

BUILDING CITY-WIDE SYSTEMS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN:

INITIAL LESSONS FROM THE *BY ALL MEANS* CONSORTIUM



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Education
Redesign
Lab



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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ABOUT THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB

The Education Redesign Lab was founded and is led by Paul Reville, the Francis Keppel Professor of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and former Massachusetts Secretary of Education. The Lab's mission is to partner with communities to build integrated education and child development systems, to research and disseminate best practices in the field, and to advance a new vision for education in order to restore social mobility and close achievement and opportunity gaps.

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INITIAL LESSONS FROM THE BY ALL MEANS CONSORTIUM

When Paul Reville ended his five-year tenure as the Massachusetts Secretary of Education in 2013, the state was widely acknowledged as a nationwide leader in K–12 education. Massachusetts students consistently ranked at or near the top of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other national rankings of student achievement, and Massachusetts students also outperformed those of many other countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams. Despite these successes, Reville could not shake an uncomfortable truth: the overall achievements of Massachusetts students masked large gaps on every measure of performance that correlated strongly with socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, disability, and English language learner status.

These gaps are not unique to Massachusetts; they exist in every state across the country. Poverty in particular has been a persistent and overwhelming predictor of poor outcomes on all measures of child achievement and wellbeing across the United States, which several decades of school reform have not been able to change. Conversations about education reform have generally avoided or minimized the impact of poverty on student success, either because of the belief that poverty is too difficult a challenge to address directly or out of concern that poverty will be used as an excuse for poor performance.

Despite this reluctance to discuss the effects of poverty directly, its impact on children is clear and pervasive. Children living in poverty experience disadvantages at every life stage relative to their better-resourced peers. By age three, children in low-income families have heard 30 million fewer words than children in better-off families. Only about 46 percent of children aged three through six in families below the federal poverty line are enrolled in center-based early childhood programming, compared to 72 percent of children in families above the federal poverty line.¹ Poor children

are about 25 percent less likely to be ready for school at age five than children who are not poor.² Once in school, these children lag behind their better-off peers in reading and math, are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory coursework, less likely to graduate, and over 10 percent more likely to require remediation if they attend a four-year post-secondary institution.³ All of these issues compound one another to create a cycle of low opportunity: children in poverty are less likely to achieve high educational attainment, and low educational attainment leads to lower median weekly earnings and higher rates of unemployment.

Children in poverty are also more likely than other children to experience multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACE)—e.g., witnessing violence, having substance abuse in the home, or having an incarcerated parent—which have been shown to hinder academic and social-emotional growth. Children in families below the poverty level are more than three times as likely to experience two or more adverse child and family events as children in families at 400 percent or more of the poverty level.⁴ These ACEs in turn contribute to disproportionately high adverse health and mental health outcomes for children in low-income households. This multitude of non-academic and academic challenges traps low-income children in a self-reinforcing cycle that causes and perpetuates gaps between them and children with access to more resources.

Socioeconomic status is not the only category in which disparities persist. Substantial opportunity and outcome gaps are also prevalent between white students and students of color, students with disabilities and students without, and English learners and those proficient in English. While 20 years of education reform has yielded some progress for America's students, it has failed to achieve the central goals of American public education: excellence and equity for all.

Creating the Education Redesign Lab and the By All Means Consortium

Recognizing the need for a new children's opportunity agenda, Reville founded the Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2014. The Lab's goal is to create systemic, silo-breaking approaches to addressing the comprehensive needs of children, especially those living in poverty, by developing personalized systems of support and opportunity both within and outside of school. The core ideas underpinning the Lab's work are that schools alone cannot address all the factors that lead to negative outcomes for children and that it will take a coordinated, system-wide approach to make real change.

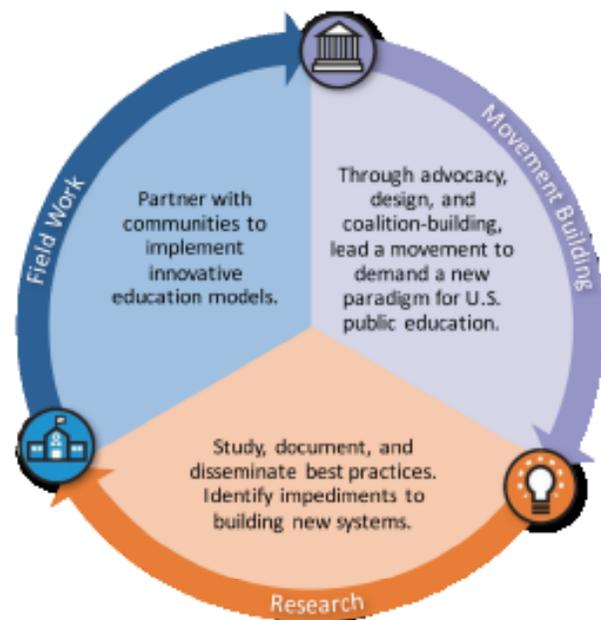
To overcome widespread inequity in supports, opportunities, and outcomes for children, the Lab is working to ensure that all children have access to personalized systems of support and opportunity starting in early childhood and throughout a developmental pathway that builds student engagement and agency while preparing them for success in higher education and careers. Features of these personalized systems include:

Systems of whole-child support: No matter how much schools improve, children need more than academic supports or improved schools to thrive; they must also be physically and emotionally healthy to be prepared to learn throughout their K-12 years. In a true support model, early childhood, health, mental health, and social service supports will be comprehensive, braided with educational services, and designed to address critical barriers to learning and development.

Student-centered, tailored learning: Meet children where they are and give them what they need to succeed. Through well-executed, student-centered learning, each student is able to achieve academically to the best of his or her abilities. This definition of learning broadens the typical "personalization"

field to include a whole-child personalized approach, so that cities create learning environments where students are at the center.

Systems of opportunity: Systems of opportunity enable each student to chart his or her own path toward a rewarding career. Low-income children are much less likely to participate in preschool or out-of-school enrichment activities than their more affluent peers, and when they do, the programs are generally inconsistent in quality and availability. To address these gaps, a coordinated system of programs and services needs to be crafted so that every child has access to preschool, expanded learning, summer, and work-based opportunities that enrich them as learners and help them build the important skills, networks, and social capital that will serve them in the future.



THE LAB'S INTEGRATED STRATEGY

The Lab leverages three key strategies to define and advance this vision for whole-child personalized systems:

1. **Field Work:** Supporting city leaders and teams to accelerate the implementation of effective practices, enabling conditions, and systems integration;

2. Research: Disseminating curated and original actionable research on the critical components and examples of redesigned education systems; and
3. Movement Building: Promoting this vision, in collaboration with key partners, through strategic communication, capacity building, and advocacy around critical state and local policies.

In February of 2016, the Lab launched the By All Means initiative to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children’s needs and developing their interests and talents requires a system-wide approach. Six small- to mid-sized cities joined the initiative to work in partnership with the Lab over a two-and-a-half-year period: Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts.

The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children while the Lab supported and documented this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work.

By All Means (BAM) is informed by a mayor-driven “collective impact” approach to addressing social challenges through collaborative action.⁵ Mayors have a unique ability to drive this work. According to Oakland mayor Libby Schaaf, “As mayors, we have the opportunity to change how public systems work, as opposed to just starting another program. . . . We can change the expectations and beliefs of an entire generation of children. There is no nonprofit organization that can deliver that kind of promise, and we should really be aware of that opportunity that only government has.”

Collective impact encompasses a number of core practices, including having one or more strong champions, identifying shared goals and common metrics, and creating a “backbone” organization to support the work.⁶ A second defining frame for this work is the central role of leadership in effecting change. Ronald Heifetz’ theory of “adaptive leadership” acknowledges the complexity of many leadership challenges and the need for new mindsets and

ways of leading rather than simply technical solutions to many leadership challenges.⁷

The Lab chose to work with cities as the unit of change because they are increasingly emerging as sites of innovation and leadership on issues that are struggling to gain traction nationally. Cities also represent relatively discrete systems that already provide a number of direct services to children. Four of the six BAM cities are in New England, one is in the South, and one on the West Coast. The cities range in population from 760,000 (Louisville, KY) to 43,000 (Salem, MA). They represent the complex array of governance relationships between mayors, school superintendents, and school boards across the country, from mayors who directly select superintendents, to those with have no formal influence on the schools at all. Finally, they vary demographically, with differing levels of poverty, different racial and ethnic makeups, and different histories. The variations among the cities have afforded the Lab opportunities to compare how a city-wide initiative could be implemented in different contexts.

FORMING THE CONSORTIUM

The Lab identified cities for potential inclusion in BAM through a combination of word of mouth, research, and outreach, which included a presentation at an October 2015 meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors. Using the criteria below, the Lab then invited the cities to submit applications for membership.

Mayoral Commitment and Leadership: Mayoral commitment and willingness to lead a collective action approach was the first essential element for participation. The rationale for this is that addressing all the factors affecting children’s wellbeing requires a city-wide effort, and that this starts with strong leadership from the top. The Lab believes that mayors have the political capital and convening power to make BAM a high-visibility, high-impact effort.

City-School District Partnership: While mayoral leadership is central to the Lab’s theory of action, schools are and will continue to be the hub of service provision for children. The aim of BAM is to

create a broad coalition to share the responsibility for children with the schools. For this to happen, it is essential that the mayor and school superintendent have a strong working relationship and a shared commitment to the BAM work.

Existing Work: By design, each of the cities chosen for the consortium had already begun to take action toward a more comprehensive approach to serving children. The expectation was that BAM would build on and accelerate these actions while knitting together different initiatives under a single framework, rather than helping cities build something completely new. In some cases, cities already had a substantial number of initiatives underway.

Stability: Although there is no way to guarantee this—as shown by the unexpected leadership departures in several BAM cities—the Lab looked for cities that appeared to have some degree of stability in their key leadership positions. It also looked for sites that were relatively stable financially, while recognizing that cities and school districts face constant financial pressures.

Size: The Lab intentionally targeted small- and mid-sized cities for BAM, since these offered the greatest chance of success and learning in the early stages of the work.

CORE COMMITMENTS AND SUPPORTS

Because BAM is intentionally designed to be experimental, with variation across cities, the Lab took a “light touch” approach to core city commitments and Lab supports. Each city agreed to participate in the following required elements of BAM’s model, and the Lab provided resources on best practices rather than prescriptive requirements on how to best implement or take advantage of them:

Children’s Cabinet: Children’s Cabinets are the governance structure for each city’s BAM work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations. Each city in the consortium has formed a cabinet that is chaired

by the mayor, is co-chaired by the superintendent or another city leader, and includes representation from health and social services and other government and community organizations.

Consultant: To ensure the work of the cabinet moves forward between cabinet meetings and has a designated facilitator, the Lab supports a part-time consultant in each city. The Lab and the cities worked together to identify candidates for these positions; in some cases, the consultants already had deep local experience, while in others they were newcomers to the city contexts. The role is envisioned as a process facilitator rather than a content expert.

Twice-Yearly Convenings: To further support the cities’ work, the Lab sponsors a semi-annual series of convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Starting with the first convening in May 2016, city teams have come together with the Lab staff and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources. Each convening has included a mix of presentations and panels by top education and policy experts, “team time” for city teams to work together, and opportunities for cross-city sharing of progress. The Lab also arranges for individual meetings between cities and experts in particular areas of interest, such as financing, equity, or early childhood education.

Documentation and Evaluation: Cities agreed to participate in an ongoing documentation and evaluation process, which serves multiple purposes: to share lessons with a broader audience; to assist cities in tracking their progress on a range of process, opportunity, and outcome measures; and to inform the Lab’s iterative approach to supporting the cities in this work.

Additional Supports: The Lab has provided a range of additional supports tailored to the needs of each city that has included Reville and others’ participation in key city events, helping cities identify and connect with program partners and potential funders, and assistance with data use and outcome measures.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

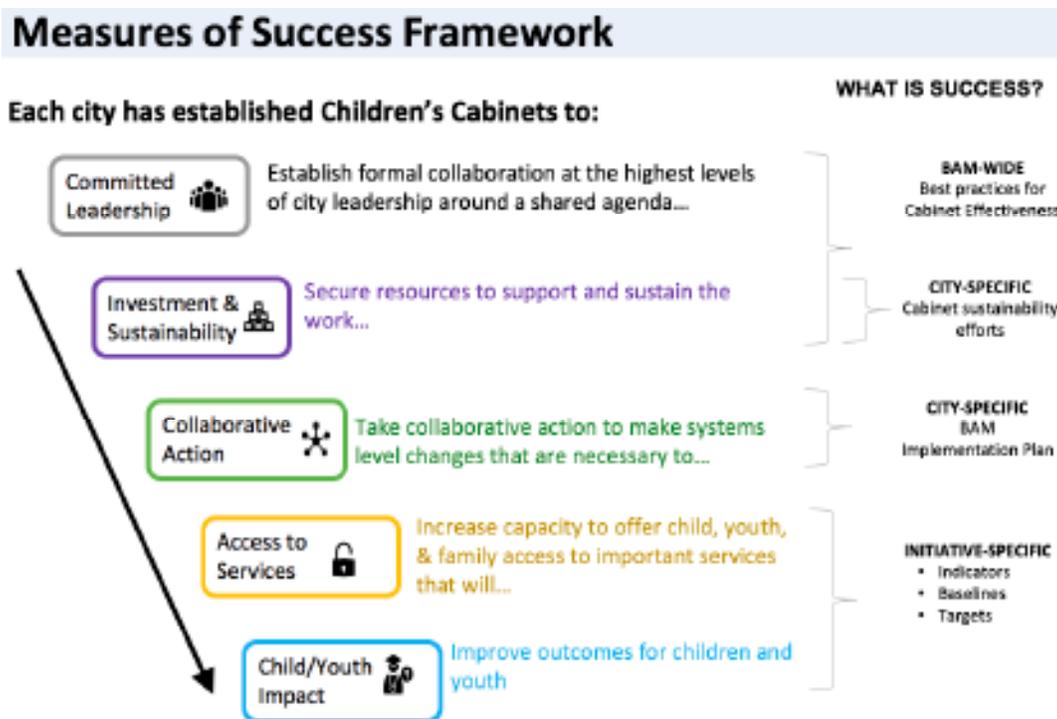
As the cities began their work, there was an obvious need to create a way of measuring each city's progress toward its goals. For an initiative initially designed to last only two-and-a-half years, this presented a challenge: it would take time to design and implement the elements of the work that could lead to improvements in student outcomes, with the first potential child outcomes likely not coming until near the end of the time period or even later. The early work in each of the cities focused on creating the Children's Cabinets, and the variation in initiatives from city to city meant that using common measures across all six cities was unfeasible.

To address these issues, the Lab developed a framework through an iterative process that acknowledged the three phases of the work in each city:

1. Creating cross-agency governance structures through the cabinets;
2. Providing increased programming and services to children; and
3. Improving outcomes for children.

The Lab shared an early version of the framework with city teams prior to the October 2016 convening and met with the cities' data or evaluation representatives during the convening to review it and its use. The current framework, derived from collective action approaches, contains three process-focused categories that can be measured qualitatively through evidence, and two outcome-focused categories that can be measured quantitatively through data.

This Measures of Success framework serves several functions: it tells a story about the systems-level work to better serve children and youth across multiple initiatives, it provides accessible information that can be used to inform cabinet-level conversations and discussions with potential partners and funders, and it can trigger conversations and collaborative action to improve capacity to use data for effective decision-making. The Lab also hoped to identify a small set of common quantitative measures that could provide some cross-city comparison of progress, but this proved impossible given the range of initiatives and focus on different age groups. Instead, the Lab has included chronic absenteeism as the single measure to be tracked in



each city. While this measure will not make it possible to compare progress across city initiatives in any meaningful way, it does provide a common indicator that can serve as a proxy for a number of factors that influence child wellbeing, including health, mental health, and family stability.

The Lab asked each city to define its outcomes and obtain cabinet approval for them prior to the May 2017 convening. Though this was accomplished, the measures carry different levels of weight in different cities: while several cabinets have begun using the measures framework during meetings to track their progress, others have not yet incorporated them into ongoing discussions about the work. In addition, some teams have seen the work shift in a way that necessitates a change in the outcomes. Since the spring of 2017, the Lab has been working with the consultants and city data leads to identify and collect the specific data that cities will use to track their outcomes.

DOCUMENTATION OF PROGRESS

Documenting and learning from the work of the By All Means consortium is a central component of the Lab's iterative approach. This research is designed to distill the enablers of and barriers to this cross-sector work, in order to inform the ongoing work of the consortium as well as to provide actionable research for other cities interested in undertaking a similar comprehensive agenda for children. This report documents the first 18 months of BAM's initial two-and-a-half-year duration and focuses on the following elements: leadership, including cabinet effectiveness; partnerships and relationships; external factors; data; and funding. The final report, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics.

Data for this overview include multiple, in-depth interviews with each city's mayor, superintendent, and other key participants in the change process;

observations of Children's Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and anonymous surveys given to participants at the conclusion of each of the Lab's convenings. To date, Lab researchers have visited each of the six cities twice, at approximately six-month intervals.

Building Collaborative City-Wide Change

During the early stages of By All Means, the six cities in the consortium created Children's Cabinets if they did not already have one, identified specific areas of focus for their work, and began, in most places, implementing initiatives directly benefiting children. Among the initiatives the cabinets have undertaken are increasing access to preschool, improving behavioral health services, expanding access to personalized learning and summer programming, and implementing individualized supports and enrichment plans. Several cities have also focused on creating data-sharing agreements between different agencies. In each case, the goal is to move toward creating systems that integrate services and supports in order to make it possible for every child to come to school ready to learn every day. In addition, each city has identified an initial set of measures by which it will track its progress, and most have either secured funding or developed a funding strategy.

The following overview provides initial findings of the enabling factors that have been important in determining how the work has unfolded and some of the challenges cities have faced in their efforts to create new systems. It features brief illustrations of these enabling factors and challenges where possible. The city-specific summaries that accompany this overview provide greater detail on how BAM has evolved in each city.

LEADERSHIP

Mayoral Leadership Enables High-Level Collaborative Action

Putting mayors at the forefront of BAM marked a notable change from many collective impact efforts. The Lab's goal was to ensure that this would be a collaborative, city-wide effort with the political clout that comes from mayoral involvement. The experiences of the BAM cities confirm the value of leading with mayors: cabinet members pointed to the mayors as the most crucial factor signaling BAM's high priority and a key draw in bringing cabinet members and executives to the table.

Mayors also have a unique platform to shine a spotlight on the joint moral and economic imperatives of ensuring the success of the children in their cities. A number of mayors have spoken out forcefully on the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing poverty that goes beyond schools. In addition, several mayors have used their political capital to help raise money for their cities' BAM and other child-focused efforts. In one city, the mayor expended significant political capital on behalf of an effort to bring integrated student supports to schools by pushing through a funding mechanism that was not initially supported by the City Council; this persistence resulted in substantial benefits for K–8 students that fall. In another city, the mayor has used her prominent position to raise millions of dollars in scholarships for students, including an annual birthday celebration that raises money for the cause.

Mayors have highlighted the value of the twice-yearly convenings, mentioning four elements in particular: the opportunity to talk informally with other mayors about the work; the opportunity to meet with their teams outside of their cities, which enables them to form closer relationships and make substantial progress on strategy and planning; the “peer pressure” of publicly sharing their progress at each convening; and the leadership sessions with Ronald Heifetz, an internationally recognized expert on adaptive leadership. Mayors have, in all but one city, regularly attended the Children's Cabinet meetings,

and all mayors have participated in the convenings at Harvard.

There are also risks to linking collective action efforts so closely to mayors. If a mayor leaves, it may be difficult to sustain momentum under the new leadership. For this reason, it is important for the entire cabinet to be deeply engaged in and committed to the effort.

Cabinet Members Need the Decision-Making Authority to Enact Change

Setting up a Children's Cabinet and calling it to meet is—with mayoral leadership—relatively straightforward; creating a cabinet with the right members and a clear plan that enables cross-agency work is much harder. An important feature of successful cabinets is the decision-making authority necessary to enact real change. In all but one city, the mayor and superintendent attended nearly every meeting, which signaled to their staff and other cabinet members that the work was a priority and catalyzed action; their absence affected the level of discussion at the meetings. Successful cabinets also saw serendipitous funding opportunities arise when representatives from local businesses or foundations participated as cabinet members. Additionally, cabinets with the most productive meetings established clearly defined, action-oriented agendas, as well as processes for capturing and sharing updates and action items from each meeting.

In the early stages of BAM, most cities struggled to find the right membership and function for the cabinets. To this end, Elizabeth Gaines, Senior Fellow at the Forum for Youth Investment and an expert in supporting Children's Cabinets, shared best practices with the city teams at the first BAM convening. Still, it took time for cities to determine who should be at the table, how frequently they should meet, and what the goals of the meetings should be.

A few cabinets initially did not reflect a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Several cities tackled this issue by engaging in a stakeholder mapping process and bringing on leadership that represented constituents who were not initially included. All six

cities refined their initial membership over time, and most also created one or more separate working groups to move the effort forward between meetings.

One city refined its cabinet structure and processes after seeing meetings swell to as many as 30 people. The team set clear guidelines for inclusion: only the top executive from each organization would be at the table. Should that executive be unable to attend, a designee granted decision-making authority attends in his or her place if possible; if not, the absent cabinet member is expected to respond to any action items within 48 hours. Cabinet members can bring additional staff from their organizations, but those staff do not sit at the table. This new setup allows the group to clearly determine who is on the cabinet, but also enables critical staff to share updates with the cabinet and stay up-to-date on cabinet work. Every cabinet meeting has action items, from crafting an elevator speech that each member can use to talk about the work in the same way, to agreeing on the broad frame for a data-sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A cross-sector core team meets weekly between cabinet meetings to move projects forward, oversee other working groups, and set future agendas. These formal structures and processes were built around the work that had already been initiated, enabling the team to produce a structure that made sense and would not impose unnecessary rigidity.

Across cities, the frequency of cabinet meetings varied from every three or four weeks to just a few a year, with the BAM convenings providing two additional meeting opportunities per year. The cities meeting most regularly made substantial progress in their BAM work: they formed the strongest relationships between the cabinet members, engaged most stakeholders regularly, and generated collective decisions and plans. Among those meeting less frequently, the amount of progress was highly dependent on whether there were people on the team making a strong effort to move the work forward more informally.

Strategies for Effective Cabinets

- Consist of decision-makers and executives who are representative of the community.
- Meet regularly (monthly or bi-monthly).
- Collectively establish a common vision for and understanding of the work.
- Articulate structures and processes that help streamline complex efforts.
- Create action-oriented agendas to make cross-agency decisions, share progress, and plan next steps.
- Carry the work forward between meetings via working groups or small teams.

Cities Must Create Dedicated Internal Capacity

The part-time consultants hired by the Lab are tasked with moving the work forward and providing process support to the city teams, but this logistical and motivational work cannot depend on them alone. Since cabinets rely heavily on executive leadership, it is important for supporting staff to be deeply embedded in the work as well. Otherwise, these high-level leaders would not have the capacity to coordinate the logistics of day-to-day systems change. In several of our cities, internal support has come from the deep involvement of one to three staff members, from either the school or city side (or both), who work closely with the consultant. In one city, for example, the consultant works closely with staff across three sectors: one from the mayor's office, one from the school district, and one from a nonprofit organization with experience as a backbone structure. This structure is ideal, since the transition of any one person would be less likely to deliver a significant blow to the work's momentum.

In another city, a school district employee has taken on much of the work in partnership with the consultant. While this has resulted in a strong and fruitful partnership, it poses risks to sustainability if one should leave. Another city, with a similarly heavy reliance but on city staff, experienced some

momentum loss when both the consultant and the key city staff role turned over mid-initiative. It is beneficial, then, for staff support to come from multiple people across multiple sectors, both to maintain momentum and to ensure long-term sustainability.

In addition to having key support staff participate in the logistics and moving the work forward, broader staff involvement is beneficial to generating a truly collective approach. This involvement fosters relationships between agencies and creates a network of activity that is harder to disrupt when there is a leadership change or an unexpected obstacle. Several consultants saw a rapid uptick in productivity when cabinets formed working groups to move the content-based work forward between meetings. Across the cities, these working groups focused on topics like governance, data sharing, out-of-school time initiatives, preschool access, and communications.

Strategies for Creating Internal Capacity

Determine who will be responsible for moving the work forward and how much time they will need to do it.

Free up time for staff people to do this work or identify funding to hire additional staff.

Clarify roles and responsibilities.

Sustaining Momentum Despite Leadership Turnover

Given the high rates of turnover among urban superintendents and mayors, changes in leadership are inevitable. There is no denying that this can pose serious challenges to the momentum and sustainability of a leadership-initiated collective impact model, and By All Means has not been immune to this phenomenon. Within 15 months of the launch of BAM, three key leaders left or announced plans to leave their positions. One superintendent opted to leave mid-year to become the chancellor of a different urban school district, while another

superintendent resigned under pressure from the local school board. In late 2016, a mayor in the cohort announced he was not running for reelection, and announced his bid for governor that spring.

One city navigated a superintendent transition smoothly because, according to participant interviews, the cabinet had already identified and articulated a shared vision for children prior to the superintendent's departure. In addition, the strong relationships that had formed across leaders and staff as a result of frequent cabinet meetings enabled them to proceed without disruption. When encountering this obstacle and others, the cabinet members agreed that the work was too far along to stop or slow. Reflecting the district's commitment to the work, the incoming acting superintendent began attending cabinet meetings during the transition period, ensuring there would be no gap in school department involvement. While it is too early to assess the long-term persistence of BAM in any city, the factors interviewees identified as most central to its continuation through leadership changes at the district are the continued support of the mayor, the continuity of key staff, the cross-agency relationships developed among staff, the existence of tangible plans to carry out the work, and the strength of broad-based support in the cabinet and the community.

Community understanding of and demand for a comprehensive agenda to support children is important for long-term sustainability, especially as the work begins to involve changing practices and new funding. As the work has progressed, most cities have begun developing strategies for engaging their communities and linking the elements of BAM together to create a city-wide movement. One city held a community-based education summit in the spring of 2017, with grant support facilitated by the Lab, to solicit input on a cohesive local vision for education. That summit resulted in a report with recommendations that are being incorporated into the local work. Several other cities are giving the work a name, such as Our Salem, Our Kids or Louisville Promise, as a way of succinctly framing and messaging a complex set of undertakings. Other efforts to engage the

community include the co-creation of short elevator speeches that all cabinet members can use to describe goals and actions using common language, and the development of websites that describe the comprehensive work and include links to a broad set of community resources. While these efforts are still in the early stages, cities are finding that engaging with their communities more actively—particularly the communities they are hoping to positively impact—is an important component of the work, and is likely an effective strategy for sustaining momentum through leadership change.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Collective impact approaches require strong individual relationships and organizational partnerships to succeed. In the context of BAM, the most important partnership is between the mayor and superintendent; while mayors lead the effort to create a new city-wide responsibility for children, superintendents govern the largest and most important child-serving agency. All BAM superintendents welcomed the recognition that schools alone cannot address all the challenges of children living in poverty and the shift to a more collaborative responsibility for providing practical supports.

Strong City-School Relationships Are a Primary Predictor of Progress

Cities with strong partnerships between the mayor and superintendent were, not surprisingly, able to move forward more quickly to implement child-facing initiatives. There is a complex array of governance relationships between mayors, school superintendents, and school boards across the country, and the cities in the consortium reflect this range. In a number of the cities, the mayor has a role in selecting the superintendent. In one city, for example, the mayor chairs the school committee, which then selects the superintendent. In another city, the mayor appoints all members of the school committee. At the other end of the spectrum, two of the cohort's mayors have no direct influence over the selection of the superintendent.

In some cities, the mayor-superintendent relationships were collaborative even before joining the consortium, while in others there had been little shared work. In two cities, the shared vision between the mayor and superintendent around developing a comprehensive agenda for children was strong enough that the school district's strategic plan was created in alignment with the cabinet's priorities. There was strong consensus that the convenings were effective as a means of deepening relationships between mayors and superintendents and in facilitating the creation of a common vision. Cities in which the superintendent left in the midst of the initiative found that the continuation of the city-school partnership depended on whether there was strong staff support and buy-in.

Children's Cabinets Facilitate New Working Partnerships

Partnerships and relationships with other city agencies and outside organizations are also crucial to this work. As cabinet members developed relationships with each other, unanticipated partnerships emerged. Cabinet members across the six cities highlighted examples of ways their new relationships facilitated innovative and efficient partnerships, from informal arrangements, like the Department of Health and Human Services lending a bus to facilitate transportation for growing afterschool programming, to the creation of formal MOUs and data-sharing agreements signed across agencies. A few cities benefited from having already built at least a partial foundation of cross-agency work, and saw those relationships and partnerships accelerate with BAM.

Partnerships have also emerged with organizations not present on the cabinet. From fully-developed interventions that come with institutional infrastructure to funding support to thought partnership, ongoing connections with outside organizations expand the scope of what cities are able to accomplish. Several cities, for example, partnered with nonprofit organizations that provide out-of-school programming or in-school integrated student supports that allowed them to expand the services available to children without having to build the capacity internally.

EXTERNAL FACTORS: LAB SUPPORT

External Consultants Serve a Key Role as “Honest Brokers” and Facilitators

The role of the BAM-sponsored consultants in each city is to facilitate the work of the cabinets, both during and between meetings, and to ensure that the work continues to move forward. Consultants are also the primary point of contact between the cities and the Lab, facilitating a range of tasks that includes overseeing the adoption of Measures of Success indicators (see page 7), developing city presentations for the convenings, and reviewing city-specific materials produced by the Lab.

The consultant’s role varied across the cities. Larger cities relied on their consultants to coordinate and align BAM with other related efforts as a part of their work; one city even combined the consultant’s role with another role to create a full-time position based out of the mayor’s office. In contrast, the consultant in another city took a more peripheral role in facilitating the work, while in yet another, the consultant did much of the content-based work herself. The importance of the consultant’s role was apparent in one city where the consultant did not join the team until well into the first year of BAM: without the consultant’s presence, the BAM work struggled to take hold amongst competing priorities.

The consultants came to BAM with different backgrounds and areas of expertise, including politics, education, equity, and change management. Observing their experience with the cities has yielded a number of early lessons for cities looking to begin this work. First, it is beneficial for the consultant to have an in-depth understanding of the local context; at the same time, it is helpful for the consultant to be distant enough to bring a fresh, neutral perspective to the work. In several cities, participants stressed the importance of having a facilitator who was seen as an “honest broker” who worked independently of the mayor and the superintendent. In one city, the consultant was officially an employee of the mayor, which at times impeded the consultant’s ability to navigate political situations. In another city, the initial consultant was deeply embedded in the city’s

collective impact work before BAM, and though she had strong prior relationships with both the mayor and the superintendent, many participants felt that the consultant was too close to the work of the role to offer a fresh take on ways of working together.

Second, cities should recognize the time commitment needed to do this work, especially early on, for consultants to get to know key players and facilitate the early work of establishing initial structures and processes—on top of their charge to handle logistics, manage goal setting and the identification of outcomes, and act as a liaison with neutral third parties (such as Harvard). Most of the consultants supported by the Lab felt they needed more than the quarter-time they were allotted to support the cabinets effectively. Finally, given the innovative and cross-sector nature of BAM efforts, consultants with change management expertise can greatly accelerate the process. Additional skills the Lab has observed that contribute to high performance in this role include strong interpersonal, political, and project management skills. These skills were particularly helpful during times of turnover and facilitated the continuation of work amidst disruption.

Strategies for Effective Facilitation

Look for a facilitator who is independent yet, ideally, familiar with the community. Ensure the facilitator has the confidence of the mayor, superintendent, and cabinet members.

Seek qualities such as change management expertise, a high level of organizational ability, and political/interpersonal aptitude, as these are well-suited for this silo-breaking work.

Plan for significant upfront coordination and facilitation time (especially in the larger cities); once systems are in place, the facilitator’s time can often be reduced.

The Lab communicated regularly with the consultants through monthly group conference calls,

individual calls, and email. The consultants also had opportunities to meet as a group at the convenings and through a consultant retreat during the summer of 2017. Feedback from the retreat was positive, with attendees welcoming the opportunity to share successes and get input on the challenges of this difficult work. A follow-up retreat was planned following the November 2017 convening.

The Convenings Provided Support and Planning Time

The convenings have proven essential to the work of the consortium: all cities have highlighted the value of having focused, extended team time away from their cities as an important contributor to their progress. Of the many benefits articulated by participants, the most common related to the power of bringing everybody together in a neutral location, which facilitated a high level of focus on the work and relationship-building among the cabinet members; the value of opportunities to learn from other cities and from national experts on topics relevant to their cabinet work; and the importance of the friendly “pressure” and natural accountability that emerges when convening with other cities, since cabinets are eager to demonstrate progress and, simultaneously, do not want to feel as if they’ve fallen behind their peers.

DATA USE AND INTEGRATION

Data is essential both to identify high priority needs in the community and to evaluate the effectiveness of the cabinet’s interventions to address those needs. During BAM’s early months, cities began asking for support on data use and integration. Some cities already had sophisticated data operations, but wanted to take the next steps toward integrating data across different agencies to support collective impact; other cities had data they collected but did not fully utilize and wanted to develop stronger practices for using data as a tool for decision-making and change. To address this, Lab staff began supporting cities individually on the development of, and data collection for, their Measures of Success.

The Lab is also supporting one of the cities in creating a broader strategy for data use.

Several other cities have been developing additional data capacity in support of this work, including creating MOUs to share data across agencies, surveying students about their school connectedness, asking families about the barriers they face in accessing preschool, and making use of data collected through a programmatic partnership to improve their understanding of community and individual student needs. For example, one city in the cohort doubled the number of summer learning slots available to children in 2017, and did so using the following data-based strategies: analyzing student data to identify the need for summer programming, requiring providers to agree to track certain data about participants, and implementing pre- and post-tests to determine how effective these programs were in reducing summer learning loss. The city’s contract with summer program providers will be re-negotiated annually according to these results, thereby making effective use of funding as well. Another member of the cohort has addressed data gaps in particular areas of interest by moving the school registration processes online, allowing the city—for the first time—to gather data on the community’s childcare needs in real time.

Two cities in particular have excelled at incorporating data into their decision-making, with one poised to become a national leader in this work thanks to a significant external grant. This grant is supporting the city in the creation of a data dashboard that aligns with collectively determined goals across the areas of education, health, economic security, housing, and safety. In the other city, the mayor’s data lead is a member of the cabinet, enabling that culture of data to permeate the cabinet’s work. This city is pioneering innovative systems strategies to address the needs of children, including the possibility of assigning an ID at birth to track children’s progress from infancy to early childhood to K–12. Doing so would allow agencies to coordinate interventions, identify children’s individual needs sooner, and address them faster and more effectively. Due to FRPA and HIPAA laws, this effort has hit a number

of roadblocks, but the cabinet has overcome challenges with persistence, knowing that effective roll-out of such a project is central to their shared vision.

It is important to note, too, that cities have moved ahead on projects that benefit children and increase access to services even where they lack nuanced data, knowing the importance of meeting children's needs sooner rather than later while also iterating and refining the work.

Strategies for Using Data

Use data to guide cabinet decision-making, to make a compelling case for change, and to create demand for cabinet initiatives.

Create ways to share data across agencies to facilitate better service delivery.

Evaluate the effectiveness of programs.

Track the success of collective impact initiatives.

Use individual student data to develop an understanding of each student's needs.

Link students with personalized services and supports.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Finding startup and sustained funding is a perennial challenge of collective action work as well as a key measure of its success and sustainability. The Lab has provided indirect financial support to the cities through the part-time consultants, the convenings, and strategy and fundraising contacts, but it does not provide direct grants to carry out the work. The cities have found success utilizing several different strategies for funding, including reallocating or raising public dollars, identifying private funding, or securing in-kind support. In some cases, this support was provided by a cabinet member's organization; in other cases, the cabinet successfully sought outside funding.

Cities Took Multiple Approaches to Funding

All of BAM's cities have made investments in developing a comprehensive opportunity agenda for children, and the cabinets have influenced those investments in a number of locales. One city increased funding for education for the first time in nearly 10 years. In others, the mayor repurposed funds to support cross-sector projects and specific cabinet initiatives. The recognition that outside funding rarely addresses long-term needs spurred one mayor to consider a new trash collection fee that would support the expansion of preschool access.

In many cases, city funding has been met with matching funds from the school district. On one cabinet, the mayor and superintendent have agreed to jointly fund a part-time position to support the logistical work of the cabinet. This role, while officially housed in the school department, is intended to work across sectors and agencies to sustain the momentum of the cabinet's work. Another cabinet has agreed to undergo a fiscal analysis of the city and school's funding allocations to determine whether they are allocating funds according to their shared priorities and to avoid duplication of efforts. In one district facing financial challenges, the work has turned to optimizing the alignment and collective impact of pre-existing initiatives. Another district was able to afford bringing in a major provider of new services for students by creatively repurposing existing staff.

Several of the cohort's cabinets have found surprising success in receiving funding from cabinet member's organizations, which is likely a result of the collective buy-in of the group: there is no need for a pitch or grant proposal when the funder is equally invested in seeing the work come to fruition. In one city, a nonprofit organization and a local institution of higher education spoke up during cabinet meetings to offer in-kind support or funding for a city-wide training model. These on-the-spot suggestions were pursued between meetings by the consultant and a district staff member, and the project came to fruition quickly and efficiently. In another city, which has several foundation leaders on the cabinet, substantial funding has been offered to support an ambitious college scholarship goal. In a third, a major health

provider and local employer funded staff to support the city's efforts to align its existing collective impact initiatives in a strategic and data-driven way. These partners, being well aware of and deeply embedded in the work, knew their money was going to an effective and worthwhile cause that they were already invested in seeing succeed.

Several of the cohort's cities have been particularly effective in obtaining outside funding from grant-making organizations to finance aspects of their work. These efforts have been enabled by the commitment of leadership as well as by internal capacity in those cities with grant-writing staff; cities lacking a grant-writing function have faced challenges in finding the time to dedicate to this additional task.

Conclusion

The first 18 months of the By All Means initiative have demonstrated both the power of a comprehensive agenda to support children and the challenges in implementing new systems to further this agenda. Leadership is essential for the work to be sustainable long term, but so are structural supports, staffing capacity, and broad stakeholder buy-in. As much as anything else, persistence matters: our strongest cities proceeded with the work amidst changes in leadership, cabinet membership, focus areas, structures, and processes. They forged innovative new relationships and connections while overcoming complex political histories and gaps in data.

As the Lab anticipated, By All Means has progressed at different rates in different cities for a variety of reasons. For example, the size of the larger cities presented challenges—more complex governance structures, greater needs for funding, more children to serve—but also advantages, such as more robust staffing and more community partners. In these larger cities, the cabinets needed to strategically

Successful Funding Strategies

Utilize a multi-pronged plan that includes private and public funding as well as short- and long-term strategies.

Leverage the mayor's leadership to identify and secure resources from external sources, create new revenue streams, and develop long-term funding strategies.

Reallocate existing funding to match spending with city priorities.

Develop new ways to share funding across agencies to address common goals.

Access all available state and federal funding opportunities.

align BAM with the complex landscape of existing initiatives, in a way that generated coherence and broad buy-in, to ensure the sustainability and success of the work. The progress of each city's work was influenced by each of the themes reviewed in this document: leadership, partnerships and relationships, external factors, data, and funding. The Education Redesign Lab has, in its capacity as a partner and convener, worked to support the individual needs of each city as leaders there have encountered obstacles and celebrated successes.

The accompanying Keys to Success (see page 18) are distilled from the Lab's observations of the first 18 months of this initiative. To learn more about the experiences of each city, visit the individual case studies (beginning on page 20). As the work continues to unfold and cities forge ahead on implementing new and innovative ways of working across traditional sectors, the Lab will be looking for the barriers to and enablers for sustaining the work on behalf of children after this initial startup phase.

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KEYS TO SUCCESS:

EARLY LESSONS

Lead with the mayors.

The shift from putting the responsibility for children's success and wellbeing solely on the schools to making it a community-wide effort must start from the top leadership. No one in a city has more ability than the mayor to signal a city-wide commitment to children, and the mayor also has a unique ability to bring executives and key partners to the table, to raise or redirect funds, and to coordinate across disparate groups.

Define the need locally.

The first step to solving a problem is understanding it. Naming the problem and illustrating its urgency in concrete, data-based, locally meaningful terms are important prerequisites to building the public and institutional will to change practices.

Build a city-wide movement.

City-wide efforts will only be sustainable with broad stakeholder and community buy-in. The cabinet must create a public demand for change by making a case to the community through a concise, engaging messaging campaign. This effort should engage the whole community, including parents, taxpayers, and voters, to make the case for a new, comprehensive approach to serving children and to ensure community voices and needs are fully reflected in the cabinet.

Form a children's cabinet to coordinate across sectors.

The cabinet needs to consist of the right people—those with the authority to make change and who represent the full community, create a shared vision, identify goals, and define individual responsibilities for moving the work forward.

Develop a shared vision for the whole system, but also create tangible interim successes.

The Lab asked cities to accomplish two different things at the same time: to build toward a comprehensive, cradle-to-career system of education and support for children, while also taking on more tangible, programmatic work. To accomplish this, cities need to articulate a shared vision of what the fully realized system looks like so everyone understands the goal and how the programmatic changes—expanding access to summer learning, for example, or introducing personalized learning into the schools—helps move the city closer to that vision.

Create backbone and internal capacity to start and sustain the work.

Even with the best intentions in the world, meaningful collaboration will not move forward without people who are committed to doing the time-consuming and often difficult day-to-day connective work. The cabinet needs a facilitator to coordinate meetings and move the work forward, with support from staff in cabinet member organizations.

Use data strategically and share data across different parts of the system.

Data is an important tool at every step of the process. It is important for identifying community needs and building a case for change, and an essential element of personalization: without data on individual children, there is no way to know their strengths or needs. Shared data on access to services and programs as well as on child outcomes provide important metric evidence of the effect of collective action.

Build true partnerships between the city and schools, across city organizations, and with funders.

While mayoral leadership is central to spurring new approaches for cities to address the needs of children, a strong partnership between the mayor and superintendent is essential. Schools are the place where children spend much of their time, and they can serve an important role as a connector to other services. Partnerships with funders and with other city organizations that can provide services ranging from health supports to afterschool programming are also key to the success of this work.

Anticipate turnover.

Turnover in key roles is inevitable, even in a short timeframe. Ensuring the initiative will be sustained through these changes depends on the strong commitment of multiple actors, both conceptually and through tangible effort, to ensure its survival. Having a formal, funded backbone structure, a broad-based movement, and codified practices can mitigate the effects of leadership change or key staff departures.

Create time and space for deep collaboration. Build relationships.

Cabinet meetings are important for carrying out the ongoing work, but making time for deeper collaboration through convenings or retreats builds relationships and nurtures common understanding of and commitment to goals and strategies for achieving them. While it can be challenging to create the time for this, it has proven immensely valuable to participants.

**BUILDING CITY-WIDE SYSTEMS OF
OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN:
CITY CASES**

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children's needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium: Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed onto a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- A Children's Cabinet, which serves as the governance structure for each city's By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.
- A BAM-sponsored part-time consultant, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.
- Twice-yearly convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of “what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table”? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children's needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, including cabinet effectiveness; partnerships and relationships; external factors; data; and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children's Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Louisville's participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Louisville is BAM's largest city, is the only city located in the South, and has faced several external challenges during early phases of the initiative, including a transition in school district leadership and Kentucky's first charter school legislation.

Louisville Metro is Kentucky's largest metropolitan area, with approximately 760,000 residents. In 2003, Louisville and Jefferson County merged into a single governance structure, with one mayor serving the new jurisdiction. The area is unusual in that its county-based school system has enabled its efforts to desegregate, meaning that urban and suburban children often attend the same schools. A 2015 article in *The Atlantic* describing these ongoing efforts suggested that Louisville's economically and racially integrated schools are a large part of the reason for its economic vitality.¹

In recent years, Louisville has seen its national and international reputation rise as it has been given top marks in areas ranging from business climate and good governance to food and music. Among its many recent accolades are being named the country's top city for manufacturing by *Forbes*, a top ten food city by *National Geographic*, and a top ten city for homeownership by *BankRate*. Louisville's Mayor Greg Fischer has also been recognized: he was named one of America's most interesting mayors by *Politico* and awarded a 2016 National Education Pathways with a Purpose award by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

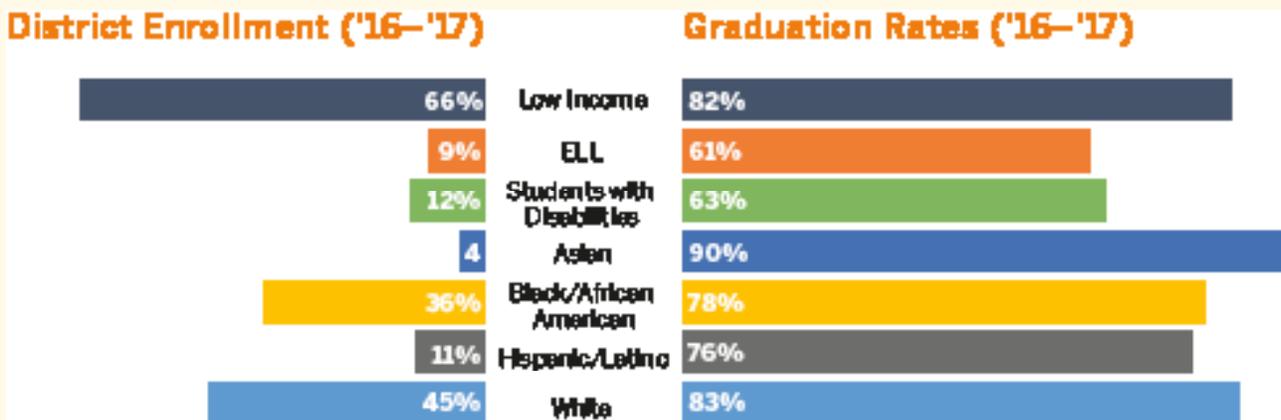
Despite these successes, the city has continued to grapple with disparities in outcomes among children. Test scores and graduation rates for Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) have been rising steadily since Kentucky's most recent accountability system was enacted by law in 2012. However, JCPS results for the 2015–2016 school year show that, in spite of slight improvements over the prior year on a number of measures, significant achievement gaps remain between specific subgroups.²

THE BIRTH OF LOUISVILLE'S VISION FOR A CRADLE TO CAREER SYSTEM

When Greg Fischer was elected to his first term as mayor of Louisville in 2010, he made improving education and lifelong learning one of his three primary goals for the city. This commitment reflected a long-held understanding in the Louisville metro area that education and workforce preparedness are key drivers of prosperity. An Education Roundtable, created by Louisville's previous mayor in 2008, worked with the local Business Leaders for Education to set

City-School Relationship

In Louisville, there is no formal relationship between the mayor's office and the school district. The Jefferson County Board of Education appoints the district superintendent.



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

an ambitious goal in July 2009: by 2020, 50 percent of Louisville's working-age population would hold an associate's degree or higher. A new public-private partnership called 55,000 Degrees, with the support of Mayor Fischer, took on responsibility for this goal, which would require adding 55,000 two- and four-year degrees to the Louisville population.

A few years later, JCPS adopted a new five-year strategic plan, Vision 2020, which seeks to develop and implement structures supporting social, emotional, and intellectual knowledge and skills so that students can thrive in college, career, community, and life. The plan included targets on kindergarten readiness, early literacy, and college/career readiness.

Mayor Fischer, seeing the alignment between the priorities of JCPS (as authored in Vision 2020), 55,000 Degrees (as authored in 2010 Greater Louisville Education Commitment), and the Business Leaders for Education (who sought an educated workforce for the city's prosperity), aimed to broaden and deepen the work by establishing a framework that could thread these elements together into a cohesive, cradle-to-career pipeline for Louisville youth.

JOINING BY ALL MEANS

In October of 2015, Mayor Fischer attended a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in Boston and presented his work on Louisville's Cradle to Career Initiative. The initiative, which Fischer had launched in January that year, sought "to establish a systematic approach to support lifelong learning and success in the Louisville community" by using shared data to identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities for alignment of services from early childhood to college and career. Under the initiative, Fischer created four "pillars" of the work with lead organizations that were responsible for identifying key metrics and strategies for the city's need in each area: Kindergarten Readiness, led by Metro United Way; K-12 Success, led by JCPS; Postsecondary Transition and Completion, led by 55,000 Degrees; and 21st Century Workforce and Talent, led by KentuckianaWorks.

At the same meeting, Paul Reville presented an overview of his newly formed Education Redesign Lab

at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and outlined its comprehensive children's opportunity agenda. The Lab was preparing to launch its By All Means (BAM) initiative and was looking for partner cities to participate as "laboratories" of innovation. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to suit the needs of every child.

After learning about By All Means, Fischer returned to Louisville and shared the opportunity with Superintendent Donna Hargens. They were joined by Mary Gwen Wheeler, Executive Director of 55,000 Degrees, who had been exploring a partnership with Say Yes to Education to establish a holistic support system for college and career readiness in Louisville. For Fischer, Hargens, and Wheeler, the alignment between BAM, Say Yes, and their local work was clear: soon after, Louisville opted to pursue both partnerships simultaneously.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

In Louisville, the Children's Cabinet—known locally as the Cradle to Career Cabinet—initially operated to formalize the work of the four pillar leads. Initial cabinet members included at least one high-ranking representative from the pillar lead organizations—Metro United Way, JCPS, 55,000 Degrees, and KentuckianaWorks—in addition to Mayor Fischer, Superintendent Hargens, and representatives from the school board, city government, health-care, higher education, and many local nonprofits, businesses, and foundations. Karen Wunderlin, a change-management expert with strong local ties, joined the team as the cabinet's BAM-sponsored consultant in June of 2016. The first cabinet meeting took place shortly thereafter.

DEFINING THE WORK

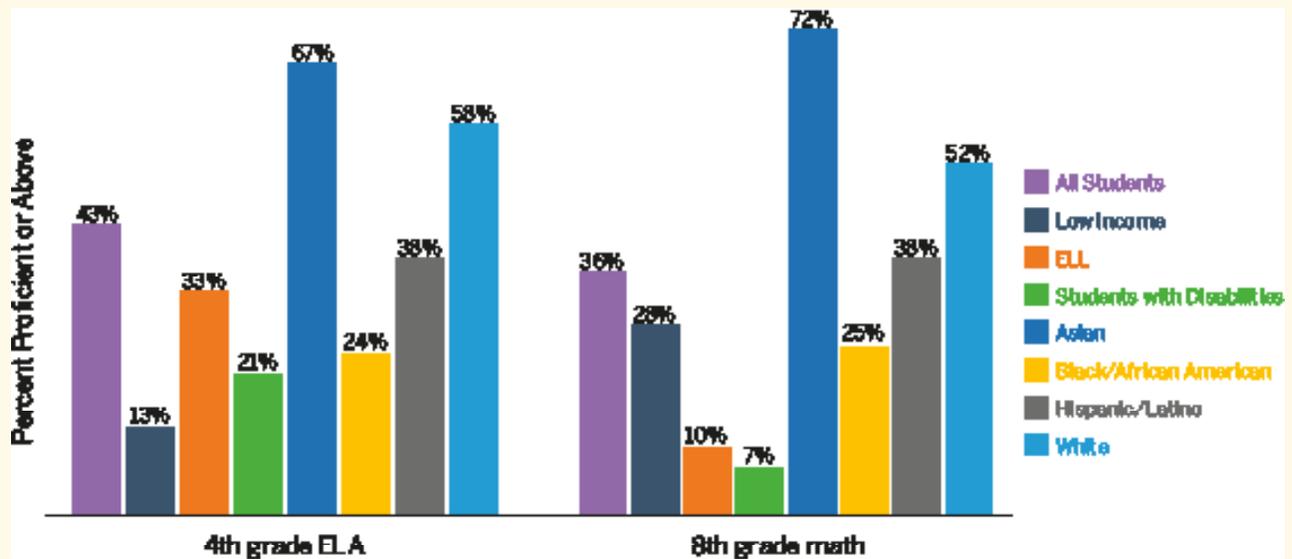
Behavioral Health

The behavioral health working group formed in response to early cabinet discussions around the city and school’s unmet needs in this area. The group collectively identified the high and increasing number of suspensions in recent years—coupled with stark racial disparities in both absolute numbers and percentages and in students’ alternative school placements—as the first challenge they wanted to address through their BAM work. The group began meeting biweekly and sought to outline a data-driven pilot project that would address the social-emotional needs of JCPs students. Membership included leaders from JCPs, the school board, city government, Centerstone of Kentucky

(a behavioral healthcare provider), 55,000 Degrees, Metro United Way, institutions of higher education, local foundations, and community organizations.

By the time of the May 2017 BAM convening, the focus of the behavioral health working group had shifted away from system-wide comprehensive solutions in favor of piloting a specific intervention. As a result, the behavioral health working group had transitioned from Wunderlin’s purview to that of Alicia Averette, Assistant Superintendent of Academic Support Programs at JCPs. Together with the Division Director of Child and Family at Centerstone and the Coordinator of Social Emotional Learning at JCPs, Averette led the effort between working group meetings to develop and implement a pilot program at Carrithers Middle School, a school representative of Louisville’s

Sample Test Scores
2017 K-PREP



Students Chronically Absent:

18.1%

Child Uninsured Rate:

1.7%

Children Born with Low Birthweight:

9%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/JCPSdata, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/JCPSdata, Test Scores: bit.ly/JCPSdata, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/LouisvilleAbsenteeism17, Children Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/UninsuredRates, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/LouisvilleBirthweight

overall student population. A pilot, the team hoped, would allow the behavioral health team to establish a proof point that, if successful, could be brought to the cabinet for potential widespread adoption.

Shared Governance

By late 2016 it became increasingly clear that Louisville faced unexpected financial roadblocks to becoming an official Say Yes city. As a result, the cabinet shifted its focus to formalizing a shared governance structure around Louisville's Cradle to Career work. The cabinet agreed that its goals remained a priority and that it was consequently important to ensure the sustainability of their collective work regardless of the Say Yes outcome. As Mayor Fischer recounted, "We started the whole Cradle to Career process with informal governance. Formalizing that now and changing the funding stream for the collective impact model is going to just give [the work] a lot more capacity. So, it's a logical next step."

The cabinet focused its February 2017 retreat on defining its goals and what shared governance model was needed to reach them. From that meeting, the cabinet emerged with a working structure (see Structure and Process, page 26) and a statement defining its desired result. This included committing to move forward with implementing the Say Yes theory of action and to contact with the Weiss Institute. At the same time, the cabinet launched its shared governance working group headed by the President and CEO of Metro United Way and began work to build the enablers of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing each stakeholder organization's commitment to the cabinet's work. The cabinet also pursued a data-sharing agreement between the city government, the schools, and the Weiss Institute that would allow the cabinet to analyze spending and determine how well expenditures matched Louisville's goals for children.

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Mayor Fischer's top goals for Louisville are making it a city of lifelong learning, making it a much healthier city, and making it an even more compassionate community. With education as one of the mayor's top priorities, the Louisville team has enjoyed his enthusiasm and support in moving the work forward. As one top health official noted: "We're a city government that I think functions, as most cities do, on what's happening at the top, and he has the bully pulpit to talk about education. He discusses education often and really talks about it from cradle to career."

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP CHANGE

By the end of 2016, Superintendent Hargens' relationship with some members of the board of education

had become strained: several newly-elected members of the board campaigned on a platform calling for new leadership for the department. Around the same time, the Kentucky Department of Education initiated a state audit of the school system. In April 2017, Superintendent Hargens announced her intention to resign effective July 2017.

Despite a leadership change in a critical role—the Louisville Superintendent—the BAM work proceeded with little interruption. Several Louisville team members attributed this to the strong momentum and the buy-in of all parties involved in BAM work.

FOCUS ON GOVERNANCE

Louisville has uniquely prioritized building governance structures and a shared vision for the work that will be sustainable over time. The team has

achieved an effective, high-output effort through the use of a pre-existing backbone organization (55,000 Degrees); formal structures, processes, and action-oriented agendas; formal roles for notetakers and timekeepers; and broad stakeholder buy-in.

Structure and Process

During the cabinet's early period, cabinet membership grew with every meeting as more and more stakeholders were brought to the table. While this inclusivity was conducive to generating broad stakeholder buy-in, it was also unsustainable: with up to 30 attendees at cabinet meetings, it was far too cumbersome to discuss an entire agenda. Thus, at the cabinet's February 2017 half-day retreat, the group decided it was time to pare official cabinet membership down to a size that would facilitate a reasonable amount of progress during meetings, while also ensuring the cabinet was reflective of the larger community. As a result of the retreat, the Louisville team settled on both a tentative membership list as well as a new structure.

After their February 2017 retreat, Louisville emerged with a new structure: the cabinet itself would include only chief executives of stakeholder organizations, with provisions for designees to attend if the principal member could not. Cabinet members could bring additional staff from their organizations, but those staff would not sit at the table. This setup would allow the group to clearly determine who is on the cabinet, but also enable critical staff to share updates with the cabinet and stay up-to-date on cabinet work.

An important component of the new structure was the creation of the "core team," comprising select cabinet members and staff. While the Cradle to Career Cabinet would meet every three weeks, the core team would meet weekly and ensure critical work was carried forward. This group would set cabinet agendas, complete specific action items, and oversee the various working groups tasked with specific aspects of the cabinet's work, such as behavioral health, data, creating college scholarships, and governance.

Incorporating Pre-existing Local Work

The Louisville team built upon pre-existing collective impact work by 55,000 Degrees and the other Cradle to Career pillars, which had already built the collaborative muscle of cross-sector work in Louisville. 55,000 Degrees, the only independently funded backbone organization in this space, stepped up to "project manage" the cabinet's efforts, while the pillar leads took on core team or working group leadership roles.

THE ROLE OF EQUITY

Louisville is acutely aware that the leadership team does not reflect the racial diversity of the students and families served by JCPs. While the cabinet was growing, new additions came from organizations identified as having a potential role in the cabinet's efforts; by December 2016, however, several Louisville team members voiced the need for more adequate representation of the community—the cabinet needed more racial diversity. As Jonathan Lowe, Director of Strategy for JCPs, described during an interview: "It's a problem of our community leadership structure, where if you're picking people based on their position, you're going to get a lot of white folks. You've got to think about that. And we've got to think about how we're going to incorporate representation for families and kids that we want to serve. . . . You have to have relationships and build trust. And one of the ways that you do that is make sure that your leadership team reflects the community at large."

As the team continues to develop and evolve, it is intentionally and thoughtfully working to address this leadership issue, particularly since the pursuit of racial equity in opportunities, supports, and outcomes is an explicit central component of Louisville's work. Additionally, the Weiss Institute's partnership with the National Equity Institute to analyze racial equity in Louisville is expected to provide increased support around the cabinet's larger racial equity goals; a team member noted that they would be able to help facilitate conversations about race and provide recommendations on how the cabinet should approach the issue.

Partnerships and Relationships

ALIGNING MULTIPLE NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Because Louisville entered the BAM partnership while simultaneously exploring becoming a Say Yes city, the initial efforts of the cabinet folded into the city's Say Yes planning efforts. As Wheeler describes, they were initially balancing "having this parallel path of Say Yes and By All Means, where we were basically trying to create our first project in one of the BAM focus areas, but in a way that would organize us [to reflect how] we might end up functioning if we were a Say Yes city." As a result, the cabinet launched two initial efforts in the fall of 2016: an asset-mapping project and a behavioral health working group. The asset mapping, while prioritized as part of the Say Yes planning process, would benefit the BAM work as well: it was meant to identify existing gaps in community services for Louisville children. The behavioral health project, launched as Louisville's first BAM focus area, would similarly inform the Say Yes work.

Around the time the Louisville cabinet had committed to continue its work—with or without an official Say Yes partnership—Say Yes was finalizing its newly formed Weiss Institute, which aimed to provide traditional Say Yes support to cities without the immense financial commitment involved in its last-dollar scholarship model. Parallel to the efforts of the shared governance working group, Wheeler continued to engage Say Yes in conversations around becoming the Weiss Institute's first partner city; doing so would provide Louisville with much of the support it sought around data systems, financial analysis, asset mapping, and governance, funded jointly by Say Yes and philanthropic support. By the time of the third BAM convening in late May 2017, Louisville was preparing to sign its contract with the Weiss Institute.

CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

After the May 2017 convening, 92 percent of the Louisville team reported that they collaborate more with other agencies and organizations in their cities after having joined By All Means. These stronger relationships have been key to enabling the work to push forward in spite of challenges, and have allowed for more unexpected collaboration between agencies in ways that truly benefit Louisville children.

Lowe described one such instance that occurred in partnership with Yvette Gentry, former Chief of Community Building for Louisville Metro Government and retired Deputy Chief of Police: "JPCS recently bought a building to use as an early childhood site, and it has a gymnasium. Yvette Gentry approached me and said, 'We need a place for kids to go. Can we use your gymnasium?' There was some back and forth, but Dr. Hargens thought it was a pretty good idea. So we made it happen and [Gentry] was telling me that there were 300 kids there on Saturday night. I mean, that's a lot of kids that are not somewhere else."

Because Lowe and Gentry had developed a working relationship attending cabinet meetings and BAM convenings, a new collaboration in service of children took place between the city and the school district that might not have otherwise occurred—or at least not occurred as quickly.

The Mayor/Superintendent Relationship

When Louisville joined By All Means, Mayor Fischer and Superintendent Hargens had already established a strong working relationship. Despite the absence of a formal role for the mayor in the education system, the two held regular meetings to identify joint priorities and update each other on progress in areas of overlapping interest.

Moving at the Speed of Trust

The new and strengthened working relationships between city officials, school officials, and other stakeholders have also been critical in sustaining momentum amidst policy and leadership changes, particularly as Louisville navigated the transition

from Superintendent Hargens to Interim Superintendent Marty Pollio. The public announcement of Pollio's new role was published just one day before the May convening, and while he was not in attendance at this convening, he was scheduled to attend his first cabinet meeting alongside Hargens in June 2017. Hargens and Pollio would spend a month working together in June, during which time Pollio would learn about the school district's involvement in the BAM, Say Yes, and Weiss Institute work.

Thanks in part to the strong working relationships between city and school officials on the core team and in early iterations of the cabinet, Louisville team members felt confident that JCPS would remain a partner in the work despite the change in leadership. As one participant shared, "If [the change in leadership] had happened in June of 2016, we might have had to stop working until they got a new person on board and they brought that person up to speed, but there's so much happening now. We had enough forward momentum that the work continued."

These relationships have also been important as Louisville navigates implementation of Kentucky's first charter school bill, and the granting of authorizing power to the mayor. During the May 2017 convening in Cambridge, the Louisville team acknowledged that these developments had created tensions between the mayor's office and JCPS. The consensus among Louisville's convening team was that the charter bill had strained, but not broken, the relationships and trust between those agencies.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONSULTANT

Given the crowded landscape involving Louisville's Cradle to Career Initiative, Say Yes to Education, the Weiss Institute, and By All Means, the cabinet's consultant was critical to keeping Louisville's BAM work in focus and on track. An expert in change management, Wunderlin's early involvement included handling the logistical aspects of cabinet meetings (setting agendas, coordinating schedules, etc.)

as well as facilitating the cabinet meetings. Further, Wunderlin played a role in coordinating other aspects of the work at various points, including the asset-mapping project, the behavioral health working group, and the core team. This not only resulted in her working longer hours, but also meant she was "the glue holding it all together," according to one cabinet member.

Wunderlin was also instrumental in planning and facilitating the February 2017 retreat that allowed the cabinet to refine its membership, structure, and processes. As Wheeler shared: "Karen has been tremendous at helping us gel and form us with some purpose. Moving to the retreat was part of her change management philosophy. I think it's been great to have that kind of facilitation." With the end of year one approaching, Wunderlin knew it was time to take a step back: "The early work was so important and the extra energy was necessary given its size and complexity, but Louisville now had enough momentum that I, as a neutral facilitator, could step back." Over the course of spring 2017, Wunderlin began phasing out her involvement in all meetings that weren't official cabinet meetings.

CONVENINGS

Cohort Model

For Louisville, the convenings are an important way to learn more about what the other cities are doing. As one participant shared, "What I have found about my time in Louisville . . . is that things really get pushed forward when there's an attachment to a cohort model. By All Means really provides us a space to create with other cities, see what they're doing, and push forward because they're pushing forward."

City team members also enjoy the convenings because of the opportunity to compare notes on challenges and successes with those who share similar roles in other cities. Ashley Parrott, Senior Policy and Development Advisor in Mayor Fischer's office, emphasized that she would like to see much more of the cross-city collaboration: "I would love to connect even more with the other mayor's offices to discuss our strengths and challenges as we move this work forward. From a mayor's office

staff perspective, I want to know ‘what are we doing well?’ and ‘where can we make improvements?’ It helps me determine if we are going down the right path as a city.”

Superintendent Hargens echoed these sentiments. “It’s like the Lab is exactly what we need. And of course, we’ve had this framework, but talking to other people who are trying to do the same thing is huge because we’re all solving the same problem. It’s ‘how do you do this?’ And I know there are different sizes of districts represented there, but it’s essentially the same work.”

Expertise

The second major draw of the convenings was the access to expertise, which informed the work of Louisville’s “team time.” Hearing Paul Reville, Ron Heifetz, and other Harvard experts discuss the issues specific to their efforts allows the work to move forward using knowledge and best practices from neutral third parties. As Parrott shared: “We broke up our team time based on our city’s needs to move the work forward. We had an early childhood expert work with us to address our early childhood needs. We also had a behavioral health group that formed to help us determine the additional social and emotional supports needed for students to succeed. And then we had a conversation about asset mapping. Team time gave us the opportunity to dive deeper into our work and strengthen relationships among our leadership, which is very important.”

During the May 2017 meeting in particular, Louisville relied heavily on the expertise of convening keynote Michael McAfee. McAfee, President of PolicyLink and a main driver behind making the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative a reality, delivered a talk about bringing an equity lens to the work, sparking a powerful response from the Louisville team. At their request, McAfee joined the team for a discussion over lunch on their need to confront the historical and ongoing reality of racism in their community.

OTHER SUPPORTS

In the fall of 2016, Mayor Fischer’s office reached out to Paul Reville regarding Louisville’s third Cradle to Career Summit. The summit, organized by the mayor’s office, is an annual opportunity for Louisville to engage community stakeholders on both the challenges and opportunities faced in strengthening and aligning education, workforce, health, and social service systems in their community. Fischer hoped that Reville could speak at the summit about Louisville and BAM’s shared children’s opportunity agenda. In addition, having been impressed by Harvard Professor Ron Heifetz at the May 2016 convening, Fischer hoped to connect with Heifetz as well. Ultimately, both Reville and Heifetz spoke at the November 2016 summit, and Louisville was able to spend one-on-one time with Heifetz during the November 2016 BAM convening.

The May 2016 convening also inspired a city team member—Metro United Way’s Vice President for Early Care and Education—to invite Reville to give remarks at a meeting of the Ready for K Alliance, the “cradle” portion of Louisville’s Cradle to Career continuum. Reville agreed to do so and called into their meeting on July 2016. Additionally, Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as thought partner on their education strategy.

External Factors: A New Charter School Bill

Kentucky’s first successful charter school bill was signed into law by Governor Matt Bevin in March 2017, making it the 44th state in the country to allow charter schools. Under the new law, local school districts and the mayors of Lexington and Louisville are granted the power to approve charter applications. JCS opposed the legislation and was taken by surprise at the granting of charter approval authority to the mayor’s office. While the upcoming effort to create a specific plan for the rollout of charters may create additional challenges, both sides are committed to continuing to work productively together.

Data

As in all other BAM cities, data has played an important role in the early work of the cabinet. Louisville had a head start on this: both the city and school district follow a philosophy of data-driven decision-making. In starting the work with a shared understanding of data's importance and some capacity to analyze with an eye toward the cabinet's work, Louisville enjoys an advantage of a head start, data-wise.

Despite Louisville's established practice of data-driven decision-making, the cabinet recognized it was still not fully realizing the potential of the city's raw data. At their April 2017 cabinet meeting, the team agreed in principle to creating data sharing agreements—to be signed by several of the cabinet's stakeholders, including JCPS and Louisville Metro Government—as such data sharing could be used to inform asset mapping, individual student growth plans, and a number of other analytics. In prioritizing and completing these agreements, the cabinet could position Louisville to take full advantage of the data experts coming into the community through the anticipated partnership with the Weiss Institute.

Funding

Louisville has an engaged philanthropic community that has been strongly supportive of the work of the Cradle to Career Cabinet. Several local charities have been active members of the cabinet from the outset and have attended the By All Means convenings at Harvard. As a result of this partnership and engagement in the work, at least one foundation has contributed financially to the cabinet's shared work. This philanthropic engagement and commitment to this work has been named by a number of cabinet members as a key factor in Louisville's progress.

Conclusions

Louisville has made impressive progress toward creating a collaborative, sustainable metro-wide initiative to support its children, despite encountering a number of obstacles. Their accomplishments to date demonstrate how to align multiple public entities and external partners in a way that is effective and adaptive. Louisville has successfully navigated the significant challenges of new charter school legislation, a superintendent transition, and the shift in Say Yes's involvement thanks in large part to a strong, shared commitment to their goals for Louisville's youth, established through the committed support of the mayor and superintendent and deep engagement with a broad group of stakeholders.

Louisville's team members found substantial benefits just from the regular interaction with their counterparts and colleagues in other sectors through the cabinet and convenings. These new relationships, for example, enabled them to see how data from one sector might help another sector perform more efficiently and effectively (e.g., how school discipline data can help a former police chief target and reduce juvenile infractions). Relationships with local foundations proved beneficial as well, as they yielded important support at several stages of the work. Leadership from 55,000 Degrees played an important role in facilitating this cross-sector work and relationship-building: they stepped in to "project manage" the city's efforts, drawing from their prior experience of acting as a backbone organization.

ENDNOTES

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Louisville Takeaways

- A strong cabinet, with formal operating structures, processes, and regular meetings, ensures the collective buy-in to sustain the work through challenges and leadership transitions.
- Cabinet membership will evolve to reflect shifting priorities and community representation.
- Cities can engage effectively with multiple external partners when done with purpose and intention.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Louisville's work has evolved in the following ways:

- The cabinet began to focus on messaging and community engagement, describing and framing their efforts as the Louisville Promise. Louisville held a Community Conversation in September 2017 to introduce the Louisville Promise and initiated a digital presence through the creation of a website, louisvillepromise.org, and a Twitter page. As of February 2018, the cabinet is undertaking additional research to determine if the name Louisville Promise is the best option.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining a shared commitment to Louisville children was created and signed by numerous stakeholders on the cabinet in August 2017.³ The signatories, otherwise referred to as the Louisville Promise Partners, included JCPD, Louisville Metro Government, the Jefferson County Teachers Association, the 15th District Parent Teacher Association, Metro United Way, 55,000 Degrees, Centerstone, KentuckianaWorks, three foundations, four institutions of higher education, and several others.
- Data-sharing agreements covering student-level data and fiscal allocations have been prepared in partnership with the Weiss Institute. These agreements are to be signed by JCPD and the Louisville Metro Government with the purpose of identifying "pinch points" in the areas of student need and spending. The city and school district are hoping to identify spending gaps and areas of overlap so that the two entities, in partnership, can allocate funds effectively on behalf of children.
- Marty Pollio officially became Louisville's new Superintendent in February 2018 after serving as Interim Superintendent for nearly eight months.

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children’s needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium. Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed onto a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- A Children’s Cabinet, which serves as the governance structure for each city’s By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.
- A BAM-sponsored part-time consultant, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.
- Twice-yearly convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of “what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table”? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children’s needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, including cabinet effectiveness; partnerships and relationships; external factors; data; and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children’s Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Newton’s participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Newton is BAM’s most affluent city, is the only city in the cohort to face the prospect of a mayoral transition, and is one of the three BAM cities to experience a changeover in consultant.

Newton, Massachusetts is not a place people generally think of when talking about the challenges of poverty: it is an affluent Boston suburb whose schools consistently rank among the best in the commonwealth. Despite this, there is substantial income inequality in Newton, and many residents struggle to afford housing, childcare, and other services. A 2016 report found that “11 percent of Newton school children are living below the poverty line, a 77 percent increase over the past five years.” The same report detailed that, in light of Newton’s affluence, “it is between 11 percent—19 percent more expensive to live in Newton than in neighboring cities and towns.”¹

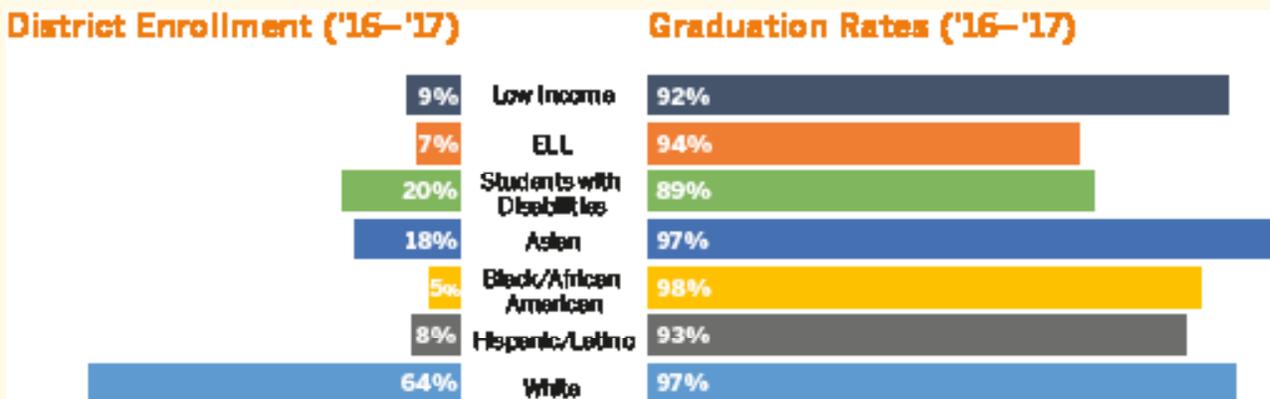
As in the rest of Massachusetts, the achievement of Newton’s students diverges across categories, with low-income, African-American, and Latino students faring worse, on average, than others. For example, only 34 percent of economically disadvantaged students in Newton met or exceeded expectations in third grade reading, compared to 62 percent of their non-economically disadvantaged classmates. In eighth grade math, just 38 percent of African-American students met or exceeded

expectations and 63 percent of Latino students met or exceeded expectations, compared to 72 percent of white students and 85 percent of Asian students.²

Prior to joining By All Means, the Newton Public Schools (NPS) already had a number of programs in place to provide opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds and needs. Newton is host to the commonwealth’s largest Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program, which enrolls students from Boston in suburban school districts. Every year, over 400 students from Boston are enrolled in Newton’s public schools. The schools also offer the Calculus Project to African-American and Latino students, a program that provides eligible students with summer and school year math tutoring and academic support to increase the number of minority students taking high-level math classes. For younger students, NPS offers inclusive preschool, which serves mixed groups of children with special needs and typically-developing children. Within the mayor’s office, Newton created a summer internship program to ensure all high school students have equal access to the benefits of substantive summer jobs.

City-School Relationship

In Newton, there is no formal relationship between the mayor’s office and the school district. The Newton School Committee—Newton’s elected board—appoints the district superintendent.



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

JOINING BY ALL MEANS

In October 2015, Mayor Setti Warren—who was, at the time, chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Community Development and Housing Committee—convened a two-day meeting in Boston of mayors and leaders from different sectors on the topic of “Economic Growth for All.” Drawing on research from Brookings’ Center on Children and Families,³ Mayor Warren created the initiative as a means for cities to develop cross-sector approaches to ensure that everyone had a pathway to economic prosperity. Warren used the same event to launch Newton’s local Economic Growth for All initiative (EGA) in partnership with Boston College.

Around the same time, the Education Redesign Lab, headed by Paul Reville, was preparing to launch its By All Means initiative and was looking for partner cities to participate as “laboratories” of innovation to create a children’s opportunity agenda. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to suit the needs of every child.

Warren, who had heard about Reville’s work, invited him to share the By All Means initiative at the conference. Seeing BAM as an opportunity to advance the education components of Newton’s EGA agenda, Warren opted to pursue joining the initiative as well.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

Newton’s EGA initiative established four working groups tackling education, health, wealth, and innovation. To avoid duplication of effort, Newton’s Children’s Cabinet—known locally as the Education Cabinet—was founded as EGA’s education working group. It is coordinated by Deb Youngblood, Newton’s Commissioner of Health and Human Services, who also coordinates the activities of the other EGA working groups. The cabinet held its first official

meeting in April of 2016, with significant membership from the City of Newton, as well as Superintendent David Fleishman and other representatives from the school district, Boston College, and the YMCA. By the third meeting in late June 2016, the cabinet grew to include school board members, a child psychologist, and others. The Lab’s research director served as the cabinet’s consultant for the first stage of the work.

While the mayor and superintendent both initially attended the cabinet meetings, they subsequently each appointed surrogates to represent them. Brian Turner, Director of Professional Development and Assessment for the Newton Public Schools, became the school district’s representative to the cabinet in the fall of 2016. Soon after, Turner began working closely with Youngblood and the initial consultant to further the cabinet’s work between meetings, with the three operating as an informal executive working group.

In February 2017, the initial consultant transitioned out of her role and was replaced by a Harvard doctoral student. The cabinet held its first meeting with their new consultant the following month. In November 2016, Mayor Warren announced that he would not run for reelection and later declared his candidacy for governor in May 2017.

DEFINING THE WORK

The cabinet identified two priorities at the outset of the initiative: connecting middle school students with out-of-school time (OST) programming and expanding access to preschool opportunities. It saw each of these as having the potential to reduce achievement gaps by providing supports for children at important developmental stages in which there were income-based disparities in access to services. Newton had already begun to focus on equal access to preschool and commissioned a study on the topic from Northeastern University. This study, which was intended to highlight the extent of Newton families not participating in preschool and their barriers to doing so, was due for completion in November 2016. With that work underway, the

cabinet opted to wait for the report’s results before further exploring preschool access and turned its attention to middle school OST as its first focus. The cabinet later folded an existing mayoral initiative, the summer internship program for high school students, into the BAM work as well.

Middle School OST Opportunities and Supports

Newton’s initial plan was to establish additional after-school programming and supports for middle school students, out of a concern that there is an abrupt drop-off in the availability of and participation in these programs in middle school despite the developmental importance of these years for children. As Youngblood described it, “We’re really interested in the relationship between out-of-school time and in-school time to reduce the achievement gap and to make sure that we enhance opportunities for all of our kids. I think what we’ve recognized is that while we have that as our big overarching goal, we needed to have a sort of ‘anchor project,’ so we decided to start with the middle school out-of-school time.”

Early cabinet meetings involved discussions of the multiple goals of expanding access to after-school activities—including helping students discover their passions, increasing their exposure to a range of enrichment activities, and improving academic achievement and attitudes about school—as well as examinations of data on participation in school-sponsored afterschool activities. A smaller group of members interested in OST met outside of the cabinet meetings to consider the range of options, as well as whether any additional programming and support should be universal or target just those students identified as being at risk of low achievement or disengagement.

In late 2016, the cabinet explored two potential options for expanding access to OST opportunities and supports for middle school students: adding an entirely new afterschool program that would focus on enrichment as well as academic support, or hiring coordinators in each of the middle schools to connect children with existing OST programs and—for children with greater needs—additional services.

Concurrently, the cabinet decided to learn more about any potential relationship between “school connectedness” (how connected middle school students felt to their schools) and participation in OST activities. Because of the logistical and regulatory challenges of implementing a new district-wide OST survey in a short time, cabinet members initially explored creating and implementing an OST survey to a subset of Newton middle school students. This drew concerns about unbalanced student representation, given the differences in student populations across schools and even across student teams within schools. Ultimately, the cabinet chose to capitalize on the new school connectedness survey that Newton was about to administer for the first time, adding several questions specific to students’ participation in afterschool activities. While this decision reduced the level of detail about students’ OST activities, it ensured representation of all students rather than just a subset. This collaborative approach to collecting and using data between the city and schools reflected a new cross-agency strategy in Newton.

Informed by the survey’s results and recommendations, the cabinet agreed upon an initial project in December of 2016: they would pursue the possibility of creating an OST coordinator position in each of the middle schools, who would be responsible for connecting children with risk factors for low achievement with after-school and summer opportunities, as an initial step. The cabinet also agreed to keep open the possibility of expanding programming at a later date if there proved to be a shortage of opportunities. Various cabinet members highlighted the ways such a proposal would affect different populations of students, and worked to ensure the individual needs of subgroups would be incorporated into the design of this new position. Such groups included METCO students (transportation), English language learners (multilingual support), students with special needs (specialized support), and student athletes (relationship between sports and academics). The cabinet also discussed funding: both where it would come from and how it would be used.

At the adjournment of the December cabinet meeting, Youngblood shared that she would investigate potential funding options for the OST coordinator proposal. In the months that followed, the smaller executive working group investigated potential sources of funding for the role. The resulting possibilities, however, comprised opportunities for which an affluent community such as Newton would not be a realistic candidate.

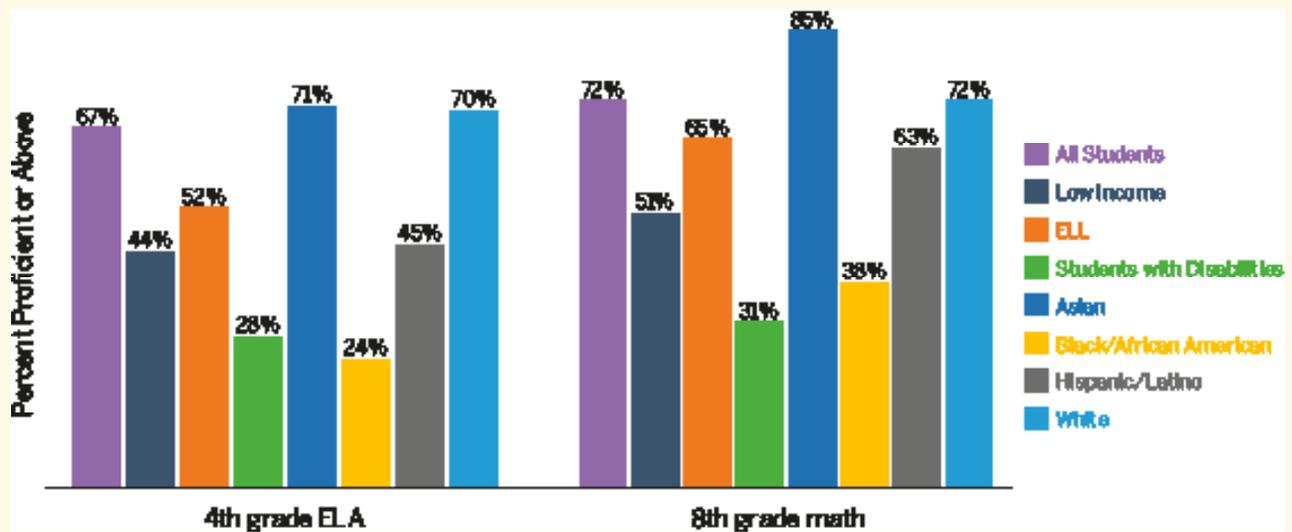
With the funding search stalled, the cabinet revisited the underlying question of why some students were not participating in afterschool activities. Since cabinet members still felt they did not fully understand the connection between participation in afterschool programming and students' feelings of connectedness, they decided to conduct focus groups to hear directly from the students. The focus groups yielded a number of interesting insights, but

nothing that suggested a clear policy direction. The cabinet's other effort to increase participation in afterschool activities, which had begun earlier in the school year, was to create and publicize a comprehensive listing of the opportunities already available for middle school students in Newton, since that information had previously been fragmented and difficult to access.

Expanding Preschool Access

Expanding preschool access re-emerged as a key goal of the cabinet during the second convening at Harvard in the fall of 2016. The cabinet had commissioned a report from Northeastern University on barriers to preschool access, and while the results had not yet been written up, cabinet members were able to discuss some preliminary findings. The researchers had found the most

Test Scores 2017 MCAS



Students Chronically Absent:

6.6%

Child Uninsured Rate:

1%

Children Born with Low Birthweight:

4.1%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/NewtonDem17, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/NewtonGrad17, Test Scores: bit.ly/NewtonMCAS17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/NewtonAbsenteeism17, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/UninsuredRates, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/birthweightMA

significant barriers to preschool access in Newton to be cost and scheduling. In addition, children of immigrant families—who make up 24 percent of students in NPS—are less likely to attend preschool than non-immigrant children. It was unclear from the research whether this was the result of cost, cultural preferences, language barriers, or other factors. The cabinet also discussed the district’s lack of data on whether or not incoming kindergarteners had attended preschool; Superintendent Fleishman indicated that this gap could be remedied by collecting the information as part of the kindergarten readiness evaluations NPS conducted during the spring prior to kindergarten.

With both the mayor and superintendent in attendance for Newton’s “team time” during the second convening, the discussion of potential solutions was particularly fruitful. The cabinet discussed several options for expanding both the number of slots and the length of the day in the district’s existing inclusive preschool program. The mayor and superintendent also discussed ways to provide financial support to Newton families struggling with preschool affordability, such as instituting a sliding fee scale and direct support to low-income families. Mayor Warren and Superintendent Fleishman both indicated that improving preschool access was a high priority. In fact, Warren shared his view that this was an

important enough goal to warrant new, sustainable funding streams and that he was considering ways of accomplishing this through new citywide fees or taxes—although ultimately he did not introduce this before the end of his term. The cabinet commissioned an additional report, this one from Boston College, to explore options for expanding access to early childhood programs.

Summer Internships for Teens

The cabinet decided to capitalize on an existing high school internship program as an important opportunity for building stronger postsecondary outcomes for high school students: the city planned to expand the Mayor’s Summer High School Internship Program from serving 38 students in 2016 to serving 98 students in 2017. The program places an emphasis on recruiting students from diverse backgrounds and the program’s director, who also sits on the cabinet, works with guidance counselors and other school professionals to identify and recruit students who are likely to have limited opportunities for engaged learning over the summer. A cabinet member from the Lynch School of Education at Boston College will be designing and implementing an evaluation of the program and is helping facilitate the expansion of services by providing support from graduate students.

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

DELEGATION OF LEADERSHIP

While mayors and superintendents were regular cabinet attendees in other By All Means cities, Newton’s mayor and superintendent delegated attendance to senior members of their staffs. While these representatives had a certain level of decision-making power, the absence of the top leadership did affect the level of discussion and decision-making at cabinet meetings as well as the

level of coordination between the mayor’s office and the superintendent’s office.

A MAYORAL TRANSITION

In November 2016 Mayor Warren announced that he would not be seeking reelection in 2017, and announced his bid for Massachusetts governor just six months later. With mayoral leadership central to BAM’s theory of action, it was unclear how this transition would affect the momentum of the planned work. The reflections of cabinet members following

this announcement were optimistic. As one participant shared: “Even though it’s the mayor, you would hope that no one person or position is irreplaceable. If any one person’s absence was going to have a big splash or impact, it’s probably him. He was, from what I’ve been told, instrumental in getting Newton involved with By All Means and now [his departure means] the rest of the group has to carry on. And feel compelled to do so.” Likewise, Superintendent Fleishman reflected that “that’s the downside of these kinds of projects. But I think this work would continue. . . . I guess the advantage is because our projects are more internal—rather than dependent on outside entities—our preschool project or summer middle school work could go on regardless of who the mayor is.” However, it became clear by the May 2017 convening that Warren’s imminent departure was having an impact on the urgency of the work, with the mayor attending only a small portion of that convening and the team time resulting in a decision to re-evaluate the cabinet’s priorities for the work.

CABINET

In Newton, the primary staffer and organizer of the cabinet is also the city’s top health official: Deb Youngblood, Commissioner of Health and Human Services. Often, she coordinated the work herself, while in other cities scheduling and other logistical items have been handled by the BAM-sponsored consultant or a local supporting staff member. As has been found in other BAM cities, some support staff time is crucial to keeping the work moving. Consequently, by the spring of 2017, Youngblood had recruited one of her permanent staff members to help support the logistical aspects of Newton’s BAM work.

Partnerships and Relationships

CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

In many cities, school districts tend to work in isolation from other elements of city government. In Newton, this tendency has been magnified by the relatively low level of need in its community, which has enabled the school system to work independently of the service providers that play an integral role in high-poverty school systems across the country. As Superintendent Fleishman shared: “I think that in general, [Newton] school people aren’t necessarily used to working with nonprofit organizations and service providers. There’s not a lot of history of working together, and they’re not deeply embedded here the way they would be in other places.”

The convenings have played a transformative role in breaking down these historical silos between Newton’s city government and its public school system. After the second convening, Mayor Warren shared that “the city team time—where we had to hash out short- and long-term goals after hearing about what works or doesn’t work—that accelerated our work. It forced city and school officials to sit down and listen to policy experts who talked about the need for this architecture to be built.”

Brian Turner’s involvement on the cabinet evinced a change in thinking about the school’s relationship with outside providers and other city agencies. Turner, who sees his role on the cabinet as being the liaison to the school system and its data, noted that “hearing about what other cities are doing in terms of having platforms for communicating and sharing data about kids across the agencies has been interesting. . . . It’s created some food for thought in terms of what data do we want to share with others within Newton. . . . Part of this is the school system needing to realize that the partners who also work with kids have got the same goals we do. . . . We might learn, at what point is the school system just not enough?”

This shifting orientation is a welcome development for city leadership. As one city official explained,

“For Newton, the major difficulty is that we have not developed a great way to collaborate with schools. One of the major themes of the first convening for me was that the schools should not be the ones solely responsible for this work.” By All Means, the official said, had also been instrumental in increasing data sharing between the schools and the city. This new sense of openness extends beyond the school system: after the May 2017 convening, 63 percent of the Newton team reported that they collaborate more with other agencies and organizations in their cities after having joined By All Means (the remaining 38 percent reported that their interactions were “about the same”).

ALIGNMENT WITH PRE-EXISTING INITIATIVES

The cabinet’s work has been greatly enhanced by its alignment with Newton’s broader Economic Growth for All initiative. This collaboration with Boston College has brought research, financial resources, and thought partnership to the work. By All Means has also given additional impetus to the city’s pre-existing interest in expanding access to preschool to ensure greater equity.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONVENINGS

Many attendees noted that the convenings have been helpful in introducing a sense of accountability and positive pressure to Newton’s By All Means work. For the superintendent, the conversations that took place at one convening moved expanding preschool access to the top of his priority list; this pressure, he said, is a helpful way to prioritize the work amidst competing demands.

Some of this accountability also stems from BAM’s cohort model, which provides a way for cities to imagine new possibilities based on the work of

others. As one participant shared, “I think the convenings and hearing what other cities do and sharing best practices has helped to inform what we’re doing greatly. . . . But there’s also that little, you know, you don’t want them to be able to report a lot of progress and we haven’t found any. So I think there’s a little bit of a kickstart to be sure that we’re not going to fall behind the other cities that are participating.” Newton is driven by a curiosity about both how the other cities are doing, and what other cities are doing.

CONSULTANT

In Newton, the initial consultant worked closely with Youngblood and Turner to keep the initiative moving forward between meetings. According to Susan Swick, Chief of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, “[Without the consultant], I feel like the work could otherwise feel very circular, and instead it feels a little more linear, like we’re building some consensus to head towards a destination and attempt something.” The consultant helped to develop meeting agendas and shared the meeting facilitation responsibilities with Youngblood. When the initial consultant left this role in February 2017, the new consultant filled a less central role in the BAM work. On top of this smaller role for the consultant, the transition came at a time when locating funding for the middle school initiative had stalled, which presented an additional challenge to the progress of Newton’s work.

OTHER SUPPORTS

Education Redesign Lab Director Paul Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as a thought partner on their education strategy. The Lab has additionally supported Newton in seeking sources of funding and connected the team with a fundraising expert at the November 2016 convening.

Data

As in all other BAM cities, data has played a substantial role in the early work of the cabinet. And like many districts across the country, Newton Public Schools is data-rich with limited capacity to analyze its data. Recently, the district was fortunate enough to expand its capacity in this arena, adding a new full-time central office staff member to analyze data. This capacity was instrumental in supporting the cabinet’s work to understand the scope of the OST and preschool problem in Newton—though there is still plenty of data left to analyze.

Funding

Newton’s relative affluence presents challenges to locating outside funding sources, even for addressing the needs of under-resourced children, since most foundation funding is targeted to higher-need communities. The challenge finding funding for new middle school OST coordinator positions led to a scaling back of that plan to provide more direct supports to children. Mayor Warren’s plan to introduce a new citywide tax or fee to provide sustainable funding reflected bold thinking about how to address this issue; the fact that the mayor did not actually accomplish this before the end of his tenure suggests the political challenges of this kind of approach.

Conclusions

Newton’s experience has been informative in helping the Lab understand what this work might look like in more affluent cities. While many willing partners came to the table to work together on behalf of children, challenges with creating momentum for BAM initiatives and identifying external funding stymied progress. While other BAM cities had success raising external funds for new initiatives, this was not the case in Newton, suggesting that in more affluent cities, coordinated efforts on behalf of

children might necessitate internal funding through a reorganization of existing funds or the introduction of new taxes or fees. In the latter scenario, success would entail broad buy-in from the larger community. However, without a sense of urgency to rally the community, it can be difficult to generate buy-in or even prioritize this work among competing issues. Finally, the transition of the consultant at a pivotal time for the cabinet’s first initiative stalled progress even further, suggesting that there is a critical degree of buy-in a community must achieve before the successful transition of a key player. Overall, the Lab’s partnership with Newton demonstrates that affluence does not guarantee the will or the resources to build systems of opportunity and support for low-income children.

ENDNOTES

1. Warren, S. and Youngblood, D. C. (Fall 2016). Economic Growth for All. City of Newton, Massachusetts. Retrieved from <http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/78244>
2. Fleishman, D. (2016–2017 School Year). “2017 Complete Report Card” <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/reportcard/rc.aspx?linkid=38&orgcode=02070000&fycode=2017&orgtypecode=5&>
3. Sawhill, I. V., Winship, S., and Grannis, K. S. (September 20, 2012). Pathways to the Middle Class: Balancing Personal and Public Responsibilities. Center on Children & Families at Brookings. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0920-pathways-middle-class-sawhill-winship.pdf>

Newton Takeaways

- Affluent communities face challenges in creating a strong demand for change and in securing outside resources to fund the work.
- Creating new taxes or fees offers a sustainable source of funding for new initiatives.
- Consistent, activist leadership matters, and close alignment of priorities between the mayor and superintendent is critical to making progress.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Newton's work has evolved in the following ways:

- Newton elected a new mayor in November 2017. Ruthanne Fuller was inaugurated as the city's first female mayor in January 2018.
- Newton concluded its participation in By All Means in early 2018. Mayor-Elect Fuller attended part of the By All Means' November 2017 convening, but ultimately decided in February 2018 that Newton would not continue to participate in the initiative.
- Expanding access to preschool remains a priority. Under the new mayor, Newton is continuing to explore ways to ensure cost is not a barrier to preschool access for low- and moderate-income Newton families. The city hosted two convenings of approximately 30 preschool providers to discuss interests and concerns around expanded enrollment strategies.

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children's needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium. Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed on to a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- A Children's Cabinet, which serves as the governance structure for each city's By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.
- A BAM-sponsored part-time consultant, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.
- Twice-yearly convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of “what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table”? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children's needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, partnerships and relationships, external factors, data, and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children's Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Oakland's participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Oakland is BAM's only city located west of the Mississippi River, and has faced several external challenges during early phases of the initiative, including a transition in school district leadership and a public school budget crisis.

Oakland is a mid-sized city of over 400,000 people located just east of San Francisco, and is among the most diverse cities in the nation. The Bay Area tech boom has brought an influx of workers, new restaurants, and a youthful energy to the city. It has also brought the challenges of gentrification, including stark income inequality and an acute housing crisis. In just a five-year period between 2011 and 2016, the median home price nearly doubled,¹ and homelessness has become such a widespread problem that the city has put up storage sheds as a stop-gap measure.² Libby Schaaf, who was born and raised in Oakland, was elected Oakland’s 50th mayor in 2014 on a platform of addressing economic and racial inequality city-wide. The issue of equity is an Oakland priority, and supporting the needs of students and families furthest from opportunity is deeply embedded in the Oakland work described below.

In January 2016, Mayor Schaaf, in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), East Bay College Fund, and the Oakland Public Education Fund, launched Oakland Promise, a cradle-to-career initiative aimed at tripling the number of college graduates from Oakland. At the time of the announcement, only about 10% of Oakland public

school students who started ninth grade went on to complete college within five years of graduating from high school.³ Hoping to tackle this issue through a cross-sector partnership, the city, schools, and hundreds of partners joined forces to participate in one or more of four interrelated Oakland Promise initiatives:

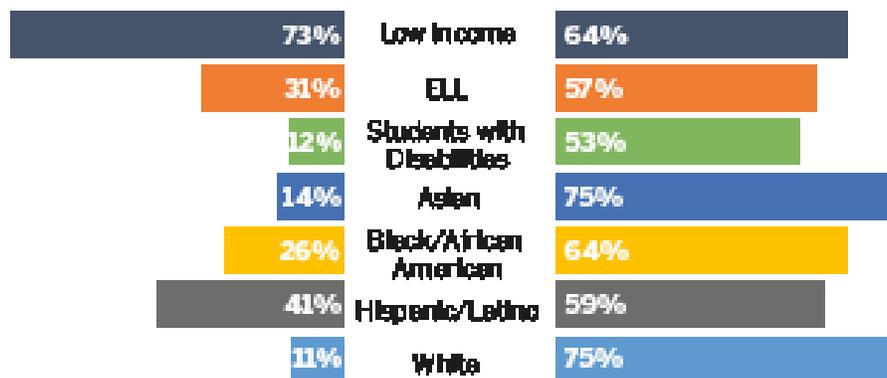
- Brilliant Baby, which supports the healthy development of babies by providing up to \$1,000 for Oakland’s most economically marginalized families. It establishes college savings accounts (CSAs) seeded with \$500 for babies and offers coaching and financial awards of up to \$500 for parents/guardians to support their financial, academic, and parenting goals.
- Kindergarten to College, which opens early college scholarships seeded with \$100 for all Oakland public school kindergarteners, supports families to open their own CSA, offering up to \$100 in savings incentives, and aims to instill a college-bound mindset through school-based activities.
- Future Centers, which are college and career hubs in middle and high schools that provide college application and scholarship support, technology, and access to internships.

City-School Relationship

In Oakland, there is no formal relationship between the mayor’s office and the school district. The Oakland Unified School District Board of Education appoints the district superintendent.

District Enrollment ('15-'16)

Graduation Rates ('15-'16)



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

- College Scholarship & Completion, an initiative through which students receive multi-year scholarships paired with persistence supports (one-to-one mentors, peer support, retreats, college partnerships) to provide the holistic supports needed to graduate and be successful in a career.

Between January 2016 and January 2017, Mayor Schaaf led an ambitious fundraising effort that raised approximately \$25 million for the Promise's first four years of operation. In its January 2017 progress report, Oakland Promise posted the following successes:

- Brilliant Baby piloted a financial coaching program with 100 new parents.
- Kindergarten to College partnered with 18 schools to award 1,250 early college scholarships.
- Future Centers were established in seven schools and saw a 90 percent FAFSA/DREAM application completion rate among its three participating high schools.
- College Scholarship & Completion supported 300 OUSD graduates with \$2.5 million in multi-year scholarships and persistence support.

Oakland Promise was launched in a landscape that was already engaging in innovative collective impact efforts, particularly ones focused on providing equity of opportunity for all children. In 2009, Oakland partnered with a number of philanthropists and community-based organizations to become a Full Service Community Schools district. Full service community schools were designed to act as hubs, providing opportunities that children need at every phase of development to be healthy and wholly supported from birth to graduation. Oakland is also a My Brother's Keeper city, and released an action plan in May 2016 outlining the city's efforts to ensure equity in outcomes for boys and men of color; both the city and the district have staff dedicated to improving outcomes for students of color. These undertakings are examples of some of the 20-plus significant initiatives underway when Oakland applied to participate in the By All Means initiative.

At the systems level, the Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority (JPA) coordinates services and programming for children from Alameda County, OUSD, and the City of Oakland. The JPA's status as a Joint Powers Authority—a distinct legal entity through which two or more public authorities can jointly exercise power—had allowed the county, the city, and the school district to meaningfully work together in service of eliminating health, wealth, and education disparities in Oakland so children can thrive. Typically chaired by the mayor, superintendent, and county supervisor, the JPA grew out of the 1998 national Urban Health Initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through which the three major public entities developed and implemented far-reaching systems change efforts. When the initiative ended, their collective work evolved to become the JPA in 2006.

In early 2016, Kaiser Permanente, Oakland's largest private sector employer, became involved with the JPA and expressed interest in helping it "become a viable, sustainable, backbone collective impact organization in Oakland" through funding and in-kind support. At the March meeting of the JPA, Schaaf shared that "in addition to an \$826,050 grant to the JPA, Kaiser will also support a contract with [consulting firm] FSG to assist with framing [JPA's] governance structure, and aligning the work across" the organization's board, steering committee, and working teams.⁴ As a result of FSG's analysis, the JPA established the Oakland Thrives Leadership Council in July 2016. Made up of civic and business leaders, its purpose is to involve the broader civic community in the work to raise young adults who graduate from high school with the potential to go to college, have a career, and be successful. The Leadership Council is chaired by Schaaf and an executive vice president of Kaiser Permanente and—together with the JPA and FSG—was instrumental in developing the JPA's data dashboard and "Impact Tables," which are working groups setting goals and outlining strategies to address challenges in education, health, wealth, housing, and safety (for more details, see Data, page 49).

JOINING BY ALL MEANS

As Oakland’s mayor and superintendent were preparing to announce their Oakland Promise partnership, the Education Redesign Lab, headed by Paul Reville, was preparing to launch its By All Means initiative and was seeking out partner cities to participate as “laboratories” of innovation to create a children’s opportunity agenda. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to meet the needs of every child.

It was the former Director of Communications at OUSD who first brought By All Means to Oakland’s attention. He sent the opportunity to city and OUSD leadership, who hadn’t yet launched Oakland Promise, seeing it as a great way to highlight their budding partnership. The President of OUSD’s school board, James Harris, learned about it “as an opportunity to share and really express some of the cross-pollination work we had started about three or four years ago at the JPA.” Harris, OUSD, and the city were “happy to know that there were other folks out there doing similar work. It felt like collective impact and collaboration were really strategies to improve outcomes for students and children.” With the city, school district, and school board in agreement, Oakland officially applied to join the By All Means consortium.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

Knowing that Oakland’s landscape in this area was already crowded, the Oakland team—a group of people chosen by the mayor’s office to attend BAM convenings—decided shortly after the May 2016 convening that the JPA would act as Oakland’s Children’s Cabinet. The team’s reasoning was that the JPA, which meets every six to eight weeks, comprised many of the same leaders suggested by BAM: in addition to having typical BAM cabinet

members such as the mayor, superintendent, director of human services, city council president, and the school board president, it also included executive representation from the county government and the Oakland police department.

At the time of Oakland’s decision to use the JPA as their Children’s Cabinet, the JPA was actively searching for a new CEO. Lisa Villarreal was named to the post in August 2016. The following month, the mayor’s Director of Education, David Silver, introduced By All Means to JPA members and solicited suggestions for a BAM-sponsored consultant. In November 2016, two new members were added to the JPA: senior leadership from Alameda County’s early childhood effort and from the area’s community college district.

DEFINING THE WORK

At the November 2016 convening, the Oakland team had a breakthrough in aligning their multiple efforts. During the city’s “team time” sessions, new JPA CEO Lisa Villarreal worked with the mayor and the BAM team to develop a new model for aligning how the JPA and the Oakland Thrives Leadership Council would coordinate activities. The group also discussed the complex work on the five Impact Tables and the initial focus for the city’s BAM work: rapidly expanding the number of Future Centers located in Oakland’s middle and high schools. The team invited a special guest to this convening: city planning and equity expert Ricardo Huerta Niño, who, shortly thereafter, became Oakland’s BAM-sponsored consultant and new Director of Collective Impact.

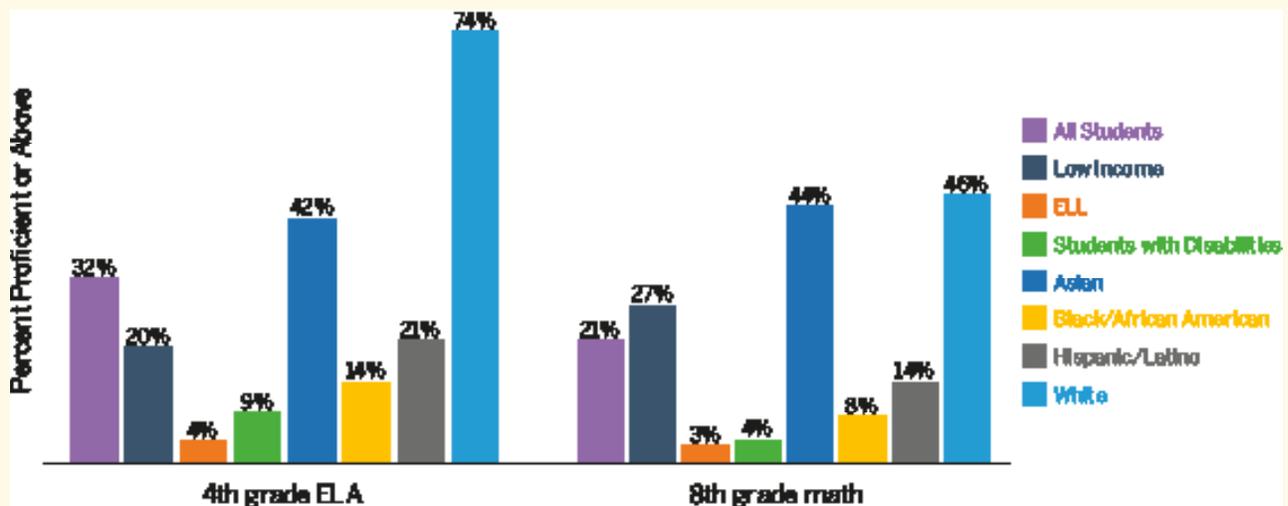
Just a few days after the November convening, the Future Centers’ biggest champion, Superintendent Wilson, announced that he would be leaving Oakland to become Chancellor of D.C. Public Schools beginning February 2017. Despite this surprising and hasty departure, Huerta Niño began his efforts to elevate and accelerate the expansion of the Future Centers. Over the spring of 2017 the group experienced successes around the Future Centers: in particular, the growing partnership between the district’s Future Center leaders and Community

Schools leaders, which has led to staff from both efforts within several schools coordinating, for the first time ever, services and supports for students in multiple schools. But the group also came up against a major challenge: having lost Superintendent Wilson, the Future Centers’ major champion, it was unclear whether the funding which had been committed for their expansion would materialize for the 2017–2018 school year, in light of OUSD’s publicly emerging budget crisis. A private funder also indicated his intention to pull back on future funding for the Centers.

By the time of the May 2017 convening, it had become evident that the JPA was too broad of a governance structure, dealing with policy questions at too high a level, to accelerate the specific

child-facing initiatives Oakland had identified as a part of their BAM partnership. Recognizing this, the Oakland team—most of whom had consistently attended convenings since the start of the initiative—instituted smaller, monthly steering committee meetings that would be punctuated by larger quarterly meetings that include the mayor and superintendent. Just a few weeks earlier, Oakland had announced the new OUSD superintendent to be Kyla Johnson-Trammell, an Oakland native who had been working in the district for 19 years. Her tenure was scheduled to begin July 1, 2017, and the team hoped that the new BAM structure would also provide the opportunity to fully integrate Johnson-Trammell’s vision into their work.

Test Scores 2017 SBAC



Students
Chronically Absent:

15%

Child
Uninsured Rate:

4.2%

Children Born with
Low Birthweight:

7.1%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/OaklandDem16, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/OaklandData, Sample Test Scores: bit.ly/OaklandSBAC17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/OaklandData, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/UninsuredRates, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/OaklandBirthweight

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Even though the Oakland mayor does not officially oversee education, Mayor Schaaf has used her convening power and political leadership to move an education agenda; she is passionate about improving education. “As mayors,” Schaaf shared, “we have the opportunity to change how public systems work, as opposed to just starting another program. We also have the opportunity to scale things. . . . As the controllers of these giant public systems that affect everybody, we can change culture. We can change the expectations and beliefs of an entire generation of children. There is no nonprofit organization that can deliver that kind of promise, and we should really be aware of that opportunity that only government has.” In addition to using philanthropic support as an impetus to fund Silver’s position in her office, Schaaf annually celebrates her birthday as a fundraising gala for Oakland Promise.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP CHANGE

Superintendent Wilson’s mid-year departure caught many by surprise. Because the superintendent-mayor relationship is central to BAM’s theory of action, the superintendent transition had implications for the pace and direction of the BAM work. First, Wilson was the primary champion of the Future Centers, so his departure affected the pace and immediate feasibility of their expansion. In light of this, it was impossible for the team to accelerate progress in a meaningful way until a new superintendent was named. The team used the transition as an opportunity to take a step back and evaluate options for creating a broader college-going culture in the city. Oakland has been adaptive in face of this challenge and is actively planning to incorporate Johnson-Trammell’s vision into their work.

CABINET

Between recent wins and new leadership, the decade-old JPA has experienced an exciting revitalization in Oakland. There is a growing interest among agencies to join the JPA. Its charter members, the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, and OUSD, were joined by the Alameda County Office of Education, First 5 Alameda County, and Peralta Community College District in 2016. Others, including the Housing Authority, are actively interested in joining as well. The existence of formal governance structures and processes has facilitated organized collaboration between members. In March 2017, JPA’s bylaws were being actively revisited in response to its revitalization.

The revitalization is thanks in large part to the creation of the Oakland Thrives Leadership Council, the Impact Tables, and the new data dashboard (for more details, see Data, page 49). Schaaf, who joined the JPA as a council member before her election as mayor, shared that through this active, collective impact work the JPA has seen a transformation. Similarly, Harris noted that “it has really been fun to see the organization come back to life and to see all the people from the different sectors of Oakland and the County of Alameda coming together in the name of kids. It’s really, really a great thing to see.”

Partnerships and Relationships

The landscape in Oakland, BAM’s biggest city, is large and complicated. In this regard, Oakland has the added challenge of contextualizing BAM and articulating where it intersects with numerous pre-existing efforts. Among competing priorities, the city’s BAM agenda and work plan weren’t set in motion until well into the initiative, when the BAM-sponsored consultant was brought on board. His presence was instrumental in aligning the work

and moving things forward, and the team hoped to see an acceleration of Oakland’s existing collective impact work through his presence.

Oakland’s pre-existing work is both an asset and a drawback, because aligning numerous initiatives and collectively setting priorities is an ongoing challenge. Schaaf, however, is skilled at making the most of this pre-existing landscape: “I think what has allowed us to scale and get huge traction very quickly is our belief in partnerships. We have not tried to reinvent the wheel or layer on a new program. We are the government: we are trying to change the way that the institution works, not add yet another program.”

Schaaf shared a number of examples to illustrate the ways that Oakland has capitalized on and aligned with numerous existing efforts by engaging in partnership and collaboration with trusted, valuable organizations across the city. First, Oakland Promise’s Brilliant Baby initiative—which gives babies born into poverty \$500 college savings accounts and offers financial coaching for parents—is introduced to parents by the children’s hospital. As Schaaf quipped, “Who is more trusted than a child’s pediatrician?”

Another example is their partnership with the Unity Council, a culturally competent organization that runs early Head Start in Oakland’s Latino community. The Unity Council introduces the Brilliant Baby message, gives the gift of a \$500 college savings account, and also provides a warm and trusted invitation to the financial coaching services. According to Schaaf, “This is what has allowed us to scale and reach people in a very trusted way very quickly.”

External Factors: Lab Support

CONSULTANT

The consultant experience in Oakland has differed markedly from other BAM cities in two ways. First, Oakland was the only city to combine the part-time role with a second part-time position to create a full-time position. This position, Director of Collective Impact, has been housed in the mayor’s office rather than filled by an independent consultant, as in the other By All Means cities. This layer of independence has proven to be an important factor in the other cities, as it enhances the consultant’s ability to effectively facilitate the cabinet and the implementation of its initiatives. The Lab has observed that the neutral, third-party aspect of the consultant’s role has been advantageous in moving the BAM work forward.

Second, Oakland did not have a BAM-sponsored consultant until toward the end of the first year. This delay in hiring was caused by a multitude of factors, including the logistics created by the combined role and the fact that in larger cities, processes tend to move more slowly. This initial absence of a facilitator slowed Oakland’s progress in undertaking BAM-specific work.

CONVENINGS

In spite of the difficulty Oakland has had in fully integrating the BAM framework, participants agreed that attending the convenings as an Oakland team has been beneficial to cross-sector collaboration on behalf of children in the city. For Oakland, the convenings have provided opportunities to come together for focused periods of time and deepen relationships across agencies. “Carving out the time is really important,” shared a senior leader at Kaiser. “When we’re all back here at home and doing our day-to-day work, sometimes it’s a challenge to just sit down and carve out the time to think freely and

strategically. Just convening everybody together is incredibly important.” Silver, from the mayor’s office, agreed: “Getting all of us out of here and in a room together to talk is actually a big deal. Having that work time just doesn’t happen given all the other priorities.”

Having this dedicated time has deepened relationships across Oakland silos. After the May 2017 convening, 90% of the Oakland team reported that they collaborate more with other agencies and organizations in their cities after having joined By All Means. The convenings have brought partners like Kaiser even closer to the work while “improving communication, establishing stronger relationships with an expectation of continuing to meet and communicate, and preparing a foundation for ongoing collective impact work.” This, for Villarreal, has aligned strongly with the vision and mission she inherited as the JPA’s new CEO: “It’s played right into what I need to be doing and it adds more clout and proof to the fact that we need to be working on cross-sector collaboration. I don’t think that I would be as far along in my relationships and communication with the people on the team, and the people that they work with, had we not had the two convenings that I’ve been to.” Team members have noted that the convenings have resulted in it being easier to meet with and get information from one another, particularly high-ranking officials who would typically take weeks to reach.

The convenings have had this effect even within the school district. As a result of attending the convenings together, the leaders of the Community Schools and Future Centers initiatives—both housed in OUSD—have begun coordinating for the first time. Their staffs are meeting regularly and collaborating on implementing a whole-child approach for students being supported by both efforts. As one person close to the initiatives shared, “We have a real referral process. . . . When you talk about servicing the whole child, the fact that we can better do that together is really helpful and I think something that the convenings and Impact Table have helped speed along.”

OTHER SUPPORTS

Mayor Schaaf has acknowledged that one of the most important ways the BAM partnership has supported Oakland’s work is through the credibility and validation that the Harvard affiliation provides. The Lab has introduced the team to key experts and funders, elevated Oakland Promise, and provided highly visible speaking opportunities for Schaaf to discuss Oakland’s vision (for example, Reville invited Schaaf to participate in a panel at the popular Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Summit where the mayor had the chance to meet a number of business leaders interested in Oakland’s agenda for children). In the absence of a consultant for nearly a year, the Lab’s staff also played a significant role working with Oakland to identify and organize their BAM-specific work and, after the addition of a consultant, has continued to assist the city in collaborating across silos and moving an agenda. Finally, Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as a thought partner on their education strategy.

Data

Oakland is an outcomes-oriented city and believes in using strong data to guide decision-making. In March 2017, Oakland was selected to be the first city in the nation to develop and pilot a comprehensive data platform. With funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, and in partnership with the equity agenda launched by My Brother’s Keeper (now a project of the Obama Foundation), Oakland has begun to develop an Equity Intelligence Platform (EIP), a comprehensive, cross-agency data dashboard that will be the first of its kind in the nation. The EIP is aimed at making local data come alive, specifically to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color, by organizing and presenting local data in a way that increases accountability and supports policy and system change. City managers, community-based organizations, and provider agencies will use the EIP to measure and track progress in improving outcomes for boys and young men of color.

This platform is being developed in alignment with the goals of the JPA's five Impact Tables, which work to identify discrete short- and long-term goals for the city in the areas of education, health, wealth, housing, and safety. These Impact Tables, supported by their Kaiser-funded Program Managers and JPA-appointed chairs, have done a lot of work to date on identifying goals, solidifying outcomes, and backward planning to identify benchmarks and strategies to reach those goals.

Funding

JPA

Increased funding from members and partners has accelerated the JPA's collective impact efforts. The JPA is funded by the annual contributions of member agencies, who pay to maintain their status as members, so the JPA's increased membership has been beneficial financially. A co-chair of the JPA's Oakland Thrives Leadership Council, Kaiser Permanente has contributed significant funding to accelerate the work of the Impact Tables, allowing the JPA to hire a program manager for each of the five tables (education, health, wealth, housing, and safety). Additionally, a significant gift from Bloomberg Philanthropies is funding the JPA's ambitious data dashboard effort.

OAKLAND PROMISE

The Oakland Promise is funded by annual contributions from the City of Oakland, OUSD, and the East Bay College Fund, as well as a number of private gifts from donors such as Kaiser Permanente, the Benioffs (of Salesforce), and Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Mayor Schaaf uses her visibility and position of leadership—as well as her birthday event—to continue directing funds to the Promise.

FUTURE CENTERS

Oakland's effort to expand the Future Centers has run into a number of financial challenges. In January 2017, the district's budget deficit triggered a

conversation amongst all stakeholders about priorities: slashing millions of dollars from the budget would entail funding some programs at the expense of others. With the departure of the Future Centers' primary champion, Superintendent Wilson, it became unclear if the immediate expansion of Future Centers would remain a priority for the 2017–2018 school year. Amidst OUSD's budget shortfall, Oakland struggled to gain additional outside funding for them as well. While Salesforce.org provided funding for expanding Future Centers during the 2016–2017 school year, it is unlikely they will continue funding the partnership. As such, leaders are exploring other opportunities and partnerships to ensure all middle and high school students have access to high quality college and career access supports.

Conclusions

Oakland is a city with visionary leaders and a wealth of civic and community organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children. Since the launch of By All Means, the city has seen significant progress in aligning major initiatives—including Oakland Promise, Oakland Thrives Leadership Council, the JPA, and others—into a strategic collective impact agenda. At the same time, Oakland continues to face challenges in closing achievement and opportunity gaps. Oakland's plans for accelerating initiatives through By All Means was significantly impacted by the unexpected departure of Superintendent Antwan Wilson, by the delayed start and multiple commitments of the BAM-sponsored consultant, and by OUSD's budget challenges.

The negative impact of the superintendent's mid-year departure on Oakland's first By All Means initiative, the expansion of the Future Centers, suggests that broad-based buy-in by city and civic leaders is critical to making progress over time and in the face of leadership transitions. Additionally, in such a large city with so many key leaders, the part-time nature of the consultant's role was not adequate, and the fact that he was not hired earlier in the process also impacted Oakland's progress.

Furthermore, Oakland's experience suggests that a consultant not affiliated with the city or district would likely result in a more effective approach to facilitating this complex work.

As it moves forward, Oakland is continuing its efforts to align its supports for children into a more unified governance structure that incorporates the measures identified in the Impact Tables as benchmarks. The mayor's leadership in both public and private resource development will clearly have a long-lasting impact, enabling so many of Oakland's youth to make college a reality.

ENDNOTES

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Oakland Takeaways

- The By All Means model should be adapted in larger cities to accommodate their complex environments. For example, in larger communities coordinating across multiple efforts is critical to success.
- Having a strong facilitator in place at the outset is necessary to keep the collective impact work prioritized and moving forward.
- Getting early buy-in from key stakeholders helps sustain momentum through leadership transitions.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Oakland's work has evolved in the following ways:

- The Future Centers successfully expanded from seven schools to 10 schools in the 2017–2018 school year, and talks are underway between city and OUSD leadership on the expansion of Future Centers moving forward.
- The Oakland Promise published its 2018 progress report, sharing the following successes: Schaaf has raised \$32 million in funding for the first four years of operation; Brilliant Baby has awarded over 150 babies with \$500 college savings accounts; Kindergarten to College is now at 35 Oakland elementary schools, has awarded 4,300 students \$100 early college scholarships, and supported 200+ families in opening CSAs; Future Centers have seen dramatic results for students, of whom 77% enrolled in college directly after high school graduation, 88% applied to at least one college, and 90% completed the FAFSA or DREAM application; and College Scholarship & Completion has supported nearly 700 OUSD graduates with \$5.5 million in multi-year scholarships and persistence support.
- Oakland leaders are currently advancing a ballot measure to ensure sustainable public funding for Oakland Promise and the expansion of early childhood slots. This measure, if passed in the 2018 election, is anticipated to raise approximately \$27 million annually.
- Kyla Johnson-Trammell began her tenure as Oakland Superintendent in July 2017 and attended BAM's November 2017 convening, along with her chief of staff. A By All Means working group is focused on identifying a few key focus areas—informed by the JPA's Impact Table work and prioritized by the mayor, superintendent, and county leaders—to tackle over the next several years.

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children's needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium. Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed onto a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- A Children's Cabinet, which serves as the governance structure for each city's By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.
- A BAM-sponsored part-time consultant, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.
- Twice-yearly convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of "what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table"? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children's needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, partnerships and relationship, external factors, data, and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children's Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Providence's participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Providence is one of three BAM cities to experience each changeover in consultant and is the only city to tackle all three focus areas at once.

Providence, the capital of Rhode Island, has become an increasingly popular destination for its award-winning restaurants and vibrant arts scene. It was named the Top City in America by Travel + Leisure Magazine and the country's Best Small City by Architectural Digest in 2014; and in 2015 GQ Magazine called it America's "coolest city." The city is home to Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Johnson and Wales University.

Even with these accolades, Providence continues to face the challenges familiar to many New England cities. Its economy, which has been shifting from manufacturing to service industries, has struggled to overcome a slow recovery from the recession that began in 2007. Providence has also been working to move past a history of political distrust: Mayor Jorge Elorza, who took office in 2015, won his election as a political newcomer against six-time mayor Buddy Cianci, who had twice resigned due to felony corruption convictions.

In 2016, 84.4 percent of Providence Public School District (PPSD) students were considered

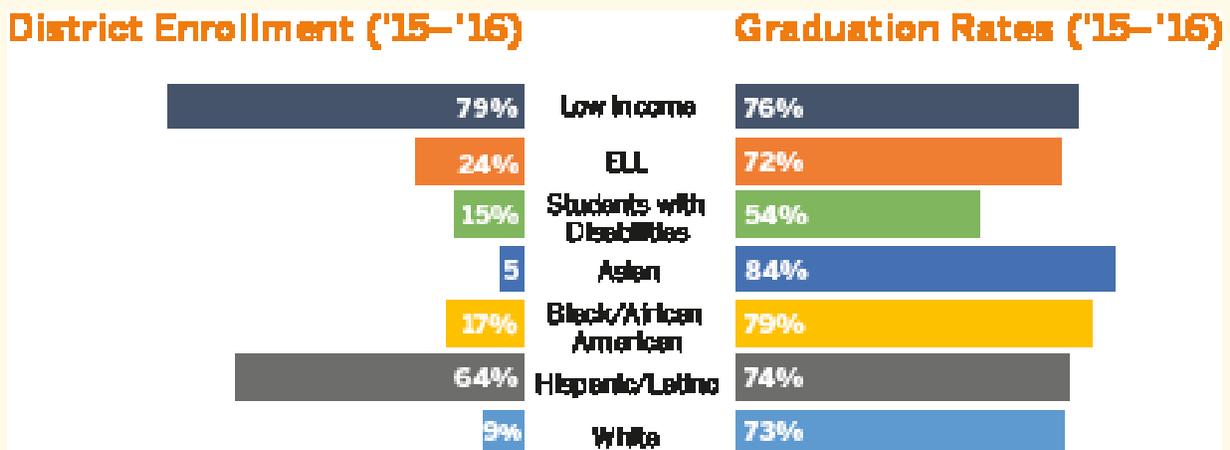
economically disadvantaged. For Mayor Elorza, providing pathways to success for vulnerable children is personal: he was born in Providence to recent immigrants from Guatemala, grew up in poverty, and went on to become the first in his family to attend college. He graduated from Harvard Law School and was a law professor before running for mayor. Mayor Elorza credits his success in part to a teacher who recommended, on the day that applications were due, that he apply to Providence's top performing exam school, Classical High School. The chance nature of this suggestion underscored for him the importance of creating more systemic approaches to ensuring all children have the supports and opportunities they need to succeed.

JOINING BY ALL MEANS

When Mayor Elorza took office, he outlined three major goals for the city: excellence in education, jobs and economic opportunity, and building a thriving community. Later that year, he attended a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in Boston and

City-School Relationship

In Providence, the mayor and the school district have some formal connections. For instance, the mayor works with the Providence School Board to select a superintendent through a collaborative process.



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

presented the city's innovative work on Providence Talks. This program, which won grand prize funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies' 2013 Mayors Challenge, seeks to close the word gap between children living in poverty and those who are not through home visits and the use of "word pedometers."¹ The program had been established under Mayor Angel Taveras, and Elorza, seeing its potential, quickly took steps to invigorate and expand the program after taking office.

At the same U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting, Paul Reville presented an overview of his newly formed Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and outlined its comprehensive children's opportunity agenda. The Lab was preparing to launch its By All Means initiative and was looking for partner cities to participate as "laboratories" of innovation. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to suit the needs of every child.

Not long after the conference, Newton Mayor Setti Warren reached out to Elorza to gauge his interest in having Providence become one of these laboratories. Providence was fortuitously already engaged in expanding each area of the Lab's focus: the mayor's office had recently convened a Summer Learning Task Force, the Providence Public School District (PPSD) was already finding success with expanding personalized learning models, and both the city and schools had an interest in expanding social-emotional learning (SEL) support for children. To Elorza, participating in By All Means would be an opportunity to accelerate those efforts and tie them all together under a comprehensive framework. Elorza approached Acting Superintendent Chris Maher with the opportunity and Maher, seeing BAM's alignment with PPSD's priorities, agreed to sign on as well.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

At its inception, the BAM cabinet included Mayor Elorza, Acting Superintendent Chris Maher, and senior leadership from city government, PPSD, City Council, the Lifespan Corporation, Rhode Island College, Brown University, and the Providence School Board. During a prior administration, the mayor's office had created a Providence Children & Youth Cabinet, which had transitioned into an independent organization comprising nonprofit organizations from around the city. The BAM Children's Cabinet acknowledged and incorporated this work by including the cabinet's director as a cabinet member. Another pre-existing body, a Summer Learning Task Force that Elorza convened in late 2015, saw overlap in several members as well, which would prove helpful in aligning pre-existing work with the cabinet's efforts.

A Salem-based education expert joined the team as the cabinet's BAM-sponsored consultant, and Courtney Hawkins—then Chief Policy Officer for the City of Providence—collaborated with the consultant on the day-to-day work between cabinet meetings. According to Hawkins, "We were already doing some things in each of the By All Means focus areas, but the cabinet has helped us to do more engagement with people around that and to be more structured in our approach." The cabinet convened quarterly, with its second and third meetings taking place in September 2016 and January 2017. By the spring of 2017, the cabinet grew to include a PPSD specialist in trauma-informed work, as well as additions from the Teachers Union and the Rhode Island Department of Education. The current cabinet includes substantial representation from the school district, and its initial work has relied heavily on PPSD staff.

By the spring of 2017, cabinet members agreed that many of the right people were at the table, though determining how to best utilize those people presented a challenge. According to one member, "I think figuring out the right configuration for the

cabinet [has been difficult] . . . and figuring out how the cabinet can influence the work on the ground, connecting people between meetings to the work, and getting people to actually tangibly contribute.” This grappling with structures and processes is common in early collective impact work.²

By late May 2017, cabinet members still expressed a feeling that the cabinet was not yet operating in a truly collective way; rather, they felt a lot of great work was being done in parallel. The team left the May convening with a common understanding that to optimize their time together as a cabinet, they needed to come together under a shared vision and purpose to better coordinate and communicate their efforts.

DEFINING THE WORK

During early conversations, the team decided to focus equally on each of the three ongoing initiatives they had defined as priorities—expanding access to summer learning, increasing the number of schools offering personalized learning, and improving social-emotional support services in the schools—as their official BAM work, rather than choosing just one effort. One cabinet member described it this way: “The school department and the mayor’s office did an assessment to get an inventory of who’s doing what, in the hopes that that would help inform where we ought to place our initial emphasis. . . . The conversations that they had after that first convening led to the decision to approach all three [BAM focus areas] at once, I think largely driven by the desire to leverage investments—time, talent, treasure—that were already being made in all three areas.” The cabinet came to the conclusion that they should use BAM not only to accelerate their ongoing work, but also as a frame by which Providence could tie its ongoing initiatives together in a way that could be easily communicated to the public.

In April 2016, the Providence School Board unanimously confirmed Maher as superintendent, and he charged a new team at PPSD with developing a district strategic plan. This team included cabinet member Heather Tow-Yick, the district’s new

Chief Transformation Officer. During this process, Tow-Yick and the planning team mapped each of the BAM focus areas—which include personalized systems of education and support, expanding access to out-of-school opportunities, and integrating health and social services with schools and with the district’s work—and explicitly named them as strategies to realize the district’s goals of achieving academic readiness and maximizing learning time for students.

A New Approach

During the second BAM convening, Mayor Elorza was inspired by hearing how other cities in the cohort had engaged their communities in this work and decided to pursue a similar approach. Elorza rallied the cabinet around a “big tent” concept that would increase community engagement in and awareness about public education. The mayor reached out to the president of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation—whom he had met at the BAM convening—to seek funding for a summit aimed at building and supporting a community-informed vision for education in Providence.

The foundation awarded Providence a grant to hire a community organizer to plan and facilitate the summit. To ensure the summit would truly be a community-driven rather than a top-down effort, the city used the grant funds to hire a local expert in community engagement and youth participatory action, Adeola Oredola, who greatly impacted the summit’s agenda and structure in ways that amplified student and community voice. As one cabinet member shared, “The summit is going to be very much focused on community input and on engaging community members to tell us about what their priorities are, which is something that we haven’t done as a cabinet yet. We’re thinking about how to take the influence of this leadership group and ensure that it’s being informed by the needs of the community.”

Providence publicly announced the summit in January and scheduled a pre-summit Community Conversation for stakeholders to provide ideas, feedback, and suggestions to ensure that the summit would lead to meaningful action. The All In:

Providence Education Summit took place in April 2017, with over 400 students, teachers, and community members in attendance.

During the Lab's third convening in May 2017, the Providence team discussed plans to share outcomes from the summit with the community in the following months. The city was developing a report detailing the summit's conclusions, which included the following five priorities:

1. Improving Facilities District Wide
2. Cultivating Culturally Responsive Learning
3. Strengthening Diversity and Inclusion
4. Improving Outcomes for English Language Learners
5. Leveraging Community Partnerships in Schools

In breakout sessions for each priority area, summit participants identified short- and long-term goals, such as engaging in an asset-mapping process to determine how resources are being used in Providence to support children and who is providing services. The city planned to host a series of continuing community conversations on these topics. The cabinet made a commitment to integrate the community's recommendations into its BAM work and to develop an overarching vision for the community to rally around and for stakeholders to buy into.

Focus Area 1: Summer Learning

Simultaneous with this work, the cabinet was moving forward on its goal of increasing and enhancing summer learning opportunities for Providence youth in order to mitigate summer learning loss and accelerate year-round learning among students. In an unprecedented partnership, the mayor's office and PPST together released a \$1 million RFP seeking proposals from high-quality summer learning programs serving K–8 students (for high school students, they announced that in summer 2017 the city would offer more than 1,000 summer jobs, more than doubling the number from 2016³). The RFP integrated a set of recommendations from the Summer Learning Task Force Elorza had created in late 2015.⁴

The RFP resulted in partnerships with four provider organizations—Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), Breakthrough Providence, the Providence After School Alliance, and Generation Teach—all of which agreed to provide five-day programming for five weeks, with pre- and post-testing to determine the effectiveness of the programs. Three of the four providers already used the same assessment as the Providence school district, which would facilitate the collection of data on the summer programs. The fourth partner would be given access to the tools and equipment necessary to conduct this testing for their students as well.

A city official shared that “the goal is twofold: for them, it's the differentiation piece, using the data within the program to figure out how to best adapt for the kids. For us, it's to understand in each program what the pre- and post-results look like.” On this latter purpose, the city and district were preparing to engage in performance-based contracts, under which the partner organizations would be paid according to their ability to meet certain agreed-upon benchmarks. This process, facilitated with help from the School Board's experience in this area, is one of the strategies the district is using to create a more cost-effective deployment of resources.

Final investments were vetted and approved through the City Council and Providence School Board. Through this collaborative effort, over 850 summer learning slots were made available in summer 2017 for Providence children. These slots represented a baseline number of summer slots with consistent program features to providing high-quality summer learning, spurred by Providence's participation in BAM, that included requirements for the number of weeks of programming and data sharing with the district. The investment aligns with the district's strategic plan and five-year goal of providing 1700 summer learning seats by summer 2021. On this effort and others, the cabinet has aligned its BAM efforts with the district's strategic plan to facilitate coordination across multiple stakeholders on the greatest needs and possibilities for Providence children.

Focus Area 2: Personalized Learning

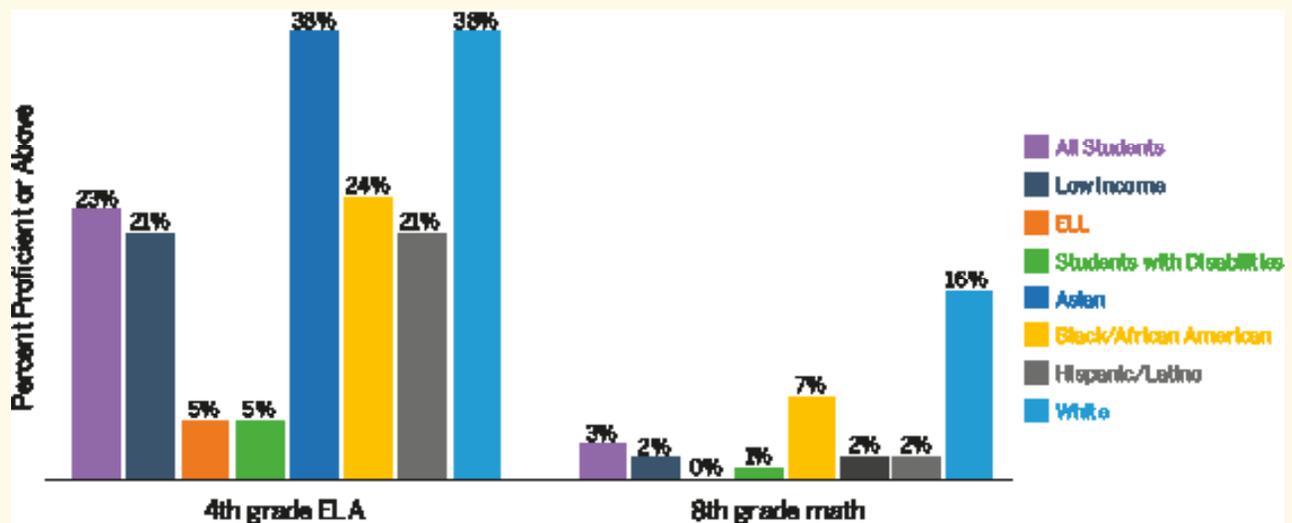
The Providence school district has been a leader in implementing personalized approaches to teaching and learning. In a 2017 article in *The Atlantic* describing Rhode Island's progress in this area, Superintendent Maher shared the PPSD strategy: "Through professional development led by groups such as Summit Schools and the Highlander Institute [a Providence-based education nonprofit], our teachers and administrators have learned how to use real-time student data to shape instruction so that they can meet each child where that child is at academically."⁵ In 2015, one Providence school implemented the Summit personalized learning model and found such great success that the district has expanded the model to four additional schools. In addition to providing training, the district has made significant strides toward 1:1 technology

for students and in embedding ethnic studies into the curriculum. Maher stressed that personalized learning is seen not as an intervention, but as being the core of how PPSD will change its outcomes.

Focus Area 3: Social-Emotional Learning

Of its three focus areas, Providence's effort to expand social-emotional learning is its newest. PPSD hired its first full-time central staff member dedicated to social-emotional health in November 2016, Gail Mastropietro, who began attending cabinet meetings as a member in April 2017. The district began by providing additional trauma-informed supports to six schools, and they hope to increase the number to 21 by the end of the 2017–2018 school year. Additionally, Providence plans to spend about \$350,000 on social-emotional learning during the 2017–2018

Test Scores
2017 PARCC



Students
Chronically Absent:

38%

Child
Uninsured Rate:

1.7%

Children Born with
Low Birthweight:

8.7%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/ProvidenceDem16, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/ProvidenceGrad16, Test Scores: bit.ly/ProvidencePARCC17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/ProvidenceAbsenteeism17, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/UninsuredRates, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/ProvidenceBirthweight

school year for professional development, employee salary and benefits, and curriculum materials. These funds include a public-private collaboration to provide student mental health services in select

schools.⁶ As of May 2017, Mastropietro started to plan how to collect data that gives evidence on the impact of social-emotional learning work.

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

The mayor and superintendent strongly support the By All Means work and attend every cabinet meeting; this clear signaling from both the city government and the school district has consistently brought other leaders to the table, while also enabling the work to move forward quickly. The mayor and superintendent have both committed a significant amount of staff time to carrying forward the cabinet's work in the three focus areas.

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Since taking office in 2015, Mayor Elorza has outlined three big goals for the city: excellence in education, jobs and economic opportunity, and building a thriving community. As a result, strengthening the city's commitment to its children has been a cornerstone of his administration's work. With education as one of the mayor's top priorities, the Providence team has benefited from his enthusiasm and support in moving the work forward. Nearly every cabinet member has named this as a factor contributing to the success of their work, with one member saying, "We're able to garner resources and we're so focused because By All Means is so deeply aligned to what he wants to do and to his agenda."

ALIGNMENT WITH SUPERINTENDENT

Maher was new to his role when BAM began, having been appointed as interim superintendent in July 2015 and hired permanently in April 2016. He and Mayor Elorza are aligned in their vision for

Providence children and youth, as well as on the city's next steps in advancing this vision. As Superintendent Maher shared, "Social-emotional learning, summer learning, and personalized learning are three areas that we're really working on and focused on in the district. So [BAM] blended very well with the direction that we were already taking." Maher's strong commitment to the shared vision has facilitated the coordination between BAM and PPSD, generating a district strategic plan that supplements and supports the cabinet's efforts.

CABINET

The cabinet's early work did not fully incorporate and account for existing efforts already underway in Providence; as several cabinet members explained, early meetings were spent coming to consensus on topics they had already agreed on in the past. This, in combination with the quarterly meeting schedule, left cabinet members wanting more in terms of quantity and quality. After the May 2017 convening, 33 percent of cabinet members—all senior executives with limited time—reported that they felt the Children's Cabinet should meet more frequently. As one member described it a few months earlier, "At the convenings, group time is in short bursts. The cabinet meetings are a couple of hours but they're short bursts. There either needs to be more bursts with less time in between them, or the bursts need to be longer. Because this work is about reaching agreement and that takes time, discussion, and some give-and-take and consensus building." In addition, given Providence's complex political history, the initial consultant's lack of prior relationships in the city and geographic distance from it

posed challenges to her ability to embed herself in the work.

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Providence has experienced a number of core staff transitions since the start of By All Means. Brett Smiley, the city's Chief Operating Officer and an early member of the Children's Cabinet, left his post in July 2016 to become the Governor's Chief of Staff. Less than a year later, the city's Chief Policy Officer—Courtney Hawkins, an integral player in the work—was tapped to become the new Director of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Hawkins' Policy Associate Lily Gutterman, who is now the Deputy Director of Policy, has taken on an important role in the work, helping to alleviate the knowledge gap created by this transition. Just days before the third BAM convening, City Council President and cabinet member Luis Aponte resigned from his leadership post amid charges of embezzlement. At the same time, the initial consultant was also preparing to exit her role in June; her replacement was to be Providence local Maryellen Butke, who had deep expertise in coalition-building as well as educational advocacy and philanthropy.

Partnerships and Relationships

CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

After the May 2017 convening, 71 percent of the Providence team reported that they collaborate more with other agencies and organizations in their cities after having joined By All Means (14 percent said much more, 57 percent said somewhat more). Nearly a third of the participants shared that the level of interaction is about the same. While the growth in these relationships has been beneficial to pushing the work forward, several team members have noted that the quantity and quality of cabinet meetings has not been enough to facilitate true cross-sector partnership.

The establishment of cross-sector relationships between the city government and city schools has been challenged by a revolving door of superintendents in Providence over the past 15 years. This lack of continuity at the leadership level has made collaboration tough, engendering a lack of continuity in relationships and interaction at the staff level as well. Since joining BAM, however, "The extent to which the superintendent and I are on the same page—and the school department and my policy team, the way that they're working together—that's been invaluable to moving this forward," shared Mayor Elorza. "The coordination of the work that we're doing, even though it's massively complicated and there are many prongs to it, it all feeds into one larger goal. I think that has made the difference."

This critical alignment between school leadership and city leadership extends beyond the district and the mayor's office. Another cabinet member noted that "the mayor and superintendent are on the same page, and now I can see that the city council president is also, to some extent, on the same page as well. . . . The alignment of these key people is critical."

Likewise, Providence's School Board leadership has been key to supporting and representing the BAM work in the community. The board plays an integral role in supporting the focused use of PPSD dollars to support SEL and summer learning. In addition, given the expertise of board members in performance-based contracting, direct service, and program work, the collaboration and thought partnership between PPSD and board members has worked to advance the city's overall vision.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Providence has excelled at keeping racial equity at the center of their community engagement work, which grew directly from the student voice that they brought into the summit planning and execution. Through its April 2017 summit, the city has emphasized student voice and agency in the community engagement process. In addition, the cabinet has worked to be truly responsive to that voice. The mayor's office and PPSD have taken concrete steps to

explicitly acknowledge what they heard at the summit, from plans to release a follow-up report to plans for engaging the community through workshops on specific topics culled from the summit, such as school facilities and middle school culture and climate. Further, these workshops will be co-facilitated and organized by high school students.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONVENINGS

The first three By All Means convenings took place in Cambridge, MA in May 2016, November 2016, and May 2017. Providence team members generally found the convenings useful for introducing new ideas, sharing information among the cities, and building relationships among team members. The November 2016 convening inspired Mayor Elorza to undertake significant community engagement in the city's visioning process for education. As one participant described the value of the convenings for the mayor: "He always gets ideas from it, and the summit came directly from the last convening. So, it's certainly gotten us to places of action." For his part, Mayor Elorza shared, "If you really want to hit your stride, you have to engage and leverage the power of all the stakeholders outside of the formal education system. And that's deeply influenced the approach that we've taken to this. The summit planned for April 8 is in large part influenced by the conversations and the exchange of ideas that we've had by participating in the convenings."

A number of team members expressed a desire for more, and more productive, team time during the early convenings. During the first two convenings, Providence spent much of their team time discussing topics some members felt they had already established: the community needs, the agenda to meet those needs, and the actions the cabinet would take in service of its agenda. While the team felt it could be better utilizing its time together, several cabinet members noted that the convenings were helpful in deepening cross-sector relationships. As

one cabinet member shared, "I think as the teams start to get to know each other more, we become more like colleagues."

OTHER SUPPORTS

Providence's All In: Providence Education Summit was made possible by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, a partnership that arose out of a connection made at one of the BAM convenings. As a part of the initiative, Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as thought partner on their education strategy. Reville traveled to Providence to participate in the announcement of the summit and invited Elorza to participate on a panel at the popular Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Summit. The city has also expressed that the Lab's BAM framework has given them confidence that they are moving in the right direction, which has pushed them to think even bigger and bolder about what they can set out to accomplish in service of children.

Data

As in all other BAM cities, data has played an important role in the early work of the cabinet. And like many districts, PPSD is data-rich, but with limited capacity to analyze its data. The city's efforts to dramatically expand high quality summer learning slots began when the mayor and superintendent came together to find out whether and how summer learning loss—a topic gaining increasing amounts of national attention—affected Providence students. "That's the first time they looked at pre- and post-test data for the summer and found, 'Oh, this is a huge problem for our kids and it reflects an achievement gap that we know exists,'" a city staff member recalled.

According to a press release from the mayor's office, "In Providence, more than 60 percent of students suffer summer learning loss in reading and more than 51 percent in math. Studies show that students from lower-income families are far less likely to have access to summer learning opportunities,

leading to greater summer learning loss and lower graduation rates. Students at the greatest risk for summer learning loss can lose up to two years of grade-level reading and math ability by the time they reach fifth grade when compared to children from higher-income households.”⁷ Releases such as these demonstrate the extent to which Providence is using research and data to inform its BAM work.

Funding

Providence has made effective use of funding partnerships. In addition to garnering the support of Nellie Mae for its All In: Providence Education Summit, the team has leveraged funding for summer learning from the City Council and is collaborating with the State of Rhode Island to request a significant investment from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative for personalized learning. This is in part thanks to the district’s capacity to seek external funding through grant-writing staff.

Conclusions

Providence has made impressive progress in its work to expand opportunities and services for children. The team’s decision to focus on all three focus areas at once was unique: it accelerated the city’s work to meet multiple child-facing needs simultaneously. The city has made substantial progress in expanding access to summer learning, increasing social and emotional supports in the schools, and personalizing learning. Given the school-based

focus of pre-existing initiatives, much of work has fallen to PPSD staff, which at times has become a substantial amount of work. Providence is now focusing on shifting this balance and better utilizing all partners who are at the table. Providence has also found great success with its community engagement efforts and continues to incorporate the voices of students, teachers, and families into its efforts.

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Providence Takeaways

- Restructuring existing funding can be an effective strategy to finance new priorities in the absence of additional resources.
- Performance-based contracting ensures funds are spent on effective programs.
- Engaging the community early provides useful input and greater buy-in.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Providence's work has evolved in the following ways:

- Providence substantially increased its summer opportunities for students. In his February 2018 State of the City address, Mayor Elorza reported that "a high percentage of the 480 students who participated in BELL's summer program gained roughly 2 months in literacy skills and 3 months in math skills during the summer. Our students are no longer going backwards over the summer, they're getting ahead and we're closing the achievement gap . . . With the City Council's support, we have more than doubled the number of summer jobs we offer in the city, we're instilling a sense of pride in our kids, and we're preparing them with the essential skills they'll need to succeed in this world."³
- The team used the consultant transition as an opportunity to refocus the work of the cabinet. After the June 2017 departure of the initial consultant, Providence local Maryellen Butke—an expert in coalition-building, educational advocacy, and philanthropy—joined the team as its new BAM-sponsored consultant. The team has found it beneficial to have a locally-based consultant and, with her arrival, has focused on maximizing the cabinet's full set of skills and resources by setting a broader focus beyond schools. The cabinet also added several new cabinet members to increase diversity and representation from across the community.
- Providence published its report on the All In: Providence Education Summit in August 2017.⁸ The report included specific recommendations and next steps, which have since been discussed over multiple community conversations. As a result of these sessions, Elorza announced a city-wide effort to repair school buildings and facilities in August 2017 and the city hired new school culture coordinators to focus on positive school climate and student engagement in December 2017.
- Mayor Elorza has taken a key leadership role in a new national Children's Accord initiative, which aligns with the goals of By All Means.

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children’s needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium. Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed onto a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- A Children’s Cabinet, which serves as the governance structure for each city’s By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.
- A BAM-sponsored part-time consultant, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.
- Twice-yearly convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of “what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table”? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children’s needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, partnerships and relationships, external factors, data, and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children’s Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Salem’s participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Salem is BAM’s smallest city and had the least pre-existing infrastructure for engaging in this type of work.

Salem is a small coastal city an hour north of Boston. Its motto, “Still Making History,” acknowledges its significance as one of the country’s oldest cities and as the infamous site of the Salem witch trials. Kim Driscoll, mayor since 2006, often likes to say that “Salem is a city that punches above its weight.” Despite having a population of less than 43,000 people, Salem is home to the world-class Peabody-Essex Museum, whose international collection is a product of the city’s nautical history; Salem State University; and the North Shore Medical Center, which is one of the largest employers in the region. Its pedestrian-friendly downtown area has seen a resurgence of restaurants and commerce. In 2016, the city began planning a community visioning process, Imagine Salem, to “develop a set of shared values and a shared vision” ahead of its 400th anniversary.

Both the city and its schools are becoming increasingly diverse, largely as a result of immigration—although there is a notable difference between the diversity of the city’s population and that of its schools. In the 2010 census, over 80 percent of the city was white, while during the 2016–2017 school year, just under 50 percent of students

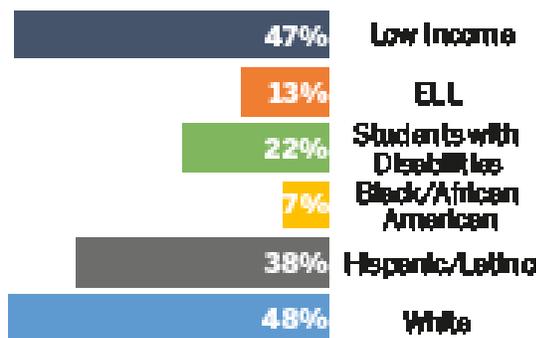
in Salem Public Schools (SPS) were white. More than a quarter of students speak a language other than English at home, and close to half are economically disadvantaged.

In 2011, Salem learned that its public school system had been designated a Level 4 district by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education due to the classification of one of its schools as underperforming; in Massachusetts, the entire district is given the classification of its lowest-performing school. The designation came as a surprise and ignited a new focus on the city’s schools and the challenges faced by its children. As the Salem Public Schools entered turnaround status, city and school leadership began mobilizing to address the underlying causes of this designation and improve outcomes for children. Over the next few years, the district developed school improvement plans and ultimately converted its lowest performing school, Bentley Elementary, into a charter school in 2014. The city also participated in a national endeavor to expand learning time in schools and was ultimately funded by the state to expand learning time in one of its middle schools. In July 2015, Margarita Ruiz became Salem’s

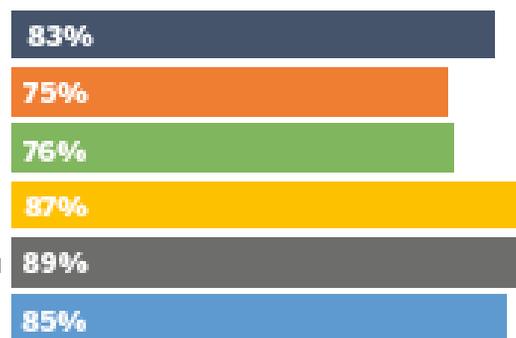
City-School Relationship

School Committee—chaired by the mayor—selects the superintendent of schools. Once selected, the superintendent serves on the School Committee along with the mayor.

District Enrollment ('16-'17)



Graduation Rates ('16-'17)



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

new superintendent, and soon after, the district embarked on an ambitious process to create a five-year district strategic plan that addresses the needs of all students, particularly those of diverse learners, with support from New Profit's Reimagine Learning Fund, the Tower Foundation, and others.

Just a few months later, Paul Reville was sharing information with mayors about his newly formed Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and outlining its comprehensive children's opportunity agenda. The Lab was preparing to launch its By All Means initiative and was looking for partner cities to participate as "laboratories" of innovation. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to suit the needs of every child.

Reville called Mayor Driscoll to gauge her interest in bringing her city to the cohort. Driscoll, who already had a strong working relationship with Salem's new superintendent, was intrigued by the idea of using BAM to develop a sustainable model in Salem—one that would promote the idea that educating children is not the job of schools alone, but is rather a community effort. Driscoll consulted with Superintendent Ruiz, who was similarly looking to build a new framework for education and saw alignment between the By All Means areas of focus and her developing district strategic plan. Together, Driscoll and Ruiz decided Salem would benefit from joining the consortium.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

The formation of Salem's Children's Cabinet cemented the ongoing collaboration between the city and the school system that had formed when Salem was labeled a turnaround district, and had the added benefit of formally bringing other stakeholders into the conversation. According to Mayor

Driscoll, "[Through the turnaround work], the superintendent, myself, and some of the school officials were used to being in each other's company and thinking about this. But it's not often that we would have the director of the community health center or the Teachers Union president or other stakeholders directly engaged." After careful selection of community partners, Salem's cabinet quickly found a stable combination of members, which included senior representatives from North Shore Community Health, Salem State University, the United Way, LEAP for Education, the local YMCA, the Peabody Essex Museum, city government, Salem Public Schools, and the Teachers Union. Kendra Foley joined the team as the cabinet's BAM-sponsored consultant in April of 2016, and the first meeting took place shortly thereafter in June 2016.

Due to the alignment between BAM and a pre-existing initiative at SPS, called the Partnership Collaborative, the district's Director of Extended Learning Programs (and coordinator of the collaborative), Emily Ullman began staffing the cabinet in a significant way. The Partnership Collaborative, a district-led advisory committee aiming to bring schools, community organizations, and municipal departments together to better serve Salem youth, was already working to build a network for collective problem solving and systems change. To avoid duplication of effort and ensure alignment between the cabinet and the collaborative, Foley and Ullman structured the cabinet to act as a governing board for the collaborative, with initial plans for the cabinet to meet quarterly. Between the beginning of By All Means and May 2017, the cabinet met three times in addition to city team time at the convenings.

DEFINING THE WORK

The cabinet quickly identified social-emotional well-being as an initial focus. Mayor Driscoll and Superintendent Ruiz both felt that Salem was ready to embark on a new initiative as a follow-up to their recent expansion of learning time, both in-school—in partnership with the National Center on Time & Learning—and out-of-school, in partnership with Citizen Schools. They were in agreement that

social-emotional wellbeing was one area in which coordinated effort could make a meaningful difference: in recent years, Salem had seen an uptick in trauma-related issues for students and the city was eager to more systematically address their needs.

The cabinet performed an analysis of the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and identified three areas related to social-emotional learning challenges in which the city could improve:

1. **Data:** Salem was lacking non-academic data for all students.
2. **Framework:** Salem was lacking a framework for student-level identification, referral, and prevention for all students.
3. **Connection:** Salem was lacking clear partnership pathways between the district and community resources.

Addressing Data and Framework Gaps through City Connects

After determining the gaps, the team became interested in seeking a partnership with City Connects, which would provide a solution for their social-emotional support, data, and framework needs. City Connects, a Boston College-based initiative, had pioneered a systematic approach to addressing the out-of-school factors that limit learning.¹ The approach involves a sophisticated data system that tracks the holistic needs of all students and a staffing model that puts a specially-trained City Connects coordinator in every partner school with the purpose of matching every child with the resources they need to thrive. The coordinator meets with each teacher to learn about the strengths, interests, and needs of each child, which form the basis of a student profile that includes other data such as assessments and any special academic services the child receives. Based on these profiles and each child's designated level of need, the coordinator identifies services and supports and follows up to ensure they are actually being provided. For Salem, this focus on each child would ensure no student fell through the cracks.

While City Connects has research evidence showing its effectiveness and has expanded substantially over the past decade, it had never implemented its program citywide.

The Salem cabinet hoped that the program's data system would allow for better tracking of all student needs, both individually and systemically, as well as provide yearly data to show progress. Likewise, the coordinator position provided a framework for using the data system, which facilitated the collection and use of data to support students, faster referrals to needed services, and stronger connections with families and community partners. Their hope was that the system would ultimately reduce mental health service needs among students by proactively engaging with children and meeting their needs before they entered crises.

Assistant Superintendent and BAM cabinet member Margaret Marotta initiated conversations with City Connects as a potential partner after a fortuitous meeting with its director at a Reimagine Learning conference during the summer of 2016 and found that there was strong interest in the partnership on both sides. Conversations continued for months, with the Lab arranging time for the full Salem team to meet with City Connects representatives at the November 2016 convening. Working with the Teachers Union president, Marotta was able to come up with a funding and staffing structure that worked for all stakeholders: instead of hiring new City Connects coordinators, the district would redesign school adjustment counselor positions to utilize the City Connects model. This model would reduce the startup cost of implementing City Connects citywide.

Mayor Driscoll was able to negotiate funding for the first and most expensive year of City Connects implementation in Salem through the city's Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with North Shore Medical Center—making the funding a unique private/public combination. After being delayed multiple times in City Council, the agreement was approved in May 2017: City Connects would be rolled out in all K–8 schools that fall.

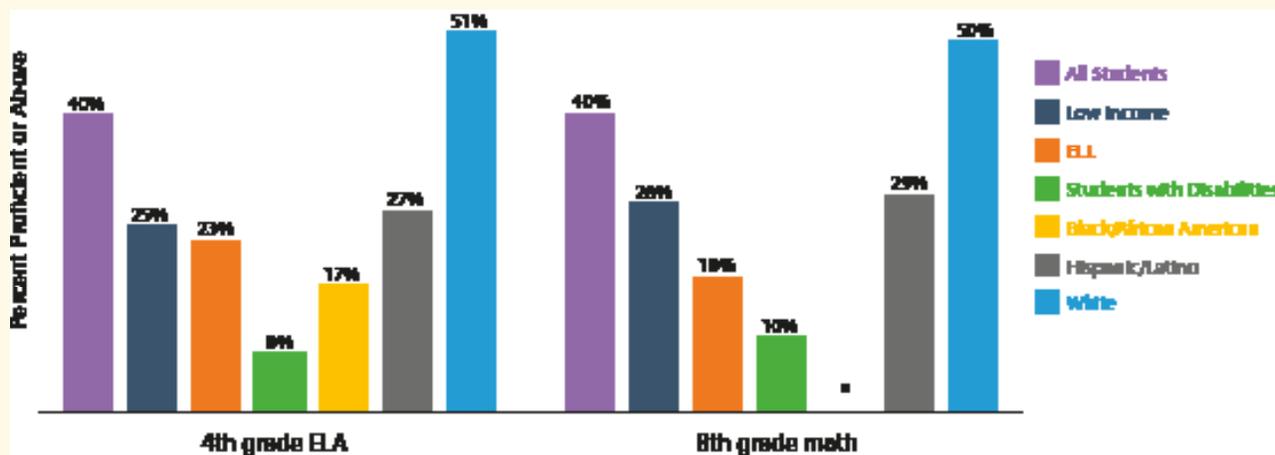
Addressing Connection Gaps through Trainings and a New Website

Trainings: The Salem team came up with a citywide training initiative to help address the connections gaps identified in their SWOT analysis. Trainings were suggested as a way to engage all members of the community and encourage them to play a role in meeting the needs of children across Salem. As Ullman shared, “A low percentage of kids feel like their community cares about them. . . . So these trainings will be about supporting adults to be a healthy force in kids’ lives, even if they don’t see themselves as folks who traditionally work with kids.” The idea gained momentum at the cabinet’s second meeting, in September 2016, when cabinet members from the United Way and Salem State University offered in-kind support and funding to bring the trainings to fruition.

Working with the United Way and another organization, the Mass Mentoring Partnership, Foley and Ullman developed a train-the-trainer model that would be rolled out starting in October 2017. The Partnership Collaborative helped inform the direction Salem would go in terms of content, and ultimately determined that the initial training should focus on the formation of healthy youth-adult relationships. The training would be targeted toward youth service providers (including all members of the Partnership Collaborative), who would then go on to lead trainings at their own organizations and beyond to the wider Salem community.

Website: The Salem team hired Social Capital, Inc. in early 2017 to create a website that would help families identify, understand, and access community resources. Representatives from Social Capital,

Test Scores 2017 MCAS



Students Chronically Absent:

23.9%

Child Uninsured Rate:

.7%

Children Born with Low Birthweight:

6.7%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/SalemDem17, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/SalemGrad17, Test Scores: bit.ly/SalemMCAS17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/SalemAbsenteeism17, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/SalemIns16, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/birthweightMA

Inc. attended the February 2017 cabinet meeting to share early ideas and solicit feedback from cabinet members. Hopeful that Salem was about to embark on the first citywide implementation of City Connects, the cabinet wanted to ensure that the site met the needs of families as well as City Connects-trained counselors, whose focus would be identifying opportunities and services to meet the needs of every Salem student. The website would be designed to allow community providers to log into the site and add opportunities themselves, which would help address capacity issues around maintenance of the site's content. As of May 2017, the team was planning an imminent beta rollout of the site to solicit feedback from the community.

Bringing It All Together

By the time of the May 2017 convening, Foley and Ullman realized that it would be an important next step for Salem to develop a messaging campaign around each element of their cabinet's agenda. According to Foley, "We had these three initiatives but we had no global messaging about what the purpose was for any of them and they could sound so unconnected" without a message uniting them. Salem spent a portion of their team time discussing what that campaign might look like, tentatively coming up with "Our Salem, Our Kids" as a name and an umbrella framing for their emerging movement.

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

The mayor and superintendent strongly support the work and attend every cabinet meeting; this clear signaling from both the city government and the school district has consistently brought other leaders to the table, while also enabling the work to move forward quickly. The mayor and superintendent have both committed staff time and funding to carrying forward the cabinet's work.

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Mayor Driscoll has made it clear that the work of the Children's Cabinet is a priority for the city, and her persistent leadership was instrumental in securing funding for the first year of City Connects. The Community Benefits Agreement with North Shore Medical Center was held up several times by the City Council, requiring the mayor to use her political acumen to ensure the funding was passed in time for the fall 2017 implementation of City Connects in all Salem K-8 schools.

ALIGNMENT WITH SUPERINTENDENT

Due to the turnaround work already taking place in Salem, the mayor and superintendent had an ongoing relationship and were well-aligned in their collective vision for Salem's children; BAM provided an opportunity to strengthen and formalize that relationship. Superintendent Ruiz's strong commitment to their shared vision facilitated coordination between BAM and Salem Public Schools, generating a district strategic plan that supports and supplements the cabinet's efforts. As Ruiz shared in February 2017, "We're talking about revamping and strategically planning for the district, and By All Means is helping us to think strategically at the city level. Those two processes support each other."

CABINET

The cabinet's structure is heavily dependent on two individuals who have put substantial time into Salem's By All Means work, which presents a sustainability challenge. Relying on the work of a few core team members leaves Salem vulnerable to loss

of momentum if there are staffing changes. Because a few people in the cabinet's early structure are carrying the bulk of the work forward, some stakeholders are not as fully involved as they could be.

Salem's cabinet has also met less frequently than cabinets in other cities. While this hasn't inhibited the city's impressive implementation progress, a number of cabinet members have referenced infrequent cabinet meetings as limiting their awareness of interim progress.

Partnerships and Relationships

For Salem, the Children's Cabinet has served the important function of deepening cross-sector relationships. As Mayor Driscoll shared, "I think that we've developed a strong camaraderie and willingness for all voices to be heard. Some of that happened through our time at Harvard—it's a close networking group."

The Salem cabinet has been particularly successful in bringing projects to fruition quickly and efficiently thanks to buy-in and support from various cabinet members. For example, unexpected support from community partners enabled the trainings to get off the ground quickly. A cabinet member from the United Way expressed interest during a cabinet meeting in using his resources to start citywide trainings with the goal of giving everyone a shared understanding and language about the cabinet's work and generate community buy-in. At the same meeting, the dean of education at Salem State University noted that he had some professional development funds he could contribute to the training initiative.

When the cabinet pushed forward on rapid implementation of City Connects, they engaged relevant stakeholders every step of the way. The district and Teachers Union worked closely to create a City Connects staffing structure that worked for everybody, enabling the process to move quickly and smoothly in time for implementation during the 2017–2018 school year.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONSULTANT

The BAM consultant, Kendra Foley, works closely with a school district staff member and has spent a significant amount of time advancing the cabinet's agenda between meetings. Several cabinet members have noted that Foley and Ullman make an outstanding team. Thanks to their combined hard work, action items from every cabinet meeting are implemented quickly and effectively. As one senior district official noted, "Kendra keeps us moving and directed in a way that we need. So she's an awesome facilitator and the work wouldn't be the same without her. We wouldn't be as far along. I do think that without support, we could get scattered in all the things that are going on."

CONVENINGS

For Salem, the twice annual convenings at Harvard have had an important function of holding the team accountable and providing cabinet members the opportunity to learn from experts, programs, and other cities. As one cabinet member shared:

We love the sharing out of ideas. We've borrowed things from Oakland and we work closely with Somerville. I would not undervalue the time we spend together, even though it can be minimal at times, but those convenings are pretty deep for us, in terms of providing some guidance and some pressure, so like, "We're meeting soon. What have we accomplished?"

Another cabinet member agreed on the value of the convening for accountability and pressure, noting that "at least with our cabinet, and it appears with other cabinets, you have so many people that are so busy with their jobs that without really forcing people to make the time and use that time to set the direction and identify who's doing what, nothing would come out of the initiative. In that way, the convenings have worked well."

The November 2016 convening, in particular, gave Salem the opportunity to meet with City Connects for the first time as a large group. Pat DiNatale, Director of New Practice for City Connects, joined Salem’s team time to share basic information about the program.

OTHER SUPPORTS

As a part of the initiative, Lab Director Paul Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as a thought partner on their education strategy. Additionally, Reville invited Driscoll to participate on a panel at the popular Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Summit.

Data

As with all other BAM cities, Salem’s cabinet has been working to improve its capacity to use data to make decisions about priorities and track progress. Because of its small size, SPS is data-rich but has limited capacity to analyze its data; both the mayor and superintendent have identified this as a key need for the city. The Lab has supported the development of a strategy for improving data-driven decision-making for the Salem team through phone calls and in-person meetings. The Salem team also hopes that the partnership with City Connects will help them develop a robust data system from which to draw and expand capacity to use that data.

Funding

Salem has found success in securing funding from among its cabinet members. North Shore Medical Center, an early member of the Children’s Cabinet, provided funding for City Connects’ first and most expensive year of implementation through a Community Benefits Agreement with the city. The team is currently seeking longer-term funding to ensure that City Connects can continue to operate in Salem’s schools. Other cabinet members—United Way and Salem State University—provided

resources to implement the cabinet’s citywide trainings.

Conclusions

Salem has moved rapidly from planning to implementation to create new citywide supports for its children and youth. As Mayor Driscoll shared, “This initiative has been what jump-started us, and it has served as a catalyst both for programs like City Connects and for helping us think more cohesively about the system. The strategic plan effort that we have for the district is being implemented now, very much informed by the work we did with By All Means.”

Building on the momentum of the schools’ strategic planning process and the imperative to improve its Level 4 designation—which they exited in September 2016—Salem has put in place tangible interventions to ensure that no child falls through the cracks: the introduction of the City Connects model into all its K-8 schools ensures each child will have a personalized support plan and a coordinator tasked with ensuring its implementation; the new community resources website provides centralized, comprehensive information on programs and services available within the community; and the new community training program broadens Salem’s view of its collective responsibility for the wellbeing of its children.

ENDNOTE

1. Boston College (2015). Web site: www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lsoc/sites/cityconnects/results.html

Salem Takeaways

- Cities starting from scratch on collective impact work can make considerable progress in a short time with the commitment of key leaders.
- Bringing a range of partners to the table spurs creative resource sharing and additional support.
- Creating a compelling overarching message can help the community understand how different elements of the work fit into a comprehensive vision for meeting children's needs.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Salem's work has evolved in the following ways:

- Through a comprehensive movement called Our Salem, Our Kids, Salem is broadening the focus of its individual BAM initiatives—City Connects, community trainings, and a new website—and motivating an entire city to rise to the challenge of collectively supporting its young people.
- The team rolled out a beta version of the movement's website, oursalem.org, during the summer of 2017. During their September 2017 cabinet meeting, cabinet members discussed a broader messaging campaign for Our Salem, Our Kids to generate community buy-in. Goals for this include creating a video that can more easily highlight the city's progress to date and communicate the need for a citywide movement to support Salem's children.
- Salem has created a new part-time position jointly funded for the first year by the mayor and superintendent to support the cabinet's efforts. The team is seeking longer-term funding for this position, as well as for year two and three of City Connects (in subsequent years, the cost of the program decreases substantially).
- The cabinet received \$75,000 from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation in early 2018 to support its new messaging work around Our Salem, Our Kids, after a connection made by the Lab between Salem officials and representatives from the foundation.

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children's needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium. Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed onto a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- A Children's Cabinet, which serves as the governance structure for each city's By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.
- A BAM-sponsored part-time consultant, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.
- Twice-yearly convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of "what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table"? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children's needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, partnerships and relationship, external factors, data, and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children's Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Somerville's participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Somerville has BAM's longest serving mayor, is one of the nation's most densely populated cities, and is one of three BAM cities to experience a changeover in consultant.

Somerville, Massachusetts is a small, densely populated city just north of Boston. Bordered by three major universities—MIT, Harvard, and Tufts—Somerville is known for its vibrant population of young adults, its steady influx of immigrants, and its energetic and creative community. Twenty-five percent of its population was born in another country, and the median age is 32 years, the second-youngest in Massachusetts.¹ The city has been addressing its rapid increase in housing prices and gentrification through an aggressive strategy of high-density, targeted development.

When Joe Curtatone, himself the son of immigrants, was elected Mayor of Somerville in 2004, he brought a data-driven approach to improving city government. Curtatone identified the city's schools as his top priority from the outset, and he launched SomerPromise in 2009 as a collective action effort to improve outcomes for children through cross-sector collaboration. Along with SomerPromise, Somerville has several related initiatives that take a broad, data-driven approach to improving a range of departments. These include SomerStat, which is a city office that analyzes data across a range of domains to improve service provision, and

Student Insights, an online data dashboard that provides teachers with individualized, disaggregated student data in areas such as weekly attendance, discipline, and test scores. During Mayor Curtatone's tenure, student academic outcomes have improved steadily, and Somerville has been recognized by The Boston Globe Magazine as the Best Run City in the Commonwealth.

JOINING BY ALL MEANS

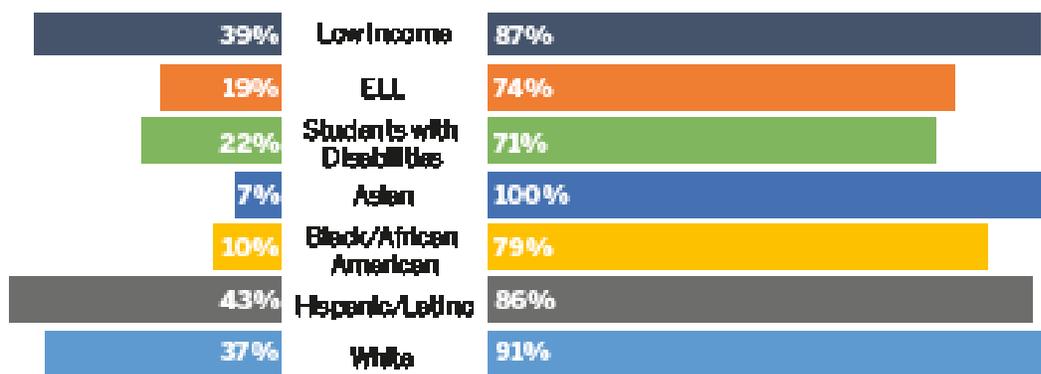
Mary Skipper became Superintendent of Somerville Public Schools (SPS) in July 2015. A month later, Mayor Curtatone and Superintendent Skipper brought together over 90 of Somerville's city and school leaders to hold the city's first Community Cabinet meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to brainstorm solutions to issues that affect education but couldn't be addressed by the school district alone. Such issues included access to out-of-school time learning, adult education as a means to reduce unemployment, and urban planning as a means to increase child safety and housing stability. By early 2016, the Community Cabinet evolved into a smaller group of approximately 20 representatives who met

City-School Relationship

In Somerville, the mayor and the district maintain formal ties, as the mayor is an ex-officio member of the school committee and has full voting rights.

District Enrollment ('16-'17)

Graduation Rates ('16-'17)



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

regularly to discuss opportunities for cross-agency collaboration on these topics.

Around the same time, the Education Redesign Lab, headed by Paul Reville, was preparing to launch its By All Means initiative and was looking for partner cities to participate as “laboratories” of innovation to create a children’s opportunity agenda. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to suit the needs of every child.

Reville reached out to Superintendent Skipper that fall to gauge Somerville’s potential interest in joining the consortium. Skipper, who had been working closely with Mayor Curtatone since coming to Somerville just a few months earlier, saw the synergy between BAM’s theory of action and her own efforts to work collaboratively with the city. Similarly, in the eyes of Mayor Curtatone, “By All Means is helping us share the story of a city as a complex ecosystem and helping us double down on our efforts to work the system toward a common mission. We’re not siloed and we understand collectively how our work helps us achieve where we want to go.” Together, Skipper and Curtatone agreed that joining the initiative was an obvious choice.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

Given the alignment between Somerville’s pre-existing Community Cabinet and the goals of the By All Means initiative, the city opted to use the Community Cabinet as its Children’s Cabinet. The cabinet included committed representatives from the school district, health and human services, early childhood, SomerPromise, the community hospital, and the city’s data department, in addition to the mayor and superintendent.

Stephanie Hirsch joined the Somerville team as its consultant in April 2016 with a long history of

working in the city: she had helped found SomerStat and SomerPromise; had been instrumental in bringing Code for America to Somerville, creating the city’s innovative Student Insights platform; had worked with the Somerville Public Schools on data and other initiatives; and was instrumental in the creation of the Community Cabinet. As a part of her role, she managed the cabinet’s working groups, set agendas, and moved work forward between meetings. The cabinet met in August and October under her facilitation until, in November 2016, Hirsch stepped down from the cabinet to run for city alderman.

Hirsch was replaced by Jeff Curley, a student in Harvard’s doctoral program in Education Leadership with experience in nonprofit creation, management, and civic engagement. Thanks to a well-planned handover from Hirsch, Curley was able to embed himself in the work quickly and efficiently. With Curley on the team, the cabinet decided to begin meeting more frequently, and convened monthly beginning in January 2017.

DEFINING THE WORK

By the time Somerville joined the By All Means initiative, the Community Cabinet had tasked six subcommittees with working on each of the following issues between cabinet meetings: out-of-school time, enrollment/capital planning, communications and family engagement, early childhood education, whole child policy and practice for K–8 schools, and whole child policy and practice for high schools. As the cabinet’s involvement with BAM grew, it reorganized its working groups to focus explicitly on their developing BAM initiatives: early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and integrated student health data.

Early Childhood Education

During early meetings, the cabinet chose to focus on early childhood education as its leading BAM initiative. Superintendent Skipper had included early childhood education as a central focus in her blueprint for Somerville Public Schools, but didn’t know exactly how the district should frame it or approach

it. The rationale, according to Skipper, was, “If we could stop the gaps from forming at the start, then we’d be that much further ahead instead of always chasing tails trying to close them.” Addressing early childhood needs would also allow the cabinet to tackle an issue touching multiple city organizations, since several agencies have a role in serving kids from birth until kindergarten entry.

To start their work, the cabinet focused on expanding access to high-quality preschool with two primary goals in mind: improving kindergarten readiness and better meeting the needs of working parents. The team articulated several strategies for accomplishing this, including expanding the number of high-quality preschool slots in Somerville; increasing the number of full-day slots available; and improving data articulation between the city’s early childhood and K–12 systems.

Because Somerville has a “mixed delivery” system of both public and private providers for preschool, expanding the number of high-quality slots required a multi-pronged approach. The cabinet approached the expansion of high-quality slots in two ways: they would look into expanding the number of high-quality slots and also work to ensure that pre-existing slots were high-quality by offering training to private providers.

As a result, Somerville has extended the number of hours per day of programming in all city preschools, with plans to serve 40 percent of preschoolers until 5:30 pm during the 2017–2018 school year—up from 7 percent in 2015–2016. In addition, Somerville’s early childhood department has expanded an existing Head Start partnership to increase the number of public preschool slots available in the city, adding two Head Start classrooms to public school buildings. To improve the quality of pre-existing private slots, Somerville has added a second early childhood instructional coach to its early education department; her role is to support curriculum development and improve instructional practices across the mixed-delivery landscape.

The cabinet’s early childhood working group also decided to introduce a new sliding fee scale for full-day preschool programming during the 2017–2018

school year to address the access and affordability issue for working families; the team anticipates that this will help them better understand what the unmet demand is for preschool in the city by seeing whether there is an increase in enrollment as a result of the lower cost for low-income families.

Out-of-School Time (OST) Learning

Another primary cabinet focus has been on expanding access to out-of-school time learning opportunities. At Somerville’s February 2017 cabinet meeting, the OST working group announced they had secured a new partnership with Citizen Schools, an after-school provider focusing on enrichment and deeper learning in low-income communities. The partnership would expand afterschool programming in one of Somerville’s middle schools, thanks to funding from both the school department and a local business.²

At that time, the working group was also working with another provider, Breakthrough Greater Boston, to further expand afterschool programming for middle school students throughout the district. These conversations, begun in 2016, came to fruition with the public announcement of their new partnership in May 2017. Breakthrough Greater Boston planned to open its new Somerville offices in fall 2017, with programming scheduled to start for students in summer 2018. Somerville Public Schools committed to funding one-third of the cost of the program over the first three years, while Breakthrough Greater Boston would raise the remainder.

Finally, the cabinet formed a partnership with the Calculus Project to provide summer and afterschool math support to prepare African-American and Latino students for upper-level high school math. Together, these new partnerships will allow 165 more Somerville students access to free, high-quality afterschool programming.

Integrating Health and Human Services

A third area of focus for Somerville is improving the integration of health and human services into the city’s work on behalf of children. Throughout the first 18 months of the initiative, cabinet members

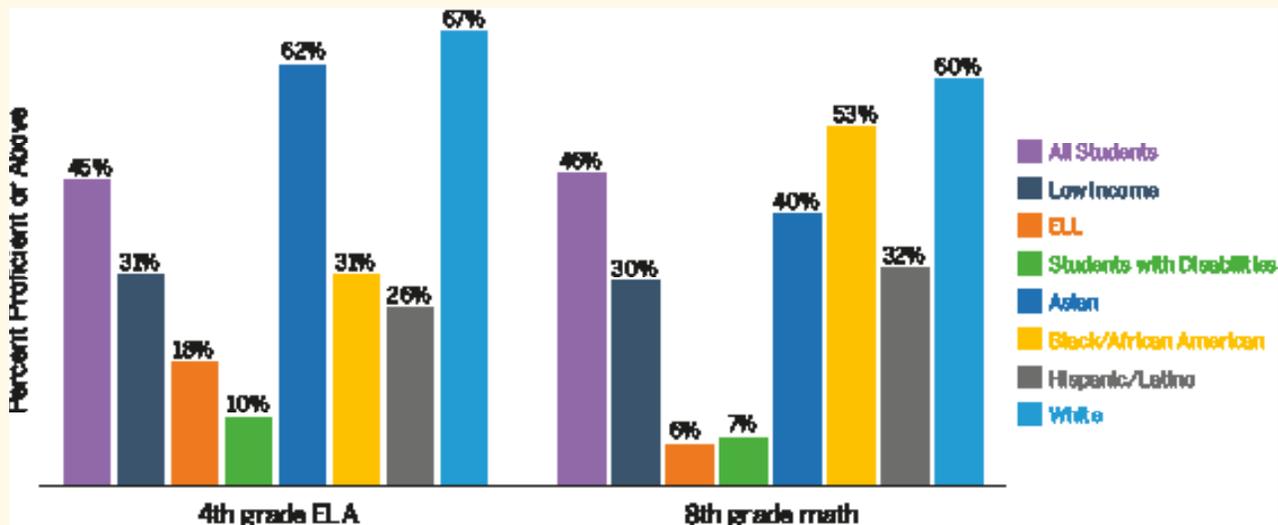
from the Somerville Community Health Agenda and Department of Health and Human Services provided updates to the rest of the cabinet and solicited feedback on the forthcoming Wellbeing Report they were preparing for the city—the first that had been prepared in six years. The report was organized by life stage, and not by theme, which made the report uniquely valuable to the cabinet’s focus on children. While the cabinet felt this was a useful exercise, most members agreed that they wanted to take the engagement further.

In seeking a deeper connection between health and education, the team has been exploring the possibility of giving children in the city IDs at birth rather than at school entry, an innovative idea that would facilitate data sharing across multiple services and result in earlier identification of individual student needs. Due to the complexity of FRPA and HIPAA

privacy laws, the team has encountered a number of barriers in exploring their idea to assign IDs at birth. Despite these obstacles, Somerville has been persistent and continues to identify solutions for each issue encountered.

Starting in spring 2017, the Department of Health and Human Services has teamed with Somerville Public Schools (SPS) to pilot SomerBaby, an education- and health-focused welcome baby visit program that is currently run out of SPS’ Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, and is funded and supported by SomerPromise. Relationships developed among cabinet members have enabled other new forms of collaboration between the district and health department: for example, the Department of Health and Human Services is lending a seldom-used bus to Somerville Public Schools to benefit the district’s increased OST programming.

Test Scores 2017 MCAS



Students Chronically Absent:

16.8%

Child Uninsured Rate:

1.2%

Children Born with Low Birthweight:

7.6%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/SomervilleDem17, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/SomervilleGrad17, Test Scores: bit.ly/SomervilleMCAS17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/SomervilleAbsenteeism17, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/UninsuredRates, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/birthweightMA

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

The mayor and superintendent strongly support the work and attend most cabinet meetings; this clear signaling from both the city government and the school district has consistently brought other leaders to the table, while also enabling the work to move forward quickly. The mayor and superintendent have also each committed staff time and funding to carrying forward the cabinet's work.

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Since taking office in 2004, Mayor Curtatone has identified children's wellbeing as a top priority, and he has built a data-driven approach and cross-sector integration into all aspects of this goal. Through his focus on improving Somerville schools, the city has become the highest growth urban district in the state during his nearly 15-year tenure as mayor. Beyond schools, Curtatone prioritizes and promotes child health through city-sponsored programs such as Shape Up Somerville, a city-wide collective impact campaign to reduce obesity and promote healthy behaviors. This focus from the mayor has greatly benefited the work of the Somerville cabinet, particularly in terms of identifying and leveraging financial resources.

ALIGNMENT WITH SUPERINTENDENT

The mayor and superintendent are aligned in their mission to work collaboratively, and had already begun engaging in cross-sector work prior to joining By All Means. As Curley shared, "The mayor and superintendent have signaled a strong commitment to this work, are open to it, and themselves have good personal relationships and shared goals. That sets a tone that I think is clearly reflected: that this is important."

CABINET

Somerville's cabinet is engaged and efficient, with the consistent attendance of the mayor, superintendent, and key agency heads and stakeholders. The cabinet meets monthly and has focused, action-oriented agendas. While they initially met less frequently, the switch to monthly meetings has facilitated rapid rollout and regular opportunities for agency heads to collaborate. The cabinet has several working groups that develop plans and funding strategies between larger cabinet meetings, reflecting a substantial investment of human capital in this work. As a result of this concerted effort, Somerville has been particularly successful in rapidly expanding child-facing services.

When asked what factors have contributed to the cabinet's success, several people identified the commitment of the people at the table. As Skipper shared, "In Somerville people are committed to the work. They know what By All Means is and they believe in it. They believe that city and schools working together is the right way to do it." A top city official echoed her sentiment, explaining that "we knew that we needed to build a better bridge between city and schools, but it was unclear how that was going to happen." Because all cabinet members came to the table understanding their common goals and vision for Somerville children, their work unfolded smoothly.

Partnerships and Relationships

CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

After the May 2017 convening, 84 percent of the Somerville team reported that they collaborate more with other agencies and organizations in their cities after having joined By All Means. These stronger relationships have been key to enabling the work to push forward in spite of challenges and

have allowed for more unexpected collaboration between agencies. The shuttle bus loaned to SPS by the Department of Health and Human Services is but one small example of the benefits of growing relationships between cross-sector colleagues. While the collaboration is poised to grow, one district official commented: “I don’t think our district has ever worked as closely with health services as we have in the last year and a half.”

The Mayor/Superintendent Relationship

Both the mayor and superintendent are deeply engaged in the cabinet’s work: they consistently attend the cabinet meetings, participate in policy and programmatic decisions, and are actively engaged in fundraising for different components of the initiative. When asked if their deepening partnership has impacted the nature of Somerville’s collaborative work, one early childhood leader responded, “100 percent. My work has completely shifted because of their participation in these initiatives and their growing awareness of not just what is needed in early childhood or in our department, but how it links to the out-of-school time, how it links to health and human services, and how it links to data.”

CREATING AND LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

Somerville has been particularly effective in creating and leveraging partnerships. The cabinet’s leading focus to establish universal access to high-quality early childhood learning has made great progress thanks in part to the expansion of an existing partnership between SPS and Head Start; the team also leveraged a pre-existing project to expand trainings around early childhood care. For the cabinet’s OST focus, the team has brought several new afterschool and summer learning partners to the city by securing funding from local and regional sources.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONSULTANT

All cabinet members interviewed agreed that having a consultant was a vital factor in moving their work forward. According to Superintendent Skipper, “One of the huge things that By All Means recognized is that having a coach and having somebody that can help make sure the agenda continues to move forward, document, etc.—that’s really pivotal to the success of this work.”

Although Somerville experienced a changeover in consultant during the first 18 months of the initiative, the team found that bringing in someone from outside the system provided a new perspective on their work. While the initial consultant’s departure meant a loss of deep expertise in Somerville, there were also advantages to having a more distanced view of the city’s needs and policy opportunities. Curley found success by deeply embedding himself into many aspects of the work.

CONVENINGS

Cohort Model

Somerville is among the many BAM cities that have noted the value of the convenings—particularly as part of a cohort—as a motivator for progress. Curley shared that “knowing that there are peer districts around us that are doing great work is helpful, and I think sometimes there’s a competitiveness to it, like ‘Oh, Salem just did this, we want to move this forward. The convening’s coming up, where are we moving, and what’s our narrative going to be?’ I think some of those motivations and ingredients are really helpful.”

For Somerville’s leaders, the convenings are also an important way to learn more about what the other cities are doing. Both Mayor Curtatone and Superintendent Skipper have emphasized the value in hearing about the success and struggles of the other cities. As Skipper shared, “The ability to be able to see what other cities like us are working on,

be able to exchange ideas, seed innovation. . . . You don't often get to do that. Their challenges help us to be smarter about how we do things, help us to look down the road, and say, 'What could be potential pitfalls?'"

Being Together

The Somerville team has also found value in simply convening their team for two days—even though Harvard is just down the road from their offices. As the mayor's Chief of Staff Skye Stewart shared, "The team time is really important because of everybody's busy schedules. It is hard to get everybody in a room for a certain period of time."

Superintendent Skipper also pointed out that the convenings' team time has been important in building cross-sector relationships: "The convenings have created sort of a platform for us to build a relationship with city agencies that then allows us to be able to kind of take things to the next level." Lisa Kuh, Director of Early Education for SPS, echoed these sentiments: "I think it's good for us to get out of our building and silos every once in awhile, to go hear from some people who are doing interesting work, and then be able to come together and have conversations about it. That's been a very powerful piece."

Access to Expertise

Another major draw of the convenings is the access to expertise, which has informed the city's work even beyond the scope of Somerville's cabinet. Hearing Paul Reville, Ron Heifetz, and other Harvard experts discuss the issues specific to their efforts allows the work to move forward using knowledge and best practices from neutral third parties.

OTHER SUPPORTS

Just after the first BAM convening, Superintendent Skipper reached out to Lab Director Paul Reville for advice on bringing professional development to Somerville; specifically, Skipper wanted to take steps to put Somerville ahead nationally on its student support model. This request ultimately led to a two-hour professional development training

for Somerville counselors facilitated by Harvard's Jacqueline Zeller in December 2016. The Lab also played a role in connecting Somerville with Citizen Schools, which ultimately led to their partnership. Finally, Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as thought partner on their education strategy.

Data

Somerville has a long history of using data as an integral part of its planning and policy process. This starts with the mayor, who makes constant use of data to understand the state of the city and identify his goals from year to year. As Mayor Curtatone shared, "We have people who are looking at data in real time collaboratively and cooperatively in a way they've never done before. The city has led—not just with the community, but in a very national effort—to understand how we utilize data on a real-time basis to not just improve performance and effectiveness of management but to identify where we are going to put policy to have a real impact on community. And the community cabinet allows us to do it collectively."

Data-driven decision-making permeates the cabinet, which includes among its members the district's data analyst; the city's Chief of Staff, Skye Stewart, who formerly directed SomerStat; and Doug Kress, whose position as Director of the Department of Health and Human Services is deeply data-oriented. Yet another cabinet member is the director of SomerPromise, an organization that "mines data from [Somerville] schools and identifies areas that need to be improved and challenges that need to be met so that every child in Somerville has a full opportunity to flourish."³

This elevation of the role of data is reflected in the city's approach to all aspects of the BAM work, and puts Somerville at the forefront of cities in innovative data collection and use. The city has a number of data-focused initiatives, including an innovative student data platform, Student Insights, developed through Code For America by Stephanie Hirsch several years prior. Since joining the initiative, the cabinet

has been exploring providing children with ID numbers at birth as well as linking early education assessments with kindergarten readiness assessments.

While the cabinet's initial preschool efforts focused on expanding the number of slots, the team quickly reoriented when it found that the real need concerned expanded longer-day slots. The cabinet is addressing this data issue by moving school registration online. Moving this process online will allow the city to capture information about family needs in real time and enable them to respond accordingly. Even while working to improve the data, Somerville moved forward on a new afterschool sliding fee structure to increase access to preschool OST immediately. The team recognized that the retrospective data would be helpful in guiding their iterative work.

Funding

EXTERNAL

Of the BAM cohort, Somerville has been particularly effective in obtaining outside funding from grant making organizations to finance aspects of their work. These efforts have been enabled by the commitment of leadership as well as by the internal capacity of grant-writing staff. One member of the cabinet, Director of Communications and Grants for Somerville Public Schools, has coordinated ongoing fundraising efforts for OST programming and expanding Somerville's innovative Student Insights platform, and the Boston Foundation has made a commitment to support Somerville's efforts to create an integrated data system.

Similarly, Citizen Schools' expansion into Somerville is supported by a \$200,000 grant from the Biogen Foundation, a long-time partner of the Somerville Public Schools and Citizen Schools. This partnership leverages the support of Google's Cambridge office as well, since Google supports Citizen Schools' STEM work through funding and employee volunteer time.

INTERNAL

Thanks to a strong relationship between the city government and the school district—bolstered by the success of SPS in significantly raising student achievement from year to year—children in Somerville have benefited from annual budget increases to education for the last five years. The high level of trust between Mayor Curtatone and Superintendent Skipper amplifies this: if Skipper says SPS is ready to take on a new project, Curtatone provides the resources needed.

In May 2017, the school district submitted a proposed budget to the city for fiscal year 2018. This budget included requests for paying a full-time OST coordinator, bringing Breakthrough Greater Boston and the Calculus Project to Somerville middle schools, and continuing a three-year rollout of Universal Kindergarten Readiness through expanded public preschool slots and a new Early Learning Instructional Coach.⁴ The full city budget also proposed funding for expanding public health services related to By All Means. For example, the Department of Health and Human Services requested an expansion of the role of their Public Health Nurse to increase support to daycare centers on child health concerns.

Conclusions

Somerville has benefited from a history of collaborative work and had already begun developing a collective impact mindset prior to joining By All Means. As one senior SPS official described, "This cross-agency work is more or less in the DNA of how we operate here." This mindset, coupled with the leadership's strong commitment to By All Means, provided a strong foundation that has allowed the cabinet's work to move forward quickly. Through a data-driven culture, frequent cabinet meetings, and a focus on deliverables, the team has made substantial progress on a number of fronts. The cabinet's most notable achievements to date include increasing the number of high-quality, longer-day preschool slots available in Somerville, expanding summer and afterschool programming, and releasing a community health

report whose recommendations are being incorporated into the work of the cabinet.

ENDNOTES

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4. Somerville Public Schools, School Committee's FY2018 Budget (May 17, 2017; Draft Version 1.1). Retrieved from http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/sites/default/files/FY2018%20School%20Budget%20Presentation%205.13.17_DRAFTv1.2.pdf
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Somerville Takeaways

- Regular use of data facilitates the accurate identification of needs, evidence-based decision-making, and accountability at all stages of collective impact work.
- Utilizing multiple streams of funding from the city, schools, and external sources can accelerate the work.
- Frequent cabinet meetings strengthen relationships and solidify a shared vision.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Somerville's work has evolved in the following ways:

- Somerville experienced its second changeover in consultant in July 2017, when Curley transitioned out of his role to work for the Somerville superintendent and lead the OST expansion in partnership. Curley was replaced by another doctoral student, Alison Welcher, a former principal and expert in school turnaround and leveraging partnerships to increase student achievement.
- In early September 2017, Somerville announced a grant from The Boston Foundation to expand the Student Insights data platform, and in October, the Somerville team learned they had received a two-year planning grant from the Barr Foundation to fund the development of a learning redesign project focused on personalized learning, meaningful experiential learning, and college readiness at Somerville High School in cooperation with the Center for Collaborative Education.
- Somerville released its comprehensive Wellbeing of Somerville Report in November 2017, which includes Prenatal/Early Childhood and School Age/Adolescence chapters.⁵
- In early 2018, Somerville received \$100,000 from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to support new messaging work after a connection was made by the Lab between Somerville officials and representatives from the foundation.