initiative is based on the premise that high-quality schools are established with external providers (design teams) providing assistance to schools for implementing designs:

A Design Team is an organization that provides high-quality, focused, ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators organized around a meaningful and compelling vision of what students should know and be able to do. The vision, or design, offers schools a focus for their improvement efforts, along with guidance in identifying what students need to know and be able to do and how to get there. (New American Schools Development Corporation, 1997, p. 6.)

Glennan (1998, p. 11) describes a design further saying that it “articulates the school’s vision, mission, and goals; guides the instructional program of the school; shapes the selection and socialization of the staff; and establishes common expectations for per-
formance, behavior, and accountability among students, teachers, and parents."

NAS is currently in the scale-up phase of its effort in which the designs are being widely diffused in partnering jurisdictions across the nation. NAS’s strategy for scale-up was based on the belief that school transformation could only take place with strong district support. At the beginning of the scale-up phase, NAS sought to partner with jurisdictions that would commit to five-year partnerships with NAS and the design teams to create a supportive environment for schoolwide reform. At the beginning of its scale-up phase in 1995, NAS partnered with ten jurisdictions: Cincinnati, Dade, several districts in Kentucky, Maryland, Memphis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, San Antonio, San Diego, and several districts in Washington State. All of these jurisdictions insisted that the participating schools meet district or state standards and that students be assessed against district and state mandated tests.

As NAS entered the scale-up phase, there were seven design teams:

- Audrey Cohen College [AC] (currently renamed Purpose-Centered Education);
- Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students [AT];
- Co-NECT Schools [CON];
- Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound [EL];
- Modern Red Schoolhouse [MRSH];
- National Alliance for Restructuring Education [NARE] (currently renamed America’s Choice Design Network); and
- Roots & Wings [RW].

While each design has unique features, the designs tend to emphasize school change in the following areas: organization and governance; teacher professional development; content and performance standards; curriculum and instructional strategies; and parent and community involvement.
The purposes and approaches of NAS and its design teams are the same as those for “schoolwide” Title I programs\(^1\) and the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program also known as Obey-Porter.\(^2\)

These two programs are targeted to improve performance of high-poverty schools. Each intends to improve student and school performance of low-performing schools through schools adopting a unified, coherent approach rather than adding fragmented programs or investing in personnel dedicated to a small group of students in pullout programs. Each intends to serve all students, not just subgroups of students. Thus, findings on NAS and its attempts at whole-school change can help inform the need for policy improvement for the many schools serving low-income students through the Title I and the CSRD programs.

**LONGITUDINAL EVALUATION OF SCALE-UP OF NAS DESIGNS**

Since its establishment in 1991, NAS contracted with RAND to provide analytical support. In 1995, RAND began an evaluation of the

\(^1\)“Schoolwide” programs, available for funding since 1988, allow schools to use Title I money with other dollars to improve school performance as opposed to targeting Title I money solely to qualified students. The 1994 Improving America’s Schools Act encourages more wide-range adoption of schoolwide programs (see American Association of School Administrators, 1995; http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA). Currently, schools can use their Title I funding to improve the entire instructional program throughout the school if at least 50 percent of the students within the school are from poor families. (For a discussion of the 1994 Improving America’s Schools Act, see U.S. Department of Education, 1993; and Borman et al., 1996).

\(^2\)To further the implementation of comprehensive, whole-school reforms, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRD), also known as Obey-Porter, was established in November 1997. These appropriations committed $145 million to be used to help schools develop comprehensive school reform based on reliable research and effective practices. The majority (83 percent in FY98 and 77 percent in FY99) of the funds are committed to Title I schools. Part of the money ($25 million in FY98 and FY99) was available to all public schools, including those ineligible for Title I, as part of the Fund for the Improvement in Education (FIE) program. Approximately 1,800 schools will receive at least $50,000 per year for three years under the CSRD program, beginning in FY98. There was an increase of $75 million for FY00 ($50 million in Title I/Section 1502 funds and $25 million in FIE funds) over the $145 million appropriated for FY98 and FY99, which will allow 1,000 additional schools to undertake comprehensive reform (see Kirby, Berends, et al., in review; http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform).
scale-up of NAS designs to many schools. This longitudinal evaluation of the scale-up phase covers years 1995 to 2000 and addresses three major questions:

- What is the level of implementation in NAS schools?
- What impedes or facilitates that implementation?
- Does the adoption of NAS designs result in any changes to student and school outcomes?

Over this time period, RAND’s program of studies has included:

- A longitudinal sample of over 100 NAS schools that began implementing early on in the scale-up phase, for which data on implementation and performance were gathered from principals, teachers, and districts (Berends, Kirby, et al., 2001);³
- Case studies in 40 schools to analyze implementation and the role that districts play in impeding or enabling comprehensive school reform (Bodilly, 1998);
- A description of how designs have evolved from the initial proposal stage to implementing at scale in real schools across the nation (Bodilly, 2001);
- Analyses in one urban school district of how designs promote changes in classroom instruction, teaching, and learning, and individual-level student achievement scores (Berends, Stockly, and Briggs, forthcoming);
- A case study analysis of what factors contribute to performance differences in high-implementing NAS sites; and
- Ongoing discussions with NAS staff and design team leaders.

³In addition, because the longitudinal sample focused on early-implementing schools, RAND collected data from a freshened sample of schools that began implementing NAS designs after 1995–1996. However, only four jurisdictions—Cincinnati, Memphis, San Antonio, and Washington—agreed to participate in this data collection effort, and 46 schools in these jurisdictions responded to the principal and teacher surveys. Although we analyzed data from these schools, the analyses did not change the results from those reported here substantially. Thus, these schools are not included in this report.
The original group of schools selected for the longitudinal study consisted of those schools initiating implementation of NAS designs in eight jurisdictions that NAS named as its partners during scale-up in either 1995–1996 or 1996–1997. These eight jurisdictions include: Cincinnati, Dade, Kentucky, Memphis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, and Washington State. These jurisdictions reflect a range of support for implementation—from relatively supportive to no support at all (see Bodilly, 1998).

At the beginning of scale-up, there were 184 schools that were implementing the NAS designs in these jurisdictions. These schools were the focus of the longitudinal evaluation, although the final sample of schools analyzed was smaller than this because of nonresponse, panel attrition, and schools dropping the designs.

A variety of data was collected to monitor the progress in implementation and performance in the NAS sites: (a) teacher surveys administered to all the teachers in the NAS schools; (b) principal phone interviews that took about an hour each to complete; (c) data provided by districts on school performance indicators (e.g., mandated test scores, attendance rates, promotion and drop out rates, and school demographic characteristics), and (d) site visits to schools and school districts to gather information through interviews and focus groups about district and school administrators’ and teachers’ reports of the progress of the NAS initiative.

Survey data were collected in 1997, 1998, and 1999, and provide information two, three, and four years after the scale-up. In addition, in 1999, schools that had dropped the design in either 1998 or 1999 were surveyed regarding the reasons for the decision. About 30 schools responded.

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4At the time we decided on the longitudinal sample of schools, Maryland and San Diego were not far enough along in their implementation to warrant inclusion in RAND’s planned data collection efforts. Since then, several of the design teams report that they are implementing in Maryland and San Diego.

5It is difficult to calculate an attrition rate (i.e., schools that dropped the design as a percentage of the total sample) for the sample as a whole. Some schools that did not respond may well have dropped the design. Out of the 184 schools at the beginning of scale-up and excluding the 12 Pittsburgh schools that were later dropped from the study, at least 41 out of 172 schools had dropped the design, giving us a lower-bound attrition rate of approximately 24 percent.
As mentioned above, these quantitative data were complemented by interviews of key decisionmakers in the different jurisdictions undertaken in 1997 through 1999 to gather information about district-level policy changes and their effects on NAS implementation and outcomes. Incorporating the interview and focus group information provides a richer description of what has happened in the NAS schools and districts.

PURPOSE OF CURRENT REPORT

This report is one of two reports following the progress of schools in the longitudinal sample. The first report (Berends, Kirby, et al., 2001) analyzed implementation and performance in this group of schools three years after scale-up. This report is a follow-on to the earlier report, and provides a longitudinal (and final) look at the progress in implementation of designs four years after scale-up.

In particular, we address the following sets of research questions:

1. What is the mean level of implementation of NAS designs across this set of early implementing NAS schools four years after scale-up? Has implementation increased over time? Does implementation differ by jurisdiction and design team?

2. Has implementation deepened over time across schools, as measured by the change in the within-school and between-school variance of reported implementation levels?

3. What are the factors—in terms of teacher, school, design team, and district characteristics—that help explain the variation in implementation across schools and jurisdictions?

4. Among schools that dropped the NAS designs and for which we have data, what factors contributed to this decision?

The analyses that follow focus solely on schools that were part of NAS’s strategy to build partnerships with districts to diffuse the designs to a large number of schools (i.e., scale-up). What follows, then, is a report on NAS’s scale-up strategy. It is not a report on individual design teams’ efforts. The designs have been implemented across the nation in many other schools than those examined here. While we present some comparisons among designs, we are more in-
interested in understanding the progress in implementation within the jurisdictions that partnered with NAS at the beginning of the scale-up phase. Understanding how district, design team, school, and teacher factors contribute to implementation and early performance trends provides important lessons for comprehensive school reform efforts across the nation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to understand the limitations of our sample and findings drawn from analyses of this sample of schools. For many of the design teams, these were the first schools to which they had provided assistance with implementing their designs on a fee-for-service basis. In addition, at the beginning of scale-up in 1995 most of the design teams reported to RAND that their designs were still unfinished. As a result, the early years of implementation on which we report saw many changes in both the designs and the assistance provided as the teams and the schools gained experience.

The strategy that NAS developed for scale-up (New American Schools Development Corporation, 1997) focused on a small number of jurisdictions that persuaded NAS that they possessed what NAS called supportive operating environments in which the designs could be implemented. In fact, for the most part these districts did not possess such environments. They had limited understanding of whole-school reform and the sort of design-based assistance that NAS design teams were intending to provide. The districts, NAS, and the design teams collectively and individually invented procedures and policies for design teams and the assistance they provided as the implementation unfolded. For example, districts varied widely in the processes set up for matching schools and designs, the contracts set up with designs, the services to be acquired, and the ways they monitored implementation of the designs (Bodilly and Berends, 1999; Bodilly, 1998).

In short, the early years of scale-up continued to be a time of uncertainty. There was some chaos and a great deal to be learned on the part of NAS, designs, districts, and schools. Thus, this report documents experiences that may differ from those of schools beginning implementation today. NAS and the design teams might have matured in large part because of the lessons learned about the ways in
which jurisdictions, design teams, and schools must work together (Bodilly and Berends, 1999; Bodilly, 1998).

While the fact that designs were evolving over time as they gained experience and adapted to local contexts makes a longitudinal evaluation difficult, we believe that the information obtained in following these schools still offers valuable lessons, particularly for CSRD schools adopting a variety of school-reform models in many differing environments.

Thus, when interpreting the findings in this report, it is important to keep in mind these features of the population of schools we have studied.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report provides an update of the earlier study (Berends, Kirby, et al., 2001). The conceptual framework that forms the underpinning for the analyses in the earlier report as well as the current report is discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three provides details of the RAND longitudinal sample of NAS schools, and presents a brief description of these schools in terms of their demographic and school climate characteristics. Chapter Four presents an analysis, by jurisdiction and design team, of two summary implementation indicators. These implementation indicators are then analyzed in Chapter Five using multivariate models to tease out the net effect of various teacher, school, and implementation factors, controlling for other variables. Chapter Six provides a brief overview of findings from the exit interviews conducted with principals of 30 schools that reported dropping the design. Chapter Seven summarizes the results and their policy implications.

The appendixes provide additional detail regarding the core elements of designs and the derivation of the longitudinal analysis sample.

The analyses in this report offer both useful and provocative insights that will help inform the NAS effort and larger federal efforts to implement comprehensive school reform in low-performing schools.