



Leading TOGETHER

Four Case Studies of Successful
Gateway City Initiatives



Third Annual Innovation Awards

November 2015

Dear Friends:

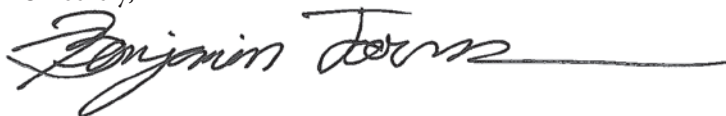
With great pleasure, we offer these four case studies of successful Gateway City initiatives. Linking the work to our annual Gateway City Innovation Awards allowed us to conduct this novel research. Financial support from generous event sponsors—combined with some additional underwriting from the Boston Foundation—gave us resources to plow many hours into the project, travelling across the state and taking time to reflect on what we heard during our visits.

As you will read, the Gateway City leaders made excellent research subjects. They welcomed us into their world to explain how they overcame considerable obstacles and candidly shared thoughts on how they could do even better. The research and writing benefited from Amy Dain, a consultant to MassINC, who was groomed at the Kennedy School and the Pioneer Institute. She accompanied me on all of the interviews, bringing an outstanding eye and intuition for policy research. In addition to reading these case studies, I strongly encourage you to visit our website to view video of the interviews. Llyr Johansen, a recent addition to the MassINC team, expertly captured the voices of Gateway City leaders and produced compelling videos that bring their stories to life.

MassINC's focus on Gateway Cities is driven by a wholehearted belief that within these communities burn the flames that we must fan to rekindle a strong and stable middle class. For so many Massachusetts residents, the work that Gateway City leaders are undertaking provides the fuel for strong-willed pursuit of the American Dream. The policy support that we offer these leaders must be backed by evidence and hard data. But as these case studies illustrate, our investment decisions cannot be made on the basis of numbers alone. Qualitative research and investigation is critical to ensuring that state policy is implemented successfully and that communities have the latitude they need to innovate and course-correct.

As always, we thank you for your continued support and encourage you to remain steadfast with us in this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Davis", followed by a long horizontal line.

Executive Director

MassINC Gateway Cities Innovation Institute

Leading TOGETHER

Four Case Studies of Successful
Gateway City Initiatives



**The Five District
Partnership Case Study** 7



**The Lawrence Community
Partnerships Case Study** 13



**The Holyoke Safe and Successful
Youth Initiative Case Study** 21



**Developing a Fresh Generation
of Civic Leaders in Worcester** 27

Leading TOGETHER

Four Case Studies of Successful Gateway City Initiatives

INTRODUCTION

Life was simpler a generation ago. General practitioners treated a wide array of ailments, attorneys lawyered most any case that came their way, and CEOs led homegrown, family-owned businesses with financing from local banks. Over the past few decades, waves of specialization, consolidation, and globalization have dramatically altered professional patterns and corporate holdings. These trends have hit our commonwealth's Gateway Cities with especially blunt force.

Responding to the challenges brought about by industrial change requires strong leadership, but the changes themselves have eroded the leadership capacity of small to midsize cities throughout the US. Consolidation leaves fewer committed private sector leaders with a long-term vision at the civic table. The rapid pace of economic change creates more residential turnover. Declining household income means residents have less time to volunteer and fewer resources to donate or stake campaigns for public office.

Gateway Cities clearly need new governance structures and leadership development strategies to thrive in this more complex world. Academics have vigorously debated different approaches, leaving in their wake a trail of seemingly logical ideas from which communities may choose. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that the stakes for this decision are high. More so than any other factor, local leadership separates cities that succeed from those that struggle.¹

This volume presents four case studies that offer guidance for those invested in helping Gateway Cities choose and successfully establish next-generation governance and leadership development models. By looking closely at initiatives that have provided an effective response to complex challenges in a variety of settings, the case studies reveal lessons about the structure of leadership in Gateway Cities, as well as current leadership capacity and efforts to tap a wellspring of future leaders.

The first case study examines the Five District Partnership, a collaborative venture developed by the Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, and Winthrop school districts in response to the challenge of student mobility. Every year, thousands of students move among the schools in these neighboring cities, creating major disruptions in learning. The case study examines the collaborative leadership model the partnership has created, which spreads the power to effect change across five superintendents and down to teacher-leaders responsible for developing curriculum in over 40 different schools.

For the second case study, we travel to Lawrence and find another example of collaborative leadership in a very different educational setting. In 2012, the state placed Lawrence's struggling school district in receivership and appointed a superintendent with sweeping powers to transform the system. The new superintendent used these powers to grant individual school leaders more autonomy. He then challenged schools to use this autonomy to expand the learning opportunities available to students by partnering with local nonprofits.

Holyoke is the setting for the third case study: a look at the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative, which seeks to reduce violence among proven-risk youth. This effort involves a challenging collaborative model to address one of the most complex problems Gateway Cities face. Despite the high degree of difficulty, all indications suggest that the approach is saving lives.

The final stop on our tour is a visit to Worcester, where we look at two examples of how Gateway Cities cultivate leadership qualities in their changing citizenry. The case study begins with the Latino Education Institute, a center at Worcester State University that provides high-quality summer and after school programs with a heavy emphasis on developing the civic identity of the city's immigrant youth. For another perspective, we



Watch Our Live Interviews

MassINC is searching for compelling new ways to draw attention to successful Gateway City initiatives. We captured all of our interviews for these case studies on video. Visit massinc.org to hear powerful stories directly from Gateway City leaders.

examine young adult and young professional leadership institutes run by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

These four case studies can be read by those interested in the specific problems and specific adaptations Gateway Cities have put in place to address them. However, our hope is that the cases provoke deeper reflection on common themes that emerge, including three that we explore in more detail in these introductory pages: how leaders work together collaboratively, the leaderships styles they employ to build buy-in for change, and the readiness of Gateway City residents to engage as full participants in the work of community revitalization.

Collaborative Leadership

Power in Gateway Cities is often distributed across a long leadership table. Seats are filled by holders of elected office and officials from an array of government organizations, chamber executives, hospital CEOs, college presidents, and heads of community foundations and local nonprofits. Many believe that the key for these communities is maximizing this leadership potential through initiatives that marshal resources and target them strategically at shared priorities. This *collaborative impact* approach, as it has been termed, is not without its challenges.²

Foremost, it often runs contrary to forces that keep leaders from coalescing. Many times organizations simply have conflicting interests. Even when leaders share objectives, they may shy away from collaboration because it makes taking credit for results more difficult. Working in coalition also involves a high degree of risk. Building consensus and implementing initiatives through a tangled web of bureaucracies introduces extra complexity and often requires more time.

Despite these challenges, focused collaboration can be found in different forms in every one of these case studies. It happens in the 5DP because the five school superintendents—the principal leaders in the endeavor—had built relationships with one another over decades, resulting in an exceptional level of trust. Lawrence is different. The state-appointed superintendent was brand new to the community. However, he had confidence that the organizations could offer quality learning

opportunities and he could demonstrate to the organizations that he had the intention, the resources, and the power to make productive partnerships happen. Collaboration in Holyoke was a forced marriage. It occurred because it was a requirement of the state grant (and the only way to deliver the comprehensive set of services that proven-risk youth need).

While different forces enabled each of these collaborative partnerships to form, it is likely that one common characteristic explains their success. Each undertaking narrowly focuses on a single achievable goal: aligning curriculum so students do not miss units when they transfer schools in the 5DP, getting more youth to more enrichment activities in Lawrence, and wrapping support around a very small and specific population of young men in Holyoke. This conclusion is consistent with the literature on successful collaborative impact partnerships.³

However, the Gateway City cases differ from the theoretical vision for collaborative impact in the most fundamental way. While the classical idea is that these partnerships will result in organizations programming existing resources more efficiently, all of these models required new outside funding. The SSYI service in Holyoke relied entirely on a new grant. Lawrence received large 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants from the state to support the community partnerships, as well as significant grants from private foundations. While the outside funding for the 5DP was much smaller relative to the operation, the districts still relied heavily on grants from the state department of education to get the initiative off the ground. These outside resources led to systems change and significant positive momentum, but it remains to be seen whether these communities will be able to sustain their success over the long term.

Transformational vs. Transactional Leaders

The leadership style that individuals employ is another important consideration. Those who study leadership in cities undergoing stressful change often differentiate between transactional leaders and transformational leaders. Transactional leaders attract followers by bargaining for their support with inducements. In contrast, transformational leaders are the charismatic type who lay out a clear vision for change that inspires followers.⁴

"Transformational leaders are able to produce dramatic change by generating renewed commitment to the organization."

Transactional leaders gain trust in a community through competence. While transactional leaders are often averse to change, those who wish to move communities in new directions can skillfully cash in on this earned trust by incrementally asking followers to adopt new practices. The 5DP case study has elements of transactional leadership. In this example, long-serving superintendents compensated teachers for their work developing and implementing aligned course sequences. Change occurred one subject at a time over multiple years.

While the most effective leaders in Gateway Cities may use a transactional style at times, change agents in these communities often rely more heavily on a transformational leadership style. They are able to lay out a clear vision, a cause that appeals to the moral values of their followers. Modeling behavior consistent with achieving this moral cause, transformational leaders often encourage followers to challenge old assumptions. Transformational leadership may be more likely in collaborative endeavors precisely because these leaders are often altruistic, which makes them more willing to take greater risk and sacrifice credit. This in turn inspires others to transcend their own self-interest.⁵

The risk-taking proposition that the Holyoke SSYI team makes with every partner in the initiative is an example. The Holyoke SSYI leaders win the support of employers, the courts, and others in the community by passionately communicating a conviction that the young men in their care deserve a second chance and that the program can give them this opportunity.

Transformational leadership can be particularly effective when those being led are predisposed to believe in the moral purpose, have been frustrated by past efforts, and are longing for change. This is often the case in Gateway Cities, where leadership involves winning the backing of those who came to work in government and social service agencies with a genuine desire to improve the lives of others.⁶ Studies of educational leadership in school settings show that transformational leaders are able to produce dramatic change by generating renewed commitment to the organization. This is achieved by establishing a vision and giving teachers autonomy to realize it together.⁷

Questions for Additional Consideration

- How do Gateway Cities make leadership development and citizen participation a community-wide priority?
- How do Gateway Cities benchmark their success developing next-generation leaders and fostering citizen participation?
- What are the specific qualities that Gateway Cities should look for in individuals or seek to build through leadership development programs to promote collaborative leadership?
- What changes to formal governance structures are needed to facilitate collaborative leadership?
- How should Gateway Cities respond when the civic discourse creates divisions at odds with the goal of inclusive citizen participation?

This is certainly one way to view the transformation in Lawrence. Prior to the takeover, the Lawrence school district was among the lowest performing in the state. Without dramatic personnel changes, the district has made remarkable headway in just a few short years. The superintendent's vision that all students deserve more learning in a wider variety of settings was a strong moral call to action. Giving schools greater leeway sent a strong signal that the system would support bold action to achieve this vision, inspiring confidence and generating commitment from principals and teachers.

Engaged Residents

Leadership studies overwhelmingly focus on the leader as the unit of analysis, but qualities of the led also deserve careful consideration. Sociologists find higher levels of social capital in neighborhoods where residents share values and trust one another. This social capital creates *collective efficacy*, a term for residents with the ability to self-organize and accomplish much for the common good on their own.⁸ As a field, community development has traditionally been about boosting the capacity of neighborhoods to self-organize around problems and decision-making processes affecting the larger community.

Teacher-leaders, parent-leaders, and next-generation leaders in Lawrence



The changes that Gateway Cities are undergoing and the economic instability of many of their residents clearly make it more difficult for social capital to form. Establishing trusting relationships in diverse neighborhoods with a high degree of residential turnover is difficult. Participation in civic life is strongly linked to income and education, the resources residents bring to the interaction, as well as to homeownership, which increases the return on investment. Studies show that city leaders often make ill-advised decisions on behalf of the public when citizen participation is absent from the process.⁹

The case studies provide examples of Gateway Cities working hard to prepare community members for participation in civic life. In Lawrence, Parent Education Circles facilitated through the nonprofit partnerships give residents the resources needed

to successfully engage with teachers and contribute something positive to the entire school community. Proven-risk young men receiving services from the Holyoke SSYI program are trained to engage with local leaders and advocate for their own needs. These experiences are intended to be therapeutic. They show youth that they do have voice and their actions can influence their life circumstances.

In the final analysis, a clear takeaway from the case studies is that Gateway Cities contain a large reservoir of untapped leadership capacity. There is a popular refrain among experts in this field: "leaders are just ordinary people with extraordinary determination." Gateway Cities are full of immigrants and others who show extraordinary determination every day overcoming adversity. When these residents are inspired to lead, they bring enormous energy and invaluable life experience.

Endnotes

- 1 Yolanda Kodrzycki and others. "Reinvigorating Springfield's Economy: Lessons from Resurgent Cities" Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Public Policy Discussion Paper 09-6 (2009).
- 2 Philip Hallinger and Ronald Heck. "Leadership for Learning: Does Collaborative Leadership Make a Difference in School Improvement?" *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*
- 3 Fay Hanley Brown and others. Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work" *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 20 (2012).
- 4 For example, see Derrick Purdue. Neighborhood Governance: Leadership, Trust, and Social Capital" *Urban Studies* 38.12 (2001).
- 5 Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio. *Transformational Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006).
- 6 Bradley Wright and others. Pulling the Levers: Transformational Leadership, Public Service Motivation, and Mission Valence" *Public Administration Review* 72.2 (2012).
- 7 Nienke Moolenaar and others. Occupying the Principal Position: Examining Relationships between Transformational Leadership, Social Network Position, and Schools' Innovative Climate" *Educational Administration Quarterly* 46.5 (2010); Helen Marks and Susan Printy. Principal Leadership and School Performance: An Integration of Transformational and Instructional Leadership" *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39.3 (2003).
- 8 Robert Sampson and others. Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy" *Science* 277.5328 (1997).
- 9 Barbara Brown and others. Place attachment in a revitalizing neighborhood: Individual and block levels of analysis." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23 (2003).

1

THE FIVE DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY

Solving the complex challenges faced by Gateway Cities almost always involves leaders joining forces across institutions. This is a challenge in itself. Organizations have separate missions, budgets, chains of authority, and systems of accountability. How do they successfully overcome these bureaucratic obstacles? The Five District Partnership's response to the problems caused by student mobility is a powerful case study.

The superintendents leading neighboring school districts in Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, and Winthrop knew that thousands of students were moving mid-year from one of their communities to another. This meant that children were repeating some academic units and missing others, as there were no standard sequences for teaching subjects. They formed the Five District Partnership (5DP) to align teaching plans across schools so that third-grade fractions, for example, are taught everywhere in September. Children who transfer mid-year no longer miss or repeat units. The partnership is not only benefiting students in mobile families; it has become a platform for the districts to work together in a number of innovative ways.

Read on to learn more about the 5DP model and what this case study tells us about leading the way to change in Gateway Cities.

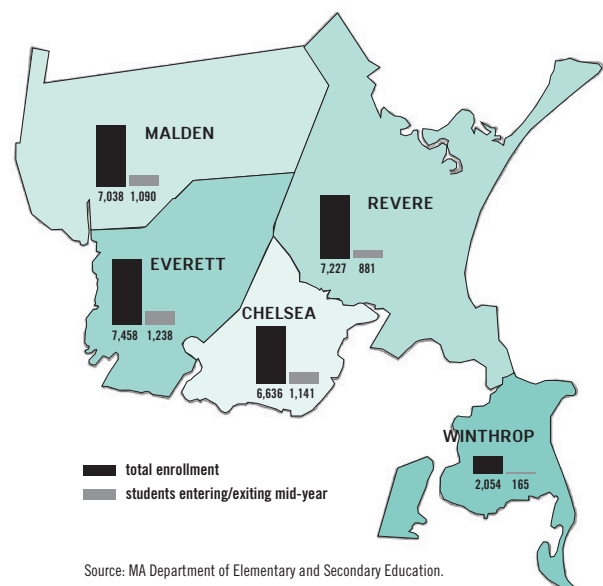
THE PROBLEM: Thousands of transferring students are missing portions of the curriculum

Mary Bourque, superintendent of the Chelsea Public Schools, wrote her doctoral dissertation on the issue of students transferring among the five communities. Dr. Bourque found that the negative impact of high student mobility in the region extended beyond the mobile students, affecting the whole school community.¹

The scenario may look like this: a family cannot keep up with rent for their apartment in Revere, so they move in with relatives in Everett. They save money and eventually rent another apartment in Chelsea. Their daughter learns fractions in the fall in Revere and repeats fractions in the spring in Everett. Unfortunately, she misses the unit on measurement altogether, so she will need remedial help to catch up in Chelsea. She begins the next school year in Chelsea prepared, but teachers must repeat material for her entire class that other transferring students have missed. The pace of instruction slows and academic achievement suffers for everyone.

Dr. Bouque's analysis indicated that if teachers in these five districts could synchronize their teaching, nearly 30,000 students would benefit.

Enrollment and mobility in 5DP Districts, 2014



"Teachers quickly realized that they had a lot in common and interesting insights to share."

THE LEADERS:

Deep roots in the community and strong bonds

The story of the 5DP can't be told without first explaining that all of the leaders involved had deep roots in their communities. Dr. Bouque is a product of the Chelsea Public Schools. She has been an educator in the district for nearly two decades. Over the years, she has formed strong bonds with leaders from the other five school districts, who have similar ties to their communities.

Tom Stella, the assistant superintendent overseeing Everett's participation in the 5DP, graduated from the Everett Public Schools, just like his grandmother and his children. John Macero, Winthrop's superintendent, was a teacher in Everett alongside Dr. Stella for 20 years. Mr. Macero then became a principal in Revere at the same time as Dr. Dakin, Revere's longtime superintendent. Dr. DeRuosi, Malden's superintendent, was also a principal in Revere working under Dr. Dakin. Dr. DeRuosi talks about how growing up in the community gives these leaders deeper understanding. "The mom who comes into our office who works three jobs: I know her...that was my mom," he says.

A few years ago, this group of education leaders started joking about forming a partnership. When the talk turned serious, they realized that launching the Five District Partnership was quite doable. Unlike the students who were moving regularly, this leadership team was stable. As Dr. Dakin says, "The human connections made the effort go easier than if we were strangers."

THE OPPORTUNITY:

The Common Core

Dr. Bourque inspired the key leaders to come together and mobilized buy-in from the key leaders to come together to address it. The timing was fortuitous: The districts had to respond to dramatic change ushered in by the new Common Core Standards. School leaders and teachers would need to translate these standards into curriculum and assessments. It made sense for teachers to collaborate across districts. "None of us had the administrative or teacher capacity to align lessons to the new standards on our own," Dr. Bourque notes. While they were working on the Common Core changes, they could sequence their year-long teaching plans.

THE STRATEGY:

Build a strong and sustainable platform

The superintendents thoughtfully designed a structure for implementing their idea. Here are some key features that made it work:

- **House the partnership in the districts.** The partnership would be a creature of the participating districts, not primarily a project of an external partner, consultant, or state agency. Each district provided resources to the partnership to demonstrate their commitment to it.
- **Hire staff to coordinate the effort:** The districts hired and managed a staff person dedicated to the project, which gave it real focus and capacity.
- **Have teachers in the districts take the lead.** At the end of the day, aligning course sequences would require buy-in from teachers in the classrooms. It made sense that teachers be empowered to develop year-long plans (the document with the unit sequences for teachers to follow) using their knowledge of course progression. Consultants and state curriculum specialists provided some assistance, but teachers drove the decision-making. The partners secured funding to pay the teachers for the work. Teachers gained leadership experience, deepened their expertise, and got to know their colleagues better. This learning stayed in-house.
- **Develop and improve year-long plans through an expanding and iterative process.** The leaders of the 5DP did not press for change overnight. Rather, they put in place a process that initially allowed teachers to develop a small set of year-long plans. Teachers then tested these plans and provided feedback to improve upon them. This iterative process is unfolding over several years, building buy-in and expanding incrementally until all of the common courses are sequenced.
- **Secure outside funding to support the work.** The superintendents were concerned that with tight budgets and other urgent needs, it might be hard to get sufficient funding from all of the districts to support the program. Resources from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided the fuel to get the partnership operating. A grant from the Boston Foundation helped accelerate momentum.



THE IMPLEMENTATION: Learning to walk, trying not to run

In 2012, Cove Johnstone Davis was hired to direct the Five District Partnership. She quickly formed several teams for implementation: the leadership team, including superintendents and assistant superintendents; a steering committee, with three teachers or school level administrators from each district; and content teams, staffed by teachers and curriculum directors.

The initial task was to develop common year-long plans so that teachers would follow the same sequence as they taught their courses. They might use different curriculums, texts, and assessments, but the main components of each subject would be taught around the same time in the academic calendar across all five districts.

The first summer, the 5DP recruited 85 teachers for the content teams. Although there was initially some awkwardness, the teachers quickly realized that they had a lot in common and interesting insights to share. To reinforce this point, Dr. Davis shares an anecdote of two English teachers from different districts discussing the needs of a transferring student. Moments into the exchange, the teachers realize they had both taught the same boy.

In year one, content teams developed sequences for English Language Arts (ELA) and math in grades 2 through 8. That fall, several classes piloted these year-long plans. The teachers collected feedback via surveys and revised the plans accordingly. Over the course of the 2013-14 school year, content teams assembled and created plans for ELA and math for kindergarten and first grade, for history and social studies for grades 2 through 8, and for ELA for grades 9 and 10. Now in the third year, 5DP content teams are working on plans for

math and ELA for the remaining grades, as well as for science, history and social studies. While the bulk of this work has been completed during summer recess, districts have provided teachers with release days when planning meetings were required during the school year.

As the 5DP gained credibility and momentum, many ideas surfaced for how it could be put to good use. The leadership team was careful to remain focused. Dr. Davis was results-oriented and saw it as her responsibility to ensure that the districts remained disciplined about what they took on and what they would sidestep.

Responding to the demands of teaching the Common Core was a founding principle, so it made sense to use the partnership as a platform for sharing professional development capacity to help teachers adapt to this new approach. Much of the training offered jointly through the partnership has involved Understanding by the Design (UbD), a process to help teachers design curriculum, assessments, and lesson plans for Common Core Standards. Teachers using UbD begin by identifying what students are expected to know and how students will demonstrate their ability to put this knowledge to good use. Then they develop a lesson plan that will help them carefully tailor instruction to achieve these outcomes. UbD also calls upon teachers to work collaboratively to regularly review curriculum and assessments, continuously improving to increase student learning.

Through the 5DP, content teams are beginning to use UbD to move beyond year-long plans and also produce lesson plans for courses. These lesson plans will be available to teachers with a login to the 5DP website; unlike the year-long sequences, teachers won't be obligated to use them.

THE RESULTS:

Early returns with long-term payoff potential

The 5DP has already produced significant benefits for the participating districts. Work remains to quantify these gains, but here is what we can say at the moment:

- 1. The 5DP has increased alignment, which means less missed content for mobile students.** Academic achievement is affected by countless factors including the many interventions schools undertake, so it is hard to tease out the effect of the 5DP. But logic holds that when there is standard sequencing across districts, students transferring within the districts will not miss sections of the curriculum as often. Alignment plans are now in place for most classes. Chelsea, Malden, and Revere phase assessments according to the year-long plans, so at least in these three districts, it is possible to confirm that teachers are following common sequencing.
- 2. The combination of 5DP teacher leadership positions, networking, and professional development can elevate instruction.** The 5DP is increasing collaboration by bringing teachers together to deliberate on curriculum, standards, assessment, and lesson plans. The 5DP also gives the districts the ability to make more professional development opportunities available, particularly for educators in small departments with fewer faculty. The superintendents believe bringing talented teachers across districts to work in teams leads to the cross-fertilization of ideas. Describing his first days in the classroom, Dr. Dakin emphasizes the benefits of having teachers interact with master teachers from other districts: "Back then, we closed our classroom doors and taught from the book. Today it's all about taking ideas from great teachers and all of the time trying to get better at our craft."
- 3. The partnership is drawing resources into the district.** In 2014, the partnership was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Boston Foundation to train teacher leaders to deliver professional development on UbD. More recently, together with a center at UMass Boston focused on math and science instruction, the 5DP received a \$50,000 grant to train middle-school science teachers on new science standards and developing high-quality assessments.

As word about the successful partnership spreads, many groups are approaching the districts with new ideas for collaboration around curriculum, assessment, and professional development. The scale, efficiencies, and successful track record are appealing to funders. Relationships between teachers across the district continue to develop and strengthen, positioning the 5DP to pursue even more challenging work in the future.

THE ROAD AHEAD:

The 5DP as a vehicle for innovation

An axiom in urban education is that high performance cannot be found at scale. If you look across the country for exceptions to that rule, districts in the 5DP may come as close as any. Together these five districts contain 40 schools and not a single one is rated Level 4 or 5 (the two lowest categories in the state's accountability framework). This strong performance predates the 5DP and can be attributed to many factors. Chelsea, for example, benefited from a two-decade partnership with Boston University. That these systems were relatively high-functioning at the outset certainly contributed to the 5DP's success. Now with the 5DP partnership, these communities are even better situated for additional improvement.

To make further gains closing achievement gaps, Massachusetts needs new strategies to help communities use limited funding to support students and families as efficiently as possible. This will require investing catalytic resources in places that are ready to innovate. New forms of assessment and accountability will be particularly important to directing resources toward more effective teaching and learning.

Assessment has been a prominent issue for 5DP leaders. Chelsea, Malden, and Revere have relied heavily on external partners (ANet and Bay State Reading Institute) to help develop assessments that give teachers a better understanding of how individual students are progressing and help teaching teams target areas for improvement in learning and instruction. Everett was utilizing Edwin Teaching and Learning, an assessment system funded through the Race to the Top grant, which is no longer operational. Training teachers to use assessments and the data they produce on an ongoing basis is costly and time consuming. Positioning the 5DP districts to move forward on this work will require a significant upfront funding commitment from an outside investor.

Another important marker on the road forward for the 5DP is an external evaluation. As with many ambitious education undertakings, the superintendents bootstrapped resources to get the project off the ground. This meant adequate resources were not available to quantify outcomes. Conscious of the need to build future efforts on top of hard evidence, 5DP leaders are eager for a rigorous review.

"As word about the successful partnership spreads, many groups are approaching the districts with new ideas for collaboration."

LEADING THE WAY TO CHANGE IN GATEWAY CITIES: LESSONS FROM THE 5DP

The 5DP case study offers several lessons for Gateway City leaders working to unite with others in the community to tackle hard problems. First, it is an example of how collaborative leadership can succeed. Collaborative leadership has been a hot topic in Gateway City circles since the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston published a seminal research paper showing the one factor that differentiates cities striving for a comeback is the extent to which the community works together with a common vision for renewal.² This idea has gained traction as an intentional strategy in the form of collective impact initiatives, organized efforts whereby community groups mobilize behind a plan of action. Like the 5DP, the most successful of these efforts have focused on a well-defined solvable problem.³

The 5DP also provides powerful evidence that collaborative leadership can be particularly effective in education settings. Around the same time that the Fed published its findings on resurgent cities, researchers began connecting school improvement to collaborative leadership. While studies had long pointed to principals as change agents, rigorous research suggests an even more effective variant of education leadership comes when administrators, principals, and teachers work together to promote change. This happens through governance models that encourage broad participation in decision-making and shared accountability.⁴ To a T, this is the type of structure the 5DP leaders built.

Viewed from a slightly different angle, another translation of this takeaway is we don't always need a John Wayne to ride into town. There is a popular tendency to credit change to transformational leaders, heroes who save a city or turn around a struggling school, but more often, improvement happens collectively and within a system that can support change. Leaders at the top, in this case the superintendents, are still the catalysts for innovation, but their leadership abilities are effective because the right conditions exist within the system.

Conversely, schools that have chronically struggled may be unresponsive to action initiated at the top, even when leaders do everything right. In education, change may be particularly sensitive to the local factors because schools are by nature places where leadership is distributed. The formal control of superintendents and principals is limited, especially when it comes to instructional practice in the classroom.⁵ When teacher leaders engage effectively, change happens, which in

turn increases the credibility of the leaders at the top. In this way, districts gain momentum.

Harvard's Center for Public Leadership has been working to illustrate how a similar positive feedback loop exists within communities through a concept they call *capital absorption*; put simply, money flows into places that are able to work together to put it to good use.⁶ Growing interest in the 5DP from outside may be evidence of this occurring.

A few reflections on classic leadership theory in the Gateway City context from the 5DP:

One might credit some of the 5DP's success to old-fashioned transactional leadership. From this vantage, the storyline would be that superintendents got what they wanted because teacher leaders were compensated for their time developing the plans, and the approach was not radically different than how curriculum decisions might traditionally play out in the departments of their respective schools. Transactional leadership tactics occur all the time in Gateway Cities (e.g., providing food to get resident organizers to community meetings or paying parents to take on parent leadership roles).

But transactional tactics are generally combined with other strategies to be effective. We cannot discount the profound change introduced by the Common Core, which was asking teachers to give up some control and work more collaboratively than had been the practice up to that point in their careers. In this sense, the 5DP process contained some of the classic features of *adaptive leadership*. The Common Core presented a significant challenge to current teaching practice. By giving teachers control through content teams, they experienced this transition not as a moment of loss but rather as an opportunity. As Ron Heifetz and his colleagues write, adaptive leaders are in the business of "assessing, managing, distributing, and providing context for losses that move people through those losses to a new place."⁷

Finally, there is the very important issue of trust. Going back to the beginning of leadership theory, trust has always been emphasized as a critical factor. The local roots of the 5DP superintendents may have played an important role in securing buy-in, but trust was likely also generated by empowering teachers. Studies show that trust in the direct leader is even more important than trust in organizational leaders higher up the chain of command.⁸

So what can we conclude about the 5DP as a replicable model?

The 5DP demonstrates that partnering is an effective strategy to innovate more efficiently. Modest public and philanthropic resources can facilitate this approach when the conditions are right. It is great to have an external threat or opportunity and entities with the capacity to engage productively (it helped tremendously that all five of these districts were high-functioning going into the partnership). Trust is valuable, but educators without strong relationships will work together to solve problems and build allegiance along the way. The leaders of the five districts want to make this point clear. As Dr. Bourque says, prior relationships aren't a prerequisite: "What is necessary is to identify a common need that you can address together." Perhaps now that the five districts have shown the way, other school systems will follow their lead.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Mary Bourque. "The Impact of Student Mobility on Academic Achievement" *Doctoral Dissertation* (Boston, MA: Boston University, 2008).
- 2 Yolanda Kodrzycki and others. "Reinvigorating Springfield's Economy: Lessons from Resurgent Cities" *Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Public Policy Discussion Paper* 09-6 (2009).
- 3 Michele Jolin and others. "Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives; A Promising Approach to Addressing America's Biggest Challenges" (New York, NY: Bridgespan Group, 2012).
- 4 For an excellent summary, see Philip Hallinger and Ronald Heck. "Leadership for Learning: Does Collaborative Leadership Make a Difference in School Improvement?" *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 38(6) (2010).
- 5 Kenneth Leithwood and others. "Seven Strong claims about Successful School Leadership" *School Leadership and Management* 28(1) (2008).
- 6 David Wood and Katie Grace. "The Capital Absorption Capacity of Places" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012).
- 7 Ronald Heifetz and others. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).
- 8 Kurt Dirks and Donald Ferrin. "Trust in Leadership" *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87(4) (2002).

2

THE LAWRENCE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY

At their best, Gateway Cities like Lawrence launch young residents out into the world and securely up into the middle class. But acting as a springboard for intergenerational economic mobility is getting more difficult, as Robert Putnam portrays in his most recent book, *Our Kids*. Children living in urban communities no longer get the full array of experiences they need to grow into successful adults. In large part this is because so many families are low-income and led by a single parent working long hours. This makes it difficult for them to engage with schools and establish relationships with other families in the neighborhood. Without the social capital that develops from these interactions, families are less stable and communities less cohesive.¹

Lawrence is certainly not unique in experiencing these challenges, but the collaborative spirit and bold ambition with which city leaders have joined together to support children and families is tells an exceptional story. A receiver appointed by the state to take over the city's struggling school system is working alongside a new mayor and the heads of strong civic organizations. Together, the schools, the mayor, and local nonprofits are weaving a web of partnerships to give students and families a diverse array of opportunities to engage in the community and draw sustenance from it.

THE PROBLEM: A matter of time

If you had only one word to describe the challenge Gateway Cities like Lawrence face, the word to choose would be *time*. As the Massachusetts-based nonprofit the National Center on Time & Learning has compellingly demonstrated, high-poverty schools cannot provide all of the experiences that disadvantaged students need to thrive in our complex society within the constraints of the traditional six-and-a-half-hour-day, 180-day-school-year schedule.² While communities like

Lawrence strive to offer organized sports, dance, drama, and other quality enrichment programs outside of school, making it to these activities is challenging for youth who lack transportation, often have childcare obligations for younger siblings, and a whole variety of other barriers to participation. The reality is very few youth in low-income communities get enough exposure to life experiences that help them build relationships with adults, learn to work as a team, develop a better understanding of their talents, and discover opportunities available to them in the wider world.

Parents also lack time. They work long, hard hours, often at multiple jobs. Language and cultural barriers make it more difficult for them to get the most out of the limited time they do have to engage with their child's school. Without the ability to participate fully in school-centered activities, they have difficulty forming relationships with other parents, making it harder to exchange knowledge about struggles a child may be having, gather information about job opportunities for themselves or a family member, and support in time of crisis. This has implications beyond individual students and families. If schools aren't weaving this social fabric, it's much harder for neighborhoods and the city itself to function as a successful community.³

THE OPPORTUNITY: A collaborative state receiver; an exceptionally strong network of civic organizations; a new mayor

In response to the chronically low performance of the Lawrence Public Schools, the state put the district in receivership, placing Jeff Riley at the helm in 2012. The new superintendent was an outsider from Boston best known for converting one of BPS's worst performing middle schools into one of its best. Among his key reforms, Superintendent Riley extended



A Community Education Circle coming together

the school day, partnering with a number of high capacity nonprofits to provide fun and challenging activities. While many leaders dropped into a failing school system would look inward, focusing on academics to drive up test scores, Superintendent Riley knew the power of strong partners, appreciated that schools need to educate the whole child, and had faith that investing in community partnerships would pay off over time.

Superintendent Riley landed in the perfect place. For a city of its size, Lawrence was awash with nonprofit capacity in education, youth development, and community organizing. The Community Group (TCG) has been a nationally-recognized leader in the field of early childhood development since the 1970s. In the 1990s, TCG became one of the early leaders in the charter movement, launching a successful K-8 school with a long history of exchanging ideas and practice with public school educators. Thanks in part to the generosity of families who got a strong start in Lawrence, the city also has a state-of-the-art Boys and Girls Club and a healthy YMCA. While most cities of Lawrence's size have limited nonprofit community development capacity, Lawrence has two prominent organizations: Lawrence Community Works (LCW), a community development corporation that has drawn national attention for its resident engagement, empowerment, and asset building model, and Groundwork Lawrence, a nonprofit working to bring physical and environmental renewal to the city through a federally-funded national network.

In November 2013, one year after Superintendent Riley's arrival, residents elected Mayor Daniel Rivera, a progressive leader, to a four-year term. The new administration brought energy and optimism to civic leaders fighting for Lawrence families.

THE STRATEGY: A (two-dimensional) school-community partnership

Superintendent Riley's plan was to partner with community organizations to increase the school district's capacity to deliver enrichment activities. Superintendent Riley explains the imperative: "You see super high performing schools [in high poverty areas], where the students even beat Weston kids on the MCAS, but all of the Weston kids get through college." He explains that Lawrence kids need more opportunities to get up on stage and perform in front of a large audience. Enrichment opportunities like these give kids the life skills they need to thrive.

The partners were on board with Superintendent Riley's vision and positioned themselves to help him achieve it. As they worked together and developed trust in Superintendent Riley and his team, the community organizations added another fold to the strategy. Because the schools reach more residents than any other institutions in the community (perhaps half of all Lawrencians, between students and their families), they are well-positioned to serve as a nexus for community economic

"Students needed to show themselves and others that they were gaining competencies."

development efforts. As Jess Andors, the Executive Director of Lawrence Community Works, describes the thinking: "We wanted to see if the nonprofit and business communities could complement the school turnaround effort by connecting with and organizing parents, increasing their attachment to the schools and linking them to training and employment opportunities that help them become more secure and stable economically. If we were able to recreate the schools not only as a hub for academic excellence, but also for family access to education and opportunity, that would have an amazing impact on poverty and the city."

At a minimum, the community groups could use their organizing prowess to help with the difficult work of engaging parents in the schools. But they could also reach more parents and more effectively connect them to services with the potential to improve family finances. Over time, if these efforts result in more economic stability for students, all the better from the educator's perspective.

THE IMPLEMENTATION: High speed weavers

Superintendent Riley took over the Lawrence Public Schools in January 2012. Right away he started planning ways to give students more enrichment programming. His turnaround strategy, issued in May 2012, asked schools to extend learning time, specifically calling on schools to reach into the community.

Empowering school leaders to develop productive relationships with the community was central to his approach. When he was a principal in Boston, Superintendent Riley fought for autonomy to make decisions that were best for his school. Now as the state-appointed receiver for a district of 28 schools, he offered greater latitude to principals. He asked them, along with their faculty, to figure out how to use expanded learning time to serve their students.

To help school leaders create plans to use this additional time well, he brought in the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL). With funding from the Ford Foundation, NCTL provided deep technical assistance, partnering with school leaders and teacher teams to redesign their school day with a focus on strengthening instruction and building strong professional learning communities. For example, they helped school leaders survey students to better understand what kinds of enrichment opportunities kids were looking to explore. They also surveyed teachers to build an inventory of in-house skills. This gave principals a better understanding of what

they could provide, what kind of instruction they should pull into the schools with help from the community, and what activities they might access off campus.

With coaching from NCTL, they were encouraged to look for experiences that enabled kids to develop mastery. Having fun would not be enough; students needed to show themselves and others that they were gaining competencies, whether it was learning how to cook healthy foods or how to swim.

With a better grasp of what schools were looking to find, Superintendent Riley put together a "speed dating" event. School principals and local nonprofits leaders spent an evening rotating around the room for multiple five-minute one-to-one conversations. This helped school leaders develop a sense of what community organizations might offer. Equally important, it sent a strong signal to the community organizations about the school leadership's commitment to collaboration. Superintendent Riley explains that when he took over the schools a few of the partners reached out and "they were shocked to hear back from me because that is not how the district had typically operated." Shelia Balboni, the long-time leader of The Community Group, is animated when asked about the new collaborative spirit: "Before Superintendent Riley, we were in some schools, but I had to fight so hard to be there, even though it was in the best interest of the children."

Superintendent Riley began to hold regular meetings with the city's nonprofit leaders. Heather McMann, Executive Director of Groundwork Lawrence, explains: "I don't have time to spare for meetings that aren't going to lead to something. But I had a sense that this might be different. I didn't know exactly where Superintendent Riley was going, but I knew I needed to be at the table."

Soon principals and community organizations were having many productive conversations. The school leaders discovered that Lawrence had significantly underused capacity for high-quality learning opportunities for kids outside of the school setting.

One principal, who saw perhaps a third of her students head to after-school programs at the Boys and Girls Club, made a call to Kerry Wiersma, the Grants Development Manager at the Boys and Girls Club, to follow up on a conversation that began at the event. She was wondering if all of her students might be able to go to the Boys and Girls Club during school hours for enrichment. The Boys and Girls Club's state-of-the-art facility was mostly empty during the school day. Not only did

"Lawrence leaders came to consensus that supporting the school turnaround was the priority for the community."

it have a great aquatics program, the club also had an expansive list of enrichment programs, including a high-quality healthy living curriculum designed with a grant from the New Balance Foundation and an excellent computer-based Maker Education program, equipped with modern technology and funding from Intel.

The more principals talked with community leaders, the more quality enrichment opportunities they uncovered. A large national foundation had supported the Lawrence YMCA's collaboration with a local professor to develop curriculum that involves measuring steps and heartrate during active play, and using MCAS-tested math skills to analyze the data generated. Groundwork Lawrence had an environmental education curriculum to help kids understand and enjoy the Lawrence ecosystem. The Community Group had an established mock trial program for fourth graders.

To connect schools to these enrichment opportunities, the central office issued an RFP. It then vetted responses and put together lists of vendors that the schools could engage as community partners. The central office handled the contracting and assisted schools as they developed MOUs with external organizations.

By the time kids returned to school in September 2013, plans had been laid. A number of schools would be loading all of their students on buses once a week to spend the better part of a day at the Boys and Girls Club or YMCA. Notable among them was the new Oliver Partnership School, itself the product of another burgeoning district partnership with the Lawrence Teachers Union and its parent organization on the state and national level, the American Federation of Teachers. Managed by the union in collaboration with the district, OPS's model emphasizes seeking the support of local agencies and community groups, and a weekly trip to the YMCA for the entire student body has remained an integral part of the school curriculum since it opened its doors that fall. Other schools would be working with The Community Group, who relied on their staff and decades of relationships in the city to provide array of enrichment activities.

WHILE ALL OF THIS ACTIVITY was going on with a focus on extending the school day and providing Lawrence youth with more enrichment, nonprofit leaders were sitting around

another table talking about how the city could compete in the Working Cities Challenge, an initiative led by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to help community leaders develop collaborative relationships to tackle hard problems. The rules of the competition gave cities wide latitude to choose a problem to address. But each community could submit only one application, and they would be judged heavily on the degree to which all sectors (public, private, and nonprofit) were active participants in the project.

At first there were many ideas, but slowly Lawrence's leaders came to a consensus that supporting the receiver and the school turnaround effort was the priority for the community. As Jess Andors of Lawrence Community Works explains, "It became really clear that the school turnaround is *the* transformational systems-changing opportunity in the city right now."

The leaders fashioned a bold idea plan to support the school turnaround and took the \$700,000 first place prize in the Working Cities competition in January 2014. Over three years, these funds would support the implementation of the Lawrence Working Families Initiative. Led by Lawrence Community Works and the Lawrence Public Schools, the initiative involves 37 partners (and growing), including Northern Essex Community College, the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, the Valley Works Career Center, the Mayor's Health Task Force, Lawrence General Hospital, and nearly 20 major employers in the region.

With funding from the Working Cities Challenge, the initiative hired a director and a full-time family coach for the Lawrence Public Schools Family Resource Center. They began with outreach to both parents and employers.

LCW had already begun developing a parent engagement strategy through a design team process, the organization's signature model for building trust and exploring new approaches to solve hard problems. For the design team, LCW assembled a small group of parents, teachers, and students to think about how you build capacity to engage parents in a school system that traditionally lacked effective practices to support communication between families and schools. The design team devised a solution they called Community Education Circles.

Parents, teachers, and students from a school would come together for a series of three to four weekly discussions held

over dinner at either their school, LCW, or the home of a parent or teacher. These conversations would give members of the circle a chance to build relationships and mutual understanding. Each circle would work to create a strategy or project that they could implement to make their school community stronger.

To engage employers in the schools and increase their contact with a pipeline of parents looking for better employment opportunities, partners in the Lawrence Working Families Initiative along with the mayor's office and the city's business development director started to conduct outreach to employers jointly. Together, they visit companies to better understand their needs and to figure out if there might be a mutual benefit in partnering with the school district, for example, in offering workshops or sending employees to fill volunteer opportunities. According to Jess Andors, the message they seek to convey during these visits is less "Here are ways you can help us" and more "What can we do to help you?"

The Lawrence Working Families Initiative provides employers with prospective workers who have been pre-screened, and offers English language classes, connections to (and scholarships for) sectoral and soft skills training, and complementary resources, such as financial coaching for parents.

Recognizing that these employment opportunities may not be sufficient, the initiative is also supporting families who are interested in self-employment, such as operating as a home daycare center, by drawing on the expertise of partners. (The Community Group has a long history of training home daycare providers.) With tighter integration to the schools, there is hope that as parents gain experience in early education, they can move up the career ladder and into public school teaching, helping the schools expand its workforce of diverse, highly-qualified educators.

THE RESULTS:

A web of school-community partnerships

The Lawrence Boy and Girls Club's state-of-the-art facility just a few years ago sat dark during school hours, but now it is buzzing with activity all day. Each week, six schools take turns bussing students over to the club during the school day. Students pick two one-hour classes to take during their weekly visit. Options include art, basketball, cooking and nutrition, computers, creative writing, dance, karate, music, and swimming. By the end of the year, each student completes six enrichment courses.

The YMCA in Lawrence set up something similar, with kids getting bussed in from another set of schools. The Y also sends its staff into the schools to deliver enrichment on-site to reach even more students than its facilities can accommodate. Frank Kennelly at the YMCA explains that they used to serve 140 kids

after school; now they are reaching thousands of Lawrence kids, both at the Y and in the schools.

Groundwork Lawrence has also expanded its scope. While the nonprofit had maintained an environmental educator on staff, it never had resources to bring its programming to scale. Now Groundwork Lawrence sends its staff into the schools, getting students outside to collect bugs, identify plants and animals, do gardening, and build campfires and shelters. Thousands of kids get new learning experiences every year.

The expanded day with integrated enrichment programs may be particularly beneficial for kids who learn differently and excel in settings different from the traditional classroom. The partnerships may be increasing the capacity of the schools to offer differentiated learning. For example, Heather McMann of Groundwork Lawrence explains how her curriculum is excellent for kids with special needs. Outdoor education involves a lot of tactile and sensory experiences that can be adapted for and enjoyed by kids with sensory processing challenges. Groundwork Lawrence has paid particular attention to these learners in developing its curriculum and they have trained their staff to work with students who have special needs.

The partnerships may also work in reverse, helping to build this capacity in the community. For instance, the Boys and Girls Club's after-school programs had not been set up to serve students with special needs. Youth participating in their programs were fairly independent, selecting their own activities and playing in large, busy game rooms during free time. With schools coming in during the day for enrichment, the Club has to serve all students. Each school brings along its special education team. These specialists have helped Club staff learn to work with kids who need more support. This partnership makes it possible for students who can benefit from active learning to participate. Kerry Wiersma describes how one principal visiting the Club during the school-day enrichment program commented that she saw one of her students, who has special needs and faces a lot of challenges at school, smiling for the first time.

The rapid progress the Lawrence Public Schools are making as a district suggests these partnerships are contributing to the success of students more broadly. Education Resource Strategies (ERS) published a report earlier this year which found that students are getting 130 more hours per year of core academic instruction. The rest of the time is spent on enrichment and targeted work with individual students. By having partners come in to provide the enrichment, teachers have gained time for collaborative planning. ERS found that Lawrence teachers now report spending two hours planning collaboratively every week, compared to the state average of 1.25 hours.⁴

Heather McMann at Groundwork Lawrence says she has never seen partnerships like this before in the city: "There have

"Other indicators are needed to gauge how the enrichment experiences contribute to the social-emotional development of students."

always been so many talented and dedicated community leaders running programs to benefit Lawrence kids and their families. Now they are working and innovating together with school administrators, on a large scale, to help the kids and community thrive."

Lawrence's community partnerships have even caught the attention of the *New York Times*, whose editorial board praised the system for rooting out dysfunction not by turning away from the community, but through deep engagement and partnership.⁵ Jess Andors from Lawrence Community Works describes how this change is visible to parents. She notes that in the past many schools "were fortresses with security guards and parents did not feel welcome." In contrast, the school system now has a bright and welcoming Family Resource Center, where parents find an outstretched hand. The Community Education Circles have also shown promising results. While a rigorous evaluation is under way, more than 300 parents have participated in the circles to date and, as just one of many teachers have noted, "Those parents that participated seem to be much more comfortable in the school and engaging with me in communication like notes, emails, and conversations. It makes a difference that I now know so many of the parents by first name." Several Circle parents are now being recruited by LCW and LPS together for Design Teams to create sustained and customized structures for parent engagement in individual schools.

THE ROAD AHEAD: Transitioning to a sustainable model

In June, the state extended the receivership, keeping the system under Superintendent Riley's control through at least 2018. This stability will help the school district and community institutionalize its collaborative partnership model.

The trust and relationships that have been built will be critical over the next few years as the team collaborates to create a sustainable financial model. Efforts in Lawrence have been supported with seed funding provided by the Working Cities Challenge, the Kellogg Foundation, and others. While the plan is to replace these grant dollars with local funds once the partners prove these concepts work, this may be challenging.

For the school district, collecting data on social-emotional assessment will be particularly helpful for balancing future

investment decisions. Test scores are an indirect indicator that the partnerships are successful, but other indicators are needed to better gauge how student enrichment experiences contribute to social-emotional development. This will require a new set of assessments that the district is currently exploring.

Similarly, leaders of the Working Families Initiative are eager to see findings from the evaluation of the Community Education Circles. They hope this information will give them a blueprint for expanding the circles, making them an integral component of each school's parent engagement strategy and a key pathway for connecting parents to the Family Resource Center and economic opportunity in Greater Lawrence.

For the community partners, transitioning to a sustainable model also presents challenges. With contracts redrawn every year, they face a lot of uncertainty. Often they have very little time to plan. These organizations have expanded their staffing considerably to serve Lawrence students. This adjustment requires more management capacity, but program budgets have generally covered only frontline staffing. They must also fundraise to cover equipment costs and upkeep with the wear and tear on their facilities that come with greater use.

LEADING TOGETHER IN GATEWAY CITIES: Lessons from Lawrence

When we ponder the lessons that this case study offers for transformative Gateway City leadership, there are striking commonalities between how the school district and LCW successfully engaged teacher and parent leaders, respectively. A large body of literature suggests one of the fundamental problems poor urban communities face is lack of "collective efficacy" or shared trust and confidence that by working together neighbors can make a difference in the myriad of everyday problems they encounter. Similarly, scholarship in educational leadership shows that teachers in struggling schools often lose hope that they can work together to make a difference in the lives of their students. In both neighborhoods and schools, empowerment is the remedy to this problem.⁶

To empower residents to act, community organizations need to build a sense of community, provide opportunities for citizen participation, and train residents to exercise leadership effectively. By design, the Community Education Circles fulfill all three of these functions.



Drama class at the Boys & Girls Club

Superintendent Riley's model of school autonomy sent an immediate signal to teachers and school leaders that they were empowered to work creatively to use extended learning time to meet the needs of their students as they saw them. By also making resources available to cover the costs of enrichment activities, the school leaders were positioned to quickly see tangible improvements in the learning opportunities afforded to Lawrence youth.

There is one more subplot in the Lawrence story that is pertinent to this collective efficacy thread. While many forces undermine collective efficacy in distressed communities, one of the most common is lack of positive community identity. Facing a barrage of negative media portrayals, residents of low-income communities like Lawrence often internalize problems that are the result of much larger social and economic forces beyond their control. Reversing this narrative and the pessimism it spawns can be incredibly difficult. In Lawrence, the solution proved to be a larger dose of the venom. When a 2012 *Boston Magazine* article labelled Lawrence the "City of the Damned," residents decided they would no longer be voiceless and let others define them. They joined hands and formed the We Are Lawrence campaign.

Leadership theory shows that, like the rallying power of a crisis, perceived injustice can often spur a strong collective response.⁷ In coming together to draw attention to all of the

good in Lawrence that *Boston Magazine* refused to acknowledge, the city's civic leaders were able to motivate aggrieved residents, pointing to all of their accomplishments and generating momentum for collective action as the receivership, the Rivera administration, and the Working Cities Challenge were taking shape.⁸

Gateway Cities looking at strategies for developing collaborative leadership often get stuck by a narrow definition of leadership. They see the same table of dedicated civic leaders who rise to every challenge and wonder how they can ever be more effective without more hands on deck. By placing the power of leadership in the hands of teachers and parents struggling to make their community a better place, the Lawrence Community Partnerships model provides a compelling answer to this quandary.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For example, see Patricia Baquedano-López and others. “Equity Issues in Parental and Community Involvement in Schools.” *Review of Research in Education* 37(1) (2013).
- 2 David Farbman. “The Case for Improving and Expanding Time in School” (Boston, MA: National Center on Time and Learning, 2015).
- 3 See Ann Crouter and Alan Booth, eds. *Work-Family Challenges for Low-Income Parents and their Children* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
- 4 “Back from the Brink” (Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies, 2015).
- 5 “Massachusetts Takes on a Failing School District” *New York Times* (June 17, 2015).
- 6 Roger Goddard and Yvonne Goddard. “A Multilevel Analysis of the Relationship between Teacher and Collective Efficacy in Urban Schools.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17(7) (2001); Mary Ohmer. “Citizen Participation in Neighborhood Organizations and its Relationship to Volunteers’ Self-and Collective Efficacy and Sense of Community” *Social Work Research* 31(2) (2007); Robert Sampson and Stephen Raudenbush. “Systematic Social Observation of Public Spaces: A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods.” *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (1999); John Ross and Peter Gray. “Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment to Organizational Values: The Mediating Effects of Collective Teacher Efficacy.” *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 17(2) (2006).
- 7 Martijn Van Zomeren and others. “Toward an Integrative Social Identity Model of Collective Action.” *Psychological Bulletin* 134(4) (2008).
- 8 This description of the media influence may appear exaggerated, but those who have worked in these communities will appreciate the powerful stigmatizing influence that the media can have. Much has been written on this topic. For example, see, Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo. *Steeltown USA: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

3

THE HOLYOKE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL YOUTH INITIATIVE CASE STUDY

The Holyoke Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) offers proof positive that responding effectively to challenges in Gateway Cities sometimes calls for very unique breeds of leadership. SSYI seeks to reach the most vulnerable young men. Those who are "proven-risk" because they have committed crimes using a gun or a knife, they have been victimized by violent crime and are likely to retaliate, or they are known to police as associated with a violent gang. Young men in these precarious circumstances have been failed repeatedly by adults, and are now left on their own to endure traumatic events in various forms. A participant in the Holyoke SSYI program named Carlos makes this clear in describing his difficult upbringing:

I started selling drugs when I was 11 years old. I got kicked out of school—kicked out of the system. I never passed 9th grade. Basically, I had bad friends and hung out with a bad crowd. I've seen dead people on the floor...a lot of crazy stuff. My little brother and father were killed. My father was in a standoff with the cops and was shot. My little brother got murdered by gang members. I got in a fight and beat up a guy and then got jumped by gang members. I was unconscious on the floor and my brother went in to save me and they shot him. He was only 16 at the time—I was 18.¹

Reaching teens and young adults like Carlos before it is too late requires leaders with varied life experiences, professional backgrounds, and skills who can bridge their differences and work together creatively. The Holyoke SSYI case study tells a hopeful story of what can be achieved when adults are able to coordinate their efforts in this way. Together, the Holyoke SSYI team is embracing their proven-risk clients with consistent care and kindness, creating safe spaces to

deliver effective services, healing years of emotional trauma, and giving these young men a path forward toward a healthy and fulfilling life.

THE PROBLEM

A gap in prevention services for young men involved in costly violence

Youth violence runs through communities like a contagious disease. This violence has enormous costs beyond the large criminal justice expenditures required to cover police, prosecutors, judges, parole officers, and jailers. Families suffer losses, both on the victim's side and on the perpetrator's. Exposure to violence can lead to physical and behavioral health problems for residents of high-crime areas—real costs that we generally fail to connect with neighborhood disorder. Other consequences are unmistakable: businesses lose customers, those who can afford to move leave, and property values fall. Over time, violence becomes "normalized" and residents mired in these environments enter a state of "learned helplessness."²

For most of us this kind of urban violence is foreign, but like those caught in it, we also tend to view it as an intractable problem. Researchers are increasingly demonstrating that breaking the cycle of violence is achievable with relatively modest resources and the right approach. This is because most violent acts in high-crime neighborhoods are committed by a small number of teens and young adults.³

Helping these young men is challenging because they face multiple barriers. Most fit a diagnosis of complex trauma and all of the resulting difficulties regulating behavior, emotions

and motivation, and forming a positive self-identity. On top of suffering from this condition, these youth must overcome obstacles that teens and young adults typically do not face. They often want for a safe place to sleep. Criminal records make it hard for them to find work or continue their education. And many are under the supervision of the adult corrections system, which is ill-suited to respond to their developmental needs and can create even more hurdles for them to overcome.⁴

THE STRATEGY

Providing wraparound services under one roof

As the multiple costs of violence and the value proposition for intensive prevention have become better understood, the public health field has sought to develop effective new approaches. In 2011, leaders in the state's Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) recognized the potential of these prevention models and created the state SSYI grant program to provide coordinated services, including outreach, therapy, education and job training, and transitional employment to a targeted population of proven-risk young men.

Holyoke responded to the grant opportunity with a proposal that put all of the programs together under one roof. This would give youth engaged by outreach workers one safe space where they could come to receive all of the services they would need. The strategy was put forward in an application prepared by the Holyoke Police Department together with a steering committee that included the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, the River Valley Counseling Center (a large provider of behavioral health treatment in the region), CareerPoint (the city's one-stop career center chartered by the regional workforce investment board), and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holyoke.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Solving challenges with trust and teamwork

In the fall of 2011, Holyoke was one of 11 cities awarded state funding for services to begin early in 2012. Unlike some of the other cities receiving SSYI grants, where there were existing organizations with experience serving this population, Holyoke was starting from scratch. However, the steering committee partners did have a strong history of collaboration, including a long-serving county sheriff with a social work background who had been recognized for his commitment to working with others in the region to provide rehabilitation and reduce recidivism.

Stephen O'Neil of the Hampden County Sheriff's Department

explains how Holyoke's collaborative proven-risk model is somewhat unique: "You have to know that law enforcement organizations and NGOs can operate in silos. We can have blinders on, not seeing the bigger picture. Our sheriff is a collaborator. We cannot get the job done alone. We work with over 300 organizations."

To realize the vision of coordinating services all at one site, the new SSYI Holyoke leased the entire second floor of a large old mill building that sits on the edge of downtown. Establishing the space is an important first step to helping young men who have suffered years of trauma in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Mr. O'Neil also points out that the space is symbolic of the city's commitment to the effort. Many communities, he notes, would locate this kind of program out in the woods.



SSYI staff and youth meeting with local legislative leaders

Initially led by two part-time coordinators, the program gained steam in 2013 when Jacqueline Lozada was hired by River Valley Counseling Center to serve as its first full-time program director. In addition to the program's two therapists who are also employed by River Valley, she has supervisory responsibilities for three outreach workers, one and a half case managers, and two workforce development managers employed by CareerPoint, and two educators employed by Holyoke Community College. She must also manage the relationship with the Center for Addiction and Recovery, which provides the program with data and evaluation services.

This cross-agency structure allows the program to deliver a diverse array of services, but it also creates bureaucratic challenges. Ms. Lozada was uniquely suited to manage this configuration of partner organizations and staff, having worked

"The trust outreach workers build and help extend to other staff members is critical to providing effective treatment."

previously at both CareerPoint and Holyoke Community College (as well as the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, another leading partner). While at times her team struggles with disagreements that arise from different organizational approaches and priorities, they are unified by the mission to help the client.

"We focus on the person," an SSYI caseworker explains. "While we might not all agree on the process that needs to be done, we all respect one another a lot. There are times we compromise, and times when we say 'I will step back from this, although I don't agree.' There is a real person, we think about our guy."

A key feature of the proven-risk model is working with a list of young men in the community identified by the police department as eligible for the services based on their known involvement or association with violent crime. Exclusivity is essential because, as Ms. Lozada notes, participants receive "Whatever it takes, whatever they need to be successful. We make sure they get it." With limited resources to provide this intense level of intervention, the team had to develop a process for recruiting only those who pose the greatest danger.

The program's design made outreach workers the foundation of the model. They are responsible for seeing to it that selected youth engage. They visit young men in prison prior to release and they spend time on the streets and in the courthouse identifying high-risk youth and trying to build relationships with them.

Once an eligible youth agrees to participate, the outreach workers are by their side as the program's case workers help new clients put together and pursue individualized plans for success. Outreach workers then support them as they look for stable housing and get to various medical appointments and court proceedings. Together with the workforce development managers, they coach them for job interviews. Most importantly, they go to great lengths to respond immediately whenever the youth call upon them for help. The way outreach workers describe spending weekend time with their clients and clients' kids to prove their commitment goes beyond the 9 to 5 duties of paid work. An outreach worker tells us, "They know we care. They listen to us like family. They want to be here."

These holistic services give treatment better odds of success. A therapist with the program explains it this way: "Therapy addresses internal feelings, hurts, and pains, but we are talking here about ongoing trauma, an internal issue that results from external issues. Mental health cannot stand alone to solve their

issues. We have case managers to address health, housing, and employment."

The trust outreach workers build and help extend to other staff members is critical to providing effective treatment, as another therapist with the program describes: "It's about the relationship over time and what they're ready to bring to you. What level of trust you have with that person."

The trust between outreach worker and client is also essential to maintaining a safe space. A client might be hesitant to disclose a gang affiliation, but if clients from rival gangs come into the SSYI space together, everyone's safety could be at risk. The outreach workers need trust to gain information about gang affiliations so that clients can be kept apart as needed.

Outreach workers are able to successfully build trust with the young men because they can identify with them. But the histories of outreach workers can also complicate their work with public safety partners. A large body of research shows that outreach workers struggle to balance the information youth share with them confidentially with their desire to prevent violence. This tension is complicated by their own relationships with law enforcement: trusting outreach workers who are former gang members can be very hard for police; conversely, outreach workers often have negative views of how police respond to crime in their community.⁵

Getting the program up and running has required putting together a team that could overcome these dynamics and develop broader support for the initiative from the community. The outreach workers appreciate how their work is leading to different interactions between the police and young men in the program. Holyoke Police Captain Matthew Moriarty, a partner in the initiative, gives credits to the SSYI team. "The staff here point out that we're here to help," he says, "not to come and get you."

The SSYI team is also encouraged by the positive reception they receive in courtrooms, where prosecutors and judges often look favorably upon their involvement with youth and value their perspectives on sentencing.

The program's standing in the community is particularly critical to the effort to build relationships with employers. Unlike some of the other SSYI cities, where existing orga-

"The program has increased the community's capacity to plan and execute a comprehensive crime reduction strategy."

nizations had a head start on efforts to engage proven-risk youth and help them find work, Holyoke's workforce system has not traditionally served this population. Finding transitional employment for these young men requires particularly patient employer partners who are willing to take the chance and give clients time to hone their behaviors and skills for the workplace. Steve O'Neil, of the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, credits creative leadership at CareerPoint for making this leap, noting that not all career centers are interested in serving this population.

The Hampden County Sheriff's Department deserves credit as well. They have taken the unusual step of locating a prison industries program in SSYI Holyoke's site. This allows them to simultaneously provide employment to Holyoke SSYI participants and inmates preparing to return to the community. In addition to these prison industries positions, three of the program partners also offer the young men transitional employment opportunities, as well as a handful of companies in the community.

Holyoke SSYI has been particularly aggressive in developing other aspects of the transitional employment program. For instance, they were one of the first SSYI sites to adopt a skill-building curriculum developed by Commonwealth Corporation.

Compared with other SSYI programs, Holyoke's design gives workers a relatively small dose of transitional employment—just 12 hours per week. This minimal approach to client employment recognizes that many of the youth are not yet ready (or do not have enough time) for more work hours, and provides more resources for counseling and education. However, there is a tradeoff, as paid employment is one of the strongest incentives for youth to engage in the program. If a better option surfaces, out of necessity a participant may leave the program and the support that comes along with it.

Like other SSYI programs, Holyoke's has also worked to develop a two-generation approach with many of the young men who are also parents. Youth receive skills training and counseling to help them repair family relationships and interact in healthy and supportive ways with their children.

A final element of the program is an effort to foster youth voice, a tenet of the positive youth development approach. The team takes clients to the State House to advocate for the program. These experiences can be particularly formative for

young men that have not had the ability to influence the forces and events that have shaped their lives.

THE RESULTS

Safer streets, successful youth

To date, SSYI Holyoke has supported 141 proven-risk youth. A recent study examining the results for all 11 sites across the state found that SSYI young men were 42 percent less likely to be incarcerated than similar young men not actively receiving the intervention.⁶ Available data for Holyoke show a 50 percent drop in homicides and a 13 percent decline in violent crime victimization between 2012 and 2013, the first year the program operated.

For participants, the benefits have ranged from subtle gains (e.g., relocating to a less dangerous neighborhood, having open cases closed without a finding because judges were reassured by program participation) to major victories (e.g., two have gone on to college, 15 have completed their high school equivalencies). A workforce development coordinator, who was once a proven-risk youth, speaks to the most profound effect the program can have: "SSYI saved my life. That is what they did."

SSYI's advocacy work is also effective in helping to sustain the program. The state legislature has remained committed with funding and youth advocacy clearly helped win over Governor Baker, who has become a vocal champion for SSYI. Many participants refer to the advocacy component as having a particularly powerful influence on them as they work to rebuild their lives. In the words of Carlos, the youth whose story we began with:

I've been to the state government in Boston twice and have met with the Governor. When I meet with lawmakers, I talk about what I went through in life and how important the SSYI program is. It feels like another home. They give young people a lot of support and push youth to get them where they want to go. They show youth how to do it right. I like that I'm getting heard. Now that I'm getting the hang of advocacy, I've become passionate about it.⁷

Thanks to the state SSYI grant program, a fledgling project led by a steering committee is on its way to becoming a mature and sustainable initiative. While the Holyoke program's design creates some adversity for the staff, they have clearly bonded through the effort they have put into overcoming these chal-

enges. Many talk about the SSYI team as being like a family, and several use the phrase "all hands in." They describe the respect they have for one another and for their clients, as well as the respect they receive from clients, as the key ingredient of their model, and see such mutual respect as vital to sustaining the power of the work in the future.

Another benefit of the program is that it has increased the community's capacity to plan and execute a comprehensive crime reduction strategy. Members of the SSYI team are present in conversations around how Holyoke deploys resources to most effectively deliver prevention across the full spectrum of youth, not just those with proven risk.

As Captain Moriarty of the Holyoke Police Department says of the program's value: "This is a good example of what you get when agencies come together, and they have a plan, and they're able to work together. You get such a great result. There are some hard core hitters now who have a GED, who have a job. Jacqueline and her crew have gone above and beyond to get these people where they need to be."

THE ROAD AHEAD

Creating an SSYI Holyoke built to last

As noted by the researchers who assisted the state in developing the SSYI grant, programs that have successfully addressed youth violence have often had great difficulty sustaining their success over the long-term because the model was not built to last.⁸ SSYI Holyoke shares some of the same limitations. In order to create capacity where none existed, the grant program supported a patch work of organizations. Sustaining success and moving toward a financial model that is built on more than a single line item in the state budget will require a new structure.

To get to this more mature structure, Holyoke SSYI requires more stability in the interim. Because the program only operated for six months in the first year, the state has essentially continued to budget for the program in six-month cycles, appropriating funds in the July 1st fiscal year budget and then requiring the passage of a supplemental budget mid-year to maintain services. This produces stress and uncertainty for case workers, who do not know if they will have a job or be able to live up to the commitments they make to their clients. It also makes it harder for the program, which is reliant on this single source of funds, to plan and develop into a mature organization.

Other aspects of the road to maturity just require time and sustained effort. For example, the program continues to pound the pavement looking for employers. Ms. Lozada says they are increasingly having success with a "Try it. If you like them, hire them" model, where they cover first month's wages and liability for participants. Employers are interested because in addition to paying first-month wages, the pro-

gram can provide transportation for their participants, which is a constant struggle in the region. This value proposition should allow the program to continue improving its base of employer partners.

The outreach workers and case managers also describe the need to continue building trust and strengthening partnerships. For instance, they do not have access to criminal records and often must wait over a month for the police department to process their requests so that they can determine a participant's eligibility. In their line of work, this lost time can make a life or death difference. Similarly, outreach workers and case managers are still building relationships and confidence with the County Sheriff's Department. When they visit prisons, they are often accompanied by prison staff to interview potential clients. This can make it more difficult to develop trust with incarcerated young men and draw them into the program.

"Solving complex challenges requires us to think creatively and look locally," says Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Health and Human Services. "The SSYI model in Holyoke demonstrates that by building on community collaborations and addressing violence in partnership with local law enforcement, but through a public health approach, we are not only driving down crime and saving the state money, we have the opportunity to save lives."

LEADING TOGETHER IN GATEWAY CITIES

Lessons from Holyoke

The lessons you draw from Holyoke SSYI depend on how you apportion credit to the leadership that has made the program a success.

If you situate the leadership primarily within this steering committee, the case study provides compelling support for a collective impact model, and reinforces the notion that coordinated change efforts are most likely to succeed when organizations coalesce around a narrowly defined goal. In this case, community leaders agreed that they would intensively focus resources on proven-risk youth and work together relentlessly to place these young men on a path toward success.⁹

On the other hand, building a program like Holyoke SSYI isn't a simple transaction between organizations. You don't simply combine funds and purchase it off the shelf. To make it work, it takes leaders who can connect with public agencies at all levels of government, as well as with private partners, community stakeholders, and, most importantly, the youth participants. These leaders need to be able to move nimbly across different spaces, working cooperatively with people who have diverse philosophies, worldviews, and methods of communicating.

A paper published a decade ago by the Child Welfare League of America entitled *Moving Mountains Together* describes the "staggeringly complex work" involved in trying to make the

overlapping web of health and family services and the criminal justice system operate effectively to meet the many and changing needs of vulnerable youth.¹⁰ Research examining how teams of mental health workers do this for their clients finds examples of both transformational and transactional leadership.

To overcome the profound difficulty of the work, transformational leadership is needed to help team members approach their clients with optimism that they can succeed despite the challenges. Leaders build a culture of success with their organizations by empowering team members through collaborative decision-making and effective delegation. At the same time, some forms of transactional leadership are required to keep the team within the prescribed boundaries of the practice and focused on meeting strategic program goals.¹¹

By all accounts, Jacqueline Lozada, the SSYI project director, has masterfully applied a blend of these leadership approaches to rally her team around a shared vision and prepare them to operate successfully in a challenging environment.

In the voices and stories of the SSYI workers, we capture something even more fundamental. Fully half the team has personal experience with the criminal justice system and neighborhoods infected by violence. They appreciate that their resiliency is special. It empowers them and inspires them to give others opportunities to change. With criminal records and painful memories, these young leaders are still striving every day to overcome their own pasts. They fight back against these injustices by giving all they have to the program and the young men they serve. As an SSYI outreach worker concludes his interview: "I was like them. I grew up here. I went through the same things they went through. Mine is a story of redemption. I fixed my life, I fix other lives."

ENDNOTES

- 1 Holyoke SSYI youth were interviewed by the federal government website youth.gov. See <http://youth.gov/youth-voices/carlos>.
- 2 For a more thorough description of the costs to individuals and communities, see David Hemenway. "Measuring the Cost of Injury: Underestimating the Costs of Street Violence" *Injury Prevention* 17.5 (2011). Learned helplessness is a term coined for a classical conditioning theory developed by Martin Seligman in the 1970s. See Martin Seligman. "Learned Helplessness" *Annual Review of Medicine* 23.1 (1972).
- 3 Anthony Braga and others. "Problem-oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence" *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38.3 (2001); Marvin Wolfgang and others. *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- 4 The very serious challenges the adult corrections system faces responding to the developmental needs of young adults is explored more fully in a recent MassINC report. See Benjamin Forman and others. "Justice Reinvestment with a Developmental Lens" (Boston, MA: MassINC, 2015).
- 5 Scott Decker and others. "Street Outreach Workers: Best Practices and Lessons Learned" *School of Justice Studies Faculty Papers* #15 (Bristol, RI: Roger Williams University, 2008).
- 6 Patricia Campie and others. "A Comparison Study Using Propensity Score Matching to Predict Incarceration Likelihoods among SSYI and non-SSYI Youth from 2011-2013" (Boston, MA: Executive Office of Health and Human Services, 2014).
- 7 <http://youth.gov/youth-voices/carlos>
- 8 Patricia Campie and others. "What Works to Prevent Urban Violence Among Proven Risk Young Men?" (Boston, MA: Executive Office of Health and Human Services, 2013).
- 9 Michele Jolin and others. "Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives: A Promising Approach to Addressing America's Biggest Challenges" (New York, NY: Bridgespan Group, 2012).
- 10 Laura Burney Nissen and others. "Moving Mountains Together: Strategic Community Leadership and Systems Change" *Child Welfare* 84.2 (2005).
- 11 Patrick Corrigan and Andrew Garman. "Transformational and Transactional Leadership Skills for Mental Health Teams" *Community Mental Health Journal* 35.4 (1999).

4

DEVELOPING A FRESH GENERATION OF CIVIC LEADERS IN WORCESTER

Collaborative leadership has been a central theme in this series examining successful Gateway City initiatives. The extent to which community leaders work together to solve complex problems was first identified by researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston as the key distinction between comeback cities and those still struggling to transition to the new economy.¹ The bank found this finding so compelling that it took the extraordinary step of designing the Working Cities Challenge to help today's leaders coalesce around shared priorities.

But how can cities proactively groom the next generation of civic leaders to work together effectively? A large body of research tells us that collaborative leadership thrives in cities where citizens trust their government, are engaged in the life of the community, and are tolerant of cultural differences. For the last case study in this series, we look at how Gateway Cities cultivate these qualities in their changing citizenry through the prism of Worcester.

THE SETTING

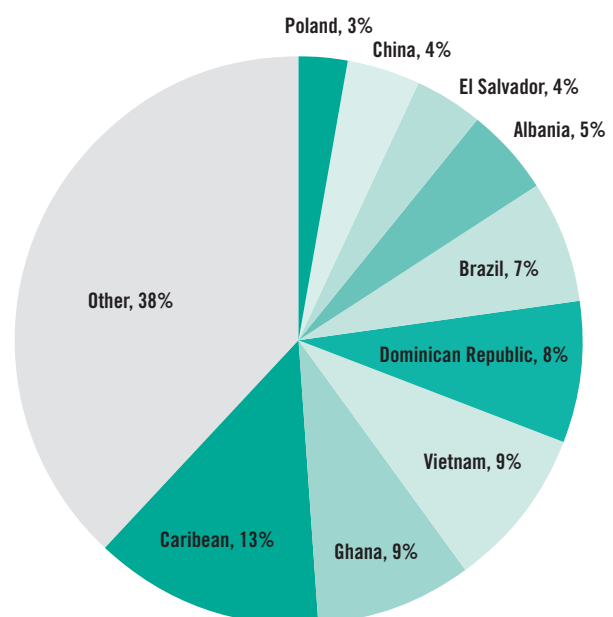
All paths lead to Worcester

Worcester is an iconic all-American community that welcomes immigrants from every corner of the globe. The city's 40,000 plus immigrants compose nearly one-quarter of its residents; add in over 26,000 first generation youth whose parents were born overseas, and Worcester's multi-cultural immigrant community swells to well more than one-third of the city's population.

Unlike many of its peers, Worcester has absorbed these immigrants while maintaining a strong middle class and public

schools with a relatively high degree of economic integration. Still, Worcester is not immune to the challenges that other Gateway Cities face incorporating new residents. Immigrants arriving in Worcester today do not find good-paying factory jobs—the employment pathway that provided past generations a sure shot at the American Dream. Today's immigrants are generally confined to low-wage work, which means they have more difficulty supporting their families.

Worcester's Foreign-Born Population by Place of Birth



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 2011-2013

"Educating a citizen goes far beyond the experiences students receive in the classroom."

Many immigrants are also escaping violent conflict in their homelands. Worcester struggles to soothe the traumas these newcomers have experienced while at the same time helping them adjust to the challenges of a new life in America. The fate of this struggle has serious repercussions: In the near future, Worcester will need the talent of this new generation to replace aging workers. The city is equally dependent on immigrant youth to engage in the community and assume leadership roles.

THE CHALLENGE

Preparing a diverse generation to engage

Worcester faces two critical tests in its quest to develop the next generation of citizens. The first is educating youth that face cumulative disadvantages. In an oft-quoted study describing the link between education and civic engagement, the political scientist Philip Converse summarized extensive research on the topic noting that "education is everywhere the universal solvent...The educated citizen is attentive, knowledgeable, and participatory and the uneducated citizen is not."²

Educating a citizen goes far beyond the experiences students receive in the classroom. From adolescence to young adulthood, the opportunities youth have to fill leadership roles in organized sports, community organizations, religious institutions, and summer and part-time jobs contribute to their development as engaged citizens and civic leaders. Research shows that, on the whole, low-income urban youth today have far fewer of these opportunities. Gateway Cities must figure out the arithmetic of providing the next generation with more of these formative experiences.³

The second challenge is more complex. Sociologist Robert Putnam has pointed out that while educational attainment is rising throughout the country, civic participation is on the decline, particularly at the local level. In part, he attributes lower engagement to increasing diversity. Compelling data show that, all things being equal, residents in diverse communities like Worcester have lower levels of trust and civic participation. Social psychologists attribute this finding to the social distance between people who lack shared life experiences and common identities, but Putnam's data reveal lower levels of trust and engagement even among those with the same racial and ethnic backgrounds.⁴

This is what makes the leadership challenge for Worcester so acute. It's not just a matter of affording low-income youth

with more opportunities. Civic engagement among all of the city's residents is likely to be suppressed unless concerted effort is made to bring them together. To be sure, this problem will almost certainly resolve over the long term, as the community acclimates to its growing diversity. But cities like Worcester can't afford to wait. In today's rapidly changing and globally competitive world, the most successful inclusive urban communities will be those that find effective strategies for accelerating the acculturation process.

Organizations throughout Worcester and the city government are working together passionately to rise to these challenges. To learn more about these efforts, we visited the Latino Education Institute and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

STARTING YOUNG

The Latino Education Institute

Latino youth represent more than 40 percent of all students enrolled in the Worcester Public Schools. Fifteen years ago, recognizing that Latino students were experiencing unique educational challenges, a cross-sector working group was convened to explore potential solutions. Among several recommendations, the group called for the formation of a university-based institute to support the school district's efforts to find innovative models to help Latino youth thrive.

Worcester State University took the lead launching the Latino Education Institute (LEI) in 2000. The institute was chartered to conduct research to better understand the needs of the city's Latino youth and families; to provide programs that help students excel in the Worcester Public Schools and pursue post-secondary education; and to prepare parents to serve as educational stewards for their children in a new community and different culture.

The institute has grown to approximately 70 staff members who provide direct services in Worcester schools and on college campuses. While the majority of students served by LEI are Latino, about one-third come from other ethnic backgrounds.

Latina Achievers in Search of Success (LASOS) is one example of the institute's efforts to reach youth and prepare them to be better educated, more involved citizens. Created in 2001, with funding from the Women's Initiative of the United Way of Central Massachusetts, LASOS serves Latina girls ages 11 to 13 and their mothers. The two-generation model is a common thread, explains Mary Jo Marión, the institute's executive direc-

LEI students developing their voices for leadership



tor: "We look at the family as our unit. We don't serve students, we serve the family. Everything starts with the family. Making sure that we know them, that we touch them, and that they're part of what we do."

LASOS includes a summer camp, a 24-week after-school curriculum, and eight family academies held on Saturdays. Girls are also assigned bilingual mentors. An evaluation conducted by a professor at Holy Cross found that students report significantly higher positive-identity, self-esteem, and personal agency after completing LASOS.⁵

Gains in these civic leadership qualities can be at least partially tied to the service-learning component embedded in LASOS and all of LEI's middle school programs. LEI engages students in youth-led service-learning projects. The students identify both a community problem and its solutions. with a curriculum that includes three components:

- **Direct service** Youth participate in activities that directly respond to the problem, building their sense of agency;
- **Public education** Youth provide outreach to the larger community to explain the problem, developing communication skills; and
- **Advocacy** Youth meet with local officials and elected leaders

to advocate for policy change, increasing their awareness of the system and appreciation that their voices will be heard.

As an example, LEI's assistant director Hilda Ramirez tells the story of a middle school group that identified litter as a concern in their neighborhood. To respond directly, the youth encouraged local businesses to take an "adopt a trash can" approach to the problem. Thinking they could affect more change by starting early, for their public education campaign they developed a PSA geared to elementary school students. And for the advocacy component, they met with a city counselor to discuss the problem. Through projects like these, LEI educators teach Worcester youth that they can bring about change by participating, emphasizing that "Often times the best things are those that people work hard to construct together," says Ramirez.

LEI's curriculum aligns with a large body of research on the effects of high-quality service learning, which shows that youth-led experiential learning increases the communication, research, critical thinking, and problem solving skills residents need to positively engage in civic life.⁶

As a university-based institute, LEI's work is informed by rigorous research. "We spend an immense amount of time thinking about the principles of youth development" says LEI executive director Mary Jo Marión. However, because youth

"These experiences are intended to give emerging leaders a better understanding of a community that is undergoing dramatic change and greater knowledge of the city's resources to respond."

development research is generally lacking in terms of documenting how these practices transfer across cultures, LEI often must adjust these models to serve their population. For example, LASOS is attuned to how basic adolescent development processes vary in Latina girls. LEI's leadership model explicitly focuses on families and group work in part because this is how Latino youth are accustomed to thinking. Marión explains that "Latinos as a whole are more community driven. It's less of an individualistic culture, which is why family matters and so you see a lot of group leadership models. Our students really enjoy working with one another in groups to solve a problem."

While research shows that civic participation for immigrant youth is often rooted in their status as immigrants or concerns about conditions in their home countries, LEI also works to help students develop their voices and self-identify within the context of the larger Worcester community.⁷ Ramirez explains: "We try to give the context of 'who you are' and from there we develop 'who you are within this community.' They do a community mapping activity, where they learn about the history of Worcester, how it was shaped as an immigrant community, the city's many innovations, and how Worcester has changed."

Community mapping is a common technique to help youth represent themselves and their understanding of the world around them. Scouring their neighborhoods with cameras, youth capture their concerns as well as things that are important to them and that convey their values. The images help the youth transcend language and other communication barriers. Placing the photos collected on maps provides a layered view of the community and offers an inclusive, participatory, and accessible starting point for a conversation about civic engagement.⁸

Another standard component of LEI's model is hiring home-grown college students to assist the licensed teachers delivering afterschool programs. Ramirez says they carefully train these young adults to know that "the relationship they build with the youth is what really transforms the student." This model works both ways. Offering college students these mentoring opportunities further enhances their leadership capacities and civic identities during a crucial period in their own formation, as we learned during our visit with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

CAPTURING YOUNG ADULTS

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Many chambers offer leadership academies. Typically, these yearlong experiences enroll a mix of one to two dozen emerging leaders from a community's public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Participants gather to visit different organizations, hear from leaders to learn more about local problems and priorities, and develop their individual networks. In the past, the Worcester chamber ran this kind of leadership academy for the community, but some years ago the program lapsed.

When former lieutenant governor Tim Murray took over as president and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce in 2013, one of his priorities was to reestablish the program. Murray spent years serving the city in elected office, he recognized the value of building ties between Worcester's public and private sector leaders.

Murray's efforts have led to the creation of Leadership Worcester, an intensive program delivered in partnership with the Greater Worcester Community Foundation over nine monthly full-day sessions. In addition to these gatherings, participants take part in an opening overnight retreat and a concluding celebration. Companies sponsor the employees they nominate for the program. Scholarship aid is available for government and nonprofit organizations that are unable to cover program costs.

Murray says the program provides experiential learning: "It's hands on, getting people out, questions, answers, visiting, seeing, touching, and exposing them to the community in lots of different ways. It builds excitement and awareness."

By design, these experiences are intended to give emerging leaders a better understanding of a community that is undergoing dramatic change and greater knowledge of the city's resources to respond. The program also helps emerging leaders from different backgrounds coalesce. Participants come away with a stronger cross-sector network. They also gain the knowledge required to test old assumptions and put forward viable solutions to today's challenges.

Murray underscores the need: "We're a growing, diverse community. We want to make sure that people in leadership positions now and in the future reflect that diversity." Recognizing that today's pipeline of emerging leaders is not fully reflective

of the larger Worcester community, the chamber is also working to prepare the next generation through the Worcester Youth Leadership Institute.

The Worcester Youth Leadership Institute is a partnership between the chamber, United Families for Change, the Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, the United Way of Central Massachusetts, and the City of Worcester. Over the summer, selected students entering their senior year of high school participate in the seven week program.

The institute is attached to the city's youth summer jobs program, which provides employment opportunities for teens from low-families income. Each year 30 youth in the summer jobs program are selected to participate. The students learn about the city through meetings with local leaders and visits to businesses and institutions in the community.

"It's about reaching out at a young age, where young people are saying, 'What am I going to do, where do I fit into this community?'" says Murray, adding that at each of these events they try to underscore that "there's an expectation from the broader community that you are going to lead one day."

Both of these leadership models conform with the literature on civic engagement and leadership development in young adulthood. Political scientists have long pointed out that the experiences youth have as they come of age heavily influence their future patterns of civic engagement. With the transition to adulthood taking longer, as young adults today pursue more education and delay marriage, they tend to hold off on getting involved in their community. With young adults today having fewer leadership experiences at this formative stage, cities like Worcester are at risk of not having talent on the bench to assume responsibilities for community stewardship in the future.⁹

For Murray, these two leadership initiatives are grounded in an understanding that soon Worcester will need a fresh generation of leaders who can work together collaboratively to position the city to succeed. But the chamber is also responding to the concerns of its members. The number one issue they raise concerns preparation of the future workforce; at the end of the day, the skills emerging leaders gain through these programs make them more productive employees. Murray also acknowledges a little bit of benign self-interest on the part of the chamber: "Our immigrants often come from cultures and backgrounds that aren't as familiar with what chambers do. And there's a natural connection because many of the new immigrants are more entrepreneurial, not afraid to start their own businesses. I think there's a real opportunity by engaging not only young people but reaching out to educate a broader community about how chambers act as an advocate for business."

LEADING TOGETHER IN GATEWAY CITIES

Lessons from Worcester

Gateway Cities perform a critical function absorbing newcomers and preparing them to contribute to the economy. Their efforts produce very real benefits for our state and nation in the long run, and very real costs for these communities in the near term. The state and federal government provide at least partial compensation for the direct cost of delivering necessary services, but there are also large indirect costs, most notably the social stresses Gateway Cities face as they work to incorporate newcomers into civic life. Worcester's efforts to develop a next generation of civic leaders crystalizes what's possible when Gateway Cities exercise collaborative leadership to tackle complex social and economic challenges.

Fortunately, the currents of policy change are flowing in a favorable direction for Gateway City efforts to build a fresh generation of leaders. For instance, all of the state's Gateway Cities are home to public colleges and universities, and these campuses are increasingly civically engaged. University partnerships like those led by the Latino Education Institute play an important role in Gateway City leadership development initiatives. In addition, an increasingly large number of Gateway City students are going on to post-secondary education at public colleges and universities. What these youth learn on campus exposes them to new points of view and differing perspectives.

College is also a time when internships and volunteer experiences give young adults exposure to community institutions. While low-income students attending public universities (and private colleges with low endowments) tend to receive far fewer of these formative opportunities, Massachusetts is working to remedy this problem.¹⁰ Last year, the Commonwealth became the first state in the nation to adopt a policy making civic learning an "expected outcome" for undergraduates at public colleges and universities. To ensure follow-through, the policy called upon the campuses to develop reliable measures of civic learning.

Changes that should benefit Gateway City efforts to prepare the next generation for civic life are also brewing in our K-12 education system. School leaders often lament that the pressure to increase test scores has led to a narrowing of the curriculum and less attention to civic education. (In a survey administered to Massachusetts school superintendents last spring, 60 percent reported that the level of civic learning in their districts was insufficient.)" A working group convened by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education recently issued several recommendations for improving civic learning in the Commonwealth's public schools. Among these recommendations, the group called upon the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education to revise their common definition of college and career readiness to explicitly include readiness for civic life.

While the renewed attention to civic learning is promising for Gateway Cities, there are legitimate questions about whether these communities have the resources to respond. The state has done excellent work building model curricula for service learning and afterschool programs, but delivering this instruction takes time and resources. Gateway City school districts have been increasingly eager to cultivate this learning through an expanded school day and community partnerships, but across the board, the core resources that enable cities to operate these programs are on the decline—the Extended Learning Time grant, the Gateway City English Language Learners Academies grant, the Afterschool and Out-of-School grant, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, and the Connecting Activities grant have all faced significant cuts in recent years.

This drop in resources may change as service- and civic-learning gain more traction and private sector partners become more engaged. In many Gateway Cities, business groups are increasingly involved in advocating for improvement in public education. These groups have been particularly vocal about placing greater emphasis on the development of "soft skills" such as timeless, team work, and work-appropriate behavior. The changing economy is demanding workers who are prepared to communicate, resolve conflicts, and solve problems in ways that keep pace with rising diversity and rapid workplace change. On this note, we conclude with a quote drawn from the preface of a report by the state boards' working group on civic learning: "There ought to be a happy convergence between the skills most needed in the global knowledge economy and those most needed to keep our democracy safe and vibrant."

ENDNOTES

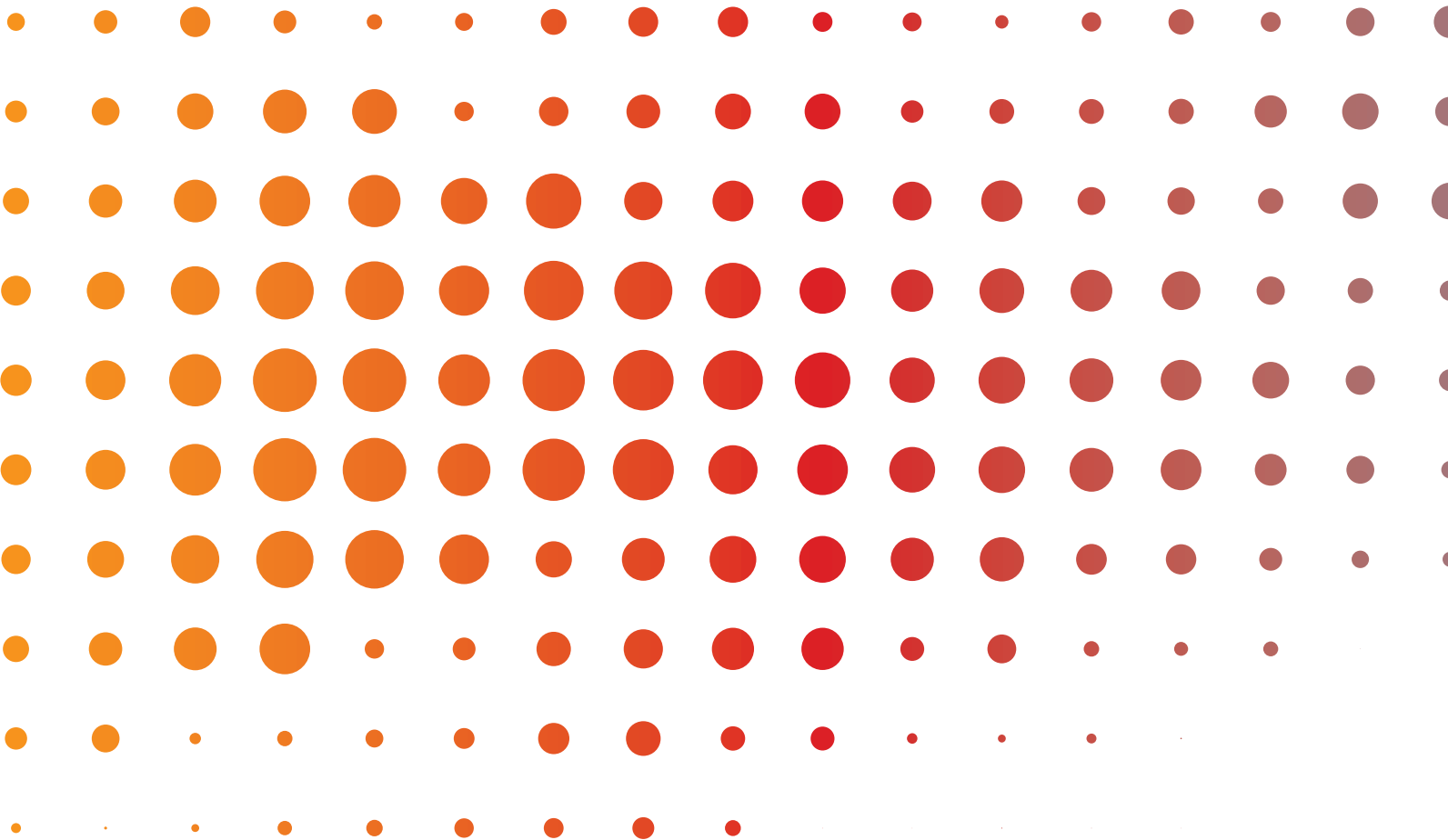
- 1 Yolanda Kodrzycki and others. "Reinvigorating Springfield's Economy: Lessons from Resurgent Cities" Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Public Policy Discussion Paper 09-6 (2009).
- 2 Converse, Philip Converse Foundation. Change in the American electorate. In Angus Campbell and Philip Converse (eds.), *The Human Meaning of Social Change*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- 3 Daniel Hart and Robert Atkins. "Civic Competence in Urban Youth" *Applied Developmental Science* 6.4 (2002).
- 4 Robert Putnam. "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century" *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30.2 (2007).
- 5 Joanna Mergeche and Rosa Elena Carrasquillo. "Best Practices for Improving Educational Attainment among Pre-Adolescent Latina Girls: Evaluation of Latina Achievers in Search of Success (LASOS)" (Worcester, MA: College of the Holy Cross, 2010).
- 6 William Morgan and Matthew Streb. "Building Citizenship: How Student Voice in Service Learning Develops Civic Values" *Social Science Quarterly* 82.1 (2001).
- 7 Rubén Rumbaut and Golnaz Komaie. "Immigration and Adult Transitions" *The Future of Children* 20.1 (2010).
- 8 For example, see Jackie Amsden and Rob Van Wynsberghe. "Community Mapping as a Research Tool with Youth." *Action Research* 3.4 (2005); and Kenneth Hergenrather and others. "Photovoice as Community-Based Participatory Research, A Qualitative Review" *American Journal of Health Behavior* 33.6 (2009).
- 9 Constance Flanagan and Peter Levine. "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood" *The Future of Children* 20.1 (2010).
- 10 Abby Kiesa and others. "Millennials Talk Politics: A Study of College Student Political Engagement" (College Park, MD: CIRCLE, 2007).
- 11 "Preparing Citizens: Report on Civic Learning and Engagement" (Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2015).

ABOUT MASSINC

The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC) is a rigorously non-partisan think tank and civic organization. We focus on putting the American Dream within the reach of everyone in Massachusetts using three distinct tools—research, journalism, and civic engagement. Our work is characterized by accurate data, careful analysis, and unbiased conclusions.

ABOUT THE GATEWAY CITIES INNOVATION INSTITUTE

The Gateway Cities Innovation Institute works to unlock the economic potential of small to mid-size regional cities. Leveraging MassINC's research, polling, and policy team, the Institute strengthens connections across communities and helps Gateway City leaders develop and advance a shared policy agenda.



LEAD SPONSORS



MAJOR SPONSORS



SPONSORS



FRIENDS

