2013

The BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood Mini-Education Pipeline Strategy

The Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority

"Our Neighborhood. Our Choice."
BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood

Executive Summary

Executive Summary: Mini-Education Pipeline

The Mini-Education Pipeline (MEP) represents the education and school reform strategy that accompanies the broader Perry Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan. In order to create a neighborhood that can serve as a platform for improving the lives of the residents in the Perry Choice Neighborhood (PCN), we are developing a strategy which creates a continuum of enrichment and support that enables young people to graduate from high school ready to enter into college or a career. Achieving this outcome would be next to impossible without first creating a place-conscious approach to education that creates highly interactive linkages and connections between home and family, school, and neighborhood. These linkages would need to be embedded in a feeder system of schools. Specifically, we are creating an educational experience, or a *pipeline*, that is cemented in the context of the neighborhood. Simply stated, school reform cannot happen in isolation of the transformation of the very neighborhood from which students come. This strategy is composed of five highly interactive components that will be linked together by a management structure, which will coordinate services and connect back to the neighborhood.

To this end, we have created a system designed to link school and neighborhood transformation, with the goals of ensuring that all students are socially and academically ready to enter kindergarten and first grade, and eventually college and/or a career. This strategy will consist of an Early Learning Network, including four Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) – Futures Academy (PS 37); Martin Luther King, Jr. Multi-Cultural Institute (PS 39); East High School; (PS 307) and South Park High School (PS 206) – and two partnership schools, including King Center Charter School and City Honors School. This plan is laid out in two sections: (1) The Needs Assessment and (2) the Pipeline Approach and Structure.

Part One: Introduction and The Need

1.0 Introduction: This section establishes the context for understanding why a new and innovative approach to education in distressed communities is warranted.

2.0 The Need and Challenge: n order to establish a baseline understanding of the current environment in which our four Pipeline schools operate, we present a demographic case for why these schools will be included in our strategy. Evidence of the Pipeline school's need for reform include declining enrollment and a persistently low-achieving academic status. The pipeline system is designed to remedy such issues using a network of academic and support programs. Because the Buffalo Public School system is an "open enrollment" district, in which students may choose to enroll in any school in the district, our pipeline system faces serious challenges creating a link between school, neighborhood, and family. We mount an argument that suggests that historical tensions exist between choice-based school reform strategies and neighborhood-based school reform strategies.

3.0 Goals and Priorities: In this section, we clearly state the goals and priorities for the Mini-Education Pipeline system. Three goals set the framework for our five priorities that are centered on the idea of building a different and reimagined education system rooted in the context of a particular neighborhood.

Part 2: The Mini-Education Pipeline Approach and Structure

4.0   The Pipeline Approach and Structure: Pipeline conceptions of the educational experience are not necessarily new. We will describe previously existing pipeline frameworks, and discuss how the Mini-Education Pipeline goes beyond these approaches by working directly with existing public schools, incorporating the university-assisted community schools approach, and anchoring the pipeline in the context of a specific neighborhood. We discuss our five interactive components which form the Mini-Education Pipeline structure.

4.1   The Early Learning Network and Structure: The network is designed within the framework of the "Birth-to-Eight Early Learning Continuum of Services," which includes early learning, health outreach, family and community involvement, professional development for child care workers, and assessment and data collection systems. These services will begin to interface with children in infancy, and will continue to work with

them until they turn eight. We will work with many community partners to make this system a reality, including Every Parent Influences Children, Read to Succeed Buffalo, Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center, the Early Childhood Direction Center, and King Center Charter School's Parent-Child Home Program.

4.2 **K-12 Grade Academic Enrichment and Supportive Service Program:** This program assists schools in identifying their unique academic and support needs, and outlines what programs and services are available to the schools. The program then frames partnerships to fill the school's needs. We propose a clustering system of academic support, social/emotional support, and college/career readiness that will create a way to understand and more accurately evaluate these partners and service providers in order to adhere to certain academic and social goals. This clustering system will also be designed to create linkages and connections between these systems both at the school and at the neighborhood level.

4.3 **PCN-Based After-School Program:** Recognizing that school-based academic programs may not meet the needs of all families, we have a strategy to connect residents with neighborhood-based enrichment activities. With our partners at the Buffalo City Swim Racers and Computers for Children, we have designed a strategy to extend learning beyond the school day and incorporate it into the neighborhood as a way to create an academic culture and a love of learning across the PCN.

4.4 **The Summer Enrichment Program:** The UB Liberty Partnerships Program has partnered with the UB Center for Urban Studies to create a program targeted to combat summer learning loss. This project-based learning approach to summer programming offers students a chance to apply school learning to real-world problem solving in the context of the PCN neighborhood transformation process.

4.5 **The School-Neighborhood Bridge**: Our Connector system's primary goal is to create strong linkages and interfaces between MEP schools, the children's homes, and the neighborhood. This system consists of entities that cement the pipeline in the neighborhood – from Parent Advocates to a Parent Council to build strong connections with parents and caregivers.

4.6 **The Management Structure:** In order to bring all pieces of the Mini-Education Pipeline together to operate as a system, we will design a combination of collaborative organizational relationships along with newly-created staff positions to create a management structure. The structure will build on the school-based success of Closing the Gap (CTG), a partnership between the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, Catholic Charities, and BPS. CTG creates systems integration frameworks between organizations and groups within the jurisdiction of the school to resources and assets within the neighborhood.

Project Plan

PART 1: Introduction, Need, and Challenge

1.0 Introduction

The BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood (PCN) is a two-year planning initiative that seeks to develop a strategy that turns the PCN into a platform that improves the lives of residents, and that nurtures and transforms young people into engaged citizens capable of realizing their full human potential. Developing an educational strategy that provides a continuum of academic enrichment and supportive services from "birth to college and/or a career" is a requisite for achieving these goals. The reason is that educational attainment is a huge problem for residents in the Perry Choice Neighborhood. About 26% of the residents of the PCN have less than a high school diploma and only about 10% have Bachelor's degrees or higher. A linear relationship exists between education attainment and income, with those having only a high school diploma or less, at the very bottom of the economic ladder. Thus, without changing this educational profile, the goal of moving most PCN residents to economic security and financial self-sufficiency will fail. Therefore, the PCN places education at the core of its neighborhood revitalization strategy.

To improve the quality of education in the PCN, the education planning team designed a solution based on the construction of a Mini-Education Pipeline (or, the pipeline). This approach focuses on educational improvement, and provides a continuum of academic enrichment and supportive services that will allow young people to graduate from high school ready to go to college or enter a career. The pipeline strategy is based on the belief that to reform schools you must also revitalize the distressed and underdeveloped neighborhoods where the children live. Therefore, unlike other pipeline methodologies, the mini-education pipeline is a place-conscious method that employs a university-assisted school model to achieve its goal of graduating every PCN child from high school on time and ready to enter college or a career.

This report outlines a plan designed for solving the problem of low-educational achievement in the PCN. The report will be divided into three parts. The first part outlines the "needs" for improving the quality of education in those schools attended by PCN students and

the "challenges" faced by these schools, students, and families. The second part discusses the mini-education pipeline strategy and the management plan.

2.0 The Need and Challenge

One key to changing the educational profile of the PCN is to improve the quality of the schools to which PCN children have access. To accomplish this goal, the MEP developed a collaborative relationship with four public schools – two primary and two secondary schools. Buffalo is a school choice city. Therefore, children living in the PCN go to schools scattered throughout the city, but mostly on the East Side of Buffalo. The goal is to improve the quality of education in the four MEP partnership schools, and then to encourage PCN parents to send their children to these schools, thereby turning the partnership schools into de facto neighborhood schools.

Today, however, the MEP schools are low-performing institutions. In the recent accountability report released by the New York State Education Department, the four MEP schools were all listed as "Priority Schools," a designation that denotes the lowest performing five percent of schools in the state. Schools within the immediate vicinity of the Perry Choice Neighborhood are either classified as "Focus" or "Priority" schools, with the exception of certain criterion schools which have screened admissions processes.

Our needs assessment flows in the same way we conceptualize the education pipeline. Rooted in the neighborhood, we will begin by examining the neighborhood context in which education operates. From there, we explore the "birth-to-eight" continuum, or the status of the early learning environment and its relation to school readiness issues. Early learning flows into an assessment of the formal public schooling system, from student characteristics in MEP schools to school performance. An added layer to academic performance will also be an assessment of the supportive service infrastructure in schools and its impact on school performance. Finally, we examine how school choice provides a contextual challenge for place-based strategies. The conclusion of the needs assessment will articulate the MEP's goals and priorities which naturally flow out of these identified needs.

2.1 The Neighborhood Challenge and Educational Infrastructure

The PCN is an underdeveloped neighborhood with a jobless rate of about 58%, a median household income of $20,000, a poverty rate of 34%, with a staggering 35% of the population paying 50% or more of their household income on housing.   Add to this equation that 56% (1623 of 2878) of all family households are single-parent households led by mothers and another 12% (332 of 2878) are single-parent households led by fathers. Moreover, according to surveys, focus groups, and police reports, crime is a serious problem in the neighborhood. For example, the rates of property and violent crimes in the PCN are significantly higher than citywide rates.

In addition, the neighborhood does not have an infrastructure to support education. For example, in focus groups, the children say they have no quiet place to study at home or in the neighborhood. They also say there is no one in the household that can help them with homework or provide assistance in subjects with which they are struggling. The children say they have no access to the computers either at home or in the neighborhood and that getting to the public library is difficult because of the cost of transportation.   In this setting, many families withdraw and become detached from formal institutions, including the public schools, thereby establishing barriers between schools and parents.   These conditions erect non-academic barriers to student academic achievement, as well as create obstacles to the students acquiring the necessary aspirations, skills and competencies needed to improve academically and to graduate from high school ready for college and/or a career.

Upon deep investigation through our comprehensive needs assessment, many neighborhood-based challenges to education emerged. During the Walking Tours, adults in the neighborhood pointed out vandalism throughout the neighborhood that was a result of youth's behaviors and lack of educational opportunities. During the Community Needs assessment, households were shown to lack access to a computer, and most families reported having no access to the internet. During the asset mapping, institutions within PCN appeared to be disconnected both from each other and from residents within the neighborhood. Social institutions explicitly focusing on education, aside from schools themselves, are non-existent. Daycares in the neighborhood are isolated from each other and from other institutions that can

help them improve their quality. School-based interviews and a review of the Joint Intervention Team Reports suggested a lack of parent and community involvement with schools. Taking all of these factors together, an idea emerges: despite the existence of public schools and day care centers in the neighborhood, no connected educational infrastructure exists inside of the PCN community or unites institutions to support education and learning of children inside of the neighborhood. Further complicating the neighborhood educational infrastructure is school choice efforts that have driven a wedge between neighborhoods and schools. The next section explains this challenge and how it influences the construction of the MEP.

2.2 The School Choice Challenge

Buffalo is a school choice city, so the concept of "neighborhood schools" does not resonate with residents in our location as it might with suburban or southern communities. With a tenuous history of desegregation efforts that have largely failed, the idea of "zoned schools" raises concerns among parents that their children will be forced to attend a failing neighborhood school. Figure 1, below, illustrates the magnitude of the school choice issue confronting the Perry Choice Neighborhood. As the maps show, students attending MEP schools live across the city, especially the east and west portions but less from the north. The lack of patterns among school choice decisions animates how complex and messy the transition to a community schools approach will be. However, as a result of this, we have devised a 4-pronged strategy to address this issue. First, current MEP schools were chosen because of their involvement with the "Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods" collaborative, as well as their levels of support and enthusiasm for the effort. Next, as the MEP strategy launches, we plan to upscale to schools found within the neighborhood, beginning with BPS School # 6 (Buffalo Elementary School of Technology). The MEP strategy can easily be upscaled for two reasons: (1) our strategy is designed to work with current partners within the framework of the building, (2) site facilitators, a key component to our strategy, will be in all BPS schools by 2016.
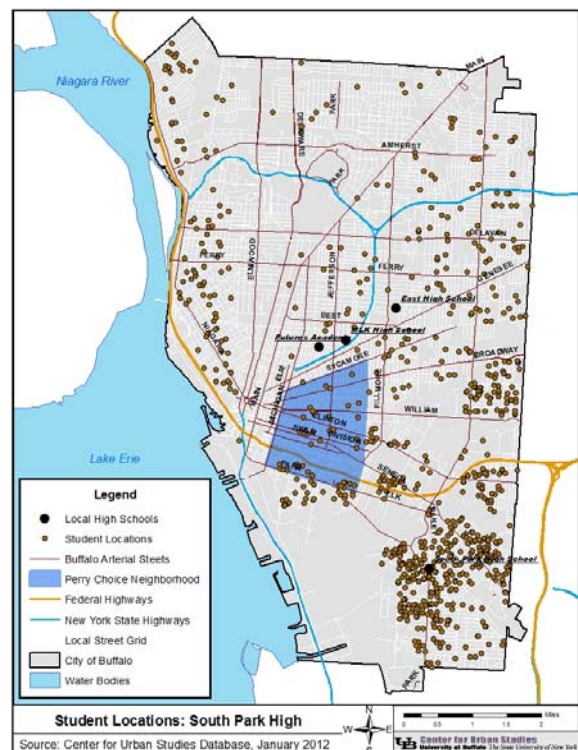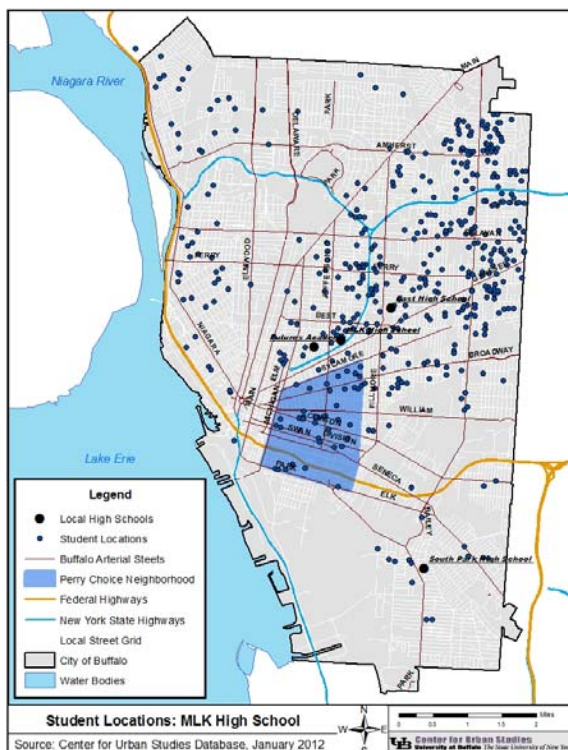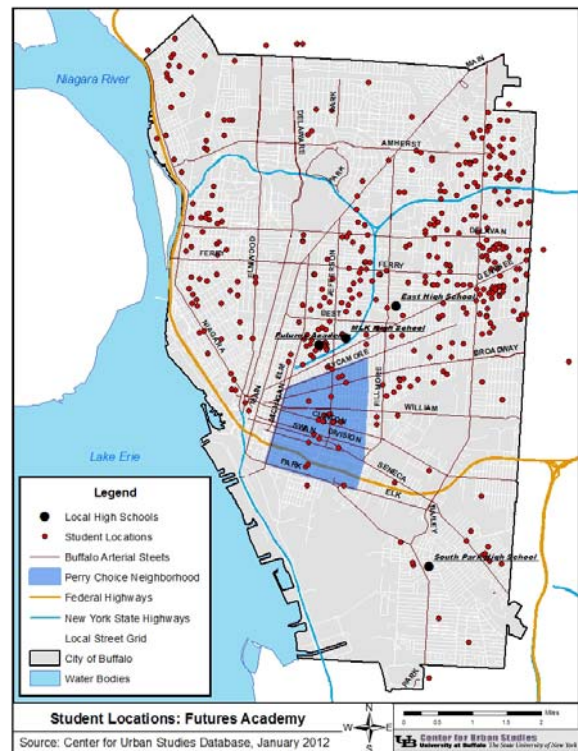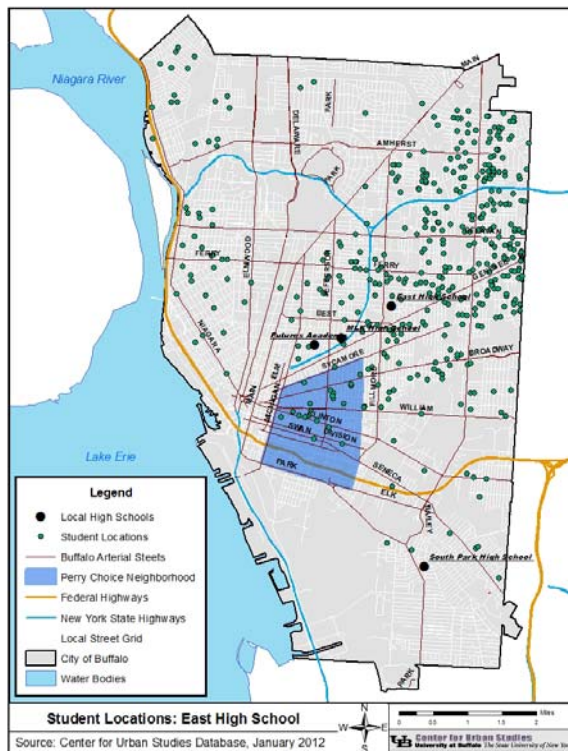
Figure1 Spatial representation of MEP school enrollment
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

As a third way to confront this challenge, the neighborhood-based after-school program serves as a catchment for children attending schools outside of our neighborhood. For neighborhood-based after-school programs, several efforts already operate: Planning and Information Center, Buffalo City Swim Racers, and Computers for Children. Given our partnerships with Boys and Girls Club of Buffalo, the Police Athletic League, and the Ellicott-Masten YMCA, an infrastructure exists for bolstering the neighborhood-based after-school activities to serve students who attend school outside the neighborhood. Finally, we plan to develop special relationships between in-school supportive service staff (CTG site facilitators, social workers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors) from schools with larger numbers of PCN students and our neighborhood-based social workers.

On a more systems-level approach, we will work on two fronts to create a system of schools that are designed with PCN students and families in mind. First, we will work with Buffalo Public Schools' Central Registration Office to encourage families to attend the MEP schools through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) process. Next, we will work with residents to develop an aggressive neighborhood-based campaign to enroll their students in MEP schools.

2.3 School Readiness and Early Learning in the PCN

The birth–to-eight continuum provides a lens through which to see school readiness. This section will be broken into three sections of the needs for the birth-to-eight continuum. First, we will examine needs related to children ages birth through two, while the second section will examine ages two through five. Finally, we will examine ages five through eight.

Birth through two (Parenting and Child Care)

At this level of the assessment, school readiness can be viewed through the lens of parent and home environment because these factors are predictors of school success. For example, parent personality and negative home environments impact school readiness because of their impact on motivation and engagement. Our needs assessment, as reported, discussed the lack of educational infrastructure in the neighborhood and the home such as dedicated

places for children to do their homework, adults in the community who can help students with academic work, and institutions that are providing educationally-rich experiences for children. This lack of educational infrastructure has implications for parenting behaviors and resources available in the home to support learning. Parents surveyed in the needs assessment cited a lack of interaction with institutions that help build parenting skills. Parents in the Perry Homes also cited an average of only 33 books per household. Studies have shown that the number of books in a student's living environment is a predictor of educational success. Parents' educational attainment is often a good surrogate measure of child's educational attainment, and its impacts can be seen early. In the PCN, a small number of people completed college while many either dropped out of high school or dropped out of college if they completed high school. One piece of that data which indicates rick for children is teen birth rates. According to the New York State Kids Well-Being Indicators Clearinghouse, Erie County's birth rate for women 15-19 is approximately 2.5% (24.5/1000 births). The PCN's teen birth rate is more than triple for the county 9.0% (90.3/1000 births). Research has demonstrated that children born to teen mothers are at higher risk for academic difficulty and other health-related issues.

Three through five (Child Care through Kindergarten readiness)

We know that children who are placed in early learning/childhood education programs perform better on intellectual and academic measures as young adults. Studies have shown that if lower-income students are already behind at an early age, they will most likely be consistently behind their higher-income peers.
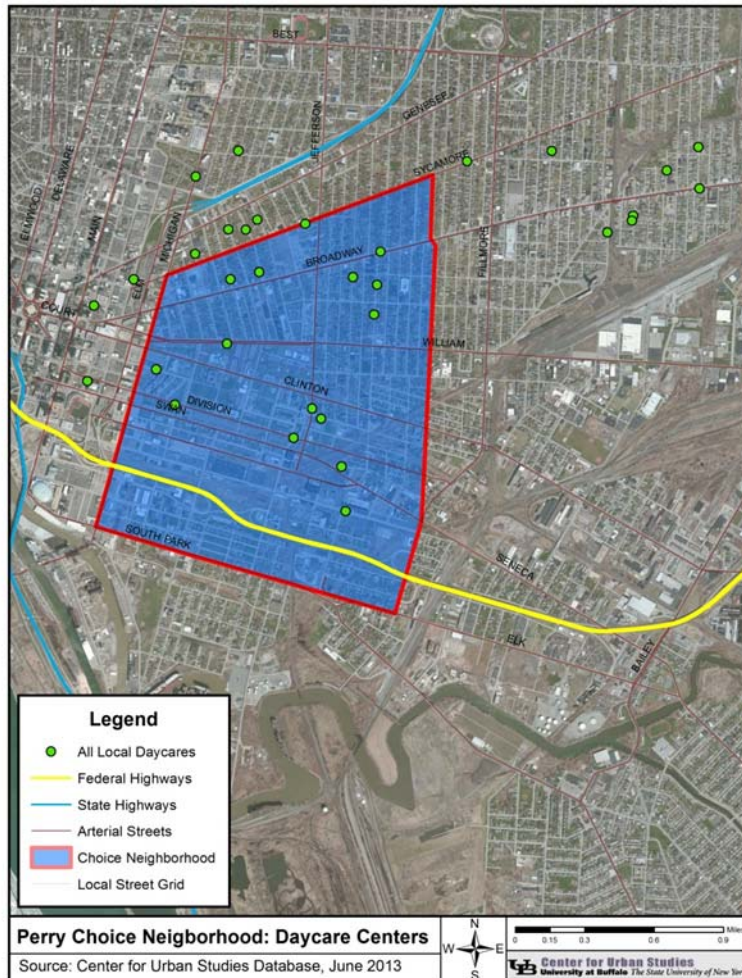
Figure 2 PCN Early Childhood Centers
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies, New York State Office and Child
Family Services Day Care Facility Database

The existing PCN early learning network consists of a two nearby Head Start and one neighborhood-based Early Head Start program, along with a parent child home program, about 17 licensed daycare centers, and at least 51 unlicensed daycare centers (See Figure 2). There are two major problems with this institutional network. First, Head Start is the most sophisticated of these early learning programs, but they can only provide services to a small number of children. In metropolitan Buffalo, the Community Action Organization of Erie County (CAO) operates sixty-three Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These programs, however, provide services for only about 1,102 children. In the PCN, alone, there were 608 children five years of age and younger living in that community. Most importantly, according to Nate Hare, executive director of the CAO, it is virtually impossible to get new Head Start applications approved.

There are about 381 children attending the licensed daycare centers in the PCN, but this information comes with some caveats. First, through our data analysis, it seems that many of these children being served may or may not be from the PCN. In the PCN, there are 608 children age 5 and under living in the community, and an estimated 243 between ages 3-5

years. However, 72% (174) of the 3-5 year old children attend a formal preschool program.[1] The remaining children are either enrolled in licensed daycare centers, unlicensed daycare programs or they stay at home with a parent or caregiver.

Further, there is no guarantee that children are attending high-quality day cares within the PCN because there are no standards for educational programming for day cares and many day care providers are not trained in early education. For example, some child care sites in the PCN are categorized as "legally exempt" providers. These centers are registered as legally-exempt because they receive child care subsidies through the Erie County Department of Social Services, managed through the Child Care Resource Network (CCRN). Providers in this category are only subject to basic checks for housing quality and criminal background. These providers are not assessed in terms of credentialing for employees, formalizing of learning environments, or assessing the nutritional value of food served. Within the 14204 ZIP code, which covers the majority of the PCN, 51 legally exempt day care centers exist. Commodore Perry Homes houses 10 of those legally exempt providers. There may be more de facto unlicensed providers within the PCN that are not working with CCRN but this also means that they are not receiving subsidies. Some of these child care providers are simply relatives, for instance a grandmother watching her grandkids, who receives a subsidy to take care of the kids. These providers are not attempting to build clients or provide a service outside of their immediate family or friends. Nevertheless, these providers could benefit from instruction or resources to provide early learning programming. Encouragingly, two centers located in the PCN participate in the QUALITYstarsNY, which is a system for determining high quality daycare centers. Beyond child care settings, the needs assessment shows that many students in the neighborhood do not take advantage of pre-Kindergarten programs.

Table 1 Early Learning Opportunities and Capacity in the PCN

Day Care Centers and Providers	Number
Legally Exempt Providers in 14204	51
Number of Independent Day Care Providers (Includes centers, group/family care)	16

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[1] This figure is an estimate for 2010. The estimate for 2011 is 56%. The large variation is likely due to error in Census estimates.

Number of Early Head Start Programs	1
Number of Head Start Programs	0

TOTAL CAPACITY	Number
Total Capacity of Children Served by Day Care Centers/Providers in PCN	381
Number of Children Under 5 Years Old PCN	608

Sources: New York State Office and Child Family Services Day Care Facility Database; U.S. 2010 Census; Child Care Resource Network

In both of these settings, we believe that the children are not getting the type of stimulation and experiences that would get them ready to read and become excited about learning. There is a very strong Parent-Child Home Program operating just outside of the PCN, but the organization does not have the resources to expand its operations throughout the neighborhood. Currently, no Commodore Perry children are served by this service. Four and five-year-old students have the opportunity to enroll in pre-school programs through private options, BPS pre-Kindergarten programs, and Head Start, but only an estimated 72% of children aged 3-4 in the PCN currently enroll in pre-school programs.
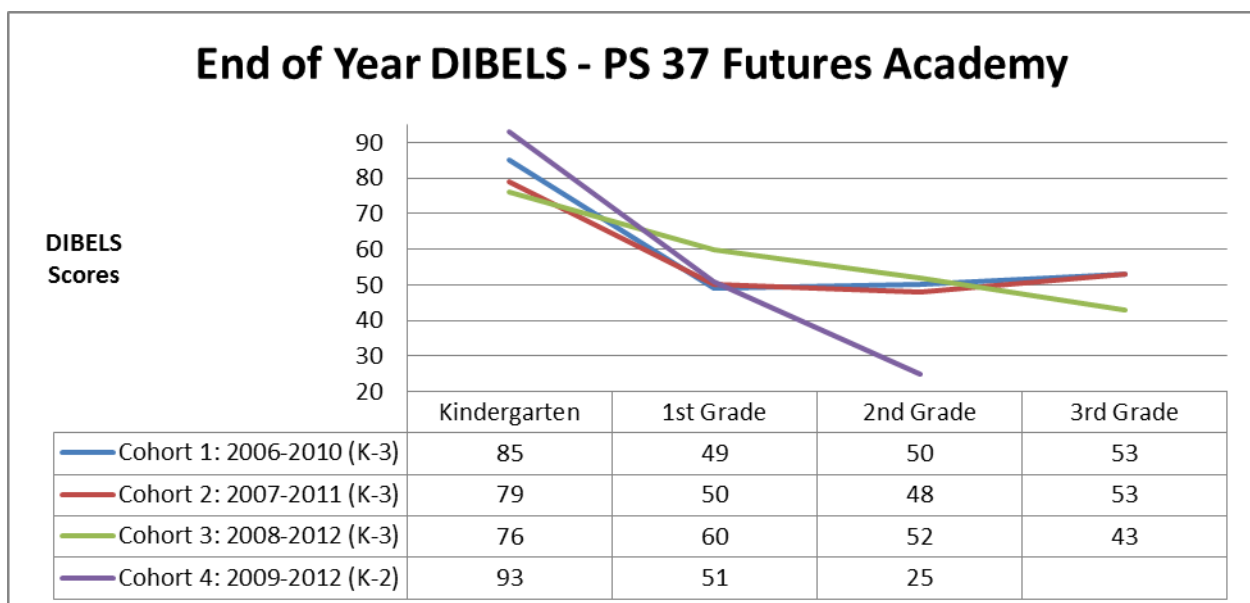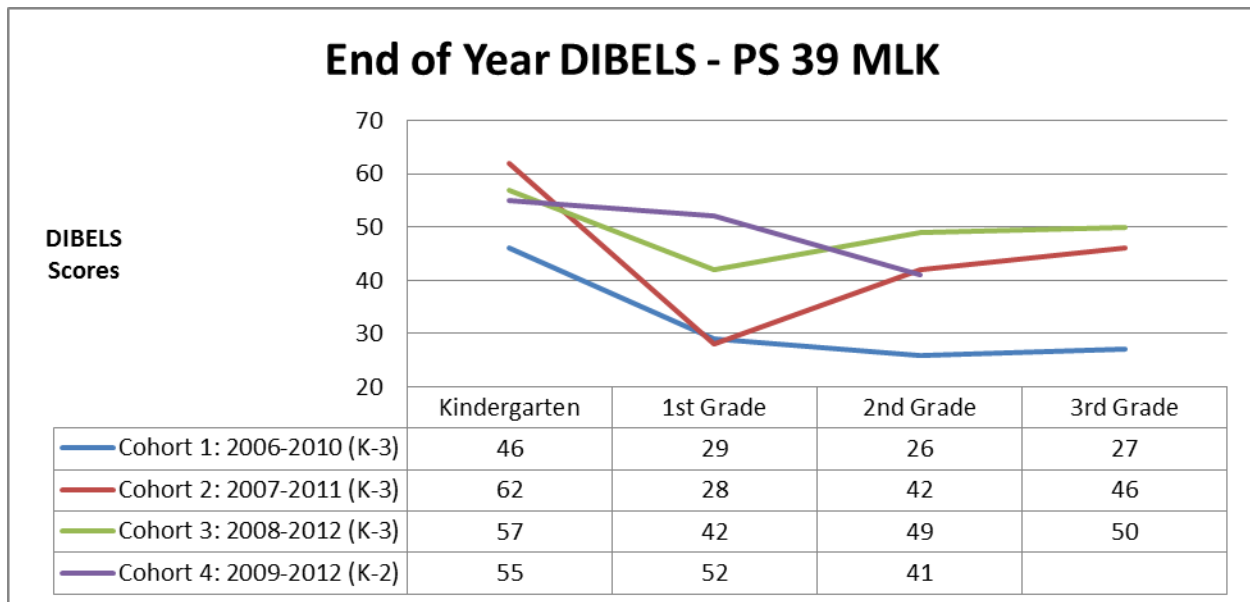
The PCN early childhood institutional framework is a dysfunctional one that is not preparing most PCN children to enter first grade ready to learn. As long as this institutional framework is not working properly, African Americans and Latinos in the PCN are going to struggle in Buffalo schools, no matter what type of reform system the various schools adopt. As we will also discuss later in the "Neighborhood Challenge," neighborhood factors compound school readiness, as conditions found in distressed neighborhoods negatively influence student academic achievement and ensure that inner city children will not meet critical developmental milestones.

Five through eight (Kindergarten readiness through third grade performance)

While research cited above clearly shows the neighborhood and institutional impacts on school readiness, we also argue that students in the PCN are not performing well when they reach Kindergarten or first grade.   Examining DIBELS, an assessment administered each year between Kindergarten and sixth grade, scores for Kindergarten through third grade in MLK Multicultural Institute and Futures Academy demonstrate that any early learning gains that

were made from early learning programs are not sustained. These data highlight the critical importance of (1) high quality early learning systems and (2) effective strategies between pre-school and Kindergarten / first grade.

Table 2 DIBELS scores for MEP schools

End of Year DIBELS - PS 39 MLK

DIBELS Scores

	Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
Cohort 1: 2006-2010 (K-3)	46	29	26	27
Cohort 2: 2007-2011 (K-3)	62	28	42	46
Cohort 3: 2008-2012 (K-3)	57	42	49	50
Cohort 4: 2009-2012 (K-2)	55	52	41	

End of Year DIBELS - PS 37 Futures Academy

DIBELS Scores

|	Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
Cohort 1: 2006-2010 (K-3)	85	49	50	53
Cohort 2: 2007-2011 (K-3)	79	50	48	53
Cohort 3: 2008-2012 (K-3)	76	60	52	43
Cohort 4: 2009-2012 (K-2)	93	51	25	

Source: Read to Succeed Buffalo

2.4 The MEP Public Schooling System: Student demographics

In the Buffalo School Choice environment, parents select the schools their children attend. Enrollments in the four MEP schools have generally either flat lined or decreased between 2008- 2009 and 2011-2012 (see Figure 3).
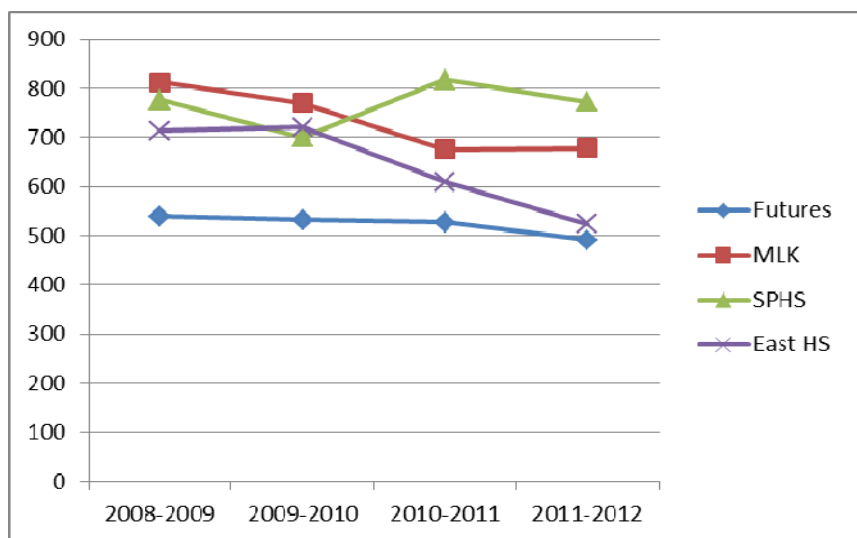
In the Buffalo School Choice environment parents select the schools their children attend. Because of this, developing a school reform strategy that directly impacts the children living in Perry Choice will be difficult. This challenge is made even more daunting by the large number of persistently low-achieving schools that service students living in the inner-city.[2] About 77% (43 of 56) of the public schools in Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) are persistently low achieving institutions called "priority" or "focus" schools in New York State (Table 3). Third and eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA, or "English") and Math test scores are used widely to determine if students are meeting the appropriate academic standards at these two critical grade levels. The assessments on these tests are based on students reaching different levels of proficiency: *Level 1—Below Standards*, the student's performance is below standards, while at *Level 2—standards*, the student's performance demonstrates a partial understanding of the Math and English language arts knowledge and skills expected at their grade level. At *Level 3-*

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[2] In New York State, these schools are now referred to as Focus and Priority Schools.

Proficiency, students demonstrate an understanding of Math and English language arts knowledge and skills expected at their grade level, while at *Level 4*, they exceed the proficiency standard. We refer to proficiency rates as the total percentage of students who achieved levels 3 and 4. Among third graders, students in BPS's focus and priority schools reached 22% proficiency in English and 22% proficiency in Math, compared to 56% and 60%, respectively, proficiency rates of Erie County students (Table 3). In other words, 78% of students in BPS focus and priority schools *failed to meet* proficiency in both English and Math. Among eighth graders, the story is worse. Only 18% of BPS students scored at levels 3 and 4 in English Language Arts and only 17% scored levels 3 and 4 in Mathematics, compared to 53% and 62% proficiency rates, respectively, of students attending other Erie County schools. Stated differently, 82% of eighth graders in BPS's lowest-performing schools *failed to meet* proficiency in English, and 83% of these students *failed to meet* proficiency in Math. In high school, proficiency rates continue to lag. Further, 48% of students in low-performing schools did not meet proficiency in English, while 45% of students did not meet proficiency in Math. High school graduation rates hover at 65% for these Buffalo schools, while the county-wide graduation is 92%.[3] At both levels of schooling, attendance rates in these Buffalo schools fell substantially below Erie County averages.

Table 3 Rates of Proficiency (Level 3 and 4) for English Language Arts and Mathematics, Attendance Rates, and Enrollment Figures in Buffalo's Priority and Focus Schools Compared to Erie County Schools, 2011-2012

Elementary and Middle Schools	ELA 3 Proficiency Rate	Math 3 Proficiency Rate	ELA 8 Proficiency Rate	Math 8 Proficiency Rate	Attendance	Avg enrollment	Total enrollment	Total schools
Buffalo Focus and Priority schools	22%	22%	18%	17%	90%	580	18,567	32
Erie County schools	56%	60%	53%	62%	94%	575	90,905	158

High School	ELA Proficiency Rate	Math Proficiency Rate	Grad rate	Attendance	Avg enrollment	Total enrollment	Total schools

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[3] These graduation rates are not the cohort graduation rates that are the conventional graduation metric. These graduation rates refer to the number of seniors that graduated divided by the total number of seniors. These figures are much higher than the cohort graduation rate which accounts for completion in 4-5 years. For instance in 2011-2012 the 5 year cohort graduation rate for all BPS schools (not just focus and priority) was 52%. In 2011-2012 the cohort graduation rate was not provided in the NYSED School Report Card Database.

| Buffalo Focus and Priority schools | 52% | 55% | 65% | 80% | 640 | 7,038 | 11 |
| Erie County schools | 82% | 84% | 92% | 91% | 730 | 39,439 | 54 |

Given the complexities of school choice, and the magnitude of the challenges facing most of Buffalo's public schools, we have created a system designed to link school and neighborhood transformation with a subset of four BPS schools. These four schools – Futures Academy (PS 37); Martin Luther King, Jr. Multi-Cultural Institute (PS 39); East High School; (PS 307) and South Park High School (PS 206) – are designed to be a set of feeder schools designed to meet the needs of residents in the PCN. Additionally, two higher-performing schools, called "Friends of the MEP" will also work with our schools as partners and mentors with the four schools: King Center Charter School and City Honors School. The remainder of the needs assessment focuses on the status of the four MEP schools.

Table 4 provides a profile of the students attending the MEP schools, along with other Buffalo and Erie County public schools.   These data represent pre-K through grade 12 enrollment. Noticeable differences exist between MEP schools and the two comparison groups. The MEP schools had noticeably higher percentages of Blacks and students receiving free lunches under the federal School Lunch Program than did the City and County schools. Moreover, attendance rates were lower in MEP schools than Erie County, while suspension rates were the higher than both BPS and Erie Co schools.

Table 4 Student Characteristics, 2010-2011

Student Characteristic	MEP Schools	BPS Schools	Erie County Schools
	(4 schools)	(56 schools)	(218 schools)
Total Enrollment	2,726	34,119	132,577
Percent Black	67%	51%	20%

Percent White	19%	21%	66%
Percent American Indian	1%	1%	1%
Percent Hispanic	8%	14%	5%
Percent Asian	1%	4%	3%
Percent Free Lunch	75%	68%	33%
Percent Reduced Price Lunch	5%	5%	7%
Annual Attendance Rate	84%	86%	91%
Percent Suspension	28%	18%	8%

Source: New York State Education Department School Report Card Database, 2011-2012

2.5 Graduation Rates and Aspirational Goals

Table 5 summarizes data for class size, graduation rates, and aspirational goals. These data represent 8th grade and high school classes. Graduation rate data represent the percentage of student in the 2006 cohort that graduated by 2011. Aspirational goal data are compiled for students who graduated in 2011. The graduation rate among MEP students was significantly lower than that of BPS and Erie County schools, as was the percentage of students that planned to go on to a four-year college after graduation. Alternatively, a much higher percentage of MEP students indicated that they are planning on attending a two-year college after graduation. This data suggests that both the aspiration and graduation levels of MEP schools lag behind those of other Buffalo and Erie County public schools.

Table 5 Class Size, High School Graduates and Aspirational Goals, 2010-2011

Student Characteristics	MEP Schools	All BPS Schools (56 schools)	Erie County (218 schools)
Average Class Size: 8th grade English	19	18	20
Average Class Size: 10th grade English	28	21	21
Graduation Rate	49%	53%	81%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to enroll in four-year colleges in NYS	17%	30%	43%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to enroll in four-year colleges outside NYS	0%	5%	8%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to enroll in two-year colleges in NYS	51%	44%	33%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to enroll in two-year colleges outside NYS	0%	1%	1%

Percent of high school graduates who planned to enroll in other post-secondary institutions in NYS	5%	3%	1%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to enroll in other post-secondary institutions outside NYS	0%	0%	0%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to enlist in the military	1%	2%	2%
Percent of high school graduates who planned to pursue employment	12%	7%	7%

2.6 Key Academic Benchmarks: 3rd and 8th grade state test scores

Third and eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) and Math test scores are used nationally to determine if students are meeting the appropriate academic standards at these two critical grade level benchmarks. The data show that the two MEP schools that have 3rd and 8th grade students are lagging behind other BPS and Erie County public schools (Table 6). For example, only 11% (10%) of 3rd grade MEP students are scoring at proficiency levels for ELA (Math) which means that 89% (90%) of students are attaining scores of proficiency for grade level testing. These percentages are less than half and one-fifth of the scores for BPS and Erie Co schools. Eighth grade performance for MEP schools roughly mirrored 3rd grade scores compared to BPS and Erie Co schools.   At the high school level, while the MEP high schools perform much better than MEP primary schools, MEP high schools' lag behind both BPS and Erie Co high schools. These performances indicate the challenges that will be faced while transforming MEP schools into top quality schools that parents or caregivers will select for their children.

Table 6 State Assessment Scores in English Language Arts and Mathematics for Grades 3 and 8, 2011-2012

Student Characteristic	MEP Schools (n=2)	BPS Schools (n=36)	Other Erie County Schools (n=117)
Average Score ELA Grade 3	636	645	664

Percent Level 3 and 4 on ELA 3	11%	28%	56%
Average Score on Math Grade 3	663	672	687
Percent Level 3 and 4 on Math 3	10%	27%	60%

Student Characteristic	MEP Schools (n=2)	BPS Schools (n=35)	Other Erie County Schools (n=78)
Average Score ELA Grade 8	637	645	659
Percent Level 3 and 4 on ELA 8	9%	25%	53%
Average Score Math Grade 8	637	652	678
Percent Level 3 and 4 on Math 8	9%	24%	62%

Student Characteristic	MEP Schools (n=2)	BPS Schools (n=16)	Erie County Schools (n=54)
Percent Level 3 and 4 on ELA HS	55%	56%	82%
Percent Level 3 and 4 on Math HS	59%	60%	84%

Source: New York State Education Department School Report Card Database, 2011-2012

2.7 Joint Intervention Team Reports

Three MEP schools were assessed by the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) in the 2010-2011 school year, and the team noted the challenge of turning these schools around. Most critically, the reports emphasized the need for intervention programs to complement the curriculum and help enhance the student's skills and competencies. While there were other issues of great concern, the report made it clear that the schools would not succeed without strong academic enrichment and supportive service programs.

2.8 Out-of-School Time: After-School and Summer Learning Opportunities in the PCN

The neighborhood is an education dessert during the out-of-school hours. Research consistently shows that students, particularly Black and Latino, are negatively impacted by summer learning loss. For example, research shows that on average low-income Black and Latino students lose approximately anywhere from one to three months of grade level

equivalency in mathematics, reading, and writing performance. Only four institutions were identified as organizations that provided programming for children during non-school hours like after-school, summer, and weekends. Out-of-school time programming at these institutions lacked coordination and ignored neighborhood-based issues and challenges. Table 7 showcases the character of these four identified programs.

Table 7 Institutions in PCN Providing Out-of-School Opportunities

	Cost (Yes/No)	Structured Activities (Type)	Unstructured Activities (Type)	Formal Connection with Schools in PCN or in the MEP?	Located in the assisted footprint?
Name					
JFK Community Center (CAO)	Yes	Homework help, Arts and crafts, Field trips (summer), and sports teams	Recreational sport activities, outdoor pool, basketball court, computer access	No	No
YMCA	Yes	Homework help, Arts and Crafts	Open gym, open pool, compute access	No	No
Computers for Children	Yes	Computer hardware and software training	N/A	No	No
Lanigan Field House	No	Arts and crafts, homework help, sports teams, Field trips (summer)	Open Gym, weight room and TV room	No	Yes

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

Most programs cost families money to participate in them, with the exception of the Lanigan Field House which simply provides open access to an unstructured gym environment supervised by City of Buffalo Parks and Recreation officials. None of these institutions had formal connections with schools located within the PCN, thereby creating a set of disconnected educational programs from the formal educational mission of schools. At best, current institutions provide children with homework assistance, which our data indicated that students

currently do not use. Instead, parents reported that they are usually the ones who help their children when they experience academic difficulty. While some drop-in recreation centers exist within the PCN, research demonstrates that high-quality out-of-school time programs meet certain benchmarks of quality.

In the summer, no institutions provide structured educationally-focused programming, with the exception of field trip programs that appeared to be disconnected from larger structured program models. No institutions provide the kind of highly-structured educational experiences for children that can positively impact educational attainment. Surveys revealed that this is one of the concerns of the residents of Commodore Perry. In years past, the Lanigan Field House provided numerous field trips, recreation activities, and even a local marching band. Now the Field House is simply a gym that is known for ethnic tensions and trouble for youth.

The same story can be told during the school year. With the exception of school-based programs, no community-based organizations or public entities provide structured academic enrichment programs for youth in the PCN. While the broader PCN includes a YMCA and the JFK Community Center, these institutions provide neither structured after-school nor structured summer programs, in turn contributing to the lack of educational infrastructure in the neighborhood. Three MEP schools do provide after-school programming, but they are not connected to any neighborhood-based activities or entities. Further, none of these institutions make intentional efforts to connect with the communities around them, nor do they link any of their programming with community development processes.

2.9 Supportive Services

This needs assessment reveals a disconnect in service coordination between external and internal support providers. During conversations with school principals, discussions about supportive services revealed that the Student Support Team (SST) was the primary infrastructure within the school to oversee supportive service delivery. At the time of this assessment, two schools did not have SST Chairs which suggests that turn-over in these positions results in an unfilled position—creating additional work for other support

professionals in the building. Principals viewed supportive services through the scope of the SST, which operates as an encompassing building-level network of individuals. The SST Chairperson is responsible for setting meetings with the Committee on Special Education regarding special needs students. The SST Clerk, a position that was only filled in one school, tracks attendance and behavioral needs for special needs students. Not surprisingly, assessments revealed that SST Chairs almost exclusively spent time arranging for special education service delivery. While the Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) model is in place, implementation appeared to be inconsistent—two schools mentioned the program during the assessments, while the other two schools did not mention it. Our assessment revealed that some supportive service staff members (school psychologists, social workers) within the school are shared with other schools, resulting in overwhelming case loads. Also, building staff members expressed the limits of service provision at the building-level.

Through our analysis, we also found that the in-school supportive services system is augmented by external providers. However, in the case of three schools, no one entity is responsible for monitoring the supportive service system, identifying gaps in services, and ensuring communication between external and internal support and enrichment providers. In only one school, South Park High School (SPHS), Closing the Gap (CTG), an external provider of referrals for supportive services, operates on a daily basis within that school to ensure interfaces between in-school services and external providers. A CTG site facilitator is working to develop a streamlined service coordination system where external and internal providers communicate and share common reporting systems. Notably, CTG in SPHS is funded by South Buffalo Promise Zones, the New York state place-based initiative to transform distressed communities.[4]

2.10 Schools in the PCN Footprint

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[4] New York State Council on Children and Families:
http://ccf.ny.gov/ChildPlan/cpResources/PromiseZoneSummary.pdf

One strategy to tackle the school choice challenge includes eventually "scaling up" the MEP to schools within the PCN footprint. We will provide an overview of these schools' enrollment figures and school performance data in Table 8.

Table 8 Schools in the PCN

	ELA 3rd Grade	ELA 8th grade	Math 3rd grade	Math 8th grade	Pre-k-8th Enrollment	Attendance Rate
BUFFALO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY	13%	19%	9%	19%	568	90%
HARRIET ROSS TUBMAN ACADEMY	15%	22%	26%	21%	516	90%
BENNETT PARK MONTESSORI SCHOOL	26%	23%	16%	14%	726	92%

Source: New York State Education Department 2012 School Report Card. ELA and Math scores are percentages of students scored as at least proficient (levels 3 and 4).

2.11 Summary of Needs

The needs assessment has shown that there are deficiencies across the educational environment in the PCN. These deficiencies are responsible for the poor educational outcomes that lead to income traps that perpetuate hardship for residents in the PCN. From early childhood learning to the transition into elementary school, children in the PCN are not exposed to high quality programs that prepare them to learn. Once in elementary and high school, students lack access to positive educational and life enriching activities within their neighborhood. Within the schools in the PCN, service coordination is disjointed and decentralized which risks neglecting comprehensive service coverage. The schools in the PCN are also performing much lower than state averages on test scores, and the two MEP high schools have very low graduation rates. In addition to these challenges, Buffalo's school choice model creates additional barriers to providing schools with supportive services since institutions are not organized and connected to the neighborhood level. It is from this foundational assessment that the Mini Education Pipeline plan has been created.

3.0 Goals and Priorities

The needs assessment demonstrates the serious and complex challenges encountered by children and families in the PCN in attaining education. These data, considered with data on household income, racial isolation rates, crime, supportive service infrastructure, and a variety of other household and neighborhood data, accentuate the need to build an education system that is not only more rooted in the neighborhood but attempts to reimagine and rethink how the educational system operates in the context of the city. To these ends, the goals of the MEP are:

1. To create the type of supportive environment that will help the children acquire the aspiration, skills and competencies necessary to succeed academically and to graduate from high school ready for college and/or a career.

2. To create an educational infrastructure, anchored by high quality early learning programs, in the neighborhood that will work to align the neighborhood's institutions and families with the educational mission of the school system.

3. To intentionally produce students who become caring adults imbued with citizenship skills based on critical consciousness, democracy, and a strong sense of social, racial, economic and environmental justice.

In order to accomplish these goals, we have developed a set of priorities that shaped our program designs and investment decisions:

1. Build an educational infrastructure in the Perry Choice Neighborhood that is aligned with supporting the educational goals of the schooling system.

2. Create a smooth transition between an early learning environment to Kindergarten or First grade.

3. Build and strengthen K-12 academic enrichment and supportive services both in the school and in the neighborhood.

4. Build and strengthen summer academic enrichment activities for PCN students.

5. Strengthen and expand the Community as Classroom program as a way to expand project-based real-world problem-solving activities into enrichment activities. We believe that the "Community as Classroom" is an ideal academic enrichment program. It should be

completed with a strong tutorial program that focuses on skills deficits associated with the project being developed and a writing workshop that strengthens skills in this area.

## PART 2: The Mini-Education Pipeline Approach and Structure

4.0 The Mini-Education Pipeline Approach and Structure

The goal of the mini-education pipeline (MEP) is to create the type of supportive environment that will help the children acquire the aspiration, skills and competencies necessary to succeed academically and to graduate from high school ready for college and/or a career. Based on the pipeline education strategy pioneered by the Harlem Children's Zone, the MEP is a place-conscious, university-assisted initiative, which operates as a continuum of academic enrichment and supportive services that envelop PCN children from birth to college and/or a career. The MEP operates under the umbrella of the Say Yes to Education *City-wide Turnaround Strategy*, and it is anchored by a multi-sector collaborative that includes BMHA, UB Center for Urban Studies, the Buffalo Public Schools, Closing the Gap – a subsidiary of United Way and Catholic Charities – as well as Say Yes Buffalo itself. The participating schools are Futures Academy (PS 37), Martin Luther King, Jr. Multi-Cultural Institute (PS 39), East High School (PS 307) and South Park High School (PS 206). The pipeline has two partnership schools that are "Friends of the MEP" – City Honors and King Urban Life Charter.

The MEP consists of five interrelated components, which function as a cluster of feeder programs and activities: the early learning network (ELN); the pre-k – 12 primary and secondary academic enrichment and supportive service program; The Summer Enrichment Program; two neighborhood-based after-school programs; and the School-Neighborhood Bridge (Figure 4). We refer to our strategy as the "Mini" Education Pipeline because we are starting with a group of four schools and two partnership schools as an initial group with the intention of adding other schools as years progress. We also view our strategy as unique because it is *cemented* in the neighborhood within the context of the public school system. Our strategy is designed to have highly interactive linkages and connections with a neighborhood-based support structure so that services and enrichment activities are both *linked to* and *based in* neighborhoods and schools. Connections between neighborhoods and schools become cemented through a series of activities focused on building the educational infrastructure that will create alignment

between neighborhood-based entities to support the educational mission of schools. These strategies also include working alongside families in the PCN to make their homes active learning environments. The Mini-Education Pipeline operates under the leadership of a single administrative system, which is managed by Say Yes to Education Buffalo and Closing the Gap, and functions under the leadership of the Choice Neighborhood Community Council.

Figure 4 The Mini-Education Pipeline Schematic
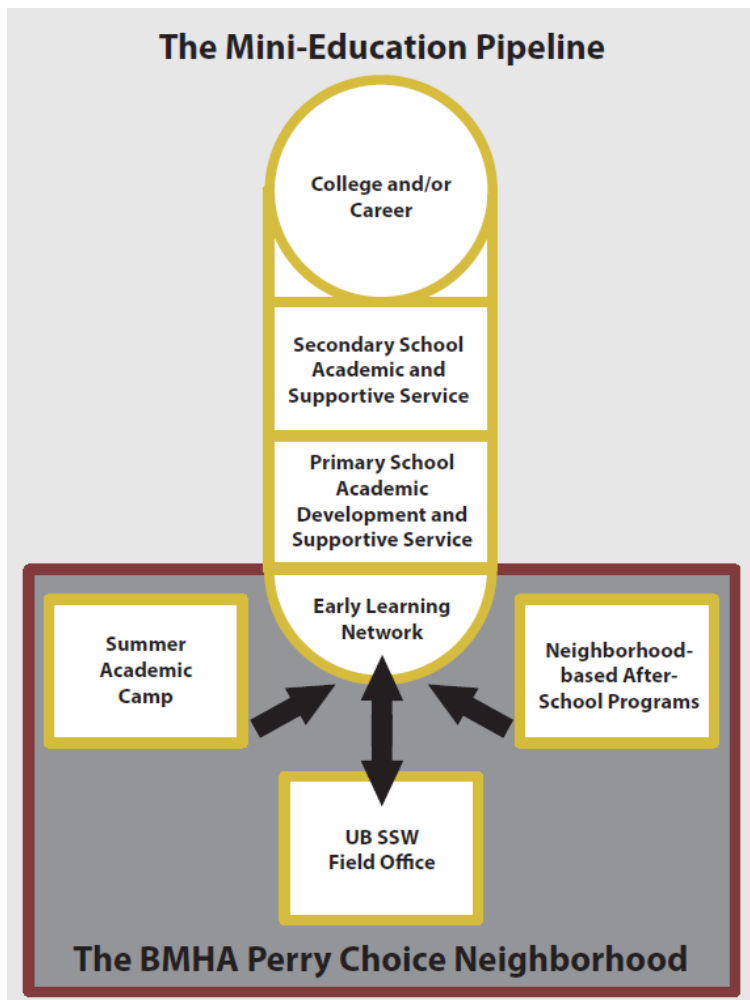
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

4.1 The Early Learning Network

The ELN provides an educational foundation from which all other programs the pipeline strategy build upon in a child's education. Its primary goal is to get children to the first grade academically and socially ready to learn. The idea is to increase the percentage of PCN children entering school with the social, emotional, and pre-reading skills needed to succeed academically. It is during these early years that we seek to instill the children with aspirations, enthusiasm and excitement about problem-solving and learning, with the goal of encouraging them to succeed academically. The network is designed to create a framework of learning experiences, health outreach, family and community involvement, as well as professional services that will enable PCN children to reach this goal.

The Early Network Structure and Administration

The network is composed of five interactive programs: Ready, Set, Parent!; Parent-Child Home Program; Project Community Action for Reading Excellence (or Project CARE, a literacy-based quality improvement program for licensed child care providers); the Early Learning Center, which is modeled after the Head Start and Early Head Start programs; and a comprehensive health screening program.

In year one, we will hire an Early Learning Network facilitator who will be responsible for convening early learning providers in the PCN, overall PCN project leadership, relevant citywide early learning agencies, and families. We will have this staff member develop funding proposals to fully implement the PCN Early Learning Network. By the end of year one, this staff member will have established an early learning network of professionals in the PCN that meets regularly. This staff member will also oversee the evaluation of individual programs, data collection and sharing procedures, and all necessary paperwork associated with regulatory compliance for child care centers and providers in the PCN. This staff member will ensure that all ELN providers in the PCN are involved with the supportive service collaborative. This staff member will also be responsible for working with Buffalo Public Schools to ensure that early learning supports are aligned with the public school curriculum.

Ready, Set, Parent! will be managed by Every Person Influences Children (EPIC).

The evidence-informed delivery model consists of three components: (1) an EPIC trained Parent Educator reaching parents within their hospital room within 48 hours of giving birth (hospital-based) to share information about available neighborhood-based supports; (2) a one-hour newborn class occurring daily on each hospital maternity floor (hospital-based); (3) a cluster of community-based workshops (Parenting Infants and Toddlers and Dr. Talks; Healthy Bellies, Happy Babies; Ready, Set, Read). In the first year of implementation, we will work with EPIC to increase staffing at the major birthing hospitals in Buffalo (Mercy, Children's, and Sister's) to ensure that program staff can visit at least 200 families in the PCN. We will provide EPIC with information about our case management unit and supportive services available in the neighborhood so they can distribute information to parents. We will also establish regular meetings between PCN case workers and EPIC staff members to ensure effective program implementation. Data sharing agreements will also be established so EPIC staff can share information freely with PCN case workers. We will also monitor usage of the program at the different birthing hospitals to ensure the program is reaching the intended PCN population. EPIC staff members will join the supportive service collaborative.

Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP), an evidence-based program that will be initiated by the King Urban Life Center.

PCHP is a research-proven intensive home-visiting program for toddlers and parents, where each family has a para-professional "Home Visitor" that visits the home twice a week for a half hour for a minimum of 23-weeks, for up to two program years. PCN staff will work with PCHP staff to enroll five families in year one, and the number of enrollees will increase steadily over a five-year period to a total number of 40 families in year 4. P&I Center staff and PCN case workers will actively promote the home visitation program and enroll eligible families. We will supply PCHP home visitors with a comprehensive list of all children aged 0-5 for a targeted mailing to recruit for the program. We will also hold information sessions in the neighborhood through the Tenant Council and the P&I Center. PCHP will be added to the supportive service collaborative to ensure communication with other supportive service providers. We will also

connect PCHP staff with school-based site facilitators to begin to encourage student enrollment in Mini-Education Pipeline schools while also getting them connected to school-based supports. Data sharing agreements between PCHP staff, PCN case workers, parents, and BPS supportive service professionals will also be established. PCHP conducts internal assessments of parenting skills and child interactions, environmental rating scales, and initial academic assessments. These data would be shared with the school system and child care providers when appropriate. PCHP staff will provide enrolled families with the full range of programming associated with this intervention.

The Project CARE Program is an evidence-based kindergarten readiness program that will be implemented by Read to Succeed.

Through Read to Succeed Buffalo's Project CARE, we will link licensed home-based child care sites in the Perry Choice Neighborhood with on-site embedded professional development and program supports to improve the overall quality of the child care with a particular emphasis on language and literacy development. This program will train licensed child care sites to teach literacy skills to children who have not yet entered a formal Pre-K program. In year one, we will work with ten neighborhood-based child care centers to enroll children in Project CARE which will reach an estimated 120 children in the PCN. We will establish regular meetings with child care providers in the neighborhood alongside the Child Care Resource Network in order to establish a learning community among providers. We will hire one Early Childhood Specialist that will begin to enroll providers participating in Project CARE in professional development sessions to increase skills and abilities of child care providers. We will negotiate data agreements between Project CARE sites and Buffalo Public Schools / Say Yes to Education so relevant data can be included in the Student Monitoring System. Project CARE will also enroll at least one provider in QUALITYStarsNY, the state's child care quality improvement effort. Project CARE staff will be added to the supportive service collaborative. In year two, we will attempt to enroll unlicensed or legally exempt sites in the project CARE program. We will also enroll another ten child care sites in Project CARE in year four which will reach another estimated 120 children.

An early learning center will be established under the leadership of the Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center.

Under the leadership of Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center, this new early learning center will be built from BHSC's expertise in running internal education programs, such as the Leap into Literacy and Language programs and a new charter school. Anchored in the new Perry Life Chances Center in the Commodore Perry Neighborhood, this new learning facility will have an integrated classroom model centered on building a literacy-rich early childhood education environment, focused parental engagement techniques, and an active neighborhood-based system that will support a culture of learning. Year one will serve as a planning year for the Early Learning Center. We will work with BHSC to plan staffing structures, funding sources, start-up materials, facility needs, enrollment/demand studies, etc. We will hold discussions with local funders and other funding sources to see how existing funds could be used to fund this center. We will hold discussions with the UB Early Childhood Research Center to create a framework for establishing an experimental Early Learning Center jointly operated by UB and BHSC. Throughout year two, we will engage in intensive fundraising with local funders, including United Way's Success by Six and other Early Learning Network Partners. By year three, we intend to open the facility and serve 40 children in the PCN. We will convene regular meetings between BHSC, Head Start and other child care center providers in the PCN to begin to develop relationships between them so the centers can begin to operate as a network— sharing best practices, holding joint professional development sessions, and implementing neighborhood-based enrollment campaigns.

Comprehensive Screenings and Parent Workshops **will be established by the Early Childhood Direction Center and the Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center.**

As we convene child care providers in the PCN for participation in Project CARE, we will connect the Early Childhood Direction Center with these providers. Once children are enrolled in the centers, the ECDC will schedule days and times for conducting physical and mental health screenings. Based on these discussions, they will make referrals to providers across the city

with preference to neighborhood-based providers.   We will provide screenings for 100 children in the PCN.   ECDC will also work collaboratively with the P&I Center and PCN staff to understand the needs of parents in the neighborhood and hold relevant parent workshops based in the neighborhood. At least two parenting workshops will be held in the PCN each year by the ECDC. ECDC staff will also be included in the PCN supportive service collaborative.

Connections with Buffalo Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten Initiatives

We will meet with BPS Pre-Kindergarten staff members to plan a strategy for enrolling more PCN residents in pre-K programming. This discussion will include staff members working with PCN's Early Learning Network, P&I Center staff, and PCN case workers. We will also have the ELN Facilitator join the Kindergarten enrollment team as a part of the BPS kindergarten enrollment initiative referred to as "Ready Freddy."   We will also work with child care providers in the neighborhood through Project CARE to ensure that students from these programs have the opportunity to enroll in BPS Pre-K.

Number of children served

The table below indicates how many children will be served by Early Learning Network.

Table 9 Early Learning Network Children Served

Program	Number of children served	Assisted vs Non-assisted
EPIC (Ready Set Parent) Hospital Services	75 yearly 350 in 5 years	Assisted (primary); Non-assisted (secondary)
Project CARE	390 day care slots	Both
Parent-Child Home Program 1st program year 2nd year 3rd year 4th year 5th year	 5 families 10 25 40 40	Assisted
Early Childhood Direction Center Comprehensive Health Screenings	100 students	Both
Early Childhood Direction Center Parent Workshops	20 parents served in 2 parent workshops	Assisted
BHSC Early Learning Center	40	Assisted
Early Learning Network Facilitator	430	Both

Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

4.2 K-12 Academic Enrichment and Student Supportive Service Program

The K-12 academic enrichment and student support service program is holistic program, which is composed of primary and secondary components. The goal is to provide students with the support they need based on the academic, social, and neighborhood requirements in order to achieve academically and graduate from high school ready for college and/or a career.   The plan is to integrate programs between the academic and supportive service components, and to connect them to the classroom teacher and the school's reform strategy. In this way, the academic enrichment and supportive service activities complement classroom activities by mediating non-academic barriers and by enhancing the competencies and skills needed for academic success. We will conduct on-going Needs Assessments in each of the MEP schools to determine the supportive services and academic enrichment needs of that school and then, based on that analysis, a plan will be devised to provide the school with the best possible mixture of academic enrichment and supportive services to match that school's unique needs. Our academic enrichment strategy makes use of the strategic strengths of our partners by strengthening their programming. First, we will connect them with supportive service entities so they can access supports for children who need extra assistance. Second, we will work with Say Yes Buffalo (SYB, a subsidiary of the national Say Yes to Education foundation) to improve the evaluation process so it better matches the organization's specialty areas (e.g. academic support, social/emotional development, college/career readiness). Additionally, we will work with SYB Site Facilitators to build relationships with neighborhood-based entities so school-based programming can be mirrored in the PCN community. We will also work with Site Facilitators to write grants to support expansion of certain programming across schools. Finally, we will incorporate project-based learning within in-school and after-school enrichment programming through the "Community as Classroom" programming model.

K-12 Academic Enrichment and Student Supportive Service Program Administration

In year one, we will convene school-based site facilitators, the MEP Executive Director, MEP school principals, teachers, parents, and students to establish the MEP network of stakeholders. This group will meet regularly to discuss MEP implementation, issues that service providers encounter when working between BPS and external stakeholders, programmatic needs of individual schools, and data management and sharing obstacles. In year one, three site facilitators will also hold regular meetings with PCN case workers to design policies and procedures for coordinating service provision between schools and neighborhoods. Site facilitators and the MEP director will outreach to all educational institutions within the PCN to build relationships and eventually create complementary programming at the neighborhood level. The MEP director will also hold meetings with city and county-level officials to discuss more effective payment and billing arrangements to ensure students can access services at the school and the neighborhood level.

The Primary School Component

This focuses on the needs of elementary and middle-school students and provides them with the assistance they need to move successfully through primary school education and on to high school. This program is particularly concerned with assisting children moving through three main transitional periods – from kindergarten to first grade; from elementary to middle-school, and from middle school to high school. The primary school component consists of a literacy Intervention and a supportive service program, along with three academic enrichment programs.

The Literacy Intervention Program will be managed by Read to Succeed Buffalo. In year one, we will hire one Literacy Intervention Coach (LIC) that will work alongside Kindergarten and first grade teachers in both MEP primary schools. We will develop relationships between teachers and the LIC and establish delineated responsibilities in the classroom. PCN staff members will initiate discussions with the Buffalo Teacher's Federation to ensure that implementation of the program will not violate the teacher's contract. As able, LICs will be

directly working in classrooms by the end of year one. It is expected that we will serve at least four classrooms at an estimated 100 students through this program in the first year. LICs will also do an assessment of curriculum to explore changes that could be made in order to align the early learning curriculum with the Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, first, second, and third grade curriculums. LICs will also meet regularly with Project CARE staff to explore opportunities for professional development between child care providers and primary grade teachers (PK-3). LICs will administer a pre- and post-test of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)-IV, collect the data, analyze it with teachers, and report the data to the SMS.

The Community as Classroom (CasC) Expansion Initiative led by the UB Center for Urban Studies. In year one, we will assess the level of project-based learning happening in all school-based and neighborhood-based after-school programs. The UB Center for Urban Studies will facilitate conversations with after-school provider agencies and principals about implementing the CasC project-based learning. By the end of year one, we will pilot a CasC expansion project in MLK.

The Primary School Academic Enrichment Program. In the first year, site facilitators will work with existing service and enrichment providers within each building to conduct an assessment of unmet needs. They will also catalogue existing programs into basic categories: (1) Academic Enrichment or (2) Supportive Services. Within these categories, there will be more clustering and distinction made between programs (Academic Enrichment will be categorized between Academic Support, Social Development, and College/Career Readiness). This will happen in coordination with Say Yes Buffalo's (a subsidiary of Say Yes to Education) Site Facilitator / After-School rollout strategy which will seek to put a site facilitator in each building, along with a formal after-school program in each building. Where certain buildings already have site facilitators who have

conducted needs assessments, we will work with their existing needs assessment data to classify their programming and current service/programmatic providers. They will also build relationships between the neighborhood-based School of Social Work Field Office case managers, which will act as the Site Facilitator's counterpart in the neighborhood. This will begin the process of integrating the school-based and neighborhood-based supportive services. PCN leadership will work on data agreements to ensure that in-building providers can access data from BPS / SYB Student Monitoring System. In year two, after enrichment programs are clustered, we will work with SYB to develop specific evaluations that can distinguish between the clusters. Field testing will occur on these evaluations before the end of year two. We will begin formal data sharing across in-building partners in partnership with SYB. Initial development of GIS mapping system of supportive service providers will happen at the neighborhood level. Closing the Gap will also initiate a formal process of referrals between community-based and school-based supportive services. In year three and beyond, we will engage in on-going monitoring of data and assessment of the programs' implementation.

(1) **The Academic Support Cluster** contains those programs aimed at improving the learning in specific content areas, strengthening academic performance by helping students with their homework, and building their problem-solving, critical, and analytical thinking skills.
   1. Tutoring, homework assistance, etc. (5 programs)
   2. Supplemental instruction (3 programs)
   3. Project-based learning (4 programs)

(2) **The Social Development Cluster** contains those programs that seek to build resilience, discipline, judgment, decision making, and other social skills that are critical to success in school and life.
   1. Healthy Living (3 programs)
   2. Social/Emotional Development (4 programs)

3. Mentoring (3 programs)
4. Recreation (2 Programs)

(3) The College and/or Career Development Cluster contains college preparation activities and the development of workforce skills. Programs in this area often focus on the development of awareness of science and technology and occupational skills training. Currently, we have two college access programs in this area.

The Secondary School Component

The Primary School component also consists of three academic enrichment clusters, and its purpose is to ensure that students graduate from high school ready to attend college or enter into a career. The strategy is in line with the Buffalo Public Schools goal of an 80% graduation rate which is also the NY State average graduation rate total. These services are delivered by independent providers that operate under the MEP management structure.

The Secondary School Academic Enrichment Program. In the first year, site facilitators will work with existing service and enrichment providers within each building to conduct an assessment of unmet needs. They will also catalogue existing programs into basic categories: (1) Academic Enrichment or (2) Supportive Services. Within these categories, there will be more clustering and distinction made between programs (Academic Enrichment will be categorized between Academic Support, Social Development, and College/Career Readiness). This will happen in coordination with Say Yes Buffalo's (a subsidiary of Say Yes to Education) Site Facilitator/After-School rollout strategy which will seek to put a site facilitator in each building, along with a formal after-school program in each building. Where certain buildings already have site facilitators who have conducted needs assessments, we will work with their existing needs assessment data to classify their programming and current service/programmatic providers. They will also build relationships between the neighborhood-based School of

Social Work Field Office case managers, which will act as the Site Facilitator's counterpart in the neighborhood. This will begin the process of integrating the school-based and neighborhood-based supportive services. PCN leadership will work on data agreements to ensure that in-building providers can access data from BPS/SYB Student Monitoring System. In year two, after enrichment programs are clustered, we will work with SYB to develop specific evaluations that can distinguish between the clusters. Field testing will occur on these evaluations before the end of year two. In the second year, we will begin formal data sharing across in-building partners in partnership with SYB. We will launch the initial development of GIS mapping system of supportive service providers at the neighborhood level during the second year, as well. Closing the Gap will also initiate a formal process of referrals between community-based and school-based supportive services. In year three and beyond, we will engage in on-going monitoring of data and assessment of the programs' implementation.

(1) The Academic Enrichment Cluster consists of programs in three areas.

1. Tutoring, homework assistance, etc. (7 programs)
2. Supplemental instruction (3 programs)
3. Connecting classroom activities to neighborhood improvement (2 programs)

(2) Social Development Cluster

1. Healthy Living (2 programs)
2. Social/Emotional Development (4 programs)
3. Mentoring (3 programs)
4. Recreation (2 Programs)

(3) College and/or Career Development

1. College Access (5 programs)
2. Workforce Development and Training (4 programs)

The College Success Center: PCN staff will organize discussions between high school counselors, UB professor Dr. Nate Daun-Barnett, the principal, and Say Yes to Education about establishing a College Success Center at South Park High School. By the end of

year one, we will develop a plan for implementation of this effort, including funding sources, physical location in the building, and how it will be connected to the neighborhood. Years two and beyond will be dedicated to fundraising and implementation as able.

Credit Accrual and Recovery: We will work with PCN staff and site facilitators to conduct an assessment of MEP/PCN student credit levels necessary for graduation. BPS and external program providers offer credit recovery programs for students who need to make up missed courses or improve grades in order to graduate on time. We will also talk to after-school and summer programs run at East and South Park High Schools to assess the extent to which credit recovery is a part of their program. Based on those assessments, we will plan with Buffalo Public Schools to incorporate access to credit recovery computer-based modules in our school-based and neighborhood-based out-of-school time programming.

Student Supportive Service Program

The student support services are found in both the primary and secondary school programs. They are divided into four clusters: special education, physical health, mental health, and social supports. As previously mentioned, a Needs Assessment is conducted to determine the specific mix of student supportive services available and what services are needed in each MEP school. After the assessment is completed, the MEP management will work closely with the principal to meet those needs based on a combination of school system-provided supports and external supports.

The Special Education Services Cluster includes those services that provide specialized instruction for students with special needs and/or disabilities.

The Physical Health Cluster is comprised of services designed to prevent medical issues from arising or to assist students with physical conditions that hinder their academic performance. Health services promote healthy living, provide treatment for minor

ailments, provide screenings for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), reproductive health care, and provide students with convenient access to a healthier lifestyle.

The Mental Health Cluster provides support that helps the children deal with psychological issues that might negatively impact their studies.

The Social Support Cluster connects the students to a comprehensive network of supportive services that address a range of social and emotional development issues, including problems of frequent absenteeism, suspension, and behavioral concerns.

Interactions between In-School and After-School Enrichment and Supportive Services

The Mini-Education Pipeline will create an interface between in-school and after-school programs and the PCN supportive service system. This will take place at two interactive levels: (1) building-level enrichment and supportive services and (2) the neighborhood-based Service Coordination Unit. At the building level, if students need access to academic enrichment or supportive services outside the building, contacts will be made with the PCN Service Coordination Unit. If the student does not live in the PCN, the case worker will still work with the school in identifying the most appropriate service and/or activity in the child's neighborhood.

Number of children served by in-school and after-school programs by school

Table 10 Supportive Services Children Served

School	Students Served Before MEP	Students Served By MEP	Assisted or Non-Assisted
PS 39, MLK Multicultural Institute	560	600	Both
PS 37, Futures Academy	200	300	Both
South Park High School	177	300	Both
East High School	345	450	Both

4.3 Perry Choice Neighborhood After School Program

The goal of the Neighborhood-based after school program is to provide academic enrichment services for students that do not attend pipeline schools and/or those who do attend pipeline schools, but for various reasons cannot attend the after-school program. Three programs will serve as the foundation for the neighborhood-based after-school program, but other neighborhood-based activities will be added as opportunities arise.

Neighborhood-Based After-School Programming Administration

The MEP Director will establish a neighborhood-based educational opportunity consortium that will be comprised of all partners in the PCN who provide after-school programming (Police Athletic League, YMCA, JFK Community Center, Computers for Children, Harvest House). The purpose of this group will be to create a mechanism by which program staff can coordinate complementary programming, recruit students from within the neighborhood, and begin to collect data that will align with the Say Yes Student Monitoring System (SMS). Once these relationships are established, the MEP director will work to connect site facilitators and PCN case workers with this group. All neighborhood-based after-school providers will be invited to participate in the supportive service collaborative. Supportive service providers will be able to make referrals to neighborhood-based after-school providers and will be tracked through the SMS and PCN case workers if appropriate. The MEP director will also work with the Say Yes United Group of School Reformers to advocate a larger role of neighborhood-based programming in the Say Yes after-school program model.

Expanding the "Community as Classroom" Program (CasC). In year one, we will introduce the Community as Classroom concept to the PCN neighborhood-based educational opportunity consortium. We will explain that project-based learning is a cornerstone of our school reform strategy. We will pilot CasC in one community site by the end of year one by offering it as an elective activity that focuses on addressing a neighborhood-based problem.

The Buffalo City Swim Racers (BCSR) – USA Swimming. BCSR is an after-school program designed to provide students enrolled in the Perry Choice Neighborhood Mini-Education Pipeline with the opportunity to participate in competitive swimming, while simultaneously helping them develop the skills, confidence, and resiliency needed to succeed in school. The program will offer swim lessons, tutoring, homework assistance, and other forms of academic enrichment. Year one for this program will launch with 80 students, recruited primarily from MLK Multicultural Institute, Futures Academy, and King Center Charter School. We will work with BCSR to identify a partner to provide the academic support and enrichment for the program, which will tentatively be Watts Tutoring. In the second year, we will work with partners to stabilize the program and work out issues with implementation. In this phase, we will look to pull more students directly from the PCN by working with the P&I Center, BMHA, and neighborhood-based institutions like the Lanigan Field House and the tenant council. If possible, we will attempt to move some programming space to the Life Chances Center, depending on its construction status. We will continue to work with BCSR board and USA Swimming to fundraise for the program.

The Computer Workshop is a partnership between PCN and Computers for Children (CFC). The program will be designed to teach young people in the PCN computer skills; introduce them to advanced computing skills, including software applications and the repair and rebuilding of computers; and to develop a computer-based home-school connection for neighborhood students. In year one, we will work with CfC to do a soft launch of discounted internet access effort with Time Warner cable. We will also work with CfC to enroll 20 students in basic computer skills workshops (Kid Co program) through the P&I Center. The P&I Center will also train parents on the BPS "Parent Portal" web-based parent interface through the "Schools to Home" initiative. In year two, we will expand the KidCo program to another 20 students. We will bring together Computers for Children and Boys and Girls Clubs to link the KidCo program with the B&G Club community-based programs and target students who live in Perry. We will continue P&I Center-based programming, but add "Advanced Computer Skills" workshops. We will explore expansion to Frederick Douglass public housing facility in the PCN.

The Neighborhood-Based 21st Century Community Learning Centers strategy. In year one, we will work with Boys and Girls Club of Buffalo to strengthen the school-based 21st Century sites' ability to serve at least 20 students who cannot, for whatever reason, participate in the school-based programming. Additional students from these schools who live in the vicinity of the PCN will be transported to the Babcock Clubhouse so they can that they can participate in a program that provides services that are more rooted in the neighborhood. In years two and beyond, we will work with the current 21st Century providers at the different schools (Northwest Buffalo Community Center, CAO, and CATS) to include this component as they seek future 21st Century funding. We will work with principals, program staff, and youth to plan complementary programming at the neighborhood level that will get more students interested in after-school programming. We will also work with P&I staff to align their outreach efforts with these after-school programs.

Number of children served

Table 11 After School Program Children Served

Program	Students Served	Assisted or Non-Assisted
Buffalo City Swim Racers	60 per year	Assisted (primary), Non-assisted (secondary)
Computers for Children	20 per year	Assisted
Community as Classroom	60 per year	Assisted (primary), Non-assisted (secondary)
Neighborhood-Based 21st Century Community Learning Centers	20 per year	Assisted

4.4 The Summer Enrichment Program: BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood – UB Academic Summer Camp on Neighborhood Development.

The summer academic camp operates under the leadership of the UB Center for Urban Studies and is funded by the UB Liberty Partnerships Program. It is designed to combat summer learning loss, which disproportionately impacts Black students, by using a project-based learning approach that seeks to improve students' writing, reading, computer, and research

skills by solving real-world neighborhood development problems. In this way, children are taught that a relationship exists between the skills learned in the classroom and their ability to bring about changes in their own community. At the end of the camp, students showcase their projects by presenting their projects to the community, family members, and a panel of experts on community development and/or education. Moreover, the camp's location on the University at Buffalo campus exposes the children to college life and culture. The camp is an intensive five week program that targets middle school students between the grades of 6 – 8.

We will continue to implement the UB Summer Academic Camp on Neighborhood Development in a similar way as the previous two summers. In year one of the official PCN implementation effort, we will serve 25 children with the summer camp and expand by 25 students each subsequent year. In the first year, we will also seek funders from a variety of public and private sources. We will work with Say Yes Buffalo to expand the summer camp to more students through Say Yes's summer enrichment opportunities program in collaboration with BPS.

Number of children served

Table 12 Summer Academic Camp Children Served

Program	Students Served	Assisted or Non-Assisted
UB Summer Academic Camp	25 (y.1), 50 (y.2), 75 (y.3), 100 (y.4), 125 (y.5)	Assisted (primary), Non-assisted (secondary)

4.5 The School-Neighborhood Bridge

A series of crucial neighborhood-based programs are used to cement the pipeline in the PCN and build interactive relationships between the neighborhood, household, and school. The goal is to build a social infrastructure that supports life-long learning, academic excellence, and college enrollment. Such an infrastructure will ensure that most PCN children enter the mini-education pipeline rather than the neighborhood-to-prison pipeline. Most importantly, the

neighborhood-family-school connector is a portal that catalyzes interaction between the MEP schools and neighborhood.

Parent Advocates, managed by Closing the Gap, will be hired in 2 schools and will be trained both in the context of the school's management structure and the neighborhood's Social Work Field Office. Parent Advocates will be a part of the PCN service collaborative and will have regular meetings with the PCN case workers. We will do a soft launch of a 20-member Parent Council, facilitated by Citizen Action of New York's Western New York chapter. In this first year, we will work with the P&I Center to dedicate an AmeriCorps worker from UB to oversee the development of this council. The Council will meet monthly and work on capacity-building, leadership development, and community organization skills to work with parents on issues they will face in schools and in the community related to justice and equity issues. The First Year will have an explicit focus on orienting parents to various issues they will face in school buildings and understanding how to navigate through BPS. We will also work to recruit parents into PTO/PTA groups that would be grounded in the neighborhood. We will also have discussions with the principals about holding Parent/Teacher conferences in the neighborhood. In subsequent years, we will expand the parent council to include other adults in the community—not only parents.

Through this dimension of the plan, the MEP Director will launch a thorough assessment of all social institutions within the PCN to assess the extent to which they have educational outreach components. The MEP director will work with institutional leaders to consider creating policies, practices, and special initiatives that explicitly support education. For instance, we will work with health providers in the neighborhood to create signage in the waiting room about the connection between health and learning. We would also work with faith-based institutions to create education task forces to develop strategies for their churches to support MEP and PCN schools. Further, the MEP Director, BMHA administrators, and PCN leadership will consider ways that they could make their properties more supportive of educational endeavors. We will explore ways that existing programs can incentivize participation in educationally-focused

programming (e.g. parenting workshops, training programs) or make homes more supportive of learning (e.g. putting more books in the home).

BMHA- UB School of Social Work Supportive Service Coordination Unit (SSU) will link the MEP schools with supportive services organizations both within the neighborhood and across the City. All students referred to the service coordination unit will be placed in our case management system and their progress will be carefully monitored. A strong working relationship will be established between the MEP Site Facilitators and the SSU. The SSU will establish a neighborhood-based GIS system that tracks supportive services found in every neighborhood in Buffalo.

The PCN neighborhood-based after school programs are specifically designed to provide academic enrichment activities for neighborhood youth. A fundamental goal of these activities is to provide neighborhood youth with opportunities to engage in learning programs even if they do not attend such programs at their school.

The PCN-Buffalo Public Library (BPL) Digital Commons is a partnership with the City of Buffalo Library that is designed to put into a digital format records on the history of the Commodore Perry Housing Development, the BMHA, the City of Buffalo, and oral histories of PCN residents. This information will be made accessible at the Buffalo Public Library. Likewise, the BPL will develop interactive links between the PCN Planning and Information Center and the BPL, thereby facilitating use and interaction between the library and PCN residents.

The Youth Council is a neighborhood-based organization that will operate under the guidance of the Boys and Girls Club of Buffalo. Its purpose is to provide a safe haven for neighborhood children, especially those who are not enrolled in any after-school programs. This will be a youth led organization that operates under the supervision of adults and the leadership of the Boys and Girls Club.

The Peacemakers Non-Violent Street Workers Program is a multi-faceted program designed to interrupt violence, undermine neighborhood-based outlaw culture, and provide young people with an alternative to outlaw culture, crime, and violence. The program will specifically target youth from 19-24 as well as the young adult population that falls into the 25 to 34 age range. The violence interruption strategy will be coupled with jobs training, business development, adult education, parenting and the development of other skills and competencies that young people need to be competitive in the job market.

The Parent Council will be led by Citizen Action of New York's Western New York Chapter and will be designed to prepare parents for interfacing with schools, identifying key educational issues and advocating for their children.

Parent advocates will be hired at MEP schools and will create a link between the school and neighborhood parents. These staff members will have a level of comfort operating in both contexts, and will help parents in the PCN to have positive encounters with other entities within the PCN – from the Supportive Service and Information and Management Center to the Planning and Information Center to the Early Learning Network.

Table 13 School-Neighborhood Bridge Children Served

Program	Number served	**Assisted or Non-Assisted**
Parent Council	20	Assisted

4.6 The Management Structure

The MEP model is based on the proper alignment of the early learning network, the K-12 enrichment and support unit, the neighborhood based after-school programs, the BMHA-PCN neighborhood-family-school connector, and the BMHA-UB summer academic camp and their functioning as a single unit. The purpose of the MEP management team is to coordinate these units and make them function as an efficient and highly effective system. Concurrently, the

MEP is part of the Say Yes Buffalo Citywide Turnaround Strategy. Therefore, the management team must also coordinate with SYB to make sure that we are aligned with their policies and overall strategy to transform education in Buffalo (Figure 5).

The MEP system will be managed by Closing the Gap (CTG), which is a subsidiary of United Way and Catholic Charities. The goal of CTG is to integrate the MEP university-assisted community school model with their community school model, thereby producing an efficient and highly developed hybrid. Importantly, the MEP is a Choice Neighborhood program and it reports to the PCN Community Council, which oversees the Choice Neighborhood initiative. Within this context, the MEP management structure consists of the following:

- **Executive Director** that oversees the entire operation and administers the unit. This person will work closely with the PCN Management team and steering committee. S/he will also be in charge of making decisions when there is a conflict in some kind of policy and procedure between organizations. Maintaining relationships with external organizations, managing partnerships, building new partnerships, and resource development will also be key responsibilities of this staffer.

- **Early Learning Network Facilitator/Program Coordinator** will be responsible for making sure that all of the MEP programs operate in an efficient and effective manner. This position is expected to develop strong relationships with the day care providers, organizing data from early childhood assessments and ensuring it is reported to the PCN data staff member, and staging activities that would facilitate PCN students' smooth entry into Kindergarten/first grade. **This position** is also responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the various MEP components, including problem-solving regarding daily tasks and communication between organizations.

- **Site facilitators (4**) at each school will coordinate service delivery to students and families both in the school and in the neighborhood. Say Yes / Closing the Gap already has a developed a full job description. MEP site facilitator job descriptions will include expectations for creating systems that connect school-based service delivery to the neighborhood-based systems of care.

- **Parent advocates (4)** for the primary and high schools, for a total of four Parent Advocates. These four positions will be based on need. Parent advocates will be responsible for working with the schools to build parent capacities for supporting education in the household, as well as conducting outreach with parents which would include helping these parents navigate the BPS system.

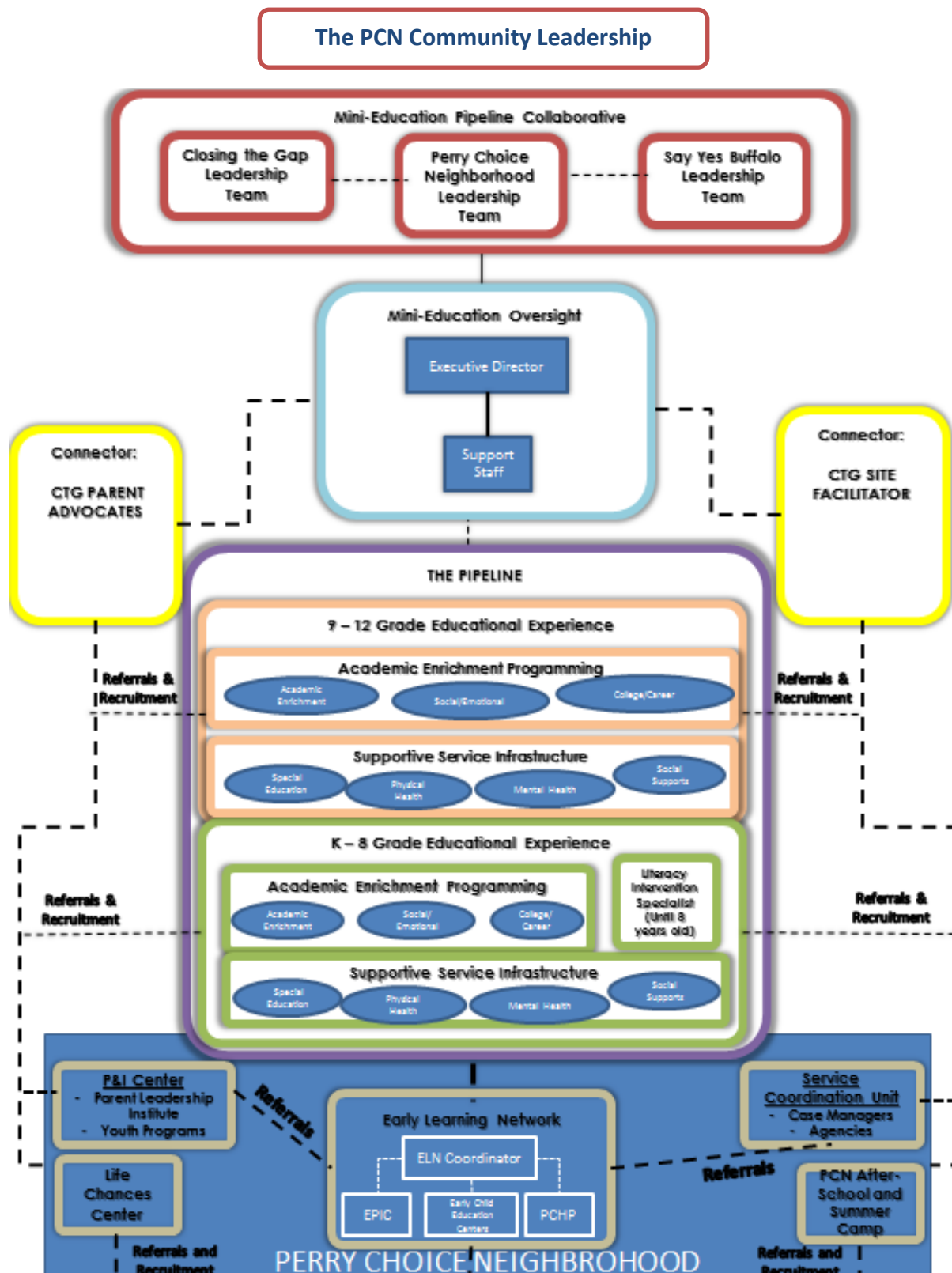In addition to these staff positions, staff within MEP programs are included in the listing of MEP staffing.

Figure 5: MEP Management and Operations Framework
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

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