

BUILDING CITY-WIDE SYSTEMS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN:

INITIAL LESSONS FROM THE *BY ALL MEANS* CONSORTIUM



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Education
Redesign
Lab

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The cases contained within this report were researched and written between December 2016 and January 2018.

ABOUT THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB

The Education Redesign Lab was founded and is led by Paul Reville, the Francis Keppel Professor of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and former Massachusetts Secretary of Education. The Lab's mission is to partner with communities to build integrated education and child development systems, to research and disseminate best practices in the field, and to advance a new vision for education in order to restore social mobility and close achievement and opportunity gaps.

Introduction

In February of 2016, the Education Redesign Lab launched a consortium of six cities, called By All Means, to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children’s needs and developing their interests and talents requires a city-wide approach. The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children. The Lab would support and document this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work. The Lab recruited mayors in six small- to mid-sized cities to join the consortium. Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts signed on to a two-and-a-half-year commitment to work in partnership with the Lab to create new systems of education and support for children.

In joining the By All Means (BAM) initiative, each city agreed to participate in the following core design elements:

- *A **Children’s Cabinet**, which serves as the governance structure for each city’s By All Means work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism, chaired by the mayor, to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations.*
- *A BAM-sponsored **part-time consultant**, who facilitates cabinet meetings and ensures the work of the cabinet moves forward between meetings.*
- ***Twice-yearly convenings** at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which bring together city teams, the Lab staff, and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources.*

This series of city-specific cases and the accompanying overview are meant to provide rich information for those interested in understanding the possibilities—and challenges—of a leadership-driven approach to creating systems of opportunity for children and will be particularly useful to other cities looking to embark on similar work.

Collectively, the cases aim to answer such questions as: What does it take to get complicated, silo-breaking work up and running? What are the necessary ingredients for success? How does a city collectively grapple with the early questions of “what are we doing, why are we doing it, and who belongs at the table”? How can a city overcome unexpected external challenges without letting the work stall or get off track? Most importantly, how can cities embark on this politically challenging undertaking while always keeping children’s needs at the center of the work?

The primary goal of this research is to understand the enablers of and barriers to getting this cross-sector work successfully started, both to inform the ongoing work of the consortium and to provide actionable research for other cities that are interested in undertaking a similar systemic approach to meeting the needs of children. Our initial analysis focused on the following elements: leadership, partnerships and relationship, external factors, data, and funding. The final case study, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics. Data for this study include interviews with mayors, superintendents, and other key participants in the change process; observations at Children’s Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and surveys given to participants at three two-day convenings of teams from each of the cities hosted by the Lab.

This case documents the first 18 months of Providence’s participation in By All Means and includes its activities through May 2017. We are hoping that city leaders and others will use this piece to understand how opportunities and obstacles unfold within specific contexts. Each city in the consortium is unique: Providence is one of three BAM cities to experience a changeover in consultant and is the only city to tackle all three focus areas at once.

Providence, the capital of Rhode Island, has become an increasingly popular destination for its award-winning restaurants and vibrant arts scene. It was named the Top City in America by *Travel + Leisure Magazine* and the country's Best Small City by *Architectural Digest* in 2014; and in 2015 *GQ Magazine* called it America's "coolest city." The city is home to Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Johnson and Wales University.

Even with these accolades, Providence continues to face the challenges familiar to many New England cities. Its economy, which has been shifting from manufacturing to service industries, has struggled to overcome a slow recovery from the recession that began in 2007. Providence has also been working to move past a history of political distrust: Mayor Jorge Elorza, who took office in 2015, won his election as a political newcomer against six-time mayor Buddy Cianci, who had twice resigned due to felony corruption convictions.

In 2016, 84.4 percent of Providence Public School District (PPSD) students were considered

economically disadvantaged. For Mayor Elorza, providing pathways to success for vulnerable children is personal: he was born in Providence to recent immigrants from Guatemala, grew up in poverty, and went on to become the first in his family to attend college. He graduated from Harvard Law School and was a law professor before running for mayor. Mayor Elorza credits his success in part to a teacher who recommended, on the day that applications were due, that he apply to Providence's top performing exam school, Classical High School. The chance nature of this suggestion underscored for him the importance of creating more systemic approaches to ensuring all children have the supports and opportunities they need to succeed.

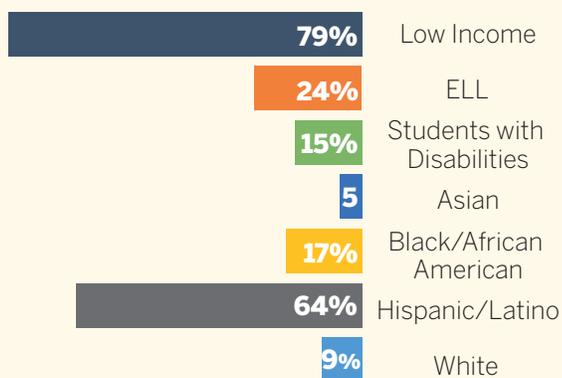
JOINING BY ALL MEANS

When Mayor Elorza took office, he outlined three major goals for the city: excellence in education, jobs and economic opportunity, and building a thriving community. Later that year, he attended a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in Boston and

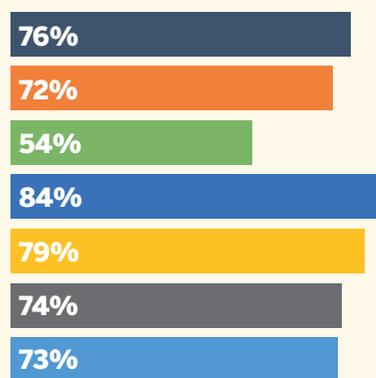
City-School Relationship

In Providence, the mayor and the school district have some formal connections. For instance, the mayor works with the Providence School Board to select a superintendent through a collaborative process.

District Enrollment ('15-'16)



Graduation Rates ('15-'16)



Note: Subgroups for which the number of students was too small for sources to report were excluded if this occurred in more than one data category.

presented the city's innovative work on Providence Talks. This program, which won grand prize funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies' 2013 Mayors Challenge, seeks to close the word gap between children living in poverty and those who are not through home visits and the use of "word pedometers."¹ The program had been established under Mayor Angel Taveras, and Elorza, seeing its potential, quickly took steps to invigorate and expand the program after taking office.

At the same U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting, Paul Reville presented an overview of his newly formed Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and outlined its comprehensive children's opportunity agenda. The Lab was preparing to launch its *By All Means* initiative and was looking for partner cities to participate as "laboratories" of innovation. These laboratories, Reville hoped, would work to reimagine and implement new, personalized systems of education and youth development, focusing on expanding access to out-of-school learning, integrating health and social services into schools, and individualizing education to suit the needs of every child.

Not long after the conference, Newton Mayor Setti Warren reached out to Elorza to gauge his interest in having Providence become one of these laboratories. Providence was fortuitously already engaged in expanding each area of the Lab's focus: the mayor's office had recently convened a Summer Learning Task Force, the Providence Public School District (PPSD) was already finding success with expanding personalized learning models, and both the city and schools had an interest in expanding social-emotional learning (SEL) support for children. To Elorza, participating in *By All Means* would be an opportunity to accelerate those efforts and tie them all together under a comprehensive framework. Elorza approached Acting Superintendent Chris Maher with the opportunity and Maher, seeing BAM's alignment with PPSD's priorities, agreed to sign on as well.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

At its inception, the BAM cabinet included Mayor Elorza, Acting Superintendent Chris Maher, and senior leadership from city government, PPSD, City Council, the Lifespan Corporation, Rhode Island College, Brown University, and the Providence School Board. During a prior administration, the mayor's office had created a Providence Children & Youth Cabinet, which had transitioned into an independent organization comprising nonprofit organizations from around the city. The BAM Children's Cabinet acknowledged and incorporated this work by including the cabinet's director as a cabinet member. Another pre-existing body, a Summer Learning Task Force that Elorza convened in late 2015, saw overlap in several members as well, which would prove helpful in aligning pre-existing work with the cabinet's efforts.

A Salem-based education expert joined the team as the cabinet's BAM-sponsored consultant, and Courtney Hawkins—then Chief Policy Officer for the City of Providence—collaborated with the consultant on the day-to-day work between cabinet meetings. According to Hawkins, "We were already doing some things in each of the *By All Means* focus areas, but the cabinet has helped us to do more engagement with people around that and to be more structured in our approach." The cabinet convened quarterly, with its second and third meetings taking place in September 2016 and January 2017. By the spring of 2017, the cabinet grew to include a PPSD specialist in trauma-informed work, as well as additions from the Teachers Union and the Rhode Island Department of Education. The current cabinet includes substantial representation from the school district, and its initial work has relied heavily on PPSD staff.

By the spring of 2017, cabinet members agreed that many of the right people were at the table, though determining how to best utilize those people presented a challenge. According to one member, "I think figuring out the right configuration for the

cabinet [has been difficult] . . . and figuring out how the cabinet can influence the work on the ground, connecting people between meetings to the work, and getting people to actually tangibly contribute.” This grappling with structures and processes is common in early collective impact work.²

By late May 2017, cabinet members still expressed a feeling that the cabinet was not yet operating in a truly collective way; rather, they felt a lot of great work was being done in parallel. The team left the May convening with a common understanding that to optimize their time together as a cabinet, they needed to come together under a shared vision and purpose to better coordinate and communicate their efforts.

DEFINING THE WORK

During early conversations, the team decided to focus equally on each of the three ongoing initiatives they had defined as priorities—expanding access to summer learning, increasing the number of schools offering personalized learning, and improving social-emotional support services in the schools—as their official BAM work, rather than choosing just one effort. One cabinet member described it this way: “The school department and the mayor’s office did an assessment to get an inventory of who’s doing what, in the hopes that that would help inform where we ought to place our initial emphasis. . . . The conversations that they had after that first convening led to the decision to approach all three [BAM focus areas] at once, I think largely driven by the desire to leverage investments—time, talent, treasure—that were already being made in all three areas.” The cabinet came to the conclusion that they should use BAM not only to accelerate their ongoing work, but also as a frame by which Providence could tie its ongoing initiatives together in a way that could be easily communicated to the public.

In April 2016, the Providence School Board unanimously confirmed Maher as superintendent, and he charged a new team at PPSD with developing a district strategic plan. This team included cabinet member Heather Tow-Yick, the district’s new

Chief Transformation Officer. During this process, Tow-Yick and the planning team mapped each of the BAM focus areas—which include personalized systems of education and support, expanding access to out-of-school opportunities, and integrating health and social services with schools and with the district’s work—and explicitly named them as strategies to realize the district’s goals of achieving academic readiness and maximizing learning time for students.

A New Approach

During the second BAM convening, Mayor Elorza was inspired by hearing how other cities in the cohort had engaged their communities in this work and decided to pursue a similar approach. Elorza rallied the cabinet around a “big tent” concept that would increase community engagement in and awareness about public education. The mayor reached out to the president of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation—whom he had met at the BAM convening—to seek funding for a summit aimed at building and supporting a community-informed vision for education in Providence.

The foundation awarded Providence a grant to hire a community organizer to plan and facilitate the summit. To ensure the summit would truly be a community-driven rather than a top-down effort, the city used the grant funds to hire a local expert in community engagement and youth participatory action, Adeola Oredola, who greatly impacted the summit’s agenda and structure in ways that amplified student and community voice. As one cabinet member shared, “The summit is going to be very much focused on community input and on engaging community members to tell us about what their priorities are, which is something that we haven’t done as a cabinet yet. We’re thinking about how to take the influence of this leadership group and ensure that it’s being informed by the needs of the community.”

Providence publicly announced the summit in January and scheduled a pre-summit Community Conversation for stakeholders to provide ideas, feedback, and suggestions to ensure that the summit would lead to meaningful action. The *All In*:

Providence Education Summit took place in April 2017, with over 400 students, teachers, and community members in attendance.

During the Lab's third convening in May 2017, the Providence team discussed plans to share outcomes from the summit with the community in the following months. The city was developing a report detailing the summit's conclusions, which included the following five priorities:

1. Improving Facilities District Wide
2. Cultivating Culturally Responsive Learning
3. Strengthening Diversity and Inclusion
4. Improving Outcomes for English Language Learners
5. Leveraging Community Partnerships in Schools

In breakout sessions for each priority area, summit participants identified short- and long-term goals, such as engaging in an asset-mapping process to determine how resources are being used in Providence to support children and who is providing services. The city planned to host a series of continuing community conversations on these topics. The cabinet made a commitment to integrate the community's recommendations into its BAM work and to develop an overarching vision for the community to rally around and for stakeholders to buy into.

Focus Area 1: Summer Learning

Simultaneous with this work, the cabinet was moving forward on its goal of increasing and enhancing summer learning opportunities for Providence youth in order to mitigate summer learning loss and accelerate year-round learning among students. In an unprecedented partnership, the mayor's office and PPSD together released a \$1 million RFP seeking proposals from high-quality summer learning programs serving K–8 students (for high school students, they announced that in summer 2017 the city would offer more than 1,000 summer jobs, more than doubling the number from 2016³). The RFP integrated a set of recommendations from the Summer Learning Task Force Elorza had created in late 2015.⁴

The RFP resulted in partnerships with four provider organizations—Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), Breakthrough Providence, the Providence After School Alliance, and Generation Teach—all of which agreed to provide five-day programming for five weeks, with pre- and post-testing to determine the effectiveness of the programs. Three of the four providers already used the same assessment as the Providence school district, which would facilitate the collection of data on the summer programs. The fourth partner would be given access to the tools and equipment necessary to conduct this testing for their students as well.

A city official shared that “the goal is twofold: for them, it's the differentiation piece, using the data within the program to figure out how to best adapt for the kids. For us, it's to understand in each program what the pre- and post-results look like.” On this latter purpose, the city and district were preparing to engage in performance-based contracts, under which the partner organizations would be paid according to their ability to meet certain agreed-upon benchmarks. This process, facilitated with help from the School Board's experience in this area, is one of the strategies the district is using to create a more cost-effective deployment of resources.

Final investments were vetted and approved through the City Council and Providence School Board. Through this collaborative effort, over 850 summer learning slots were made available in summer 2017 for Providence children. These slots represented a baseline number of summer slots with consistent program features to providing high-quality summer learning, spurred by Providence's participation in BAM, that included requirements for the number of weeks of programming and data sharing with the district. The investment aligns with the district's strategic plan and five-year goal of providing 1700 summer learning seats by summer 2021. On this effort and others, the cabinet has aligned its BAM efforts with the district's strategic plan to facilitate coordination across multiple stakeholders on the greatest needs and possibilities for Providence children.

Focus Area 2: Personalized Learning

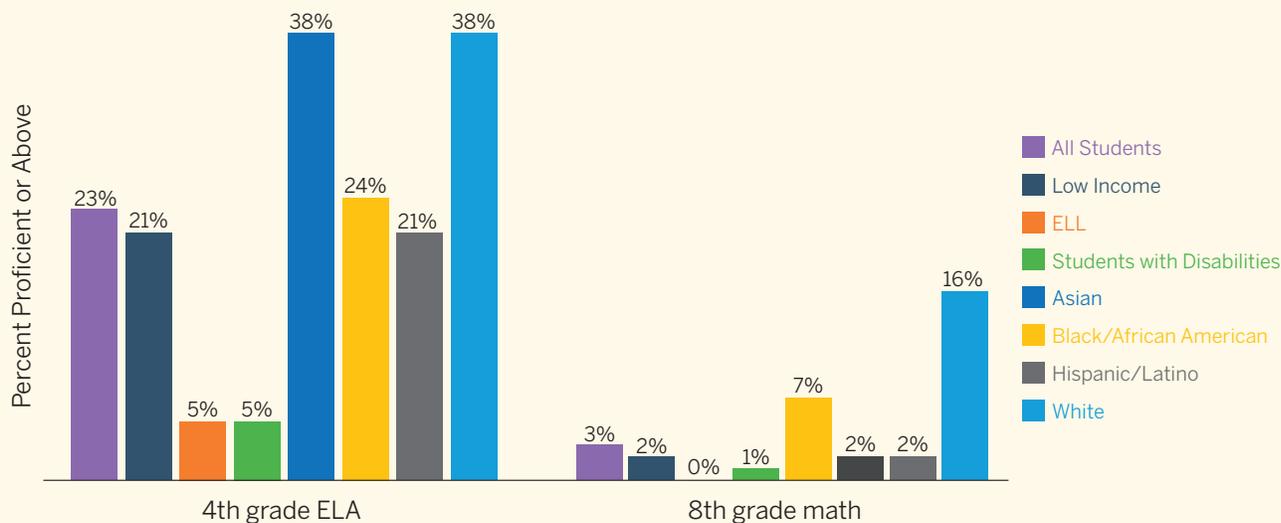
The Providence school district has been a leader in implementing personalized approaches to teaching and learning. In a 2017 article in *The Atlantic* describing Rhode Island's progress in this area, Superintendent Maher shared the PPSD strategy: "Through professional development led by groups such as Summit Schools and the Highlander Institute [a Providence-based education nonprofit], our teachers and administrators have learned how to use real-time student data to shape instruction so that they can meet each child where that child is at academically."⁵ In 2015, one Providence school implemented the Summit personalized learning model and found such great success that the district has expanded the model to four additional schools. In addition to providing training, the district has made significant strides toward 1:1 technology

for students and in embedding ethnic studies into the curriculum. Maher stressed that personalized learning is seen not as an intervention, but as being the core of how PPSD will change its outcomes.

Focus Area 3: Social-Emotional Learning

Of its three focus areas, Providence's effort to expand social-emotional learning is its newest. PPSD hired its first full-time central staff member dedicated to social-emotional health in November 2016, Gail Mastropietro, who began attending cabinet meetings as a member in April 2017. The district began by providing additional trauma-informed supports to six schools, and they hope to increase the number to 21 by the end of the 2017–2018 school year. Additionally, Providence plans to spend about \$350,000 on social-emotional learning during the 2017–2018

Test Scores 2017 PARCC



Students Chronically Absent:

38%

Child Uninsured Rate:

1.7%

Children Born with Low Birthweight:

8.7%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/ProvidenceDem16, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/ProvidenceGrad16, Test Scores: bit.ly/ProvidencePARCC17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/ProvidenceAbsenteeism17, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/UninsuredRates, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/ProvidenceBirthweight

school year for professional development, employee salary and benefits, and curriculum materials. These funds include a public-private collaboration to provide student mental health services in select

schools.⁶ As of May 2017, Mastropietro started to plan how to collect data that gives evidence on the impact of social-emotional learning work.

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

The mayor and superintendent strongly support the *By All Means* work and attend every cabinet meeting; this clear signaling from both the city government and the school district has consistently brought other leaders to the table, while also enabling the work to move forward quickly. The mayor and superintendent have both committed a significant amount of staff time to carrying forward the cabinet's work in the three focus areas.

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Since taking office in 2015, Mayor Elorza has outlined three big goals for the city: excellence in education, jobs and economic opportunity, and building a thriving community. As a result, strengthening the city's commitment to its children has been a cornerstone of his administration's work. With education as one of the mayor's top priorities, the Providence team has benefited from his enthusiasm and support in moving the work forward. Nearly every cabinet member has named this as a factor contributing to the success of their work, with one member saying, "We're able to garner resources and we're so focused because *By All Means* is so deeply aligned to what he wants to do and to his agenda."

ALIGNMENT WITH SUPERINTENDENT

Maier was new to his role when BAM began, having been appointed as interim superintendent in July 2015 and hired permanently in April 2016. He and Mayor Elorza are aligned in their vision for

Providence children and youth, as well as on the city's next steps in advancing this vision. As Superintendent Maier shared, "Social-emotional learning, summer learning, and personalized learning are three areas that we're really working on and focused on in the district. So [BAM] blended very well with the direction that we were already taking." Maier's strong commitment to the shared vision has facilitated the coordination between BAM and PPSD, generating a district strategic plan that supplements and supports the cabinet's efforts.

CABINET

The cabinet's early work did not fully incorporate and account for existing efforts already underway in Providence; as several cabinet members explained, early meetings were spent coming to consensus on topics they had already agreed on in the past. This, in combination with the quarterly meeting schedule, left cabinet members wanting more in terms of quantity and quality. After the May 2017 convening, 33 percent of cabinet members—all senior executives with limited time—reported that they felt the Children's Cabinet should meet more frequently. As one member described it a few months earlier, "At the convenings, group time is in short bursts. The cabinet meetings are a couple of hours but they're short bursts. There either needs to be more bursts with less time in between them, or the bursts need to be longer. Because this work is about reaching agreement and that takes time, discussion, and some give-and-take and consensus building." In addition, given Providence's complex political history, the initial consultant's lack of prior relationships in the city and geographic distance from it

posed challenges to her ability to embed herself in the work.

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Providence has experienced a number of core staff transitions since the start of *By All Means*. Brett Smiley, the city’s Chief Operating Officer and an early member of the Children’s Cabinet, left his post in July 2016 to become the Governor’s Chief of Staff. Less than a year later, the city’s Chief Policy Officer—Courtney Hawkins, an integral player in the work—was tapped to become the new Director of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Hawkins’ Policy Associate Lily Gutterman, who is now the Deputy Director of Policy, has taken on an important role in the work, helping to alleviate the knowledge gap created by this transition. Just days before the third BAM convening, City Council President and cabinet member Luis Aponte resigned from his leadership post amid charges of embezzlement. At the same time, the initial consultant was also preparing to exit her role in June; her replacement was to be Providence local Maryellen Butke, who had deep expertise in coalition-building as well as educational advocacy and philanthropy.

Partnerships and Relationships

CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

After the May 2017 convening, 71 percent of the Providence team reported that they collaborate more with other agencies and organizations in their cities after having joined *By All Means* (14 percent said much more, 57 percent said somewhat more). Nearly a third of the participants shared that the level of interaction is about the same. While the growth in these relationships has been beneficial to pushing the work forward, several team members have noted that the quantity and quality of cabinet meetings has not been enough to facilitate true cross-sector partnership.

The establishment of cross-sector relationships between the city government and city schools has been challenged by a revolving door of superintendents in Providence over the past 15 years. This lack of continuity at the leadership level has made collaboration tough, engendering a lack of continuity in relationships and interaction at the staff level as well. Since joining BAM, however, “The extent to which the superintendent and I are on the same page—and the school department and my policy team, the way that they’re working together—that’s been invaluable to moving this forward,” shared Mayor Elorza. “The coordination of the work that we’re doing, even though it’s massively complicated and there are many prongs to it, it all feeds into one larger goal. I think that has made the difference.”

This critical alignment between school leadership and city leadership extends beyond the district and the mayor’s office. Another cabinet member noted that “the mayor and superintendent are on the same page, and now I can see that the city council president is also, to some extent, on the same page as well. . . . The alignment of these key people is critical.”

Likewise, Providence’s School Board leadership has been key to supporting and representing the BAM work in the community. The board plays an integral role in supporting the focused use of PPSD dollars to support SEL and summer learning. In addition, given the expertise of board members in performance-based contracting, direct service, and program work, the collaboration and thought partnership between PPSD and board members has worked to advance the city’s overall vision.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Providence has excelled at keeping racial equity at the center of their community engagement work, which grew directly from the student voice that they brought into the summit planning and execution. Through its April 2017 summit, the city has emphasized student voice and agency in the community engagement process. In addition, the cabinet has worked to be truly responsive to that voice. The mayor’s office and PPSD have taken concrete steps to

explicitly acknowledge what they heard at the summit, from plans to release a follow-up report to plans for engaging the community through workshops on specific topics culled from the summit, such as school facilities and middle school culture and climate. Further, these workshops will be co-facilitated and organized by high school students.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONVENINGS

The first three *By All Means* convenings took place in Cambridge, MA in May 2016, November 2016, and May 2017. Providence team members generally found the convenings useful for introducing new ideas, sharing information among the cities, and building relationships among team members. The November 2016 convening inspired Mayor Elorza to undertake significant community engagement in the city's visioning process for education. As one participant described the value of the convenings for the mayor: "He always gets ideas from it, and the summit came directly from the last convening. So, it's certainly gotten us to places of action." For his part, Mayor Elorza shared, "If you really want to hit your stride, you have to engage and leverage the power of all the stakeholders outside of the formal education system. And that's deeply influenced the approach that we've taken to this. The summit planned for April 8 is in large part influenced by the conversations and the exchange of ideas that we've had by participating in the convenings."

A number of team members expressed a desire for more, and more productive, team time during the early convenings. During the first two convenings, Providence spent much of their team time discussing topics some members felt they had already established: the community needs, the agenda to meet those needs, and the actions the cabinet would take in service of its agenda. While the team felt it could be better utilizing its time together, several cabinet members noted that the convenings were helpful in deepening cross-sector relationships. As

one cabinet member shared, "I think as the teams start to get to know each other more, we become more like colleagues."

OTHER SUPPORTS

Providence's *All In: Providence Education Summit* was made possible by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, a partnership that arose out of a connection made at one of the BAM convenings. As a part of the initiative, Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as thought partner on their education strategy. Reville traveled to Providence to participate in the announcement of the summit and invited Elorza to participate on a panel at the popular Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Summit. The city has also expressed that the Lab's BAM framework has given them confidence that they are moving in the right direction, which has pushed them to think even bigger and bolder about what they can set out to accomplish in service of children.

Data

As in all other BAM cities, data has played an important role in the early work of the cabinet. And like many districts, PPSD is data-rich, but with limited capacity to analyze its data. The city's efforts to dramatically expand high quality summer learning slots began when the mayor and superintendent came together to find out whether and how summer learning loss—a topic gaining increasing amounts of national attention—affected Providence students. "That's the first time they looked at pre- and post-test data for the summer and found, 'Oh, this is a huge problem for our kids and it reflects an achievement gap that we know exists,'" a city staff member recalled.

According to a press release from the mayor's office, "In Providence, more than 60 percent of students suffer summer learning loss in reading and more than 51 percent in math. Studies show that students from lower-income families are far less likely to have access to summer learning opportunities,

leading to greater summer learning loss and lower graduation rates. Students at the greatest risk for summer learning loss can lose up to two years of grade-level reading and math ability by the time they reach fifth grade when compared to children from higher-income households.”⁷ Releases such as these demonstrate the extent to which Providence is using research and data to inform its BAM work.

Funding

Providence has made effective use of funding partnerships. In addition to garnering the support of Nellie Mae for its *All In: Providence Education Summit*, the team has leveraged funding for summer learning from the City Council and is collaborating with the State of Rhode Island to request a significant investment from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative for personalized learning. This is in part thanks to the district’s capacity to seek external funding through grant-writing staff.

Conclusions

Providence has made impressive progress in its work to expand opportunities and services for children. The team’s decision to focus on all three focus areas at once was unique: it accelerated the city’s work to meet multiple child-facing needs simultaneously. The city has made substantial progress in expanding access to summer learning, increasing social and emotional supports in the schools, and personalizing learning. Given the school-based

focus of pre-existing initiatives, much of work has fallen to PPSD staff, which at times has become a substantial amount of work. Providence is now focusing on shifting this balance and better utilizing all partners who are at the table. Providence has also found great success with its community engagement efforts and continues to incorporate the voices of students, teachers, and families into its efforts.

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Providence Takeaways

- Restructuring existing funding can be an effective strategy to finance new priorities in the absence of additional resources.
- Performance-based contracting ensures funds are spent on effective programs.
- Engaging the community early provides useful input and greater buy-in.

Where Are They Now?

In the time since our research concluded in May 2017, Providence's work has evolved in the following ways:

- **Providence substantially increased its summer opportunities for students.** In his February 2018 State of the City address, Mayor Elorza reported that “a high percentage of the 480 students who participated in BELL's summer program gained roughly 2 months in literacy skills and 3 months in math skills during the summer. Our students are no longer going backwards over the summer, they're getting ahead and we're closing the achievement gap . . . With the City Council's support, we have more than doubled the number of summer jobs we offer in the city, we're instilling a sense of pride in our kids, and we're preparing them with the essential skills they'll need to succeed in this world.”³
- **The team used the consultant transition as an opportunity to refocus the work of the cabinet.** After the June 2017 departure of the initial consultant, Providence local Maryellen Butke—an expert in coalition-building, educational advocacy, and philanthropy—joined the team as its new BAM-sponsored consultant. The team has found it beneficial to have a locally-based consultant and, with her arrival, has focused on maximizing the cabinet's full set of skills and resources by setting a broader focus beyond schools. The cabinet also added several new cabinet members to increase diversity and representation from across the community.
- **Providence published its report on the *All In: Providence Education Summit in August 2017*.**⁸ The report included specific recommendations and next steps, which have since been discussed over multiple community conversations. As a result of these sessions, Elorza announced a city-wide effort to repair school buildings and facilities in August 2017 and the city hired new school culture coordinators to focus on positive school climate and student engagement in December 2017.
- **Mayor Elorza has taken a key leadership role in a new national Children's Accord initiative, which aligns with the goals of *By All Means*.**