



# **Zone 126 Press Kit**

## **History of Zone 126**

Zone 126 was originally developed by the [Thomas and Jeanne Elmezzi Private Foundation](#) (Elmezzi)—a grant-making institution founded by Thomas Elmezzi, one of the inventors of Pepsi Cola. In 2009, The Elmezzi Foundation embarked on an 18-month comprehensive community-wide survey of the needs of over 3,000 residents of public housing in northwestern Queens to better understand the needs and assets of the residents living there. Survey results overwhelmingly pointed to education as parents' top concern for their children, as well as a willingness among residents to invest the necessary time and commitment to create a community-wide transformation strategy. That effort, [The Project 126 Community Survey Report](#), along with a yearlong investigation of place based, system-wide education reform initiatives, was the catalyst for Elmezzi's decision to found Zone 126.

Zone 126 became a recognized nonprofit and received its 501©(3) status in 2011 and is currently fiscally sponsored by the Fund for the City of New York.

In December of 2011, The Elmezzi Foundation was awarded a United States Department of Education Promise Neighborhood Planning Grant to support Zone 126's efforts and embarked on a planning year in 2012, after applying for a \$30M Promise Neighborhood Implementation Grant and narrowly missing, placing seventh out of 45 finalists, Zone 126 decided to go forward and still begin working with partners and community members to create a cradle to career continuum of seamlessly integrated programs and supports—a promise neighborhood—for the 2,900 children and youth in the Zone.

The Elmezzi Foundation has invested more than \$2M dollars to help support the start-up phase of the cradle to career project. In the past two years, Zone 126 has experienced significant growth and have deepened our impact through securing more partners, serving more children and families, and raising financial resources to scale up our programs to more deeply serve our ten partner schools. In 2015, Zone 126 secured two awards from NYC Department of Education for the Mayor's Community Schools effort, totaling more than \$3.8M over the next three years, significantly enhancing our ability to build staffing capacity, secure program partners, and implement strategies for retaining children and families in Zone programs.



## **The Zone 126 Team**

### **Executive Director: Anthony Lopez**

Anthony Lopez joined Zone 126 as its Executive Director in August 2016. Anthony is a seasoned community advocate, accomplished non-profit leader and youth development professional. As the first Executive Director for NYC's I Have Dream Foundation, he played a key role in growing the organization nationally. He led Aspira of New York, the nation's first Puerto Rican-led youth development and educational advocacy organization in developing 1,000 high school students into leaders at three Beacon community schools and in 30 high schools. In this capacity, he advocated for English Language Learners by monitoring NYC Department of Education's compliance to the Aspira Consent Decree. He has served as a collaborator, thought partner, and facilitator to numerous policy makers and elected officials on school reform related to Career and Technical Education, Charter Schools, and the K-12 educational pipeline. In 2007, he founded the Aprendes Foundation to support community-based solutions in education and youth development.

## **Zone 126 in the News**

Click on the following links to see Zone 126 in the news and learn more about past initiatives and our continued commitment to the children and families within our Zones of Promise.

[Zone 126 and Summer Advantage USA bring summer programming to Queens students for second year](#)

NYN Media, June 28, 2016

[Zone 126, LIC High School celebrate student achievement](#)

LIC Journal, June 2, 2016

[Library of Congress Books Coming to LIC](#)

Queens Tribune, May 5, 2016

[Profile of a Success Mentor, Office of Community School - NYC Department of Education](#)

April Newsletter, 2016

[A Bold Shift to Make Public Schools Serve Poor Students](#)

Yes! Magazine, January 25, 2016

[Zone 126 Summit focuses on Collective Impact in New York](#)

America's Promise Alliance, December 9, 2015

[Nolan Testifies At PS 111 Receivership Hearing](#)

Queens Gazette, October 7, 2015

[Constantinides, Local Groups Collect School Supplies](#)

Queens Gazette, September 23, 2015

[What will transform public schools? Answer: Tri-Sector Athletes in Education](#)

Huffington Post Blog, September 22, 2015

[Low-key funder's big boro boost](#)

Crain's New York Business, September 14-20, 2015

[Zone 126 to lead Renewal School Program](#)

Long Island City Partnership News, August 13, 2015

[Zone 126 Receives \\$125,000 from Guttman Foundation](#)

LIC/Astoria Journal, January 14, 2015

## **Zone 126 Media Contact Info**

For all inquiries contact our Development & Communications Associate, **Symphony Chau**

Email: [schau@zone126.org](mailto:schau@zone126.org)

Phone: (347) 960- 2102

### **Social Media**



Zone 126 | @zone126queens