A young green plant sprout with two leaves is growing out of dark, rich soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with a clear blue sky. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the soil and the vibrant green of the plant.

Taking Root

THE JOYCE FOUNDATION 2008



ENVIRONMENT

Around the lakes

To preserve and protect a healthy and vibrant natural environment in the Great Lakes region, Joyce has collaborated with a diverse network of partners to drive progressive policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels. Using sound science and a variety of perspectives from those living and working around the Great Lakes, we have joined with our grantees to: help secure a cleaner energy future for the Midwest; combat climate change; and protect and restore the waters in and around the Great Lakes.

These projects are complex and require both persistence and patience. But, persistence often pays off, as demonstrated when a significant milestone was finally reached this year with the passage of the Great Lakes Compact.

In the late 1990s, proposals to export water to other parts of the U.S. and foreign countries, localized water shortages, and the threat posed by climate change raised concerns about protecting the region's freshwater resources. So, an unlikely coalition of mayors, governors, anglers, campers, bird-watchers, scientists, environmentalists, and citizens came together to protect the Great Lakes. The result is the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. After winning approval from eight Great Lakes state legislatures, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, and two Canadian provinces, the Compact was ultimately signed into law by President George W. Bush.

LOOKING AHEAD Our grantees are now working within each state to help implement the Compact and develop the policies that will protect and conserve the Great Lakes.



EMPLOYMENT

On the job

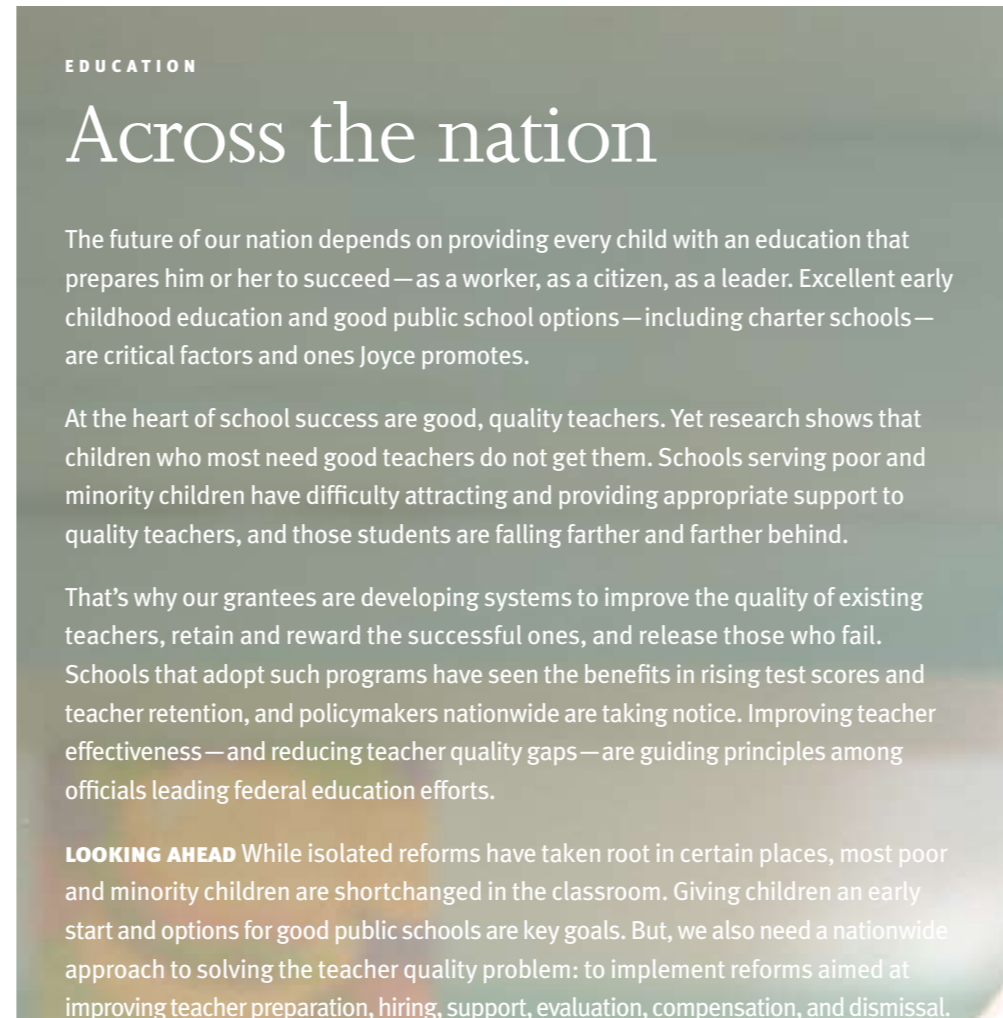
In the last decade, our nation's approach to poverty and joblessness was to find low-income workers a job...any job.

Yet, research revealed an alarming fact: many workers, though working full-time, were earning such low wages that they were still impoverished. But, if those low-income workers acquired additional education and training, they were able to advance their careers and lift themselves out of poverty.

With that knowledge, we went to work. Our grantees launched state and federal advocacy initiatives to educate policymakers that education and training pays off. We supported efforts to demonstrate how access to education and training can have a positive impact on workers' careers, employers' productivity, and local communities.

Ten years after we began these efforts, the nation's approach is shifting to make education and training a priority. Federal funding is becoming available to ensure workers have the right tools to move ahead.

LOOKING AHEAD The current downturn in the economy has shed new light on and given urgency to the need for increased access to and success in education and training. Now is the time to ensure that American workers and the businesses that employ them are focused on increasing the education and skill levels of our citizens.



EDUCATION

Across the nation

The future of our nation depends on providing every child with an education that prepares him or her to succeed—as a worker, as a citizen, as a leader. Excellent early childhood education and good public school options—including charter schools—are critical factors and ones Joyce promotes.

At the heart of school success are good, quality teachers. Yet research shows that children who most need good teachers do not get them. Schools serving poor and minority children have difficulty attracting and providing appropriate support to quality teachers, and those students are falling farther and farther behind.

That's why our grantees are developing systems to improve the quality of existing teachers, retain and reward the successful ones, and release those who fail. Schools that adopt such programs have seen the benefits in rising test scores and teacher retention, and policymakers nationwide are taking notice. Improving teacher effectiveness—and reducing teacher quality gaps—are guiding principles among officials leading federal education efforts.

LOOKING AHEAD While isolated reforms have taken root in certain places, most poor and minority children are shortchanged in the classroom. Giving children an early start and options for good public schools are key goals. But, we also need a nationwide approach to solving the teacher quality problem: to implement reforms aimed at improving teacher preparation, hiring, support, evaluation, compensation, and dismissal.



GUN VIOLENCE

In our neighborhoods

Each day in America more than 80 people die from gun homicide, suicide, and unintentional shootings, and nearly 200 more are wounded. The proliferation of guns and gun violence is devastating to our families and our neighborhoods.

Strong law enforcement is clearly a critical factor when it comes to criminal activity, but our grantees also view gun violence as a matter of public health, and believe that violence prevention is a major priority. At the state level, they are bringing many voices to the discussion—faith-based groups, police chiefs, mayors, and the medical community—in an effort to develop new ways to prevent firearm death and injury.

Researchers are working to expand access to data that can inform prevention strategies, demonstrating the effectiveness of new tactics to address illegal gun trafficking, and breaking ground in understanding the dangerous link between access to guns and suicide. In addition, our grantees are supporting efforts to defend constitutionally-permissible gun regulations.

LOOKING AHEAD Tragically, gun violence continues to take a toll on our communities. For this reason, Joyce is committed to continuing to support state-based advocacy for policies to reduce the lethality of firearms and easy access to illegal guns, research targeted at keeping firearms away from dangerous individuals, and legal strategies to counteract future attacks on reasonable gun laws.



On the web

Whether around the lakes, on the job, across the nation, in our neighborhoods, around the region, or on the stage, the Joyce Foundation and its grantees are working hard to positively affect the lives of families in the Great Lakes region.

While this Annual Report Overview provides a brief look at the work we have accomplished, more in-depth program and financial information can be found online. Read our 2008 Annual Report in its entirety at WWW.JOYCEFDN.ORG/AR.