

Education Funders Research Initiative

Initiative Overview & Summary of Research

November 21, 2013

**EdFundersResearch.org
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*Education Funders Research Initiative, a project of **Philanthropy New York**, is supported by a group of diverse funding organizations that have pursued an array of education reform strategies.*

These and other private foundations have invested over \$2 billion in New York City public school reform efforts over the last decade and have been crucial to many of the reform strategies pursued both by the Department of Education and by other education support organizations. EdFunders have come together to engage New Yorkers and focus our leaders on new research into how we can best prepare students for college and 21st-century careers, driven by the question: How can we improve on what's working in NYC education?

To that end, EdFunders has commissioned a series of reports that will provide unbiased, independent analysis of the various reform strategies that have been implemented across New York City public schools, highlighting strategies that have achieved success in schools or programs effective with particular populations.

Good things have been happening in the New York City school system, and the EdFunders reports illuminate those. But, this initiative also asks probing questions about what aspects of our educational system aren't working – including whether we can better align the system's resources to what the research shows works. We believe this is an important contribution to the public dialogue on public education as the next mayor and chancellor consider new directions for reform.

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The first two white papers, summarized in the pages of this document were released on October 8, 2013 at an event co-sponsored by WNYC SchoolBook. The third white paper, also summarized here, was released on November 21, 2013. The six priorities that appear first in this document flow directly from the research commissioned by EdFunders, and also appear in the third paper.

SIX PRIORITIES

For the next Mayor and Chancellor

In December 2012, the Education Funders Research Initiative, a diverse group of 16 funders committed to supporting education reform in NYC, commissioned three independent research papers to examine education in the City during the past decade. The Initiative's goal is to inform future priorities for public policies and private philanthropy that build on what is working in New York City to better prepare all students for college and 21st-century careers. EdFunders selected a team of researchers, unaligned with a particular reform ideology, all based at highly regarded institutions of higher education. The third paper in our series, written by The Center for New York City Affairs, brings together this research and proposes a set of priorities that will support continued progress in New York City schools. These priorities, presented at a Forum on November 21st, are intended to focus the public, education funders, education support organizations and government officials on key issues critical to making continued progress in the coming months and years.

The research commissioned by this Initiative points to these six priority areas for the new leadership of the Department of Education *to build on current successful approaches and address long-term racial and socio-economic achievement gaps among students.*

LITERACY: Take action to dramatically improve literacy in the early grades, so more students are prepared for high school. This should include intensive interventions for struggling readers, as well as expanded early education, full-day pre-kindergarten, and targeted investments in community-based supports for low-income families and black and Latino students, who have the lowest rates of academic success and reading proficiency.

COMMON CORE: Use the newly adopted Common Core standards to promote college readiness, by investing greater attention and resources into the teaching of reading, writing, research, analysis, problem solving and other academic behaviors, as well as social and emotional skills to prepare students for rigorous coursework before they graduate.

COLLEGE AND CAREER PLANNING: Concentrate more resources, either directly or through partnerships with community based organizations, in early and ongoing support for college and career guidance especially for the majority of young people who don't have this support in their own families.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Ensure a strong accountability system that uses a wider range of performance measures, making it more informative for and responsive to the needs of school leaders, school staff and families.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: Retain principals' important ability to control hiring, budgets and curriculum, but establish a clear chain of command that provides supervision and also appropriate support by superintendents and/or network leaders.

SYSTEMIC SUPPORT: Strengthen traditional zoned neighborhood schools and develop structures to connect all schools—neighborhood, magnet and charters alike—within given geographic areas or networks.

A SUMMARY: ESSENTIAL LESSONS FOR THE
NATION'S LARGEST SCHOOL SYSTEM

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN CONTEXT
THE EXPERIENCES OF ONE NYC HIGH SCHOOL COHORT
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BETTER SCHOOLS

Fall 2013



COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN CONTEXT

By Leslie Santee Siskin

ESSENTIAL NYC TAKEAWAYS

Over the past decade, New York City has made real progress in increasing high school graduation rates. Approximately 65% of students graduated on time in 2012, reflecting a clear increase since the early 2000's. But educators, policymakers, and philanthropic leaders across the nation have now turned their attention to an even more ambitious goal: college and career readiness for *every* public school student. This is a huge sea change in New York and elsewhere.

Without a doubt, it's an enormous undertaking in New York and nationally. Here in New York City, overall, only 29% of students who had entered high school four years before met the state's college readiness benchmarks in 2012. And of those who went on to enroll in a community college—a very common destination for NYC graduates—just 20% received an associate's degree in four years.

More than \$2 billion has been invested in education during Mayor Bloomberg's tenure from private donations, spurring many of the innovations that helped raise the city's graduation rate and advance college and career readiness. Philanthropy has helped fund a range of improvements, from the massive shift to Common Core standards across the city to innovative model schools. However, the challenges of designing new policies and programs that could accomplish the goal that *all students* graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college and careers is tremendous and will take time and systemic changes to realize.

The new goal of college and career readiness for all requires a focus not on 'beating the odds' in a few schools or with a few students, but changing the odds for all students. With critical help from philanthropy, the city has led on educational reforms that increased graduation rates and can lead the way again on the long-term systemic change of expectations *and* results for college and career readiness.

Acknowledge and Understand the Starting Points

Educators often speak of a college "pipeline." But, in a large and complex system like New York City, that common 'pipeline' image is misleading: all students do not start at the same point, and they do not follow the same path along the way.

- The city's schools enroll 1.1 million students (more than many states) who come from 197 countries, speaking almost as many (185) languages—42% do not speak English at home

- Some students live in multimillion-dollar apartments, while others live in public housing projects. Almost 70,000 students were homeless at some time during the 2011-2012 school year
- During the 2011-2012 school year, NYC's student population was 40.5% Hispanic, 27.7% black, 16.6% Asian/American Indian, and 15.2% white

There are clear disparities along economic and racial lines

- In some (poor) neighborhoods, fewer than 10% of the class of 2011 met the college prep benchmarks; in other more affluent sections, 79% did
- Only 8% of black and 11% of Hispanic young men reached the aspirational college readiness benchmarks set by the State, contrasted with 48% of Asian and 40% of white young men

College and Career Readiness for All: Not Just Academics and Not Just Students

Extend measures and metrics both up and down the school system, to identify where students are and where they need to be from pre-kindergarten through high school graduation – building better indicators of whether students are on-track for college based on academic, social, and practical preparation.

Expand definitions of college readiness to more than academics, including information about colleges, application processes, and financial aid and incorporating characteristics like conscientiousness or grit, academic tenacity, paying attention, study skills, teamwork, and problem solving.

Enlarge our understanding of what it takes to get there not only in terms of student readiness, but also the role of classrooms and schools in terms of creating a 'college-going culture' that sets expectations and provides the college preparatory curriculum and practical information necessary for enrollment and success.

Engage partners to create pathways to readiness for college and career – including counseling, mentoring, and technical skills.

The next Mayoral Administration will have the opportunity to work with philanthropic organizations to extend, expand, enlarge, and engage to promote college and career readiness for New York City's public school students.

THE EXPERIENCES OF ONE
NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOL COHORT:
OPPORTUNITIES, SUCCESSES, AND CHALLENGES

Douglas Ready, Thomas Hatch, Miya Warner & Elizabeth Chu
Teachers College, Columbia University

October 8th, 2013



THE EXPERIENCES OF ONE NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOL COHORT

By Douglas Ready, Thomas Hatch, Miya Warner & Elizabeth Chu

ESSENTIAL TAKEAWAYS

New York City made tremendous strides in high school graduation rates from 2000 to 2011, moving from about 50% graduating to more than 65% graduating. Despite improvements in educational opportunities and results across the city, many students continue to encounter individual challenges and structural barriers that impeded their social and academic development. For students on or near the path to college, advanced classes, clear benchmarks, and associated efforts, many of which are supported by philanthropy, to get and keep them “on-track,” serve as the support they need to make their way to high school graduation and on to college. However, far too many students find themselves on pathways that do not lead to college or productive careers.

Discussions about college and career readiness typically focus on high schools. Often lost, however, is the fact that students enter high school with dramatically different academic backgrounds, and whether students leave high school with the requisite skills is partly a function of their experiences in elementary and middle school. To explore this issue, the paper examines the kindergarten through college experiences of a single cohort of 77,501 New York City public high school students who entered ninth grade in 2005 and who hoped to graduate in 2009.

FINDINGS

EARLY LITERACY MATTERS

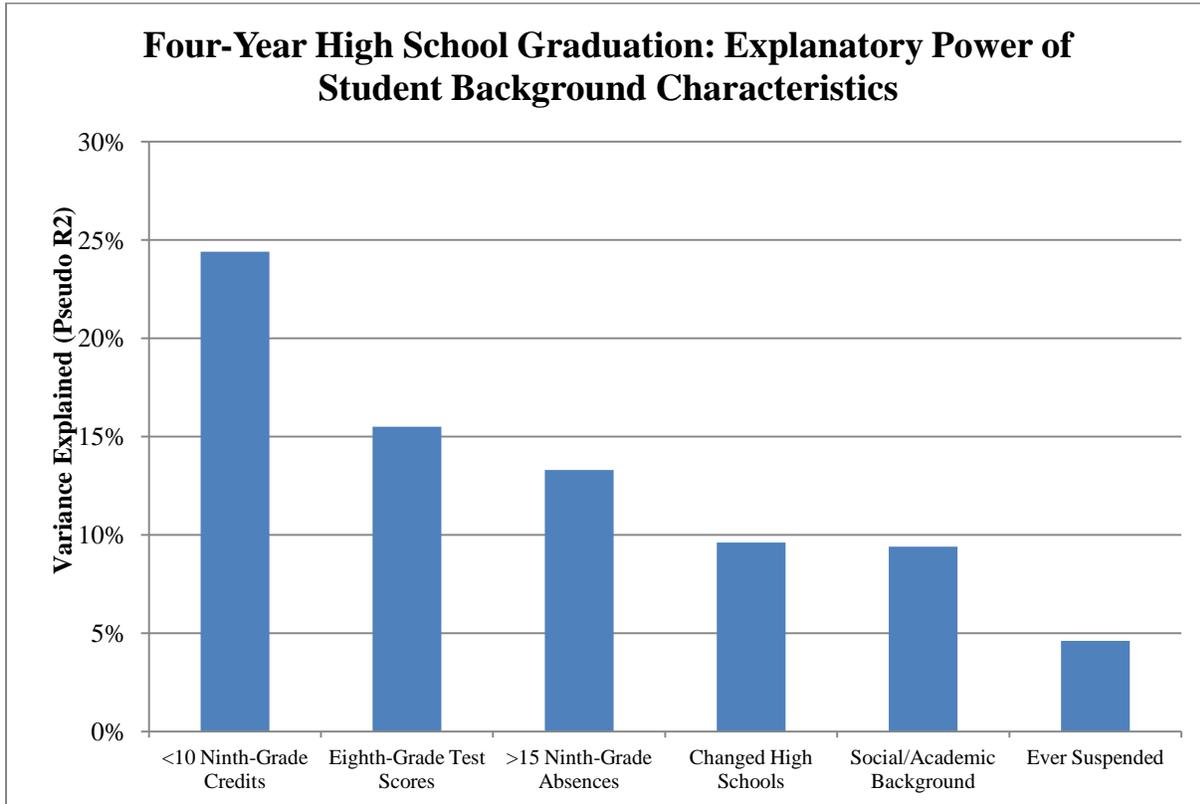
- Only 2.7% of students who failed to meet the third grade English Language Arts (ELA) standard went on to meet or exceed the benchmark in eighth grade. Only one in three of these students ultimately graduated from high school.
- 91.3% of students who exceeded the ELA standard in third grade would meet or exceed the standard in eighth grade. Almost 90% of these students graduated within four years.

RACIAL/ETHNIC DISPARITIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD SEGREGATION REMAIN

- Racial and ethnic disparities in academic outcomes were evident as early as third grade and persisted over time; some grew larger by eighth grade.
- Students in the cohort attended elementary and middle schools that were racially and ethnically quite segregated; by high school, schools were less racially segregated but more academically stratified.
- Black and Hispanic students are more likely to attend “high needs” schools than white or Asian students. One in three students who attended higher-needs schools for

elementary, middle, and high school graduated within four years, compared to almost three of four students who attended no higher-needs schools.

- Black students were significantly more likely to be suspended in middle school than white or Asian students.



COLLEGE READINESS INDICATORS

- High school mathematics levels differed among students
 - Asian students advanced roughly two-fifths of a year further in math than their white counterparts, all else equal.
 - Black and Hispanic students both lagged behind their white peers by nearly half a year in math courses.
- The level of preparation was associated with college persistence:
 - More than three of four graduates who completed Algebra 2 or beyond in high school remained in college after year one, compared to fewer than half of students who completed a less rigorous mathematics sequence.
 - 80% of students who passed at least one AP course persisted through one year of college, compared to roughly half of students who took no AP courses.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

The next mayor faces significant challenges in improving our public education system. But many key positive steps have already been taken and the philanthropic community welcomes opportunities to support promising solutions. The new mayor will also have great opportunities. Several promising reforms are already occurring:

- Common Core Learning Standards reflect more rigorous expectations for students
- Small, non-selective schools showed promising results in improving ninth-grade credit accumulation
- Recent DoE changes to the discipline code offer the possibility of significant reductions in suspensions.

Philanthropy stands ready to work with the next mayor to build on the work that has already been done and to improve the system so that it provides all students – in all corners of the city – with the kind of rigorous education that will prepare them for success in college and careers.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BETTER SCHOOLS:
HOW THE NEXT MAYOR CAN PREPARE NEW YORK'S
STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Clara Hemphill, Kim Nauer, Andrew White & Thomas Jacobs
The New School

November 21, 2013



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BETTER SCHOOLS

*By Clara Hemphill, Kim Nauer, Andrew White, and Thomas Jacobs
Center for New York City Affairs at The New School*

ESSENTIAL TAKEAWAYS

Mayor Bloomberg and his schools chancellors have effectively used mayoral control to produce dramatic changes over the past 12 years. In that time, they thoroughly reshaped the school system, dismantling an ossified bureaucracy, increasing per-pupil spending and giving more authority to principals to run their schools. With significant support from private foundations, they made large investments in the creation of hundreds of new small high schools that have been widely credited with boosting high school graduation rates.

However, there is a large gap between graduation and preparation for college. Fewer than one-third of the city's graduates complete high school on time and ready to take courses at CUNY without remediation. Many of the city's high schools do not offer a college prep curriculum. Black and Hispanic students remain disproportionately unprepared for high school and leave high school disproportionately unprepared for college. Reading scores in the elementary and middle schools (as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress) have been stagnant. And while principal autonomy has allowed dozens of groundbreaking schools with strong leaders to flourish, it has also allowed some schools—with weaker leaders or facing very tough challenges—to drift.

This research – like the two previous EdFunders papers – calls attention to the massive changes associated with expecting high schools to not only graduate nearly everyone, but also to prepare students for college and jobs that demand the higher education credentials once expected of only a few. *Building Blocks*, like the other papers, highlights this new focus on college readiness as a revolutionary change in expectations.

Recognizing that the next administration must decide which aspects of Bloomberg's education legacy should be built upon—and which should be rethought or jettisoned – the analysis sets out criteria for making these decisions. And, it lays out a set of priorities that will help leaders at the NYC DOE meet the new expectations.

These are some of the achievements of the last decade on which increased college and career readiness can be built:

- Historically high citywide graduation rates
- Increased attention to attendance in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods, with consequent increases in attendance and achievement

- Development of data collection systems, aimed at aiding instruction, improving achievement and informing the choices of key stakeholders – including students and parents – in a system characterized by the expansion of choice and options
- Creation of hundreds of small high schools that promote an intimate learning environment, including schools targeted at students not fluent in English, transfer schools, and high level career and technical education schools

Many of these crucial successes – and others, including the creation of many exemplary charter and district schools – have been made possible through vibrant partnerships with philanthropy at all levels of education.

There is reason for optimism. Perhaps the mayor’s greatest education legacy is the belief that good public schools for all are possible. Yet the challenges, including resource challenges, remain huge. The school system avoided sharp funding cuts following the recession that ended in 2010, but steady increases in staff costs have squeezed individual school budgets. The new mayor will make consequential choices about where to allocate limited resources in order to overcome the many challenges that impede increased college and career readiness.

Priorities for the next Mayor and Chancellor:

The goal of preparing all students for college and careers requires not one strategy but a series of interlocking strategies to improve instruction and opportunities to learn in all of the city’s schools.

1. Take action to dramatically improve literacy in the early grades, so more students are prepared for high school. This should include intensive interventions for struggling readers, as well as expanded early education, full-day pre-kindergarten, and targeted investments in community-based supports for low-income families and black and Latino students, who have the lowest rates of academic success and reading skills.
2. Use the newly adopted Common Core standards to promote college readiness, by investing greater attention and resources into the teaching of reading, writing, research, analysis, problem solving and other academic behaviors, as well as social and emotional skills to prepare students for rigorous coursework before they graduate.
3. Concentrate more resources, either directly or through partnerships with community-based organizations, in early and ongoing support for college and career guidance especially for the majority of young people who don’t have this support in their own families.

4. Ensure a strong accountability system that uses a wide range of performance measures, while making it more informative for and responsive to the needs of school leaders, school staff and families. This includes continuing to use the accountability system to identify the 10 percent of schools that are struggling the most—and then providing these schools with intensive support.
5. Retain principals' important ability to control hiring, budgets and curriculum, but establish a clearer chain of command that provides supervision and support by superintendents and network leaders.
6. Strengthen the remaining traditional zoned neighborhood schools and create new structures to connect all schools—neighborhood, magnet and charters alike—within given geographic areas. At the same time, existing, well-functioning and innovative networks should be kept in place and drawn upon as models for their good work. We should provide all such networks with support to foster more effective partnerships with community organizations and institutions, and to cultivate greater racial and economic integration in schools where possible.



Education Funders Research Initiative

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