



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES**

**OVERSIGHT: COMMUNITY CENTER  
PROGRAMMING - BEACON, CORNERSTONE,  
AND SATURDAY NIGHT LIGHTS**

**DARRYL RATTRAY  
ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER**

**APRIL 25, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Committee on Youth Services. I am Darryl Rattray, Associate Commissioner for Youth Services and Strategic Partnerships. I am joined by Wanda Ascherl Assistant Commissioner for Community Centers and Joyce Duverce, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our community center-programming: Beacons, Cornerstones and Saturday Night Lights. These programs are critical in DYCD's mission to invest in a network of community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish.

#### Beacon Program

In the early 1990's Mayor David Dinkins launched "Safe Streets, Safe City" to tackle New York City's high crime rate. He recognized that a larger police force couldn't be the only strategy to combat crime. It had to be combined with community policing and providing young people and community members with safe places and enrichment and recreational opportunities. The Mayor also recognized that many school buildings sat empty afterschool, during weekends and the summer, which could be used to offer activities for young people and families across the city, and the Beacon program was born.

The Beacons provide activities and services for school-age youth, families, and adults ages 22 years and older, including seniors. In keeping with the original concept, programs make special efforts to engage hard-to-recruit youth and young adults for whom participation in activities that foster positive youth development, social emotional learning (SEL) and leadership skills that are especially beneficial.

Programs operate for a minimum of 42 hours over 6 days in the afternoons and evenings, on weekends, school holidays, and during school recess.

Beacons have become a national and international model. Since their inception, Beacons have served millions of youth and adults.

Currently, there are 92 Beacons. This year the program is on track to serve over 109,800 youth and families.

#### Cornerstone Program

Following years of federal disinvestment in public housing, in 2009 the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) announced the closure of community centers it operated. Thanks in large part to the strong advocacy of the Council, the City announced a plan to ensure continuity of services at 25 NYCHA community centers. Using city tax levy funding, we began what is now known as the Cornerstone Program. In the time since then, the program has grown and now offers services at 99 developments across the city. These programs, administered by local non-profits, help young people acquire the academic foundation and skills they need to graduate from high school, succeed in the workplace, and give back to the community.

Programming was shaped by input from young people, NYCHA residents, Resident Association leaders and principals at schools that serve youth who live in the participating developments. Activities include academics, homework help, STEM activities, and high school and college prep. Cornerstone programs also serve adults through General Education Diploma and English for Speakers of Other Languages instruction, job preparation, parenting skills, tenant education and advocacy and intergenerational programming.

To date, these centers have served over 19,500 participants.

### Saturday Night Lights

In 2021, the NYPD partnered with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the City's District Attorneys, and community-based organizations to open 100 gyms and expand its "Saturday Night Lights" (SNL) program. SNL is a summer program that provides access to free youth sports programming on Saturday nights.

Last month, Mayor Adams, kicked off the spring season of Saturday Night Lights (SNL) at P.S. 244 in Mott Haven. Last year, DYCD partnered with the New York Police Department, the City's District Attorneys, the Parks Department, and our Cornerstone and Beacon providers to expand the program. Each Saturday, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., children from 11- to 18-years-of-age participate in sports, including basketball, soccer, volleyball, dance, martial arts, and others. Programs take place in gyms and local parks, weather permitting.

These initiatives, along with the Summer Youth Employment Program, are critical in the Mayor's efforts to protect our communities, and create a safe prosperous city for all New Yorkers.

### Summer Rising 2.0

Last month Mayor Adams announced Summer Rising 2.0 which will serve 110,000 elementary and middle school students this summer. We appreciate the support of Chair Stevens, who was with Mayor and Chancellor Banks at this special announcement at the P&J Beacon Program in The Bronx.

Summer 2022 will offer a new opportunity to engage youth and families in joyful and skill-building activities, bringing together the strengths of DYCD-funded summer enrichment initiatives and DOE's academic programs into a coordinated experience for young people.

We are pleased to announce that registration begins today through an enrollment portal hosted by the Department of Education.

## Other Programming

### COMPASS

It's important to note that Beacon and Cornerstone Programs are complimented by our other large afterschool initiative, the COMPASS program which is at approximately 900 locations. COMPASS NYC began as Out-of-School Time (OST) in 2005. New York City's trailblazing efforts at ensuring access to quality afterschool for all its young people have been recognized nationally in publications like "Hours of Opportunity" by the Wallace Foundation, among others.

In total, these programs are on track to serve over 200,000 participants at 1,091 locations.

### Step It up NYC

Since 2009, youth have participated in Step It Up NYC: a youth engagement program to create change. Each year, nearly 100 teams and more than 1,000 young people audition to create positive change across all five boroughs. Through the competition, dance and step teams plan community service projects and develop citywide social campaigns to speak up about issues that impact their communities, including education, health, equality and opportunity, peace and tolerance, and safe communities.

### Young Sharks

Since 2017, youth have also participated in the DYCD Young Sharks competition. This project-based activity for youth aged 14 to 24, incorporates business basics and product design, financial literacy, work readiness, and leadership development. This May and June, we will engage youth in collaboration with Hip-Hop Youth Summit Youth Council using the digital "Daymond on Demand" business curriculum.

Youth will create a product design, develop a business plan, and construct a prototype to raise their voice against gun-violence. Teams will have the opportunity to win up \$2,500 to the first-place team, \$2,000 to the second-place team, and \$1,500 for an "Audience Choice" Award for the business team with the most social media pledges against gun violence.

Top three finalist will meet and receive mentorship from The Sharks Tank's own co-star Daymond John. The finalist will also showcase their business ideas at the DYCD Anti-Gun Violence Awareness Day projected to take place on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer your questions.



# Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

## Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

Success should not be determined by the color of someone's skin, their zip code, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or their family's wealth.

Success should be determined by equal access to well-rounded education, instruction that supports all learners, fair access to resources, and equal opportunities that enable each student to realize their full potential.

The events of the last few years have highlighted the enormous barriers to true equity and inclusion in the fundamental pathways to success. For decades, we've heard industry leaders from the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math (STEAM) call for greater diversity within their professions and a greater pool of qualified candidates from local communities.

Yet, for far too many of our City's students, the obstacles to success are great.

Without diminishing the importance of overcoming systemic shortfalls in fair and safe housing, nutritious food supply, and affordable healthcare, this paper will focus on the strategies and resources needed to build a strong foundation for students' success in STEAM careers.

This can be accomplished if we work together to:

- Build on the strengths of the City's in-school and after-school programs
- Provide access to affordable, accessible, and impactful STEAM education
- Leverage the resources of the private, non-profit, and public sectors

However, we need to start where resources are needed most:

- Economically disadvantaged communities
- Under-resourced after-school programs
- And wherever students struggle to see themselves as successful



***“Success should not be determined by the color of someone's skin, their zip code, gender, sexual orientation, or their family's wealth.”***

Unfortunately, there are not enough STEAM experts to go around; students need:

- Access to curricula and instruction that are easy to understand and follow
- Engaging lessons that are designed for all learning styles
- Opportunities to debate, discuss, and design solutions to real world challenges

And for far too long, after-school programs that serve our City's under-resourced communities, have lacked high quality, low cost resources. After-school providers that serve our City's students in these communities are desperate for access to reliable, consistent, and proven experts in STEAM education.

To make matters worse, the negative financial impact of the COVID pandemic hit the DOE's budget hard for both the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years.<sup>1</sup> And we don't yet know the longer-term impact on the DOE's budget. While all schools continue to suffer, those without access to supplemental resources, or the volunteers to secure those resources, will be hit exponentially harder. Similarly, NYCHA and many City-sponsored after-school programs within its Community Centers, already strapped for cash, scramble to survive through the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

Solving these challenges may seem like a heavy lift but it is doable.

This white paper proposes a three-part solution to serve after-school centers in under-resourced communities. Robust underwriting through a public, private, and non-profit partnership could support:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profits for elementary students
- Stand-alone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle and high school students
- Mid-career STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/22/21334981/education-budget-cuts-hiring-freeze>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cbcnv.org/research/nychas-operating-outlook>



## New York City has what it takes...

There is no better place than New York City to build the next generation of engineers, architects, designers, and other building industry professionals. The City is rich in resources, experiences, and opportunities. Our nation's financial capital, a world-renowned cultural hub, and a center for innovative technology, construction, engineering, design, and architecture, is a 21st century STEAM city.

So, it is no surprise that New York City continues to be a magnet that draws young, creative talent from all over the world. People come to New York to realize their potential, forge their futures, make their fortunes, and realize their ambitions.

But what about our children?

New York City students have just as much potential to succeed in STEAM fields as anyone else. In fact, with all the City's resources ~ private, public, and non-profit ~ our students should have pathways to success that others can only dream of.

Our schools are filled with hardworking and dedicated teachers and administrators. Our Department of Education (DOE) produced the STEM Framework, an excellent guide to impactful STEM instruction.<sup>3</sup> And our City has the Comprehensive Afterschool System (COMPASS)<sup>4</sup> and Schools Out New York City (SONYC)<sup>5</sup> programs that supplement in-school learning.

But despite our hardworking educators and the City's existing resources, too many students are missing out.

For example ~ because there isn't a teacher certification in STEAM, teachers must independently do their own research and develop ways to integrate STEAM into their classrooms. More often than not, they must do this in their own time. Teachers with more free time and/or resources can create these additional enrichment lessons for students (we call them additional, but really, they are essential). Students whose teachers have less free time and resources lose out.



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/stem-framework/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/comprehensive-after-school-system-of-new-york-city-compass.page>

<sup>5</sup> <https://growingupnyc.cityofnewyork.us/programs/sonyc/>

This disparity in access to quality STEAM education prevents a strong continuum of learning for all.

### **Tapping available resources to build success...**

Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.

New educational initiatives must address grade-specific learning, deliver age-appropriate instruction, and create new approaches to engaging students. They must engage subject matter experts in STEAM education to provide push-in programs for younger elementary students who need a STEAM educator to guide their learning. They must provide intuitive and easy to follow independent learning opportunities for older middle and high school students. And they should partner with STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM.



### ***“Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.”***

Vital to any successful STEAM program is a deep understanding of the NYC DOE’s STEM Framework and clear alignment with educational standards such as the Common Core math standards, Next Generation science standards, and the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Visual Arts. Programs should build STEAM literacy, place theoretical concepts in familiar contexts, and give students the opportunity to practice new skills and apply new knowledge to real-world challenges.

STEAM programs are in high demand in any after-school environment.

But many City-run after-school programs struggle to retain qualified program staff, especially at entry level. Newly trained employees often move swiftly to higher paying jobs with new employers. While this is great for employees’ individual growth, after-school programs are left with inexperienced program staff and an expensive, ongoing training cycle, while students continue to suffer.

By contracting with qualified nonprofit STEAM organizations, City-sponsored after-school

programs have regular access to highly trained educators and state of the art curricula that reinforce in-school learning through fun, engaging activities. Effective STEAM educational non-profits constantly refine and update curricula. Their educators engage in year-round professional development on best practices, classroom management, and how to communicate STEAM concepts at various grades ~ they are subject matter experts in STEAM.

While issues of access and quality can cross socio-economic boundaries, under-resourced communities always experience the greatest disadvantage.

Families in wealthier neighborhoods may have access to private and corporate support. Parents might only work one job or have a partner who doesn't have to work at all. They can afford to contribute more to their student's school, the PTA, or help obtain coveted grants to fund programs that are beyond the school budget.

But why reinvent the wheel? New York City is rich with STEAM educational organizations dedicated to developing and delivering rigorous STEAM instruction.

There are many organizations like the Salvadori Center that provide rigorous grade-specific K-12 programs to support and supplement in-school education through engaging, rigorous, and impactful age-appropriate after-school programs. Programs that help reduce the STEAM gap for students who lack access to quality STEAM education.

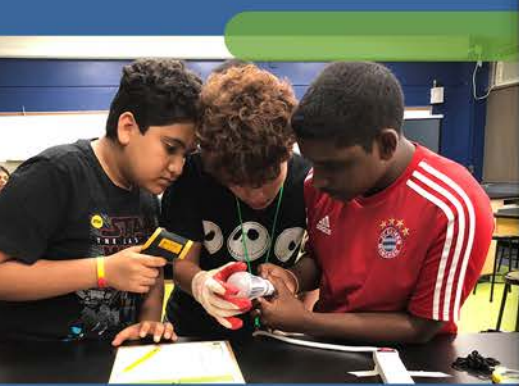
The City has great after-school centers filled with students eager to learn. And our STEAM industries have young professionals burning to make a difference and open the world of STEAM to the next generation.

Together, through a true public/private partnership, we can help our most vulnerable communities overcome these disparities. We owe it to our children, and to the future of New York City's STEAM industries, to provide opportunities and programs that help local students see and believe that they too can excel in science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math.

We have the experts, the talent, and the desire to help all our City's students succeed.



***“We have the experts,  
the talent, and the desire  
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students succeed.”***



*“Young children are quite capable of doing, at a developmentally informed level, all of the scientific practices that high schoolers can do: they can make observations and predictions, carry out simple experiments and investigations, collect data, and begin to make sense of what they found. Having a set of practices like these that become routinized and internalized is going to really help them learn about their world.”*

*“Research also shows that STEM support should start early: children in disadvantaged circumstances, especially, start school lacking the foundation for that success.”*

## The Core Principals of Success

We all know teaching STEAM ~ science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math ~ at an early age is important. It captures students’ interest at an early age, builds confidence, and the self-perception that they can succeed.<sup>6</sup> A 2016 study, for example, examined learning experiences in more than 7,750 children from kindergarten entry to the end of eighth grade, and found that early acquisition of knowledge about the world was correlated with later science success.

Children’s early knowledge about the natural and social sciences, self-regulatory behaviors, and reading and mathematics achievement may constitute modifiable factors that, if increased through school-based interventions, may help prevent or reduce the early onset of science achievement gaps.<sup>7</sup>

Salvadori believes teaching STEAM also builds the 21st Century skills that all employers seek:

- **Creativity**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Collaboration**
- **Communication**

Education professionals recognize the importance of building students’ self-confidence and self-perception that they can succeed in school ~ valuable insights and integral to any STEAM education.



<sup>6</sup> [https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jgcc\\_stemstartsearly\\_final.pdf](https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jgcc_stemstartsearly_final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2016). Science achievement gaps begin very early, persist, and are largely explained by modifiable factors. *Educational Researcher*, 45(1), 18–35.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X16633182>



### Impact In Action

On a recent STEM program classroom visit, a parent described how his daughter's behavior changed during a recent family trip out of the city. Usually she sat in the back seat, eyes glued to her iPad. But this time, she was absorbed by what they drove past and wouldn't stop talking about what she saw. She pointed out the trusses on bridges, different types of beams on buildings under construction, and even described how one stone arch reminded her of Roman arches.

We can build these strengths for all students by making learning truly accessible. Yes, that means providing lessons that are fun, engaging, and tied to students' cultural traditions, daily experiences, their neighborhoods, and the City they live in. We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students' lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn.

### We need to make the theoretical concrete.

For example, Salvadori ties grade-specific STEAM concepts to the built environment ~ structures built by humans. Students see math in the buildings they enter, science in the bridges surrounding the city, technology in the simple machines in their playgrounds, engineering in the structures that break the skyline, and arts/architecture in the City's landmarks, monuments, and memorials. Other organizations use our waterways, the ecosystem, or outer space.

When programs tie new concepts to what the students experience every day, where they live, their cultures, traditions, and the world around them, students see how learning is relevant.

***"We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students' lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn."***



## Creativity

Creativity is fostered by self-expression and the ability to give voice to ideas, concepts, and thoughts. This requires courage. Courage to be vulnerable. Courage to express ourselves, to take risks, and yes, the courage to fail.

However, it can be harder for students to express thoughts if they don't see themselves in what they are learning. When learning is student centered, when they see themselves and their culture contextualized in educational settings, they make connections faster. They feel part of the system and abstract concepts become concrete.

Familiar contexts can encourage students to express themselves, explore new concepts, and share ideas. As students feel safe and understood, they gain confidence to succeed, despite the obstacles that may lie ahead.

The last year has reminded us of the importance of inclusion for all students.

Responsive STEAM curricula incorporate underrepresented STEAM leaders ~ architects, engineers, builders, etc. ~ and their work. We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers.

Inclusion provides a safe environment that opens the door to risk-taking, which fosters creativity.

***"We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers."***

## Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a vital component of any STEAM



program. It is integral to problem-solving and to the creative process.

The engineering, design, and scientific methods are similar. Each identifies a problem or challenge, analyzes a situation (posing questions as part of inquiry-based learning), proposes solutions, solicits feedback, develops/refines ideas, and improves the solution. All build on new knowledge gained through experimentation, trial and error, observation, and/or data. Each repeats the process until the desired effect is achieved.

Teaching STEAM effectively incorporates one or all three methods.

As students solve real-world challenges, they critically analyze a situation or problem. They form hypotheses and build experiments with their hands (project-based learning). And through trial and error they test and refine their hypotheses.

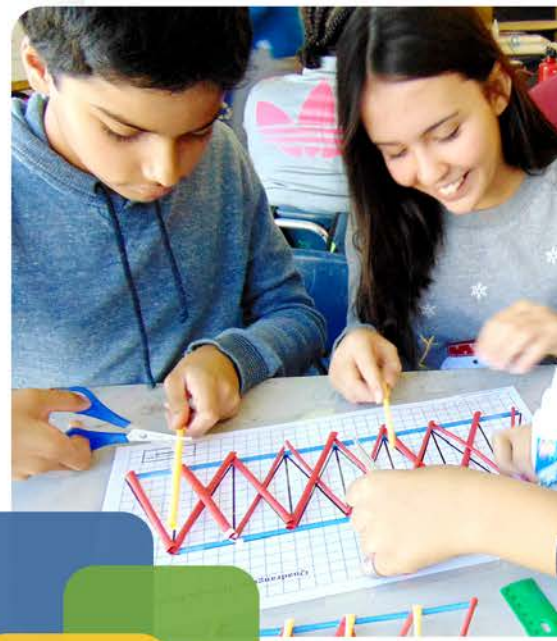
As you know, a hypothesis is merely an educated guess. As our knowledge grows our hypotheses become more accurate. Through trial and error ~ trying, failing, observing, analyzing, modifying the approach, and repeating until the desired result is achieved ~ students see the impact of critical thinking and learn the value of persistence and resiliency.

For many students, understanding “why they need to know this” increases engagement and improves knowledge retention. Studies show that understanding the potential impact of area of study, endeavor, or career is particularly important to girls.

But all students want to understand why.

For example, when a student is asked to form a hypothesis on which geometric shape will produce the strongest column in a building, they may wonder why it matters.

By learning that the shape of a column is based not only on its load bearing capacity (strength) but also on the amount of material used, which impacts cost and open space,



#### ***Our Impact in Action:***

On a snowy icy day, I was entering a NYCHA Community Center to check-in on one of our programs. A maintenance worker asked, “What are you teaching these kids?” With some trepidation, I asked, “Why?” The maintenance worker replied in an annoyed tone, “A kid just told me to put rock slat on the handicapped ramp to increase the friction.” I couldn’t have been more proud. This is exactly what we want ~ students applying what they are learning in school to real world problems.

students ‘get it.’ Connecting school learning to the real world ~ such as columns in new construction around the city and in their schools ~ drives the concept home.

When concepts are made familiar, accessible, and relevant, students feel encouraged to ask questions and explore new concepts. Understanding why, and making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete. They understand why analysis and critical thinking are important and can begin to apply this to other areas of their life.

***“making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete.”***

### **Collaboration**

Collaboration fosters creativity through new ideas, perspectives, and points of view. And it is vital to any problem-solving process.

STEAM professionals must seek feedback and input from others. They gain perspectives beyond their personal world view. And they learn to work with and value the contributions of others ~ even people they may not know or like.

A collaborative approach to learning provides an environment where an individual student doesn’t have to have all the right answers. They can share ideas, build on each other’s insights, and work together to find the best solution. They can “think outside the box” more freely as they explore new ideas. As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.

***“As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.”***



More importantly, they are learning an essential skill needed to succeed in any career, and for every relationship.

## Communication

Communication is key. It isn't enough to have good ideas or to understand a problem. Students need to learn how to communicate effectively.

We need our students to develop STEAM literacy.

The confidence to express themselves, the patience to hear others, the strength to question their position, and the courage to re-formulate their ideas. They need to learn how to seek the opinion of an opposing side, to embrace contrasting points of view, and to gain the insight to improve their solutions and projects.

Talking is the smallest part of learning how to communicate.

When students work in small groups of 3 to 4 students, they can more freely express themselves. They can critically analyze problems collaboratively as they talk it through. And they can use new vocabulary as they share creative approaches and debate ideas and concepts. They are freed from the pressure of presenting to a large group, the entire class, or failing to impress their teacher. As discussions pulse between small group interactions to whole class conversations, students are given opportunities to practice communicating effectively as they learn how to express new ideas, pose thoughtful challenges, and hone new vocabulary.

Students develop STEAM literacy, become effective communicators, and acquire the ability to remold and build on each other's ideas.

STEAM learning that uses the engineering and design processes don't typically culminate in traditional "show and tell" presentations. Students articulate how knowledge gained throughout the semester informed the solution to their real-world final project. They now understand how to apply knowledge to solve new challenges.





I had the chance to see students who have difficulty in regular academic courses excel through this hands-on, interactive experience.

**-MS 72 (Bridges)**

The hands on nature of the projects excites all learners and gives them a chance to problem solve unlike any other class projects.

**- Salvadori Starter Teacher, PS 132 (My Community)**

As I have consistently stated, one of the greatest benefits of the Salvadori program is the emphasis on “hands on” activities. During my observations I was able to notice students taking on different roles during the actual “construction” process and witnessed students successfully taking on some leadership roles.

**- Salvadori Starter Principal, Northeast Intermediate (Bridges)**

These skills are key elements of success!

Not just in STEAM, but in life. Every employer wants people who can work with others to critically analyze a situation, pose creative solutions, and communicate effectively.

## Low Tech, High Impact

Tools that cost money ~ computers, internet access, equipment ~ can empower but they can also divide. We’ve learned the hard way that the technology gap unfairly favors students whose families can afford these tools as well as access to the internet, and who have an adult with time to help their child navigate new technology. Similarly, many cash strapped schools and after-school centers struggle to keep up with the latest technology.

A fair and equitable solution may take time to achieve, time we do not have.

Low tech project-based learning can quickly reduce this divide. Research shows that project-based learning can have a positive impact on learning outcomes for all students, irrespective of their background or socio-economic status.<sup>8</sup>

Students in project-based classrooms passed their AP (Advanced Placement) tests, outperforming students in traditional classrooms by 8 percentage points. Students from low-income households saw similar gains compared to their wealthier peers, making a strong case that well-structured PBL can be a more equitable approach than teacher-centered ones. Importantly, the improvements in teaching efficacy were both significant and durable: When teachers in the study taught the same curriculum for a second year, PBL students outperformed students in traditional classrooms by 10 percentage points.<sup>8</sup>

Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective. Materials are often affordable or even free. More importantly, students learn by doing. They don’t just listen to lectures or read texts. They experience all modes of learning ~ seeing, reading, hearing, and doing. Adding a collaborative approach to project-based learning engages classmates in discussion and discovery.

<sup>8</sup> [https://cesr.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Knowledge%20in%20Action%20Efficacy%20Study\\_18feb2021\\_final.pdf](https://cesr.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Knowledge%20in%20Action%20Efficacy%20Study_18feb2021_final.pdf)



### **Successful programs:**

Design curricula so each lesson builds on content from the previous session, and engages students in activities that help them learn STEAM concepts by addressing real-world problems. Support increased student achievement by providing a coherent, in-depth learning experience that explores STEAM principles relevant to a particular theme.

Engage students as they build foundational knowledge, conduct controlled experiments, and complete projects that integrate engineering vocabulary, math skills, and design processes around a single topic, such as bridges or green design.

## ***“Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective.”***

Through collaboration, students learn that they don’t have to have all the right answers. Each contributes to success by seeing, thinking, and sharing ideas that the others might not have noticed. Through a collaborative process, students build communication skills as they discuss and debate ideas, explore results, and share observations on the process.

By working together, the group is more effective than the sum of its parts.

A project-based approach to experimentation, especially one with a variety of instructional methods (seeing, hearing, reading, and discussing), supports all learners. Before beginning, it is important to work with other educators to gather relevant information on individual student learning styles in order to heighten understanding, improve access to new knowledge, and form teams that naturally build on each other’s strengths.

Those who absorb information by hearing, gain through discussions and spoken instruction. Visual learners watch experiments unfold and appreciate image-based instructions. Those who learn by doing experience new knowledge through hands-on activities. And students who understand concepts through repetition gain while sharing ideas and presenting their projects.

Schools and after-school programs need hands-on, collaborative, project-based STEAM lessons more than ever, whether in-person, fully remote, or through blended learning. And while remote learning enables organizations to serve students in new ways, we must maintain a commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and providing a rigorous, transformative experience for all students, including those with special needs, such as English Language Learners, students living in transitional housing facilities (shelters), and students in hospital schools.

A collaborative, project-based approach can embrace learners of all abilities.

## Call to action ~ Public Private Partnership

Laying the foundation for the next generation of STEAM professionals may seem like a herculean task but it is achievable. We can do it through a partnership between STEAM companies (architects, engineers, contractors, developers, etc.), STEAM educational organizations, and City government.

STEAM companies (engineering and architectural firms, contractors, developers, etc.) can support schools and under resourced communities by underwriting programs. They can open their doors and their project sites to the community ~ introducing students to the vast range of jobs needed to build our future. Companies' young STEAM professionals can serve as mentors, helping students see themselves in STEAM careers.

Educational non-profit organizations working in STEAM education, can work together to strengthen the pipeline of STEAM education. Starting with pre-school or Kindergarten and building a continuum of STEAM learning and success through college and beyond. STEAM educators can enhance school-based curricula, providing enriching after-school programs.

City government can provide financial, logistical, and physical support. City-operated spaces can house programs offered in collaboration with STEAM organizations. Agencies that serve our young people (NYC DOE, DYCD, DCLA, etc.) can provide access to students and teachers as well as partnership opportunities.

Independent programs, like those delivered by Salvadori and other industry non-profit organizations, are extremely valuable. But, despite quadrupling in size in ten years, Salvadori teaches only 8,500 of the NYC's 1.1 million students. Like so many organizations, we can do so much more but we need help, access, and partnerships.

A broader public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.

We support a public/private partnership to fund intensive after-school programs in select New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Community Centers across all five boroughs of New York City. Each NYCHA Community Center would receive:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profit organizations for elementary school aged students ~ a reasonable start would be 100 after-school programs
- Standalone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle school students ~ starting with 1,000 classes
- Connections to young STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce high school students to college and career pathways in STEAM

***“A broad public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.”***

Salvadori has a proven track record working with NYCHA on expansive programs serving students from all five boroughs.

Salvadori provided 50 STEAM programs across 25 sites (5 per borough) that reached thousands of students in public housing. Sites were selected based on need and in partnership with NYCHA leadership. To ensure a successful program, site staff were required to attend a full-day training program to establish buy-in and to develop an understanding of Salvadori’s approach, instructional merit, and partner responsibilities.

The program was a success. The fundernoted the high intellectual merit and broad impact, and described the program as a “successful”, “interesting”, “unique” program that “invests in training the instructors to provide good quality delivery”. Unfortunately, sustaining long-term funder for broad City-wide initiative is challenging for most funders even when successful.

The take away is that the need was great, the program was effective, but agencies serving our City’s students with the greatest need can’t afford to self-fund the program.

But together we can improve students’ futures, and build a pathway for success!



## Contributors to this white paper include:

### **Kenneth Jones, M.Arch. Executive Director**

Executive Director



Kenn Jones started his career as a licensed architect working in New Jersey and New York City. His career as an educator paralleled his career in architecture where he taught undergraduate courses in studio art, design, and the history of art and design, as well as graduate courses in non-profit management. Kenn has substantial experience developing project-based curricula, interdisciplinary programs, and adult education/professional development. He has served as a U.S. Diplomat in the Middle East and as the Executive Director of Peters Valley Craft Education Center and the New York Foundation for Architecture; before joining Salvadori he was the Curator of Education for the New Jersey State Museum. Kenn holds a M.Arch. degree from the University of Maryland and post-graduate studies in historic preservation and design as a Rotary Foundation Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Using strategic planning and creative problem solving to achieve organizational goals and objectives, Kenn ties together his experiences in education, executive management, and philanthropy ~ an approach he brings to the Salvadori Center.

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### **David McGillan**

Deputy Director



David joined the Salvadori Center as Operations Manager in 2010 and changed roles in 2012 to become Development Director. A British native, David settled in New York City and managed four senior centers from 2005 to 2010, after several years working for local government in England and a year spent traveling the world. David graduated with a Master's in Public Administration, in 2011, from Baruch College, where the United Way of New York City honored him with a Senior Fellowship. In 1997 David received a BA with honors in Creative Writing from the University of Derby in the United Kingdom. David is an active volunteer with Street Soccer USA – helping the homeless develop life skills through soccer.

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### **Malika Khalsa**

Education Director

Malika is a Virginia native who moved to New York to attend St. Johns University where she received a degree in Childhood Education. After teaching for a year, Malika became a Child Protective Specialist, investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and ensuring safety for children. Later, Malika went on to work with City Year New York as a Program Manager, Program Director and Senior Program Director, managing different levels of staff whose goal was to provide academic tutoring and mentorship to students in under-resourced schools. Malika leads Salvadori's team of seven Educators in New York City region and Northeast Pennsylvania to develop curricula and deliver programs to students through in-person, fully remote, and blended learning.

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### **Emiliano Maghallighen**

Senior Educator

Emiliano Maghallighen was born and raised in Mexico City and moved to New York to study at City College. He received a BS in Architecture in 2004 and joined Gensler as a job captain where he helped design retail stores including Apple, Victoria's Secret and Gap. While teaching at the Guggenheim museum and interning at the Museum of Modern Art, Emiliano became interested in education and the arts. In 2009 he joined Organizacion Tepeyac, a non-profit organization that provides after school programs, adult education, and immigrant advocacy to Mexicans in New York.

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### **Roxanne Meija**

Senior Educator

Roxanne was born in New York City and grew up in Queens, NY. As a child, she always had an interest in art and design. In 2006, she received her BFA in Architecture from Parsons The New School for Design, moving on to work in the design and construction industries. In July of 2010 she joined the Salvadori Center full-time to manage an after-school program in New York City Housing Authority community centers across the 5 boroughs. Currently, Roxanne serves as a Senior Educator and helps develop new curricula for Salvadori.

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## **Juliana Wong**

Senior Educator

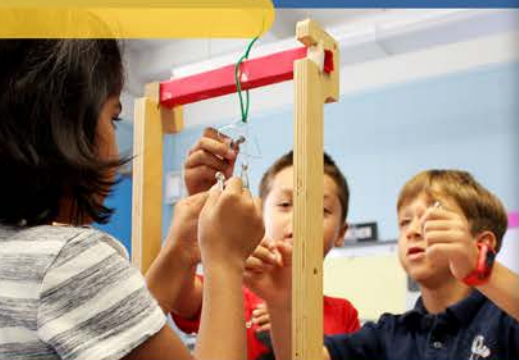
Juliana grew up in London, UK where she received her BA Honors in Interior Design at Kingston University. She moved to Hong Kong and designed for Ronald Lu & Partners on a wide range of commercial and residential projects before joining Goudie Associates as Senior Designer on the expansion offices for Credit Suisse. Settling in New York City, she worked for Lowery Design and then as an Educator for the Brooklyn Center of Urban Environment. Juliana concurrently trained with the DOE as a parent advocate for the School Base Support Team, and furthered her interest in how children learn through project-based learning whilst being an active parent volunteer at NEST+M, one of the first K-12 grade seamless public schools in NYC. She holds a Certificate in TEFL, Diplome de Langue Francais and in Danielson's Competencies. Juliana joined the Salvadori Center staff in 2009 where she has been writing and developing curricula, leading professional development, mentoring and teaching in Salvadori programs across all five boroughs as a Senior Educator.

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Additional contributions from Richa Sadana and Jessica Guice.



# About the Salvadori Center



“Lessons and achievements were scaffolded to build understanding of architecture and design, even at a kindergarten level: impressive! The educator infused our themes of character and building in her lessons, giving students a feeling of belonging, evident by the personal influence/experiences seen in final product.”

- *My Community, Flatlands*

“The Salvadori experience allowed my students to gain 21st century skills through collaborative and innovation. The hands-on activities kept them engaged and most importantly, the gained an understanding of how to be responsible, future citizens of the world.”

- *Building Green, Belmont Preparatory High School*

## About the Salvadori Center

Salvadori’s in-school, after-school, and summer multi-day programs celebrate a collaborative, hands-on, project-based approach to learning through the built environment ~ buildings, bridges, parks, and communities.

Students learn new things about the city they live in. They see the math and science in the buildings they enter, the bridges they cross, and the parks they play in. They quickly understand why math and science are relevant to their lives. The teachers we coach become our strongest advocates and schools return to work with us year after year. In fact, over 75% of schools returned each year.

Salvadori Educators work with schools to build durable skills, engage all students, provide results that reflect high levels of ownership, and directly support educational standards through the (4) C’s:

- **Collaboration** ~ working together to hypothesize, build, test, and solve problems
- **Critical thinking** ~ analyzing how and why things work
- **Creativity** ~ posing creative solutions to real-world challenges
- **Communication** ~ listening, learning, and articulating complex ideas and concepts

Our programs help schools:

- Make math, science, and the arts intellectually accessible for all learners
- Increase student comprehension and success at grade-level math and science
- Lay the foundation for future STEAM degrees and/or careers





"I think this is a great thing that Salvadori does. As a non-for-profit, city funded program, our funds are often limited in bringing quality educational programs, especially STEM related programs for minimal costs or free, and Salvadori does just that. We at South Beach were honored to be chosen for the program and the children are very impressed with themselves and their achievement of the "Big Bridge" as they call it, which has drawn quite a bit of attention as it is on display in our center lobby, and participants give the history of its making. This program gave participants not only engineering concepts, but built up their self-esteem and confidence to achieve. Thank you!"

**- Salvadori After School Teacher,  
UAU South Beach**

## Academic Rigor

All Salvadori curricula support grade-specific math, science, and arts concepts. Curricula are reviewed and updated to ensure STEAM concepts are current and applicable. And all our curricula align with:

- Common Core math Standards
- Next Generation Science Standards
- Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts

Throughout the year, our Educators engage in vibrant professional learning. They continually work to strengthen their teaching skills ~ pedagogy, communication, classroom management, etc. They participate in 'Deep Dive' exercises to develop their ability to teach with greater agility to different grade levels. This enables us to easily adapt STEAM concepts to real life situations; bringing STEAM life for students.

Additionally, we work with STEAM professionals to make sure that engineering and architecture concepts are aligned with industry standards. This diverse group of young professionals serve as mentors, sharing their journey, and helping students see themselves as successful in STEAM degrees and careers.

As a team, we have delivered programs in thousands of classrooms across the City ~ in schools, after-school centers, museums, and other cultural institutions. Working in such a broad cross-section of learning environments builds an unparalleled depth of knowledge and insight into what works and what doesn't.

## Salvadori's Approach

Our hands-on approach to building projects gives students an intimate and personal experience. Working collaboratively, students learn that they don't need to have all the answers; each team member contributes to a more dynamic view. The small





***“We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.”***

group scientific approach allows students to form hypotheses, build and test apparatus, record observations, and draw conclusions. Results are shared, discussed and analyzed with the entire class.

Each multi-day residency or program includes multiple collaborative experiments that build toward a culminating activity. Individual sessions start with a re-cap activity that reinforces the previous week’s session on a higher level. This reminds students where they left off and enables those who missed the previous session to catch up. The primary activity explores new concepts with hands-on, project-based experiments. Sessions end in a brief wrap-up activity, which is often a “cliff hanger” that motivates students to engage in future sessions. Students combine the design approach to problem solving with the scientific method of experimentation to explore new concepts and solve real world problems.

Salvadori programs help close the achievement gap for students living in poverty, such as those at NYCHA facilities. We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

### **A Culture of Assessment**

Our main goals are to increase comprehension of STEAM concepts ~ particularly math and science ~ to help students feel more confident in their abilities, and to encourage students to pursue



### ***Impact in Action:***

Salvadori Educator Kaelin described the powerful impact the program had on one struggling student:

I'll never forget the day I met Erica. Her teacher told me that she was on the autism spectrum and would not be able to participate. We thought about giving her independent work. I asked if she could try – I have a special education background – and knew she could participate in some way.

I don't expect high pre-assessment scores as students haven't learned physical science concepts yet. Erica scored 27%.

Although she had a hard time communicating, Erica had amazing fine motor skills. So I appointed her as our materials manager. She measured, marked, cut, and distributed materials to each group. Erica gained a sense of purpose and began smiling. Groups that struggled appreciated her help to complete projects on time.

Erica gave her all in every session. She made friends and found she was capable of learning in a general education setting.

In the post-assessment Erica scored 97%!

***“Childrens’ perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori.”***

STEAM education and career choices.

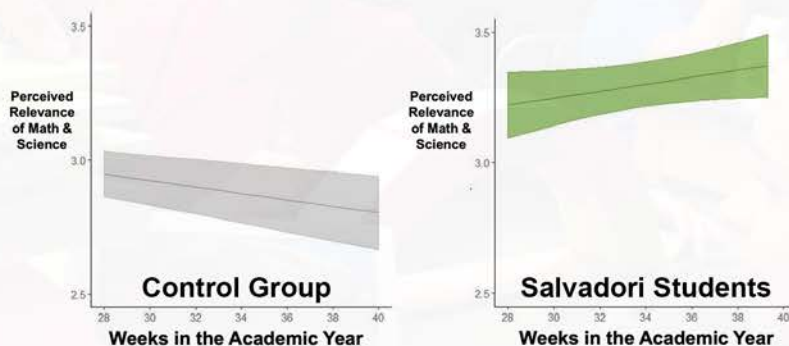
Perhaps Salvadori's greatest accomplishments over the past few years are the results of our third-party assessment reports, conducted by Youth Studies, Inc., and New York University.

Results demonstrate statistically significant increases in student ability. For eight consecutive years of Youth Studies reports, Salvadori students:

- felt more confident in their math and science ability
- were more motivated to pursue educational/career choices in STEAM fields
- improved their knowledge of math, engineering, and architecture concepts
- increased their understanding of the scientific inquiry process

And there's more good news! A preliminary study by researchers from New York University's (NYU) Department of Psychology showed promising results of Salvadori's impact on students' perception that what they learn in school is relevant to their lives. The study began with these hypotheses:

- Salvadori programs help children see how math and science are relevant to their everyday lives
- Childrens' perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori
- This perception persists after their participation in Salvadori



Graph shows what happens after participation (for the Salvadori students) hence the initial difference in starting points



### Salvadori measures effectiveness through a six-tiered evaluation system:

- Principal surveys assess ties to school-wide goals
- Anonymous teacher surveys assess curricula impact and ties to classroom objectives
- Independent assessment measure changes in students' STEM comprehension
- Intensive year-long training of new Educators, including mentoring by Senior Educators
- NYC Department of Education vendor performance review system
- On-site evaluations assess the quality of instruction

Preliminary results were extremely positive:

- In general, students who didn't receive Salvadori's program showed a steady decrease in their perception that math, science, and art are relevant to their lives
- Students who received a Salvadori program showed an increase in their perception that math, science, and art was relevant
- More impressively, students who received a Salvadori program maintained a sense that what they learned is relevant several months after the program ended

The beauty is that hands-on, collaborative, project-based learning not only has a significant impact on a child's perception that math and science are relevant to their lives, but the perception of relevance stays with the child well after the program is complete – unlike students who didn't receive Salvadori.

We plan to be able to generalize the results by replicating the study over the next four academic years. The new study will follow students in two schools and measure the impact of Salvadori's programs on students who receive our curricula compared with students who don't.

Thankfully, the expanded study will be fully funded by our Board so the cost is not included in this request.

Qualitative and anecdotal data collected from classroom teachers, Salvadori Educators, and students complement and reinforce independent assessment findings. All of our assessment results are available at: <http://salvadori.org/wordpress/programs/testimonials-results>

### Serving through the Pandemic

As soon as New York City schools closed in mid-March, 2020, Salvadori Educators went into overdrive to produce versions of our curricula that could be taught remotely. This was no small feat,



considering our model has always relied on our built environment experts delivering the program directly, in the classroom, through collaborative project-based learning.

We wanted to respond and serve while staying true to our mission.

Within two weeks, we had updated and begun to distribute new versions of our hands-on lessons so that classroom teachers and new at-home educators, could continue to educate our children. From March to June, we distributed FREE project-based Salvadori lessons every week to schools in our network and worked with city officials and our funding partners to spread the word and to share these valuable resources as widely as possible. Among those who helped spread the word were our funding partners, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

At the same time, our Educators began delivering lessons to our school partners via Google Meets for direct instruction, uploads via Google Classrooms to account for changing class schedules, and pre-recorded instructional videos for young students and supplemental resources.

Perhaps more importantly, in the last few months of the school year, we delivered free resources to “new home educators” across New York and beyond through:

- **FREE STEAM Lessons** each week for 15 weeks ~ to over 75,000 teachers and new at-home educators
- **Instructional videos** for NYC DOE’s *Lets Learn NYC!* on WNET THIRTEEN for 3 to 6-year-olds

By doing this, we helped teachers transition to remote/online learning, aided families by providing educational activities they can do at home with household materials, and reached new audiences across New York City and the tri-state region.



*“This was a great experience for the kids this year. With the pandemic things have been rough. The program was done virtually and Salvadori Educator did an excellent job. She had a lot of patience with the students. Her instructions were clear and the students had no problem following them. She kept the students interested and engaged. The students looked forward to Fridays when we had the Bridges program and they were sad to see it end. It provided the students with some hands-on learning, a little diversion from our regular classwork, and a lot of encouragement and personal attention that the students need during this hard time.”*

### Moving forward:

As we slowly return to normal, Salvadori is already back in the classroom. We currently offer in-person, fully remote, and blended learning for in-school, after-school, and summer programs. We expanded our partnership with NYC DOE’s Lets Learn NYC! on WNET THIRTEEN to include a 20-episode series entitled My Community for 3 to 6-year-olds

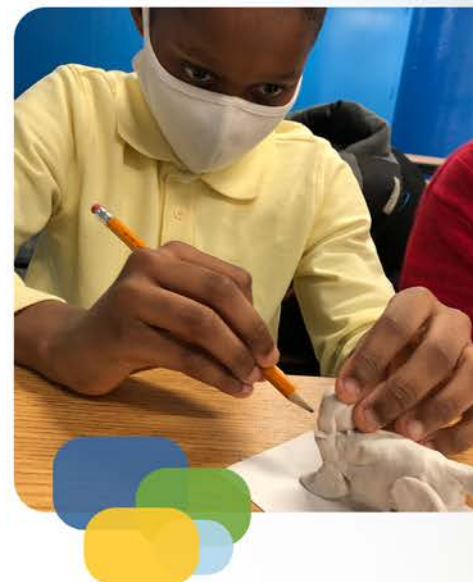
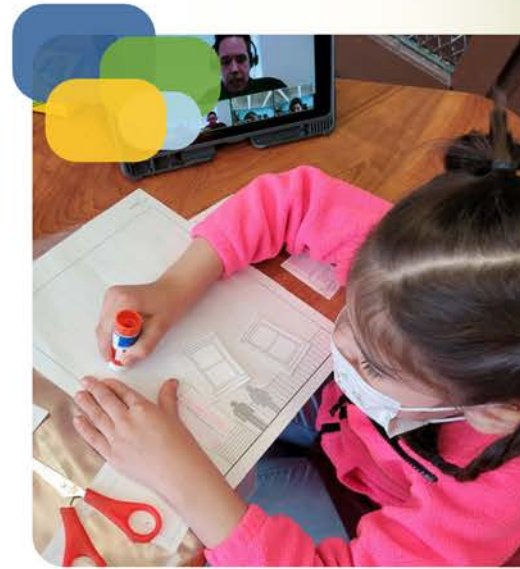
### In summary, Salvadori programs:

- promote college and career readiness
- engage students through project-based exercises
- use the built environment as a vehicle for learning
- employ collaborative problem solving that involves all participants
- produce results that reflect high levels of creativity and ownership

### The Team:

Salvadori’s team is as diverse as the schools we work in.

Our Educators reflect the students we serve. In fact, several were once NYC DOE students themselves and some have children currently in NYC public schools. When hiring Educators, we seek professionals who have a teaching background as well as previous professional





experience or education in related fields ~ NYC history, fine arts, design, and STEAM careers such as architecture, urban planning, engineering, construction.

Educators' backgrounds give them greater insight into our curricula and enables them to speak to our core concepts from a point of personal experience. More importantly, the diversity of our staff enables students to see themselves in their Educator ~ helping to plant the seed that they too can succeed in STEAM careers.

Our entire staff reflects the diversity that makes NYC great ~ a collection of unique voices and perspectives formed by race, gender, ethnicity, culture, age, sexual orientation, religion, and immigrant status. They know the challenges facing NYC students because they've lived it. They have been new immigrants, English Language Learners, BIPOC students, GLBTQ students, girls interested in STEAM, and so much more.

Their circumstances and experience gives them a first-hand understanding of the challenges facing NYC students today.

Full staff profiles can be found here: <https://salvadori.org/wordpress/about-us/staff/>





*See it. Build it. Know it.*

See what is new at Salvadori by visiting our web site and following us on social media:

- [Salvadori Web Site](#) ~ assessment reports, resources for teachers, etc.
- [YouTube](#) ~ short videos of classroom projects
- [Facebook](#) ~ news and images of student experiences
- [LinkedIn](#) ~ professional relationships and networking



**Testimony**  
**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services**  
**Oversight Hearing: DYCD Community Center Programming -**  
**Beacon, Cornerstone, and Saturday Night Lights**  
**April 25, 2022 at 1:00 PM**

**Submitted by**  
**Beatriz Diaz Taveras, Executive Director**  
**Catholic Charities Community Services**

Good afternoon to Chair Stevens and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services. I am Beatriz Diaz Taveras, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

For over 70 years, Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS) has provided comprehensive, professional human services to vulnerable, low-income City residents in the poorest communities of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Its network of services enables a participant in any of our programs to access a continuum of services which include: case management services to help people resolve financial, emotional and family issues; long-term disaster case management services; eviction and homelessness prevention; emergency food; immigration legal services; refugee resettlement; ESOL services; after-school programs at summer camps and community centers; and supportive housing programs for adults with serious mental illness. Through its programs, CCCS serves thousands of individuals each year without regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

Building on a 25-year history of serving low-income, high-needs, at-risk youth and families in northern Manhattan and the Highbridge and Morrisania sections of the Bronx, CCCS' Alianza Division operates successful, high quality, youth-focused programming in public schools and NYCHA housing facilities. We effectively engage parents, and other school and community stakeholders to improve students' educational outcomes and increase access to much-needed resources. Our Beacon and Cornerstone programs in Washington Heights (Northern Manhattan) and in Highbridge (West Bronx) are community centers that transform local schools or NYCHA housing facilities into thriving neighborhood centers after school and in the summer months. These programs provide a safe, supervised place for youth to go for recreation, cultural activities, homework help, tutoring, and counseling. Many also offer programs for parents, siblings or the whole community including English language classes, recreation or computer training. CCCS has also operates the Saturday Night Lights (SNL) program at our Bacon and Cornerstone sites in Highbridge and Washington Heights as well as at the Brandis High School Campus on the Upper West Side, providing youth a safe, fun and productive space during times when crime and victimization rates are at their peak – on Friday and Saturday nights.

We appreciate the attention the Council has paid to the need for increased resources for youth services in its response to the FY23 Preliminary Budget. Catholic Charities Community Services supports the expansion of the Summer Youth Employment Program and Summer Rising, which help youth to recover from COVID-related learning loss and foster the skills needed to start successful careers. The Council's call for additional investment in the Work Learn Grow program will help connect participants in these summer programs with additional skill-building and work experience needed to transition to the next phase of their academic and career development. The restoration of \$5 million for Saturday Night Lights will also advance public safety through positive youth engagement and relationship and trust building between youth and law enforcement. Equally important is the Council's support of increasing the per participant reimbursement rate for Beacons, Cornerstones, and other DYCD contracted program in parity with any increases in the rates for Summer Rising. CCCS has been proud to partner with the City to operate these programs, but cannot deny that contract delays, insufficient reimbursements, and last-minute regulatory changes have impacted our ability to offer services to as many young New Yorkers as possible. We appreciate the Administration and the Council's efforts to resolve these issues and look forward to further collaboration through the remainder of FY22 and the start of FY23.

On behalf of New York's most vulnerable and Catholic Charities Community Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and thank you for continuing to serve this great City of New York. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional detail.



**Testimony of Lena Bilik, Senior Policy Analyst, Children's Aid**  
**Submitted Testimony – Youth Services Committee Hearing DYCD Community Centers**

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Althea Stevens and the members of the Youth Services committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on DYCD community centers. Additionally, I would like to thank the New York City Council for your leadership on issues that impact the youth and families of NYC.

With a mission to help children living in poverty to succeed and thrive, Children's Aid provides comprehensive support to children, youth, and their families in some of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in New York City. Since our founding in 1853, Children's Aid has been anchored in the knowledge that poverty cannot be overcome with a single service delivered at a single point in time. We are a solutions-driven, multi-service agency employing a holistic strategy that serves children and their families at every stage of development, from cradle through college and career; and in every key setting — home, school, and community. Today our 2,000 full- and part-time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth, and their families through our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and community health clinics. We work primarily in Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, the north shore of Staten Island, Bedford Stuyvesant/Williamsburg, and downtown Brooklyn.

Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we are in support of their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

An often under-appreciated asset of the youth services continuum in NYC are the CBOs that contract with DYCD in Beacons, Cornerstones, and community centers. Children's Aid holds a Beacon contract at one of our community schools, and operates five community centers that have DYCD funding, including COMPASS, SONYC, NDA, and SYEP – Dunlevy Milbank Community Center, Next Generation Center, Goodhue Community Center, Hope Leadership Academy, and Frederick Douglass Community Center. Community centers are one of the city's strongest place-based, community-based resources. They are resources not only for youth, but for their families and entire community.

It is crucial to note that DYCD community centers were the programs that stepped up to provide emergency child care and academic support for students through Learning Labs during the height of the COVID pandemic. This exemplifies the reliability and dedication of community centers. When schools were closed, we were the safe, trusted place where families felt comfortable sending their



children to be supported as they navigated remote learning. Children's Aid operated 4 learning labs, 3 of which were at our community centers. Community centers are also crucial SYEP providers - last year, Children's Aid's centers alone offered 255 SYEP slots.

### **Children's Aid's Community Centers/Beacons**

- Children's Aid has been partnering with I.S. 219 New Venture Academy since 2014 as a community school, and one of the funding streams leveraged there is our Beacon program. Our afterschool and out of school time programming there is integrated as part of the holistic services we offer as a community school.
- Next Generation Center in the South Bronx was launched in 2006 in direct response to the city's increasing population of teens in foster care and in recognition of the lack of services for this specific population. Youth served are currently in or have been in foster care, are low-income, and/or have specific barriers to traditional employment including being court involved.
- Children's Aid's College and Career Access and Success programs provide young people with the skills and supports they need to pursue a post-secondary pathway that sets them up for a successful transition to adulthood. Hope Leadership Academy, a teen center located in East Harlem within the Taft Houses NYCHA facility, serves as our flagship site for these activities, while also offering an array of services that meet the specific needs of adolescents.
- A beacon in the Harlem community for generations, the Dunlevy-Milbank Center provides essential resources to the children and families of this diverse community in Central Harlem.
- Each year, the Frederick Douglass Center welcomes children and family members residing in the low-income communities of the Frederick Douglass Houses and nearby Central Harlem. Located in one of the largest NYCHA developments in the city, the center provides a holistic array of services and programs designed to improve student learning, strengthen families, and foster healthy communities.
- The Goodhue Center—which has access to acres of woodlands, nature trails, a pond, ballfields, an outdoor swimming pool, and a community building—has served residents of Staten Island since 1912. Today, Goodhue is a full-service community center offering a range of resources and programs including academic enrichment, hands-on STEM learning, arts education, life skills workshops, fitness and recreation activities, and more.

During the 2021-22 school year, our centers served over 700 participants in afterschool and offered an array of academic and enrichment activities and services, related to social-emotional learning, arts & culture, math and reading, health & wellness, family engagement, and overall return to the sense of just “being a kid” after being isolated for too long during COVID. Children's Aid's programming is backed by decades of experience and supported by strong evidence. Understanding that children must be able to surmount barriers to learning and that both academic and non-



academic competencies are required for success, we provide a range of activities to promote and celebrate student talents and interests, support physical and social well-being, and foster a sense of community, belonging, and connectedness. To achieve these aims, our programs actively incorporate youth voice, choice, and input. We also hold at the forefront that, in order to thrive, children and their families need access to basic care and services. As a multi-service organization, we are readily able to provide housing advocacy, medical, dental, and mental health, family stability, and other needed supports and referrals at all of our programs. Our center-based and Beacon programs are powerhouses of youth development based right in families' communities.

### **Recommendations**

Despite the important work DYCD community centers do every day, they are often forgotten during budget season. One recent example is that through Summer Rising 2.0, COMPASS and SONYC programming operating Summer Rising in schools this summer will see an increase in rates. This is absolutely needed. However, COMPASS and SONYC center-based summer programming not running Summer Rising will not see increases, nor will Beacons and Cornerstones. This inequity will lead to immense difficulty in hiring and retaining staff for these critical programs, which will hinder their ability to provide the year-round support they provide to our communities. We thank the city council for pointing this out in their response to the preliminary budget, and will continue to advocate for parity, and increases in rates for ALL summer programs.

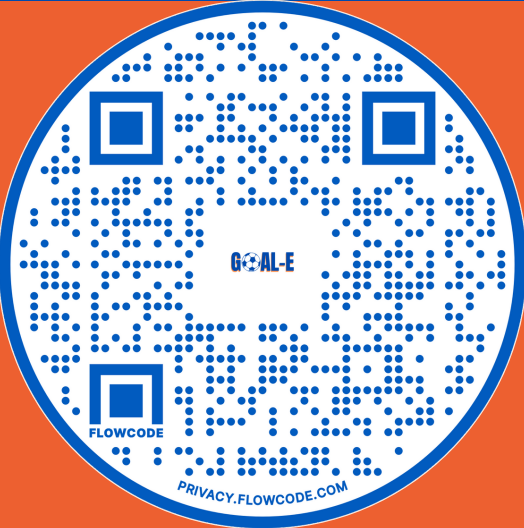
This strain on staffing caused by lower rates for centers would only aggravate the hiring challenges facing all sectors. But one challenge that has made this worse for the youth services sector is the background clearance backlog for child care and youth providers. The backlog must be cleared as soon as possible, as it has interfered with our ability to serve youth and families and hire staff for two years. It is imperative to the success of all youth programming for these background clearance apparatuses to run smoothly. It is difficult to ensure full program coverage if a staff with a pending clearance must constantly work with a cleared staff member. This also leads to retention issues; staff who must wait for months for a clearance will often find other work where they can start right away. All of this negatively impacts the children and families who rely on youth services throughout the City.

DOHMH has shared that they are in the process of developing an online platform for prospective employees to submit their documents, which will make the background check process more efficient and effective. So that we don't enter a fourth school year with a broken system, we recommend that the City have this new system up and running for the 2022-2023 school year, and that all pending clearances be addressed by September 2022. Furthermore, we encourage the City to test this online system with providers before it is launched so that end-users can provide feedback before it is live.

**Conclusion**

Nonprofits that operate youth programs are an invaluable part of the city's social safety net. When young people come to our Beacon program and community centers, they are coming to a home base, where they are safe, cared for, empowered, and supported. Children's Aid sincerely thanks the New York City Council for their support of children, youth, and their families in New York City. We look forward to working with this Council to lift up the importance of community centers as vital neighborhood lifelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony for the record. If you have any questions about this testimony, please feel free to contact [lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org).



**IN PERSON:  
BOYS & GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL**

**ZOOM:  
270 049 5645**

# GOAL-E

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**CELEBRATING THE JOY  
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2021/2022 Season

NYC Council

**Testimony for the Committee on Youth Services - April 25 2022**

To Whom It May Concern:

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www.icetheatre.org  
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I am submitting this testimony as Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ® (ITNY)

ITNY celebrates and advances dance on ice as a performance art and stands as the very first ice dance company to be recognized with dance program funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Through its performances in both traditional and site-specific venues, ITNY presents ice dance that allows the public, especially children and young artists to reimagine skating in new and unexpected ways.

ITNY proudly provides the New Works and Young Artists Series (NWyAS) to young people—public school students K-12 in Harlem, Brooklyn and Queens. We annually serve about 800-1,000 students.

The NWyAS has been funded in part by Council Member discretionary funding through the Department of Youth and Cultural Development.

The process with DYCD is extraordinarily cumbersome and time consuming for a small non-profit organization, that to date receives \$5,000 in annual discretionary funding. The time and paperwork it takes us to process this grant almost requires as much in staffing payroll costs. Not to mention the elaborate – and very confusing - pre-qualification process and the constant requirement to update passwords and documents. We have been receiving DYCD funding since 2015 and each year I require multiple assistance calls and emails to maintain the pre-qual, do the contract, create the final report and file the request for reimbursement.

In opposition to this, there is the process with Bloomberg Philanthropies that gives us an annual grant of \$10,000 for the same program. It requires one letter, one quick online confirmation of our organization's non-profit status and verification of our payment information. I wish all grants would be this easy.

In any case, the process for a \$5,000 grant from DYCD should not be the same as for a million-Dollar grant. This makes no sense. We hope DYCD will review its process for small grants and make it more user-friendly.

Meredith Monk Ice Theatre of New York, Inc.®  
Ken Shelley Page two  
Atoy Wilson

Maybe, in the case of arts organizations that are already being funded through DCLA, all discretionary funds should just automatically be funded through them. Added bonus, we will get about 80% of the grant up front instead of waiting till December or later to be reimbursed for the programming that ended the prior June (which we fronted). This year ITNY is asking every Council Member to fund us through the Department of Cultural Affairs instead of DYCD.

NYC's cultural programming and specifically ITNY's programming benefits life in NYC, from our general audiences to the NYC public school children we serve. We bring joy with our free public performances to dance enthusiasts, figure skating fans and all passers-by of our performances on the seasonal ice rinks all over New York City.

Government support is especially critical to small non-profits. Ice Theatre of New York is resilient – we have been around since 1984 – but we could not do this without the support of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Council Member Discretionary Funding. This support goes beyond the actual financial contribution in inspiring support from foundations and individuals.

Ice Theatre of New York has been helping to lead the economic recovery with its pop-up ice dance events, by creating traffic to local communities and businesses and enlivening the communities we perform in. We hope that soon – as in the past - ITNY will be part of the cultural landscape that will attract tourist back to our City.

As we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, ITNY sees it as imperative as we care for the neediest among our fellow citizens, that the overall NYC budget for culture in schools and for after-school programming increase, and that the funding process is made less cumbersome.

With gratitude for the City's past support and in hope of increased funding for Culture in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jirina Ribbens', with a stylized, elongated flourish extending to the right.

Jirina Ribbens  
Executive Director

Lucy Sexton

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs hearing

February 22, 2022

Thank you Chair Stevens and members of the City Council for this important and urgent hearing. My name is Lucy Sexton and I am with the citywide cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts.

As you know, many cultural organizations contract with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to deliver critical programming for our city's young people, from dance classes to summer camps to professional music training to science courses in our zoos and gardens---and so much more. These programs are often the only access to culture that young people in low wealth neighborhoods have. And those organizations can provide story after story of the impact their work has on young people and the invaluable service they provide to families and communities.

Unfortunately, DYCD is a broken system and the cultural organizations who contract with them are at a breaking point. The structure of the system itself is problematic, requiring the work to be completed before 80% of the funding comes to reimburse the costs. Add to that the chronic and destabilizing delays in payment of months and years, and you have cultural organizations deeply in debt and struggling to meet payroll. I got a call last week from a 30 year old organization in East Flatbush that provides cultural programming to children year round. They are still waiting for 10s and hundreds of thousands of dollars owed to them by DYCD for the summer camp they produced and paid for last year---and for various other programs completed before that!

To state the obvious, this is particularly a problem for lower budget organizations, often led by and serving communities of color, who do not have access to reserve funds to float them while they wait to be paid for jobs they have done and done well.

The Comptroller's recently released report, A Better Contract for New York: A Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid On Time, clearly states, "As a result (of the city's delays), nonprofits are forced to take out loans and incur substantial costs to keep themselves afloat."

I strongly suggest that the Council consider moving DYCD funding from a contract to a grant structure, so the organizations would get the money to do the programming and supply detailed reporting afterward on how the funds were spent and what programs were delivered. Realizing that necessary shift may take time, I ask that the Council immediately take steps to make the process more transparent so cultural organizations can see where their funds are in the process, and have a clear idea of when those funds will be delivered. This is the only way organizations can plan prudently.

I'm happy to put you directly in touch with the cultural organizations experiencing these problems so we can all work together to find solutions.

I would be remiss if I did not also include the current sector-wide ask for support in the city's [FY23 budget: CultureVIBE NYC \(Fund Culture: a Visionary Investment in Building the Economy of NYC\)](#) We need to work toward a city with services, culture, arts, education, and safety for every New Yorker in every neighborhood, and culture is key to that vision.



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212-967-0322 | [www.unhny.org](http://www.unhny.org)

**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council Committees on Youth Services  
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Oversight: DYCD Community Center Programming  
Beacon, Cornerstone, and Saturday Night Lights  
Submitted by Dante Bravo, Youth Policy Analyst  
April 25, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dante Bravo, and I am the Youth Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 45 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

Young people across New York City depend on settlement house youth programming and other community centers as lifelines to grow into healthy, successful young adults as well as connect their families to other essential supports beyond after-school. Community centers complement school-based programming like COMPASS and SONYC sites. Sites like Cornerstones in particular—which are open to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) community members of all ages—support intergenerational bonding and community development, helping to weave social services into all areas of a young person's life.

A healthy youth services ecosystem that meets the needs of all youth requires both school-based and community-based programming. Recent emphasis on academic programming -

like Summer Rising - has left community based programming out of the conversation, despite this programming being directly connected to local communities across New York City.

Community center sites like Cornerstones, Beacons, and Saturday Night Lights programming allow Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to create programming that centers the needs of the local community. Whereas school-based youth programming may have an emphasis on academic remediation, community center programming allows young people an intentional space to develop holistically within a supportive community in an assets-based program framework rather than within a deficit model that does not recognize the skills, knowledge, and multiple intelligences our young people already possess. Community center programming is a critical resource that can empower and nurture the inherent talents of New York City's young people, all within the safety of their local communities, and Settlement Houses have been doing this work for over a century.

In short, community center programming is one of the few places where CBOs have full autonomy to do what they do best: positive youth and community development.

UNH testifies today to affirm the importance of community center programs, lift up challenges faced by the providers running those program contracts, and makes the following recommendations for Summer 2022 and beyond:

- Set realistic enrollment targets for all youth contracts, especially Beacons; and
- Revisit funding formulas for Cornerstone programming to ensure budgets are sufficient to cover: Full staffing—especially in summer months when providers offer extended hours; dignified wages for staff to improve recruitment and retention of high-quality candidates; and infrastructural challenges that are a major obstacle in NYCHA sites.

### **Beacon Programs**

Beacon programs are school-based community centers that serve community members as young as six years old, and some contracts include specific provisions for adult education and family support services. Because Beacon programs operate chiefly when school is not in session (holidays, weekends, after-school hours, and more), summer enrollment is especially critical in meeting larger enrollment targets for the entire school year.

Complicating matters, DYCD has announced to providers that they need at least 1,200 participants this calendar year to continue their contracts. While in theory this metric is achievable, DYCD has also capped summer enrollment, limiting the number of young people providers can enroll during their highest-volume months. These DYCD regulations create an unwinnable condition for providers, who are being asked to serve young people in nine months with limited hours that would normally take a full calendar year to do.

UNH recommends that—in addition to higher cost-per-participant rates and added support with staffing—the City looks into the formulas that dictate enrollment targets to come up with a more realistic enrollment target that reflects the reality of delivering services, as well as allow

providers to set summer enrollment slots as they see fit to serve their local communities. Settlement houses have been doing positive youth and community development work for decades, and it is only in collaboration with our CBOs that the City will be able to deliver the quality programming our young people deserve.

### **Cornerstone Programs**

The Cornerstone model was developed with input from United Neighborhood Houses and our settlement house members and is aligned with the settlement house model. Cornerstones are based in NYCHA community centers and—like settlement houses—offer integrated, holistic social services to community members of all ages. For school-aged youth, during the academic year, Cornerstones provide after school programming and tutoring/academic services, and over the summer, they act as safe sites within NYCHA communities where young people can go to engage in youth development-driven activities. Cornerstones were first launched in 2010, and over the last decade have expanded to 99 total contracts across all five boroughs, with 49 of those contracts being held by UNH's settlement house members.

While providers do amazing work in their Cornerstone sites, the model itself is under-funded, causing considerable stress and creating unnecessary challenges for the nonprofit staff who are tasked with their operation. In order to prepare for this hearing, UNH convened fifteen staff members representing eight of our settlement house members with Cornerstone contracts. The feedback we heard from those gathered was disheartening but illuminating, indicating several areas of focus where Cornerstone contracts could be improved to benefit the young people and communities that rely on them:

- **The funding formula:** Providers report that the funding formula for Cornerstone's is complex and difficult to understand. Cornerstones are funded based on a calculation that takes into account their physical size, operations, and the number of people served throughout the year. For the providers in UNH's network, the total funding they receive does not cover the costs of staffing or running effective programming;
- **Infrastructural challenges and partnership with NYCHA:** NYCHA developments have faced severe under-funding for the last half-century, leading to modern conditions of dilapidation and disrepair. Community centers are not exempt from these challenges, and providers struggle to get NYCHA to respond quickly to repair needs within their centers, from leaks that could cause mold, peeling paint that could lead to lead exposure, and HVAC issues that result in high temperatures when the AC shuts off in the summer months; and
- **Stigmatization and the experience of "safety":** Communities of color—and NYCHA communities in particular—have been severely impacted by stigma and narratives of escalating violence. These narratives have reached a fever-pitch in recent months, resulting in a perception that NYCHA communities are profoundly unsafe. This perception that NYCHA communities are inherently violent has led to hiring challenges for Cornerstone providers, who struggle to recruit staff who are comfortable working the late hours that Cornerstones operate.

### *Cornerstone Funding*

Of the eight Cornerstone providers who participated in UNH's recent focus group, 100% reported losing money on their Cornerstone contracts. At best, Cornerstone funding covers their staffing—but only if providers are able to find staff to work for minimum- or near-minimum-wage. In reality, in the current job market, and based on the knowledge, skills, and expertise required of Cornerstone staff, wages should be set at a minimum of \$21 per hour for frontline staff, with more significant investments for those who manage staff, direct programs, and set curricula. In addition to raising wages, staffing levels over the summer need to be increased so that providers are not forced to work their Cornerstone staff overtime, resulting in increased expenses and burnout. The reality is that contract budgets do not cover these basic needs, forcing providers to choose between over-working and under-paying their staff, or moving independently-raised funds—which many providers do not have—into these programs to meet the bare minimum staffing levels and wages required.

This is before providers account for other than personnel services (OTPS). OTPS pays for activities, trips, partnerships, and services, and without sufficient funding for OTPS, Cornerstones become, in the words of one frustrated provider, “Glorified babysitting for teens.” There is a tremendous opportunity cost to under-funding OTPS in Cornerstone contracts, because when young people decide to enter their local community center, if they have a negative experience or leave bored, they are unlikely to return and try again. Programs like Cornerstones that rely on foot traffic and community building need sufficient budgets to attract youth in and keep them engaged. While some larger, more-established providers have been able to make in-kind contributions to their Cornerstone contracts to offer compelling and engaging programming through the summer months, this is an unsustainable solution that locks smaller providers with less fundraising capabilities out of the program.

Cornerstone providers are experts in youth development, yet their passion for program design and summer activities is severely limited by the amount of money the City is willing to invest in these contracts. Luckily, we have the people in place on the ground to make a change, all it would take from the City is to add sufficient money to their budgets to make that change possible. Fundamentally, the City should not be issuing contracts to nonprofits where the funding is insufficient to cover basic staffing needs and activities, and with programs as important as Cornerstones, budgets should never be the barrier that holds them back from success.

**Recommendation:** There must be a stakeholder-driven redesign of the funding formula for Cornerstones based on a model budget that covers: Full staffing, especially in the summer months when extended hours are important resources for the local community; competitive wages for Cornerstone staff that account for the knowledge, skills and expertise required to operate effective youth development programming; and an engaging, youth-development-informed

catalog of year-round programming to attract young people and community members into the centers so that they achieve their stated aim.

### *Infrastructural Challenges and Partnership with NYCHA*

Operating programming out of NYCHA-based spaces comes with a unique set of challenges and frustrations. NYCHA has, for the past half-century, been defunded at the City, State, and Federal levels, resulting in modern conditions that are nothing short of deplorable. The same issues with mold, lead, vermin, and crumbling infrastructure that NYCHA residents face in their apartments plague NYCHA community center sites, and those challenges make it difficult to run effective programming. Furthermore, as NYCHA's operations staff have become increasingly bogged down with a never-ending list of repair and maintenance requests, community center sites have been deprioritized. For providers, this has meant turnaround times of one to three months for even the most basic repairs.

A long turnaround time for repairs has several collateral consequences: Immediately, it makes program sites unattractive for community members, making them less likely to attend walk-in programming like Cornerstones and making it difficult to recruit staff. Secondly, it exposes providers to financial risk, as they are frequently cited by City inspectors from Department of Buildings (DOB), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), of the Fire Department (FDNY) for health and/or infrastructural infractions that they are not technically responsible for repairing. Given the secondary risk of fines or citations for infractions that have gone without repairs, many providers are faced with a difficult choice: Wait for NYCHA to fulfill their responsibility and make the repairs, direct dollars from their already-tapped budgets to make the repairs themselves, or simply close programming until NYCHA can make the necessary repairs to bring the spaces up to code.

To be clear: UNH and our members believe that NYCHA *should* prioritize the health and safety needs of NYCHA residents who are forced to live in deplorable conditions day-in and day-out. For this reason, we are not asking to be elevated on NYCHA's priority list and have our repairs made first. Rather, we are asking the City to acknowledge the current situation, ratify and document it, and compensate providers who are taking on additional maintenance tasks at their NYCHA sites. NYCHA, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) have been engaged in talks for several years around developing an official division of roles and responsibilities that allows providers the agency to make basic repairs as they pop up and fund them accordingly, but those talks have stalled out time and again.

**Recommendation:** Resume and finalize talks between NYCHA, DYCD, and OMB to identify which basic maintenance/repair tasks providers can reasonably take on, and fund them to manage those tasks, freeing NYCHA up to focus on repair needs in residential apartments and allowing providers to bypass NYCHA's untenable wait times for repairs. Ratify this division of

responsibilities, and modify budgets to ensure providers are not forced to divert scarce resources from programming to cover basic maintenance.

### *Stigma and “Safety”*

One of the most complex issues Cornerstone providers touched upon was the negative stigma associated with NYCHA communities, and staff concerns that working late hours in NYCHA-based programs exposes them to potential risk. All policy is impacted by our country’s insidious history of white supremacy and anti-Blackness, but perhaps one of the areas in which systemic racism is most apparent is in the history of public housing and programming for public housing residents. NYCHA has faced federal divestment for the last half-century, concurrent with the moment public housing developments de-segregated and began offering leases to Black Americans.<sup>1</sup> Narratives of crime and violence have been used to justify starving public housing residents of resources—including the basic resource of dignified housing free of disrepair.

In 2022, there is no excuse for allowing those narratives to perpetuate further divestment.

Cornerstones are unique among the City’s current contracting portfolio in that they are intentionally geographically-based, rather than population-based. Cornerstones are intended to serve residents of particular NYCHA communities regardless of age, background, or need. If funded at the appropriate levels, and if given the necessary resources to address their infrastructural challenges, Cornerstones could help to *curb* this negative stigma through the community development and youth development they are designed to offer. Cornerstones, at their best, act as hubs: creating opportunities for community members to collectively support each other while offering programming that meets their needs. However, this model relies on something public housing residents have gone without for too long: investment.

In the short-term, the solution to stigma over the ostensible safety of these communities boil down to a very simple answer: fund these programs and the staff who run them. Financial, human, and resource investment in the Cornerstones’ program model—paired with investments in the physical infrastructure to make long-needed repairs—would start the long process of community revitalization and reinvestment.

In the long-term, the solution is much more complex, as it will require intensive, thoughtful, dedicated work on the ground to bring folks together and create spaces for them to experience alternative modalities. But the latter portion of that work cannot and should not be done top-down. Cornerstones *are* the infrastructure that is necessary to make grassroots community change happen, and by starving them of resources, the City is missing a critical opportunity to break from tradition and begin a legacy of restoration starting with New York City’s most

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on this, consult *The Color of the Law: a Forgotten History of How Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein (2017); UNH can also make more academic, historic, and policy resources available to City Council upon request by emailing [dbravo@unhny.org](mailto:dbravo@unhny.org).

systemically divested residents: low income communities of color who call NYCHA buildings their homes. By investing in communities, the City recognizes the inherent strengths of our NYCHA residents, and can push back against painful racist histories. As a City, we have attempted to imagine more proactive approaches to public safety, and—when fully-funded—Cornerstones provide a clear opening to model that vision. Over-reliance on reactive public safety measures aids in the further entrenchment of stigma and racialized fear.

Investment in the Cornerstones model includes supporting and developing natural leaders within communities, which becomes a positive ecosystem that feeds back into itself. For example, finding staff for Cornerstones from within the development itself can and should be a priority for Cornerstone operators, as those individuals are more likely to understand the dynamics within the community, effectively navigate them, and help to address any challenges that arrive. In order to do so, current Cornerstone providers will need support, partnerships, higher salaries to pay these staffers and opportunities to experiment as well as access to professional development/training funds for all Cornerstone staff. What is more, Cornerstone funding models need to shift, as explained earlier, in order to allow nonprofits of all sizes—and not just those with access to in-kind resources they can dedicate to subsidize inadequate City funds—to participate and get engaged.

**Recommendation:** Embrace Cornerstones as sites for grassroots, community organizing and youth development in order to help curb racist narratives regarding young people and adults living in NYCHA communities. Fund providers to build community power, and support providers to more effectively recruit staff from local NYCHA communities for Cornerstones while offering training and professional development to allow Cornerstone jobs to serve as launching pads for career paths in community service and organizing, and allow providers the creativity and flexibility they need to proactively address community needs, turning the curb on decades of divestment and allowing NYCHA communities to flourish.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today. For more information, or to answer any additional questions, you can reach me at [dbravo@unhny.org](mailto:dbravo@unhny.org).



**YouthBuild NYC Collaborative -- 206 East 118 Street, New York, NY 10035**

April 19, 2022

The Hon. Adrienne Adams, Speaker of the New York City Council  
Eisha Wright, Division of Finance, NY City Council  
Michele Peregrin, Division of Finance, NY City Council

**RE: Proposed allocation for the Speaker's Citywide Initiative for YouthBuild from Discretionary Funds in FY2023 -- \$3.2 million**

+++++

The YouthBuild NYC Collaborative advocates for youth services focused for the NYC youth population aged 16-24, who are out of work and out of school, the Opportunity Youth. Currently eight (8) experienced nonprofit organizations -- members of the Collaborative -- operate YouthBuild programs in the five boroughs of New York City, each one funded creatively by a combination of federal, State, City and private sources.

These program operators are strong agencies: Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, New Settlement, SoBro, Antioch Community Services, Youth Action YouthBuild, Central Family Life Center, The Hope Program, and Queens Community House. Each of these institutions has taken up the awesome challenge of turning around the lives of young people that really need that second chance, through a methodology that includes training, education, counseling, community service, follow-up services, respect, inclusion, and yes, love.

Ten percent of our city's population is in the 18-24 age slot, and one in six of them are out of school and out-of-work... that is the population we address directly. They are often labeled Opportunity Youth, because the upside of their transformation to success is so beneficial to our society; so right, and so deserved.

Building off their vision and energy, much good can be accomplished. Through YouthBuild over the past four decades and across the country, over 200,000 Opportunity Youth have transformed their lives, they have constructed or rehabbed 40,000 units of low-income housing, they have contributed millions of hours of service to their communities, and so many have taken on leadership positions in their cities, towns, and neighborhoods. New York City is the historical center of YouthBuild, but our message and impact has, in effect, gone viral. The original YouthBuild program launched in East Harlem in 1979, and soon spread around the City, picked up as a model program by the NYC Department of Employment as part of the CityWorks initiative. By the early 1990s YouthBuild went national, first as a HUD program, and later (in 2007) at the US Department of Labor, where it remains today, with federal YouthBuild grants now supporting 160 of the 240 YouthBuild programs across the USA. Currently, 8,000

Opportunity Youth sign up for YouthBuild each year in 44 states. And since 2000, YouthBuild programs have sprung up in as many as 23 other countries, opening doors to thousands of marginalized youth seeking paths to productive careers, positive relationships, basic security, dignity, success.

This is an historic moment for the Council, a chance to:

- Reverse the forced retrenchment and fear of the crushing pandemic and help ease the lingering shocks.
- Build on the new spirit in Washington DC, made evident last year in the historic enactments of the American Relief Act (ARPA) that injected welcome fuel into the economy and expanded the City budget directly by about \$6 billion dollars, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, with its trillion dollar investment in our nation's transportation infrastructure, broadband access, electrification for cars, etc. Government is not the only answer, but so often we need our public officials to show us the way, open the paths to urgently needed change, and Washington has demonstrated important leadership on that front..
- Enlist youth who have been relegated to the margins into the rebuilding of their own lives, and invite them to become agents of needed change for our city, this year and heading into the future.

We agree with the Council's goal as published in the Apr 1, 2022 *Preliminary Budget Response*: "It is important to invest in the City's human capital infrastructure. Now more than ever post-pandemic workers who have shouldered job losses and struggled with employment during the economic downturn need the City's investment. The Council calls upon the Administration to expand the network of Workforce1 Career Centers and include additional training programs that provide workers with the skills to stay competitive in a global marketplace." (pg 12)

And how much more so in regards to youth, 16-24, who are struggling to get on course to careers and yet find themselves shunted away and frustrated. This is the time to open doors and real options to more and more of the Opportunity Youth of New York City. It is no easy task, but experienced agencies are already doing this work, and they must be funded to continue.

The *Preliminary Budget Response* goes on to call for building upon and expanding these existing efforts. "Our City's youth also need programming outside of school that provides work experience and can be used as the first step towards long-term workforce development. The Council calls upon the Administration to continue to build on employment opportunities for our youth through *an expansion of year-round youth employment programs* [emphasis added] that matches the recent expansion of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and expand the Work, Learn, Grow program that strengthens work readiness skills and allows youth to explore career possibilities. (pg 14)

**We stand ready to continue to do our part, and request full and adequate funding for YouthBuild in FY2023. The Speaker of the Council typically has allocated \$2.1 million of Discretionary funds through a Citywide Speaker Initiative each year since 2014, thereby ensuring that no YouthBuild opportunities are lost for lack of funds. In FY2022 we helped transform the lives of 363 youth among the eight NYC sites; with adequate funding, we can do even more in FY2023. To ensure excellent YouthBuild services for a minimum of 588 Opportunity Youth in all five boroughs in FY2023, we respectfully**

**request \$3.2 million in the Speaker's Citywide Initiative for YouthBuild.**

There may be some variables between now and June 30, but in principle \$3.2 million would enable six grants @ \$395K allocated to the programs with no US/DOL/YouthBuild grant; three grants @ \$225K allocated to programs with aging US/DOL/YouthBuild grants (inadequate for a full year of program operations), and \$155K (5% of the total) for the TA grant that is administered by Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc. to ensure citywide excellence and participation.

Thank you for your consideration.



David Calvert  
Citywide Coordinator  
YouthBuild NYC Collaborative  
Email: dcalvert@yayb.org  
Cell: 646-351-2433

cc. Ditashiah Kohn, President, YouthBuild NYC Collaborative  
Robert Taylor, Vice President, YouthBuild NYC Collaborative

## **NEIGHBORHOOD BENCHES approach and our STUDENTS**

As a young boy growing up in the projects was never easy. However, I always expected I would learn what I needed to learn growing up. This is why I appreciated the community centers and afterschool programs. Every day after school I knew I would be able to do something fun. I can remember the times we would have free lunch provided by the Andrew Jackson Center, PS 29 and IS 151. We really had choices. Some of these places even allowed you to stay and chat after eating. Some of these places also opened up the gym for us to play. Much of what I just shared provided the support and cushion to many community leaders that wanted to do something positive in the community. These are also places where we connected with our elders and neighbors.

But over the course of a few years... much of this changed. There are stories that would highlight so much from many of my friends and myself.

I remember there used to be youth tournaments hosted block by block. This allowed us to build relationships with one another and learn what it means to care and be a team player.

I remember coming outside and watching games being played and wanted to learn the game myself. So much bonding and love is shared during these baseball and basketball games.

Over time, everything faded away and those we could trust and appreciate faded away with these changes. I did not learn until later on that the original community center in Andrew Jackson Houses no longer allowed young people to participate in activities or eat lunch and/or grab snacks. These days they are not even reaching out to have the young people join them. This is what contributes to the destruction of community and building of relationships.

See, not too many organizations are going to walk into communities of color and seek out support from the ones in the community without work or entry level skills. Not too many organizations are looking to pay young people to have a discussion on neighborhood benches. Not too many organizations are going to support someone that experienced a loss, such as a job, friend, child, parent or opportunity. Many organizations are not stopping to see who's crying or struggling and ask why. We are not surrounded with these types of people anymore because they are locked down in a number system or just don't really care about building a healthier community.

As a result of this we are experiencing so much violence and poor approaches with educating our youth. This is removing how we empower our young people and remind them of their ability to do better as young leaders. As we witnessed, it got worse over the pandemic.

Gun violence increased over the years, and the pandemic made things no better. As reported last year, shootings increased from 1054 shootings versus the 556 shootings reported last year (September 6, 2020 compared to September 6, 2019). This type of senseless gun violence led to multiple arrests increasing the number of young people involved in the criminal justice system. Neighborhood Benches understands this is nothing new to the South Bronx, and for Andrew Jackson and Melrose Houses... this is a normal lifestyle for many of our young people. The type of behaviors we witnessed are contributing factors in the decisions made among residents to support the younger adults, as well as teens in need. These same behaviors prevent elders from coming out to enjoy the weather, stop experienced adults (credible messengers) from engaging and sharing respectable knowledge that could decrease violence and incarceration among the young people. Our knowledge of this behavior allowed us to experience first-hand how these behaviors increased the fear factors for young people under the ages of 18... and in many cases become what they learn to glorify in order to avoid the

“statistics” and become a “man”. However, we understand the connection between the violence and incarceration. On any given day in New York City, there are approximately 700 16- and 17-year olds held in local jails if not arraigned, prosecuted and sent to juvenile detention centers.

We spent a lot of time identifying the issues that are impacting our community last reporting period. Although we plan to move forward and highlight our solutions, it is important we talk about the recent reports before reminding you of the previous issues reported.

Recent reports are discussing gun violence on a citywide level. The Mayor identified gun violence as an issue and implemented the [Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety](#). The Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP) is a targeted, comprehensive approach to reduce violent crime in and around public housing since 2014. MAP identified 15 public housing developments that comprise almost 20 percent of violent crime and started a pilot.

### **NYCHA / Public Housing Citywide Level:**

— Last year 2020, MAP exerted little apparent effect on minimizing crime.

An examination by THE CITY found:

- Shootings rose at 14 of the 15 MAP sites in 2020. All told, 52 shootings took place at MAP developments, up from 22 the prior year.
- Murders increased at eight of the 15 MAP sites. Overall, killings went from five in 2019 to 16 last year.
- The number of major crimes — including rape, robbery, burglary, felony assault, grand larceny and auto theft — rose from 762 to 829, a hike of 9%, at MAP developments. By comparison, major crime declined by about 1% citywide and increased across the board at NYCHA developments by just over 2%.
- Shootings jumped by 97%, from 769 to 1,518; murders rose by 41% from 317 to 447, according to the NYPD. That marked the highest number of homicides in nearly a decade, with the deaths of a [43-year-old mother](#) shot through her bedroom window and a [1-year-old boy](#) shot at a barbecue in a Brooklyn park shaking many New Yorkers.
- NYCHA fared even worse. Shootings rose by 103%, from 155 to 314, while murders jumped by nearly 50%, from 47 to 70. Both increases exceeded the citywide percentages.

And much of that increase occurred at the city’s 15 MAP sites, including the Red Hook Houses.

### **NYCHA / Public Housing Borough Level:**

- According to the Bronx Task Force "SAFE AT HOME" report, the crime rate in New York City Housing Authority is still a problem:
  1. From 2009 through the end of 2013, New York City saw a 3.3 percent increase in crime while NYCHA saw a 31 percent increase in crime.
  2. Serious crimes in NYCHA developments rose about 2.4 percent from 5,088 in 2015 to 5,211 in 2016, in contrast to a citywide drop of approximately 4 percent.

During 2016 NB identified gun violence as an issue in public housing developments and started working towards systematic changes by using restorative practices and recruiting change agents to improve the community. 2017, November the Safe At Home report was released sending shock waves throughout the Bronx borough.

## NYCHA /Public Housing Neighborhood Level:

1. Daily News during 2012 headlines read: ***Street crews, and how residents' fear grew at Melrose Houses and Andrew Jackson Houses.*** When the feds smashed two drug gangs in Melrose Houses and Andrew Jackson Houses last fall, residents braced for a violent fallout. Now some say their fears are coming true.

2. **DNAinfo:** February, 2016 Two NYPD officers were injured during a confrontation with a gunman who died after shooting himself in the head because he didn't want to go back to prison, police and sources said.

Three uniformed officers were on a vertical patrol inside the Melrose Houses, at 320 E. 156th St., at roughly 8 p.m. when they encountered two men in a sixth-floor stairwell, police said. One of the men, identified by police sources as 23-year-old Malik Chavis (the young man that took his own life).

3. **New York Times:** On a warm Tuesday night in the Bronx, a couple of dozen young people took refuge from their stuffy apartments in a courtyard between two redbrick towers in the Melrose Houses. They laughed, drank and smoked freshly rolled blunts as a speaker pumped out rap music. A few minutes before midnight, a gunshot cracked the air outside 305 East 153rd Street, echoing among the towers of the public housing project. People took cover under the green wooden benches in front of the building. Adrian Maldonado, who dealt drugs on a nearby corner, sprinted away from the battered front door, the police said. He made it across the street before collapsing next to a school playground.

As we review reports of gang violence and raids where young people are placed behind bars, we also acknowledge the lack of leadership, resources and mentors. There are many cases where our young people are caught up in the system and return home violently. There are cases where young people are also guilty and return violent. Knowing this we acknowledge the cycle of violence and incarceration and want to work harder to prevent this from continuing.

Here's an example of how easy it is for our young people to get identified and placed into a system where he or she is forced to adjust, adapt and survive. Recent [news reported](#) highlights of how poor decisions made by the NYPD places young black boys and girls in handcuffs... causing them to adapt to this culture of survival: "The database contains information about 18,000 people whom the department believes are affiliated with gangs based on information about their hand signs, clothing colors, music lyrics and hangout locations gleaned by officers, informants and other agencies. Nearly everyone in it is Black or Latino, and most have not been convicted of a crime, fueling criticism that the database puts young men under criminal suspicion based primarily on their race." However, NB understood the importance for identifying issues that may spin out of control and influence gun violence. Acknowledging this and not wanting to have another situation replicated as the one that took place leading to the [death of Tyshanna Murphy](#) or the arrest of Tylonn Murphy Jr., both from the General Grant Houses in Harlem, NB implemented proactive strategies to bridge the gap between young people and adults that was supported by the local pct.

The [criminalization of social relationships in communities of color](#) have placed many of our students at risk for being rearrested and/or profiled during the pandemic. These are issues raised by Babe Howell, a co-author of the report and a professor at CUNY School of Law who

studies gang policing practices. Knowing this NB had to spring into action during the pandemic to avoid a replication of previous police tactics to criminalize our students.

During these times we noticed that the areas where violent crime, youth arrests and gun violence took place seemed to be left unattended and without resources. This led to Neighborhood Benches acknowledging what was missing and designing solutions to decrease violence. However, realizing the need to reduce violence must be accompanied with healing, support and restorative practices, NB built communities of care in the process. Communities of Care is a way individuals treat one another, care for one another, and nurture one another. In order to design a community of care model, the members of NB worked collaboratively to transform how the neighborhoods they would visit, would promote mental health and self-care in everyday life. Knowing this NB designed initiatives that brought together diverse partners from across sectors and community members to plan and implement activities that address a wide range of community needs related to resilience, mental health, equity, and wellbeing. As the strategy proved to work NB continued.

One strategy that continuously proved to work is when Founder William M. Evans would remind the team of the importance of being inclusive and diversified when creating teams of leaders (acknowledged today as credible messengers). William would regularly return to the neighborhoods where he contributed harm and pilot projects, identify credible messengers and bring them into the work using shadowing tactics and uniquely designed training.

It is the intentional design of Neighborhood Benches, Inc. to enter NYCHA developments, neighborhoods, and communities that are the most difficult to engage while engaging the toughest to reach individuals around community needs and good leadership practices. Our work strengthens both at-risk youth and formerly incarcerated members of the community as credible messengers, navigating them through the system of training focused on credible messenger mentors, credible messenger supervising and program development. Part of our design for further developing our students from mentors into leaders is grounded in the stages (1,2,3). When moving onto the various stages we provide ongoing practicing opportunities like our "shadowing-style practice" and project-based learning which allows the students to put skills into practice. This intentional design highlights how the power of service, community engagement, and inspiring our youth can not only help turn the tide, but also continue to inspire credible messengers to serve their community in a positive way.

A key aim of Neighborhood Benches Initiatives are to reduce early exposure to violence and incarceration whenever possible and to utilize appropriate neighborhood interventions to mitigate the impact of the two. The solutions we offer are roadmaps for directly impacted people to practice modeled changed behaviors that build community, and tools that strengthen young people seeking to make a change in life..

We identified three areas in which we needed to focus on if we wanted to change the impact of the poor choices made by young people causing them to become victims of the criminal justice system and/or victims to violence. We promoted the importance of:

1. **COMMUNITY OF CARE/COMMUNITY-BUILDING INCUBATOR:** Planting the seed that will influence a restorative design that will connect trusting people willing to design safe spaces to live, thrive and grow.
2. **CM MENTORS:** Identifying and training individuals from the neighborhood seeking to be a change agent (e.g. neighborhood leader, mentor, credible messenger).

3. **RESTORATIVE PRACTITIONERS:** Designing a training to strengthen the students ability to articulate needs, challenges and practices to restore community values while addressing and repair harms.

Neighborhood Benches educate people on leadership and good practices that break cycles of youth violence and incarceration, making it easier to focus on leadership roles, educational studies, and next steps. Neighborhood Benches achieves this mission by engaging some of the hardest-to-reach people from underrepresented communities, and by implementing initiatives that teach young people to act as leaders for finding solutions and implementing them. The process and solutions are roadmaps for directly impacted people to model changed behaviors and for building community with both resident leaders and the next generation of leaders organizing for change.

The most important part of this work is the appreciation for what we are doing in communities. NB is breaking the cycle of youth violence and incarceration of black boys and men by creating leadership and educational models for them to change behaviors, build community, and organize for positive change.

Since the launch of our first pilot in the Andrew Jackson houses, we have launched another pilot in Morrisania Air Rights, followed by programs in Pelham Houses, Fort Independence, Gun Hill, Parkside, Edenwald, Melrose, Grant, Butler, Webster, and even asked to partner with schools and universities for projects and curriculum designing. Such schools like Monroe HS where the young man Brandon Hendricks attended, we facilitated programs there. We also designed programs and curricula with other schools such as Lehman College, Fordham University, Columbia University, Claremont McKenna, Greensboro, and so many more. The idea when working with these schools is to bridge the gap between the projects and higher education. It is also designed with a two-pronged approach in mind for the college students. One is to strengthen vocabulary and knowledge of community, specifically project kids and families as we break down improper and misused stigmas that separate people from the projects from the larger community. Their other part is to strengthen the knowledge gained outside of the classroom. understanding of students enrolling into these degree programs.

As we know, there is a movement in liberal arts education to develop experiential learning opportunities for students who traditionally learn exclusively in the classroom. Experiential learning has been a popular pedagogical approach in liberal arts education since the 1990s (Venema, Meerman, & Hossink, 2015). Research has shown that learning by doing has been an effective tool (Gibbons & Gray, 2002; Goldstein, 2001; Huerta-Wong & Schoech, 2010; Kolb, 1984). Our approach focused on Urban leadership, as we learned over time that it is an important part of social justice work (Iachini, Cross, & Freedman, 2015), community building and credible messengering. We learned our strategies to be more effective when we were approached by the Chair of Social Work from Lehman College. Through the new relationship we highlighted the issues within public housing and reviewed the Bronx Public Housing TaskForce report (2017). NB focuses on the larger community, but we also have a specific focus that is exclusively on issues directly affecting public housing and experiential learning. The collaboration of a university-community partnership has consistently been effective in developing leadership, promoting social change and justice, and merging theory with practice. (Bordlein, 2018; Katz, Serbinski, Mishna, 2017; Moxley, Feen-Calligan, & Washington, 2012; Stahl & Shdaimah, 2008).

I remember the Social Work Chair wrote a proposal to the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG) for the June 5-8, 2019 symposium: *“Using a group work perspective, the two-hour per week class was developed into a group with the focus of developing leadership skills. The CEO of the non-profit often joined the classroom group and introduced issues regarding urban housing and homelessness. As time passed, the students often added their own life experiences where homelessness, inadequate housing, and growing up in public housing were true personal experiences.*

*At the non-profit agency which met on Saturday morning and is located in public housing, the students were assigned to groups, each group composed of five students. After an orientation to the public housing complex, interactions with the tenant association, and meeting with groups of young residents as well as older adults, each student group was asked to develop a project, similar to a capstone project, that would positively impact the residents of public housing. The faculty person at the college frequently was present on Saturday and assisted the students in developing their projects.*

*Examples of the student capstone projects include meeting with City Council members; developing community art projects; organizing sports competitions for young residents of the projects; and taking public housing adolescents to the college campus to meet with students, faculty, and staff for the purpose of introducing college as a realist option for the adolescents. Group work is frequently the method of choice in promoting student learning both in the classroom and the community ( Knight, 2018; Maidenment & Brook, 2014; Postlethwait, 2016.)*

*The class was a great success. Student evaluations were uniformly excellent with students saying that they learned much about urban housing, but more importantly how to be leaders in social justice. Furthermore many of the students wrote of their growing self-confidence and that the group work structure helped them believe in themselves and their capacity to change.*

*The interactions and mutual support between the faculty member and the CEO not only brought the college and the agency closer together but served as a model of cooperation for the students. The course has been replicated with similar results.”*

This was titled: Using Groups in College-Agency Partnerships to Develop Experiential Learning Opportunities for Non-Social Work Students. This is one of our current programs: Neighborhood Teaching Practicum for Developing Mentors (NSTP-DM). The NSTP for Mentorship Development projects provide the opportunity to pull together collective experiences in urban community service and develop a unified approach to urban problems. NSTP-DM connects urban leadership, experiential learning and credible messenger mentors to further develop young social impact leaders and transform development spaces into social innovation hubs.

What makes our work so unique and important is how we are still following the model of the Founder & President.

### **History of the Founder & President William M. Evans:**

William lived through traumatic experiences, much of which led him into a career of leadership building. After 20 years of combined experience as an Alternative to Incarceration Counselor, supervising a team of Discharge Planners on Rikers Island and mentoring young people, he resigned from his job with Discharge Planning to launch Neighborhood Benches and locate other leaders willing to find solutions for improving communities of color across



New York City. In conjunction with this plan, William joined other advocates across NYC fighting to protect the public and improve the criminal justice system. With the support of advocacy groups and leaders he returned to his childhood neighborhood in the South Bronx to launch the first NB's Leadership pilot.

Understanding the culture of his "hood", William could easily identify individuals that contributed to the destruction of a community or steered others in the wrong direction. These people looked up to him. William believed that by returning with a specific plan to recruit individuals in the "hood", helping them understand the need for change, as well as the role they could play in inspiring others to follow them in finding and implementing solutions, great changes would come. He knew these extraordinary individuals had a tremendous impact on how youth live today, on how their society functions, and on what values young people hold. They were the leaders who "made a difference," and he wanted to recruit them to create long-lasting changes that improved the quality of life in some way. William figured a good strategy would be an effective alignment between benches in the courts and benches in the "hood", focusing on systematic changes. This strategy would start by assessing what courts do, and what society needs courts to do, while simultaneously addressing gang behaviors on neighborhood benches.

**OUR PROGRAMS:** Our programs are place-based initiatives that are designed using neighborhood and school partnerships. Our students obtain experiences in experiential learning (school) and project-based learning (neighborhood), a design mentors appreciate and learn from. This partnership model expands our current mentoring model, and strengthens our innovative ways of demonstrating how our impact on students makes it easier for them to focus on leadership roles, educational studies, and next steps.

**NEIGHBORHOOD BENCHES, Inc.**  
**Neighborhood-Schooling Teaching Practicum**  
***for Developing Mentors (NSTP-DM) &***  
***NYCHA PROGRAMS & PHD STORYTELLING PROJECT***

Neighborhood Benches decided to be the first organization to navigate Restorative Practices and Credible Messengers to develop mentoring practices that reflect the community's big brother big sister. This is done by providing adult students with a practicum approach opportunity - Student-Centered Learning and Shadowing-Style Learning experience. NB understood, although the work with young students is important, it is also critical to not discount adult learners. The adult learners are credible messengers and restorative justice practitioners who are willing to transform the lifestyle of young people. These are the unsung heroes that were working with young people trying to reduce violence and prevent recidivism, with little knowledge of grassroots level work used to improve the neighborhood, and members of NB took note of this as the organization developed programs. Our Student-Centered Learning and Shadowing-Style learning requires additional support from CBO's and groups as a part of transitioning into the work.

**NEIGHBORHOOD BENCHES, Inc.**  
**Neighborhood-Schooling Teaching Practicum (NSTP)**  
*for Mentorship Development*

An expansion of the current mentoring initiative.  
Our innovative way for demonstrating impact makes it easier for our students to  
focus on leadership roles, educational studies, and next steps.



The **NSTP for Mentorship Development** projects provide the opportunity to pull together collective experiences in urban community service and develop a unified approach to urban problems.

NSTP-DM connects urban leadership, experiential learning and credible messenger mentors to further develop young social impact leaders and transform development spaces into social innovation hubs.



**NEIGHBORHOOD BENCHES, Inc.**  
*Building Leaders at Three Levels*  
Strategic Urban Leadership Development

## PHD STORYTELLING PROJECT



### PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STORYTELLING PROJECT

Neighborhood Benches (NB) is a grassroots organization devoted to educating young people from communities of color on leadership and good practices that break cycles of youth incarceration and violence. NB is designed to enter communities that are difficult to engage, and overlooked. Our model further develops leaders and practitioners while driving down violence and incarceration.

The **PhD Storytelling Project** is a specialized 10 month project (Started - March, 2021) that helps NB gather experiences from impacted people of violence and how it has impacted their relationships with their peers, community and family. There are 160 students participating in this project from Manhattan and The Bronx. In partnership with Common Justice, the project will help to better inform our practice, develop mentors and restorative practitioners.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:** Students will focus on personal experiences related to negative behaviors and the transition made based on the traumatic experiences. Students will be present through zoom to analyze the data based on the areas violence may have made an impact as it relates to employment, education, family and/or community. The data should be used to make recommendations for programming. In addition students should be familiar with program planning, logic models, and policy strategies.

The project will support Neighborhood Benches with gathering information needed to develop leaders, tools and educational models that will end youth violence and incarceration.

## Adult Outreach & Programming:

### PHD STORYTELLING PROJECT



#### PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STORYTELLING PROJECT

The **PhD Storytelling Project** is a specialized 12 month project that “plants the seed” for systematic changes. Through this project NB gathers information of lived experiences from systems impacted people to make recommendations and design curriculum that improves the behavior of people and the community. Simultaneously, the project helps to improve relationships between young people, adults, the family, and community.

#### Annual Target & Cost

##### Students

Adults: 30 (15 / 15) @ \$125 x 2 = \$7,500

Youths: 150 (75 / 75) @ \$50 x 2 = \$7,500

##### Circle Keeper Facilitators

4 facilitators @ \$35hr

Each facilitator @ 6 hrs per wk

12 Month Total: \$10,080 x 4 = \$40,320

##### Annual Project Cost:

Students: \$15,000.00

Personal: \$40,320.00

Rent: \$25,200.00

Project Total: \$80,520.00 (\$40,260 x 2)

Over the course of 12 months NB gathers 15 adults for cohort 1 (February) followed by another 15 for cohort 2 (July). Each adult is charged with locating and enrolling 5 young people to participate in the Phd Storytelling Project. This project aims to gather information on the students' lived experiences and strategies to improve community relationships. In partnership with Universities and CBO's the students will be connected to the support needed to sustain

positive changes and increase their knowledge for best practices, mentees and mentor relationships, and restorative justice.

Recommendations are made to:

1. The Institute for Transformative Mentoring (Credible Messenger Training)
2. Prison ReEntry Institute (Collective Leadership Supervisor Training)
3. Co-Learning Restorative Practices (Participatory Action Research)
4. Leaders Leadership League (Understanding Community Building)

This practice and guidance provides the opportunity for NB students to stand as a leader and carry the torch back to their neighborhood as they're building with the larger community. Our overall goal focuses on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 16, and 17. For those seeking the opportunity to practice how to model changed behaviors and practice self-worth, values, as well as what they're learning in school through programs and other forms of education before or while in the professional field, NB align this area of practice with SDG 8 for the purpose of reducing inequalities in underrepresented communities. These tools of best-practices through structured learning environments and supporters increases the likelihood of employment opportunities in the Directors and Executive Directors roles.

This learning opportunity provides both youth and adult students with the opportunity to learn directly from NB team members and the community folks with the experiences needed to develop solutions, which highly outweigh systematic talk of high hopes and false assumptions for community change. NB acknowledge by creating a good relationship with the community many have counted out long ago, students are gaining knowledge from those who are displaced, abandoned, forgotten, but also skilled and knowledgeable in the various areas of systematic and internalized oppression. NB knows these are what drive incarceration and violence.

Our programs develop criminal justice experienced people from mentors to neighborhood leaders with the drive to increase their presence internationally, allowing them access to policies and practices that help sustain positive community changes while continuing to develop their profession and our philosophy.





## NYCHA PROGRAMS

### **Program Description: \$30,000**

#### **Solution 1: Neighborhood Level**

Need: Neighborhood Leadership Program

The Neighborhood Level solution will provide 160 students from NYCHA developments between the ages of 12-17 with a 12 week training around the work being done by Neighborhood Relation Services to end youth violence and incarceration throughout public housing property. Students will earn a stipend of up to \$187.50, organizing and advocacy training, and be connected to the #NeverBeCaged campaign. Our project-based learning opportunities will prepare students to design projects and learn the fundamentals of grant writing.

### **Program Description: \$50,000**

#### **Solution 2: Community Level**

Need: Neighborhood Relations Services Initiative

The NRS program will challenge students to reach their full potential by learning to navigate community challenges and improving their decision making skills. Each student will learn

through activities and experiences that help to develop social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies. Our activities include:

- Community Familiarity and Awareness Workshop
- Identity Awareness Group
- Leadership Identity Development Workshop
- Causes and Issue Impact
- LID Motivational Speakers
- Community Service Workshop
- Restorative Justice Group
- Educational Importance Group Sessions

The 6 month cohort-based initiative is offered to 100 NYCHA residents between the ages of 18-24. This initiative assists students with youth development & youth leadership by incorporating the practice of leadership roles between the NRS students and summer youth program participants. Young adults will be prepared to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood while learning to design the intersections of neighborhood leadership and resident association responsibilities, as well as design collaborative actions around issues impacting the residence. This initiative will increase the presence of directly impacted people trained as neighborhood leaders in the resident association.

**Program Description: \$80,000**

**Solution 3: Citywide Level**

Need: Apprenticeship Program

Neighborhood Benches offers an opportunity for 45 individuals to join the 10 month apprenticeship program. This is a competitive application process for participants from partner organizations working within these areas:

1. Public Housing - 16 people
2. College - 7 people
3. Summer Program - 15 people
4. Courts - 7 people

The selected 45 students will be a part of a project-based learning strategy to adopt-a-project that will assist with rebuilding the community by modeling changed behaviors. Through this project we're expecting each student to acknowledge and understand the concept to never be caged. This apprenticeship group will be assigned specific key roles which will require them to shadow the team. These roles will include personal, professional and leadership development, as well as expectations to participate in focus groups, conferences, food distribution, and curricular development.

As part of our citywide approach we will use this strategy to increase our presence in a selected number of neighborhoods. This will happen by developing and supporting groups in public housing developments, as well as colleges using project-based learning, grant search, and program development. By each group using best practices and adopting a project (public housing space) and taking seriously "what works", we will increase their presence and purpose.

With the support of our Neighborhood Relations Service each apprentice will conduct 8 brainstorming sessions as a way to finalize plans for the adopt-a-project launch. The developing of tools are not limited to suggested books (e.g. Spaces, etc.) that will highlight the various ways to utilize public spaces. By the end of the program the apprentices will have the tools and

knowledge to launch a project of their own focused on organizing or advocating against violence and/or incarceration through a lense of their own. These projects will launch as pilots at the selected sites.

Application Opens: January 20th.

Application deadline: February 10h.

Applicant notified of acceptance by: February 15th.

Program start date: February 22nd.

Program end date: August 27th.

This program will operate two cohorts of 40 (Harlem and the Bronx). The entire program will operate over the course of 9 months, promotion, interviews, program and student project evaluation. The program will be using Neighborhood Benches Theory of Change.

**Cohort 1:** The first cohort will run from February 10, 2020 to April 24, 2020 with an evaluation period ending on May 4, 2020. The 20 students will be responsible for the development, implementation and marketing of their program. Each program or project will receive a 6 month support period.

**Cohort 2:** The first cohort will run from May 26, 2020 to August 7, 2020 with an evaluation period ending in September, 2020 . The 20 students will be responsible for the development, implementation and marketing of their program. Each program or project will receive a 6 month support period.

#### **Readings:**

Neighborhood Benches Mentoring Guide

Neighborhood Benches Dialogue Guide

Transformative Mentoring (Trauma Informed-Care & Healing)

Safe Places, Active Spaces: Neighborhood Activation Guide

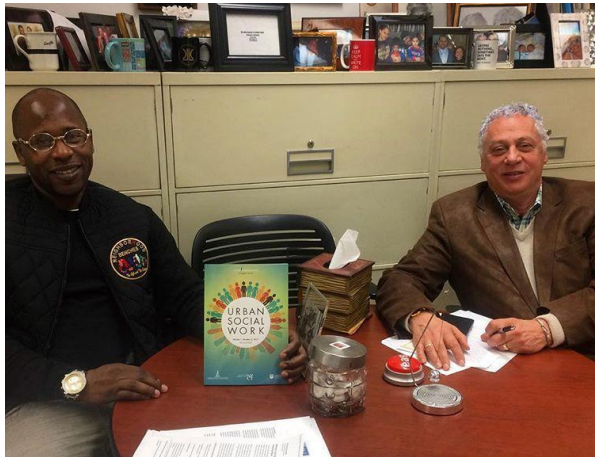
#### **Suggested Readings:**

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry & Jean Greaves

Law of Attraction by Michael J. Loiser

Neighborhood Benches is a special designed organization to enter communities where people are hardest to reach. Our strategy to gather individuals with the skills to transform lives are one of a kind and one that we pride ourselves on. With the help of the Pinkerton Foundation NB will provide services to 200 young people over the course of 12 months utilizing our 10 month program and 2 cohort approach.

NB never been fully funded and our programs continue to have a huge impact on the community. As a result we are learning more and taking lessons from our challenges. We are also getting recognized by elected officials, schools, organizations and community members outside of our coverage area.



Neighborhood-School Teaching Practicum for Developing Mentors: Neighborhood and school partnerships to locate, recruit, train and employ mentors as credible messengers.