High Schools for the New Millennium: An ACT initiative

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The ACT Department of Education and Community Services, like many education systems worldwide, faces the issue of alienation of students in their adolescent years. In the ACT, the years 7-10 structure of the high schools makes this a particularly crucial time on which to intervene. This paper reports on the policy paper which gave direction to the intervention and the processes of school-focussed reform which were undertaken. Alongside several other states, the ACT has taken the step of promoting a set of new essential areas of learning as providing direction for their high school reform: critical literacies (reading the world), building community, access to a wide range of ethical, environmental and cultural heritages and real life research & futures study. The rationale for this approach, and the research circles involving schools will be outlined and discussed in the context of other contemporary school reform movements.