Youth Development Institute: Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS)

Implementing CEPS: The First Year Evaluation Report

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Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS), created by the New York City based Youth Development Institute (YDI), is a citywide initiative to assist young people in completing their education, entering college, finding work, and contributing to their communities. Working with community-based organizations (CBOs), CEPS targets out-of-school youths, 16 to 24 years old, with reading levels below 8th grade, who are interested in preparing for the GED and/or improving their skills. The goals of CEPS are to:

- Strengthen the capacity of community organizations to provide high quality and integrated youth development, support, and education services.

- Enable returning youth to develop skills, attitudes, experiences, and credentials to achieve self-sufficiency and active involvement. (in the classroom, the program, and the organization).

Currently there are six sites implementing CEPS, two each in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn, New York. Three sites started during the 2005/06 year and three during the 2006/07 year. This report focuses on the sites' implementation of CEPS, the degree to which their implementations reflect the CEPS model, and on an analysis of the student data sites submitted to YDI in April, 2007.

The CEPS Model

The CEPS model has high quality instruction at its core. CEPS' literacy instruction is based on the America's Choice Ramp-Up curriculum, which is being implemented at all six sites. Ramp-Up is a year-long curriculum tailored specifically to the needs of adolescents who have never known academic success. Instructors are provided with daily lesson plans, homework assignments, and ways to illustrate key concepts. The daily schedule focuses on rituals for entering the classroom, independent reading, daily word study, and read aloud/think aloud.

This year, as part of the CEPS instructional component, two sites began the America's Choice math curriculum, Mathematics Navigator, which gives students, who are struggling with specific mathematics concepts and skills, instruction that addresses the root causes of common misconceptions. In support of the instruction, the model includes ongoing assessment of student

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progress using the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE) and/or other measures. In the model, administrators use student data to improve the program in general and to improve it for individual students. In addition, they use data to determine the need for counseling or referrals to social services. Different program components are expected to be combined into a "blended approach."

The model assumes that there will be:
- a process for staff to learn from each other and to learn about the young people with whom they are working;

- a primary person approach in place, where each student has a specific person to whom they go for guidance, support, and referral;

- collection and use of data for program improvement;

- administrator consultation with youth and staff on decision-making.[1]

Infused throughout the CEPS model are the following youth development practices: high expectations for youth, opportunities for youth to contribute, continuity of relationships with youth, engaging activities for youth, caring and trusting relationships, and physical, emotional and psychological safety.

Implementing the CEPS Model

This report is based on the following data collection efforts:[2]
- review of background information and reports from the six sites;

- fall student focus groups at four sites;

- spring student surveys at four sites;

- fall and spring observations at four sites;

- fall and spring interviews with the instructors at four sites;

- fall, early and late spring interviews with the six CEPS program directors;

- fall and spring interviews with all CEPS counselors, trainers, and advocates at the six sites;[3]

- analysis of March, 2007 student data submitted to YDI by the six sites.

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[1] There was less emphasis in this area during the 2006/07 year.

[2] Two sites were supported by the New York City Board of Education and had additional procedures that needed to be completed before IRB (Institutional Review Board) permission could be granted to access students, instructors and student data, other than those data already being reported to YDI. Permission was received in summer, 2007. The full data collection will be done over all six sites during year two of the evaluation.

[3] Copies of the interview questions, student survey, and observation protocols can be found in Appendix B.

<center>***Program Practices***</center>

Over the 2006/07 academic year, across the six CEPS sites, there have been significant changes in program practices. The most significant change is in the increased use of case conferencing,[4] to learn about and support participating youth, and the use of the primary person approach, where each student has one staff member who serves as their "point" person and who has explicit responsibility for that student. There has been less change in other areas. While sites continue to work on their data collection and use efforts, currently most data collection and use is tied to funder requirements. Also at an early stage is the process of consulting with youth for program-related decision-making.

Learning About Young People/Case Conferencing

Over the 2006/07 academic year, five of the six sites have either implemented case conferencing or have expanded their use of case conferencing. This includes two sites that began case conferencing for the first time this year. One site moved from doing informal and impromptu discussions about students to weekly staff and instructor meetings that included discussions about students. When there is a crisis situation, they bring others into the discussion as well. This site is also setting up a process to have instructors formally collect information about students and pass that information on to the next instructor, so that person can see what has and has not worked with a given student. A second site also moved from informal discussions of students to formal case conferencing. Along with staff conferences, there are also conferences with students to assess their academics, conduct, and attendance as well as to motivate and encourage them.

At three other sites, the change seems to be more in degree than kind. In the fall, a staff member commented that "we have case management. We formally sit down and discuss issues. There are informal conferences on students all the time. We have a collective team working with them… and conference on students consistently." In spire of that, by spring it was felt that processes for learning about students had "increased in past few months. There are some new [staff] so there are more conversations, more people concerned with the students, more interest." As one interviewee explained, "[w]e are in constant communication [about students]. It is a daily thing—in both formal and informal settings; formal staff meetings, case conferencing and a link to family services," where, within confidentiality rules, staff receive updates about students who are in family services.

A second site has continued its weekly case counseling meetings, where staff try to focus on one student and what's going on with them, then try to come up with some strategies to get that student to class. In addition, there are now some informal meetings where the counselors come into the class to speak with both instructors and students. A third site modified its informal case conferencing and monthly meetings, adding questions related to mental health, motivation, and timelines for getting a GED and a job.

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[4] YDI staff are working with CBOs to change from using the term "case conferencing," which has a more medical orientation to "student presentations" or "student conferencing."

The final site is not currently doing formal case conferencing, although staff meet and conference regularly.

Implementing a Primary Person Approach

Between the fall 2006 and spring 2007, four sites established a primary person approach where students have a primary person to contact. At one site, the instructor is now the primary point of contact for all students. At a second site, students chose who they would like have as their primarily point of contact, with each staff member having four students. The staff member and each of their students meet once a month for an hour. A third site started the year with no official primary person, saying that the students all know that they could go to one particular staff member. They now assign students to different staff members. Each staff member is now a primary counselor for nine students. Staff share information about their students in case conference meetings and staff meetings. The sites do not find the primary person approach easy to implement. "It's hard," one staff member explained, "for staff to switch roles." At a second site, a staff member felt "[w]earing hats when we haven't been trained, that's my challenge."

The fourth site struggled with the primary person approach. In March, they felt they weren't "quite where we want to be." The concern was with matching advocate skills to student needs. For example, you "might have one advocate who's really good with helping with employment, another who's really good at job searches. It's a broad stretch that we are asking advocates to do really broad things." By May however, they had figured out how to deal with their concern and had implemented a primary person approach. They have students identify a focus or primary goal, and divide them by advocate according to the focus/goal. Implementing this approach helped a lot, they felt. "Things were getting lost and now they are not."

The final two sites have had, and kept, one person (the case manager at one site and an instructor/program director at the other) as the primary point of contact for students throughout the year. However, one of the sites does feel the need to have another staff member to help follow-up with the young people.

The Blended Approach

CEPS sites are working hard to provide a more blended approach for students, but they are not finding it easy. As one site explained, "The biggest challenge [to CEPS] is the blended approach." Progress toward blending the CEPS program components is being made at all the sites, albeit in different ways. For example, one site is a partnership between two community based organizations (CBOs), one who originally did the counseling and social services at their location and a second that did the instruction at their location. Since students were entering at both sites, they were not accessing all CEPS components simultaneously. This meant that some students would do life skills and career readiness and then go into the pre-GED instruction, while others received instruction but not the additional supports. They have moved to a more blended approach. While staff from both sites work with CEPS students, the services are now all handled at one CBO with career readiness, life skills, and enrichment being done weekly, integrated with instruction.

Moving counseling "in-house" has helped one of the sites achieve a more blended program. Prior to CEPS, this site would refer students elsewhere for counseling; now, with the exception of more intensive work, counseling is done as part of CEPS. In addition to academics, their integrated program now includes, in addition to academics, life skills workshops, poetry workshops, healthy relationships workshops, and a twice a month computer class. Student career internships are now also tied into what they are learning in their CEPS classes.

Two other sites have found implementing CEPS' administrative components have caused their programs to become more blended. Implementing the primary person approach at one site has, they feel, led to a more blended approach as each primary person works with other staff to get services for "their students." In addition, daily hour-long group meetings are set up to provide the students with the wrap-around services they need. Another site is finding that using case conferencing, where the job readiness coordinator advocates and instructors all meet regularly, has contributed to their providing a more blended approach, as has staff training in areas such as how they "switch from being emotional support to being educational support." A particular challenge in utilizing a blended approach for this site is that its evening classes are held in a local school with an instructor who is there primarily for class time only.

Increasing staff interaction with each other and working as a team has led the fifth site to better blend program components. In addition, they are hoping that, with a new instructor, there will be more blending between the instructional and support sections of their CEPS program.

In the fall, the final site reported on the integration between counseling and education staff, including how topics from the books read in class were integrated into counseling and art therapy, moving them toward a more blended approach. By spring, there appeared to be less blending across different CEPS components, although efforts were being made to increase communication across components.

Staff and Youth Roles in Decision Making

The young people in the CEPS program have had minimal input on decision-making, although several sites are collecting student feedback and there are plans to do more. One site provides students with weekly opportunities to air complaints and discuss how the program is going, but notes that students don't always take advantage of these sessions. Another site has no written forms for young people to complete; however, "each teacher has their own thing to do at the end of each term [to get student feedback]."

Over the year, two sites increased their efforts to get student feedback. One site is now using a student survey to "give them voice" and get feedback, while a second site now has youth do an assessment of the program on a monthly basis. Two sites are planning to do more to involve youth. One site is planning to create a CEPS advisory council and a second is looking for ways to get more structured feedback from students.

Staff feedback and influence on decision-making varies across the sites and did not appear to change over the 2006/07 year. At one site, staff are given a three page questionnaire to provide the program manager with feedback about the organization, while a second site has regular staff

meetings, "lots of quick meetings," and staff feel information is always flowing. Another site focuses on sharing across staff. "What is taught and how it is taught is an ongoing discussion. We share best practices, do our own portfolios, share with staff. Twice a year as part of own staff development we share everything." At another site, there are concerns that staff are not heard and there continues to be a need to "get staff more on the same page."

Data Collection and Use

Outside of work with individual students, the primary use of data across sites is to meet funder requirements. However, three sites are taking some steps to increase their use of data. One site is tracking attendance and placements and has started looking at trends and patterns. They are also using their database to avoid duplications in referrals and other efforts. This site is looking to learn more from their data and is particularly interested in whether the age of the young person is related to their success and if there is more connection to the program for youth coming from the local community than for youth who come from a distance.

A second site is exploring how to use the data they collect to look at program impact and see if they can determine the elements of a program that make it successful. A third site is hoping to be able to use demographic data to group students geographically.

CEPS Instruction[5]

> *While there are differences by site, between fall and spring there tended to be an increase in flexibility in CEPS sites' implementation of the Ramp-Up model with more instructor satisfaction in terms of both their performance and their students' response. Students are enthusiastic about CEPS and recruitment is not an issue at five of the sites. The rituals and routines appear to be working well. At all sites students, both new and old, come in, know what to do, and start doing it. Retention and attendance are issues; however, they appear to be more of a problem at some sites than at others.*

The following vignettes provide insight into how the literacy curriculum is being implemented at four of the sites, how this has been changing over the 2006/07 year, and how they are moving closer to the CEPS model.

Site A

> *It is time for class to start and eleven students, six women and five men, are in a room doing silent reading while the instructor works with one student and then another until all students have had some individual interaction with the group. After 40 minutes of silent reading and individual work, students do ten minutes of writing on mental images and then participate in a discussion of how background and knowledge influence writing. The instructor reads an essay, "Yo, It's Like a Bridge Over Troubled Water, Homies" aloud to the group. There is discussion of the essay and the students each write about a passage of the reading that was important to them and why. It is now 90 minutes into the*

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[5] Pseudonyms are used in the student success stories.

class and there is another writing task; this one on the impact of music on today's teenagers. This is followed by more discussion based on student writings. Two hours into the class some students are off-task, but the instructor brings them back using Ramp-Up's routines and rituals. The class ends with the instructor tying all the pieces of the day to the GED exam, including suggesting ways of using poetry and hip-hop as fodder for the GED essay.

This spring, observation showed consistent application of some instructional and youth development practices and growth in others. In both the fall and spring observations, it was clear that students really liked and responded to the instructor. Students expected the instructor to have what they needed – chewing gum, pens, salt for swollen gums, a sweater. If the instructor didn't have it, it was gotten from somewhere. While there was some class discussion in the fall, in the spring observation there was more class discussion and sharing. Different opinions were raised by students and individual voices respected. Students appeared to be concerned about each other. The instructor agreed with this assessment, feeling that over the year there was more bonding between students, more of a sense of community, and more concern for each other.

In both the fall and spring observations, the class consisted of some students who had been in the class for months and others who were brand new. As an outside observer, it was difficult to tell the difference. As the instructor explained in the spring, Ramp-Up's "rituals and routines make it easier for new kids fit into the classroom. Older students model how new students, and all students, should conduct themselves in the classroom. When 'new kids' come in, with the rituals and routines, going along with the program is the only option."

In the fall, there were a number of opportunities for one-on-one interaction with the instructor and the students took advantage of the opportunities. By spring, there was more structure to the one-on-one sessions. Students could still choose to interact on a one to one basis with the instructor; however, in addition, the instructor initiated interactions with each student in the class.

In the spring, this instructor spoke of being more able to "twist the curriculum to better suit myself and my classroom." This "flexibility of curriculum" allows the instructor to use what is happening inside and outside of class to improve instruction.

By spring there was more "pushing the students to higher levels." For example, during the class students were encouraged to "[t]hink and write, organize your thoughts, stretch it" and told "I know you can." They were urged to be aware of the world around them and look to see who was making the decisions that affected them. In the spring there also seemed to be more engaging activities than noted during the fall observation.

These changes may be related to changes in the instructor's definitions of student success. In the fall, the definition focused on "an increase in awareness; awareness of their skills and their desire to improve." By spring, success was for "students to be aware and have a grasp of the knowledge that they can achieve and improve. Reading is the basis for that knowledge. [Students need to] consistently strive to be better."

Site B

It is time for class to start and six students are already there; fifteen minutes later, there are 17 students in the class, 14 of whom stay for the full three hour class. As students come in, they get their books and say how many pages they will read. At the end of the silent reading period, students say how many pages they read (everyone either made or surpassed their goal) and do some analysis of why they had thought they could read the number of pages they predicted and why they thought they were able to read more (Reasons included "it was a really good book"). Then as a "memory check," students write about an image they had chosen the day before. Students then spend some time reviewing the notes on their writing that the instructor gives them every week and using the notes for guidance, brainstorming ways to improve their writing. While doing the brainstorming for the writing, the instructor reveals some personal strengths, weaknesses, and concerns, creating an environment where students do the same. After the break, the 14 students who returned participate in an hour long vocabulary game where teams compete against each other. Excitement is high and engagement total.

> **A Student Success Story**
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> After Kiesha started in CEPS class, she moved up and it didn't take that long. Moving up, she has maintained attendance. She is part of the stipend program and wants to see what ways she can help. She is motivated, reliable, very punctual, and gets along with everyone. All the students like her. She's great.

The spring observation found a class that was quite different from that of the fall. The fall class was a celebration that centered around students writing and reading their own poetry, with the instructor reading the poems of those who did not feel comfortable reading their own. Normally, in fall classes, the instructor explained, there was 45 minutes of independent reading including keeping track of words they didn't know. This was followed by ten minutes of student writing in response to a prompt and instructor read aloud. There was, during the fall, instructor concern about students being left out or "checking out and not participating."

This wasn't the case in the spring, where most students were on-task, engaged, and working hard throughout the class. There was one table of four students who were initially off-task, led by one student who was trying hard to get thrown out of the class permanently. Unwilling to do that, the instructor put the student on a leave of absence and the other three students went back to participating in the class.

In both observations, there was strong evidence of a caring environment and of student engagement. The instructor(s) knew about the student's personal lives and in some cases even

knew if (and what) students were reading at home. Between observations, the expectations for students changed. In the fall, the instructor wanted to make the classroom more strict. By spring, this had happened. There were now consequences for being late and for not doing the work. Students were told "[y]ou need to know the rules." To a response of "I don't want to know the rules," they were told "[t]hen don't come to class." Previously absent students were told that, because they didn't show up the day before, today's work "will be more difficult." Retention was no longer seen as a problem and the instructor felt the increased focus on student accountability was a big part of the reason why.

Along with changing the expectations for students, this site changed the definitions for student success. Initially, the definitions for student success centered on students graduating up to a program at the next academic level. Current definitions are more intensive and extensive, focusing on the following questions:

> Has this person understood what a reading strategy is?
> Has this student been able to reflect on what they have read?
> Is the student reading with more than just decoding?
> Are they able to sit and read independently for 20 minutes?
> Is the student enjoying reading?
> Does reading skill go up?
> Does the student understand that a person needs to think about writing before they write?
> Does the student understand that they need to rewrite?
> Can the student write a paragraph?
> Is the student enjoying writing?
> Have they made a commitment to school that they can carry forward with them?

The instructor credits the positive changes between fall and spring to having more flexibility in applying the Ramp-Up curriculum to out-of-school youth. "Having the curriculum guru go off the curriculum is very freeing," said the instructor. "Within this cycle we are able to adapt the curriculum. [The America's Choice consultant] has helped narrow the curriculum to the parameter of the hours available." It has made a difference.

Site C

> *Ten minutes after class was to start, two students come in; fifty minutes later there are 12 students. Since there is an award ceremony that day, the class has been shortened to 90 minutes. As students come in, they go to the boxes in which the independent reading books are stored, find their books, and begin reading. Seventy minutes into the class, the instructor explains they are going to redo yesterday's lesson in a different way to reinforce it. Students then write up their opinions about an article on drug testing that they read the day before. The goal is for them to find two points that support drug testing and two that do not. They work on this assignment until they leave to go to the awards ceremony. Students are on-task for the independent reading; however, at other parts of the observation, four students are off-task with two of them appearing to be asleep.*

Instructor absence, due to a transportation issue, meant that fall observation was not conducted. However, in a fall interview, the instructor described the class as follows:

A Student Success Story

Sam came into CEPS at a 6.5 reading level. He increased to 9.5 in three months. He passed the [GED] predictor and is taking the GED on May 14th. He wants to go to college. He will come in [later today] to try and help another student.

"As soon we as get in there is independent reading for about 15 minutes, sometimes a little longer. While they do independent reading, I try to sit with 1-2 students to see if they understand their book, if it is at the right level for them. We work on a specific reading strategy, things that proficient readers do. Then there is a portion where student share. Then there is reading aloud and then a conversation about the book and reading. After reading aloud, they go into a lesson, [at the fall interview it was on writing their personal memoirs]."

The instructor, a former teacher, describes some changes between fall and spring classes.

"I focus less on punctuation, grammar, and formality now and more on their writing. I tweak my lessons better now—focus more on student needs. [The America's Choice consultant] is helping me to be less linear. Rather than redoing a lesson I'm now trying to make the next lesson a continuation of what we are doing rather than a repeat. I'm trying to show them, stopping and then having them do it. I'm trying to stay on the Ramp-Up time frame but I also try to get them to complete what they start. I know I have to let them move on, but I want to let them finish their thoughts and to do this I sometimes abandon the time frame."

Definitions of student success tended to focus on individual student gains. In the fall, the instructor felt that success varied by individual student; for one student it was coming to class, for another student it was starting to talk more, and for yet another student it meant sticking with a book. The spring response was similar. Success is "any sort of gain; having one student complete an assignment—I celebrate. Staying focused, taking a risk, [including] staying in when getting hard stuff."

Site D

The two students present at the start of the two-hour class go and get their books and start doing independent reading for 30 minutes. Four more students come in before the end of the first hour of class and work on summarizing what they have been reading and on the vocabulary in the readings. One of the two instructors takes the lead and asks a variety of questions. The other instructor moves around the room, encouraging the students to answer questions and answering the questions if the students don't. Students tend to be on-task; however, when it is time for students to evaluate their essays using the GED scoring rubric, only one student has

A Student Success Story

Several weeks after no longer attending CEPS, Maria asked herself "Why am I sitting [at home] when I could be in class?" She started coming to CEPS every day and is now in a GED class. She saw that she had an opportunity, a chance, and she took advantage of it.

> *written an essay. Just before the end of class, a student tries to come in to, as other students say 'get a metro card' and is not allowed in.*

At this site, there were few changes between the fall and spring observations. In the fall observation, there were two instructors and a small number of students, (four; two of whom were present on time). In the fall, the curriculum was followed pretty closely, which also seemed to be the case in the spring, although in both the fall and spring, instructors reported doing their own extension activities. In both fall and spring, there were opportunities for students to participate and their participation was taken seriously.

Definitions of student success in both fall and spring focused on increasing student TABE scores and transitioning students into GED classes. Other definitions included having students come to class, meet their personal goals, change their attitudes, and access counseling. Much of the success, the instructor reported, has been "social, creating bonds and creating a community. A success every day when they do the work and there is no meltdown." The spring observation showed evidence of that bond when the instructor and students followed up with another student whose brother was unexpectedly hospitalized.

Sites E and F

Because of different requirements for access to students and student data in the remaining two sites, classroom observations and instructor interviews were not conducted during the 2006/07 school year.[6] Both sites will be working with new teachers during the 2007/08 year and are planning to have an approach that does a better job of blending instruction and personal supports. During the year, one of the sites increased their direct implementation of CEPS from three and a half hours to six hours and found the increased time did not negatively affect retention. They feel the students are responding well to the increased time.

Mathematics Instruction

Sites A, B, and C have math components to their program; site D does not. During 2006/07, sites A and C moved from implementing their own math program to beginning to use the America's Choice Mathematics Navigator curriculum. As of spring, the math instructors had a one-day orientation on the curriculum and two site visits. The instructors have been changing the way they teach to reflect the new curriculum. As one instructor explained, "[p]reviously, I would decide what topics to cover based on test results. If students haven't done well in, for example, geometry, I would focus on that. Navigator is structured, more planned. I have to stick to the plan." A second instructor spoke about doing more group work and found the biggest change was in having students write out how they do things. Reflecting some early concerns of the literacy instructors, the math instructors have concerns about a lack of flexibility in the curriculum and how to cover material designed for a full school year in the CEPS time schedule. There are also concerns about classroom management issues, keeping the group on-task while working with individual students. Both instructors have concerns that Navigator isn't advanced

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[6] Permission has been received and observations will be conducted during the 2007/08 year.

enough for the students. One instructor is supplementing Navigator with other materials and homework. However, instructors are pleased to be using Navigator and students appear to be enthusiastic.

Across Sites

Student Measurement and Assessment

Over the 2006/07 year, student assessment in most sites continued to focus on the TABE, although some sites are beginning to expand their assessments. In one site, student assessment has changed from "just the TABE" to the TABE; instructor-created testing; mid and end of term conferences with individual students focusing on where students are academically and where they want to be; and the instructor consistently having a general idea of where each student is academically as well as personally. At a second site, the TABE continues to be used, as is daily checking of notebooks and assessing students as they go through their daily rituals. With the guidance of the America's Choice consultant, the instructor is using the Quality Reading Inventory (QRI) for individual assessment. In addition, students are doing more writing and there is more assessment of their responses to the independent readings. Two other sites are interested in doing more individualization of their student assessment, but are not clear on how to do so. One site is using student TABE scores to see what is and isn't happening in a student's learning process. At the other two sites, there has been minimal change.

Student Recruitment

Recruitment appears to be working well across sites. There have been minimal changes in recruitment efforts over the year; however, change does not appear to be necessary. Three of the six sites have long waiting lists and two more have as many students as they can handle. One site does not have as many students as they would like; however, the issue seems to be related to administrative practices, not recruitment. This site has a centralized recruiting/admissions effort where there are plenty of applicants, but eligible applicants tended to be routed to programs other than CEPS. CEPS students in four sites were surveyed as to how they had learned about CEPS. Most recruiting was informal. For example, over 40% of 48 CEPS students responding said they learned about CEPS from friends while over a third learned about CEPS from relatives. No one said that they learned about CEPS from teachers, fliers, or the library and only one said he had learned about the program from the CBO sponsoring the program.

Student Retention

Retention issues seem to vary across sites. Of the four sites described above, two are having fewer problems with attendance and retention while two other sites continue to struggle. All of the sites use a variety of incentives and social supports; however, the two sites with fewer problems seem to have consistently applied student accountability/disciplinary policies, a strategy which research has found to be a characteristic of highly effective schools.[7]

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[7] Clewell, Beatriz Chu & Campbell, Patricia B., with Perlman, Lesley. (2007). *Good Schools in Poor Neighborhoods: Defying Demographics, Achieving Success.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

Student Response to CEPS

Student response to CEPS instruction is very positive. Student comments collected during spring observations regarding what they liked best about CEPS centered on the instructors and the teaching, including such statements as:

> the teacher can actually teach you;
> [teachers are] willing to help you become what you want to become;
> teachers are nice and very understanding and really care about you, helpful.

When asked the degree to which they agreed with a series of statements about CEPS, students felt most strongly that their instructors cared about them and that there was always some person to whom they could go for help. While they felt positive about both instructors and counselors, as Table I indicates, they felt more strongly that their instructors cared about them and expected a lot from them. They agreed that they felt safe at CEPS and disagreed somewhat strongly that the activities were boring. Not surprisingly for a program that emphasizes literacy, students were more strongly in agreement with the statement that their reading was getting better than they were with the statement that their math was getting better.[8]

Table I. Mean Student Ratings Related To CEPS Instruction And Effectiveness[9]
(1=Strongly Agree to 5=Strongly Disagree)

	Total CEPS (N=48)	Site A (N=14)	Site B (N=14)	Site C (N=12)	Site D (N=8)
My reading is getting better.	1.86	1.5	2.08	1.82	2.25
My math is getting better.	2.26	2.15	2.15	2.0	3.5
My teachers expect a lot from me.	1.89	1.38	2.36	2.4	1.57
My counselors expect a lot from me.	2.1	1.62	2.56	2.3	2.17
My teachers care about me.	1.63	1.38	1.81	2.0	1.63
My counselors care about me.	1.92	1.58	2.4	1.7	2.14
Most of the activities here are boring.	4.16	4.21	4.33	4.2	3.75
I feel safe while I am here.	1.79	1.33	2.25	1.73	1.86

Student ratings of other aspects of CEPS reflected other findings. For example, reflecting on the increased use of the primary person approach, students agreed strongly that there is always some

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[8] 1.86 vs. 2.26; t=2.96; p=.005. Not surprisingly, site D, the site with the no math component, had the least positive rating in this area.

[9] Forty-eight CEPS students from four programs completed a short survey on their goals, their perceptions of CEPS, and how they learned about CEPS

person to whom they can go to for help (1.67), while they agreed least strongly that they had a say in what happens in the program (2.53).

CEPS Student Achievement

Although there was significant variance across sites, between fall, 2006 and spring, 2007, CEPS student literacy scores increased at an accelerated rate. For the five sites doing math instruction, CEPS student math scores also increased significantly, although to a lesser degree than the literacy scores. There was also no significant variance in math scores across sites. Increases in student literacy skills were significantly higher for those with better attendance; this was not case for math.

The analysis is based on the March, 2007 data that the six CEPS sites reported to YDI. The data covered 136 CEPS students, including 85 students who had initial and follow-up TABE literacy scores and 67 who had initial and follow-up TABE math and literacy scores.

Literacy Scores

Between their initial and most recent testing, CEPS student TABE literacy scores increased an average of 1.4 years, from 6.0 to 7.4.[10] This average increase is a large, statistically significant difference.[11] As Table II indicates, there were major differences across sites, with average student increases ranging from a high of 3.0 to basically no change (-.2).

Table II: Changes in Student Literacy Skills

	# of Students	Initial Test Score		Follow-Up Test Score		Gain
Site		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
All Students	**85**	**6.0**	**1.5**	**7.4**	**2.0**	**1.4**
Site A	21	5.9	1.1	7.5	1.5	1.6
Site B	9	5.2	0.7	6.2	1.9	1.0
Site C	28	6.1	1.9	7.8	2.1	1.7
Site D	6	5.8	1.1	8.8	2.3	3.0
Site E	8	5.0	1.8	7.3	2.5	2.3
Site F	13	6.9	1.0	6.7	1.8	-.2

Sixty-seven of these 85 students entered CEPS between September, 2006 and February, 2007. At the time of the CBOs' reports, these 67 students had been attending CEPS for an average of 5.0 months. During that time, their average CEPS scores increased from 6.1 to 7.5, an increase

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[10] TABE Scores are reported as grade equivalents (GE). In GE, the integer is the school grade level and the decimal is the month of the nine month school year. Thus a 7.4 indicates an academic level approximating that of the fourth month of the seventh grade.

[11] F=35.84, p=.000; effect size=. 8. In social sciences, greater than .5 is considered a large difference, although some feel that .8 is a better indicator of a large difference.

of 1.4; which is equivalent to an increase of 13 months.[12] Their gains under the CEPS program were two and a half times that which would have been expected based only on their time in the program. Interestingly, their average initial TABE literacy score was lower than the average initial TABE literacy score of 36 students who entered with them but left before taking the TABE a second time (6.1 vs. 6.4).

Math Scores

Sixty-seven of the 85 students had initial and follow-up TABE scores in math.[13] Overall, there were statistically significant increases for students in math.[14] The overall gain was .9, which is the equivalent of an increase of 8 months. Unlike literacy, the gains were not significantly different by site. With the exception of Site E, the range in gains was small from, .6 to .9.

Table III: Changes in Student Math Skills

	# of Students	Initial Test Score		Follow-Up Test Score		Gains
Site		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
All Students	**67**	**5.0**	**1.6**	**5.9**	**1.9**	**0.9**
Site A	21	4.8	1.3	5.7	1.3	0.9
Site B	9	5.4	1.5	6.1	1.9	0.7
Site C	16	5.0	1.8	5.6	2.3	0.6
Site D*	NA					
Site E	8	5.1	1.5	7.3	2.4	2.2
Site F	13	4.9	1.9	5.5	1.8	0.6

* Site D has no math instruction

Relative Changes in Literacy and Math

Figure I provides an overview of the relative gains in math and literacy for the 67 students from five sites who had both multiple TABE literacy and math scores. While the gains in literacy reflect the full CEPS model, the gains in math reflect the CEPS model without a specific math instructional component. Each site used its own math instructional model/curriculum. As Figure I indicates, at all five sites there were increases in math achievement, but at four of the five sites, those increases were less than the increases in literacy. The one exception was at Site F, where there was a mean increase in math achievement, but not in literacy. That site has replaced their literacy instructor.

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[12] A GE increase of 1.0 equals nine months; therefore an increase of 1.4 equals 13 months (9 plus 4).

[13] These 67 students are not the same 67 students who entered the program between September, 2006 and March, 2007. However, there was overlap. Forty-seven of the 67 students with multiple math scores entered CEPS between September, 2006 and March, 2007.

[14] F=21.32 p=.000; effect size=.5

Figure I: Changes in Literacy and Math Skills
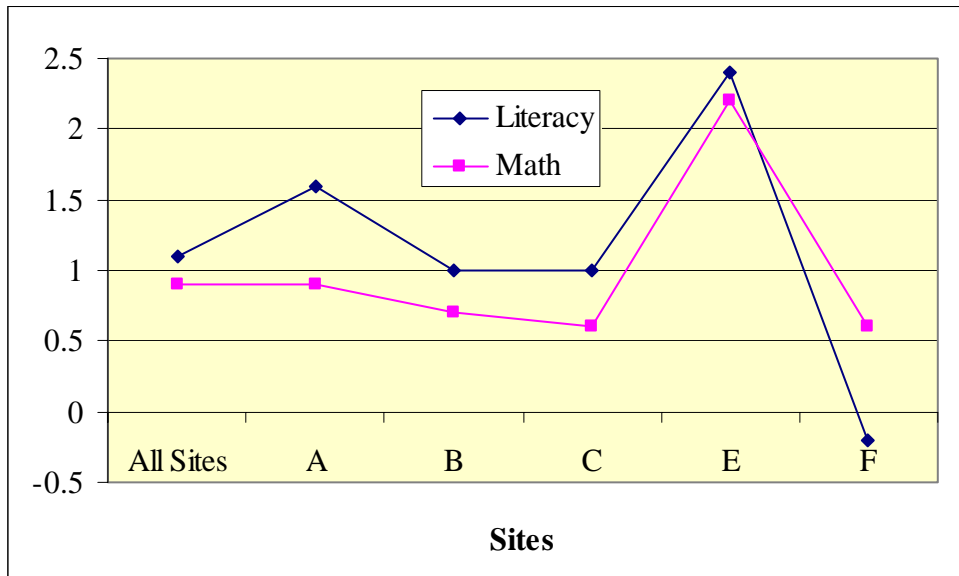
Attendance

CBOs ranked student attendance as high (70% or higher), medium (30-70%), or low (less than 30%). The 41 students with high attendance had much bigger increases in their literacy skills than did other students (2.12 GE high vs. .87 GE medium vs. .31 GE low);[15] however, gains in math skills did not differ significantly by attendance (1 GE high vs. .82 GE medium vs. .27 GE low).

Conclusions

During the 2006/07 year, CEPS sites moved significantly closer to fully implementing the CEPS model. In particular, progress has been made in adopting the primary person approach and in increasing the use of case conferencing. These strategies appear to have encouraged and reinforced instructors and staff working together as a team. Instructor and staff discussions with each other about individual students and about program components has been helping to ensure staff are on the same page about student progress and issues and on how program components are relating to each other. Having instructors and other staff working as a team, learning from each other, and having their program components explicitly supporting and building on each other is key. To make this happen, instructors need to be part of the team, participate in training, and follow the curriculum.

There has been progress in adapting the America's Choice curriculum model to the needs and time limitations of an educational program for out-of-school youth while retaining fidelity to the core philosophy. The curriculum's rituals and routines seem to be working particularly well for the CEPS sites where attendance is not always consistent and where new students come into

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[15] F=4.58 p=.013

existing classes on a regular basis. There was significant variability among the four sites where the classroom observations were conducted, with two sites having greater changes between fall and spring. Change, at these sites, focused on increased behavioral and academic expectations for students and increased instructor flexibility in using the Ramp-Up curriculum with students. These two sites were also the sites with fewer attendance/retention issues.

While there continue to be attendance/retention issues, recruitment is not a problem. The population in need of such programs is far greater than can be served by CEPS and finding students has not been a problem. CEPS students appreciate the program, feel that their skills are increasing, and particularly appreciate their instructors.

Math has not been a major emphasis of the CEPS model. One of the sites does not offer any math instruction and at the other sites, more attention is given to literacy. At two sites, it was observed that when instructional time had to be sacrificed, the math instruction time was cut. Some emphasis on math is beginning to be made. This spring, two sites began using the America's Choice math curriculum. The two math instructors attended a training session and site visits had been conducted at each of the two sites.

CEPS student achievement has been increasing at an accelerated rate. Although there was significant variance across sites, between fall, 2006 and spring, 2007, CEPS student literacy scores increased at an accelerated rate as did math scores, but to a lesser degree. While there were significant differences among sites in literacy gains, there were not in math gains. Increases in student literacy skills were significantly higher for those with better attendance; this was not case for math.

Recommendations

I.   *YDI, with the assistance of CEPS sites, should clarify what is included in the core CEPS model.* Currently, all sites are using the America's Choice literacy curriculum, the primary person approach, and case conferencing. They are also increasing their application of youth development principles. Most have math instruction, some have leadership training, some have career readiness programs, and some have internships. It would helpful if there were an indication of which are necessary components of the CEPS model and which are optional.

II. *CEPS CBOs should be able to select, supervise, evaluate, support, and, if necessary, terminate any of their staff, including instructors.* Much of the CEPS model is dependent on staff and instructors working together as a team; attending training; and implementing administrative and instructional changes. This can be very difficult if staff and instructors are operating under different organizational and supervisory rules.

III. *A process should be developed to help CEPS sites going into their third and final year under the CEPS project to implement the CEPS model as a self-sustained, institutionalized program.* This may include the development of a sustainable, institutionalized process for staff and instructor training. Without an ongoing training

process, staff and instructor turnover will make sustaining a CEPS model in a CBO very difficult. YDI is beginning work on this, including setting up one of the sites as a demonstration site.

IV.   *If the CEPS model can be sustained by CBOs, CEPS should be expanded.* The needs of out-of-school youth not eligible for GED programs are great and, as the waiting lists at the CEPS sites indicate, young people want to be a part of CEPS programs.

This report has focused on the sites' implementation of CEPS and the degree to which their implementations reflect the CEPS model. Currently analysis is being done of student data including changes on their TABE scores, other educational attainments, attendance patterns, services received, and goals. These results are being tied to site implementation of the CEPS model and to comparable students in nonCEPS programs.