

# NOT JUST About More Time

A CASE FOR STRETCHING THE DEFINITION OF EXPANDED LEARNING TIME TO INCLUDE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES, ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS



BY LUCY HOOD

This paper, along with a series of accompanying videos that use narrative and other storytelling techniques to explain the evolving concept of Expanded Learning Time, was prepared by Say Yes to Education with the generous support of the Ford Foundation.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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## PROLOGUE:

# Standing and Singing Atop Desks in Guilford County, North Carolina (and the Supports Behind the Scenes)

There's probably no better example of organized chaos than Fred Hoffmann's sixth-grade math class at Allen Jay Preparatory Academy in High Point, North Carolina. Before class starts, the students climb up on their desks and the class percussionist picks up a beat on the drum set. As if they were at Radio City Music Hall, the students break into a rousing rendition of "Shut Up Divide With Me," a song written by Hoffmann to the tune of the pop hit "Shut Up and Dance." The sixth-grade version, though, is all about division, not dancing.



When the song ends, they return to their seats and the classroom returns to normal. But the performance has joyfully instilled the meaning of dividends, divisors and quotients while giving these restless young people an opportunity to burn off steam, and most important, keep them deeply engaged in the task at hand.

Like "Shut Up Divide With Me," everything in Hoffman's class and the school as a whole is designed to do much more than impart the nuts and bolts of reading, writing and arithmetic. Teachers routinely use cheers,

chants, songs and other instructional strategies so students have many ways to respond to questions and take part in the learning process instead of simply sitting, listening and receiving information. One such technique is a brief exercise to get the students focused. Known as SLANT, it consists of two stomps, two slaps and two claps, which serve as a reminder to Sit up, Listen, Ask questions, Nod their heads and Track or make eye contact with whomever is speaking, whether it's the teacher or another student.

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With Allen Jay having an extra hour in its school day (it is open for 200 days a year instead of the statewide norm of 180), Principal Kevin Wheat says there is more time to get students active and to address their needs. A morning rally in the gymnasium allows students and staff an opportunity to be recognized for their hard work, take part in leadership exercises and to start the day on an upbeat note.

Students also break into groups based on their skill level and spend an extra 40 minutes each day focused on reading. A struggling reader, for example, might work on word recognition while an accomplished reader will go to a literature circle focused on a higher-level text or a novel.

The strategy seems to be working. The percentage of students who were proficient in reading doubled from 33 percent to 66 percent two years later. “They are never going to get caught up and be proficient,” Wheat says, “if we don’t build into the day additional time for them to experience text, engage with text, work on fluency, focus on writing, listen to effective readers, read and talk about what they’re reading.”

Wheat opened this public magnet school, on behalf of Guilford County Schools, in the 2013-2014 school year with 100 fifth graders and is adding a grade every year until he has 400 students in grades five through eight. Allen Jay is one of 65 schools in the district that receive Title I funds for its high percentage of low-income students. Of the nearly 300 children enrolled in the school, more than 70 percent are estimated to be economically disadvantaged. Seventy-two percent are African American, 22 percent are white, and fewer than 5 percent are Hispanic.

Before opening Allen Jay, Wheat studied several innovative school models and selected the best of what he saw, ultimately incorporating numerous educational and enrichment strategies intended for at-risk youth. The young people at Allen Jay, Wheat says, “are in an environment that values them, that values their need to express themselves, that values their need to be vocal and values everything about them

demographically and culturally and also helps to instill in them a desire to want to succeed.”

Allen Jay provides additional programming after each school day and on Saturdays in the spring. The teaching staff is available to students until 9:00 every weeknight; visits to college campuses are a top priority; and parent meetings are held once a month. There’s an intense focus on the arts, and the school’s fifth-grade band program is the only one of its kind in the state.

Allen Jay exemplifies the kind of expanded learning time opportunities Guilford County Schools has begun to provide for its students in recent years. Other examples of the district’s approach to expanded learning include several schools with extended-year calendars, nine early and middle colleges, as well as a district-wide emphasis on character development. Its widely popular Summer Arts Institute, which started as a week-long program for 150 students and is now a three-week program, serves 1,200 youngsters in the second through 12th grades. “One of our missions is to get as many kids into the arts as possible,” says Nathan Street, the district’s arts education director.

These and other programs are designed to meet the needs of Guilford County’s public school population of nearly 72,000 students. Of those, 62.3 percent live in poverty. “You don’t learn as well if you’re hungry,” says Nora Carr, one of the school district’s two interim superintendents. “You don’t learn as well if your teeth hurt because they’re rotten and you haven’t been to a dentist.” It’s vital, she says, to have programs in place that can help children overcome the hurdles they face before they ever set foot in a school building.

“We know the kids are bright,” Carr continues. “We know they can learn, but it’s also naïve to say that poverty and some of the conditions of life don’t impact learning, because they do.”

The robust and evolving approach to expanded learning time in Guilford County — which augments a longer school day and longer year with a suite of academic and non-academic support services



especially aimed at low-income families — was among the factors that drew the attention of Say Yes to Education to the district.

Say Yes is a national nonprofit that organizes and galvanizes entire communities to support the quest of every public school student not only to graduate from high school but also to afford and complete a postsecondary education. Say Yes believes that if given the opportunity to maximize their gifts and talents, all children can progress toward a successful postsecondary education and go on to actively contribute to their communities.

In September 2015, after a national search, Say Yes selected Guilford County, which includes the cities of Greensboro and High Point, as its third community partner — joining the communities of Buffalo and Syracuse in upstate New York — and its first outside the Northeast.

Over the next six years, Say Yes will invest \$15 million to help a coalition of community partners in Guilford County develop additional learning and enrichment opportunities, as well as student and family support services, so that thousands of schoolchildren will no longer enter school held

down by multiple barriers caused or exacerbated by impoverished living conditions.

While Guilford County Schools provide a certain level of student and family support services, Carr says, Say Yes brings “wraparound services on steroids.” The Say Yes approach includes postsecondary scholarships for qualifying, college-bound graduates in the community as well as a range of services — from tutoring to summer camps to assistance with health, mental health and legal issues — for all students in kindergarten through the 12th grade. The New York City-based organization also brings a sophisticated database and a structure that facilitates the coordination, alignment and strengthening of these efforts. “What Say Yes is trying to do,” Carr says, “is systematically remove the barriers that poverty and other issues create in a way to try to break that cycle, break that stranglehold that socio-economic status has had on student learning and student performance.”

And, in the process, the district and the nonprofit — along with the other partners in Say Yes Guilford — are seeking to rewrite the definition of expanded learning time so that it ranges far beyond the classroom (and even schoolhouse) door.

# Expanding the Definition of Expanded Learning Time

Wraparound services, in which a school, organization or an entire community effectively wraps a supportive arm around a child or family, are a relatively new addition to traditional practices of expanded learning, which originally referred to longer school days, longer school years and more creative use of classroom time. Increasingly the term has also referred to after-school and summer enrichment programs as well as support services — such as assistance with health, mental health and legal problems that take place on or near the school premises.

As concepts of expanded learning have broadened in scope, they've come to resemble the longstanding practice of community schooling, which originated in the late 1800s as a way to help young people and their families grapple with the onset of industrialization, urbanization and an influx of immigrants coming to the United States from Europe and elsewhere. That initial wave of community schooling ended during World War I, but the concept resurfaced over the years in response to various societal shifts, mainly the onset of the Great Depression and the Civil Rights Movement. Now the impetus is the ever widening gap between rich and poor and the failure of recent reform efforts, including the No Child Left Behind Act, to close that gap.

There is a whole range of issues related to poverty that affect a child's ability to be present in the classroom, says Fred Frelow, a senior program officer at the Ford Foundation. If, for example, a child is asthmatic and comes to school every day struggling to breathe, she's most likely not going to do very well in class. The same can be said for a long list of other ailments as well as mental health, housing, legal and other issues. And yet, many of those who focus on testing and accountability dismiss the importance of poverty, Frelow says, and that is misguided. The best way to address some of these broader social and economic inequities is to equalize conditions outside of school. "Kids are learning all the time," he notes, and what they learn outside a typical 6½-hour school day is just as important as what they learn in school.

In well-to-do communities, children have access to a full range of educational opportunities that children from low-income families can only dream about. These often include summer camp, test prep courses, trips abroad and various forms of athletic and artistic endeavors. "One of the things we've seen in the last 40 years," says John Rogers, an education professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, "is that as economic inequality has increased in the United States, the ability of parents across different sectors to support their children's after school and learning activities has become more unequal."

In 1970, upper-income households were spending four times more on their children than low-income families, according to Rogers. Now, roughly four decades later, that gap has more than doubled. Upper-income households are spending nine times more on their children than low-income families. Moreover, he says, the emphasis on testing and accountability that's been pervasive in American schooling since the early '90s has led to a narrowing of the curriculum and a tendency to teach to the test. This approach handicaps high-poverty schools, where low-income students are more likely to have fewer enrichment programs, fewer experienced teachers and fewer resources than students in more affluent communities.

Schooling, experts say, is about leveling the playing field for disadvantaged youth. By removing socioeconomic impediments and educational barriers



brought about by decades of institutionalized racism, at-risk youth will be better equipped to show up for school and learn on a level that's commensurate with their affluent peers. To make that happen, an ever-increasing number of school systems and education organizations are providing low-income students with an array of instructional practices, enrichment opportunities and social services aimed at helping them overcome the social, emotional, physical and financial obstacles that prevent them from showing up for school and being attentive when they do.

These kinds of integrated student-support programs serve more than 1.5 million American schoolchildren in nearly 3,000 schools, according to a report by the educational research group Child Trends, and Say Yes to Education is one of the major providers. Other programs include the Beacon Initiative, City Connects, the Comer School Development Program, Elev8, School of the 21st Century, Turnaround for Children, University-Assisted Community Schools, and the two organizations described below — the Children's Aid Society and Communities in Schools.

Founded in 1853, the Children's Aid Society has been a pioneer in foster care, teen pregnancy prevention, and the creation of a community school model that's been replicated throughout the United States and abroad. That model adheres to three key elements of the developmental triangle, says Jane Quinn, a vice president at the Children's Aid Society and director of its National Center for Community Schools.

"In a community school," she says, "you put children in the center of the triangle and you surround them with three big sets of things that research says are important to their learning and healthy development, so on one leg of the triangle, you have the school's core instructional program. On another leg of the triangle are expanded learning opportunities, and then on the third leg of the triangle are services designed to remove barriers to learning."

The Children's Aid Society operates 22 community schools in New York City, where it is now at the epicenter of a major growth spurt in expanded learning. Community schooling is a cornerstone of Mayor Bill de Blasio's education agenda, one that includes a multimillion-dollar investment in the creation of community schools. The New York City Department of Education started funding 45 community schools in the 2014-2015 school year. This year, it's putting \$103 million into 130 community schools, a number that's slated to increase to 180 schools in the next two years.

Another organization with a long track record of providing high-poverty students with expanded learning opportunities is Communities in Schools, or CIS. Founded nearly 40 years ago as a dropout prevention program in New York City, it now serves nearly 1.5 million young people in 25 states and the District of Columbia. CIS initially gained momentum when its founder, Bill Milliken, decided to bring community services into the schools.

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In more recent years CIS has made additional changes that have expanded its reach even further, says Gary Chapman, executive vice president for the National Network. It has site coordinators in each school who work with administrators, teachers, counselors and partner organizations to develop specific interventions for the 5 percent to 10 percent of students who are most at-risk. At the same time, it continues to provide site-based supports and services for the school as a whole, and the results, Chapman says, have been impressive. Of the nearly 160,000 students who received tailor-made interventions in the 2014-2015 school year, 99 percent stayed in school, 85 percent met their academic goals, and the graduation rate was 93 percent.

“I think folks are really seeing the effects of poverty on kids,” Chapman notes, “and now that the majority of kids in public education are coming from situations of living in poverty, the non-academic issues that they are coming to school with are equally if not more important to address than the academic pieces.”

Studies have shown that these kinds of programs lead to improvements in attendance rates, academic achievement and graduation rates. According to the Child Trends report, instructional supports and social services provided by expanded learning and community schooling initiatives “have shown much greater success than programs focused on didactic education and scare tactics.”

Child Trends researchers reviewed 11 studies focused on the work of three organizations and compiled the results in a report called *Integrated Student Supports: A Summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers*. It concluded that “the likelihood of academic success, especially for disadvantaged students, is enhanced by a more comprehensive set of supports.” It cautioned, however, that the number of rigorous studies is limited and each one is limited in scope. Therefore, “we would characterize this as an emerging body of evidence and advocate for more evaluations to further build the evidence base.”

While experts in the field agree that more studies are needed, they also believe that the underlying research on child development and student learning is indisputable and that the existing evidence in favor of expanded learning and community schooling is strong. “There’s been this emphasis on promoting kids’ cognitive development,” Quinn says, “and acting as if helping children develop socially and emotionally would be taking time away from academic development whereas, in fact, the research says that good social and emotional learning supports good academic achievement.”

When expanded learning is done well, experts say, organizers and school leaders bring the health center into the school; they bring legal services into the school; and they develop strong partnerships as well as an understanding with local service providers about the needs of at-risk youth. Say Yes to Education approaches expanded learning in this way, and in doing so, builds upon the efforts of CIS, the Children’s Aid Society and other organizations that have excelled at creating community-wide structures and funding mechanisms that allow children of poverty access to the same kind of enrichment and learning experiences as their affluent peers. The critical area that Say Yes has contributed to this field is its strategy and aligned structures that allow communities to both scale and sustain this crucial work in schools. To date, community school programming has been over-reliant on short-term (and therefore unstable) grant programs.



# Say Yes to Education

Working in tandem with a cross section of local stakeholders, Say Yes to Education currently provides expanded learning opportunities to nearly 140,000 young people in public schools, most of them in two states — New York and North Carolina. Initially focused on small cohorts of low-income students who, with the support of Say Yes, surpassed their peers in terms of graduation rates and college matriculation, Say Yes to Education has since expanded the scope of its work to include entire school systems and the communities they serve. In 2008, Syracuse became the first city to pilot the community-wide approach of Say Yes. In 2012, Buffalo became the second (and the first to commit to a full implementation of the Say Yes approach), and in September of last year, Guilford County became the next.

In each community, Say Yes works closely with school leaders, elected officials, teachers, parents and philanthropists to help students in largely impoverished school systems overcome a range of entrenched issues that for many make high school completion, and especially a college education, little more than an impossible dream. What that looks like on the ground level varies from place to place. For one group of children it may include a trip to Africa, for another the painting of a mural, and for yet another, the production of a Shakespeare play. But there are certain norms, expectations and standards that apply to all Say Yes initiatives, the first of which is the promise of a college scholarship.

From the very beginning — when the founder of Say Yes, the money manager George Weiss, started working with the first cohort of 112 students from Belmont Elementary School in Philadelphia — he made them an offer that was hard to refuse. If they graduated from high school and were accepted by a two- or four-year postsecondary institution, he would cover the cost of tuition.

As the Belmont model expanded to take in similar groups of students in other schools and other cities — and as that model grew into a larger, more comprehensive approach — Say Yes has never wavered in its pledge to provide eligible students with college and other postsecondary scholarships. Every high school graduate who meets certain

criteria, including length of residency and point of enrollment in the community's public school system, is guaranteed a so-called "last dollar" tuition scholarship (after federal and state aid have been applied) — to an in-state public college or university, or to one of the more than 100 private institutions in the Say Yes to Higher Education Compact.

Since 2009, Say Yes Scholars in Syracuse and Buffalo have received a total of nearly \$12 million in college or other postsecondary scholarships from the local Say Yes scholarship funds. Those scholarships have helped leverage an additional \$130 million in aid, including \$65.6 million from the federal and state governments, as well as \$61.5 million from the Say Yes private partner colleges and universities themselves. (The first students in Guilford County eligible to receive Say Yes Scholarships are those graduating high school in spring 2016, and matriculating the following fall.)

The scholarship program is a strong incentive not only for students, but also for parents, school leaders and the community. In Buffalo, for example, it's created a new mindset. "College is now for everyone," says Clotilde Dedecker, president and C.E.O. of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. "It's not about whether or not you're going to college. It's about which college you're going to, [and it's discussed] in the barber shops and the corner markets, which changes the behavior of adults and the expectations of both students and all the adult

stakeholders in the system and in their families and neighborhoods, so it's really transformational."

In addition, the scholarship is an incentive for local leaders who have limited, often fleeting tenures — including superintendents, school board members, mayors and county officials. The scholarship program makes it difficult for each successive group of leaders to dismantle the vast network of support and services that are put in place, says Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey, president of Say Yes to Education. Who, for example, wants to stand up and announce that they're going to deprive college-bound youth of millions of dollars in financial aid? And the approach, she says, appears to be working. "In Buffalo we are on our seventh superintendent in less than four years, and the

partnership has managed to keep the train on track and moving forward." That, she notes, "is absolutely essential."

Another key component of the Say Yes approach to expanded learning is the creation of extensive governing structures comprising a broad swath of local decision makers, including those representing the public school system, city and county governments, teacher groups, parent groups, faith-based organizations, higher education, and philanthropies. They meet regularly — at least once a month if not more often — thereby creating a sense of cohesion as well as the political will and commitment that's required to pool resources and successfully address the deeply rooted issues affecting at-risk youth.

## AFRICA BOUND

For nearly 20 years, Say Yes to Education approached the concept of expanded learning on a much smaller scale. The work focused on cohorts of 50 to 300 students who worked, and in many instances continue to work, with Say Yes staffers dedicated to ensuring that each student receives the assistance he or she needs from kindergarten through the completion of a college degree. One such cohort is the Bryant Chapter of Say Yes to Education in Philadelphia, which started out 15 years ago with 50 elementary school students, most of whom are now enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Along the way, they've received a broad range of services — including healthcare, social services, after-school programming, summer camps, and at the postsecondary level, guidance and support.

Among these many programs and services, however, there is one — a trip to Ghana — that stands out. Bryant Chapter student Anthony Walter describes the 2½ week trip as "the experience of a lifetime." It disabused him of preconceived notions he had about Africa and instilled in him a great deal of respect for the people he met, specifically their generosity and richness of spirit. Something as simple as a pencil, he recalls, was a highly prized item at a school where he and his Say Yes colleagues delivered school supplies. "I can remember seeing their faces, how happy they were just to get pencils and erasers," he recounts. "For every four students there was one pencil, so they were passing the pencils, and they were happy to get pencils with erasers, and I just couldn't believe it. I was really blown away."



To prepare for the trip, Bryant Chapter students studied the history and culture of Africa. They developed a fund-raising strategy, planned out the logistics of the trip, and took the bold step of getting on a plane and spending time in another country, far removed from the comforts of home. All those things are an essential part of learning, says Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey, president of Say Yes to Education. They're what "enable young people to really gain confidence," she explains, "and to become centered in themselves, and to become unafraid to take on challenges in the world."



In addition to the governing structures, other key components of the Say Yes strategy are fiscal analytics as well as a trove of data known as the Pathway to Postsecondary Success. Fiscal tallies coupled with student data provide school leaders and local stakeholders with the tools they need to make objective, sound and targeted decisions. Using this information, they can pinpoint systemic problem areas so that programs can be expanded, eliminated, or tweaked as needed, and comprehensive supports and services can be delivered on a sustainable, community-wide basis. Here are two examples of how it works:

### **EXPANDED LEARNING TIME IN BUFFALO: Supporting Students (and Families) along the Pathway to Postsecondary Success**

Stephanie Peete is a student support specialist at the BUILD Academy, a high-poverty elementary school in Buffalo, New York, where she's known as the "Say Yes Lady." She uses the student data system — all 13 indicators and 36 sub-indicators — to keep tabs on the progress each student is making in his or her journey toward high school and college completion. By staying in touch with teachers and monitoring student attendance, disciplinary referrals, grades and other information, she determines which students need the most help and intervenes to make sure they receive the assistance they need.

One recent case involved three siblings now in the second, sixth, and eighth grades. Last year, when

Peete started working with them, she learned that the youngest had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He needed medical attention, as well as counseling and a smaller, team-taught learning environment. The middle child responded well to encouragement, Peete says so she helped teachers and the student's mother find ways to provide him with positive feedback. And the oldest, she determined, would be best served by taking on additional responsibility. Initially he assisted with lunchtime popcorn sales at school, and last spring he was elected to the student council.

Peete is one of 55 student support specialists assigned to each of Buffalo's public schools. At least partly as a result of their efforts and those of many others who comprise a veritable village of collaborators — such as healthcare providers, mental health workers, and pro bono lawyers — high school graduation rates in Buffalo have gone up by 13 percentage points since 2012, and college matriculation rates have gone up by 10 percentage points.

### **EXPANDED LEARNING TIME IN SYRACUSE: Using Legal Services to Remove Predictable Barriers to Academic Achievement**

In Syracuse, the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc. runs several legal programs associated with Say Yes to Education that assist families with issues related to debt, housing, custody fights, immigration status and other legal entanglements that can have a severe impact on the

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stability of a child's life. “Young people in high poverty schools lose a great deal of their learning time,” says U.C.L.A.'s John Rogers, “and they lose it for a variety of reasons, some of which have to do with the fact that holes in our social safety net create challenges that are then brought into school.”

The Volunteer Lawyers Project, or VLP, has a telephone hotline as well as a vast pool of pro bono attorneys and law students who meet with clients in different locations in the community, such as court buildings, community libraries, homeless shelters, a soup kitchen, a veterans' center, a local hospital and two schools. One of the largest areas of need, is housing, specifically the representation of clients facing eviction from their homes, says Sally Curran, executive director of the Volunteer Lawyers Project.

There are 7,000 cases filed each year in Syracuse City Landlord Tenant Court, she says, and of the more than 3,000 cases that lawyers' project volunteers worked on last year, nearly a third of them had to do with eviction. “Seventy-five percent of the time when we represent a client,” Curran says, “we either avoid or delay eviction, which means that family without our assistance might have been facing almost certain homelessness.”

If that happens, Curran points out, “it's incredibly disruptive.” Families go into emergency shelters, and their children miss school, or they relocate to other schools, and in many instances families lose almost all their possessions.

Another major area of need is family law. It represents roughly 40 percent of all VLP cases, Curran says, “so one of the first things I did was to begin developing a family court clinic where well-trained attorneys would assist clients with drafting petitions for custody, visitation, and child support.”

One such case is that of Linda Sepulveda, who had already sent two children off to college when her best friend passed away, leaving behind a 15-year-old son with special needs and an absent father who, in addition to Sepulveda, wanted custody of the child. Sepulveda has “a very, very big heart,” Curran says, but like most people, she doesn't know how to maneuver through the legal system. Sepulveda ultimately won the case, but the outcome may have been very different and the process more daunting if it had not been for the volunteer lawyers who helped her out. “They were wonderful,” she says. “I probably couldn't have [done] it without them.”

The number of legal minds volunteering for VLP has doubled since Say Yes made an initial \$40,000 investment in the legal aid program 3½ years ago. The Volunteer Lawyers Project now has a volunteer base of 480 pro bono attorneys and 200 law students as well as a staff of seven, instead of one, and an ever-increasing case load, one that included 3,100 closed cases last year, 2,600 the year before and 1,300 in 2013.

Since that initial investment, Say Yes has assisted VLP with an additional \$20,000 and the creation of a game plan for long-term sustainability. “They helped us make connections with the county,” Curran says, “so that we were able to replace some of that funding, and it gave us the boost we needed to be able to leverage those dollars to take us to a really different level.

“If it weren't for Say Yes,” she adds, “we definitely, without question, would not be where we are today,” addressing many of the obstacles that prevent at-risk youth in and around Syracuse from going to schools and getting not only a high school diploma but also a college degree.

“It's really about community empowerment,” Curran says. “If we can help people remove those barriers, then they are able to realize their full potential.”

## DREAM, SUCCEED, LEARN, GRADUATE

Another Say Yes cohort chapter that has had a strong impact on the lives of schoolchildren is in Harlem in New York City, where a mural proudly displayed at the entrance of the Say Yes office illustrates how important it is for young people, especially those in high-poverty schools, to have a well-rounded education that, in this case, includes a strong emphasis on the arts. When testing pressures are the highest, arts programs are the ones that suffer the most, says John Rogers, an education professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. Since testing pressures tend to be at their peak in high-poverty schools, he continues, the children in those schools are the ones who are most deprived of artistic and other forms of extracurricular programming.

To help compensate for that discrepancy, Lidia Torres, the Harlem Chapter's director, worked with the Say Yes students to create a mural, one that would tap into their imagination and inspire them to express what they think about life, education



and the Say Yes program. "The arts create a really powerful hook," she says. "We've found that once we identify what really sparks that student's interest and develop that talent, that becomes a really empowering tool for them."

And so it was with the painting of the Say Yes mural, which features, among other things, a tree emanating from a book and these validating words — "Dream," "Succeed," "Learn" and "Graduate."



## EPILOGUE

Say Yes to Education intends to take these successes — and all that the organization and others have learned about the power of expanded learning supports, particularly how they benefit students living in poverty — and create a powerful demonstration for the nation. Syracuse, Buffalo and Guilford County are just the start. Incorporating the lessons learned in helping these communities to develop and enhance enrichment programs and support services for at-risk youth, Say Yes intends to add at least one city to its roster by the end of 2017. The organization, which is currently engaging in the due diligence that will result in the selection of that community, hopes that its work across all its chapters will influence policy and serve as a blueprint for others interested in doing the same kind of work.

The selection of the new sites will resemble the recently completed process that took place in Guilford County, a search that began with a list of more than 100 possible destinations. Using a rubric with nearly 60 indicators, Say Yes leaders whittled the list down to 23, then three, then one. Guilford County emerged as the winner for several key reasons, says Gene Chasin, chief operating officer of Say Yes to Education. One is the school system's commitment to transparency and collaboration. Another is its already impressive array of expanded learning opportunities. Also important, he points out, is the abundance of local colleges and universities as well as the philanthropic community's ability to raise, in a little over a year, about half of the \$70 million needed to establish a scholarship endowment for high school graduates to attend any public college or university in North Carolina.

All of these components are necessary for putting the various pieces of the Say Yes strategy in place — the fiscal analytics, the student data system and the governing structures that will ultimately lead to a school system replete with people like

Clotilde Dedecker, Stephanie Peete, and the pro bono attorneys at the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc., people who are dedicated to making sure that at-risk youth receive the support and services they need to show up for school, stay in school and get both a high school and a college or other postsecondary degree.

That's also why the work of sixth-grade teacher Fred Hoffmann and Principal Kevin Wheat is so important to the young people who attend Allen Jay Preparatory Academy in Guilford County. Every song about math that gets students singing at the top of their lungs makes a difference, as does an extra 40 minutes of reading instruction, a morning rally aimed at boosting self-esteem and team spirit, and a simple call-and-response exercise that teaches children to sit up, listen and make eye contact. As Chasin says, it's all about making sure young people are engaged in school. If they feel like they belong, he says, if they feel good about what they're doing and learn to be confident in their accomplishments, they will do well in school. "It really is that simple."

# Videos

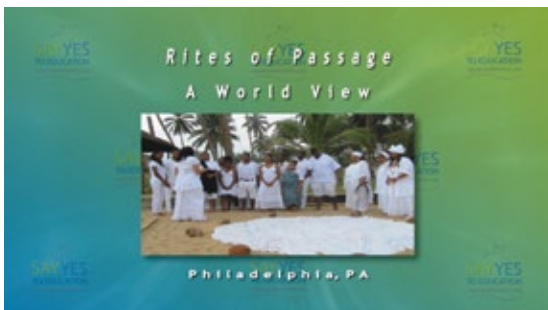
In partnership with the Ford Foundation, Say Yes commissioned five videos (each about six minutes in length) to use narrative and other storytelling techniques to explain the concept of expanded learning time to a general audience — and argue for a broad definition that encompasses not just extended time in the classroom but services in support of that effort. These videos were narrated by the award-winning broadcast journalist Jane Pauley.



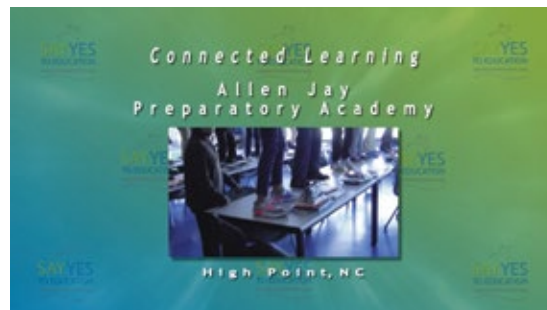
1. Say Yes Buffalo: The powerful role of family support services in removing barriers to academic achievement  
<https://vimeo.com/146316658>



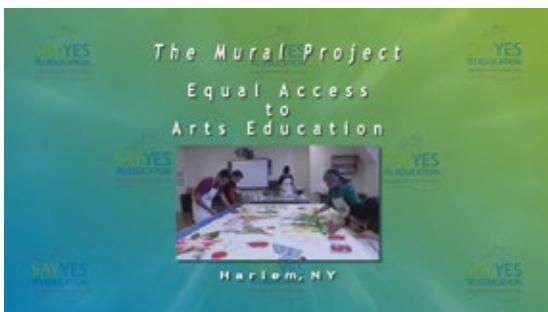
2. Say Yes Syracuse: How the efforts of school-based legal clinics can support families (and the learning process)  
<https://vimeo.com/153155084>



3. Say Yes Philadelphia in Africa: The ultimate field trip  
<https://vimeo.com/146315994>



4. Allen Jay Prep Academy in Guilford County, NC: Setting classroom lessons to song  
<https://vimeo.com/153155940>



5. Say Yes Harlem: The transformative impact of an after-school art project  
<https://vimeo.com/146317174>

# About Say Yes to Education

Say Yes to Education was founded in 1987 by money manager George Weiss, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania who boldly promised 112 sixth graders at a Philadelphia public school that he would pay to send them to college if they graduated high school. In the years since, Say Yes has evolved into a national nonprofit that helps organize and galvanize entire communities around the goals of every public school student not only graduating high school — but doing so prepared for a college or other postsecondary education, and with access to scholarships to make that education affordable. The organization works with nearly 140,000 public school students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Most are in communitywide chapters in the upstate New York cities of Syracuse (since 2008) and Buffalo (2012). More than 6,000 students have gone off to college with the support of Say Yes, most in the last three years. The organization announced the addition of its newest chapter, in Guilford County, North Carolina, which includes the cities of Greensboro and High Point, on September 17, 2015. The organization, which has already begun the screening process as it considers potential sites for its fourth community chapter, has smaller chapters in Harlem and Philadelphia.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.SAYYESTOEDUCATION.ORG](http://WWW.SAYYESTOEDUCATION.ORG)  
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