

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 relationships, 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 Salem’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: Salem is BAM’s smallest city and had the least pre-existing infrastructure for engaging in this type of work.

Salem is a small coastal city an hour north of Boston. Its motto, “Still Making History,” acknowledges its significance as one of the country’s oldest cities and as the infamous site of the Salem witch trials. Kim Driscoll, mayor since 2006, often likes to say that “Salem is a city that punches above its weight.” Despite having a population of less than 43,000 people, Salem is home to the world-class Peabody-Essex Museum, whose international collection is a product of the city’s nautical history; Salem State University; and the North Shore Medical Center, which is one of the largest employers in the region. Its pedestrian-friendly downtown area has seen a resurgence of restaurants and commerce. In 2016, the city began planning a community visioning process, *Imagine Salem*, to “develop a set of shared values and a shared vision” ahead of its 400th anniversary.

Both the city and its schools are becoming increasingly diverse, largely as a result of immigration—although there is a notable difference between the diversity of the city’s population and that of its schools. In the 2010 census, over 80 percent of the city was white, while during the 2016–2017 school year, just under 50 percent of students

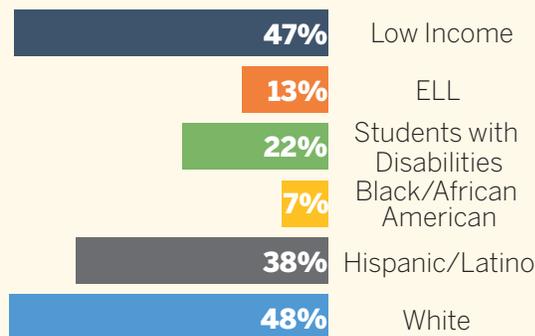
in Salem Public Schools (SPS) were white. More than a quarter of students speak a language other than English at home, and close to half are economically disadvantaged.

In 2011, Salem learned that its public school system had been designated a Level 4 district by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education due to the classification of one of its schools as underperforming; in Massachusetts, the entire district is given the classification of its lowest-performing school. The designation came as a surprise and ignited a new focus on the city’s schools and the challenges faced by its children. As the Salem Public Schools entered turnaround status, city and school leadership began mobilizing to address the underlying causes of this designation and improve outcomes for children. Over the next few years, the district developed school improvement plans and ultimately converted its lowest performing school, Bentley Elementary, into a charter school in 2014. The city also participated in a national endeavor to expand learning time in schools and was ultimately funded by the state to expand learning time in one of its middle schools. In July 2015, Margarita Ruiz became Salem’s

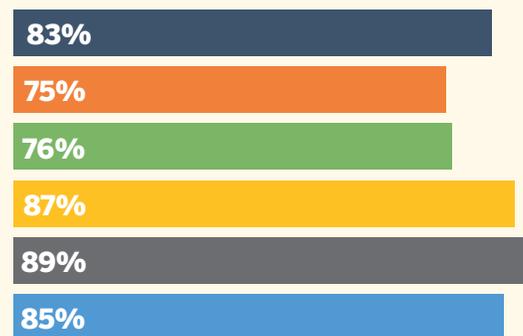
City-School Relationship

School Committee—chaired by the mayor—selects the superintendent of schools. Once selected, the superintendent serves on the School Committee along with the mayor.

District Enrollment ('16–'17)



Graduation Rates ('16–'17)



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.

new superintendent, and soon after, the district embarked on an ambitious process to create a five-year district strategic plan that addresses the needs of all students, particularly those of diverse learners, with support from New Profit's Reimagine Learning Fund, the Tower Foundation, and others.

Just a few months later, Paul Reville was sharing information with mayors about his newly formed Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and outlining 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.

Reville called Mayor Driscoll to gauge her interest in bringing her city to the cohort. Driscoll, who already had a strong working relationship with Salem's new superintendent, was intrigued by the idea of using BAM to develop a sustainable model in Salem—one that would promote the idea that educating children is not the job of schools alone, but is rather a community effort. Driscoll consulted with Superintendent Ruiz, who was similarly looking to build a new framework for education and saw alignment between the *By All Means* areas of focus and her developing district strategic plan. Together, Driscoll and Ruiz decided Salem would benefit from joining the consortium.

Getting Started

FORMING THE CABINET

The formation of Salem's Children's Cabinet cemented the ongoing collaboration between the city and the school system that had formed when Salem was labeled a turnaround district, and had the added benefit of formally bringing other stakeholders into the conversation. According to Mayor

Driscoll, "[Through the turnaround work], the superintendent, myself, and some of the school officials were used to being in each other's company and thinking about this. But it's not often that we would have the director of the community health center or the Teachers Union president or other stakeholders directly engaged." After careful selection of community partners, Salem's cabinet quickly found a stable combination of members, which included senior representatives from North Shore Community Health, Salem State University, the United Way, LEAP for Education, the local YMCA, the Peabody Essex Museum, city government, Salem Public Schools, and the Teachers Union. Kendra Foley joined the team as the cabinet's BAM-sponsored consultant in April of 2016, and the first meeting took place shortly thereafter in June 2016.

Due to the alignment between BAM and a pre-existing initiative at SPS, called the Partnership Collaborative, the district's Director of Extended Learning Programs (and coordinator of the collaborative), Emily Ullman began staffing the cabinet in a significant way. The Partnership Collaborative, a district-led advisory committee aiming to bring schools, community organizations, and municipal departments together to better serve Salem youth, was already working to build a network for collective problem solving and systems change. To avoid duplication of effort and ensure alignment between the cabinet and the collaborative, Foley and Ullman structured the cabinet to act as a governing board for the collaborative, with initial plans for the cabinet to meet quarterly. Between the beginning of *By All Means* and May 2017, the cabinet met three times in addition to city team time at the convenings.

DEFINING THE WORK

The cabinet quickly identified social-emotional well-being as an initial focus. Mayor Driscoll and Superintendent Ruiz both felt that Salem was ready to embark on a new initiative as a follow-up to their recent expansion of learning time, both in-school—in partnership with the National Center on Time & Learning—and out-of-school, in partnership with Citizen Schools. They were in agreement that

social-emotional wellbeing was one area in which coordinated effort could make a meaningful difference: in recent years, Salem had seen an uptick in trauma-related issues for students and the city was eager to more systematically address their needs.

The cabinet performed an analysis of the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and identified three areas related to social-emotional learning challenges in which the city could improve:

1. **Data:** Salem was lacking non-academic data for all students.
2. **Framework:** Salem was lacking a framework for student-level identification, referral, and prevention for all students.
3. **Connection:** Salem was lacking clear partnership pathways between the district and community resources.

Addressing Data and Framework Gaps through City Connects

After determining the gaps, the team became interested in seeking a partnership with City Connects, which would provide a solution for their social-emotional support, data, and framework needs. City Connects, a Boston College-based initiative, had pioneered a systematic approach to addressing the out-of-school factors that limit learning.¹ The approach involves a sophisticated data system that tracks the holistic needs of all students and a staffing model that puts a specially-trained City Connects coordinator in every partner school with the purpose of matching every child with the resources they need to thrive. The coordinator meets with each teacher to learn about the strengths, interests, and needs of each child, which form the basis of a student profile that includes other data such as assessments and any special academic services the child receives. Based on these profiles and each child's designated level of need, the coordinator identifies services and supports and follows up to ensure they are actually being provided. For Salem, this focus on each child would ensure no student fell through the cracks.

While City Connects has research evidence showing its effectiveness and has expanded substantially over the past decade, it had never implemented its program citywide.

The Salem cabinet hoped that the program's data system would allow for better tracking of all student needs, both individually and systemically, as well as provide yearly data to show progress. Likewise, the coordinator position provided a framework for using the data system, which facilitated the collection and use of data to support students, faster referrals to needed services, and stronger connections with families and community partners. Their hope was that the system would ultimately reduce mental health service needs among students by proactively engaging with children and meeting their needs before they entered crises.

Assistant Superintendent and BAM cabinet member Margaret Marotta initiated conversations with City Connects as a potential partner after a fortuitous meeting with its director at a Reimagine Learning conference during the summer of 2016 and found that there was strong interest in the partnership on both sides. Conversations continued for months, with the Lab arranging time for the full Salem team to meet with City Connects representatives at the November 2016 convening. Working with the Teachers Union president, Marotta was able to come up with a funding and staffing structure that worked for all stakeholders: instead of hiring new City Connects coordinators, the district would redesign school adjustment counselor positions to utilize the City Connects model. This model would reduce the startup cost of implementing City Connects citywide.

Mayor Driscoll was able to negotiate funding for the first and most expensive year of City Connects implementation in Salem through the city's Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with North Shore Medical Center—making the funding a unique private/public combination. After being delayed multiple times in City Council, the agreement was approved in May 2017: City Connects would be rolled out in all K–8 schools that fall.

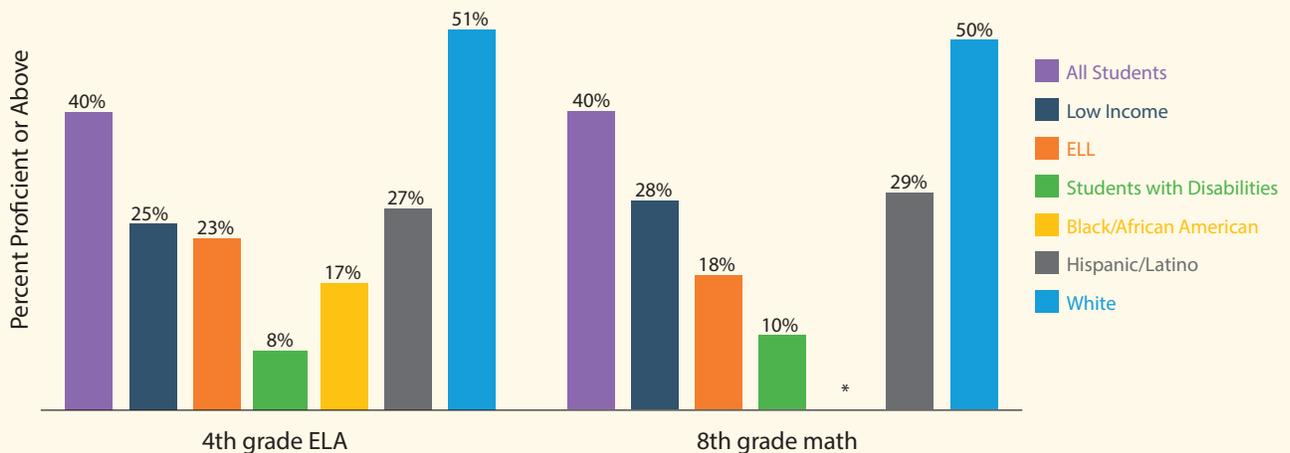
Addressing Connection Gaps through Trainings and a New Website

Trainings: The Salem team came up with a citywide training initiative to help address the connections gaps identified in their SWOT analysis. Trainings were suggested as a way to engage all members of the community and encourage them to play a role in meeting the needs of children across Salem. As Ullman shared, “A low percentage of kids feel like their community cares about them. . . . So these trainings will be about supporting adults to be a healthy force in kids’ lives, even if they don’t see themselves as folks who traditionally work with kids.” The idea gained momentum at the cabinet’s second meeting, in September 2016, when cabinet members from the United Way and Salem State University offered in-kind support and funding to bring the trainings to fruition.

Working with the United Way and another organization, the Mass Mentoring Partnership, Foley and Ullman developed a train-the-trainer model that would be rolled out starting in October 2017. The Partnership Collaborative helped inform the direction Salem would go in terms of content, and ultimately determined that the initial training should focus on the formation of healthy youth-adult relationships. The training would be targeted toward youth service providers (including all members of the Partnership Collaborative), who would then go on to lead trainings at their own organizations and beyond to the wider Salem community.

Website: The Salem team hired Social Capital, Inc. in early 2017 to create a website that would help families identify, understand, and access community resources. Representatives from Social Capital,

Test Scores 2017 MCAS



Students Chronically Absent:

23.9%

Child Uninsured Rate:

.7%

Children Born with Low Birthweight:

6.7%

Sources: Demographics: bit.ly/SalemDem17, Graduation Rates: bit.ly/SalemGrad17, Test Scores: bit.ly/SalemMCAS17, Chronic Absenteeism: bit.ly/SalemAbsenteeism17, Uninsured Rate: bit.ly/SalemIns16, Low Birthweight: bit.ly/birthweightMA

Inc. attended the February 2017 cabinet meeting to share early ideas and solicit feedback from cabinet members. Hopeful that Salem was about to embark on the first citywide implementation of City Connects, the cabinet wanted to ensure that the site met the needs of families as well as City Connects-trained counselors, whose focus would be identifying opportunities and services to meet the needs of every Salem student. The website would be designed to allow community providers to log into the site and add opportunities themselves, which would help address capacity issues around maintenance of the site's content. As of May 2017, the team was planning an imminent beta rollout of the site to solicit feedback from the community.

Bringing It All Together

By the time of the May 2017 convening, Foley and Ullman realized that it would be an important next step for Salem to develop a messaging campaign around each element of their cabinet's agenda. According to Foley, "We had these three initiatives but we had no global messaging about what the purpose was for any of them and they could sound so unconnected" without a message uniting them. Salem spent a portion of their team time discussing what that campaign might look like, tentatively coming up with "Our Salem, Our Kids" as a name and an umbrella framing for their emerging movement.

Elements Affecting Success

Leadership

The mayor and superintendent strongly support the 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 staff time and funding to carrying forward the cabinet's work.

A MAYORAL PRIORITY

Mayor Driscoll has made it clear that the work of the Children's Cabinet is a priority for the city, and her persistent leadership was instrumental in securing funding for the first year of City Connects. The Community Benefits Agreement with North Shore Medical Center was held up several times by the City Council, requiring the mayor to use her political acumen to ensure the funding was passed in time for the fall 2017 implementation of City Connects in all Salem K–8 schools.

ALIGNMENT WITH SUPERINTENDENT

Due to the turnaround work already taking place in Salem, the mayor and superintendent had an ongoing relationship and were well-aligned in their collective vision for Salem's children; BAM provided an opportunity to strengthen and formalize that relationship. Superintendent Ruiz's strong commitment to their shared vision facilitated coordination between BAM and Salem Public Schools, generating a district strategic plan that supports and supplements the cabinet's efforts. As Ruiz shared in February 2017, "We're talking about revamping and strategically planning for the district, and *By All Means* is helping us to think strategically at the city level. Those two processes support each other."

CABINET

The cabinet's structure is heavily dependent on two individuals who have put substantial time into Salem's *By All Means* work, which presents a sustainability challenge. Relying on the work of a few core team members leaves Salem vulnerable to loss

of momentum if there are staffing changes. Because a few people in the cabinet's early structure are carrying the bulk of the work forward, some stakeholders are not as fully involved as they could be.

Salem's cabinet has also met less frequently than cabinets in other cities. While this hasn't inhibited the city's impressive implementation progress, a number of cabinet members have referenced infrequent cabinet meetings as limiting their awareness of interim progress.

Partnerships and Relationships

For Salem, the Children's Cabinet has served the important function of deepening cross-sector relationships. As Mayor Driscoll shared, "I think that we've developed a strong camaraderie and willingness for all voices to be heard. Some of that happened through our time at Harvard—it's a close networking group."

The Salem cabinet has been particularly successful in bringing projects to fruition quickly and efficiently thanks to buy-in and support from various cabinet members. For example, unexpected support from community partners enabled the trainings to get off the ground quickly. A cabinet member from the United Way expressed interest during a cabinet meeting in using his resources to start citywide trainings with the goal of giving everyone a shared understanding and language about the cabinet's work and generate community buy-in. At the same meeting, the dean of education at Salem State University noted that he had some professional development funds he could contribute to the training initiative.

When the cabinet pushed forward on rapid implementation of City Connects, they engaged relevant stakeholders every step of the way. The district and Teachers Union worked closely to create a City Connects staffing structure that worked for everybody, enabling the process to move quickly and smoothly in time for implementation during the 2017–2018 school year.

External Factors: Lab Support

CONSULTANT

The BAM consultant, Kendra Foley, works closely with a school district staff member and has spent a significant amount of time advancing the cabinet's agenda between meetings. Several cabinet members have noted that Foley and Ullman make an outstanding team. Thanks to their combined hard work, action items from every cabinet meeting are implemented quickly and effectively. As one senior district official noted, "Kendra keeps us moving and directed in a way that we need. So she's an awesome facilitator and the work wouldn't be the same without her. We wouldn't be as far along. I do think that without support, we could get scattered in all the things that are going on."

CONVENINGS

For Salem, the twice annual convenings at Harvard have had an important function of holding the team accountable and providing cabinet members the opportunity to learn from experts, programs, and other cities. As one cabinet member shared:

We love the sharing out of ideas. We've borrowed things from Oakland and we work closely with Somerville. I would not undervalue the time we spend together, even though it can be minimal at times, but those convenings are pretty deep for us, in terms of providing some guidance and some pressure, so like, "We're meeting soon. What have we accomplished?"

Another cabinet member agreed on the value of the convening for accountability and pressure, noting that "at least with our cabinet, and it appears with other cabinets, you have so many people that are so busy with their jobs that without really forcing people to make the time and use that time to set the direction and identify who's doing what, nothing would come out of the initiative. In that way, the convenings have worked well."

The November 2016 convening, in particular, gave Salem the opportunity to meet with City Connects for the first time as a large group. Pat DiNatale, Director of New Practice for City Connects, joined Salem's team time to share basic information about the program.

OTHER SUPPORTS

As a part of the initiative, Lab Director Paul Reville periodically schedules calls with the mayors to serve as a thought partner on their education strategy. Additionally, Reville invited Driscoll to participate on a panel at the popular Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Summit.

Data

As with all other BAM cities, Salem's cabinet has been working to improve its capacity to use data to make decisions about priorities and track progress. Because of its small size, SPS is data-rich but has limited capacity to analyze its data; both the mayor and superintendent have identified this as a key need for the city. The Lab has supported the development of a strategy for improving data-driven decision-making for the Salem team through phone calls and in-person meetings. The Salem team also hopes that the partnership with City Connects will help them develop a robust data system from which to draw and expand capacity to use that data.

Funding

Salem has found success in securing funding from among its cabinet members. North Shore Medical Center, an early member of the Children's Cabinet, provided funding for City Connects' first and most expensive year of implementation through a Community Benefits Agreement with the city. The team is currently seeking longer-term funding to ensure that City Connects can continue to operate in Salem's schools. Other cabinet members—United Way and Salem State University—provided

resources to implement the cabinet's citywide trainings.

Conclusions

Salem has moved rapidly from planning to implementation to create new citywide supports for its children and youth. As Mayor Driscoll shared, "This initiative has been what jump-started us, and it has served as a catalyst both for programs like City Connects and for helping us think more cohesively about the system. The strategic plan effort that we have for the district is being implemented now, very much informed by the work we did with By All Means."

Building on the momentum of the schools' strategic planning process and the imperative to improve its Level 4 designation—which they exited in September 2016—Salem has put in place tangible interventions to ensure that no child falls through the cracks: the introduction of the City Connects model into all its K-8 schools ensures each child will have a personalized support plan and a coordinator tasked with ensuring its implementation; the new community resources website provides centralized, comprehensive information on programs and services available within the community; and the new community training program broadens Salem's view of its collective responsibility for the wellbeing of its children.

ENDNOTE

1. Boston College (2015). Web site: www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lsoe/sites/cityconnects/results.html

Salem Takeaways

- Cities starting from scratch on collective impact work can make considerable progress in a short time with the commitment of key leaders.
- Bringing a range of partners to the table spurs creative resource sharing and additional support.
- Creating a compelling overarching message can help the community understand how different elements of the work fit into a comprehensive vision for meeting children's needs.

Where Are They Now?

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

- **Through a comprehensive movement called *Our Salem, Our Kids*, Salem is broadening the focus of its individual BAM initiatives**—City Connects, community trainings, and a new website—and motivating an entire city to rise to the challenge of collectively supporting its young people.
- **The team rolled out a beta version of the movement's website, oursalem.org, during the summer of 2017.** During their September 2017 cabinet meeting, cabinet members discussed a broader messaging campaign for *Our Salem, Our Kids* to generate community buy-in. Goals for this include creating a video that can more easily highlight the city's progress to date and communicate the need for a citywide movement to support Salem's children.
- **Salem has created a new part-time position jointly funded for the first year by the mayor and superintendent to support the cabinet's efforts.** The team is seeking longer-term funding for this position, as well as for year two and three of City Connects (in subsequent years, the cost of the program decreases substantially).
- **The cabinet received \$75,000 from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation in early 2018 to supports its new messaging work** around *Our Salem, Our Kids*, after a connection made by the Lab between Salem officials and representatives from the foundation.