

Case Study No. 9

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATION GRANTMAKING

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Say Yes To Education: Leading a Movement to Improve Access to Postsecondary Learning Opportunities in Cities Nationwide

by GENE I. MAEROFF

OCTOBER 2014

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENT | 5 |
| INTRODUCTION: TRACING THE HISTORY OF SAY YES TO EDUCATION | 6 |
| FROM SMALL COHORTS TO CITYWIDE IMPLEMENTATION: BRINGING THE STRATEGY TO SCALE | 7 |
| LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND SECURING COMMITMENTS | 8 |
| THE SCHOLARSHIP AND ITS IMPACT | 9 |
| COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS | 10 |
| FASHIONING COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE | 11 |
| Collaborative Governance through a Case Management Approach Collaboration with the District, Board, and Union Leaders Collaboration with Government Collaboration with Parents and Community Groups | |
| EDUCATOR AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT | 16 |
| Accountability, the Foundation for the Case Management Approach Engaging Educators | |
| A DEEPER LOOK AT LEVERAGED RESOURCES | 18 |
| BREAKING THE STATUS QUO: ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEM | 19 |
| LESSONS LEARNED | 20 |
| WHAT'S NEXT: SELECTING FUTURE CITIES | 22 |
| EXHIBITS | 25 |

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Editor's Note: This study was written by Gene I. Maeroff, the author of more than a dozen books on education and a former National Education Correspondent of the New York Times, who passed away in July after complications following a medical procedure. Gene was 75. At the time of his passing, Gene had completed and edited several drafts of this paper. His wife, Joyce, believes it to have been his final work. Over the years, the members of the senior management team of Say Yes were interviewed by Gene on a number of occasions, and wish to express their gratitude for his passionate interest in the organization's work.

Say Yes To Education

INTRODUCTION: TRACING THE HISTORY OF SAY YES TO EDUCATION

What incentive could be stronger in a community than full-tuition college scholarships for all graduates of a public school system? Could this be an answer to the question of how the nation can support children growing up in poverty so that they may access middle-class opportunities? When George Weiss, a successful young money manager, pledged to pay for the college tuitions of a class of 112 fifth-graders in one of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods in 1987, he couldn't have imagined what would unfold. Two decades later, his vision, passion, and determination would galvanize a movement for entire communities to support every public school graduate in their quest to gain access to, afford, and complete a postsecondary education.

Weiss, the founder and Chairman of Say Yes to Education and the son of immigrant parents, understood firsthand the impact of a quality education. While attending the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1960s with the help of a generous scholarship, he was humbled and inspired by his experience mentoring a group of Philadelphia public high school students as they advanced toward graduation. It awakened in him a fundamental understanding of the untapped potential that exists in children in cities across the country. Grounded in that experience, he was moved to commit himself to do whatever he could to remove the barriers to success for as many children as possible. With that commitment, Say Yes to Education was born.

For its first 18 years, Say Yes was an organization that provided K-12 supports and postsecondary tuition for groups of several hundred students across six "cohort chapters." More recently, over the last eight years, it has built upon its knowledge and experience and dedicated itself to understanding and overcoming obstacles to student success throughout entire cities. When Say Yes enters a city, it brings \$15 million in start-up capital, helps to establish a robust citywide scholarship endowment, and provides students access to its growing network of private partner colleges. Together, these early and ongoing incentives unite community entities around collectively defined outcomes related to postsecondary access and attainment. Say Yes then acts as a facilitator and provides technical support as cities build a sustainable civic infrastructure to deliver wraparound services, a hallmark of its program, aimed at expanding learning opportunities and addressing social and emotional factors.

This growth, from cohorts to full cities (*see Exhibit 1, p. 21*), was the product of a gradual evolution. Not content to keep the early lessons it learned about the predictable and addressable barriers to student success at a small scale, Say Yes began considering how to extend its reach. In 2006, the organization's president, Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey, and two consultants, David Osher of American Institutes for Research and Mark Strickland of Schoolhouse Partners, began to weigh the possibilities. They flirted with the idea of taking on an entire school system, but worried that even the wealthiest person would quickly run out of money if he or she offered to pay college tuitions for all of a city's public school graduates in perpetuity, as Weiss had been doing in the cohort chapters. Additionally, they would need to find a way to fund and coordinate their wraparound support services.

Say Yes began to repaint its initial work on a much larger canvas. It leveraged resources from diverse stakeholders across cities, established collaborative governance structures, partnered with institutions of higher education, and implemented a comprehensive case management system. Using what it learned

through the course of developing two citywide efforts with promising results—the first piloted in 2008 in Syracuse, New York, with 20,000 students, and the second begun in 2012 in Buffalo with 33,000 students—Say Yes is now looking to reach even more young people in other cities nationwide.

Through its work with both cohorts and cities, Say Yes learned a great deal about the many different organizations and systems that touch the lives of students in a city. Say Yes approaches growth and expansion with a deep appreciation for the complex network of schools, governmental systems, service providers, and community organizations that need to be included in a comprehensive strategy. While it has learned much about what goes into successful citywide implementation, Say Yes knows there is more to learn from each new context and continues to be guided in its work by a few dynamic questions: What does it take to bring innovative initiatives to scale? How can promising social programs be sustained beyond the short-term infusion of capital and support? How can grantmakers honor and adapt to local contexts while also cultivating true understanding and commitment from the community?

FROM SMALL COHORTS TO CITYWIDE IMPLEMENTATION: BRINGING THE STRATEGY TO SCALE

When Say Yes considered how to grow its operations from individual cohorts of students to a larger context, the organization concluded that the only way to embark on such a monumental challenge was to find others to share the tuition and program cost burden. Say Yes needed to attract new partners with vested and complementary interests in the success of public school students to scale the work. For instance, beyond the obvious interest of the school district, city, and county governments in the success of a city's children, local business leaders also have great financial stake in the development of skilled employees and gainfully employed citizens. Similarly, the vitality of local institutions of higher education relies on the ability of those institutions to recruit prepared students as well as on the vibrancy and safety of the city in which they reside. As for private colleges and universities nationally, Say Yes recognized that the institutions were under greater pressure to recruit more diverse student bodies with the skill sets and perseverance necessary to succeed.

Guided by this understanding of the diverse stakeholders in public education, in 2007, Say Yes sought its first city for implementation. Based on a statewide educational equity ruling and a subsequent agreement between the Governor and State Legislature to increase the per-pupil expenditure, many of New York State's urban public schools were newly entitled to about \$3,500 in additional funding per student, which mapped almost exactly to the cost per student of Say Yes chapter support programming. While this funding ultimately would not materialize in the face of the 2008 economic downturn, it was a critical driver in the Say Yes to Education Foundation's decision to release a Request for Proposals to all of the largest school districts along the New York State thruway. Ultimately, under the leadership of Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor, Syracuse would be the only city that demonstrated commitment and buy-in from a wide cross section of local leadership, making it a clear choice to become Say Yes' first citywide effort. The work of co-developing a citywide strategy began.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND SECURING COMMITMENTS

In entering its first city, Say Yes was faced with a fundamental question: How could it utilize the intersecting desires of the many different entities within a city to get them to work together in support of education and to “put their money where their mouths are,” so to speak?

In relation to funding the tuition scholarships and enabling college choices for all students, Say Yes leveraged external support along two distinct paths: a public college fund and partnership with private colleges. It created a Say Yes Scholarship Board—comprised of local philanthropic and business leaders—which could fundraise and administer a state college and university scholarship fund. The board also represents a vital lever for ensuring implementation of wraparound support programming and has the power to cease scholarship disbursements if other pieces of the strategy are not in place.

Say Yes also recognized that recruiting a group of partner institutions to share the cost of its tuition commitment would allow it to offer its free tuition program to students who matriculated into private institutions on a scale far beyond what had been called for in the previous cohorts. Mindful of the generosity of certain colleges and universities—those that voluntarily provided financial aid, tutoring, and other support for the Say Yes students in its cohort chapters—Schmitt-Carey, Chancellor Cantor, and their consultant-colleagues wondered if they could recruit multiple institutions of higher education to commit, in advance, to do this for all qualified applicants within a city. Chancellor Cantor was instrumental in these efforts, tapping into her vast network in the higher education world to begin building a group of Say Yes partner institutions committed to doing just that.

In this effort to bring private partner colleges on board, it became even clearer that, while private colleges were willing to partner, what they wanted in return were students who were academically, socially, and emotionally equipped to succeed. Although Say Yes was already grounded in its conviction that holistic supports to students were imperative, it sought new ways to fund wraparound supports throughout the school district. The organization wondered if it could employ the same locally administered, partnership-based approach it used for supporting the scholarships for other aspects of the program.

To accomplish this, Say Yes went to work devising a set of fiscal analyses to break down funding streams that were dedicated to youth and family services throughout the city. It used these analyses to work with local governmental bodies—including the city, county, and school district—to identify areas of overlap and gaps in service needs, and to inform coordination and delivery of services. In the first years in Syracuse, the commitments of Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse were groundbreaking. They set a vital example of the role counties and cities can play in supporting school-based mental health and family support programming through existing funding streams. In 2013, Say Yes managed—according to its own data—to get an average of \$5.25 from other sources for every dollar of its own money invested in programs in Syracuse and Buffalo.

It was through the process of designing and implementing the strategy that Say Yes gained clarity on the four main components of its early successes in leveraging broad-based support and soliciting commitments from other entities:

1. Its \$15 million commitment when it enters a new city, which acts as leverage for launching programming. The commitment, which represents its own stake in the initiative, is paired with a six-year plan for transitioning to local fiscal sustainability.
2. Its knowledge base and a demonstrated track record of success, particularly in relation to perseverance through high school and postsecondary education that came from over 20 years of providing wraparound supports to small groups of students.
3. Its understanding of the needs of institutions of higher education as they seek to recruit more diverse and prepared student bodies.
4. Its capacity to provide access to significant consulting expertise and guidance, particularly in relation to the fiscal modeling. These efforts enabled the school district, city, and county to look at their finances in relation to one another so that they may identify redundancies and gaps.

THE SCHOLARSHIP AND ITS IMPACT

Using data from 2010, CEOs for Cities calculated that each percentage point of improvement in aggregate adult four-year college attainment in major metropolitan areas represents an \$856 increase in annual per capita income. The research states that raising the median college attainment rate of the top 51 metropolitan areas from 30.7 percent to 31.7 percent would lead to an increase in income of \$143 billion per year for the country. It is easy to see in this context the importance of Say Yes' contribution to such an outcome, especially with regard to tuition incentive.

As previously stated, the funding of Say Yes scholarships takes two separate forms: one for students going to public institutions and the other for those going to private institutions. Graduates of public high schools in Syracuse and Buffalo are eligible for tuition scholarships—regardless of family income—for up to 100 percent of the tuition needed to attend any public two- or four-year college or university in New York State to which they are accepted. The public scholarships for state colleges or universities (which include additional grants for the cost of housing for those students who live on campus and demonstrate the greatest level of financial need) are funded through a local scholarship fund established, raised, and administered by the local Scholarship Board. Tuition for private colleges and universities require a different approach.

In February 2013, Say Yes hired former New York Times National Education Correspondent Jacques Steinberg to develop partnerships with private colleges and universities. By agreeing to provide Say Yes students with academic opportunities and campus experiences, these institutions of higher education became members of the Say Yes Higher Education Compact (see Exhibit 2, pp. 21-23). Steinberg recalls meeting Schmitt-Carey for the first time and seeing a list of the 36 institutions that already belonged to the Compact. He thought that he could grab a napkin and easily list the names of another 36 schools with similar policies and good supports for underrepresented children that might well agree to join the Compact.

The strength of the Say Yes Higher Education Compact lies in the reciprocal benefit. Say Yes understood the growing need of private colleges to diversify their student bodies. The organization received promises from members of the Compact, now numbering 69 and still growing, that they—the institutions themselves—would provide the scholarships. While Say Yes aims to provide diverse postsecondary options for students,

the private schools seek to enroll more young people from low-income families abundant in the locales that Say Yes serves. Moreover, there is the bonus to the institutions of reaping the federal Pell Grant revenues that follow the students. These partner colleges and universities—including Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Notre Dame, Rice, and Syracuse University—have all agreed to provide full scholarships to students from families with annual household incomes at or below an established threshold (with most set at either \$75,000 or \$100,000) who meet their admissions criteria. Importantly, this effort also comes at a time when the White House is urging the schools to do more to accommodate such students.

As evidenced by the numbers, students in both Syracuse and Buffalo have truly taken advantage of these incentives. During the 2013-14 academic year alone, Say Yes spent \$1,897,537 on students from Syracuse and Buffalo who were then currently enrolled in New York State’s public colleges and universities. The private institutions in the Higher Education Compact provided \$12,464,981 in aid to Say Yes students from the two cities that academic year. Over time, Say Yes hopes to see these amounts grow proportionately, as increasing numbers of students recognize the full range of their college options and avail themselves of these scholarship opportunities.

The impact of the scholarships for students has been such that by the end of Say Yes’ second year in Buffalo, 96 percent of the eligible seniors applied for Say Yes scholarships. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, there was a 9 percentage point increase in the college matriculation rate in Buffalo, which climbed from 57 percent in 2012 to 66 percent in 2013 (this includes attendance at both two-and four-year colleges). Furthermore, Buffalo has had an 8 percentage point increase in high school graduates since Say Yes arrived.

While Say Yes’ results speak for themselves, the organization’s commitment to postsecondary readiness has it aiming even higher. Say Yes anticipates an even larger percentage gain of students who are postsecondary-ready and who complete college in the future.

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS

Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and a member of the Say Yes board, sees Say Yes’ wraparound program and other supports as “amounting to an arm around each child.” Levine’s understanding of Say Yes is informed by his experience as an education researcher focused on young people who were accepted into higher education institutions despite socio-economic challenges that indicated they were far more likely to become pregnant, go to jail, develop a drug addiction, or die. Students who beat the odds shared a common benefit: They had someone who believed in them and were able to change the course of their lives through education.

Say Yes’ wraparound program embraces students in ways that expand learning opportunities and address social, emotional, and physical health factors in their lives by giving them greater access to social workers, psychologists, mental health clinicians, and other health professionals. Say Yes, along with other funders and the school system itself, invests time, energy, and money in these wraparound programs and collaborates with providers to show them how they can work more closely with the public schools. It also engages educators whose teaching will be affected by this work. Students who find expanded learning opportunities

in after school and summer programs have the chance to acquire knowledge and experiences that enhance classroom instruction, an opportunity in which educators have a stake. The social-emotional component engages teachers by giving them a greater chance to teach in settings that are calmer and where disruptions are diminished.

Expanding learning opportunities was a goal even in the individual cohorts. Say Yes fashioned protocols that enabled it to contract with community-based organizations to provide after school services. The program in Harlem, for instance, is offered on Saturday mornings throughout the school year at Columbia University's Teachers College. Say Yes launched an after school program in Syracuse that was offered Monday through Thursday afternoons for two hours and provided elementary school pupils with an opportunity to engage in offerings ranging from dance to art to music to creative writing. While Say Yes contracted with community-based organizations only after it arrived in Syracuse, in Buffalo, it developed the framework, evaluation procedures, and template for a similar type program up front.

FASHIONING COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

One of the chief challenges of school reform is the transitory nature of those who make the original commitments on behalf of the district, the city, and its many groups and organizations. What happens, though, to keep the program on track when a superintendent leaves? Or, as in many school districts, how can reforms endure when they depend on short-term grants? The money runs out and the program disappears, even if the superintendent remains.

Say Yes believes that every member of a community has a role to play in supporting the success of its children. If it rains, every partner must open an umbrella. Say Yes endeavors to build a program that can withstand transitions in school system and city leadership, and one that isn't reliant on short-term grants. With this framework at its core, the kind of collaboration that Say Yes fosters aims to involve not only the school system, but also all the entities and constituencies that have a bearing on educational outcomes. Its leverage in bringing these entities together—the carrot—is the scholarship's availability to every graduate of the public school district. Its leverage to keep them together—the stick—is that Say Yes makes it clear from the beginning that it will walk away if the wraparound services are not supported by the local collaborative governing body.

Together, the diverse network of partners joins forces to spin a web of support that surrounds each student in the district, thereby sustaining youngsters by the good will and resources of an entire city. Through the early stages of this process, Say Yes serves as both convener and facilitator. After launching two citywide programs, Say Yes has learned the importance of identifying cities with leaders who truly value the potential of effective collaboration and the need to secure defined commitments from stakeholders early in the process.

Collaboration poses the challenge of knitting together entities that usually go their separate ways. These are sectors that often operate vertically, as if in silos, with few horizontal links to each other and little connection to the school system. In establishing structures for effective collaborative governance, Say Yes recognized the need by the partners for different levels of involvement—from day-to-day oversight of work plans to broad-based forums that allow for public visibility and accountability. To this end, Say Yes supports cities as they create four collaborative bodies:

1. A Community Leadership Council (CLC) that includes a cross section of local leadership and meets quarterly in a large public forum;
2. A much smaller Operating Committee (OC) that includes key local leaders—including the district superintendent, high-ranking representatives from the mayor’s and county executive’s offices, philanthropic leaders, higher education leaders, teacher and administrative union leaders, and parent representatives. These leaders meet bi-weekly to monitor the delivery and quality of services, to scale services, and to ensure long-term sustainability of services;
3. A network of Task Forces, such as: community mobilization; health and wellness; legal services; “Say Yes to Teachers”; postsecondary pathways (higher education); birth-to-eight (early childhood); religious leaders; business partnerships; and community-based organizations. These groups work together to carry out the many facets of programming overseen by the OC, and,
4. As previously mentioned, the Scholarship Board, which leads the local fundraising for the scholarship fund and manages the policies around distribution of the scholarships.

These governance structures engage and connect partners, enhancing the strength and stability of the overall strategy. The strength of the collaborative approach in cultivating widespread local engagement is evident in the depth and breadth of the participation in the CLC meetings in Buffalo. Each meeting of the 60-member CLC is chaired by either the mayor, county executive, school board president, a former chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, or the chair of the local Say Yes Scholarship Board. The CLC, which provides a venue for transparent accountability and a forum for addressing policy issues, opens its meetings to all and serves as a site for input on the program. So far, CLC meetings have been attended by between 190 and 250 members of the general public who do not have seats on the Council, but are free to participate in the meetings.

True collaboration means shared risk. It comes with the territory of shared ownership. There are, for instance, the risks of some partners not carrying their weight or of the school system not doing all it takes to prepare students for college and careers. Success is apt to be elusive if the partners consider Say Yes as the sole guarantor against risk. Say Yes does not come into a city to assume the role of an insurance policy. While its experience and know-how can overcome barriers and help smooth the path to postsecondary attendance, the task is complex and imperfect. The collaborative must remain committed through the inevitable challenges and setbacks. And if it goes well, the rewards can be glorious, changing life prospects and having an economic impact on the city at large. It is a long-range objective in Syracuse and Buffalo that home prices will rise, a cadre of college-educated young adults will be available to hire, business and industry will find the community more attractive, juvenile crime will ebb, and the demand for social services will decline.

Collaborative Governance through a Case Management Approach

Say Yes site facilitators work as case managers with Student Support Teams (SSTs) at each school to connect students with community service providers and interventions. The central foundational tool that Say Yes uses in measuring progress, coordinating service delivery, and clearly communicating among providers and administrators is the Student Monitoring and Intervention System (SMIS). Say Yes takes this approach after the collaborative bodies commit to a shared agenda around postsecondary access and success through quality K-12 supports.

SMIS is a data system that uses inputs from teachers, service providers, school-based Say Yes site facilitators, parents, and students to break down barriers to student success (*see Exhibit 4, p. 25*). The system operates across four main domains: academic, social/emotional health, health, and financial support. SMIS acts as both an early warning system and a tool for better coordination of services, tracking all of the district's students across 13 indicators and 26 sub-indicators. Each student receives a continuously updated personalized "Growth Plan" that indicates whether he or she is on track to thrive on each of the indicators and sub-indicators.

In the classroom, SMIS allows educators to think about students holistically. And because aggregate reports are derived for individual schools and for sub-groups across the district, it expands the identification and growth of the resources that exist across communities, providing insight into areas of greater need and areas of service delivery that require improvement.

Collaboration with the District, Board, and Union Leaders

Given the challenges of bringing coordinated services into public school buildings, the district superintendent plays a crucial role on the Operating Committee. The coherent and timely delivery of services across the district requires the superintendent to act as a quarterback of sorts, directing his team to carry the ball toward the end zone with as few fumbles as possible. Furthermore, Say Yes must view its relationship with the superintendent through a statistical lens, such as the one provided by a Council of Great City Schools study showing that two-thirds of district superintendents move out of their jobs at least once in five years. Turnover is even higher for superintendents in urban districts, where Say Yes does its work. This means that Say Yes must prepare to engage superintendents who are new to the role and were not involved in making the original commitments.

While Say Yes got involved in the selection of new superintendents in the first two cities in which it worked, it has since become wary of taking such a prominent role in the future. As explained by Gene Chasin, Say Yes' Chief Operating Officer, "Superintendencies are transient in nature and the role is political. Involvement in the process risks inserting the Say Yes initiative into local politics in such a way that jeopardizes the perception of Say Yes as an honest broker."

Yet, the superintendent is a critical factor in Say Yes' decision to enter a city. It wants to see a superintendent with a proven ability to work with teachers, administrators, and service providers; a track record of having

collaborated with entities outside the school system; and a willingness to be transparent with fiscal and student data. “In one prospective city, the superintendent laid out his whole budget and highlighted the areas of discretionary funding that he would use to support Say Yes initiatives,” said Chasin. “That was a real show of transparency and commitment to open collaboration.”

Another area in which Say Yes reconsidered its role has to do with when to engage with the school board. Say Yes did not meet with the school board when it made its earliest overtures to Syracuse. Instead, it courted those whom the organization perceived to be the city’s power brokers. It wrongly assumed that communications would flow between the superintendent and school board members. Say Yes has since come to recognize that the school board must be included as a critical partner whose buy-in is essential for successful implementation. It has the potential to perform a very important role in the collaborative, both in supporting initiatives and in ensuring follow-through on the district’s commitments. This revised approach was evident in Buffalo, where Say Yes included the school board in its conversations from the outset. “The school board should be the initial point of contact,” Schmitt-Carey said. Even when the school board appears dysfunctional, it is a critical player in the success of the collaborative.

Say Yes never had any doubt about the need to accord high priority to collaborating with the teachers union. Collective bargaining agreements, where they exist, have a large impact on what a school reform effort can accomplish. In addition to the strength and stability of the teachers union in each of the cities in which Say Yes has worked thus far, the union represents some of the most important stakeholders affecting school culture. Say Yes hopes that by connecting teachers to a broader network of services relevant to their students’ needs and supporting more cohesion within the district’s service provision, teachers will be empowered to think progressively about their roles in the system.

Schmitt-Carey speaks of the teachers unions in both Syracuse and Buffalo as “full and important partners.” As Say Yes looks to future cities, it has affirmed that its program needs a union leadership that is ready to drive a reform agenda. The organization requires the union to sign a letter of commitment before Say Yes will consider entering a city.

Collaboration with Government

It was the prospect of working with government to generate funding for its program that initially helped draw Say Yes to Syracuse, where the school system was in line to receive a series of generous annual grants from the state in accord with a court settlement affecting New York State’s poorest school districts. When the world flipped upside down and turned inside out after the financial collapse that began in 2008, this pool of aid dried up like a puddle on a sunny day, and Say Yes had to forge a new fiscal strategy. Partners in Syracuse had to seek fresh ways to coordinate funding streams on behalf of the schools to address such areas as prevention issues, youth development, and family services.

In its identification of these governmental revenue sources and ways to tap into them, Say Yes opened the door to taking its program to a wide number of cities. Syracuse truly was the birthplace of an innovative approach to braiding funding for school-based wraparound supports. These supports—funded through

county prevention and youth development dollars—include school-based mental health clinics, family crisis counseling, and student support specialists. In turn, community-based organizations wanted to come to the table to provide additional legal services, tutoring, and college access counseling. However, while Syracuse provides a powerful model of the coordination and funding of wraparound supports, the Say Yes strategy has yet to reach full implementation there. Early missteps that come with pilot programs—including a lack of clarity in upfront expectations and insufficient efforts to cultivate grassroots understanding, buy-in, and commitments—taught Say Yes lessons that strengthened its program as it went forward in Buffalo.

Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown certainly recognized the advantages that Say Yes would confer on his city. He first heard about Say Yes from two of the city’s civic leaders, Alphonso O’Neil-White, the retired former president and chief executive officer of HealthNow New York, and Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, president and chief executive officer of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. Perez-Bode Dedecker had gone to a Lumina Foundation convening that Schmitt-Carey had also attended and liked what she heard about Say Yes.

The two civic leaders told Brown of their interest in bringing Say Yes to Buffalo. “They gave me the overview of what Say Yes does,” said Brown, “and the fact that Say Yes provides a scholarship for college or trade school as well as education supports for children and families to get them to the point where they can graduate from high school. I was instantly sold and said ‘Where can I sign up?’ It evolved from there.” It was about this time that Say Yes issued a Request for Proposals to find a second citywide locale.

One of Brown’s first steps was to contact some parent leaders confidentially, including Samuel I. Radford III, president of the District Parent Coordinating Council, to see how they felt about the prospect of having Say Yes in Buffalo. “He was elated to hear of a program that would pay for scholarships for Buffalo’s high school students,” Brown said of Radford. Brown moved ahead to encourage the City Council to contribute \$500,000 toward Say Yes’ scholarship fund. Buffalo took steps that Brown, looking back, considered “quick and seamless.” He said that lessons learned from the individual cohorts and from Syracuse hastened the process in Buffalo.

“The level of collaboration is extraordinary,” said Brown. “We see Say Yes as a critical partner and critical to the turnaround of our schools.” In a budget proposal he submitted in 2014, Brown recommended that the city pay another \$800,000 for academic support of students related to their completion of high school. The city also provided funds to send 70 high school students to summer academic enrichment programs to help prepare them for college, in line with Say Yes’ goal.

Collaboration with Parents and Community Groups

Who needs to be on board for a citywide collaboration to have full credibility? A lesson that Say Yes learned in Syracuse was just how large a stake parents and community groups have in their local school system. “Syracuse was a learning experience,” said Schmitt-Carey. “We had never done work at this scale before and we planned for what we anticipated. Then, we realized we were missing things that would support quality implementation.” This meant taking account of such constituencies—parents, community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and minority stakeholders.

Say Yes applied these lessons to its work in Buffalo. The organization spent months “reading the Playbill” and “getting to know the actors” before putting the citywide program on display in Buffalo. There was an extended attempt to identify potential partners, even school by school, which had not happened in Syracuse. Representatives of Say Yes held one-on-one meetings with individuals and gradually met with larger groups, seeking to expand the circle of involvement. “You have to have those conversations and engage parents respectfully,” said Schmitt-Carey. With this lesson in mind, Say Yes was careful to get a wide cross section of local leaders on its committees and task forces.

EDUCATOR AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A key piece of Say Yes’ strategy is the establishment of clear, well-defined goals throughout the entire school district, and the ability to track progress toward these goals. This is the essence of accountability. While Say Yes emphasizes that outcome goals must be established and owned locally, it also sets the non-negotiable expectation that the local goals must reflect more than just academic outcomes.

With this in mind, the metrics that Say Yes tracks in conjunction with its programs are comprehensive, including measures of academic progress, social-emotional, mental and physical health, and measures of conduct and citizenship. By monitoring all of these dimensions of individual students’ experiences through its Student Monitoring and Intervention System (SMIS), Say Yes aims to enable the most targeted interventions for students, as well as the informed refinement of programming, and shared accountability. The current system, which represents a key piece of the foundation of the Say Yes strategy, is the product of seven previous iterations that were honed through the lessons learned first in the Harlem cohort chapter, and later in Buffalo.

Accountability, the Foundation for the Case Management Approach

Say Yes operates in the urban settings where public school achievement statistics tend toward the dismal. The first step in moving more students toward postsecondary opportunities is to strengthen the school districts so that youngsters get the experiences they need to attain diplomas. Say Yes tries to help the schools advance beyond the status quo by pointing them toward measures that will change student outcomes—staff development, better use of resources, more time for learning, and social and emotional supports, for instance.

If you want a student to get from here to there, then what has to happen in between? Say Yes knows that it wants students to complete postsecondary programs. Starting with the end in mind, this means that the school system should institute specific benchmarks and a timeline for attaining them each step of the way, beginning as far back as pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, when the clock starts ticking. “This is the key in driving the work of the school district,” said Gene Chasin, the chief operating officer of Say Yes.

It took a while for Say Yes to reach this juncture in its whole-district ventures. The organization was still figuring out, with assistance from the American Institutes of Research, the best way to monitor students when it began operations in Syracuse in 2007. But by the time Say Yes got to Buffalo, that city was ready to

monitor and holistically support students from the get-go. “Buffalo school personnel and representatives from community-based organizations spent time looking at the indicators and modifying and developing a platform,” Chasin said in describing the early adoption of SMIS in the second city. “Most important, we were clear that implementation was non-negotiable.” As a reading of the RFP for new cities shows, Say Yes now embeds student monitoring in almost everything it does. The information derived from the monitoring is the basis for its case management approach directed at each individual student.

Importantly, the SMIS is not just about tracking data, but about using data to drive effective, targeted service delivery, and informing the refinement of programming. By utilizing inputs from teachers, service providers, school-based Say Yes Site Facilitators, parents, and students themselves, the SMIS works to empower all of these groups to feel meaningfully and accessibly connected to a network of supports. The SMIS ultimately aims to encourage educators to think about students beyond test scores, and to support schools and communities in developing students holistically. It also aims to expand the identification and growth of the services that exist across communities.

With these goals in mind, Say Yes does what it can to support the district in becoming data driven. The most recent 2014 RFP says, for example, that Say Yes wants to know about the district’s commitment to key instructional initiatives that align to Say Yes’ postsecondary completion objectives. Say Yes also asks for information about how the district’s strategic plan aligns with the organization’s objectives and with the district budget. Say Yes knows that it must be explicit about how it expects student data to be used. The sharing of data with various parties that have a stake in the school system is essential. This means making data available not only to parents and education professionals, but to all partners of Say Yes and to the school system. This transparency is part of Say Yes’ modus operandi. In the face of widely publicized privacy concerns with the In Bloom data system in 2014, Say Yes has worked closely with legal counsel and local partners to build in positive parent consent at all steps of the process.

After learning some important lessons about the need to effectively utilize the information tracked in the SMIS, Say Yes created this four-step process for implementing a data-informed culture in its future cities:

1. Work with the school district and the collaborative leadership to establish clearly defined and measurable metrics that align with the goal of college and career readiness.
2. Embed site facilitators in all schools to focus on data aggregation, analysis, and intensive case management.
3. Implement the new SMIS platform and multi-disciplinary case management process, including an emphasis on academic, social-emotional, and mental and physical health supports.
4. Build educator confidence that these complementary indicators will enhance the delivery of the supports and services students need to learn in the classroom.

Engaging Educators

Say Yes is the consulting architect of the citywide implementation, providing unfinished blueprints that encourage stakeholders to set and pursue desired outcomes, grade by grade. It enables the college scholarships, but it is up to the school system to prepare students to take full advantage of them. This signals certain expectations about, for instance, rigor, Advanced Placement courses, counseling, and monitoring progress. Say Yes knows it cannot find success unless it effectively engages educators. They must embrace the program as their own and be fully engaged in the process. This means encouraging them to speak out early in the process as they assume ownership roles. It means cultivating a culture of belief in the potential of all students.

Viewing itself at first as an organization exogenous to the school system, Say Yes approached its work from the outside in, recognizing that it would fall to district employees to carry out the instructional activities. It is not Say Yes' place or desire to dictate to the education professionals. Rather, Say Yes tries to foster conditions for the kind of changes in a school system that result from clarifying goals, building a culture of learning, and getting people to share accountability.

More recently, according to Dr. Jerry Weast—a veteran superintendent with 35 years of experience, most notably as the former superintendent of the Montgomery County Public Schools—Say Yes has better understood its role in promoting inside-out changes in culture within a school system, as well. He lauds the metrics for student achievement that Say Yes puts forward, and which the district agrees to implement, as “developing employees’ capacity” to work on behalf of their students. By providing teachers with a more holistic understanding of their students’ needs, enabling connections to resources outside of the classroom, and validating that many of the challenges students face are beyond what teachers alone can address, Say Yes aims to empower teachers and service providers with information and a shared map for accessing supports. “To meet the metrics,” Weast said, “we must rely on inside-out teaching and learning and assistance from the outside in to plug the gaps.”

A DEEPER LOOK AT LEVERAGED RESOURCES

As noted at the beginning of this study, Say Yes' citywide strategy was founded on the principle of leveraging the resources of multiple partners. While this approach was piloted in Syracuse, Say Yes was able to build on what it had learned when it implemented the program in Buffalo.

In Buffalo, Say Yes formed a partnership with the Erie County government to provide social services for children in the Buffalo Public Schools, much like it had in Syracuse. Say Yes provides 38 percent of the money and the county puts in 62 percent of the \$980,000 for school based site facilitators who provide case management. The program operated in 47 of the district's school buildings in 2013-14, and will be in all 55 buildings by January 2015. The site facilitators hired for this work in the schools are on the Say Yes payroll and Catholic Charities provides the human resources oversight. According to the agreed upon fiscal proforma, Say Yes will continue to contribute to the program until 2017, at which point it should become fully locally sustained.

In another Say Yes collaboration, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and the Erie County Department of Social Services worked together to extend the reach of mental health clinics in the public schools. The program started with mental health clinics in 19 buildings (including 12 school based health clinics) in 2013-14 and was scheduled to be in 31 buildings by the 2014-2015 school year. Eight community-based organizations operated the clinics, which are open a day or two a week. The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo is paying the start-up costs and providing bridge funding for the clinics. Once in place, the funding for services came from billing Medicaid and private health providers.

In addition to partnering with institutions of higher education for tuition scholarships, Say Yes also collaborates with colleges and universities for support service provision. Higher education institutions have staff and students who can help public school students as tutors and mentors, often at little cost. Say Yes also leverages the services of lawyers and health professionals to assist children and their families in Syracuse and Buffalo. Local organizations and the school system itself can help provide the personnel to extend learning opportunities in the afternoons and during the summer.

BREAKING THE STATUS QUO: ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

When Say Yes operated with limited cohorts of students in its first four locales, it did not concern itself as much with leveraging. But it came to see the potential payoff of cross-government collaborations in Syracuse. It meant that Say Yes had to entice the units of government—city, county, and state—out of their silos and meld the efforts of the units on behalf of students.

Such changes in the ways that government agencies normally operate disrupt the status quo. It is popular these days to speak of what disruption can accomplish. Say Yes, ever more the facilitator than the disruptor, nonetheless upsets apple carts and sometimes makes people and institutions uncomfortable with existing circumstances. “There are predictable barriers,” said Schmitt-Carey. “We seek realignment so that people will do things differently. We want them to analyze and reconsider how money is used. We want to bring new commitments.” Say Yes’ style is a more decorous one, reaching through the back door instead of barging through the front door, but the goal still is to prod change by combining efforts for the benefit of children.

Leveraging makes it possible for the partners in a city to gradually assume fiscal responsibility for the many innovations that Say Yes introduces. Say Yes sets a six-year timetable for achieving this result. The organization draws up a roadmap in consultation with local representatives that amounts to a spending plan for each of the programs that Say Yes initially helps fund—after school and summer classes, social emotional supports, and site facilitators in the school, for instance. Say Yes contributes start-up capital of \$15 million to be allotted over the six years as part of the overall spending plan. As Say Yes’ financial role diminishes, local entities assume more of the expenses. This is what Say Yes calls the pro forma that underlies the spending plan for much of what the organization brings to or encourages upon the school system.

Say Yes uses a series of audits that it commissions from national experts to encourage the school system to think more deeply about spending patterns and a more effective allocation of resources (*see Exhibit*

5, p. 26). These audits, eventually made public, convey a thoroughness and toughness that few districts ever pursue on their own. Among the areas for which Say Yes has commissioned audits in Syracuse and Buffalo are technology, special education, five years of expenditures and disbursements, programming for social emotional health, and curriculum and instruction. The audits provide a baseline for planning and an observation point for the program's progress in the district. But, as Say Yes has learned, audits alone do not result in action. They must be tied to a transparent and inclusive participatory process to ensure that they result in actions being taken.

Information derived from the audits aids the strategic reallocation of dollars along a path toward ultimate sustainability. Illustrating Say Yes' increasingly more rigorous standards, audits were not carried out in Syracuse until two years after the program began. In Buffalo, however, the audits began immediately after Say Yes announced the choice of the city. To ensure that the audit results are clearly tied to utilization and implementation, audits for the third city will begin even before the city is formally named.

LESSONS LEARNED

In 2014, The Buffalo News said of Say Yes in an editorial, "Something fundamental is happening here. Expectations are rising. Students and their parents are lifting their sights. They are starting to understand that their possibilities are far greater than they had counted on. A larger world is opening up. That's magical. And it's a standard that, properly nourished, can be passed on from generation to generation. That's the real promise of Say Yes to Education."

In essence, Say Yes' strategy can be succinctly conveyed as a stool with three legs. The three legs represent (1) the provision of incentives to garner support for the program and to sustain it through predictable transitions in leadership; (2) collaborative governance that leads to the coordinated delivery of quality academic, social emotional, and health supports; and (3) educator and student engagement to develop a culture of high expectations and aligned college and career readiness programming. Unless all three legs remain sturdy, the stool tips over. Say Yes is driven by its commitment to local sustainable change, which includes Say Yes' provision of a six-year plan for transitioning to full local funding of the program.

Say Yes' trajectory has been characterized by modifications and improvements each step of the way. Like a software developer, Say Yes gravitated from Alpha Prototypes to Beta Prototypes, simultaneously putting forth and testing models with enough fail-safes to avoid problems while determining the efficacy of the strategy. It exemplifies systems expert Peter M. Senge's notion of a learning organization, putting into practice important lessons emerging from their own work and promising un-sustained reform efforts of the past.

These past efforts—including break-the-mold reform models such as Comprehensive School Reform and the New American Schools' approach—offered many important lessons for Say Yes about what works and needs to be in place to produce sustained and impactful educational reform. Some key guiding lessons are:

- Reforms that deal exclusively with academic improvement address only some of the barriers preventing educational success, and reforms that focus primarily on immediate test score increases are rarely sustainable.
- Reforms associated with particular leaders (e.g., a charismatic superintendent or principal) usually don't last much beyond the tenure of that individual.
- Reforms restricted to particular contexts (e.g., one or several schools) often lose staying power by being out of sync with school district initiatives.
- Reforms championed by K-12 educators only (e.g., school districts) often lose staying power by failing to become rooted in and supported by the broader community.

Through the work that Say Yes has done at the city level in Syracuse and Buffalo, several additional key lessons have emerged:

- It is necessary to gather explicit working commitments and financial commitments from every stakeholder group up front so that there is complete clarity of expectations throughout planning and the rollout of services.
- School district leadership must demonstrate a true commitment to and track record of collaboration in order to make the strategy effective.
- Trust needs to be built among the stakeholder groups—including the city, the county, and the district leadership—to secure the working and financial commitments needed to do the work sustainably. Early and patient efforts to build relationships within the community are vital. Even the best intentions can be met with skepticism, and Say Yes must address misunderstandings and incorporate feedback early.
- Shared commitment to jointly developed outcome metrics is essential to drive and focus the collaborative work. Without outcome metrics, there is not a clear roadmap to drive the work of the partnership, and there is the risk of veering into micromanagement of school-based programs. Though these outcome metrics are co-created through the partnership based on local context needs, the core metrics are: postsecondary completion, postsecondary matriculation, high school graduation, advanced course taking (indicative of college readiness), and proximal indicators of postsecondary readiness (including select eighth grade, fifth grade, third grade, kindergarten, and pre-kindergarten outcomes).
- While Say Yes as an organization possesses a deep understanding of research on best practices (in relation to after school, physical and emotional health services, etc.), it has learned that in order to have programs implemented effectively, it cannot be too prescriptive. It is vital to take time to listen to, and partner with, school staff, to respect their knowledge, and to build commitment and ownership at the school level.

- It is essential to complete the financial analytics (specifically, the value chain analyses of all school district spending, and all funding streams related to education, youth, prevention services, and family services from the city and county) very early in the process. These analytics enable the design of a strong long-term plan for increasing and improving services and leveraging the initial Say Yes investment into a locally sustainable funding model within six years.

Say Yes has taken advantage of every opportunity to learn from its experiences, making the organization exceedingly hopeful about the future. Its allegiance to a collaborative approach yoked to shared goals motivates Say Yes as it scales its program to cities making a shared commitment to the future of their children.

WHAT'S NEXT: SELECTING FUTURE CITIES

During much of 2014, Say Yes has engaged in a consideration phase that will lead to a third, and possibly fourth, city joining its network. Conceptually, Say Yes needs the future partners in the city to agree to the organization's approach and to act together to create a plan that will lead to shared understanding. Specifically, this process will result in commitments to a set of non-negotiables that Say Yes deems essential to the success of the program.

Say Yes' expectations in this regard have evolved. When Say Yes searched for its first whole-district site in upstate New York, it broadly laid down the five key commitments (*see Exhibit 3, p. 24*) for the place that it would choose:

1. Community willingness to set a goal of postsecondary completion;
2. School district willingness to partner with higher education;
3. School district willingness to partner with government and the private sector;
4. Transparent accountability in which the school district uses data to discuss what works and what does not work; and
5. Transparent, sustainable fiscal management that commits the locality to fully fund the program by the sixth year and beyond. The demand for sustainability remains pivotal, an expectation without which there is no assurance that the fire that Say Yes ignites will burn long into the future.

Now, Say Yes has a greater understanding of what a mutually good fit with a city looks like, as well as the components that must be in place prior to city selection. A 15-page Request for Proposals (RFP) guides the selection with expectations that go beyond what Say Yes asked when selecting Syracuse or Buffalo.

In the current process, after conducting a wide environmental scan, Say Yes narrowed the list of potential school districts based on the size of the districts (large enough for significant impact and visibility, manageable within current Say Yes capacity), geographic location (accessibility to key Say Yes staff), and political context.

Through several in-person meetings with diverse local stakeholders in these sites, Say Yes leadership focused on human capacity (the quality, stability, commitment, and alignment of the leadership and overall systems), and their potential financial sustainability (examining the capacity of the district, the community, local

philanthropy, and higher education to provide support services and scholarships). Stemming from these initial visits, Say Yes will selectively release the RFP to only those city sites that appear to be strong candidates.

Say Yes recognizes the rigor of its process, and is conscious of not wanting to “lead on” any of the candidates that do not appear currently ready to engage in the process. As part of the RFP, the candidate sites must submit letters of commitment from the school superintendent, school board president, mayor, county executive, local legislative leaders, college and university presidents, local teachers union president, and local philanthropic organizations. This process not only signals to Say Yes the level of local commitment, but also facilitates the local stakeholders’ own due diligence processes as they continue to deeply explore a potential relationship with Say Yes.

The cities that have received the RFP work closely with Say Yes leadership to complete their proposals, as Say Yes does additional due diligence work with the applicants, including in-depth capacity reviews. For these reviews, Say Yes applies a set of analytics to each school district to determine how it has spent its budget the last five years and what opportunities exist for more efficient use of resources (*see Exhibit 6, p. 27*).

The top two applicants will then be identified, and development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), refinement of outcome metrics, and development of a fiscal pro forma to guide implementation will be completed before final awarding takes place. Say Yes will also begin to secure endowment pledges from philanthropic partners, create a collaborative governance structure, mobilize local stakeholders, and converse with local higher education institutions about the Higher Education Compact. Say Yes will not touch a city until it has a plan for fiscal sustainability and cross-sector ownership of the program so that it is not tied to any one individual.

Once the city is named, a governance structure will be put in place and local leaders will develop a rollout plan for implementing the many parts of the plan. At the same time, Say Yes will establish a board to set policies for administering the scholarships. To promote shared accountability and continuous improvement, a publicly available statistical dashboard will be posted online to display key outcome metrics, and the figures will be refreshed at regular intervals as new data become available.

Say Yes launched its work in Syracuse without a defined governance model. This meant that it had to figure out who would play what role as the project unfolded. Say Yes quickly recognized that it had to be clear about roles and expectations for key players from the start. Much more planning preceded its entrance into Buffalo. Each step of the way, it has planned its work more assiduously and further clarified its goals. It leaves less and less to chance, but also recognizes and respects the need for flexibility.

“Say Yes seeks to use its experience and expertise to galvanize and organize communities around making a postsecondary education a reality for every public school graduate. But we are always careful not to overstep,” said Schmitt-Carey. “We have enormous respect for the communities with which we choose to work, and are conscious of the boundaries of local autonomy.”

Indeed, after six years of close collaboration with the national Say Yes organization, each Say Yes city must take ownership of the effort—assuming local responsibility for sustaining the scholarship endowment, and for providing other supports to students and their families. While the Say Yes imprimatur remains, the role of the national organization transitions to that of a guide and resource.

“Among the broader, long-term goals of Say Yes to Education is to develop a blueprint for communities around the nation to adapt and implement a pathway for getting their students to and through college—either with direct support from Say Yes or by following its lead,” continued Schmitt-Carey. “In this regard we see ourselves not simply as a strategy, but a movement.”

Exhibit 1
Timeline of Say Yes Chapters: From School-based Cohorts to Whole Cities

COHORT CHAPTERS:

.....

Philadelphia (1987)

112 seventh graders at Belmont Elementary School

Hartford (1990)

76 fifth graders at Annie Fisher Elementary School

Philadelphia (1990)

Jane and Robert Toll Program: 57 students from two third grade classes at Harrity Elementary School

Cambridge (1991)

69 third graders at Harrington Elementary School

Philadelphia (2000)

50 kindergarteners at William C. Bryant Elementary School

Harlem (2004)

384 students at five elementary schools across Harlem (now, the majority of the chapter is finishing 9th grade, and students are spread across over 60 different high schools)

CITYWIDE CHAPTERS:

.....

Syracuse (2008)

Approximately 20,000 students throughout the Syracuse City School District,
which includes 35 school buildings

Buffalo (2012)

Approximately 33,000 students throughout the Buffalo City School District,
which includes 55 school buildings

Exhibit 2 Say Yes Higher Education Compact

Students served by Say Yes to Education have the opportunity to receive full-tuition scholarships to a range of public and private institutions – including the more than 60 private colleges and universities that are members of the Say Yes Higher Education Compact (full roster listed below).*

Say Yes Higher Education Compact Members Private Colleges and Universities

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Brown University | Georgetown University | Niagara University | St. Joseph's College of Nursing |
| Bryant & Stratton College (Syracuse Location) | Goodwin College | Northeastern University | Stanford University |
| Canisius College | Hamilton College | Northwestern University | Syracuse University |
| Clarkson University | Harvard College | Notre Dame | Texas Christian University |
| Colgate University | Hilbert College | Occidental College | Trinity College |
| Colorado College | Hobart and William Smith Colleges | Pitzer College | Trocaire College |
| Columbia University | Houghton College | Pomona College | Tufts University |
| Cooper Union | Kenyon College | Paul Smith's College | University of Pennsylvania |
| Cornell University | Le Moyne College | Princeton University | University of Rochester |
| Crouse Hospital College of Nursing | Lesley University | Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute | University of Southern California |
| Daemen College | Lycoming College | Rhodes College | Vanderbilt University |
| Dartmouth College | Marist College | Rice University | Vassar College |
| Davidson College | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | Rochester Institute of Technology | Villa Maria College |
| Denison University | Medaille College | Sarah Lawrence College | Washington University in St. Louis |
| Drexel University | Molloy College | Sewanee: University of the South | Williams College |
| Duke University | Monroe College | Smith College | Yale University |
| D'Youville College | Muhlenberg College | St. Bonaventure University | |
| Franklin & Marshall | New York Institute of Technology | | |

Public College and University Partners
CUNY (City University of New York) Senior Colleges

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Baruch College | New York City College of Technology | Bronx Community College |
| Brooklyn College | Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education | Hostos Community College |
| City College | Queens College | Kingsborough Community College |
| College of Staten Island | York College | LaGuardia Community College |
| Hunter College | CUNY Community Colleges | Queensborough Community College |
| John Jay College of Criminal Justice | Borough of Manhattan Community College | |
| Lehman College | | |
| Medgar Evers College | | |

State University of New York (SUNY)

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Binghamton University | SUNY Canton | Potsdam |
| Stony Brook University | SUNY Cobleskill | Purchase College |
| University at Albany | SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry | SUNY College at Old Westbury |
| University at Buffalo | SUNY IT (Institute of Technology) | SUNY College at Oneonta |
| Alfred State, College of Technology | Buffalo State College | SUNY Cortland |
| SUNY Delhi | Oswego | SUNY Fredonia |
| Farmingdale State College | Plattsburgh | SUNY Geneseo |
| Maritime College | | SUNY New Paltz |
| Morrisville State College | | The College at Brockport |

SUNY Community Colleges

Adirondack Community College
Broome Community College
Cayuga County
Community College
Clinton Community College
Columbia-Greene
Community College
Corning Community College
Dutchess Community College
Erie Community College
Fashion Institute of Technology
Finger Lakes
Community College
Fulton-Montgomery
Community College
Genesee Community College
Herkimer County
Community College

Hudson Valley Community
College
Jamestown
Community College
Jefferson Community College
Mohawk Valley
Community College
Monroe Community College
Nassau Community College
Niagara County
Community College
North Country
Community College
Onondaga Community College
Orange County
Community College
Rockland Community College

Schenectady County
Community College
Suffolk County
Community College
Sullivan County
Community College
Tompkins Cortland
Community College
Ulster County
Community College
Westchester
Community College

**List is current as of
September 2014*

Exhibit 3

Five Criteria for Readiness

What is the readiness of a new site for successfully implementing the Say Yes City-Wide Turnaround Strategy? To evaluate a city's interest and readiness, Say Yes applies five due diligence criteria. These criteria reflect readiness and potential for citywide reform.

1. **Postsecondary Completion Goal:** This criterion requires community willingness to set the goal of postsecondary completion as the standard (along with postsecondary readiness) upon which progress will be measured. Accomplishing this goal requires commitment by the entire city—including the teachers' and administrators' unions—to form an organized coalition, engage in a collaborative process, and commit to the attainment of key outcome metrics (including postsecondary completion rates, postsecondary matriculation rates, postsecondary readiness indicators (such as advance course enrollment and SAT/ACT scores), and early education indicators that track to postsecondary readiness, such as third grade literacy).
2. **Partnership with Higher Education:** This criterion requires the school district, school board, and union to demonstrate willingness to partner with higher education in the city, in order to provide the supports and interventions needed to ensure student success.
3. **Transparent Accountability:** This criterion requires school district willingness to engage in a public dialogue—with third-party validated data—about what is working and not working. The goal of this dialogue is to develop and implement comprehensive programming that, over time, effectively meets the evolving needs of all youth within the system. The third-party validated data are the foundation for ongoing continuous improvement processes, and should be utilized by the entire community.
4. **Transparent and Sustainable Fiscal Management:** This criterion requires city-wide willingness to commit to a long-term fiscal pro forma that results (by year six of the program) in full funding of a comprehensive set of new programs (needed to support access of aspirational goals) through the core operating budgets of the school system, city, and county.
5. **Cross-Government and Cross-Sector Collaborative Governance Model:** This criterion requires school, district, government, and private sector commitment to (a) building the collaborative governance structures (e.g., Community Advisory Group, Operating Group, and Task Forces) required to scale, and, (b) sustaining the social emotional, health, legal, family counseling, and academic services needed. This commitment is based on the acknowledgement that these stakeholders cannot independently meet the intense needs of urban youth.

Exhibit 4

Student Monitoring and Intervention System (SMIS) Indicators

Overall Health

- Asthma, allergies, dental, vision, hearing
- Sleeping, eating, behavioral, emotional

Social Capital

- Adult support for education/college/problems
- Peer group support for education/college

Culture Capital

- Participation in arts, theater, museum events
- Encouragement and help for applying to college

Social Emotional Learning

- Friendships
- In touch with feelings

Behavior

- Getting along with others
- Having positive feelings

Citizenship

- Community involvement

Peers

- Value education
- Leadership roles

Learning Supports at Home

- Quiet place to study
- Help with homework

English/Language Arts/Literacy

- Mathematics/Numeracy
- Attendance
- Grade Retention
- College Eligibility

Exhibit 5
Educational Audits

Note: Education audits were conducted by Cross and Joftus

Areas audited:

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Supports for Students with Disabilities and ELLs
- Human Resource Systems

Evaluated by:

- Reviewing extant data and documents
- Conducting surveys (teachers, school administrators and school staff)
- Interviewing district staff and stakeholders
- Formally observing classrooms in district schools

Say Yes is looking for systemic coherence as defined by the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Coherence Framework. The framework published by PELP at Harvard was adapted from Tushman and O'Reilly's Congruence Model, 2002.

(PELP) Coherence Framework

.....

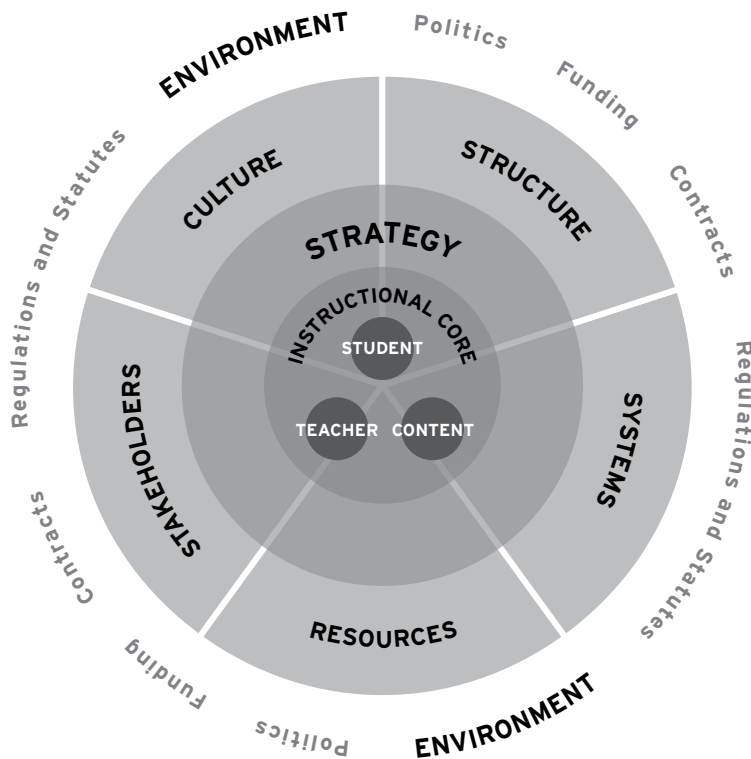


Exhibit 6

School District Financial Audits

Note: Strategic budget analysis were conducted by Schoolhouse Partners

Objectives of Strategic Budget Analysis:

- Provide a new view of District investments that shows how specific spending areas contribute to the District’s work of educating children, serving the community, and complying with rules and regulations
- Depict changes in use of District resources over time
- Identify key District program priorities, going forward
- Illustrate alignment and gaps between past investment, current planned investment, and priorities
- Recommend changes in investments going forward to move towards full funding of District priorities

Value Chain-Based Analysis of Expenses:

The analysis of district spending is organized by value chain area, which breaks down operational and support functions:

Operating Activities

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Curriculum Development | Professional Development | Core Academic Instruction | Special Education Instruction English Language Learner Instruction | Enrichment Academic Instruction | Continuing Guidance and Health Care |
| Academic Supplemental Programs | Non-academic Supplemental Programs | School Leadership | Assessment Program Evaluation, and Reporting | Food Service | Transportation |

Support Activities

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| District Administration | Human Resources | Physical Plant and Maintenance |
| Communication and Community Relations | Finance and Business Operations | Benefits and Incentives |
| Information Technology | Grants and Development | Debt Service |

Exhibit 7

A Pathway to Postsecondary Education and Career

12.

Full tuition
scholarship incentive

11.

Complete FAFSA & postsecondary program
application by December of senior year

10.

SAT Score of 1550/ACT 23

9.

AP test score of 3 or better (or 1bEqv. IV)

8.

Algebra I and Algebra II by end of grade 11 (grade C or Better)

7.

Complete the PSAT by end of grade 10

6.

Plans to Attend a postsecondary program at end of grade 9

5.

Postsecondary prep course schedule entering 9, 10, 11, 12

4.

Parent/guardian aspiration of and information
about postsecondary opportunities for child by grade 5

3.

High Stakes proficiency (>75th%) ELA, math end of grade 5

2.

Reading at grade level by end of grade 3

1.

Kindergarten readiness

Questions to consider while reading this case about effective education grantmaking:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Say Yes to Education's approach to scaling its impact?
2. What are the key implications/consequences of shifting from a cohort-based strategy to a citywide strategy?
3. What lessons and insights does this case have for your grant making? How can grantmakers think differently about supporting sustainable endeavors?
4. What are the key drivers and detractors to the sustainability of Say Yes' work?
5. How do systems and culture impact one another? How does that impact the work of grantmakers?
6. How can grantmakers support more systemic change that outlasts the tenure of single leaders?
7. How can grantmakers support best practices without being prescriptive?

PRINCIPLES FOR

Effective Education Grantmaking

- principle
no. 1

Discipline and Focus

In education, where public dollars dwarf private investments, a funder has greater impact when grantmaking is carefully planned and targeted.
- principle
no. 2

Knowledge

Information, ideas and advice from diverse sources, as well as openness to criticism and feedback, can help a funder make wise choices.
- principle
no. 3

Resources Linked to Results

A logic-driven “theory of change” helps a grantmaker think clearly about how specific actions will lead to desired outcomes, thus linking resources with results.
- principle
no. 4

Effective Grantees

A grantmaker is effective only when its grantees are effective. Especially in education, schools and systems lack capacity and grantees (both inside and outside the system) may require deeper support.
- principle
no. 5

Engaged Partners

A funder succeeds by actively engaging its partners – the individuals, institutions and communities connected with an issue – to ensure “ownership” of education problems and their solutions.
- principle
no. 6

Leverage, Influence and Collaboration

The depth and range of problems in education make it difficult to achieve meaningful change in isolation or by funding programs without changing public policies or opinions. A grantmaker is more effective when working with others to mobilize and deploy as many resources as possible in order to advance solutions.
- principle
no. 7

Persistence

The most important problems in education are often the most complex and intractable, and will take time to solve.
- principle
no. 8

Innovation and Constant Learning

Even while acting on the best available information – as in Principle #2 – a grantmaker can create new knowledge about ways to promote educational success. Tracking outcomes, understanding costs and identifying what works—and what doesn’t—are essential to helping grantmakers and their partners achieve results.

Grantmakers for Education (GFE) is a national network of hundreds of education philanthropies, united by a passion and commitment to improve public education and learning for all students of all ages, cradle to career. GFE is a force multiplier, harnessing the collective power of education grantmakers to increase momentum, impact, and outcomes for this nation's learners. We are proud to promote a culture of learning among education funders and provide a forum for interaction and engagement that builds upon and deepens the impact of our member's individual investments. Grantmakers for Education and its members believe in the power of what we can all achieve when we work together and learn from each other's successes and challenges.

