



PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS INSTITUTE
AT POLICYLINK

EDUCATION SUCCESS STRATEGIES LAUNCHED IN PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS IMPLEMENTATION SITES IN YEAR 1

*This brief belongs to a series, **Building the Pipeline: Effective Practice Briefs**, aimed at helping the Promise Neighborhoods network transform communities so that children finish high school, transition to and complete college, and move into careers.*

by the Center for
the Study of
Social Policy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI) and the Center for the Study of Social Policy would like to thank Cheryl Rogers, a senior consultant to CSSP, who is the lead author of this paper.

We also appreciate the time invested in this paper by local Promise Neighborhoods leaders, who generously shared information about their education solutions, reflected on their lessons learned, and reviewed and clarified the material that appears here.

The paper focuses on the first year of implementation (calendar year 2012) in these five sites. The education strategies are now more fully developed than described here, and by the end of 2014 they will be even more robust. We look forward to following the progress of these solutions as they “turn curves” on results for children and their families on the pathway to educational success, full and healthy development, and college entry and graduation.

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink partners:

PolicyLink, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Harlem Children’s Zone

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Context and Intended Results	2
	A. Target Neighborhoods.....	2
	B. Education Results and Indicators	3
	C. U.S. Department of Education Requirements	4
3.	What Are Sites Doing?	6
	A. Theories of Action	6
	B. Relationships between Lead Agencies and their School District Partners.....	6
	C. Solutions	8
	1. Parent Engagement	9
	2. School Reform.....	13
	3. Early Warning Indicator and Response Systems.....	20
	4. Out-of-School Time Programs.....	22
	5. Supports to Students at Critical Transitions with a Focus on College	25
4.	Conclusion and Observations	25
	Strong Relationships	26
	Individual Success Balanced with Education Improvement	27
	Early Warning Systems and Academic Case Management.....	27
	Fiscal Challenges	28
	Future Questions for New Lessons	28
5.	Appendixes	30
	A. Berea School Success Strategies in Year 1.....	30
	B. Buffalo School Success Strategies in Year 1	32
	C. Hayward School Success Strategies in Year 1.....	34
	D. NAZ School Success Strategies in Year 1	36
	E. San Antonio School Success Strategies in Year 1	38

1. Introduction

This issue brief describes the education success solutions that the 2011 Promise Neighborhoods implementation sites put in place during the first year (2012) of their five-year grants. Although most of these solutions started at the beginning of the 2012–2013 school year and thus have produced limited data on their impact, it is instructive to reflect on the creative initiatives the sites are using to turn around the educational trajectories of low-income students in their neighborhoods. The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI) is documenting the experiences of these five sites so that they can learn from one another’s work; planning grantees can gain insights that may be useful as they develop their own approaches; and, over time, PNI can share the lessons learned about these interventions with the field at large.

2011 Promise Neighborhoods Implementation Sites

Berea College	Clay, Jackson, and Owsley Counties, KY
California State University East Bay Foundation, Inc.	Hayward, CA
Northside Achievement Zone	Minneapolis, MN
United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County, Inc.	San Antonio, TX
Westminster Foundation	Buffalo, NY

In focusing on how sites are helping school-age students succeed in school, this brief describes solutions ranging from high-intensity programs aimed at specific groups of children and professional development programs broadly affecting teachers in multiple schools to even more comprehensive efforts aimed at school transformation. The Promise Neighborhoods implementation sites are using a mix of these strategies, depending on the context, challenges, and opportunities unique to their situations. At this early stage, it is useful to capture this wide range of activity.

By the same token, the strategies described here are only some of those that Promise Neighborhoods are implementing. The paper does not address, for example, sites’ early childhood strategies, their health and nutrition agendas, or their community development work. These activities will all contribute, in the long run, to the educational success of the neighborhoods’ children, but the more narrowly defined education strategies covered in this paper are so vital and essential to the Promise Neighborhoods approach that they deserve an early spotlight and a focus on the lessons being learned.

Following this introduction, this paper is organized into four more sections.

- **Section 2** describes the baseline conditions for school-age children in the target neighborhoods, the results and indicators that sites are working toward, and the expectations that the U.S. Department of Education has established for sites’ school reform strategies.
- **Section 3** describes what sites are doing operationally to achieve school success for students in their target neighborhoods. This section highlights the theories of action across the five sites, depicts the relationships the lead agencies have developed with their local school

districts, and describes the education success solutions that the sites began to implement in Year 1.

- **Section 4** illustrates the sites’ biggest challenges as well as provides cross-cutting observations about the five sites’ education success strategies.
- **Section 5**, the Appendixes, contains site-by-site summaries.

2. Context and Intended Results

A. Target Neighborhoods

The target neighborhoods in the five implementation sites have many assets and, in addition, reflect the symptoms of distress often associated with high concentrations of poverty. Table 1 shows the high-need populations in each of the five sites. Across them, between 21 percent and 60 percent of families with children living in the target neighborhoods fall below the federal poverty line, with family incomes less than \$22,314 for a family of four in 2010.¹ The families living in these neighborhoods are largely of color—mainly Hispanic and African American, with a significant Southeast Asian community in Hayward. Four of the five sites have between 76 percent and 92 percent families of color in their target neighborhoods; only the Berea Promise Neighborhood (consisting of three eastern Kentucky counties) is predominantly white (99 percent of its families are white). However, the population of Berea’s target area is among the poorest in all five sites; the rural poverty in Appalachia is deep and persistent.

The schools in these target neighborhoods are among the lowest performing schools in the country. Large percentages of students fall behind academically and either drop out before graduation or squeeze by without being prepared for college when they do graduate. The problems start in elementary school where less than one-third of students in three sites are at grade level in reading and math.

Chronic absenteeism becomes a big problem in middle and high school; Buffalo, for example, reports that nearly half of the ninth graders in the under-resourced high school in its Promise Neighborhood zone miss more than 30 days of school per year. High school graduation rates are very low in four of the five sites, ranging from 46 to 62 percent. This means that nearly half of the high school students in the target schools either drop out or end their high school career without passing enough courses to earn a diploma. Among those students who do graduate from high school, less than one-third are ready for college and/or able to avoid taking remedial courses.

Table 1: Target Populations in Promise Neighborhoods Implementation Sites

Site	Children in Poverty	Racial Minorities	5 th Grade Proficiency	Chronic Absenteeism	Graduate High School	Graduate College Ready	Enroll in College	Graduate College within 6 years

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010, http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb11-157.html.

Berea	46%	1%	70% reading, 63% math	NA ^a	74%	36% English, 12% math (11 th grade)	41% of high school grads	35.5% of college freshmen
Buffalo	38%	76%	18%	48% of 9 th graders miss > 30 days/yr	46%	6%	NA	NA
Hayward	21% of families w/children <18 yr	87%	36% English Language Arts, 32% math ^b	22% ^c	62% ^d	NA	NA	NA
Minneapolis	NA	80%	27% reading, 24% math (3 rd grade)	92% Average Daily Attendance (ADA)	54%	NA	NA	NA
San Antonio	60%	92%	62% reading and math (3 rd grade)	94% ADA	46% ^e	29%	34% ^f	NA

^aNA indicates these data are not available for this site. ^b36% and 32% of students at the six target schools of all grade levels scored at proficiency or higher on state standardized tests in 2010–2011. ^c22% of all Jackson Triangle students in K–12 miss more than 10% of enrolled days throughout the school year (source: Hayward proposal, page e56). ^d62% of Jackson Triangle seniors attending the two target high schools graduated in 2010 (source: Hayward proposal, page A205). ^eSam Houston High School, 2009. ^fFrom the class of 2010 at Sam Houston High School, 34% enrolled in college in fall of 2011.

In short, the statistics are grim for the children in these neighborhoods. Promise Neighborhoods are impelled by these data as they step up to “turn the curve” on these figures and ensure that children in these neighborhoods can succeed in school and go on to college and a career.

B. Education Results and Indicators

The U.S. Department of Education established a results framework to guide the work of all Promise Neighborhoods. It includes the following four results and indicators related to school and academic success.²

- Result #1:** Students are proficient in core academic subjects.
Indicator: Number and percent of students at or above grade level on state math and reading/language arts assessments in at least third through eighth grades and once in high school.
- Result #2:** Students successfully transition from middle school grades to high school.
Indicator: Student attendance rates in at least sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades.
- Result #3:** Youth graduate from high school.
Indicator: High school graduation rate.
- Result #4:** High school graduates obtain a postsecondary degree, certification, or credential.

² Department of Education, Notice Inviting Applications, Applications for New Awards; Promise Neighborhoods Program — Implementation Grant Competition; Federal Register, Vol. 77, No. 77, Friday, April 20, 2012, page 23679. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-04-20/pdf/2012-9597.pdf>.

Indicator: Number and percent of students who graduate with a regular high school diploma and obtain postsecondary degrees, vocational certificates, or other industry-recognized certifications or credentials without the need for remediation.

Each site established annual goals for improvement on these results and indicators, developed solutions aimed at moving the needle on each, and will report to the department annually on the progress made, so there will be a public record of changes on specific, measurable objectives in each Promise Neighborhood.³

In addition to these core education indicators that all grantees have adopted, sites were allowed to add others that fit their particular circumstances. For example, San Antonio added the following indicators to those stipulated by the department:

- *Double the percent of students who remain in the Eastside Promise Neighborhood attendance zone for six school years, from 34 percent at baseline to 70 percent by Year 5.*
- *Reduce by 30 percent the teacher turnover rate in the target schools by Year 5 (schools baseline range 3.5–21.0 percent).*

Hayward also added several indicators of its own including:

- *Average suspension rates for elementary school students from the Jackson Triangle will decrease by 20 percent per year from a baseline of 6.8 percent to 2.2 percent by Year 5.*
- *The number and percent of high school students in grades 10–12 who pass the California High School Exit Exam will increase each year for five years.*

C. U.S. Department of Education Requirements

The Department of Education requires Promise Neighborhoods to adopt “ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive education reforms that are linked to improved educational outcomes for children and youth in preschool through the 12th grade.”⁴ Sites are expected to develop education strategies that (a) ensure there are effective teachers and principals at the target schools; (b) encourage the use of data on student achievement to inform decision making; and (c) include college- and career-ready standards, assessments, and practices in core academic subjects.⁵ To turn these schools around, the department argues for creating a new culture in the school, not just tinkering around the edges.

The department stipulates that sites must select at least one “persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) school” or “low-performing (LP) school” in their mix of target schools. As long as they meet this requirement, sites are free to include one or more “effective schools” as well. Persistently lowest-achieving schools are those that are among the lowest-achieving 5 percent of schools in corrective action status in the state or that have had a graduation rate of less than 60 percent over a number of years. “Low-performing schools” are those that are in corrective action status in the state. For each type of school selected, the department gave sites a menu of school reform models from which the Promise Neighborhood site could choose.

³ Because the bulk of the education strategies were not begun until the beginning of the 2012–2013 school year, progress data were not available until at least the end of the school year in late spring 2013. Academic achievement, attendance, and graduation rates are not yet available and will be reported in Year 2 (2013–2014) for the school year 2012–2013.

⁴ Department of Education, Promise Neighborhoods Program — Implementation Grant Competition, Federal Register, page 23677.

⁵ Department of Education, Promise Neighborhoods Program — Implementation Grant Competition, Federal Register, page 23682.

For persistently lowest-achieving schools, Promise Neighborhoods are expected to choose one of four models of school reform outlined below,⁶ and in low-performing schools, sites could choose one of these models or another similarly rigorous model of school reform. If the local education agency is already implementing school reform strategies in the Promise Neighborhood target schools, sites can use the existing reform strategies instead of one of these four models.

- **Turnaround:** The district replaces the principal and grants the new principal considerable operational flexibility, screens existing staff and rehires no more than 50 percent of current staff, adopts a new reporting structure for greater accountability, and increases learning time.
- **Restart:** The district converts a school to a charter school or turns it over to an approved organization authorized to operate public schools. A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.
- **School closure:** A district closes a school and enrolls the students in other schools in the district that are higher achieving, ideally within reasonable proximity to the closed school.
- **Transformation:** The school is required to, among other things, replace the principal and provide the new principal with greater operational flexibility over such areas as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting; reward staff who have increased student achievement while removing those who, after ample opportunities, have not done so; offer teachers and school leaders financial incentives, opportunities for promotion, and more flexible work conditions designed to recruit and retain the best staff; and increase learning time by using a longer school day, week, or year to significantly increase the total number of school hours for instruction in core academic subjects as well as enrichment activities.⁷

Table 2 shows the numbers and types of schools in which each grantee chose to target its Promise Neighborhood activities. All sites had at least one persistently lowest-achieving and/or one low performing school. Four of the five sites had at least one persistently lowest-achieving school, meaning that these sites are working with the most distressed schools in their state, developing school reform strategies that seek to reverse this status, and convert them into schools of excellence.

	# of Target Schools	# of Persistently Low-Achieving Schools	# of Low-Performing Schools	# of Effective Schools
Berea	16 ^a	5	9	0
Buffalo	3	1	1	1
Hayward	6	6	0	0
Minneapolis	9	0	6	3
San Antonio	6 ^b	1	1	3

^aBerea had two schools that were not classified in terms of performance.

⁶ These four models are the same as those included in the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program that rewards states engaged in education innovation and reform and includes a focus on turning around the lowest-performing schools.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Race to the Top Fund, Notice Inviting Applications, Appendix C. School Intervention Models, November 18, 2009. <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2009/11/18/E9-27427/overview-information-race-to-the-top-fund-notice-inviting-applications-for-new-awards-for-fiscal>.

^bSan Antonio's target schools include one Early Childhood Center that is not rated.

3. What Are Sites Doing?

A. Theories of Action

All five sites believe that children from low-income families in distressed neighborhoods face conditions that put them at a disadvantage academically. For example, conditions such as lack of income and the high levels of parental stress that accompany economic distress, health hazards, exposure to violence, and frequent moving equip children with less resilience and persistence than children in more affluent communities. Leaders in the Promise Neighborhoods are convinced that they need to intervene deliberately and intensively to counteract these forces.

With regard specifically to education interventions, sites have developed action plans around the belief that children in their target neighborhoods will be well educated and successful in school if the following five categories of solutions are put in practice:

1. **Parent engagement:** Families encourage their children's school success and understand how to navigate the education systems so they can advocate for their children and help them thrive academically.
2. **School reform:** The target schools offer a high-quality, rigorous education by highly qualified teachers and principals who routinely get first-rate professional development.
3. **Early warning indicators and individual supports to students:** An early warning system is in place that uses indicators based on readily accessible attendance, behavior, and achievement data to identify students at highest risk for falling behind or dropping out of school, and then targets resources to help those students get back on track.
4. **Extended learning time:** Students have extended learning time through before- and after-school, weekend, and intersession opportunities that reinforce, augment, and enrich the in-school program.
5. **Supports at critical transitions aimed at college-going:** The target schools foster a college-going culture from the earliest grades and provide effective supports for all children at critical transition periods such as matriculation to middle school, high school, and college.

B. Relationships between Lead Agencies and their School District Partners

All five sites have been successful in building strong relationships with their school districts. Each developed a memorandum of agreement (MOU) that spelled out the respective roles of each body. Typically, the school districts agreed to:

- provide the Promise Neighborhood partners access to student data;

- let Promise Neighborhood staff into target schools;
- engage teachers and/or principals in professional development; and
- provide space for after-school and summer programs when possible.

In return, Promise Neighborhood lead agencies agreed to provide resources and staff aimed at assisting students in their educational performance.

Three sites (Minneapolis, San Antonio, and Hayward) each hired a full-time education administrator to work within the school district administration to lead the Promise Neighborhoods work in the target neighborhood. This strategy grew out of recognition that school districts are not always able to move quickly on Promise Neighborhoods work compared to all their other competing obligations. As one Promise Neighborhood staffer put it: “Sometimes the school district staff couldn’t get back to us for a week or two, and we had to move.” NAZ and Hayward pay for this position with federal Promise Neighborhoods funds, while San Antonio’s school district pays for the position as part of its contribution to the initiative. In all three cases, Promise Neighborhoods grantees now have someone who can help advance their agendas and get responses from the district much faster than before.

Two examples of school district relationships are instructive here: San Antonio’s and Buffalo’s.

- The Eastside Promise Neighborhood (EPN) in San Antonio developed an MOU with the San Antonio Independent School District in preparation for its implementation activities only to find a sudden turnover in leadership four months into Year 1. The superintendent and his senior staff left, and a new interim superintendent was appointed. Everything in the Promise Neighborhoods implementation plan for the schools was suddenly put on hold and nothing could move forward. It wasn’t that the new superintendent disagreed with the Promise plans; in contrast, he was all for them. But it took another several months to educate him and his senior staff about the approach and specifics with regard to items such as new prekindergarten (preK) programs, student support teams in the elementary and secondary schools, and data-sharing arrangements planned for the Eastside neighborhood.

As a result, EPN staff had to develop a new MOU with the school district, and this time they were determined to spell out the arrangements in much more detail with tangible deliverables, so that when the new permanent superintendent was hired, they would not have to start over again. They tried to be as detailed as possible while still allowing some flexibility for better thinking over time. They decided to make it renewable each year for five years.

EPN staff report that the most time-consuming part of the agreement involved the data-sharing issues. The school district agreed to collect and report data to be used for its early warning and response system, and considerable detail was included about which data points could be shared with whom at what point. The MOU also includes partner data confidentiality agreements, and it spells out what each party is responsible for, including who will pay how much for each part. For example, it stipulates that at Wheatley Middle School, the United Way will use its Promise funds to pay for one reading intervention teacher and 18 new computers, while the school district agrees to pay for another instructor for the special classroom for overage students. In some cases, the MOU stipulates that the Promise staff and the district staff will jointly perform a function, such as selecting a professional development provider for teachers to learn more

about how to deal with students from high-poverty backgrounds. EPN is satisfied that this new MOU will serve them well through any future leadership changes.

- Buffalo’s lead agency, the Westminster Foundation, is sharing management of two schools—Highgate Heights Elementary School (preK–8) and Bennett High School—in its target neighborhood with Buffalo Public Schools (BPS).⁸ The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood (BPN) believes that because shared management of the two schools provides it with greater flexibility in instruction, scheduling, staffing, and use of resources, it also opens the door to greater innovation and better integration with student and family supports. BPN is called the “School Turnaround Partner” for the two new target schools.

BPN staff report that the single most important feature in their co-manager role is their seat at the budget table when school-specific issues are discussed. They contend that the schools in the target neighborhood have long been neglected and under-resourced; for example, there are few support positions such as counselors and social workers in these schools. As co-manager, they can highlight the need for these support staff, and district officials take note because BPN is viewed as a conscientious champion of students with an impressive track record in the community.

For its part, the BPS agrees to provide all logistical operations of the schools—such as food and custodial services—and it maintains legal responsibility for all school facilities. The school district agrees to help implement solutions called for in the Promise Neighborhood plan, to give the Westminster Foundation authority to use the school facilities outside the regular instructional day, and it agrees to not reduce funding to the target schools because of Promise Neighborhoods supplemental funds. In return, BPN agrees to provide school management services to the target schools. It can bring in its own staff and/or non-profit social service organizations to help implement solutions, and it is part of the hiring process for all new hires at the schools.

One of the more interesting aspects of Buffalo’s agreement is buy-in by both parties to increase the number of students at the three target schools who come from the neighborhood. The agreed upon goal is to have at least 60 percent of students at the three target schools come from the Promise Neighborhoods zone by Year 5. To meet this goal, BPS agrees to fill vacant slots first with students from the neighborhood. Starting with preK and kindergarten spots at the target schools, the district agrees to assign only neighborhood children. BPS will fill 20 percent of the ninth grade slots at Bennett each year with students from the neighborhood until the 60 percent goal is met.

C. Solutions

To help more students succeed academically, most sites started with a subset of schools in Year 1, planning to expand to additional schools over the coming years. For example, Hayward started in two of its six schools and NAZ started rolling out its solutions in three of its nine schools during Year 1.

⁸ The Westminster Foundation already operates the third target school in the Promise Neighborhood, the Westminster Community Charter School. It first became involved by adopting the school in 1993 and took over as charter operator in 2004.

Promise Neighborhoods set in motion solutions that pertain to each of the five areas mentioned earlier: (1) parent engagement; (2) whole-school reforms that improve instructional content and practice including teacher professional development; (3) early warning and response systems to help prevent student failure; (4) extended learning time; and (5) supports at critical transitions that foster a seamless college-going culture from the earliest grades. These five elements have repeatedly been cited in education research as keys to improving student results in high-poverty neighborhoods.

Because most sites did not get their Promise Neighborhoods grants until partway into 2012, they were unable to start many of their school-based interventions until fall 2012, giving them only four months of operational experience in Year 1. Nevertheless, all five sites ramped up a number of cutting-edge school-based interventions in the last four months of the year. These are summarized in Table 3 and some of the highlights are described below according to the five key ingredients listed above.

1. Parent Engagement

The Promise Neighborhoods are reaching out to parents to get them to be active players in their children’s schooling. This is based on the evidence that students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades, attend school regularly, and graduate and go on to post-secondary education.⁹ Three examples of parent engagement strategies put in place in Year 1 follow.

Northside Achievement Zone Connectors and the Family Academy

In its first year of implementation, NAZ hired and trained 13 family connectors (including four managers and a director) to reach out to parents in the neighborhood and enroll them in NAZ. This program is based on the belief that parents are the first and most important people in a child’s development. Connectors signed up 220 families with 550 children and developed written plans with specific goals for each family and child. The connectors’ job is to ensure that families are linked to the opportunities they need to support their children’s school success. Connectors are hired from the neighborhood and reflect the demographics of NAZ families, often having “been there themselves.”

NAZ connectors function as “family coaches.” They talk with parents about how to support their child’s education, and they give parents a checklist of things they can do to accomplish this goal. For instance, they can be an active partner with their child’s teacher by asking three simple questions at their parent-teacher conference: “Is my child performing at or above grade level in reading and math? If not, what support will the school offer? And what can I do to support my child?” NAZ connectors encourage parents to increase the child’s learning time by, for instance, signing him/her up for after-school and/or summer programs. They also encourage parents to build a culture of achievement at home by establishing clear expectations and a homework routine at night and considering incentives to help the child focus on particularly challenging areas.

⁹ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, “A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement,” Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002.

Table 3: Education Success Solutions Implemented in Year 1, by Site

Site	Parent Engagement	Whole-School Reform	Early Warning System	Extended Time	Critical Transitions
Berea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched the Families and Schools Together program 53 families completed 8-week course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher professional development to increase advance placement courses Professional development to increase rigor reached 498 teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched early warning system Hired 14 academic specialists Reading tutoring to 252 elementary students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out-of-school time program in 11 of 13 target schools served 408 students Summer program served 2,788 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College for Every Student mentoring program for 689 at-risk 8th graders
Buffalo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired community engagement specialist Partnered with Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talent development with new curriculum, Ninth Grade Success Academy, computerized math and English labs, professional development Anti-violence program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data-driven system, tiered responses to attendance, grades or behavior problems Hired 15 AmeriCorps members for 300 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out-of-school time program in 2 of 3 target schools Summer program for 26 high school students preparing for college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing the Gap provides social/emotional supports to students as needed College Success Center at Bennett
Hayward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent education classes held for 45 families Parent centers opened in target elementary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired 3 instructional coaches called Teachers on Special Assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired 2 youth intervention specialists to work with all students at 2 elementary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out-of-school time program in all 6 target schools Summer STEM program served 111 students 	
NAZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired 13 family connectors Launched Family Academy, graduating 79 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and principal professional development through Center for Educational Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early warning system in place Hired 5 academic navigators to work with 65 students starting Jan 2013 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out-of-school time program in 2 schools + community center w/ strong academics Summer program served 100 students 	
San Antonio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made 1,765 home visits Created parent rooms at all 6 target schools Brought hundreds of parents into schools as volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second year of New Tech school within a school 1 instructional coach hired to improve STEAM focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student support teams and early warning system at all 6 schools Hired 21 AmeriCorps workers to work with 461 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out-of-school time program in 5 of 6 target schools w/ STEAM focus Summer program served 214 students 	

NAZ connectors also encourage parents to enroll in the NAZ Family Academy, a parent education program with several tiers. The first tier is the Foundations course, which is a parent empowerment seminar that NAZ believes is necessary before many parents are ready for more substantive curriculum around parenting strategies. During Year 1, 22 families with children of all ages graduated from three Foundations courses, held in two-hour classes twice a week for eight weeks. Dinner is provided and children can come, although they are in a separate room.

One mother enrolled in the Foundations course after having lost a child who died in infancy three years earlier. She was emotionally unstable and was a heavy marijuana user. Talking with other parents helped her wake up and realize she was letting her grief control her choices. She saw that her life did not match up to her expectations. With the support of her peers in the class, she stopped smoking weed every day, got a job as a medical assistant, and ended a bad relationship with a boyfriend. She was able to turn her life around and make better choices for herself and her children.

The Foundations class is based on a recognition that many low-income parents of color cannot move forward on their own goals because they are overwhelmed with challenges from a lifetime of poverty. For parents to be able to help their kids, they have to be healthy themselves and able to meet their own goals. NAZ adapted a program from one of their partners, Twin Cities RISE!, which begins by assuring parents that they are valued and important despite whatever barriers are keeping them from moving forward. Parents are taught to control their own emotions and to focus on issues and factors that are within their power to change.

NAZ reports that parents love this curriculum, saying it completely changes how they think about themselves. Parents say it helped them be able to articulate their strengths; be in greater control of their emotions; improve relations with their spouse; develop positive goals for employment, housing, and education; and be ready to be a better parent.

Once parents complete the Foundations course, the next tiers are parenting education classes tied to the age of their children. For example, there is a course for parents of infants and toddlers that addresses brain development in young children, appropriate discipline strategies when going through the “terrible 2’s,” and how to nurture young children at this early age. During Year 1, NAZ graduated 57 families from two of these age-specific parenting classes.

San Antonio’s Family School Community Partnership

For six years, San Antonio’s United Way has been working with parents to engage them in their children’s schooling. Called the Family-School-Community Partnership, it is rooted in the belief that parents should drive the parent-engagement process and are the best spokespeople to get other parents involved in their children’s education. The initiative seeks to improve children’s attendance and graduation rates, communication between school and home, parent engagement in their children’s education, and connection of families to community resources.

At the heart of the strategy is the parent-to-parent home visit. In Year 1, 1,765 home visits were conducted within the Eastside Promise Neighborhood. Parent representatives from each of the six target schools fanned out and knocked on doors, visiting with parents who had a child

attending the same school as their child. They visited every family in the target grades, and invited parents to join the larger network of parents in the neighborhood.

Home visits are considered the first critical step in building relationships among parents that help lead to other positive outcomes. These include bringing a number of parents who had not been previously engaged in their children's education into the school, where they built relationships with teachers and the principal. In addition, preliminary figures suggest that student attendance at school may have increased by 1 to 2 percentage points in the grades targeted by home visits. And home visits have helped many parents agree to volunteer at their children's school: 24,952 volunteer hours were contributed by parents in Year 1. Parents also have participated in leadership development trainings.

Volunteering happens through parent rooms set up at each school. Run by the Family Service Association, the rooms are purposefully warm and friendly, have a couch, several chairs, computers available for job searches, and space for extra supplies and uniforms that parents can help themselves to for their children. There is a "kid's corner" with toys where babies and toddlers can play while the mother or father helps out. Each room is always equipped with a bulletin board with community resources that parents can access for specific needs. The parent rooms are supported by professionals as needed, but are primarily managed by parent volunteers. Parents help by making copies of papers for teachers or preparing for special events such as Family Night. San Antonio sees this large parent network and its parent rooms as the first step in building parent leadership in the community.

When one day a parent volunteer questioned why a good student was getting sent to the principal's office, she found that he was being punished for stealing. She learned he was saving food for his younger brothers to ensure they had enough to eat over the holiday break. Saddened and concerned, the parent informed her parent team, who in turn worked with the San Antonio Food Bank and United Way to set up a program to distribute 20-pound bags of groceries to every student just before a holiday break. This year at Wheatley, parents tied attendance at parent-teacher conferences to the grocery bag vouchers. For those parents who couldn't make it to the conferences but still came with their child to collect the food, parent volunteers asked them to visit with their child's teacher at that time.

Berea's Families and Schools Together Program

Berea implemented the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program to strengthen the bonds between parents and their child and school. Families came together once a week for eight weeks during an evening to work on family dynamics aimed at helping the children succeed in school. A total of 53 families participated in Year 1. The goals were to improve family cohesion and support for learning, and to help parents support each other as they move through various phases of parenting.

For families with elementary school children, sessions were geared toward helping the children be more accountable to their parents and understand parents' rules and expectations. At the same time, parents learned how to help their children with homework and be supportive of school expectations. For families with middle and high school children, the focus was on communication and conflict resolution within the family and appropriate roles for parents in

their children’s secondary schooling and beyond. Parents reported they liked the course and learned a lot from it.

2. School Reform

Some sites elected to pursue whole-school reform which establishes a whole new design for a troubled school while others chose to implement partial reform, such as teacher professional development and programs to improve school climate. These are described in turn below.

a. Whole-School Reform

Two sites set out to improve the education experiences in their target low-performing schools through whole-school reform, which takes a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple aspects of a school’s functioning, from the organization of the school to the instructional and curricular issues, the structure of the school day to the development of leaders and staff, essentially seeking to transform all of these pieces through a new school design. Research shows that rapid improvements in student success are more likely when a number of reforms are made simultaneously rather than piecemeal. When a school has top-notch staffing, supportive scheduling, on-target professional development for teachers and administrators, engaging curriculum that sets and maintains high standards, and intensive supports, students are more likely to succeed in even the most challenged schools.¹⁰

One of the two sites (Buffalo) that chose a whole-school reform model contracted with an outside organization to implement this type of reform, while the second site (San Antonio) worked directly with its school district.

Using an External Education Provider: Buffalo

Buffalo decided to use an external education services provider—Talent Development Secondary, a program of Johns Hopkins University School of Education—to launch a comprehensive reform model rather than rely on the district to add new components to existing programs. After considering the likelihood that they could get sufficient attention and resources from Buffalo Public Schools, where resources were already thin, BPN decided it made more sense to bring in an outside school reform provider that could dedicate resources and staff to the target schools.

In addition to several other changes that Buffalo is implementing to help students succeed in school, the Talent Development model includes five key components:

- A class for sixth graders called “Mastering the Middle Grades” that helps prepare students for middle and high school through development of organizational and life skills.
- Ninth Grade Success Academy, a self-contained "school within a school" that has its own structure of interdisciplinary teams designed to provide incoming ninth graders with a successful transition to high school. It includes a year-long Freshman Seminar

¹⁰ Talent Development Secondary, <http://www.talentdevelopmentsecondary.com/>.

course that helps students develop good study habits, basic computer literacy, and college and career preparation.

- A common-core college-preparatory academic curriculum that is required for all students across the four years of high school. The ninth-grade curriculum features Transition to Advanced Math and Strategic Reading courses which supplement algebra I and English, providing a double dose of instruction in these subjects for students who need it.
- Computerized math and English labs that are available during the school day and after school to help students master needed academic material.
- An early warning indicator system that identifies struggling students and targets resources to them before they cycle into a failing pattern (described further below).

Putting all these elements in place together comprised the whole-school reform effort at Buffalo's two new target schools.

Creating a School Within a School: San Antonio

In 2011, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) created New Tech San Antonio, a school within a school at Sam Houston High School, serving 200 of its 800 students. This initiative, part of a school turn-around model, began with the simple desire to improve student outcomes at one of the city's most challenged and lowest-achieving high schools. In 2011, only 41 percent and 52 percent of Houston High School's 10th graders met the state standards in math and science respectively.¹¹ Only 56 percent of the students—a largely black and Hispanic population—graduated on time.¹²

As Houston's new principal Darnell White looked for ways to improve student outcomes, he became excited about a school he visited in 2010 outside Austin, Texas. Manor New Tech was part of a network of schools that used project-based learning focused on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects to bolster student academic success. Its results were impressive: after four years, 98 percent of Manor New Tech seniors graduated and 100 percent of the graduates were accepted to college.¹³

White was inspired. He received a School Improvement Grant from the U.S. Department of Education and used that \$5 million to start New Tech San Antonio, which helped in hiring a new head for the school, purchasing new technology, and contracting with the national New Tech Network for technical assistance and training. He saw this as a way to transform his struggling school into an innovative learning environment that engages students in a curricula that they perceive as relevant to their lives and thus leads to better educational outcomes. New Tech now serves 25 percent of Houston students, with a goal of eventually moving all Houston students into the New Tech structure.

¹¹ Schooldigger: <http://www.schooldigger.com/go/TX/schools/3873004363/school.aspx>.

¹² Public School Review: http://www.publicschoolreview.com/school_ov/school_id/81594.

¹³ Mariko Nobori, Edutopia website, "What Makes Project-based Learning a Success?", <http://www.newtechnetwork.org/news/what-makes-project-based-learning-success>.

Part of the impetus for New Tech was a desire to create a more personalized and orderly learning environment to help remedy the impersonality of the larger high school. At New Tech, groups of students share the same core subject teachers, which helps them feel that their teachers know and care about them. While research has shown that small learning communities will not, in and of themselves, increase student achievement, they have been shown to play a role in increasing attendance and reducing dropout rates, especially when they are organized around a common theme.¹⁴

Project-based learning: New Tech uses Texas education standards as the basis for curriculum in all subjects, but asks students to work in teams on projects that require critical thinking and the application of knowledge to real-world situations. Making learning more relevant allows students to see a purpose for mastering the state-required skills and gives them an opportunity to develop real-life competencies required for success in today's workplace. The model also uses the latest web-based computers and software. At New Tech, there are 24 state-of-the-art Netbooks in every classroom.

“What sold me was the idea that we could get kids solving problems as a team on real-world issues, learning not just how to find information but how to ask good questions and present their findings in a professional manner.”

— Darnell White, Principal, Sam Houston High School

In addition to the regular core high school classes, students at New Tech also chose from three elective sequences: engineering, which moves from basic principles of how machines work all the way up to digital electronics and robotics; information technology, which covers basic HTML programming and helps kids create websites for local businesses; or audiovisual, in which students write business proposals, develop storyboards, and create movies. A common sight at New Tech is a group of students moving through the halls with cameras and microphones as they learn how to shoot, edit, and produce films and videos.

To accommodate project-based learning, New Tech students attend school for half a day on Saturdays in addition to Monday through Friday, and most stay an extra hour after the regular school day. Teachers agree to stay this extra hour each day to work with individual or small groups of students on their projects.

New Tech is one of 115 schools in 18 states that are guided by the national nonprofit New Tech Network, which provides technical assistance and training to member schools. New Tech San Antonio teachers spent three weeks over the summer in intensive training before launching the new project-based curricula, learning how to shift roles from traditional “keepers of knowledge” to facilitators of fertile learning.

¹⁴ Corinne M. Herlihy and Janet Quint, Manpower Development Research Corporation, “Emerging Evidence on Improving High School Student Achievement and Graduation Rates: The Effects of Four Popular Improvement Programs,” http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_EmergingEvidenceBrief_111606Final.pdf.

“My school is much more challenging than my old school. It’s also more fun. I have a lot more responsibility and can’t just slide, but it actually gives me more freedom because I can decide what I want to learn and how. Plus the way we use technology and do our presentations is helping prepare us for what comes next.”

—Junior at New Tech

Assessment: At the end of each project, student teams give a presentation from which they get their grade. It may be a speech or a skit, a slide show or a photo essay, but it almost always is a multi-media presentation. Students are assessed not just on the content of their project, but also on how well they worked together, organized their ideas, and delivered their presentation. Other students, teachers, and sometimes community members rate the students on their critical thinking skills—the extent to which students answered the driving questions completely and explained the arguments for and against different points of view—and on their oral and written delivery skills. In short, San Antonio is trying to fundamentally rethink teaching and learning in the Eastside Promise Neighborhood so that more students are able to go to college and pursue demanding careers.

b. Teacher Professional Development

All of the Promise Neighborhoods know what research has proven: that the teachers in their neighborhood schools, which serve some of the most disadvantaged populations in the country, are often less experienced and less knowledgeable about the subjects they teach than teachers in more affluent communities.¹⁵ When faced with questions about how to improve student academic success, all five sites chose to focus resources on teacher professional development.

Today’s literature suggests that the most effective professional development activities involve teachers working together to align curricula with standards, review assignments for their rigor, and discuss ways of making classroom activities more engaging. Developing these kinds of “professional learning communities” can help boost student achievement. Two of the Promise Neighborhoods launched this type of effort in Year 1, while others started with smaller efforts, working toward less ambitious but nonetheless important outcomes for teachers. These are described below.

NAZ Professional Development

NAZ worked with the Minneapolis Public Schools to launch a professional development program that starts with principals and then moves to teachers. NAZ contracted with the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) at the University of Washington to guide them through an intensive program aimed at increasing teacher effectiveness in under-resourced schools. At the end of Year 1, partway through the 2012–2013 academic year, NAZ reports this is one of the solutions of which they are most proud.

The program posits five domains of teaching and learning that are necessary for excellent instruction:

¹⁵ Ruth C. Neild and Elizabeth Useem. “Teacher Staffing in the School District of Philadelphia: A Report to the Community.” Philadelphia: Philadelphia Education Fund. 2002.

- Conveying a sense of purpose to education
- Increasing student engagement
- Using high-quality curriculum and pedagogy
- Developing authentic assessments for student learning
- Making the classroom environment and culture respectful and productive

NAZ began in 2011 by bringing the principals from its nine target schools together for a series of professional development sessions led by CEL over the entire school year. The goal of the program was to increase the expertise of school principals to guide and support the professional growth of teachers along the five dimensions noted above. In a series of sessions, CEL taught the principals how to analyze both teacher practice and student learning using guided classroom walkthroughs.

During Year 1, the nine principals visited each other’s schools to conduct walkthroughs and identify areas for accelerated teacher professional development. For example, when the principals convened at Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary School one morning, they started by talking about how teachers are using more inquiry-based instructional approaches, encouraging students to investigate real-world questions that students devise to increase involvement in their own learning. The principals spent the first hour talking about what good inquiry-based instruction looks like, then split into small groups to visit a number of classrooms where they observed the degree to which teachers were using this approach. They came back together in the afternoon to discuss what they saw and brainstormed ideas for how to increase and/or fine-tune the practice at this school. CEL coaches then visited the school and worked with the principal to identify further professional development opportunities for teachers, both in groups and through individual coaching.

“I now have the ability to go into the classroom and look for elements of a teaching practice with a more critical eye. I'm more able to find the leverage point to help a good teacher become a great teacher.”
 —Principal involved with CEL

Both principals and teachers in the NAZ schools are very satisfied with the program, reporting that the feedback provided has been constructive and valuable and they want to continue the program in the coming years.

Berea Professional Development

In Berea, the Promise Neighborhood agenda is built around college readiness. Over the years, Berea leaders found that in rural Appalachia, classroom rigor is the single most important characteristic needed to help students be prepared for college. Only 12 percent of 11th graders were college-ready in math, and only 36 percent met that standard for English.¹⁶ (“College ready” means that students have a 50 percent chance of getting a B or better in the first credit-bearing college course.)

¹⁶ Berea College, Application for Grants Under the Promise Neighborhoods Program - Implementation Grant Competition, CFDA # 84.215N, September 13, 2011, page e29.

Local leaders concluded that many middle and high schools were not offering all students a pre-college curricula with high expectations for achievement. Lack of advanced placement (AP) courses was an obvious problem. In 2010–2011, 940 students enrolled in AP courses in the entire Promise Neighborhood of 6,297 K–12 students. Only 2 percent (or 18) of those students who enrolled in AP courses received a score of 3 or higher on the AP exam, the minimum required to earn college credit.

To remedy this problem, Berea set out to ramp up the quantity and quality of AP courses through teacher professional development, and to increase the number of students who enroll in these courses and who take advantage of additional supports, such as Saturday tutoring sessions provided to help them pass the test. Previously, many schools offered no AP courses, and many others offered only a limited selection. Few schools offered AP courses in advanced math or science or in a foreign language.

Using the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, a nonprofit education services provider based in Louisville, and Laying the Foundation, a division of the national Math and Science Initiative, Berea is training teachers in its three-county area to ensure they have the content knowledge and teaching strategies necessary to prepare students for AP-level coursework. They start with middle school teachers as “pre-AP teachers,” helping them, for instance, ready students for algebra 1 as freshmen. In high schools, teachers learn strategies and content for AP courses such as AP calculus and AP statistics, along with the required syllabi. In this rural setting, some of these courses are by necessity offered online, so some of the professional development is geared to the “how to’s” of distance learning.

Instructional Coaches: Hayward and San Antonio

Several sites are using the model of instructional coaches to help boost the quality of teaching in their Promise Neighborhoods schools. In this model, experienced, highly effective teachers are brought into a school, not to teach, but to help other teachers learn new techniques that accelerate student learning.

Hayward hired three “teachers on special assignment” during Year 1 to serve as instructional coaches in two target schools. Two specialists were assigned to Harder Elementary, one in math and one in English-language arts, and one specialist in math was assigned to Park Elementary. The coaches use a lesson study model to develop professional learning communities by subject area. For example, the math coach at Harder convened a group of math teachers who decided what units they wanted to work on, then together created a set of lessons and ways to assess student performance, using the results to improve instruction along the way. The Harder teachers were very excited about this work because it gave them an opportunity to work with their colleagues. In less than four months, teachers reported that they believed their revised lesson plans were leading to greater academic gains among students.

San Antonio set out to hire a set of instructional coaches in math and science because student scores on standardized tests were lowest in these areas. The goal was to bolster teaching in these subjects by having highly qualified coaches sharpen teachers’ skills in instructional methods in math and science. In Year 1, the district could only find one highly

qualified coach, a secondary school science “master” teacher who helped Wheatley and Houston science teachers use more effective lesson plans and instructional techniques, including better management of classroom time.

Although San Antonio had hoped to find six qualified coaches, they were surprised to find this much more difficult than they had anticipated. Out of 50 applications, only one teacher had demonstrated sufficient excellence in her teaching. As a result, school district staff had to modify their plans. They are now considering several alternatives for Year 2: they may allow principals to identify contract employees to fill this function, and they may try to increase salaries to attract the best corps of instructional coaches.

c. School Climate Improvement

Buffalo’s Anti-Violence Program

Buffalo launched an anti-gang and anti-violence program after Buffalo Promise Neighborhood leaders and Bennett High School administrators learned that more than a dozen gangs were active at the school and many students said they didn't feel safe on campus. Data also showed that many kids were not graduating on time because they would get into fights at school, get suspended, and eventually drop out. As BPN and school leaders thought about how to create schools of excellence where all students could graduate college-ready, they recognized that they had to deal with safety.

BPN chose to implement a model from New York called “Council for Unity.” Started in 1975 by a high school English teacher in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, who was concerned about the racial and gang fights that were keeping kids from learning, the program now operates in dozens of schools throughout New York State. Council for Unity intervention has led to a number of significant positive results, including increases in school attendance, improvement in grades, decreases in violent behavior and gang involvement, and increases in communication and conflict resolution skills for program participants.¹⁷

Buffalo piloted the program with 16 students during its planning year and rolled it out to 44 students during Year 1. The Buffalo School District agreed to cover the cost of one teacher, and BPN contracts with the Council for Unity for training and technical support.

Students sign up or are referred by teachers, social workers, or administrators to participate in an elective class for two semesters. Four classes are held at Bennett and approximately 11 students are enrolled in each. The class is worth one-half a credit in social studies each semester, and the curriculum conforms to New York State Education standards. Students are expected to complete a workbook in which they develop personal goals, participate in class, and master a comprehensive curriculum on life skills. No grades are given. About half of the current students are involved with gangs; the other half are not and some are high achievers who want to deal with challenging personal, peer, or home issues. The classes are taught by a teacher (also the football coach) who is well-respected and with whom students are comfortable; he is African American, like most of the students at Bennett.

¹⁷ The Council for Unity, www.councilforunity.org.

Much of the curriculum—called “Dragon Slayer”—involves identifying and overcoming fears as well as helping students make good, goal-directed decisions. Students discuss and practice strategies to examine consequences of their actions and boost self-control and self-reliance. In this way, BPN hopes to eliminate impediments to learning for a segment of the student population.

In one instance, a student in the program who was involved with a gang wanted out, but he feared what might happen to his family and to him. He considered leaving the neighborhood. In further discussions, it turned out that he could not leave the area because he had a pending court case. For him, the Council for Unity class represented a safe place where he could talk to his peers about his options. He said the class helped him realize he needed to look for alternatives—for a sense of belonging outside of gang membership—and the Council for Unity class was one such alternative.

3. Early Warning Indicator and Response Systems

All five sites have put in place early warning systems aimed at identifying struggling students before they fail and targeting resources to specific problems identified, including student attendance, behavior, and academic performance. For example, Buffalo’s system triggers interventions for students missing 18 days of school regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused. In all sites, if a teacher notes that a student is failing or nearly failing a class, or that a student is starting to act aggressively toward his or her peers, that triggers a warning as well. Once a student is identified as needing extra support, either a team of people or an individual case manager develops an action plan, connects the student to resources, and monitors progress. Because sites’ automated information systems were not fully operational by the end of 2012, they used teacher reports and attendance data to pinpoint students at risk of failure. All sites expect this process to be automated during Year 2—in fact, four of the five sites had begun use of their longitudinal data systems in the first quarter of 2013.

Buffalo’s Early Warning Indicator System

Buffalo’s system is a good example of how an early warning indicator system can rapidly deliver supports to struggling students and head off academic failure. In each of its three target schools, early warning indicator teams meet weekly to discuss students identified as at risk of failure. Team members include teachers, administrators, school psychologists, social workers, AmeriCorps members, and other adults involved with the student. They create a plan for helping the student overcome whatever problem is impeding his/her progress.

Different interventions are used according to the student’s level of need. For students with mounting absenteeism, the team might recommend making a “morning plan” or buddy system for getting to school on time, and having an end of day check-in with a “You’ll be here tomorrow, right?” message from his/her AmeriCorps member. For students with chronic absentee problems, the team might recommend a home visit to meet with the parent(s) and student together.

Students who are falling behind academically are connected to peer tutoring, study buddies, and/or a homework hotline using email, text, or Twitter. A small number of the neediest students participate in a “check-in/check-out” program, in which an adult meets with them

during homeroom to make sure homework is done and turned in and then again at the end of the day where they review teacher notes on the student's progress. The purpose is to open a dialogue about school performance and reinforce small positive gains before the student gets further off track and drops out of school.

In San Antonio, “Juan,” a high school junior, was identified through the early warning system as at risk because he came to school late almost every day. His first period teacher said he rarely made it to class and his second period teacher said he usually came halfway through class, and then would promptly put his head on his desk and fall asleep. The City Year worker talked to Juan and found out he was working the night shift at a local printing press. He usually walked to school. The AmeriCorps worker helped Juan move to an evening shift so he could get home by 11 pm, and got him a bus pass so he could be on time to school. After one month, his teachers noted some improvement; he still came late to school but just by 5 to 10 minutes, and he was not sleeping as much during class.

a. Academic Case Management

To back up their early warning systems, each of the five sites has put in place some type of individual academic supports for struggling students. These include tutoring, mentoring, and referrals to after-school programs and other organizations. Typically, these supports focus on both academic and motivational issues, providing a caring friendly adult in a one-on-one relationship. Table 4 describes each site’s hiring of these adults in Year 1. While the job title differs in each site, the function is to provide whatever help is needed to keep the student on track for a successful school career. Two sites are using AmeriCorps members to fill these jobs, while the other sites have hired professionals directly. Three sites use an enrollment model where their case managers work directly with a select number of struggling students, while Berea and Hayward use their specialists to make referrals for all students in the target schools.

Table 4: Supports to Individual Students through Academic Case Managers, Year 1			
Site	# of Specialists Hired Year 1	# Students Served	Placements
Berea	18 Academic Specialists	6,319	16 schools
Buffalo	15 AmeriCorps members	300	3 schools
Hayward	2 Youth Intervention Specialists ^a	1,347	2 schools
NAZ	5 Academic Navigators	75	3 schools + community
San Antonio	21 AmeriCorps workers ^b	461	4 schools

^a Hayward uses Youth Intervention Specialists to work with all students at two schools rather than with individual students. Their job is, among other things, to assist students in developing appropriate behavior patterns, provide individual and small-group counseling for social/emotional issues, assist with screening and monitoring special-needs students, and work with families concerning home situations that relate to the student’s performance.

^bSan Antonio uses AmeriCorps workers through City Year and Communities in Schools.

Minneapolis’s Academic Navigators

NAZ is a good example of a site that hires professionals to serve this role. Academic navigators just came on board at the end of Year 1, but quickly began developing a written “scholar achievement” plan with each student who has been identified as having difficulties

in target schools (up to a maximum of 15 students per school). The plans will specify up to five specific goals to improve the student's academic performance and chances of going to college. The navigators will meet with the student twice weekly, either during the school day or before or after school to monitor progress periodically and add new goals.

NAZ selected its academic navigators to reflect the neighborhood. Of the five navigators hired in Year 1, three live in the zone, including one mother of five who is a trained reading coach. All have done some type of academic support/coaching previously: one is a licensed teacher, another worked in an out-of-school time program, and one was a school counselor who specializes in helping students develop social-emotional competencies. Four have a college degree; one is just finishing her degree. All are African American, and range in age from 23 to 38. They earn between \$39,000 and \$45,000 per year, plus full health and dental benefits.

Buffalo's AmeriCorps Program

Buffalo uses AmeriCorps members to work with individual students. In Year 1, it hired 15 AmeriCorps members to work in three target schools with 300 students who need extra supports. Each member follows a cohort of about 20 students throughout the school day, providing one-on-one or small-group tutoring, and helping teachers in the classroom. They make phone calls home to students who are chronically absent, and lead enrichment clubs or service projects after school that reinforce academic learning.

Because the work of its AmeriCorps members is emotionally draining, intellectually challenging, and only pays \$12,200 a year, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood staff work hard to create a positive climate and team spirit so members will stay for at least a couple of years. The program director holds weekly staff meetings at each school and monthly across the three schools, plus performs individual professional development advising with each member on a regular basis. All 15 members have either a bachelor's or master's degree.

The biggest challenge to Buffalo's AmeriCorps program has been getting buy-in from the high school teachers. Because it had to implement its program quickly, BPN did not have sufficient time to bring teachers along with this approach. Indeed, only 5 of 20 teachers invited attended a voluntary day of training during the summer to introduce the program. Once school started, a few teachers said they did not want other adults in their classroom, even to work with individual students. This resistance took both the school principal and BPN staff by surprise. Although it means that some struggling students do not get extra help during class, BPN has had to respect these teachers' wishes, reassigning AmeriCorps members to other students and putting them to work on general school attendance issues. In hindsight, BPN wishes it had had more time to orient teachers to the program and work out relationships before school started.

4. Out-of-School Time Programs

All five sites seek to extend learning time by creating or expanding existing out-of-school time programs. Many of these programs are open in the afternoons and evenings, on weekends, during school holidays and vacation periods, and during the summer. Promise Neighborhoods are investing in out-of-school time programs as a way to keep students engaged in school, increase their attendance, and improve their academic performance. Research suggests that

increased learning time can help fulfill these goals, but strategies must be intensive, use high-quality instructional techniques, and be well aligned with students’ work in school.

During Year 1, the five sites expanded existing after-school and summer programs for students in their target neighborhoods or, in some cases, created new programs. Most are located on school grounds, though a few operate in community centers. All combine enrichment activities with academic supports and physical exercise. Some have instructional components where students learn or re-learn academic material, while others focus more on homework and study skills. Some are more integrated with the in-school academic curricula than others. Table 5 shows the extent to which the sites began operating out-of-school time programs during Year 1.

Table 5: Promise Neighborhoods Out-of-School Time Programs, Year 1

Site in 2012	After-School Programs	# of Students Served during School Year	# of Students Served during Summer Program
Berea	in 11 of 13 target schools	408	2,788
Buffalo	in 2 of 3 target schools	234	449 ^a
Hayward	in all 6 target schools	299	111
NAZ	in 2 of 9 target schools + community center	150	100
San Antonio	in 5 of 6 target schools	300	221

^aMay include some duplications.

NAZ’s Out-of-School Time Program

NAZ launched an out-of-school time program that has a strong academic component and is tied to curricula at target schools. To create an academic structure that would be rigorous enough to boost student performance, NAZ convened a group of after-school providers for advice. They concluded that in addition to enrichment and physical activities, all after-school programs must include sessions of at least 45 minutes of leveled reading four days per week and 30-minute math units two days per week. They decided to use the First in Math online curriculum, which dovetails with the Investigations math curriculum used by Minneapolis Public Schools.

Licensed teachers supervise the instructional component, which is delivered by youth workers. Much of the curriculum is computerized so students get immediate feedback on their performance. Academic navigators assigned to students in the after-school program regularly talk to the youth workers to assure focus on problem areas. The out-of-school time program has 30 computers used in 45-minute blocks by all students. The staff-to-student ratio is between 1:10 and 1:15.

In summer 2012, NAZ sent 100 students to the Plymouth Christian Youth Center, an anchor partner for its out-of-school time programs and which has made math and literacy instruction strong components of its summer and after-school programs. Students who participated made significant academic gains. In math, only 6 percent of participating students were proficient at the beginning of summer, and after intensive instruction in the First in Math curriculum, 28 percent scored proficient or above at the end of the four-week session. In reading, the proportion of students who scored proficient or above rose from 42 percent to 59 percent.¹⁸

¹⁸ NAZ Grant Performance Report (ED 524B) to the U.S. Department of Education, Education Pipeline: *Expanding Out-of-School Time*, November 2012.

San Antonio's Out- of-School Time Program

San Antonio extended learning time by partnering with out-of-school time providers such as the local YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, and other programs that have a deliberate focus on strengthening academic skills. To qualify, providers had to offer project-based academic activities in at least four of the five STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math). Eastside Promise Neighborhood (EPN) was adamant that everything offered during the out-of-school time programs had to be aligned with the in-school curricula. In fact, EPN's contracts contained strict guidelines requiring proof of alignment, and each application had to have a letter of support from the principal hosting the program.

Twelve applications were submitted to EPN and the top six were selected based in large part on whether school principals believed the programs would strengthen their in-school work. EPN drafted a contract with each out-of-school time provider outlining specific deliverables, including the STEAM focus, strong levels of student engagement, and a range of physical activities. EPN spent six weeks finalizing these contracts, with principals actively involved. In the end, EPN felt the process yielded robust extended learning opportunities for students in its target schools that would help students master academic material in school.

Hayward's Summer Bridge Program

Hayward pioneered a summer bridge program in Year 1 for 111 seventh graders¹⁹ as part of its strategy to build a college-going culture for low-income middle school students, many of whom will be first-generation college students and who don't normally have access to college campuses. The program sets specific goals for each student focused on staying in school, improving grade point averages, graduating from high school, and college enrollment. The program was run by Chabot College, a community college located less than a mile from Hayward's target neighborhood of Jackson Triangle. As one of Hayward's prime partners, Chabot College has been working for several years to encourage more Hayward middle and high school students to embrace college as a way of moving up to a sustaining career. They follow the students who attend the summer program through Saturday workshops during the school year.

The summer program contained sports activities as well as a STEM focus run by Chabot's Math and Science Department. This focus was selected because the college found that admitted students were most deficient in these areas and it was inhibiting their ability to earn an associate's degree and/or transfer to a four-year institution. The program featured a number of hands-on science activities, including a robotics unit that emphasized math and technical skills. According to Hayward Promise Neighborhood staff, Chabot College did an excellent job providing course content as well as ample wraparound supports for students, such as working out transportation issues and overcoming barriers to successful course completion.

Students attended the program for two full days per week for six weeks. Staff reported that attendance was very good, and students said they liked coming and wanted to come back again. At the end of the program, 93 percent of participating students surveyed stated that they

¹⁹ Of these 111 students, 37 attend one of the target Hayward Promise Neighborhood schools.

learned why it was important to go to college, and 73 percent said that they learned more about science and mathematics as a result of the program.

5. Supports to Students at Critical Transitions with a Focus on College

Several sites put in place mentoring programs aimed specifically at connecting students to caring adults at times of critical transitions. These are typically young adults who can talk to students about the value of staying in school, doing their best, and preparing for the rigors of college. Some sites use their AmeriCorps workers to fill this role while others use separate mentoring programs either to provide more support to the same students already getting academic case management or to serve additional students.

Berea's Mentoring Program

Berea uses a mentoring program called College for Every Student for at-risk eighth graders, which starts prior to high school entrance. As part of its Gear Up program, Berea College gets community volunteers to pair up with eighth graders and help them see college as a positive opportunity and high school as a stepping stone. Mentors tell students they care about and believe in them and trust that they will do great things. The mentors come from all walks of life and vary in age. Most are young, sometimes college age, but other times they are established business people from the local area or even older adults. Nearly 700 eighth graders participated in Year 1.

In all of the Promise Neighborhoods, many children have grown up in impoverished conditions and have been exposed to limited options for future success. They cannot imagine themselves attending college. Mentors serve an important function by instilling within students a sense of confidence about their futures; an understanding of the importance of college; and the motivation to stay in school, earn a post-secondary degree, and go on to enjoy a satisfying and well-paying career.

“He [my mentor] meets with me after school in the library. We talk and he helps me with my homework. He helped me with my math and I got a B on the test last week. He also tells me to stay focused in school, to use folders for my work and to think for myself, not just follow what everyone else is doing. He asks me about my goals for after high school and tells me to imagine myself on a college campus. I want to go into business, and I want to play baseball. He tells me to stay positive, look forward, and I’ll be able to do both.”

— Student in the Berea program

4. Conclusion and Observations

The descriptions above provide a glimpse of the education success solutions that the first five Promise Neighborhoods implementation sites put in practice during Year 1. These represent significant new resources for students, as well as substantial investment in this part of the sites’ cradle-to-college-to-career pathways.

It is important to emphasize that these solutions are only a part of sites' implementation activities in their first year. The work described in this issue brief occurred while lead agencies were building a staff infrastructure, working with partners to create and deploy other solutions, establishing longitudinal data systems, and creating new accountability systems for themselves and their partners, among other activities. Now that a substantial portion of their initial education success solutions are in place, site leaders are looking forward to analyzing the results from the experience of the 2012–2013 academic year and expanding and deepening solutions as well as bringing new solutions on line in Year 2.

In providing information for this paper, site leaders reflected on their challenges and accomplishments, noting several observations about their education success solutions to date. Their observations about their experiences also suggest areas for important future learning.

Strong Relationships

First, when asked about their relationships with their partner school districts, local Promise Neighborhood leaders confirmed that the relationships at the district level and at the school level were, overall, strong and collegial. In their first year of implementation funding (and in the planning that preceded it, whether federally supported or not), lead agencies worked to be supportive partners who wanted to accommodate school and school district priorities and wishes, while having a clear and important agenda of their own. Promise Neighborhood leaders went out of their way to not be perceived as a “bull in a china shop,” as one leader put it. Instead, they saw the appropriate role for themselves as collaborative partners, working with schools and school districts toward mutual goals of academic proficiency and high school graduation in under-resourced schools.

This overall spirit of partnership did not mean that all aspects of the relationships between schools and Promise Neighborhoods were easy or untroubled. The difficulty of the work to be done and the inevitable challenges of change—the need for adaptation when new practices, tools, and resources are introduced—meant that there were areas in which lead agencies and school leaders struggled to translate the intention of partnerships into reality. Several Promise Neighborhood leaders noted that they had underestimated the time needed to fully inform and involve principals and teachers before the school year started. For example, Berea leaders noted that, in hindsight, they had not spent enough time engaging the principals in the target schools before the school year began in August 2012. Then, when it came time for Berea's new academic specialists to be placed in the schools, and the specialists asked to look at student data so that they could help assure the progress of individual students, some principals slowed the process because they had not been sufficiently familiar with how this was going to play out. After “scrambling” to repair and restart the relationships (as Berea leaders describe it), Promise Neighborhood staff and principals were able to work together so that the principals and teachers recognized that the added staff were actually very helpful. Relationships improved, and the work was able to get back on track. But the delay could have been avoided, Berea leaders feel, with more careful preparation in the planning that led up to implementation.

Leaders in other sites mentioned another challenge: strong relationships built with school administrators don't automatically translate into support at the classroom level, as some teachers tend to view new programming as yet another passing fad. Promise Neighborhood leaders mention that skepticism among teachers turned out to be a steeper hurdle than originally envisioned. Promise Neighborhood staff report that their best lesson about how to overcome this resistance is clear, consistent communication and relationship building; when those were present, all sites saw progress in these relationships just between the beginning of the 2012–2013 academic year and the end of 2012.

A final area of challenge in the relationships with schools and school districts occurred around data. Working out data-sharing arrangements proved arduous in several sites, but by the end of 2012, Promise Neighborhood leaders felt they had either succeeded in negotiating the differences in viewpoint or were confident that final details were nearly complete.

Individual Success Balanced with Education Improvement

A second major reflection, when viewing the solutions that emerged, is the extent to which Promise Neighborhoods pursued solutions that were simultaneously focused laser-like on assuring success for individual children while also striving for longer-range improvements in classroom instruction and school performance. This is a balancing act: making sure that in the near term current students have the supports they need while laying the foundation for broader school change.

NAZ leaders articulate their position well, saying that their main job is to make sure all children in the zone get on a college track, regardless of what the school they attend is like. NAZ leaders say they hold themselves accountable to the children and families in their neighborhood; it is not sufficient for them to hold the schools accountable. The onus is on them (i.e., NAZ leadership) to ensure that enough supports are wrapped around each student and family so he or she can succeed—wherever they go to school and no matter what state of reform a school is in. At the same time, NAZ leaders are not giving up on helping the schools achieve broader changes. To the contrary, NAZ, in partnership with the schools in their neighborhood, is investing in intensive professional development for teachers around “purposeful instruction,” bringing in national experts to help create focused learning communities for teachers in the target schools. But their priority remains doing whatever it takes to ensure that children attending the schools succeed, no matter what.

Other sites’ solutions struck different balances between the focus on individual students (which all sites made a priority) and broader efforts to improve instruction and school climate. It is the combination of solutions that distinguish the Promise Neighborhoods approach: the five implementation sites contributed to professional development for teachers, established out-of-school time programs to extend the learning day, and increased parent engagement, as well as adding early warning systems. Two sites took even stronger steps toward comprehensive school reform. Buffalo crafted new authority for themselves as co-managers of their two new target schools, and they brought in new curricula. And the San Antonio Independent School District used the School Turnaround model to create a “school within a school” at one high school, though this predated the Promise Neighborhoods grant. Indicator data over the next several years and over the life of sites’ Promise Neighborhoods will help determine whether and how these multi-pronged solutions will be sufficient to turn the curve for low-income students living in some of the country’s toughest neighborhoods.

Early Warning Systems and Academic Case Management

A third observation, and one closely related to the points made by NAZ leaders above, is how critical sites’ approaches to early warning systems and intensive academic case management will be to the success of sites’ education strategies. Every site has some version of this approach, whereby early signs of students falling behind are identified; skilled teachers and/or other personnel (academic case managers) develop an individualized plan for that student; and then subsequent academic performance and learning are closely tracked as the plan is implemented, with prompt adjustments to ensure that the plan is always helpful and the student is making progress. During 2012, it became clear to all lead

agencies that the academic case managers, while vital to their agendas, required more time to hire and train than expected. Promise leaders found that they need a large number of these positions in order to reach several hundred students. The sites that are using AmeriCorps members—Buffalo and San Antonio—are able to reach the largest numbers of students because they can afford more workers. Learning about any differences in outcomes between Promise initiatives that use AmeriCorps workers and those who hire professionals directly will have to await further data collection.

Fiscal Challenges

Finally, site leaders recognize the challenge of implementing their education success strategies in a fiercely tight fiscal environment. Promise Neighborhoods are bringing new resources into their communities, and into schools and school districts, at a time of profound budget cuts for some districts. Promise leaders found that it was necessary to be firm in guarding against supplanting education dollars as Promise funding was made available for new or expanded programs. This is a tough position to be in, when a school district—a close local partner—may have recently had to fire or lay off staff because of budget reductions. Promise leaders in one site reported success in these negotiations for both themselves and the school district, as they eventually reached an agreement whereby the district and the Promise initiative split costs of bringing on new staff, demonstrating mutual commitment to the expanded programming and understanding of one another’s realities.

Future Questions for New Lessons

Most of all, the foundation of education success strategies that sites implemented in Year 1 establishes the groundwork for further implementation and further learning. Among the future questions for which Promise sites can generate important new lessons are the following:

- *What are the most essential ingredients for creating and sustaining strong partnerships between Promise initiatives and schools and school districts, so that their combined resources can best be focused on student success? Specifically, what approaches and processes have helped teachers to become strong advocates for and supporters of Promise strategies?*
- *How do Promise Neighborhood leaders and school/school district leaders balance and yet give equally intense attention to solutions that focus on individual student success while continuing to push forward even more comprehensive school reforms? How do these closely related strategies reinforce one another to the maximum extent possible?*
- *What are the “how to’s”—the details of implementation—of the early warning and academic case management systems that seem to correlate most with student success? Recognizing that sites are testing different approaches, is it possible to identify common “ingredients of success” that cut across these approaches?*
- *What are the cost and budget implications of taking promising education success strategies to scale? Given budget constraints, how can sites use a process of sustainability planning, early in their initiative, to consider how resources for moving toward scale and reaching all appropriate students can be generated?*

In sum, in addition to all their other duties and start-up activities, the five Promise Neighborhoods grantees made solid progress in ramping up their education solutions in Year 1. As they continue to

expand and refine their continuum of solutions, we hope they can use this and similar documents to reflect on what their peers are doing and continue to learn from each other.

5. Appendixes

A. Berea School Success Strategies in Year 1

Of the 6,297 children ages 0–18 years living in the three-county area of the Berea Promise Neighborhood, all school-age children attend one of the 16 target schools. Clay County, the largest, has nine schools and 53 percent of the students; Jackson County has five schools and 35 percent of the students; and Owsley has two schools and 12 percent of the students in the Promise Neighborhood. Table A describes the schools.

Table A: Berea Target Schools

School	County	Grades	# of Students	Status
1. Big Creek Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	175	Low performing
2. Burning Springs Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	334	Low performing
3. Goose Rock Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	275	Unknown
4. Hacker Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	322	Low performing
5. Manchester Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	442	Low performing
6. Oneida Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	137	Unknown
7. Paces Creek Elementary School	Clay	PK–6	332	Low performing
8. Clay County Middle School	Clay	7–8	504	Persistently low achieving
9. Clay County High School	Clay	9–12	976	Persistently low achieving
10. Mckee Elementary School	Jackson	PK–5	402	Low performing
11. Sand Gap Elementary School	Jackson	PK–5	303	Low performing
12. Tyner Elementary School	Jackson	PK–5	479	Low performing
13. Jackson County Middle School	Jackson	6–8	471	Persistently low achieving
14. Jackson County High School	Jackson	9–12	605	Persistently low achieving
15. Owsley County Elementary School	Owsley	PK–6	435	Low performing
16. Owsley County High School	Owsley	7–12	376	Persistently low achieving

During Year 1, Berea started its school success activities in five areas:

- 1. Parent Engagement:** Berea launched the Families and Schools Together program as a way of engaging parents in their child’s education and creating a college-going culture. A total of 53 families completed an eight-week course during Year 1.
- 2. Improving Teacher Effectiveness:** Using the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI), Berea is training teachers to, among other things, increase rigor in all classes while paying particular attention to ensuring that teachers have the content knowledge and teaching strategies necessary to prepare students for AP-level coursework. In Year 1, CTL reached 498 teachers and developed three-year school improvement plans aimed at increasing rigor for each school in the footprint.
- 3. Extended Learning Time:** Berea expanded its out-of-school time programs in 11 schools, serving 408 students during the school year and 2,788 students in the summer of 2012. BPN added bus transportation, which proved to be an important element in getting more students to attend the programs. It plans to work on better integrating the programs with in-school academic content during Year 2.

- 4. Academic Case Management and an Early Warning Indicator System:** Berea launched its early warning system, which uses individual student data on attendance, behavior, student mobility, and school performance to identify students at risk of dropping out. Until its data system is operational, it uses teacher and counselor referrals to identify at-risk students. To work on this program, 14 academic specialists were hired to develop individual learning plans, which include specific services necessary for these students to experience academic success.

Berea also expanded a tutoring program in elementary schools operated by Save the Children to reach 252 students in Year 1. This program provides in-school literacy tutoring and support for children not reading at grade level and now operates in all BPN elementary schools.

- 5. College Success:** As part of its mentoring program called College for Every Student, Berea matched 689 at-risk eighth graders with mentors in Year 1. College students and community members volunteer their time to help students succeed in secondary school and set their eyes on college. Academic specialists led several college and career exposure activities at their schools designed to widen students' horizons about their futures.

Berea's theory is that these five elements will help increase academic proficiency, high school graduation rates and matriculation to college in its three county areas. Rather than starting in only a few schools, Berea launched these programs in most or all of the 16 schools in its catchment area serving all school-age children during Year 1. BPN leaders recognize that they need to examine whether these solutions include enough attention to instruction and curriculum to move the needle on academic proficiency outside its focus on increasing AP courses. They plan to focus on this question in early 2013.

B. Buffalo School Success Strategies in Year 1

Of the 3,119 children ages 0–18 years living in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, Buffalo has pledged to serve all children ages 0–5 years and those students who attend one of the three target schools regardless of where they live. One of Buffalo’s main goals is to increase the percent of students in the target schools who come from the neighborhood from 23 percent currently to 60 percent by Year 5. Table A describes its target schools.

Table A: Buffalo Target Schools

School	Grades	# of Students	Status
1. Westminster Community Charter School	K–8	562	Effective
2. Highgate Heights Elementary School	PK–8	569	Low performing
3. Bennett High School	9–12	848	Persistently low achieving

During Year 1, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood entered into an agreement with Buffalo Public Schools to co-manage Highgate Heights and Bennett High School. (BPN is already managing Westminster Charter.) In this role, BPN focused its school success activities in four areas during Year 1.

- 1. School Reform:** Using Talent Development Secondary, Buffalo launched school reform strategies in its three target schools including an accelerated curriculum for students who are behind; dedicated student-teacher teams; longer learning blocks; a class for sixth graders that helps students develop organizational and life skills; a Ninth Grade Success Academy that is a self-contained school within a school; a year-long Freshman Seminar course that helps develop the organizational and life skills needed to succeed in high school and beyond; professional development around the Talent Development curriculum; and computerized math and English labs for extra help. BPN also launched a gang-violence prevention program at Bennett High School for 44 students.
- 2. Academic Case Management and an Early Warning Indicator System:** Buffalo established its early warning system as part of Talent Development’s work. Based on attendance, behavior, and performance, it offers tiered supports according to level of need. Until its data system is operational, it used attendance data by school and teacher referrals to identify at-risk students in Year 1. It hired and trained 15 AmeriCorps staff to work with 300 students in the three partner schools and in its after-school and summer programs.

Its partner, Read to Succeed Buffalo, is providing reading tutoring and support to kindergarten and first-grade classes at Highgate Heights. And through its partner the United Way, Buffalo is addressing the non-academic blocks that prevent learning such as social/emotional needs through student and family referrals in a program called Closing the Gap.

- 3. Extended Learning Time:** Buffalo launched an after-school and summer program at Highgate Heights and had already been running one at Westminster Charter. (It is opening one at Bennett in early 2013.) In Year 1, it served 234 students at the two schools during the school year and 449 students in its summer programs (though this last figure may include some duplications because some students attended more than one summer program).
- 4. College Success:** A College Success Center was established at Bennett High School to provide college and career counseling and support; access to internships, job-readiness programs, and

summer jobs; and access to College Summit's college readiness programming, which enrolled 26 students from Bennett over the summer.

Buffalo is the only site of the five Implementation grantees that is tackling whole-school reform and is using an external education services provider to lead and staff the effort. Buffalo's theory is that its intensive school reform efforts in a small number of schools with a co-manager role for BPN will lead to increased academic proficiency, high school graduation rates, and matriculation to college for students in its target neighborhood. This theory is entirely dependent on its ability to attract more neighborhood families to its target schools because all of its school success solutions are school-specific rather than centered on the students who live in the neighborhood. Further, it is notable that solutions aimed at parent engagement are missing for school-age children in Buffalo's first year, something they plan to turn to in the coming years.

C. Hayward School Success Strategies in Year 1

Of the 3,123 children ages 0–18 years living in the Jackson Triangle neighborhood of Hayward, CA, Hayward Promise Neighborhood is focusing its efforts on the 54 percent who attend one of six target schools located in or adjacent to the neighborhood. Hayward is considering expanding its focus to all students in these six schools. The target schools are all persistently lowest-achieving schools meaning they are in the bottom 5 percent of schools in the state in terms of academic proficiency and graduation rates. Table A describes the schools.

Table A: Hayward Target Schools

School	Grades	# of Students	Status
1. Harder Elementary	K–6	599	Persistently low achieving
2. Park Elementary	K–7	662	Persistently low achieving
3. Cesar Chavez Middle School	5–9	601	Persistently low achieving
4. Winton Middle School	6–9	568	Persistently low achieving
5. Hayward High School	7–12	1,671	Persistently low achieving
6. Tennyson High School	8–12	1,319	Persistently low achieving

During Year 1, Hayward started its school success activities in four areas, targeted mainly on the first two elementary schools listed above

- 1. Parent Engagement:** Parent Promise Academy was established at Harder Elementary School and served 18 parents, providing training to improve education, developmental, and health outcomes for children with an emphasis on the importance of reading to children at home.
- 2. Improving Teacher Effectiveness:** Hayward hired three “teachers on special assignment” during Year 1 to serve as instructional coaches in the first two schools listed above. These coaches helped teachers develop professional learning communities in math and English-language arts.
- 3. Extended Learning Time:** Hayward expanded its out-of-school time programs, serving 299 students during the school year and 111 over the summer. California State University, East Bay provided university students to tutor 70 children in these out-of-school time programs.

Hayward pioneered a summer bridge program in Year 1 for 111 sixth graders as part of its strategy to bridge secondary schools with post-secondary. Of these 111 students, 37 were from the Jackson Triangle neighborhood and attended one of the target schools. The goals of the program, which was run by Chabot College, were to get students to stay in school, improve their grade point averages, graduate from high school, and go to college.

- 4. Academic Case Management and an Early Warning Indicator System:** Hayward used web-based attendance data to track chronic absenteeism defined as missing 10 days or more of school. Hayward hired two Youth Intervention Specialists, one each at Harder and Park Elementary Schools, who served all students at the schools in Year 1. Their job was to provide support groups; crisis intervention; and referrals to support students’ academic, emotional, and social growth so they succeed in school. Hayward also hired a school psychologist for Park and Harder Elementary Schools to assess special-needs students and ensure they get the extra supports needed to thrive in school.

Hayward had a slow start in Year 1. It is still negotiating with Hayward Unified School District about whether the target population should be all students in the six target schools or just those living in the designated zone. Hayward Promise Neighborhood leaders recognize that they need to examine whether these solutions include enough attention to instruction and curriculum to move the needle on academic proficiency and whether their solutions are reaching the same children for maximum impact.

D. NAZ School Success Strategies in Year 1

Of the 5,615 children ages 0–18 years living in the Northside Achievement Zone, school-age children attend approximately 145 schools throughout the city, nine of which are NAZ target schools. These nine schools include four regular public schools, one alternative school, three charter schools, and one Catholic school. Two charter elementary schools and the one Catholic elementary/middle school are considered “effective” while the remaining are “low performing.” Table A describes the nine target schools.

Table A: NAZ Target Schools

School	Grades	# of Students	Status
1. Elizabeth Hall Elementary	PK–5	359	Low performing
2. Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary	PK–8	674	Low performing
3. Harvest Prep/Seed Academy (charter school)	K–6	343	Effective
4. WISE Charter Elementary (charter school)	K–8	275	Low performing
5. North High School	9–12	267	Low performing
6. Patrick Henry High	9–12	1,140	Low performing
7. PYC Arts & Tech High School (alternative school)	7–12	149	Low performing
8. Ascension Elementary (Catholic school)	K–8	244	Effective
9. Sojourner Truth Academy (charter school)	K–7	339	Effective

Together, these schools enroll approximately 3,790 students and an estimated 32 percent²⁰ of them come from the Northside Achievement Zone. NAZ chose to phase in its solutions over time, starting with the first three target elementary schools listed above in Year 1.

During Year 1, NAZ focused its school success start-up activities on four primary areas.

- 1. Parent Engagement:** Because parents are considered the most important people in a child’s life, NAZ started by hiring 13 family connectors who enrolled 220 families and 550 children in NAZ. They also launched the Family Academy, graduating 22 families from its first-tier Foundations class, which helps parents deal with some of their own issues that are blocking their success before enrolling in substantive parenting education classes. Another 57 families graduated from a parenting education course on infants and toddlers.
- 2. Improving Teacher Effectiveness:** NAZ continued a successful principal and teacher professional development program that it began two years earlier, led by the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington. During Year 1, nine principals worked together to observe teacher performance and develop improvement plans at each target school, and they created professional learning communities within and across the target schools.
- 3. Extended Learning Time:** NAZ expanded and strengthened its out-of-school time programs in two schools plus a community center by completing its Seal of Effectiveness process, which defined the critical ingredients for all such programs, including a rigorous academic component. NAZ contracted with three partner organizations to operate after-school and summer programs that served 100 students in the summer of 2012 and 150 students during the school year.

²⁰ CSSP estimate based on NAZ data and 2011 American Community Survey Data for the Minneapolis area.

- 4. Academic Case Management and an Early Warning Indicator System:** NAZ hired and trained five academic navigators at the end of Year 1 to work individually with 65 at-risk students starting in January 2013. Academic navigators develop a scholar achievement plan for each student and then find resources to meet the student's specific needs such as tutoring or transportation help or counseling. For its early warning system, each school identifies 15 of its highest need students to be assigned to an academic navigator. Eventually, all students who are enrolled in NAZ will get an academic navigator.

NAZ's theory is that when all four of these school success elements are delivered to the same families who have enrolled in NAZ, they will help move the children to academic proficiency and high school graduation with college and a career to follow. The 550 children enrolled in NAZ by family connectors are the same children assigned an academic navigator and if they are in one of two schools, they may be encouraged to participate in one of the out-of-school time programs. If these students attend any of the target schools, their teacher will be exposed to a professional learning community through NAZ's professional development. So NAZ's theory concentrates supports in these four areas on a cohort of children by virtue of their enrollment in NAZ.

At the same time, however, the four areas they include in their solutions do not encompass school reforms other than professional development. Whether their professional development for principals and teachers is strong enough to alter the instructional and curriculum methods in their low-performing schools so that more children meet proficiency benchmarks is an area for further examination.

E. San Antonio School Success Strategies in Year 1

San Antonio is serving all 5,925 children ages 0–18 years living in the Eastside Promise Neighborhood. It has chosen to target the six schools in its catchment area, which includes an early childhood center, three elementary schools which feed into one middle school which feeds into the one high school. San Antonio’s theory is that if it can leverage the strengths of its elementary schools and focus more intensive supports on students in the low-performing middle and high school, it can increase academic proficiency, graduation, and college-going rates. Table A describes its target schools.

Table A: San Antonio Target Schools

School	Grades	# of Students	Status
1. Tynan Early Childhood Education Center	PK	256	Not available
2. Bowden Elementary	PK–5	534	Effective
3. Pershing Elementary	PK–5	350	Effective
4. Washington Elementary	K–5	538	Effective
5. Wheatley Middle School	6–8	366	Low performing
6. Sam Houston High School	9–12	805	Persistently low achieving

San Antonio focused its school success activities in four areas during Year 1.

- 1. Parent Engagement:** Through its Family-School-Community Partnership, San Antonio’s EPN made 1,765 parent-to-parent home visits in Year 1 to improve parent engagement in their child’s education, increase the number of parents coming to their child’s school, and connect families to community resources.
- 2. School Reform:** San Antonio Independent School District established a school-within-a-school at Sam Houston High School, which is now in its second year of operation. Called New Tech San Antonio, this innovative school uses a project-based curriculum and service learning with 200 of Sam Houston’s 800 students as a way to bolster academic achievement and graduation. It also hired one Instructional Coach in Year 1 to bolster teaching in science by sharpening teachers’ skills in instructional methods in science.
- 3. Academic Case Management and an Early Warning Indicator System:** Student Support Teams have been put in place at all six campuses to identify and track the progress of individual students. Because San Antonio’s data system was not yet operational in Year 1, they used teacher referrals to identify struggling students. EPN contracted with City Year and Communities in Schools to provide 21 AmeriCorps-like workers to work with 461 students at four of the six target schools.
- 4. Extended Learning Time:** San Antonio expanded its out-of-school time programs, serving 300 students in five of six target schools during the school year and 221 students during the summer. These programs offer project-based academic activities in at least four of the five STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) and were selected by principals as most likely to reinforce in-school curriculum.

San Antonio’s school-within-a-school at Sam Houston High School is one of the most innovative and ambitious school reform initiatives of any of the Implementation sites. Although it predated EPN’s tenure, it is a bold project that offers a strong chance of enhancing academic proficiency and graduation rates in one of the lowest-achieving schools in the state. While EPN put in place a number of other

sound school success solutions during Year 1, it is not yet clear whether these programs are targeting the same students so they have cumulative impact.

Lifting Up What Works®



PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works®.

Headquarters:

1438 Webster Street
Suite 303
Oakland, CA 94612
t 510 663-2333
f 510 663-9684

Communications:

55 West 39th Street
11th Floor
New York, NY 10018
t 212 629-9570
f 212 768-2350

www.policylink.org

www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org

©2014 by PolicyLink
All rights reserved.



PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS INSTITUTE
AT POLICYLINK

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink helps build and sustain Promise Neighborhoods to ensure that all children can reach their full potential.