

New York City Collaborative Overview Brief for Grad Nation Action Forum September 2009

New York City has established a portfolio of schools and programs that is sharply reducing the number of young people who drop out of high school and increasing the number who attain a high school diploma and embark on a pathway to post-secondary, career, and life success. Community-based organizations with experience and expertise in youth development are partners in this effort. Key elements of New York City's strategy are highlighted below.

▪ **DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

As part of the overall reform efforts, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) engaged the Parthenon Group to analyze student data on the over-age, under-credited (OA-UC) population and to develop strategies for both increasing the number of viable options for this population and reengaging the *additional* 70,000 youth who were disconnected from the public school system altogether. The data collection and analysis followed a four-step process:

- 1) Sizing the challenge:** NYC developed a clear picture of the problem, determining the size and demographics of the OA-UC population and their segmentation by age and number of credits earned toward graduation.
- 2) Profiling the target population:** NYC profiled the OA-UC student population by analyzing their progression in high school; determining the effect of incoming skill levels on their success; calculating the overlap with Special Education and English Language Learner students; and measuring graduation rates. Analysis showed when, why, and how students get off track.
- 3) Identifying effective options and closing failing programs and schools:** NYC developed recuperative options with the intent of graduating OA-UC students by studying their enrollment patterns, assessing students served by alternative options, and calculating graduation rates for OA-UC students by program type. They asked, "What works to prevent young people from getting off-track?" and "What schools/programs are not working?"
- 4) Evaluating strategic options:** After considering all strategic options based on this data and potential barriers to expansion, NYC created:
 - Preventative options, including the new small schools, Small Learning Communities (SLCs), and closure of failing schools
 - Recuperative options (see next section for descriptive information), including Transfer Schools, new GED models, Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs), work-based Learning-to-Work (LTW) component, split up of large comprehensive schools, and closure of failing schools.

Strategies moving forward

Refine school-based accountability tools to help schools and programs track progress with diverse secondary options: New York City has created gold standard monitoring and accountability tools to help schools measure their impact on student outcomes. Progress reports summarize the extent to which individual students progress relative to prior performance and compared to similar students in other schools. Stakeholder surveys ask

teachers, families, and students to report their satisfaction on various components of the school. NYC is committed to holding high standards of performance for all of its students, but recognizes that accountability tools need to be refined for programs and schools that serve OA-UC students. This work was begun by tailoring progress reports for Transfer Schools and customizing their quality review process.

Continue building the capacity of school leaders and teachers to use data to drive change:

This data-driven work in New York City is helping leaders use progress reports and quality reviews to make decisions about everything from staffing to curriculum. Also, teachers are being trained to use student-level data to guide decisions about expanding and implementing small, successful, innovative changes.

Conduct frequent system-level analysis to make policy changes and portfolio adjustments:

The initial Department of Education data analysis provided a road map to launch the first phase of NYC’s secondary reform. It will be critical to conduct ongoing data analysis to determine the effectiveness of current systems and options that are in place.

Challenges and opportunities in expanding this strategy

The current challenge is finding the resources to support continued expansion: ongoing analysis of data collection system and accountability tools, and technical expertise to provide support for school leaders and teachers on data analysis and how to translate the analytic findings into changing teachers’ instructional practices.

▪ **OPTIONS FOR OVER-AGE AND UNDER-CREDITED STUDENTS**

The increasing academic rigor required for today’s high school diploma and broad structural changes in the labor market point to the critical importance for all students to finish high school with strong academic and employment skills and connections to jobs. In response, in September 2005 the NYC DOE developed a comprehensive recuperative strategy to increase graduation rates of nearly 140,000 OA-UC¹ students in New York City. The new school and program models, developed by the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG), take the innovative approach of successfully integrating rigorous academic recuperation with principles of youth development in partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that implement the Learning to Work program and provide wrap-around supports for students. Citywide, this recuperative strategy has the capacity to serve 12,000 new students. Since the beginning of the initiative in September 2005, 10,629 students have graduated from Multiple Pathways schools and programs.

The models include:

Transfer Schools

- Diploma-granting high schools for students who have already been enrolled in a NYC high school and have dropped out or fallen behind in credit accumulation
- 4,510 new seats at 25 LTW Transfer Schools, 40 Transfer Schools citywide

Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs)

¹ An over-age and under-credited student is defined as a student who is two or more years behind his/her expected age and credit accumulation in high school.

- Small learning environments with flexible evening and afternoon scheduling that support students with some credit accumulation in earning a diploma
- 5,450 new seats at 21 LTW YABCs, 23 YABCs citywide

Full-time and part-time GED programs

- Programs that prepare students who are far from completing graduation requirements to excel on the GED exam before they age out of the system at age 21
- Increased program capacity to serve older, high-needs students
- 950 new seats at 10 LTW GED sites

Accelerated Achievement High School (AAHS)

- Designed for over-age, under-prepared entering ninth graders, this model features a tiered approach to literacy and uses technology to differentiate instruction. The first school of this model opened this fall.

Learning to Work (LTW) (work-based component embedded in programs above)

- CBO partners provide opportunities for youth to re-engage with school while exploring connections between academic work and future career outcomes; CBO partners support student achievement and social/emotional growth with attendance outreach, individual and group counseling, tutoring, employability skills training, job development, and paid work experiences connected to school performance
- 4,955 internship slots currently funded

Strategies moving forward

This research and best practice-driven innovation at the intersection of academic standards and workforce readiness provides the platform for the creation of new models that reconnect older students to school, work, and economic viability. To continue to meet the demand to serve the remaining 110,000 OA-UC students in New York City, we propose to:

Increase the number of seats for OA-UC students and over-aged entering 9th graders through the creation of new schools and programs focusing on post-secondary success and 21st century skills.

Improved quality of services through the support and improvement in the quality of student support structures and educational experiences of OA-UC students in recuperative schools and programs.

Knowledge-sharing and serving as a resource and national model.

Leadership development through provision of targeted leadership training for new, prospective leaders of programs and schools for OA-UC students.

Challenges and opportunities in expanding this strategy

This current strategy has a proven record of success. To move forward and expand the number of seats, we face the interconnected challenges of identifying and obtaining funds for the development and implementation of new schools and programs and building capacity within schools and CBO partners to take on this innovative recuperative work.

▪ FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Full-service community schools are a strategic response to the realities that far too many children face (high early chronic absenteeism, lack of adequate medical, dental and mental health care, little or nothing to do in the out-of-school hours) by effectively and efficiently addressing barriers to school success so that children are prepared to learn. Through deep collaborations between schools and partner organizations, full-service community schools organize existing and new resources by leveraging the human and financial assets of the education and human services sectors and communities and families themselves. New York City has been a pioneer and leader in the full-service community schools movement since its inception.

What distinguishes the full-service community schools strategy is that all of the services and opportunities provided by partners are coordinated with each other and integrated into the life of the school. The coordination is usually done by a lead partner that both provides services and brokers relationships with other partners. The full array of services is provided through partnerships with CBOs and other community institutions such as universities and health care providers. While no two full-service community schools are exactly alike, all community schools share some core principles. They:

- Are open most of the time (before and after school, evenings, vacations, summers) and integrate school curriculum with after-school, weekend, and summer enrichment programs (some also integrate early childhood education and services, such as Pre-K and home visitation programs);
- Provide multiple opportunities for parents to be involved in the school;
- Provide school-based or school-linked medical, dental, and mental health services; and
- Offer social and educational services for families and community members.

Some prominent models of community schools are The Children’s Aid Society Community Schools and The Harlem Children’s Zone’s Promise Academy. Other organizations are doing important work in providing the programmatic components of the full-service school strategy such as expanded Beacons which include foster care prevention programs, such as those operated by Good Shepherd Services, and other models of out-of-school time programs, school-based health centers, early childhood programs, service learning programs and parent engagement programs. Research has demonstrated that full-service schools increase attendance (both student and teacher), engage parents and improve student achievement.² Additionally, evaluations have shown that school-based health clinics result in the provision of cost-effective medical care that can improve attendance and help prevent dropouts³, asthma initiatives are correlated with reductions in asthma symptoms and improved asthma management and attendance by students with asthma⁴, after-school programs improve

² Coalition for Community Schools Research Brief: http://communityschools.org/CCSDocuments/CCS_Research_Report2009.pdf. See also The Children’s Aid Society/Board of Education Community Schools: Third-Year Evaluation Report, 1999, by Anthony Cancelli (Fordham University Graduate School of Education) and Ellen Brickman, Arturo Sanchez and Glenda Rivera (Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service).

³ Larsen, C, et al 2009. “A Comparison of Urban School-and Community-Based Dental Clinics” American School Health Association: Journal of School Health Vol. 79, No. 3.

⁴ Nicholas, SW, et al 2005. “Reducing Childhood Asthma through Community-Based Service Delivery – New York City, 2001-2004, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report” *Washington, DC: Center on Disease Control Vol. 54, No. 1.*

student achievement⁵, and toddlers who complete high-quality early childhood education programs score school-ready on nationally-normed assessments.⁶

Challenges and opportunities in expanding this strategy

There are multiple examples of schools and community partners working together to improve student outcomes in schools across New York City. Too often, a school has multiple partners and the work of the partners is not coordinated with each other or with the school's core mission. Full-service community schools demand that adults from the education and human service sectors work together and share accountability for a shared set of results for children. We need to build the capacity of CBOs and schools to work together towards this end.

Early warning signs of children in trouble often appear long before high school when struggling students are most likely to drop out. One such sign is elementary school attendance. During the 2007-2008 school year, 90,000 NYC children in grades K-5 missed a month or more of school.⁷ Community schools are one comprehensive strategy to respond to the pressing issue of chronic early absenteeism because, once identified, the problem can be addressed through an appropriate intervention – be it a medical, child welfare, safety, mental health, or housing – by leveraging the resources of both schools and their partners.

This strategy can be further leveraged by targeting a cohort of schools with high early chronic absenteeism rates to become community schools. This means identifying and building the capacity of schools and partners to work together and raising the additional funds required to support this work. Goals for this collaborative work include:

- Development of set of indicators and shared outcomes around chronic early absenteeism
- Sharing and using data across sectors by schools and partners to identify families and intervention plans (respecting all FERPA and HIPA laws)
- Reducing the number of children who are chronically absent at targeted schools

▪ OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMMING

In September 2005, Mayor Bloomberg launched New York City's Out-of-School Time (OST) system. The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is the lead agency and collaborates with ten City agencies, including the DOE, and 175 nonprofit organizations to form a comprehensive public system of out-of-school time programming.

The OST system provides young people with access to high-quality programming after school, on holidays and during the summer at no cost to their families. Each OST program is operated by a nonprofit organization and the programs are targeted to high need neighborhoods based on an analysis of poverty data, school indicators, and other socio-economic demographic

⁵ Children's Aid Society 21st Century Community Learning Centers Afterschool Programs at Six Middle Schools: Final Report of a Three-Year Evaluation, 2004-2007, prepared by Kira Krenichyn, Helene Clark, Lymari Benitez of ActKnowledge July 2008.

⁶ Harlem Children's Zone internal evaluation reports

⁷ Nauer, White and Yerneni, "Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families: Community Strategies to Reverse Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades and Improve Supports for Children and Families," Center for New York City Affairs, Milano The New School, October 2008.

indicators. 75% of the programs are located in DOE schools, while the others are located in community centers, settlement houses, religious institutions, libraries, public housing, and Parks facilities. Since launching the OST initiative in 2005, enrollment has grown from 59,071 to an expected 75,000 young people in the 2009/2010 school year and we continue to offer all of our programs free of charge. The annual budget for OST is \$110 Million.

Studies show that afterschool programs effectively address and help resolve many of the issues that lead to high school students to disengage and dropout. For example, a study examining the long-term impact of LA's Best on student's dropout rates found that participants were 20% less likely to drop out of school than similar students in Los Angeles who did not participate in a programs. Also, a study in New York City found that middle school students who attended a high quality OST program earned more high school credits in 9th and 10th grades than other students. New York City's OST system recognizes the promising contribution that such programs can make on improving high school graduation rates and invests in services for this population.

Innovative OST Models in New York City

The OST Transition to High School Program is a new initiative that begins this school year. 33 OST programs provide intensive interventions to over 1,600 students who entered 9th grade in September. The goal is to help these young people achieve on-time promotion to 10th grade. Studies show that many youth who ultimately drop out of high school do so after falling behind during 9th grade. Programs will provide Counselor Advocates for the 9th graders and implement a cohort model where youth can learn from and support each other. Pending the success of the **Transition to High School Program**, funding for expansion may be sought in future years.

Community Achievement Project in the Schools (CAPS): Since 1990, the United Way of NYC has partnered annually with the DOE and dozens of CBOs in managing **CAPS**, the Attendance Improvement / Dropout Prevention (AIDP) program that has proven to significantly improve attendance rates through coordinated individualized in-school case management support. Each year, CAPS works in roughly 100 schools benefiting approximately 11,000 elementary, middle, and high school students.

CAPS-FOCUS FORWARD: Focus Forward builds on the success of CAPS by strengthening student engagement through consistent, quality, out-of-school-time services. To promote this holistic approach, all after-school activities require participating students to be enrolled in CAPS. Students participating in the CAPS program meet specific criteria and are some of the school's most at-risk students. The students and their case managers work together to address attendance challenges during school and then build on academic and youth development skills after school. With a solid 78% high school attendance rate (an impressive 11% higher attendance rate than that of the comparison group), Focus Forward is uniquely effective among dropout prevention programs in New York City

Challenges and opportunities in expanding this strategy

Combined, CAPS and Focus Forward have proven improved outcomes. However, **Focus Forward** serves a relatively modest number of children and youth compared to the number of students in need. Because Focus Forward has been made possible through limited private partnerships, only an approximate 3% of the 11,000 CAPS students receive this enhanced OST intervention. While CAPS is publically funded, the OST portion of the program is entirely funded through corporate and private support. It is estimated that a total of **\$10.7M** will allow for the comprehensive model to be offered to all CAPS students, thereby eliminating the existing gap in the delivery of services.

▪ **SERVICE AS A STUDENT ENGAGEMENT/DROPOUT PREVENTION STRATEGY**

Today, the United States' high school graduation rate ranks near the bottom among developed nations. On virtually every international assessment of academic proficiency, American high school students' performance varies from mediocre to poor. The number one reason students drop out is because they are not interested or engaged in their classes.⁸

Service is a powerful strategy to increase student engagement and reduce the dropout rate. Research shows that service is more than a cultural value; it is an essential tool to develop the next generation and a powerful lever for education and life success. More than 80 percent of students believed that opportunities for real-world learning – such as service-learning, work study, and internships – would improve their likelihood of graduating from high school.⁹ Service strikes at the core issues of the dropout epidemic, yielding measurable outcomes including improved academic achievement, increased critical thinking skills, and reduction in risky behaviors, class failures, and suspensions.

The Model: Service in Schools NYC Service, Mayor Bloomberg's initiative to increase service in New York City, is launching "Service in Schools" to make service a part of every child's education. Children for Children, through a merger with the HandsOn Network (now called the Youth Action Network), and its partners are answering Mayor Bloomberg's call to action and working to make the Service in Schools initiative operational in every school in New York City. This includes recruiting, training and deploying approximately 75 service coordinators to provide capacity building through training, technical program assistance, and data collection as well as to facilitate the effective coordination of service resources for the NYC network of schools. Service in Schools seeks strategic partnerships with corporations and foundations to help support costs associated with oversight and management of the initiative.

We believe that the New York City-wide implementation will enable the Youth Action Network to document best practices and lessons learned and develop a cost-effective model that brings systemic change to every school district in the nation. Highlighted elements include:

Service-learning curriculum development and training- The curriculum is aligned with academic standards and merges instruction with activities that encourage problem solving,

⁸ Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J. & Morison, K. B.. (2006). The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts. Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates. For the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

⁹ Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J. & Morison, K. B.. (2008). Engaged for Success Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention. A Report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the National Conference on Citizenship.

leadership and social awareness. This model offers in-service trainings; Youth Action Network sponsored workshops, lesson-modeling and on-site visits.

Service Coordinator sponsorship- This model will build a cadre of committed, well-trained individuals to provide schools with the tracking, technical assistance and guidance necessary to expertly address and meet school needs, shifting the paradigm of traditional service coordinators to imagine them as sponsored corporate volunteers, on-loan executives, and community leaders.

Online tracking and validation system- The Service Coordinators will administer a tracking system weekly to create an accurate log of service activities in the school. These data will capture the service trends of participants and yield valuable best practices to inform program implementation and evaluation. This will provide educators with the tools to implement quality service and service-learning programs.

Outcomes Based on research and practice, the Youth Action Network will focus on the following outcomes¹⁰: pre- and post assessment of service activities in schools; decrease in school suspensions and detentions; decline in disruptive behavior, bullying, peer-to-peer and student-teacher conflict; and increase in student engagement, as measured by school attendance, decreased absenteeism and an increase in graduation rates.

Challenges and opportunities in expanding this strategy

The pilot year of this initiative will cost approximately **\$1M** to provide all New York City public schools with the opportunity to integrate service into their school. As we seek to reduce the dropout rate and engage struggling students, we hope to collaborate with leaders looking to make a profound impact on student engagement and youth service by supporting this initiative. Investment opportunities include conducting research, supporting service coordinators, creating longitudinal studies, or sponsoring a youth track at the 2010 National Conference on Service and Volunteering in New York City to increase the visibility of both the initiative and its supporters.

▪ **POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS**

High numbers of struggling students entering community colleges come to college with skill levels significantly below the college level standards, which direct them into non-credit bearing remedial courses that force them to use up their financial aid, and puts them on a very slow and discouraging pace toward graduation. Many students with limited financial aid are spending fifteen hundred dollars of that aid every semester as they work through the remedial courses for which they get no credit. They end up spending several thousand dollars of their aid on remediation sometimes exhausting financial aid before taking credit bearing courses. These students are prime targets for becoming part of the already high college dropout rate and they often leave college with large debt, including loans they have taken out to supplement their aid.

- Approximately 50 percent of students who enter City University of New York (CUNY) BA programs earn a degree within six years, while only about 28 percent of students in Associates programs earn a degree within the same timeframe

¹⁰ The Youth Action Network will be collecting and evaluating the data to inform these metrics.

- Approximately 30 percent of DOE graduates attend CUNY representing about 68 percent of CUNY enrollees. Less than half of CUNY students successfully exit remedial courses within the first year.
- 6 out of 10 CUNY students come from households earning less than \$35,000 per year.
- Attainment of a post-secondary credential is significantly positively correlated with huge gains in lifetime earnings, with corresponding increases in civic participation and benefits to the tax base.

New York City is in the midst of deep education reform, stretching across elementary, middle and secondary school levels. Secondary reform efforts also include the development and ongoing expansion cutting-edge new models serving over-age and under-credited students (as described in the OMPG section above). New York City’s efforts have already begun to turn to post-secondary success with the creation of a CUNY-DOE Post-Secondary Working Group, an effort which includes data sharing and the assessment of promising practices and programs that are currently underway to support student achievement. The Working Group has begun to outline a proposed new effort, entitled the New York City College Readiness and Success Initiative to support a better understanding of “college readiness”, increase the numbers of NYC high school graduates prepared for college, increase the degree-completion rate, and track and reward progress toward these goals. New York City’s education reform efforts include deep partnerships with CBOs which are an asset in these post-secondary efforts.

Challenges and opportunities in expanding this strategy

A better analysis of data, greater data sharing, and improved understanding of its implications are needed to guide efforts. Likewise, resources are needed for system reform efforts as well as to support the financial needs of students from low-income backgrounds. Resources and capacity building efforts must also include CBO partners in this effort, particularly to build on high-traction work already underway, such as enabling partner organizations to support their OMPG graduates in the transition to and success in college. Support for the New York City College Readiness and Success Initiative, including close examination and expansion of best practices already underway provides an important first step.

Positive outcomes of this effort will include: Development of shared definition of “college readiness” and “college success”; Collection of data measuring progress toward graduating students “college ready”; Tracking and increasing the percentage of students completing college applications and FAFSA; Successful enrollment in college; Reduced need for remediation among NYC high school graduates entering college; and seeing increased numbers of NYC graduates attain successful post-secondary degree completion.