



# A Progress Report

## THE MIDDLE GRADE EDUCATION EXPOSURE STRATEGY

*A Report from* THE SISTERS *of* CHARITY FOUNDATION *of Cleveland*



## **A PROGRESS REPORT**

*The Middle Grade Education Exposure Strategy  
of the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After five years of planning and implementation of a middle grade exposure strategy, the Sisters of Charity Foundation (SOCF) is excited to share our experiences and lessons learned about the opportunities and challenges of moving a niche strategy built on a foundation of willing pioneers in relatively uncharted waters. SOCF invested over a million dollars from 2008-2013 for this important work.

The Central Neighborhood of Cleveland has been the beneficiary and sometimes the accidental victim of community focused initiatives in education, health, community transformation and community building for many years. This neighborhood has a historic past and a very hopeful future and it has been our hope to build upon the work of a dedicated group of community providers to help understand, support and promote the vision of the neighborhood for its children and families. This focused work laid the groundwork upon which to build the next generation of educational supports to Central Neighborhood residents through the Cleveland Central Promise Neighborhood (CCPN) Initiative.

The CCPN extends the reach of the SOCF Education Exposure Strategy from targeting only middle grade students and their families to building effective strategies for youth from 0-19 on a solid platform of community and family support organizations both within Central and surrounding communities, including national best practices and programs.

The providers who were selected to partner with SOCF in the Education Exposure Strategy were organizations that demonstrated their continued commitment to the Central Neighborhood as evidenced by documentation of current or historical relationships and involvement in key local collaborative planning efforts and a track record of serving students in Central or neighborhoods with similar demographics.

We are pleased to share our progress to date on this important strategy that has impacted the lives of many urban public school children in the Central Neighborhood. Through our learning community of nonprofit partners and foundation staff we have gained a profound appreciation for effective collaboration across the District, transparency between partners, appropriate value of engaged parents and the sheer magnitude of the benefits of partnering with engaged youth in the creation of effective programmatic approaches.



#### **The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland**

The mission of the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, founded in 1996, is to improve the lives of those most in need with special attention to families, women and children living in poverty. As a faith-based organization, the Foundation extends the values of Jesus Christ through the mission of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.

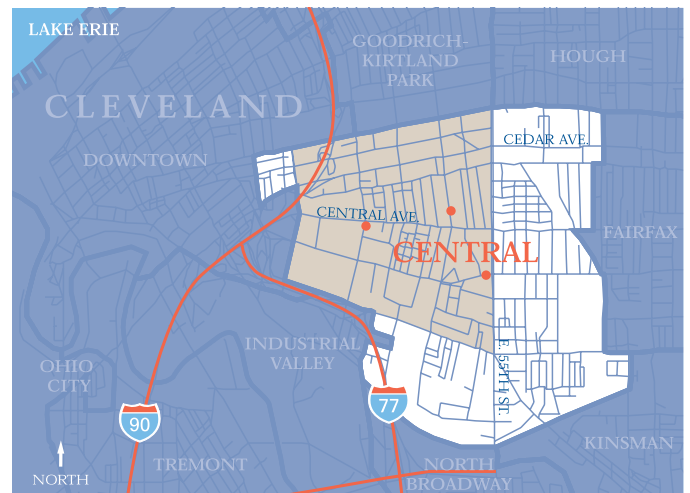
Over its first decade, SOCF supported programs aimed at: improving health in the community through health literacy and healthcare access; expanding affordable housing and working to end homelessness; sustaining the ministries of women religious; and addressing other community concerns. In 2006, as a result of a comprehensive strategic planning process, SOCF expressed a new commitment to improving educational outcomes for those most in need and an emphasis in the Central Neighborhood of Cleveland.




The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland now links hope to action through grantmaking and other activities centering on identifying best-practices and measurable results with an emphasis on specific strategic focus areas.

## CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD

The Central Neighborhood has particular meaning to the Foundation because of the connection to the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, who arrived in Cleveland more than 160 years ago. The sisters founded St. Vincent Charity Medical Center in the Central Neighborhood in 1865. The hospital is the source of 60% of the Foundation's assets through the proceeds of a partnership established in 1995. The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine have served the unmet needs of Cleveland area residents and we honor this heritage through a special emphasis in the Central Neighborhood.

Central is an asset-rich community of nonprofits, new housing developments, major educational and health anchor institutions, and community gardens. Approximately 90% of the residents of Central are African American. However, in recent decades, the splendor of Central's past has been overshadowed by the realities of its high poverty rate, large percentage of residents living in public or publicly subsidized housing and the poor education outcomes of the children. The Foundation understands that improving education outcomes is pivotal to breaking the hold of poverty in Central.



-  *Central Neighborhood*
-  *Promise Neighborhood*
-  *Public Elementary School (K-8)*



At this time, the Sisters of Charity Foundation has ended its grantmaking initiative for the middle grade education exposure strategy. We continue to meet the educational needs of middle grade students in the Central Neighborhood with a collaboration of many partners through the Cleveland Central Promise Neighborhood (CCPN), a community transformation initiative. SOCF is the lead partner in the CCPN initiative which is working with residents and partners to improve neighborhood schools and ensure every child in the Promise Neighborhood goes to college or other educational programs and on to a career. The work of the exposure strategy laid the groundwork for the Promise Neighborhood work and many of the exposure grantees will work in the community continuing as partners in the CCPN work.

# Building the Strategy

## GATHERING INFORMATION – CONVERSATION:CENTRAL

In 2008, SOCF undertook a significant information gathering process to inform the development of its Central Education Strategy. The process, appropriately titled *Conversation: Central*, included focus groups with residents of the Central community, meetings with organizations in and serving the neighborhood, extensive review of best practices in the literature and the convening of an Education Roundtable with local and national experts.

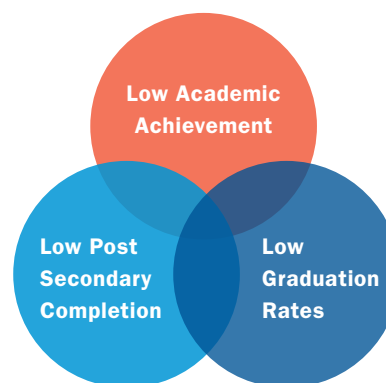
Not surprisingly, this process revealed both hope and hesitancy with respect to education. Barriers to academic success of greatest concern to residents in Central include low levels of academic achievement, low levels of post-secondary completion, and low levels of high school graduation. These obstacles reflect systemic challenges as well as individual stressors related to living and/or working in an impoverished community.

Common barriers related to accessing needed services, if available, are compounded by the need to effectively navigate a broad and complex system that is fragmented. In addition, residents indicated that the current educational system was often unresponsive to their needs.

*Contrary to popular rhetoric that suggests an apathetic attitude among low-income families toward the value of education, Central Neighborhood residents of all ages understand the importance of education and desire to benefit from a quality education.*

However, what interferes with this aspiration for learning is the reality that educational resources are often not readily available, accessible or adequate to bridge the gap between where residents are now and where they aspire to.

Additionally, the SOCF's information gathering process identified a clear need for additional programs for middle grade level students. At the same time, we learned that there are no direct funding streams in federal, state or local government that supports exposure programming at the middle level. We also learned about best practices that proved to be effective in efforts to increase the academic achievement of middle school level students across the nation.



**The Education Priorities the Residents Identified through *Conversation:Central***



*We learned that there are no direct funding streams in federal, state or local government that supports exposure programming at the middle level.*



## SOURCES

### Literature review and national input:

- Students' middle grade experience strongly impacts the extent to which they will close the achievement gap, graduate from high school and be prepared for college.
- Parents are concerned about barriers that exist which limit their children's options to participate in higher education.
- Lack of engagement and participation of middle grade students may lead to course failure, non-promotion and dropping out across the nation.
- Children in this age group come to school when they are involved in motivating activities, enjoy behavior based awards and recognition, and benefit from incentive based learning.
- Clear goals and specific measurable outcomes are important to effective programming.
- There is a critical need to increase the levels of cultural competence in students.

### Issues identified by residents and parents:

- There were providers in Central who had a history dedicated to addressing the needs of the families in the neighborhood.
- There is a lack of out-of-school time programs for middle school aged students in Central.
- The academic and social needs of this group were not adequately met when CMSD eliminated middle schools over five years ago.

### Data from the local school district:

- 8th grade students in Central are performing below the district and state averages on reading and math proficiency tests.
- Central students graduating from 8th grade are entering into a public high school that is in a state of academic emergency and had a 51% graduation rate.
- 87% of students in Central live in economically disadvantaged households.

The time spent on the initial research and early conversations with local education leaders was worthwhile because it allowed us to enhance the strategy from year to year, as the partners developed the capacity to incorporate additional aspects of the research in their work.

We continued to use research and best practices to move the strategy forward, as well as what we were able to glean from our own informal qualitative and quantitative data collection efforts. In 2011, SOCF utilized the expertise of Global Learning Solutions to conduct research and develop a white paper about identified best practice indicators for exposure opportunities for African American children and to assess the capacity of the partners to effectively evaluate the work. Steps were taken over the course of the implementation efforts to incorporate several of the recommendations that resulted from this white paper. Recommendations for Best Practice indicators that reflect the value and promise of exposure opportunities for African American children from the 2011 research are in the table below.

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXPOSURE PROGRAMS THAT BENEFIT AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH</b></p>                                       | <p><b>1. The use of exposure opportunities that emerged from collective impact initiatives</b></p>     | <p><b>2. The presence of opportunities that mitigate, nullify or eliminate developmental risk factors</b></p>   | <p><b>3. Effective service providers are culturally competent and consider the socio-historical context in which exposure opportunities are offered</b></p> |
| <p><b>4. Evidence of families engaged and supported in both children’s development as well as collective impact initiatives</b></p> | <p><b>5. The extent to which the opportunities use culturally responsive pedagogical practices</b></p> | <p><b>6. Intentionally embed the provision of positive youth outcomes and developmental assets in program design and implementation</b><br/><small>(namely social and emotional competence, self-efficacy, and positive identity)</small></p> | <p><b>7. Highly competent and resourceful adults intimately engage youth in developing social and cultural capital and competence</b></p>                   |

## KEY TERMS

*A clear understanding of these key terms helps provide an understanding of the focus of the Exposure Strategy.*

**Collaboration** — a process where two or more organizations work together in an intersection of common goals by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus. In particular, teams that work collaboratively can obtain greater resources, recognition and reward when facing competition for finite resources. Structured methods of collaboration encourage introspection of behavior and communication. These methods specifically aim to increase the success of teams as they engage in collaborative problem solving.

**Cultural competence** — an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) Attitude towards cultural differences, (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

**Exposure opportunities** — opportunities that provide social, cultural, and emotional benefit to students in order to enhance their levels of academic achievement. While we acknowledge that there are other benefits of exposure, these projects must specifically link the project outcomes to academic achievement.



# Funding

## CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD EDUCATION FUNDING PROGRAM

As a result of the detailed research and analysis in 2009 we launched the Central Neighborhood Education Funding Program to raise the level of academic achievement for middle grade level students in four K-8 schools in Central. The Strategic Goal was to increase academic achievement of 6-8th grade students in the Central Neighborhood schools.

### **The Programmatic Goals that governed the implementation of the strategy were:**

- *Increase accessibility and availability to exposure opportunities that provide enrichment activities which promote academic achievement for all middle grade students in Cleveland District schools*
- *Strengthen effective partnerships with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to promote the reformation of low performing schools through appropriate integration with state and federal initiatives and strategies*
- *Support quality service providers that implement community-based strategies to enhance education opportunities for youth and families in Central*
- *Sustain opportunities through a collaborative network of partners working together to meet the needs of the target population*

SOCF invested over a million dollars between 2008 and 2013 in our education exposure program and related strategies. Grants were provided to nonprofits, community based organizations and partnerships to improve access to exposure and enrichment opportunities for middle school level students in Central. All funded organizations received additional technical assistance.

To improve organizational capacity, the grantees elected to participate in the Education Strategy Team (EST) — the Foundation-sponsored collaborative network — to ensure the availability of high quality supports for all 6–8th graders in the four initial K-8 target schools in Central. Funded organizations agreed to also participate in a Foundation-led evaluation. In 2011 one of the K-8 schools closed its doors permanently which pushed the focus of the strategy to three schools and increased the emphasis on neighborhood youth in the targeted grades.

The grants were targeted toward organizations and partnerships that already had a track record of providing similar opportunities to students in K-12th grades across the city to increase their academic achievement. They had a track record of serving the Central Neighborhood and were ready and willing to enhance or expand their programs and services.

The criteria for funding was very specific as it was intended to guide potential applicants as they made decisions about partnering with us in this important work. The criteria were aligned with the research and due diligence that was conducted in 2008 and early 2009.



*The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland invested over a million dollars between 2008 and 2013 in our education exposure program and related strategies.*

## FUNDING CRITERIA

**Applicants were evaluated on the following criteria which were aligned with national best practices:**

- Organizational capacity was present to implement the demonstration or policy/advocacy project.
- Collaborations and partnerships were reviewed to discern their ability to support project activities.
- The chosen methodologies had to identify or use components of best practice models to achieve desired results (or for planning projects, describe how they identified best practices).
- Evidence that the planning process for full-scale program development was demonstrated through its strategies increased the likelihood that a successful program will result.
- There was evidence of experience and success of developing and implementing similar projects
- Grantees fit with the program descriptions and criteria described in the funding announcement.

# Education Strategy Team

## BUILDING ON EXPERTISE

The participants in this collaborative effort agreed to work as a learning community and build strategies to better assess the needs of the target population, initiate necessary program and service improvements, and facilitate the creation and sustainability of new or expanded services. The Education Strategy Team (EST) was led by the Education Program Officer and capacity building efforts were provided by SOCF to enhance the success of the collaboration and the overall initiative.

The Education Strategy Team members included representatives from community based organizations and identified project partners. The intent was to build on the expertise of all those involved to increase capacity in the neighborhood and in the organizations. The partners were strongly encouraged to collaborate with other organizations that had significant expertise in the areas they wished to address or who were serving the same population in order to increase the opportunities available to the target population. Applicants were required to truly explore the nature of their partnerships through the application process and on an ongoing basis as the projects progressed. This was a win-win opportunity for grantees.

*The members of the Education Strategy Team are: A Cultural Exchange, Beech Brook, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Cleveland, Boy Scouts of America, Progressive Arts Alliance, Golden Ciphers, Urban League of Greater Cleveland, Voices for Ohio's Children, The Children's Defense Fund, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center Community Outreach Department.*

Some members remained active even after they were no longer receiving dollars from SOCF due to the benefits they received from the collaboration and capacity building training that was paramount in this community of practice. Several strategies were employed to make the EST paramount.

The first grant cycle ran from December 2008– June 2010 with the majority of the grantees coming aboard during the first cycle. Four others were added across the next two grant cycles although SOCF primarily provided continuation grants through 2013. By 2011, SOCF was able to set clear implementation goals for the strategy as many of the 'ramp up issues' had been resolved including the closing of one school, the move of one to a newer building and multiple staff changes. Our ability to move forward was greatly enhanced as our partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District leadership evolved which allowed for better communication and alignment with district priorities.

## EST MEMBERS AND KEY STRATEGIES

**A Cultural Exchange:** The primary strategy for improving students literacy skills is through the Book Club program. The book club also provides a multi-generational strategy which provides opportunities for parents to read and share the same books as their children. This program also seeks to build home libraries for the families as students keep the materials they read.

**Beech Brook:** The key strategy of this project is to help parents take a more active role in supporting the educational and career aspirations of their children. They also seek to help parents have a better understanding of how to help their children plan and increase their oversight of their attendance and homework in order to help the students improve their grade point averages and get promoted on time.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Cleveland:** This project seeks to provide youth with one-to-one, professionally-supported mentoring relationships that focus on academic efficacy, character development and exposure to support engaging students in school, improving their academic efficacy and helping them be promoted on time.

**Boy Scouts of America Greater Cleveland Council:** This project seeks to improve male youth's experiential learning through offering them opportunities to experience project based learning around science, math and technology in order to help them increase their academic achievement and school attendance.

**Golden Ciphers:** In order to increase academic achievement of 6-8th grade students this project uses Rites of Passage principals which seek to increase positive character development, teach life skills, promote effective high school transition and increase prevention strategies.

**Progressive Arts Alliance:** Utilizes arts education activities for 6-8th grade students participating in the Progressive Arts Alliance–George Washington Carver Arts–Integrated Partnership. The primary strategy is the provision of technology-rich arts education programs that include workshops provided during school and out of school time.



### **Urban League of Greater Cleveland:**

The key strategy facilitates a smooth transition academically, socially and personally for Kids College students from 7th grade into high school through exposure opportunities both in and out of the classroom.

**The Children's Defense Fund-Ohio:** The Junior New Abolitionist pilot program seeks to build the next generation of servant leaders in Central that will have a positive impact on their communities and the nation through education enrichment activities, training, and interaction and support from College students.

### **St. Vincent Charity/Marion Sterling School**

**Partnership:** The key strategies are 1) To introduce students and parents to the range of high school options available through CMSD, private and parochial schools; 2) Introduce students to a wide range of cultural activities and social experiences to both enrich their lives and increase their awareness of a range of career choices and opportunities available to them; and 3) Develop student's sense of self-esteem by helping them develop personal competencies and skills through in school and out of school activities.

**Voices for Ohio's Children:** Supports the work of Education Strategy Team members, youth and families in advocating for youth development policy priorities including the restoration of key state funding to create and maintain all aspects of programs and services for after school and extended learning opportunities.

*Trust was evident between Education Strategy Team members as challenges and successes were presented openly at meetings and workshops.*

# Implementation

## BUILDING CAPACITY, BUILDING TRUST

Effective and synchronized data collection was a key element to promote sustainability in the Education Exposure Strategy. Education Exposure Strategy (EST) partner organizations submitted quarterly accountability and implementation reports to SOCF to track their progress and to alert us when they made critical mid-course corrections due to unanticipated barriers in their work plans. By 2011, this quarterly reporting also included student and participant rosters and copies of signed parent consent forms. In order to assist partners in effective data collection and evaluation strategies, SOCF secured a qualified consultant to provide professional development to the partners and to assist them in organizing their evaluation efforts and strategies. This was in addition to the initial technical support SOCF provided to the grantees during the first grant cycle to assist them in properly aligning their goals and completing the logic model and initial implementation plans.

Capacity building efforts were built into the structure of the Education Strategy Team approach. Bi-monthly two hour lunch meetings were the primary forum for the sharing and learning that occurred. Progress reports, information on upcoming activities, new collaborative project planning, shared problem solving and most importantly relationship building occurred in these meetings. Guest speakers included: District personnel who provided valuable updates and discussed strategies for strengthening relationships with the schools and the central office; guests with information on how

to connect to statewide efforts; and professional development on topics related to adolescent development. The EST members presented on their challenges and successes. Most of the meetings were held in the Foundation Board room which is a further testament to the quality of the trust relationships that were fostered through the Education Strategy Team.

There was also an opportunity to partner with others for expansive professional development opportunities. In January 2013, members of the Education Strategy Team attended the Ohio Middle Level Statewide Annual Conference in Sandusky, Ohio. Members also participated in professional development opportunities provided through MyCom (My Commitment, My Community) and Starting Point over the past several years in an effort to increase the capacity of community based partners to support positive youth development in the eight pilot MyCom neighborhoods.

In addition to the capacity building opportunities provided through SOCF staff, project partners participated in a Capacity Building training series in partnership with the SOCF Central Neighborhood strategic initiative focused on health. Compass Consulting Services, LLC was engaged to facilitate workshops that assisted with capacity building and increased collaboration among the Health and Education grantees. As a support to the grantees, Compass Consulting Services provided training on topics including but not limited to: *Building Trust*

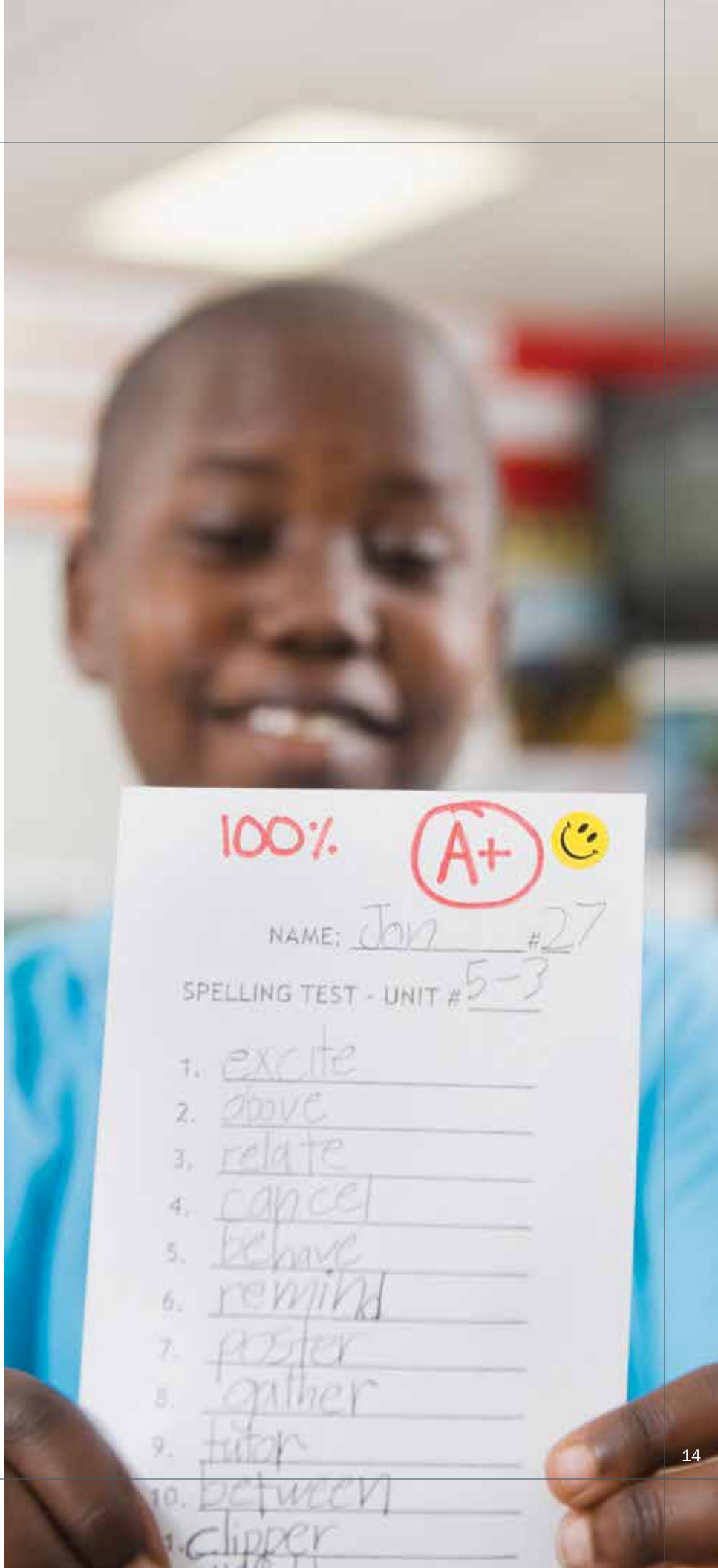


*Through Team Building, Communicating to Engage Others, The Impact of Collaboration on Sustainability, and Leading Innovative Change.* These workshops were conducted every 8-12 weeks with the SOCF Education and Health grantees between October 2011 and January 2012 and provided additional opportunities for collaboration building across the Central Neighborhood of Cleveland.

Compass Consulting Services' style was interactive discussion. While there was some lecture incorporated, it was engaging and hands on for participants. Through facilitated discussion, participants' awareness was raised and their skill sets increased. These efforts provided us a greater understanding of how to help cultivate an environment where differences are appreciated and respected. The customized workshops progressed from low to higher risk exercises to build trust amongst the group members and investment in the work.

**Summary from the evaluations from the 2nd 4-part series was as follows:**

- \* 100% of participants were satisfied with the relevance of the training
- \* 100% of participants were satisfied with the knowledge of the trainers
- \* 100% of participants were satisfied with the trainers' ability to answer their questions
- \* 100% of participants were satisfied with the quality of the activities at the training
- \* 100% of participants agreed the training would help them perform better at their current job
- \* 100% of participants rated the training as good/excellent



*Our policy strategy was built on principles of empowering people and educating them to be their most effective advocates for services and programs.*

# Policy and Advocacy

## BUILDING CAPACITY, BUILDING TRUST

Education Strategy Team members were introduced to the importance of policy and advocacy in meeting the goals of the Exposure Strategy. There are no direct funding streams in federal, state or local government that supports exposure programming at the middle level therefore community based providers and schools have to be adept at lobbying to acquire funds to support exposure opportunities from various sources. Our policy strategy was built on principles of empowering people and educating them to be their most effective advocates for services and programs that they find beneficial. This principle provides the impetus for providers to offer top quality services and effective programs that philanthropic organizations will choose to fund.

The importance of understanding the policies and informal decisions that impede the availability or affordability of effective academic enrichment opportunities is important for providers, parents and students themselves. Efforts were made to match EST partners' needs with opportunities to learn how to advocate individually and as part of collective efforts; how to engage parents and students in the efforts and how to tell your own story in the words that are understood and valued by those with power. These efforts resulted in opportunities for EST members to join effective statewide organizations, parents to travel around the city and state to speak for their children as well as advocate for them in the schools.

### Central Youth Speak To State Legislators

In October 2012, middle grade youth were prepared and taken to the state capital of Ohio to advocate for their own identified issues in a fun, yet educational experience that enhanced their knowledge of issues regarding public policy which affects youth in Ohio. Not only did the youth develop a policy agenda that they presented in Columbus, but their excitement and desire to learn and do more led to an exciting pilot program that will be implemented in 2013 which gives them more in depth advocacy training and the opportunity to engage in community change in their neighborhood. This pilot project emerged out of the desire of the EST members to create an effective strategy that would meet the expressed needs of the young people.

#### EST PROGRAM YOUTH 2012/13 POLICY AGENDA

**Sustain funding for quality after-school and out-of-school time programs to keep young people safe and engaged in activities that we enjoy and will help us reach our future goals.**

**Expand support for positive youth development activities for all students, especially those in underserved communities like Cleveland, Ohio.**

**Use available spaces in our communities to expand access to community based programs for youth involved in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System.**

Several members of the EST have joined statewide and local advocacy groups to continue to support a policy agenda that benefits their work with middle grade students in urban schools.



# Strategy Progress

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

We look to accountability and evaluation data gathered from the quarterly reports through June 2012 to illustrate forward movement on the goals of the Exposure Strategy since its inception. Additional analysis will be completed at the end of the final grant cycle, in late 2013 that will conclude the SOCF funding of the Education Exposure Strategy although the partners will continue to identify new sources of funding to sustain the work.

### **Progress made:**

- 9 Grantees funded providing services to over 200 youth and other adults in 3 schools.\*
- An enhanced data collection process developed, implemented and includes parent consent forms, student rosters and refined quantitative data.
- Students in exposure programs experienced increases in grade point average and attendance and had less behavioral incidences.
- More students applied for schools outside of the neighborhood high school which is related to our outcome aimed at helping more students access other high school options.
- As of 2009, all three K-8 schools have after-school programming available to various groups of students in middle grades.
- Capacity building training used to improve grantees reinforced shared learning indicator for Education Strategy Team (EST) members.
- The Middle Grade Exposure work has been disseminated as the Program Officer spoke at several local and national conferences
- Activities and progress of the grantees has been communicated through the E-newsletter, the SOCF website and the *Campus District Observer*, and the program officer has been quoted in publications including *The Plain Dealer*.

*Additional analysis will be completed at the end of the final grant cycle.*

## 2012 EXPOSURE STRATEGY PROGRESS

| FOCUS AREA  | PROGRESS/COMMENTS  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 8th grade transition strategies are in place that are aligned with CMSD transition efforts.   | Some challenges occurred due to variation in District school assignment strategies.  | * |
| 80% of parents of student participants will complete parent consent forms for participation and data sharing.   | Program staff needs to find ways to increase interaction with parents in order to complete forms and build relationships.  | ● |
| At least 75% of the approximate 500 middle grade students in the target schools will receive service through exposure providers as a result of the implementation of this strategy.                       | Relationships with school leadership and faculty are critical here although sometimes challenged by staff turnover.  | * |
| Exposure programming will be integrated and aligned with MyCom, The Higher Education Compact and the County Youth Development Initiative in terms of data collection, program quality and best practices. | Various incentives were offered by all of the partner organizations which members believe increased the levels of youth participation and engagement.  | * |
| Additional dollars will be leveraged for exposure through the CCPN project and partnerships with other funders.   | Resource opportunities need to be increased so that projects can expand while ensuring quality of programs.  | ● |
| Knowledge from the exposure strategy implementation will be disseminated across the city and state and to other funders where possible.   | Many local and national audiences are exploring effective strategies for building collaboration between partners and funders, serving the middle grade population and effective strategies for measuring socio-emotional and academic efforts. | * |
| Parents and youth will be involved in advocacy efforts around community development school issues and public school reform efforts.   | Resident engagement in education planning and change is evident in the city of Cleveland and particularly in the Central Neighborhood.   | * |
| Exposure strategy is aligned with Promise Neighborhood strategy in the federal application.   | The implementation plans for the federal Promise Neighborhood program shows clear alignment with the academic and family community support solutions.  | ● |

*Evidence of Improvement* \*

*Progress Exceeds Expectation* ●

# Messages to the Community

Knowing the challenges facing middle grade level youth, the Education Exposure Strategy Team Members wish to share their thoughts and beliefs with funders, educators and community providers to assist in the challenge of delivering education—in a holistic sense—to middle level youth.

**We believe in the potential of every child.**

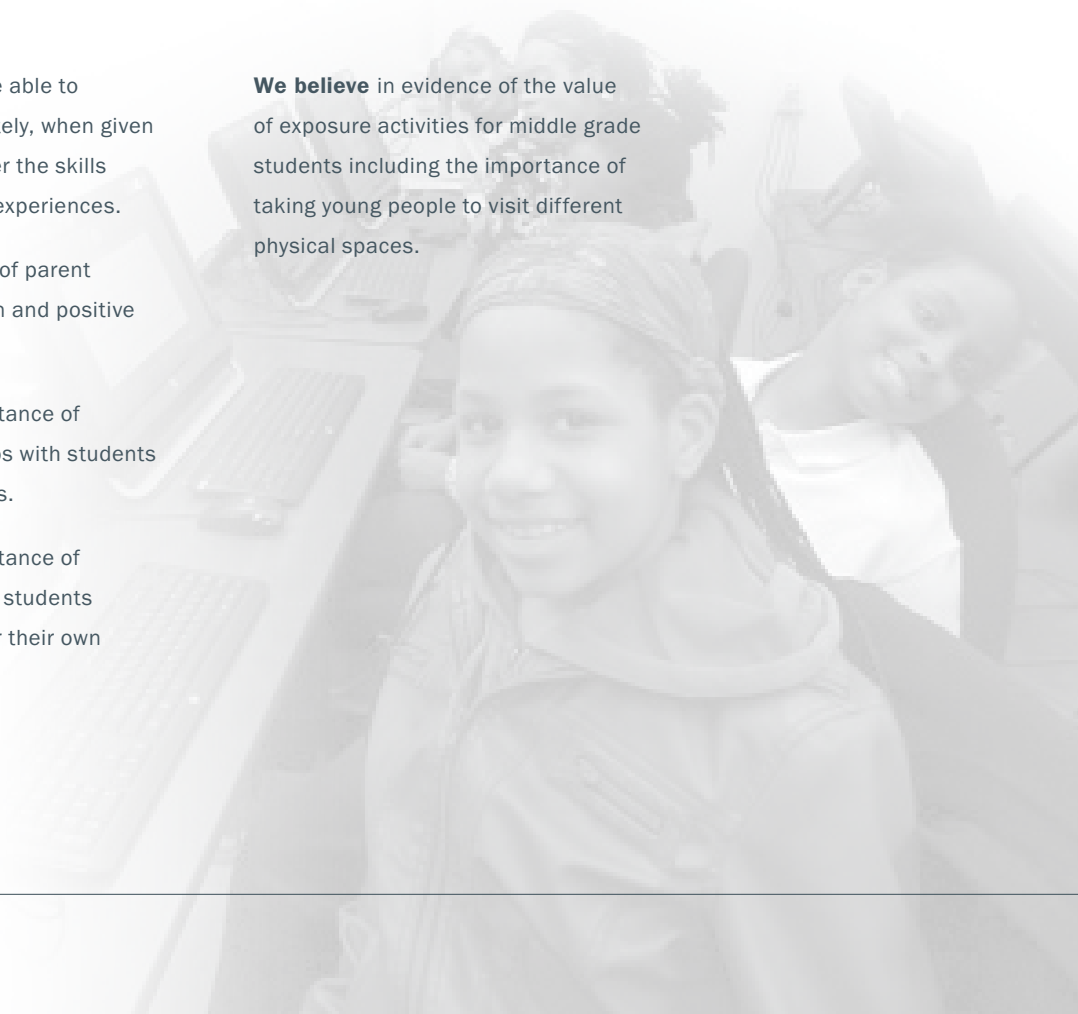
**We believe** students are able to transfer skills appropriately, when given the opportunity to master the skills across various learning experiences.

**We believe** in the value of parent voice in service provision and positive youth development.

**We believe** in the importance of continuity in relationships with students that spans multiple years.

**We believe** in the importance of empowered parents and students who take ownership over their own academic success.

**We believe** in evidence of the value of exposure activities for middle grade students including the importance of taking young people to visit different physical spaces.







**We believe in the importance of community partners operating collaboratively to provide consistency for students in the face of political, district, family and community change.**

**We believe** in the benefits of school/ community partnerships in increasing academic success for students.

**We believe** in the required effort to build safety nets for students as they transition to high school and college/career.

**We believe** adequate levels of multi-year funding commitments improve the quality of program planning and the quantity of program services available to young people.

**We believe** the availability of stipends and other incentives increases adolescent participation.

**We believe** in the benefits of effective community collaboration in a specific geographic location.

**We believe** in deliberate engagement of and focus on residents and the general public.

**We believe** effective programs build self-efficacy in youth and in their parents.

**We believe** in the importance of providing year round opportunities for students, both during and after school.





**We believe** resources directed to positive youth development will impact community change, over time.

**We believe** effective professional development on child development and cultural relevancy improves the overall quality of service delivery, especially to middle grade students.

**We believe.**

As a lead partner, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland is committed to the promise of each child in the Central Neighborhood.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE PROGRAM OFFICER

**Adriennie Y. Hatten, Ph.D.**

As I reflect upon the past five years of work building a strategy that would change the lives of youth and families and improve the way districts and community partners collaborate for the sake of these same individuals, I offer this reflection.

It is necessary for the program officer who wishes to partner with community based organizations and parents who feel disenfranchised for one reason or the other to be willing to roll up their sleeves and build a footprint in the neighborhood. Responsiveness to new partners and a focus on building win-win situations with all constituents is critical to create an open atmosphere where shared learning can occur.

Trust must be intentionally built and then continually fostered as people in organizations change and students and families move through schools. It is important to build rapport with parents and guardians to increase the quality of data collection and your overall impact on the youth. Parents provide consent and continuity and they are the primary customer of public education. Most importantly it is necessary to assure effective alignment between your goals and strategies so that the whole strategy moves in the same direction while consistently fostering creativity.

Be prepared to talk a lot, move quickly and keep your ear to the ground so that there are even fewer surprises (and look at your data). Having a personal passion for the community and an organizational mission that fosters learning and inclusiveness will provide a foundation to build a long term sustainable strategy on. Be willing to advocate for parents, youth and community partners and the work that you are doing. Learning and sharing together are effective tools to support this effort.

**“Let your conversation always be full of grace...”**

*Colossians 4:6*







SISTERS *of* CHARITY FOUNDATION  
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*A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System*

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