



ZONE 126 PROGRESS REPORT: WINTER/SPRING 2014



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The zip codes of 11101, 11102, and 11106 of Astoria and Long Island City are each anchored by a NYCHA public housing development: Astoria Houses, Ravenswood Houses, and Queensbridge Houses. More than 20,000 families in this area are living in concentrated pockets of poverty. Over 8,000 are students. Our children are living in generational poverty facing multiple environmental, social, and physical barriers to academic success. These children attend ten Pre-K-12th grade schools, lacking the necessary resources to combat these barriers.

As stated in the Stanford Social Innovative Review, "Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, not the isolated intervention of individual organizations." This framework is called Collective Impact. "Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different. Unlike most collaboration, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants."

The concept of a centralized structure with a dedicated staff is realized through what is called a backbone organization. Zone 126 is the backbone organization, coordinating and evaluating a cross-sector effort with community organizations, public agencies, and private supporters to provide the necessary programs at the ten Zone schools. These programs encompass academic support, enrichment, health, nutrition, parent education, and youth development. We are coordinating improvements at every stage of a child's life, from cradle to career.

As Collective Impact work is complex in nature, involving multiple activities, programs, and initiatives, Zone 126 designed a Theory of Change that functions as a roadmap, outlining how each isolated intervention works together to yield large-scale social change, through broad cross-sector coordination. For Zone 126, the large-scale change is to have each child in our Zone schools graduate from high school and attain the post-secondary education needed to thrive in a 21st century world. The Zone 126 Theory of Change is an evidence-based results framework, demonstrating how a student's and family's participation in a diverse set of school supports, facilitated by Zone 126, will positively impact learning and development for students as they advance from kindergarten to college to career. These outcomes inform what community resources are needed for interventions, solidify operational procedures, and determine accountability within the framework.

Of the current twelve Cradle to Career Implementation Partners, four launched between January 2014 and June 2014, the school year Winter/Spring semester. The Zone 126 Winter/Spring 2014 Progress Report you are about to read is our first progress report. Since data is being collected longitudinally, the data in this progress report is part of our baseline year data collection. Following are the five key areas assessed and respective method of evaluation:

1. Program operation

Inputs and outputs were collected by practitioners from our Cradle to Career Implementation Partner programs, which were on-site administering services in Zone schools. Data was shared with the Zone 126 team regularly during each program's implementation period for quality assurance purposes.

2. Program efficacy

Zone 126 worked with each Cradle to Career Implementation Partner to create metrics and data collection processes that encapsulate the objectives sought through each intervention. If a Cradle to Career Implementation Partner already possessed a robust internal evaluation methodology, a data collection and sharing process was established prior to program implementation.

3. Backbone organization effectiveness

Effective backbone support is a critical condition to success. Zone 126 administered a Backbone Organization Effectiveness survey to our Cradle to Career Implementation Partners.¹ All functions, activities, processes, indicators, and survey questions were based loosely on the 27 Indicators for Backbone Effectiveness, created by FSG.

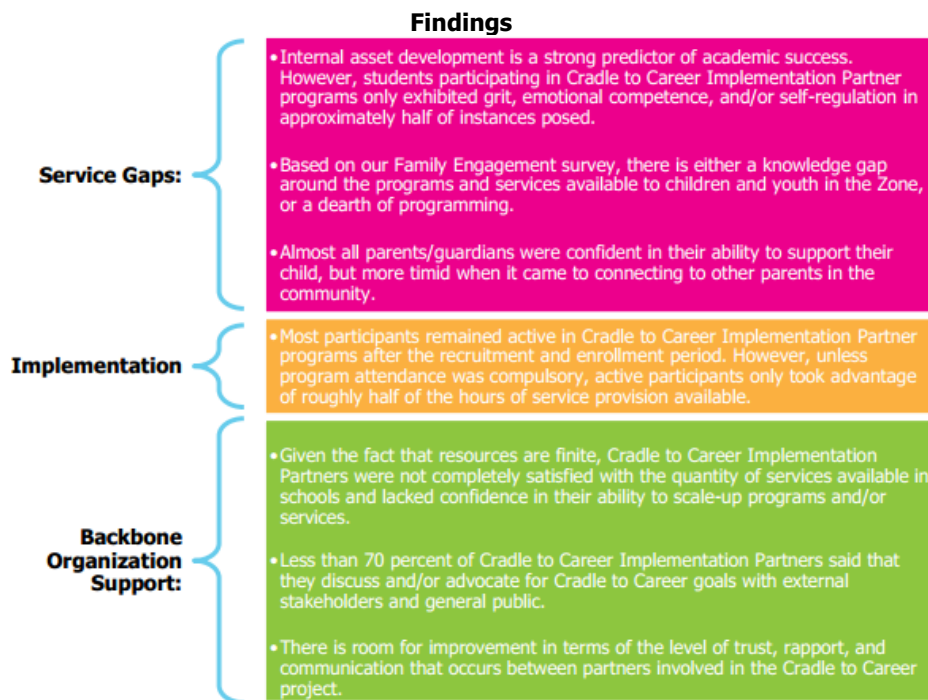
4. Participants' social, emotional, and behavioral development

Improvement of socio-emotional competencies should lead to short-term outcomes in increased internal assets, such as academic self-efficacy, growth mindset or mastery, grit/perseverance, emotional competence, and self-regulation. Zone 126 conducted age-appropriate surveys for children and adults enrolled in Cradle to Career Implementation Partner programs. If part of the program's evaluative paradigm, pretests were conducted prior to each program's implementation (in concert with the enrollment process, if applicable), during the first session, or by the end of the second session. Posttests were conducted either at the second to last workshop or session, last workshop or session, or after the program concluded.

5. Overall participant need

Zone 126 aggregated data from all participants served, using only one test per participant: if a participant only completed a pretest, pretest results were included in the analysis. Likewise, if a participant only completed a posttest, posttest results were included in the analysis. If a participant completed both a pretest and posttest, Zone 126 reported the posttest results for the most up-to-date snapshot.

Based on this year's study, below are key findings gleaned from students, adults, and Cradle to Career Implementation Partners regarding service gaps, program implementation, and backbone organization supports needed to successfully scale up the Cradle to Career project and meet goals:



¹ Cradle to Career Implementation Partner encompass Principals and school administration in Zone schools, as well as staff members at partner organizations. All partners surveyed implemented a program in School Year 2013/2014 at a Zone school.

The exciting news is that our Cradle to Career project is helping to ameliorate some of the gaps described above. After participating in one or more programs, improvements were reported in the following predictors and indicators of success:

City Growers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased concern about and interest in environmental issues and practices. • Increase in displays of academic self-efficaciousness, growth mindset, grit, and self-regulation.
NYU ParentCorps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge of programs for children in the community. • Increased confidence in ability to connect with other parents. • More instructive behaviors exhibited while assisting child with homework.
OACE TASC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in TABE scores, connoting gains in TASC exam preparedness. • Increased knowledge of programs for children in the community. • Increased confidence in ability to: make choices about child's schooling and help child deal with emotions appropriately. • More encouraging and instructive behaviors exhibited while assisting child with homework.
OACE ESL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in BEST Plus scores, connoting gains in mastery of the English language. • Increased confidence in ability to motivate child to try hard in school. • More encouraging, instructive, and modeling behaviors exhibited while assisting child with homework.
Zone 126	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High marks in terms of setting a common agenda, articulating the value proposition and roles of the project, and increasing awareness of issues in Astoria/Long Island City. • High level of satisfaction in terms of the project's trajectory, impact, and goal acquisition.

Recommendations

To address **service gaps**, Zone 126 recommends:

1. Incorporating new programs in Zone schools that focus on building grit, emotional competence, and self-regulation.
2. Integrating more activities and exercises in existing Cradle to Career Implementation Partner programs that build participants' self-discipline, self-control, emotion management, and self-direction.
3. Creating and disseminating brochures in Cradle to Career Implementation Partner programs that profile programs, services, and resources available in the Zone; outlining processes that participants needs to undertake to enroll in programs; and providing contact information if questions or concerns arise.
4. Increasing social activities in that promote communication and camaraderie with fellow parents.

To strengthen program **implementation**, Zone 126 recommends:

5. Conducting research with all participants served by Cradle to Career Implementation Partner programs to determine barriers to program retention and attendance.

To fortify **backbone organization support**, Zone 126 recommends:

6. Increasing opportunities for Cradle to Career Implementation Partners to publicly advocate for common agenda goals when opportunities arise for funding, policy changes, or resource acquisition.
7. Increasing frequency with which all Partners convene in an effort to build trust and rapport.
8. Creating subgroups based on initiative type, pipeline section, and programmatic goals.
9. Increasing quantity of services offered to each school.
10. Working with each partner to identify creative and innovative strategies to scale up programs and/or services.

In Collective Impact frameworks, the purpose for performance measurement and evaluation is to support learning to drive continuous improvement. With these findings and recommendations, Zone 126 is focused on continuing to leverage best practices and implementing recommendations from lessons learned to hone our four core functions;

1. Establish and coordinate networks to share information and facilitate decisions among school principals and staff, students and families, nonprofit program providers, elected officials, local business and community leaders, and city and state agencies.
2. Build a pipeline of direct service implementation partners whose services and resources are leveraged and scaled, working towards creating Community Schools for the common goal of all children from Astoria and Long Island City graduating from high school, attaining a post-secondary education and obtaining careers
3. Serve as the evaluator of the effectiveness of project design and implementation on quantitative and qualitative success predictors.
4. Raise awareness of the needs in our schools and community, and advocate on behalf of the often overlooked children and families we serve. Prior to Zone 126, these programs and services did not exist for Astoria/LIC children and families.

As such, Zone 126 is actively recruiting partners in the Cradle to Career pipeline and scaling up existing Implementation Partner programs. In particular, Zone 126 is actively soliciting partners with a track record of developing grit, emotional competence, and self-regulation. Once these programs are implemented, Zone 126 will identify students who exhibited these behaviors in less than 50 percent of instances posed and enroll them in new or existing programs accordingly.

To improve channels of communication between families and Cradle to Career Implementation Partners, Zone 126 Family Engagement Coordinators are building rapport with families, making appropriate referrals to programs, services, and resources needed, and disseminating information through outreach activities and workshops. By interacting with families regularly, they will also be collecting information about barriers to program attendance, which will inform the logistics and content of programming in the future. Finally, Zone 126 will be building specialized committees, implementing joint fundraising strategies to increase available resources and scope of programs within Zone schools, and including Cradle to Career Implementation partners in efforts around advocacy and policy changes.

In addition to the data aggregated in this report, future installments of Zone 126's Progress Reports will include academic indicators and predictors of success, including performance on standardized exams, grades, college readiness, and postsecondary enrollment and completion. In addition, qualitative research will be conducted to assess participants' evolving needs and progression as they move through the Cradle to Career pipeline. Once we amass several years of data, Zone 126 will measure the combinations and dosages of Cradle to Career Implementation Partner programs that yield the greatest effects on student achievement.