Getting There from Here:

Early Intervention Programs: A Background Report for the Hamilton Community Foundation

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Introduction

Over the last few decades there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of postsecondary education in Canada and globally. As a society we are moving from a mid-20th century idea of postsecondary education as "elite" to a new understanding of "mass" postsecondary education (Trow, 1973), and potentially to a newer view of postsecondary education as universal. The growing consensus is that postsecondary education is important to the economy, in providing the skilled workers required in the labour market of the 21st century, to the social and economic health of society, and to an individuals' ability to participate and contribute fully in society and labour market.

Given that premise, a tension arises as not everyone has the same equity of access to postsecondary education in Canada and therefore a large part of our society is currently being left out of the migration up and through postsecondary education.

The purpose of this report is to look at one programmatic approach to improving access among underrepresented groups, particularly low income and first generation youth. Early intervention programs (also called pre-college access programs or college outreach programs, primarily in the United States) are designed to help those youth who might otherwise not participate in postsecondary education get the resources, support and information they need to participate.

This report is the first of three reports commissioned by the Hamilton Community Foundation. The first report, below, will provide an overview of early intervention programs, the research and theory behind them, and how they support students from at risk or underrepresented backgrounds to graduate from high school and gain access to postsecondary education. The report uses 9 case studies, 8 in the United States and one in Canada, to illustrate the diverse ways that early intervention programs can function. Finally, this report looks at what evaluation research is available for these programs and what we can learn from this research.

The second report will place early intervention in the Hamilton context. Drawing on lessons learned from the first report and input from the community, it will provide three models that might work in the Hamilton community. In particular it will draw on research from other parts of the world, look at in-school interventions (such as charter schools and academic advancement programs) and programs that already exist in the Hamilton region.

The third report will more fully draw upon conversations with the community and further research in support of those conversations, to provide one proposed model that might work in the Hamilton community along with an evaluation framework and options and strategies for next steps.

Accessibility to Postsecondary Education

A great deal has been written about access to postsecondary education in Canada over the last decade[1]. Access in fact has become the word that defines much of the postsecondary agenda for governments, institutions, research organizations and advocacy groups. As participation in postsecondary has become the norm, rather than the exception, as the national focus on the knowledge economy grows and requires an increasingly educated citizenry, as aggregate attainment levels top OECD charts and continue to grow year over year (OECD, 2007), the question naturally starts to centre around who is *not* going, and why.

What becomes immediately apparent is that those who have the most difficulty generally in society also have the most difficulty accessing postsecondary education. Aboriginal youth (Malatest 2004; Mendelson, 2006), youth with disabilities (Chambers and Mahadeo , 2011), low income youth (Frenette, 2007; Deller and Oldford, 2011) and youth whose parents did not attend postsecondary, commonly now called first generation youth (Prairie Research Associates, 2005; Berger et al., 2007; Finnie et al., 2004), are less likely to attend postsecondary education. Also, youth from some visible minority groups seem to be less likely to attend (Abada et al, 2008) and youth from rural and remote locations are less likely to go to university (Andres and Looker, 2001).

In some cases the reasons may seem apparent, for rural and remote youth distance to the nearest university is problematic; for low income youth the costs of a four year degree may seem prohibitive. However, there is a growing realization in the research that despite programmatic attempts to address these needs (most notably with student financial assistance, but also with programs like online education and college to university transfer agreements) students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds still have limited access to postsecondary education.

One of the reasons for this may be that youth who do not attend postsecondary education tend to face a network of barriers, not a single simple barrier, and often the direct observable barrier (e.g., academic unpreparedness, lack of finances) is the result of a range of barriers that the youth was unable to negotiate from an early age. For example, Aboriginal youth face specific cultural barriers, those who do attend postsecondary education tend to be older, have a dependent or other family responsibilities, be less likely to have graduated high school, be low income and first generation (R.A. Malatest and Stonechild, 2008). As another example, first

[1] For the most recent literature reviews on this issue see Educational Policy Institute (2008), Mueller, Richard E. (2008), and Tandem Social Research Consulting (2007)

generation students are more likely to be low income, but also face lower expectations from their family, less access to informational and motivational supports, and thus are more likely to "select out" of the postsecondary path early, have less self-esteem and focus less on academic preparation for postsecondary, leading to the observable barrier of academic unpreparedness (Finnie and Mueller, 2009).

In fact, parental education is one of the largest determinants of postsecondary participation (Berger, Motte and Parkin, 2007; Drolet, 2005). A parent's participation in postsecondary education gives a child an early advantage. For youth whose parents attended postsecondary, it is more likely that postsecondary education is an expectation, the parent is on hand to offer advice about programs and possible institutions that the child might attend in the future, talk about their own experience and how it benefitted them, help the child figure out how postsecondary can help them achieve their goals, help them network with others in the community around postsecondary choices, get them the right information, etc. Parents who did not attend postsecondary are less able to offer the same foundation.

In his introduction to *More Student Success* (2007, p.3), the State Higher Executive Education Officers' recent publication on college outreach, Paul Lingenfelter put it this way, "children whose parents have participated in postsecondary education are automatically enrolled in a "program" that, early in life, exposes them to the advantages of higher education and the path to success. Children whose parents have not succeeded in postsecondary education need another way to get this information."

In the literature on access, the factors that determine participation in postsecondary education are usually summed up as follows:

- Parental education (largest determinant of PSE participation)
- Financial
- Academic achievement/preparedness
- Information and support
- Peer group influence
- Self-confidence/self-esteem

A number of researchers have warned against putting too much emphasis on financial barriers alone as parental expectations and academic preparedness have much more of a direct observable impact on participation (Berger and Motte, 2008; Frenette, 2007). However, the theme of financial barriers runs throughout most of the youth cohorts who do not attend. It seems to show up not as a credit constraint on entry to postsecondary education (credit is available in the form of student financial assistance once the youth has decided to attend), but in the form of an early anti-motivational device that persuades students from certain backgrounds that they are not able to access postsecondary (Palameta, B. & Voyer, J.P., 2010). As an added disincentive, some of the research shows that youth from low income families tend to overestimate the cost of postsecondary education and underestimate the economic benefit associated with attaining a postsecondary education - more so than their middle and high income peers. (Ipsos-Reid, 2004; Usher, 2005; Acumen, 2008)

What seems important here is that the network of observable and underlying barriers is probably not separable and the attempt to pull it apart and address only one barrier or obstacle, is not completely effective[2].

Similarly, although it seems a good idea to try to identify when to begin the process of addressing these barriers, it is hard to pin down a moment – that tipping point - when a youth makes that conscious decision to participate in postsecondary education, or not. That decision is unique to each individual and requires two things: it requires the initial support and momentum that allows the youth to believe it is possible for him/her to participate in postsecondary education (parental support and encouragement, information on how to proceed, self-esteem, the belief that they either have or can achieve the academic and financial resources they need to attend, the support of the school, etc.) and the ability to follow up on these beliefs (the availability of academic and financials supports, the availability of helpful information on how to proceed, the support of family, peers and school administrators, etc.).

The more barriers that a youth faces, the more difficult these processes will be. For example, while academic and financial supports may be available, if a youth does not know about them, or have encouragement to seek them out or access them, they are meaningless. A youth's motivation is affected by the encouragement and support they receive from their community, their peers, their school, and their parents.

The *Tipping Point* and the Theory behind Early Intervention

As noted, traditionally underrepresented youth are faced with various barriers to overcome in thinking about their future choices and opportunities for postsecondary education. Somewhere along the way, maybe around grade eight or nine, maybe earlier, youth from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds often consciously or unconsciously select out of the path to postsecondary education. They decide not to go, or that it is not for them, too hard, too

[2] Although it might be argued that this is exactly what student financial assistance programs do, and that these programs do have some effect in addressing the credit constraint of low income students, the fact is that low income students still do not attend postsecondary education in the same numbers as their higher income peers, points to the notion that there are deeper barriers that must be addressed if that is to change. That being said, it is not known what the participation rate of low income students would be if financial assistance were not available – although it is assumed it would be much lower - so the actual effect of that program cannot be absolutely measured.

expensive, too unrealistic, too far, or they simply never consider it as an option in the first place. Whatever the reasons, many of which may not even be well understood or articulated, they decide that the barriers to going on are too insurmountable to overcome.

One 2007 US study by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (Glover et al, 2007) has identified a potential difference in the way that “traditional” students and “underserved” students (defined for the purposes of the study as low income and/or first generation) identify decisions about postsecondary participation. The study which used focus groups of high school students to look at the question of how students prepared to go to postsecondary, suggests that while traditional students identify a long process for determining whether they will go to postsecondary, underserved students usually identify a moment in which they make the decision: A tipping point.

Early intervention programs tend to address that “tipping point”[3] by assembling a variety of interventions in one program with the hope that the package of incentives and motivations will have the effect of addressing the network of barriers and tip the individual student (back) toward thinking of postsecondary education as a possible and achievable pathway.

Early Intervention Program Case Studies

In the early 2000s, some work was initiated by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and a handful of provincial governments to create pilot programs to test what types of early interventions would work in Canada. One of these programs, *Future to Discover*, piloted in New Brunswick and Manitoba, focused on the interaction between financial incentives and career counseling and preparation (Ford et al, 2012). Another pilot project, in British Columbia, tested the use of accelerated academic preparation and support in the classroom (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2010). Two more pilots, in Manitoba and at the University of Victoria, tested packages of incentives specifically targeted at Aboriginal students (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2008).

Another Canadian early intervention initiative that is getting a lot of attention is Pathways to Education which began in the Toronto area of Regent Park (which will be discussed in more detail below).

While these programs have certainly shown some success (in particularly the Pathways to Education program), they are few in number and in many ways in their infancy (Deller and Thomas, 2013). The real long term lessons are from the US where early intervention programs have been in place for upwards of four decades and number over 1,100 at last count (in 2001).

[3] For a full discussion of the concept of a tipping point see Malcolm Gladwell’s The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference.

In the US, early intervention programs are an integral part of the accessibility landscape. They exist at the federal, state, institution and community level and they usually focus on helping traditionally underrepresented or at risk youth get through high school and into postsecondary education. While federal funding provide some of the support for the programs, much of the funding comes from other sources such as private foundations, individual postsecondary institutions, school boards and state governments.

As part of its review of early intervention programs in 1999, the College Board developed the *National Survey of Outreach Programs*. The intent was to develop a full directory of all US programs. In the Educational Policy Institute's 2001 *Outreach Program Handbook* for the College Board, they list some 1,091 programs, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guan and Micronesia.

Similar to the Canadian profile, other countries have developed early intervention programs (e.g., Mexico, Australia, UK) with mixed success (the UK cut funding to its early intervention programs when the current government came to power), but few have the history, breath of programs, and evaluation literature that exist in the US.

The second report in this series will look more closely at models from other countries to determine if there are other lessons that can be learned. This report focuses on the body of literature and expertise that has primarily developed south of the border.

Following is an examination of nine early intervention programs; 8 from the United States, and one from Canada.

These programs were chosen as case studies for three reasons.

First, 5 of the programs have undertaken an external review of their program. Of the approximately 1,100 US programs described by the Educational Policy Institute (2001) in their College Board Review, there is a consensus that only a handful has undertaken thorough evaluations of their programs that allow them to track students, evaluate their success, and understand better the strengths and weakness of their own programs.

Second, many of the programs are repeatedly mentioned in the research literature as being examples of programs that have evolved and grown as a result of ongoing internal and external evaluations (Cunningham et al., 2003; Gardana, 2001; Educational Policy Institute , 2001; L'Orange, 2008; Verzana and Rainwater, 2008). A few of the programs, in particular Pathways to Education in Canada, the Harlem Children's' Zone and the Posse Foundation have become media darlings and attracted the attention of the Canadian Federal government, and the Obama administration respectively.

Finally, these nine programs were chosen because they take slightly different approaches to early intervention, based on the needs of the different states or communities, and their specific environments at the time of development. These differences illustrate the premise, important for those attempting to learn from these programs, that the program must be tailored to the needs and resources of the community or region.

The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP)

California has a wide range of early intervention, outreach and college preparation programs which have evolved over the years in reaction to the very high (50%) attrition rate in postsecondary education. As these programs have evolved, the trend over time has been toward programs that emphasize academic preparation.

The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP), created in 1978 by the California Legislature, has as its mandate helping students increase their academic preparedness for enrolling in postsecondary education as well as providing information about postsecondary education and financial assistance.

Cal-Soap is a network of consortia through the state (15 at present time) designed to raise awareness about PSE enrolment and financial aid, as well as raising the achievement levels of students from low income and first generation backgrounds.

Each consortia is be made up of multiple partners including school districts, public and private postsecondary institutions – including independent and state universities as well as community colleges – and community groups and organizations. Cal-SOAP takes the lead in coordinating outreach through each of the consortia, with the intention of reducing duplication and providing more focus and efficiency in the system. All Cal-SOAP programs receive state funds which must be matched by individual consortia.

Although coordinated at the state level, the community-based approach of the consortia allows for services to be tailored to meet the specific needs of the local community. The based consortia distribute services to the region based on its needs. Services include:

- Tutoring;
- Peer mentoring;
- College and career advisement;
- college access and admissions counselling;
- SAT/ACT preparation;
- College tours;
- Financial aid workshops and grants.

The program provides services to eligible students at the elementary, secondary and community college levels. Students must be from low income households, be first generation college attendees, or be from schools in geographic regions with traditionally low postsecondary enrolment rates.

Interestingly, while academic preparedness was the original focus of the program, the consortia now focus primarily on providing guidance and information regarding access to student aid (illustrated by the fact that they are now coordinated out of university and college student aid offices), although tutoring and peer mentoring are still a key component of the program and program alumni are encouraged to re-engage with the program as peer mentors.

The Florida College Reach out Program (CROP)

The College Reach out Program (CROP) was established by the state of Florida in 1983 to encourage youth from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to apply for postsecondary education. The original program was a pilot project which, after evidence of some success in meetings its goals, was placed into statute in 1989 and given increased funding.

Under the CROP criteria, institutions may apply to the state for grants to establish early intervention programs. Activities differ from site to site but must meet the criteria of preparing traditionally underrepresented youth for postsecondary education. Activities often include:

- Career and personal counseling;
- Tutoring;
- Community outreach;
- Standardized test preparation;
- Week long summer residency programs;
- College campus tours;
- Motivational seminars;
- Life skills seminars;
- Mentoring;
- Scholarship assistance;
- Cultural and academic enrichment field trips.

Parents are involved in two ways in CROP activities. First, they must agree, with their children, to abide by the CROP rules and schedules and second, regularly scheduled parent conferences are held by CROP staff to keep them engaged and educated about various CROP activities in which their children are participating.

Specific eligibility criteria for the programs are set by each site but students, between grades 6 and 12, must meet certain economic criteria. Some sites require that students have specific backgrounds (e.g., first generation to attend postsecondary education), others use different criteria such as enrolment in the free or reduced lunch programs.

Sites also set their own academic requirements, including maintaining a cumulative 2.5 GPA, not being expelled, suspended, participation in a dropout prevention program, or score below average on a writing exam.

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) was founded by Geoffrey Canada as a one-block pilot project in Harlem, New York in the 1990s. HCZ was designed to address the needs of a specific community (Harlem) in order to achieve the ultimate goal of post-secondary success for children in the geographic region. Early success led to the start of a 10-year strategic plan in 2000, expanding periodically and now serving 100 blocks within the Harlem area. HCZ is a non-profit organization that funds and operates a neighbourhood based system of education and social services for the children of low income families.

The program is designed on the assumption that it takes both effective achievement-oriented schools and strong social and community services to support the educational achievement of children in poverty. As such, program interventions fall into two broad categories: academic achievement interventions that begin in pre-kindergarten, and community interventions that include a fitness program, foster care prevention programs, tenant associations, one on one counselling with families, an employment and technology centre, parenting classes and various health related programs.

Academic interventions for students and their parents include the following:

- Baby College, Three Year Old Journey: An intervention program which starts from birth, teaching young parents from the neighbourhood how to create supportive and literacy rich environments.
- Harlem Gems: A pre-kindergarten program aimed at preparing young children to enter school.
- Promise Academy K-12 Charter Schools: Admission is determined by lottery, with preference given to those who have gone through the Baby College and Three Year Old Journey and those who live in the neighbourhood.
- Peacemakers: Elementary school program. "Peacemakers" are staff who act as teacher's aides during the day, and counsellors for after school programs, which generally involve tutoring and homework help.
- A Cut Above: After school program for middle school students. Program includes tutoring, standardized test preparation, and high school entrance preparation. There are also gendered discussion groups ("Boys to Men" and "Her World") aimed at fostering social and emotional development in a group setting. Parental involvement is integrated into the program through parental workshops.

- Learn to Earn: After school and summer program for high school students. Focuses on work placements and financial literacy, as well as time management and organizational skills. The program offers entrepreneurship activities as well.
- College Preparatory Program: Tutoring, assistance with College applications, Financial Aid applications. Also includes extracurricular activities of all kinds to help foster extracurricular interests going into post-secondary.

I Had a Dream (IHAD)

Founded in 1986 by businessman Eugene Lang after the success of his small local program in an East Harlem public school, I Had a Dream (IHAD) is a national program targeted at helping lower income children graduate high school and succeed in post-secondary application.

Although a national program, each IHAD program is localized to meet the specific needs of its “Dreamers”. Local programs are launched by sponsors (individual or group) who decide to take on a group of 50-100 students in a given community. While programs may differ in many ways, a common feature of all programs is the “guarantee” that upon completion of the program tuition assistance will be provided to “dreamers”. The amount of assistance varies by program site.

Students do not apply to the program, and every student in a sponsored class receives the same supports.

A national office, located in New York City, works to identify successes and failures of programs across the country in order to share best practices, as well as leading research and development of innovative programming to disseminate to affiliate programs. The national office also manages partnerships with institutions across the country and links them with local affiliate programs.

All local programs involve the following participants:

- The Dreamers and Their Families - The group of children sponsored by an "I Have A Dream" program, and their parents, guardians, siblings, and other significant relatives who share their goal of achieving higher education;
- The Program Coordinator - A full-time paid staff member who serves both as coordinator of program activities and as mentor to the Dreamers;
- The Sponsor - An individual or group of individuals who commit 10-15 years to a group of young people. Working with the local "I Have A Dream" Foundation, the Sponsor is often responsible for the program's funding and elements of its operation. The Sponsor also maintains personal relationships with the Dreamers throughout the life of the program;
- The Community - Local institutions, organizations and corporations that provide support, meeting and recreational space, resources, volunteers and expertise to the program, making it possible to offer Dreamers a range of services without incurring prohibitive costs;
- The Program - A wide range of educational, mentoring, counseling, employment, cultural, community service, and recreational opportunities provided by "I Have A Dream" and their partner organizations;

- The Resources - The financial commitment by the Sponsor or other local donors to ensure that the promise of "I Have A Dream" is fulfilled;

"Promise" Programs

There is a group of early intervention programs in the US sometimes described as "promise programs" and sometimes described as "early commitments of financial aid" programs (pathway to college network). *The Kalamazoo Promise* and *The Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program* both fall under this umbrella but have unique features that make them worth looking at separately. What makes them similar is that the focus of the program is the financing promised to students if they complete the program.

The *Pathways to College Network* defines Promise Programs as follows: 1) the programs make a *guarantee* of aid [to students who complete successfully]; 2) they designate aid only for economically disadvantaged students, and 3), they identity and enroll students in elementary, middle, or early high school – well before the students graduate from high school. (Blanco, unpublished)

Some of these programs however, are state funded and administered (such as the Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program), and some are situated in a community (such as the Kalamazoo Promise). One of the greatest differences between community based programs and state based programs is that the community based programs often do not have an income threshold for participants, but take in all students in a particular catchment area. State based programs on the other hand, usually have some way of identifying low income students and are able to target the program to those most in need.

This paper focuses on Kalamazoo and Indiana for two reasons. First, they are well known examples of two different ways of structuring these programs and are fairly representative of how Promise Programs work; and second, they have both been externally evaluated and featured in research papers and thus there is more information available on these two programs than there is on some of the other Promise Programs.

The Indiana Twenty-first Century Scholarship Program

The Indiana Twenty-first Century Scholarship Program was established in 1990 by the state legislature for the express purpose of increasing the high school graduation and postsecondary education participation of low income youth. The development of the program was part of a wider public policy push to have more college graduates in Indiana.

21st century scholars program is an all-inclusive program in which students must enroll in grade 7 or 8. Requirements include Indiana residence and living in a low-income or foster care household.

Students must fulfill certain requirements throughout their high school career, the reward for which is up to four years of post-secondary tuition paid for by the state. These requirements are as follows:

1. Graduate with an Indiana High School Diploma from a state-accredited high school.
2. Participate in a Scholar Success Program that helps students plan, prepare and pay for college success.
3. Achieve a cumulative high school GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
4. Not use illegal drugs or alcohol, or commit a crime or delinquent act.
5. Apply for admission to an eligible Indiana college or university as a high school senior.
6. Apply on time for student financial aid (by March 10th of the student's senior year of high school).

The Program has some interesting features. From grades 9 through 12, students are charged with completing certain tasks relating to a particular aspect of post-secondary enrollment. These are categorized as "Plan", "Prepare", and "Pay". For instance, the task for "Plan" in grade 11 is to visit a college campus. The task for "Pay" in grade 12 is to file for financial aid. The task for "Prepare" in grade 10 is to gain some workplace experience.

Parents are also encouraged to help students complete these requirements.

To support students in the program, there are 16 regional offices in Indiana which provide services such as tutoring, mentoring, college visits, application assistance and activities for parents. Further to these services, information about student financial assistance and college planning is mailed to the students' homes periodically throughout the program.

Kalamazoo Promise

Announced in 2005, the Kalamazoo Promise guarantees full college scholarships to potentially every student in the 10,500 student Kalamazoo Public School (KPS) district. The creation of the Kalamazoo Promise was driven by an economic development agenda to revitalize the city and the region. The scholarship fund was established by a group of anonymous donors who see this as a means of promoting economic development.

To that end, The Kalamazoo Promise scholarship allocation of funds is based not on merit or need, but on place – in this case, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Beginning with the class of 2006 and continuing indefinitely any student graduating from the district's high schools who has been continuously enrolled in and resided in the district since kindergarten will receive a scholarship covering 100 percent of tuition and mandatory fees at any of Michigan's public colleges or universities. Graduates who have attended a public school and lived in the district for four years will receive a 65 per cent scholarship with a sliding scale for those in between. To be eligible, students must maintain a 2.0 GPA in their college courses and make regular progress toward a degree.

Pathways to Education (Regent Park)

Founded in 2001, Pathways to Education Canada (Pathways) is based on the premise that improving secondary school completion rates in low income neighborhoods requires supports that stretch outside the regular classroom. The program model compasses four pillars of assistance under the umbrella of financial, academic, social and advocacy support. Services are offered throughout secondary school to all students within the catchment area. The program originated in Toronto's Regent Park Health Centre, which in 1999 began conducting research to improve the neighbourhood secondary school completion rate and reduce neighborhood violence. Today Pathways operates in twelve communities across Canada (including Hamilton), with programs in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

Academic supports take the form of after school tutoring in core academic subjects four nights per week.

Social support is offered by volunteers who run group mentoring activities to help students with their social skills, problem solving and career planning.

Financial assistance aims to alleviate both short term and long term barriers to completing secondary school and pursing higher education. Students at the Regent Park site receive transportation tokens, while students at other sites may receive hot lunches. Students are provided with $1000 for every year they participate in the program, up to a maximum of $4000, payable to the college or university of their choice.

Advocacy support is provided through student parent support workers (SPSWs) who work one on one with students to help bridge connections between the students, their parents, school administrators, teachers and community agencies. The SPSW serve as counselors, advocates, confidants, social workers and mediators. Regularly scheduled meetings with the SPSW provide an opportunity for students to discuss issues, review grades, attendance, PSE options, and receive transportation tokens. Each SPSW is assigned to approximately 50 students.

Pathways (Regent Park) is open to all students who are of secondary school age within the Regent Park catchment area.

The Posse Scholarship Foundation

The Posse Scholarship Foundation is a national program, founded by Deborah Bial in New York in 1989. Bail, who worked in college access at the time, reportedly overhead a young drop out say: "I never would have dropped out of college if I had my posse with me". The Posse Foundation works with public high schools to identify students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential that may be overlooked by traditional college selection processes. The Foundation creates supportive multicultural teams – posses – of up to 10 students. The Foundation's partner colleges and universities award Posse Scholars four year, full tuition leadership scholarships.

The stated objective of the Posse Foundation is to:

1. To expand the pool from which top colleges and universities can recruit outstanding young leaders from diverse backgrounds.
2. To help these institutions build more interactive campus environments so that they can be more welcoming for people from all backgrounds.
3. To ensure that Posse Scholars persist in their academic studies and graduate so they can take on leadership positions in the workforce.

The Posse Program is slightly different from the other intervention programs identified here on two counts: First, while the program starts in high school, it focuses on success in college and university; and second, the target population for the program are students who are already identified as academic and community leaders, but who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and need some extra support making it into and through college and university.

The interventions of the posse program are as follows:

- The Dynamic Assessment Process: Evaluation method used by Posse to find youth who might be missed by traditional assessment criteria but whom it is believed will succeed in a post-secondary setting. The assessment focuses on social and leadership skills. Students are nominated for the evaluation process through their high schools in cities where Posse operates.
- Pre-Collegiate Training: Chosen students (Posse Scholars) are put into groups, led by staff, and are given exercises to help prepare them for post-secondary application. Activities include team-building, cross-cultural communication, leadership development, and academic workshops.
- Campus Program: Mentors are assigned to campuses where Posse Scholars attend. Mentors meet with the students weekly as a group and individually every other week. In addition, a Posse staff member visits with Posse Scholars and Mentors four times a year. There is also an annual retreat where Posse Scholars address issues they feel are important on campus.
- Career Program: Posse Foundation is linked to 150+ partner companies to provide Internships, Career Services, and an Alumni Network for post-secondary graduates who are Posse Scholars.
- Posse Access: Online database of high school students who were nominated but not accepted to the Posse Foundation's program. Students can opt in to having their information shared with Posse's partner institutions to be considered for regular admission.
- Specialized Initiatives: Posse Foundation also has specialized programs and funding for STEM students, Veterans, and for building civic engagement.

The Rhode Island College Crusade

The Rhode Island College Crusade (originally the Rhode Island Children's' Crusade) was developed in 1991 to increase the postsecondary participation rates of low income youth. It is supported by the state and by a federal grant. The program focuses on academic and other programmatic supports for its students, but also provides tuition incentives. Students enroll in the program as early as grade 6 (although the original Children's Crusade started in grade 3).

The program offers a wide variety of supports through volunteers who are assigned to different schools and monitor the progress of the students. As students' progress through the program they are offered the supports they need including:

- Earned Scholarships: Specific activities and programs geared towards preparing middle and high school students for post-secondary, such as after school programs, reading/writing programs, advisory programs, day camps. Hours of program participation are tabulated and put towards a particular scholarship (e.g. 420+ hours entitles a student to up to $2,858 a year for a two year college).
- Family Workshops: Workshops designed to inform parents on how to best support their children for entry into and success in a post-secondary program.
- Advisory: Local advisors associated with the program are located in middle and high schools throughout the state, primarily in low-income school district.

The Crusade has built into the program a network of outreach programs in Rhode Island (the College Access Alliance of Rhode Island (CAARI) that supports students in preparing for postsecondary education.

The program has evolved over time, from a program that served more than 20,000 students to a smaller more focused program that takes in 500 students a year and offers them intensive, individualized programming based on their specific needs.

Cutting across the Programs: A Look at Common Program Components

Although each of the programs described above serve different communities and use different approaches to early intervention, the similarities in interventions are obvious. In fact, the interventions can be fit into four broadly defined categories:

- Financial
- Academic
- Information
- Support/Counseling

Although all programs illustrated in this report offer interventions under every category, the categories do not have equal weight and different state and community programs emphasis different categories depending on their program goal, the evolution and the delivery of the program.

Financial Incentives

Programs like the Posse Scholars' Foundation and the Promise Programs (Indiana and Kalamazoo) have the strongest emphases on financial assistance (identified as either a scholarship or a promise of assistance for PSE), but the majority of early intervention programs have some form of financial incentive or support - usually focused on paying for part or all of tuition, and sometimes subsidizing other higher education costs as well such as books and other materials. Some programs, such as Pathways to Education offer financial supports during high school. The Regent Park site offers public transit fare so students can get to school each day and the Winnipeg site offers hot lunches to students who come to tutoring sessions.

As the majority of early intervention programs are focused on low income students who are assumed to have some form of financial barrier to continuing on to postsecondary education, financial incentives are usually, but not always, a part of the early intervention package. Most programs at the very least provide participating students with the support and information they need to apply for financial assistance. In a number of US programs where colleges and universities are a partner in the program, tuition, in full or in part, is the institutional contribution to the early intervention project. Florida has taken this approach by asking postsecondary institutions to contribute matching funds to the programs they deliver. These funds have often come in the form of tuition waivers. The Posse Program also relies on partnerships with universities and colleges to provide scholarship funds.

Financial components are often in the form of scholarships or tuition money promised to students who successfully complete the program and enroll in postsecondary education. Sometimes the financial incentive is scaled, in Indiana the amount of tuition a student can get depends upon the difficulty of the curriculum they take in high school (the harder the curriculum, the more tuition they are eligible to receive). In Rhode Island, students accumulate credits toward tuition by participating in different activities.

Florida and California do not put as much emphasis on financial incentives as Indiana and Rhode Island. This may be linked to the fact that Florida, and particularly California, have lower tuition levels for state public institutions than many other states (Cunningham et al., 2003). Indiana, on the other hand, with slightly higher (but certainly not the highest) state institution tuition has as the centerpiece of its program a large tuition waiver.

Financial incentives can also sometimes mean funding for current in-program needs. Although this does not seem to be a common feature of US programs, they are sometimes linked to students who are eligible for free lunch programs, implicitly using in-program financial supports to sustain long term academic goals.

It should be remembered that most students that are eligible for an early intervention program would also be eligible for some form of student financial assistance. Therefore, these incentives are above and beyond the loans and grants that are part of the student financial assistance package. There is a tie, as well, to information distribution and mentoring, as it usually these processes that help low income students in early intervention programs understand how to access the student financial assistance system. In fact, Indiana explicitly links the two processes by requiring students in their early intervention program to apply for student financial assistance as one of the requisites for eligibility.

Academic Achievement/Preparedness

The trend in US programs is toward more of a focus on academic achievement in addition to the basic provision of information on college requirements and student financial assistance. This reflects the understanding that getting students simply enrolled in postsecondary education is not adequate if they do not have the appropriate academic preparedness and skill requirements to stay in postsecondary education and complete their studies.

Academic components can be anything from tutoring to pre-college on campus programs to a requirement to keep grades above a certain average, to an enriched curriculum for students in the program. Programs tend to be leaning toward the concept of expecting more and higher academic achievement from participating students, in return for which they provide the support needed for students to excel (through tutoring, etc) and the rewards for high achievement (usually through financial incentives such as tuition waivers).

Most of the programs explicitly focus on academic preparation for postsecondary. A goal that addresses both the need for academic preparation to get into PSE, and the problem of high attrition rates in college. Programs like Indiana, Kalamazoo and some of the Florida CROP sites take a slightly different approach by creating a benchmark GPA (usually 2.0 or 2.5) as a criterion for staying in the program and receiving the financial incentive.

Academic preparedness is not just grades however. A growing amount of anecdotal and evaluation evidence suggests that academic pre-college preparedness is greatly enhanced by building in a component that gives the participant some contact with a college campus, either by attending college courses for high school credit, or by spending some time on campus during the summer in various forms of academic preparedness “camps”, or by having a peer mentor who graduated successfully from the same program and went on to postsecondary studies (e.g., Cal-Soap). Rhode Island, Indiana and Florida all put some emphasis on building in elements that facilitate the students spending some time on college campuses. The ability of the student to see themselves on a college campus is thought to have a “tipping point” effect for some students.

Information

Information on college applications and requirements, applying for student financial assistance and expectations for standardized testing to get into certain programs, is a core component in most early intervention programs. Many of the US state programs (e.g., Cal-SOAP, Florida CROP, Rhode Island College Crusade, Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program) evolved from a simpler starting point, where providing information was the mainstay of their efforts, to a more sophisticated mix of components. These programs have kept their information component as being an important foundation piece for student access, but have added other components which are thought to have more of an effect on high risk students.

It makes intuitive sense that students who are making certain decisions about their future are helped by easy access to information about their choices and the requirements attached to those choices. In the best case scenario, easy access to good information can provide part of the motivation a student needs to "tip" toward going on to postsecondary.

What is important to note about the delivery of information, is that most research suggests that the prevision of information on its own, has almost no effect in changing high school graduation rates or participation in PSE. Anecdotally, it seems that most programs have evolved their information distribution so that it includes a parental workshop component (HCZ), or a one on one counselling with a mentor or social worker (Pathways), or an ongoing relationship with a mentor (Cal-Soap, IHAD), etc. In other words, information is distributed in such a way that it "sticks" because it is part of a broader relationship.

Support and Counseling

A variety of forms of support and counseling, from guidance counselors, to community support, tutoring, mentoring, peer mentoring and parental support, are built into most successful early intervention programs. As noted above, most programs combine the distribution of information and the expectation of academic success with various supports to achieve the expected results. Some programs, such as Indiana, Rhode Island and HCZ, take the approach of providing a variety of supports which are individualized to each student depending on their specific needs and or their age.

Others, such as Pathways, Florida, Posse Program and IHAD, provide a variety of supports but focus more on the cohort of students as a community going through the program together. In fact, the theme of community support and coordination features in all the programs, but can clearly be seen in California's encouragement of program graduates to return as mentors, and programs like IHAD, HCZ, Pathways and Rhode Island, which focus on involving as much of the community as possible in supporting the programs and the students in the programs.

The literature increasingly supports the concept that parental involvement and community support are both key to the successful completion of the program by participations. Building in parental support has the added benefit of helping to create the social capital capacity in the home that is often lacking for students who are first generation to aspire to postsecondary education. All the programs illustrated above have an element of parental involvement; some by making parental involvement part of the structure of the program, and some by building in parental conferences and commitment to the rules as part of the program.

There is a growing consensus, supported by individual program evaluations, that parental engagement in the early intervention process is critical to the continued success of the student. However, it is also acknowledged that parental engagement can be one of the most challenging components of a program.

A number of programs attempt to address community issues by offering students supports and activities some that are directly related to academic achievement, and some that are more about increasing pride in the community. These might include after school and weekend clubs, homework clubs, neighbourhood mentors and role models. Other programs remove students from the neighbourhood and place them in a more educated environment - often a college or university campus. These interventions are often effective for the individual student, but do little for the community (Gandara, 2002) IHAD theoretically requires a community with a program to provide resources including meeting spaces, community facilities for tutoring and mentoring, volunteers and community expertise- evaluators have found that this has not always been the case, and in fact communities have seen the IHAD programs as being funded adequately by the sponsors, with no need of extra community help.

In summary, each of these component themes finds its way into most early intervention programs. At the same time, as the network of barriers and their attendant effects are unique to each student, an individualized approach also makes sense. However, any added complexity must be balanced with an ability to implement and operationalize a program that reaches as many students as possible. In other words, the concept of one arm around one child must be balanced with the need to make a program as simple and systemic as possible.

Evaluation and What Works

So, how do we know what works? How do we know which interventions and/or programs have the most effect and which show limited success? Many program founding stories are premised on a small experiment that addressed a specific challenge, and grew organically as people increasingly came to believe in the successes they were seeing first hand (IHAD, HCZ, Posse Foundation, Kalamazoo Promise). Others were founded through research into what should work or what seemed to work elsewhere or should work intuitively, according to people who work in the community health or PSE access fields (Cal-SOAP, Florida CROP, Pathways to Education).

However, external evaluations are not all that common. The Educational Policy Institute in its 2001 College Board Review of US early intervention programs, found that 94% of US programs claimed to have conducted evaluations, but on further investigation few of these programs actually tracked students longitudinally or did thorough empirical self-study (see also Gardana, 2001, who had the same findings). While these studies are slightly dated now, a review of the current evaluation literature shows that they have not become significantly more commonplace or sophisticated, when they are done.

Of the nine programs identified in this paper, five have published recent external evaluations, and this evaluation rate is higher than in the overall early intervention community (an external evaluation was one of the criteria used for selecting case studies for this report). Some programs have annual reports that track and follow up with program alumni (Posse Program; Florida CROP; Cal-Soap) other programs have site evaluations but have difficulty evaluating the broader program (IHAD; Cal-Soap). There are legitimate reasons for the difficulty in evaluating programs. A lack of data is a common problem. Many programs simply do not have the data infrastructure built into the program that allows them to track students longitudinally.

One element of many early intervention programs that makes tracking students particularly difficult is the trend towards earlier beginning cohorts. In existing programs that conduct qualitative evaluations through interviews and surveys, staff, students and parents all indicate on a frequent basis that they would have liked to have had information and supports available to them earlier in their schooling. Some programs are beginning interventions as early as kindergarten (e.g., Harlem Children's Zone; I Had a Dream) others in grade 6 (e.g., Rhode Island College Crusade) or early high school (e.g., Pathways, Florida CROP, Cal-Soap). However, the longer a student is in the program, and the more institutional types they attend, the more difficult the tracking becomes.

As we shall see below, even programs that do have sufficient data, rely on either high school graduation rates or college/university participation rates as a way of assessing success. This data is sometimes compared to the graduation and participation rates of comparable youth cohort in similar demographic populations and sometimes it is longitudinal, tracking the increase in graduation rates or postsecondary participation rates in the same neighbourhood over the introduction of the program. Sometimes evaluations are able to actually track program participants through college/university.

In a fairly typical evaluation format, Fogg and Harrington's analysis of the Rhode Island College Crusade (2013) uses three sets of data to show 1) an increase in postsecondary participation for crusaders over the previous five years; 2) an increase in retention for first year students who went through the programs; and 3) most significantly, a positive comparison of first year retention for students who went through the program, and the overall first year population for the same colleges and universities.

As another example, Florida CROP's most recent published annual report noted that: compared to the random sample of non-program students from similar backgrounds, overall, CROP program participants had higher high school graduation rates, did better on standardized tests, and had higher postsecondary education participation rates (Florida, 2006).

Evaluations of Early Intervention programs rarely assess the impact of different elements, program aspects or interventions within one program. This is either because the data is not available, or because the philosophy of the program is dependent upon the idea that all the elements are intertwined in such a way as to make assessment of unique elements almost impossible or meaningless.

There are a few notable exceptions to this rule. An early evaluation of the Rhode Island College Crusade (at the time called the Children's' Crusade) was conducted in 2000-2001 by Brandeis University. The evaluators used among other things, interviews with current and former students in the programs. They found that 89% of students in the program applied for postsecondary education**.** However, more interestingly, students surveyed reported a decreasing dependence on the program with age (84% of 7th graders, 65% of 9th graders and 46% of 12th graders reported that the program made a difference in improving their chances of enrolling in postsecondary education). They also found that students, when asked what their main incentive was for staying in the program, reported the financial incentives in grades 7 and 9, but increasingly reported that it was family encouragement by grade 12, with financial incentives falling to second place (Cunningham, 2003).

Another exception is to be found in a series of evaluations that have been conducted on the Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program. This is in large part because the Lumina Foundation has decided to use it as a test case for certain programmatic interventions and has put considerable funding into evaluating how the program works.

Indiana's evaluations were able to show that taking the Indiana scholars' pledge not only improved the odds that students would achieve academically, but also motivated students and their parents to engage in academic counseling, events and college visits, career planning activities, and academic preparation activities (St. John et al, 2008).

The Kalamazoo Promise has also undergone a series of evaluations through a partnership with the Upjohn Institute. Both sets of evaluations (Lumina and UpJohn) show the programs to be successful in regards to increased graduation rates, PSE participation and retention rates (Miller-Adams and Fiore, 2013; St. John et al, 2013). However, the evaluation results also highlight the differences in philosophy between the two Promise Programs. As part of their program, Indiana put in place various counselling, academic and social supports to help students achieve the results they needed in order to access the scholarship funds.

Kalamazoo's program is significantly simpler. It consists almost exclusively of the scholarship "guarantee", with no additional supports. What appears to have happened in Kalamazoo, is that many of the supports students needed to achieve academically have grown up organically in the school system and in the community. This has been understood, not surprisingly, in Kalamazoo as a success for the program (Miller-Adams ad Fiore, 2013).

Another challenge to evaluation is the lack of resources; if a program is underfunded and/or under staffed it can be difficult to make evaluation a priority over the running of the program. Finally, there can be a resistance to evaluation philosophically. Sometimes program staff, founders or funders believe in the program's efficacy because they are close to the "success stories", see them every day, and have no interest in, and sometimes are even hostile to, an external review.

For instance, both IHAD and Cal-Soap have conducted individual site evaluations that showed program success based on graduation rates and postsecondary participation rates. However, when broader program evaluations were attempted they encountered difficulties. In California, only 3 of the 15 program site coordinators agreed to be interviewed for the evaluation, a challenge that was compounded by the fact that each program site collected data in a slightly different way so an aggregate analysis was not possible (Songco, 2010).

Similarly, there have been a number of evaluations of individual IHAD program sites, with mixed results. Some evaluations did not seem to show a significant effect on the academic achievement of the participants (Rhodes et al, 2006) others showed a much more dramatic effect (Arete Corporation, 2001) the greatest effect was shown in an evaluation of two IHAD programs in Chicago, which differed from other IHAD programs in that they had additional federal funding, developed a strong trusting relationship with the community, and (possibly most importantly, see the results of the HCZ evaluation below) pulled the participants out of public school and placed them in parochial (private) schools (Rhodes et al, 2006). Other than the Chicago evaluation, it is unclear why some programs had greater effects than others.

Interestingly, the Justice department which partially funds the IHAD program, commissioned a meta-evaluation of the entire program in 2006. The evaluation team cautioned however that earlier evaluators of the program had met resistance from sponsors who saw evaluation as unnecessary and burdensome. They asked for some early efforts before the evaluation began to determine whether or not there would be cooperation from sponsors (Rhodes et al, 2006). It is notable that this resistance was such an impediment to evaluation, that the evaluators cited it in the introduction to their preliminary report. It is also notable that I could find no evidence that the evaluation ever took place.

Other problems with evaluations include the constant evolution (or devolution) of programs, which means that few student cohorts received the same program experience from year to year.

As new components are added or new emphasis is given to components that seem intuitively to work, a cohort of students going through the program may be experiencing a different program than the cohort from the year before. Therefore, it becomes particularly difficult to assess a program success over time. This constant state of evolution is generally positive and in keeping with the research on what works in student access (for example a growing shift from a focus on information and student aid to a focus on academic preparedness and parental involvement), but it does make the programs more difficult to evaluate.

Rhode Island and Indiana both attempted to document the effect of shifting from more universal programs to programs which focused more individual attention on a smaller group of participants. Both states reported that these shifts were successful both in relation to making the program more cost efficient and therefore sustainable, and in relation to the affect the shift had on the eventual success of the participating students.

Another challenge is controlling for other factors, both positive and negative, that might affect educational attainment and program success. Without a better understanding of the behavior and characteristics of individual students as they are tracked year over year throughout the program, the effect of factors unrelated to the program (e.g., death or injury in the family, move to a different school, loss of family income) are not taken into account in the success or lack of success of the student.

The Regent Park site of Pathways to Education has partnered with the Boston Consulting Group to evaluate the effect to the program over time. BCG has conducted two site evaluations, in 2006/7 and 2011. The results illustrate the difficulty of ascribing larger social outcomes to the program.

One of the interesting features of the Pathways evaluation is that it looked at community indicators of success (decreased crime rate, increased health and longevity, integration of recent immigrants into community) as well as academic achievement indicators (decreased dropout rate; increased high school graduate rate; increased postsecondary participation).

However, the social and community returns are assumptions, not measurable impacts. in other words, Boston Consulting has assumed that since individuals with more education tend to have better health, longer lives, spend less time in jail and integrate more fully into the community, that Pathways students because they are more successful academically will intuitively have better social returns as well. While social returns are extremely difficult to measure (DeClou, 2014) and thus this approach is reasonable, it does not necessarily mean that the Pathways program has these impacts on the community. On the other hand, it is instructive that Pathways has included in its self-assessment the impact on the community and on the social (not just economic or even measurable) returns to the individual. This says something about both the objective of the program and the interventions that are chosen.

Another instructive thing about the Pathways evaluation is the attempt to parse out predictive metrics of a student's success. According to Boston Consulting, early accumulation of credits (in year one and two of the program) and limited absenteeism were both good predictors of program completion and high school graduation (Boston Consulting Group, 2011)

Finally, it is important to note that students selected into some early intervention programs (those that require students to apply: Rhode Island, Cal-Soap, Florida CROP, Posse, Indiana, some aspects of HCZ) have already in many ways shown motivation and ambition to do better, or their parents have chosen it for them. They have applied for the program, put their names on waiting lists or entered into lotteries. This makes them more likely to succeed already, even before the program. It is difficult in an evaluation to know if therefore it was the program itself that helped them achieve, or if they were already predisposed to achieve, despite having some disadvantages. Programs that do not require a student to apply (IHAD, Pathways to Education, Kalamazoo, some elements of HCZ) are therefore perhaps a better test of how the program elements affect the most vulnerable students.

The Harlem Children’s Zone has been evaluated on two occasions, first by Dobbie and Fryer (2013) and second by the Brookings Institute. Both evaluators had access to data that allowed them to investigate different elements of the program to access what, in particular, was working. The Dobbie and Fryer evaluation was able to test the assumption, strongly held by most community based early intervention programs, that community supports were as important as academic supports. Community supports make intuitive sense. We know that children from low income and first generation backgrounds tend to have lower academic achievements and go to PSE in lower numbers than their peers. We know the importance of peer support, mentoring, and parental involvement if a student is to succeed. It is reasonable to assume that the causes of high school dropout are both school based (ineffective discipline, lack of counselling, support, outreach, and disregard for learning style) and community based (low social class, minority status, school home link weak, community support weak) (Boston Consulting Group, 2011).

However, both evaluations of the HCZ seem to suggest that the community supports are not central to the academic achievement of the students. Because of the nature of the HCZ program, Dobbie and Fryer had access to three types of student data:

1. Those students in the 100 block HCZ region who are eligible for all the community and health services, and who attend the charter school;
2. Those students in the 100 block HCZ region who are eligible for all the community and health services, but do not attend the charter school;
3. Those students outside the 100 block HCZ region and therefore not eligible for all the community and health services, but who attend the charter school.

Their evaluation showed that in comparing the test scores, cohorts of students who attended the charter school (cohorts 1 and 3) did better academically than their peers (cohort 2), with no difference between the students in the HCZ region and those from outside.

A second evaluation by the Brookings Institute compared the academic achievement of children who attended the HCZ charter school with the academic achievement of children who attended other charter schools in New York (and by definition were not participating in the other aspects of the HCZ program). The results of the HCZ students were comparable (they sat fairly squarely in the middle of the pack in regard to test scores) to other charter schools. (Croft and Whitehurst, 2010)

Overall, the lessons from the evaluation literature are somewhat limited in regard to which program components work best. Only IHAD has published a negative evaluation, so most evaluations show noteworthy success – whether this is because they have all hit on a winning formula, or because the evaluation methodology is somewhat limited, or a bit of both, is hard to say. That being said, the programs illustrated above do seem to develop, improve and generate success and new programs would probably be best served by developing data infrastructure and evaluation processes as part of the early program structure, but should not be immobilized by the lack of either.

Successful Components – What the Research Says

Despite the growing body of literature on early intervention programs, it is generally agreed that too little is still known about the success of early intervention programs, and how they affect postsecondary participation (Educational Policy Institute, 2001; Gandara, 2001; Gullat and Jan, 2007).

As mentioned above, one possible explanation for the frustration in identifying "what works" is that it may not be possible to isolate components and test their effectiveness. This is why general program evaluations are so important. Despite this, there have been some attempts to identify those practices that seem particularly effective by identifying common components in successful programs. Patricia Gandara (2001), in *Paving the Way to Understanding Education*, her 2001 overview of early intervention initiatives outlines her list of components that are usually part of successful programs:

- A primary person who monitors and guides the student over time;
- Good instruction coupled with challenging curriculum that is carefully tailored to the students' learning needs;
- Longer term interventions. The longer students participate in a program, the more benefits they report;
- Cultural awareness of students' backgrounds. Many programs find that they have more success with some groups than with others;
- Positive peer support. Students are more likely to succeed when a peer group provides academic, social and emotional support;
- Financial assistance and incentives. For many low income students who identify postsecondary education as a goal, scholarships and grants may be essential to realizing that goal.

Despite the view that there is a lack of in-depth research into various components or good program evaluations, there seems to be a consensus that there has been an aggregate increase in success rates of programs overall. How much of it is due to the shift in emphasis seen in many programs, or the combining of new components is unclear. Some of it may be due to other elements in the environment such as the effect of increased understanding of the importance of postsecondary education, a larger number of peers and role models attending postsecondary education, a greater awareness in the schools of the importance of outreach, etc.

It is clear from the case studies that different program objectives lead to different program structures. Indiana's goal of keeping students in Indiana for postsecondary education would differ from California's goal of increasing retention rates in college or Kalamazoo's goal of regional economic development or the community health goals of HCZ and Pathways Regent Park. This way of looking at early intervention seems to require a home grown approach, not just in relation to Hamilton, but between provinces and even between regions and neighbourhoods.

Another issue is how students are selected for programs. In the US low income students are sometimes identified through eligibility for free lunch programs. As Canada does not have a free lunch program, we lack one of the most effective proxies for identifying low income, high need students. Another possibility is targeting entire schools or classes within schools (as IHAD does), however in Canada schools tend to serve more than one neighborhood and have diverse student bodies. One exception to this rule might be on reserve high schools for Aboriginal students and some rural or remote community high schools with high non-participation rates. Pathways to Education, HCZ and Kalamazoo Promise have been able to target students by building programs that take in entire youth cohorts from certain urban neighbourhoods with high non-participation rates (e.g., Regent Park in Toronto, Harlem, NY), no matter where those students go to school.

In the Educational Policy Institute's College Board Review (2001), it is noted that about two thirds of all US programs (66%) require students to apply for admission. Sixteen percent of all programs operate on a first come first served bases, and about a third have a competitive admissions process.

However, one problem with self-selection or application for a program is that in the Canadian environment, where early intervention programs are not well known or universally understood, there may be less likelihood that students who have already selected out of the postsecondary pathway will select into a program intended to increase their chances of going. In the absence of evaluations that provide guidance on how to best select students and how to target those students who might get the greatest benefit out of the program (other than anecdotal evidence that it makes sense to start as early as possible before students begin selecting-out), it is difficult to assess how this would work in a Hamilton context.

In her 2001 overview, Gandara provides a good summary of the general consensus around limitations of early intervention programs:

- Program attrition. Few programs either report or know how many students that begin their programs actually complete it. [Gandara] estimates that between one third and one half of all students who begin programs leave before completion or before high school graduation. Nonetheless, programs commonly report high percentages of participants going on to college based on counting only the number of participants in the graduating class.

- Smaller number of students affected. Early intervention programs are resource intensive; it is estimated that only 5% of all US students who might be eligible for an early intervention program are actually served.
- Participant selection. Not all programs are explicit about how students are selected to participate and about the characteristics of the most successful participants. This kind of information is critically important in evaluating who can best benefit from the program.
- Records on program contact. Few programs keep records on the amount of contact participants have with the program. Similarly, programs are often vague about what constitutes completion or retention in the program.
- Academic achievement. While some programs were able to demonstrate that they doubled college going rates among participants (compared to controls) evidence that programs are effective in raising academic achievement as measured by grades or test scores is limited.
- Type of postsecondary institution. Because overall measured achievement is not generally considered, these programs are most effective at increasing the rate of students going to community colleges and less selective four year institutions. They do not appear to have a major impact on increasing number of students who go on to selective colleges and universities.
- Long term outcomes. Little is known about long term outcomes for students. Most programs do not have data that show if they increase the rates at which participants obtain college degrees when compared to students who have not participated in the program.
- Costs. Little is reported about the costs of these programs.

Summary and Conclusion

Despite the limitations of these evaluations, there are a number of lessons to be learned from these case studies and the general body of literature on early intervention. The following list summarizes some of the lessons learned and considerations that arise from a brief examination of early intervention programs:

- <u>Determine the goal</u>. The goal of the program (preparing youth to succeed academically in postsecondary education; motivating youth to enter postsecondary education in a specific region/state/province; ensuring that youth graduate from high school with the resources they need to make choices, etc.) can determine the design of the program. It should also be noted that an evaluation (such as the two conducted on HCZ) may indicate that a program is successful in a different way than the program goal had initially intended, at which point some choices may need to be made about whether the goal or the program should change.

- Packaging interventions. It is important to understand that a package of interventions will be required to address a network of barriers. Program developers and implementers should be flexible about adding and subtracting interventions, but not expect to be able to determine exactly which intervention is addressing exactly which barrier – students are complex in their responses and motivations, and evaluations are sometimes too blunt to pick up nuances in interventions.

- Determine the target student population. Aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, low income youth, rural youth, first generation youth, immigrant youth, etc, may require different packages of interventions, and different sensitivities in relation to parental and community involvement.

- How students are selected will affect the effectiveness of the program. Programs where students self-select may seem more successful as they attract students who have already shown some motivation and intention to consider postsecondary education. However, they may not target the most high risk, high need students, who may have already selected out of the pathway to postsecondary education and therefore would not sign up for such a program.

- Evaluation processes are important. Where possible, it is important to build in an evaluation process from the beginning with bench mark data so that the success of the program can be determined over time, data about student characteristics so it can be understood which types of students are responding to the program and which might need more help, and qualitative practices for understanding the views of students, parents, practitioners and administrators who use the program. However, as noted above, the lack of quantitative infrastructure to evaluate a program should not jeopardize the implementation of a project, as programs tend to develop and improve over time anyway.

- Parental and community involvement are key. The importance of parental and community involvement comes up repeatedly in the research on what makes programs successful. Different programs used different strategies for ensuring parental and community involvement, usually these strategies were very much in keeping with the goals and philosophies of the individual programs. The interesting results of the HCZ program evaluation aside, there is a consensus in most of the literature and in the programmatic self-assessment that parental and community engagement in the programs is key to the success of the students.

- Age of student and length of program matters. A conscious decision needs to be made about where to begin the interventions, understanding that the earlier the intervention the less intensive it may need to be. On the other hand, the later the intervention the more intense it may need to be as youth become increasingly firm in their choices as they age, and may have begun to act on those choices, for example in relation to academic achievement and financial savings. It is also important to understand that programs that begin early, for example the Rhode Island College Crusade, report that interventions need to change over time – what is needed in grade 6 is different from what is needed in grade 9.

- Students are unique. Each will require slightly different interventions or emphases. While "one arm around one child" is difficult, a program that builds in some flexibility in relation to a specific child's needs is likely to be more successful.

Despite the limitations of the programs themselves and the gaps in the research, early intervention programs are currently one of the more interesting ways of addressing the needs of youth who traditionally do not go on to postsecondary education. New programs could do worse than looking to the examples of those programs that are actually able to show some success. Significant problems remain regarding the small number of students served, the ability to target youth at highest risk (as they might not select into the programs or might drop out early), and the difficulty of measuring success. At the same time however, it makes sense that providing those elements lost in social and cultural capital (e.g., information, financial incentives, counseling and mentoring support, academic support) should help underrepresented students achieve. Until a more systemic approach is identified, early intervention programs may be the best approach available.

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