



FAST FACTS

MOTT HAVEN ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 10

GRADES SERVED: PreK-5

LOCATION: Bronx, NY

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 340

LOW INCOME: 96%

**STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE OR
RECEIVING PREVENTIVE SERVICES:** 66%

**STUDENTS LIVING IN
TEMPORARY HOUSING:** 20%

SPECIAL EDUCATION: 20%

STUDENTS MEETING AND EXCEEDING
COMMON CORE PROFICIENCY, GRADES 3-5



READING

MOTT
HAVEN
ACADEMY
31%

NYC
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
30%

SURROUNDING
DISTRICT
SCHOOLS
12%



MATH

MOTT
HAVEN
ACADEMY
55%

NYC
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
39%

SURROUNDING
DISTRICT
SCHOOLS
18%

LEADERSHIP CHANGES STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Jessica Nauiokas, Principal, Mott Haven Academy

2015-16 U.S. Department of Education Principal Ambassador Fellow

Nine years ago, Jessica Nauiokas was given a challenge: lead a new school serving children in foster care in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country.

The statistics are grim for children in foster care, who are often years behind academically. Many have endured emotional upheavals that contribute to serious behavior challenges. An excellent school would have to combine caring with academics, to be loving and safe, challenging and fun.

"It's a population that has challenges, but they don't have to be a barrier," said Nauiokas. "We are creating a trauma-sensitive environment and developing their resiliency skills—but none of that matters if they can't compete academically."

A "HAVEN" FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

Today, students at Haven Academy significantly outperform their peers citywide on state math and reading tests. Staff overwhelmingly describe the school as a place of safety, trust, and rigorous learning.

Nauiokas structured Haven to provide the interventions her students need. "High-risk students are often misdiagnosed with learning disabilities when their academic deficits stem from extreme school mobility," said Nauiokas. Every Haven student has an individualized learning plan and benefits from intensive remediation, small group work, and flexible-age classrooms to catch up with grade-level expectations.

Nauiokas places equal attention on creating a stable and welcoming environment. Students share feelings in morning meetings and specialists support teachers in recognizing behaviors associated with abuse and neglect. The school is equipped to address challenges students face outside school, stocking clean clothes for children who arrive without them and training staff to liaise with caseworkers and coordinate transportation services.

"I never believe that things aren't possible. I encourage people to innovate to do more, to dream bigger than what's been done before."

"I am so confident that my kids love school," she said. "When I see kids laughing and waving, I know they feel safe and challenged in a good way, and are really getting the chance to be kids."

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

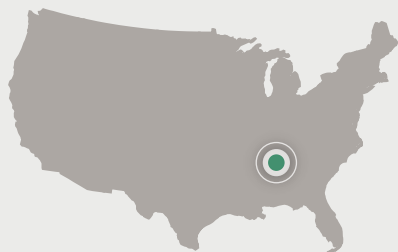
Nauiokas credits her New Leaders' Aspiring Principals training with the skills to be a collaborative, decisive leader. At Haven, she has set clear goals for student progress and met logistical challenges head on.

"To me, leadership is an honor, a tremendous responsibility, and an opportunity," she said. "The honor comes from being entrusted with a school's future. The opportunity is having the chance to innovate and motivate teams, and to create moments for students that other schools might not offer."



FAST FACTS

CHEROKEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 4

GRADES SERVED: PreK-5

LOCATION: Memphis, TN

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 517

LOW INCOME: 89%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 95%

STUDENTS MEETING AND EXCEEDING ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY



MATH

2013 **15%** 2015 **65%**



SCIENCE

2013 **25%** 2015 **74%**



READING

2013 **16%** 2015 **33%**

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES
EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • **TEACHING**
OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Rodney Rowan, Principal, Cherokee Elementary School (2012-2016)
Founding Principal, Westhaven Elementary School

Rodney Rowan was ready by 5:00 a.m. on his first day of kindergarten. As he progressed through school, however, he encountered teachers who “did not believe that all of us could learn.”

It wasn’t until middle school that he met positive male role models: the African-American coaches and camp counselors who inspired him to become an educator. He set that same strong example as principal at Cherokee Elementary School.

CORE VALUES

When he arrived, Cherokee was struggling. Rowan ignited a culture shift by articulating core values for students and staff. Now, the community celebrates integrity and rewards hard work.

“You have to first believe that children can do and will do if you create the right environment,” he said. “There can’t be a ‘but’ and there can’t be a ‘however.’ You have to have relentless drive.”

DEVELOPING TEACHERS

As a principal in Memphis’ iZone—designed to turnaround chronically poor performing schools—Rowan was granted flexibility to hire new educators, but great teachers weren’t lining up to work in such a high-need setting. In response, he crafted a development strategy and selected staff who were mission-aligned and prepared to improve.

“You will never be able to fire enough people to get what you need,” he said. “Every teacher may not be great right off

the bat, but I knew that if I hired teachers with a deep belief that all children can achieve and a willingness to learn, there was nothing we couldn’t accomplish.”

“When teachers start experiencing success and when students start experiencing success, it changes everything.”

Data analysis is central to student and teacher improvement at Cherokee. Teachers analyze student data to guide instruction, and Rowan uses data to target professional development, including during frequent classroom visits where he models effective lessons. More than a scorecard, tracking progress has also been a motivator, providing evidence of success.

“The students could see that they were smart and that they could tackle the work we were giving them,” he said. “And it was the same with the teachers, they were being pushed and they could look at the data and see they were succeeding.”

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

Rowan credits his New Leaders training with preparing him to turn Cherokee around. “Virtually 100 percent of what I do to develop my teachers I learned from New Leaders,” he said. “Being a New Leader means you are crazy enough to think you can save the world, one child at a time. It means knowing you *can* make a difference, and knowing *how* to make that difference.”



FAST FACTS

KELLY MILLER MIDDLE SCHOOL



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 5

GRADES SERVED: 6–8

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 353

LOW INCOME: 99%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 99%

HISPANIC: 1%

SPECIAL EDUCATION: 20%

CHRONIC TRUANCY



2010
30%

2015
<5%

ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY AT KELLY MILLER



MATH

2010
19%

2014
58%



READING

2010
19%

2014
38%

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES
EXPECTATIONS • **CULTURE** • TEACHING
OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Abdullah Zaki, Principal, Kelly Miller Middle School (2010–14)
Current Principal, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School

Abdullah Zaki shares a common background with his low-income students in the nation's capital—but he made his way to college and beyond. “My peers had the same hardships and came up in the same neighborhoods, but they didn’t have the support I happened to get from a handful of adults. Having the right people in your life makes a huge difference.”

He has spent his career paying that forward—first as a teacher, and then as an assistant principal and principal.

A CHAOTIC CHALLENGE

When Zaki arrived at Kelly Miller Middle School in 2010, five principals had come and gone in as many years. “The general sense was that the school was kept open so the neighborhood kids had somewhere to go, but there was no hope that they would ever get a decent education there.”

He focused on containing chaos, requiring teachers to escort students through the halls and introducing separate lunch periods for each grade. He emphasized safety and clear consequences for poor behavior. Suspensions fell by 50 percent in a year, and chronic truancy dropped from 30 percent to less than five percent by 2015.

BRINGING ORDER TO INSTRUCTION

In English and math classrooms, “teachers had been doing their own thing.” Zaki instituted common interim assessments, regularly reviewed results with his teachers, and guided

them to plan lessons aligned to rigorous academic standards. Zaki also introduced targeted interventions to meet students’ individual needs, including accelerated classes for advanced students and tutoring and Saturday enrichment classes for those who were struggling.

“You’re there to save kids’ lives. I have to make sure everyone in the school understands what our expectations are as we move forward.”

Steady progress ensued, with DC Public Schools naming Zaki Principal of the Year in 2013. By 2015, math proficiency rose from 17 percent to 58 percent of students and reading improved from 17 percent to 38 percent.

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

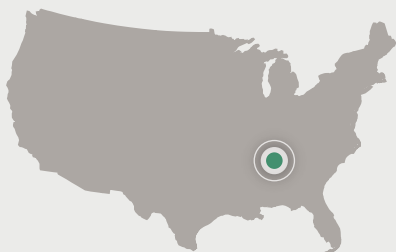
Building a new culture of high expectations was not easy. But Zaki’s training through New Leaders’ Aspiring Principals program, which he completed in 2009, equipped him with the skills to identify challenges, implement solutions, and effectively navigate the discomfort and resistance that wholesale change induces.

“My New Leaders experience taught to me how to lead difficult conversations, and that the goal is to produce positive change. If change doesn’t happen as a result, the you haven’t been productive.”



FAST FACTS

MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 4

GRADES SERVED: 9-12

LOCATION: Memphis, TN

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 228

LOW INCOME: 62%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 92%



GRADUATION RATE

100%

GRADUATES ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

100%

78%
FOUR-YEAR

22%
TWO-YEAR

STUDENT IMPROVEMENT IN ALGEBRA II



	2011-12	2014-15
GRADE LEVEL	35%	93%
ADVANCED	0%	68%

STUDENT IMPROVEMENT IN ENGLISH III



	2011-12	2014-15
GRADE LEVEL	39%	71%
ADVANCED	9%	12%

LEADERSHIP CHANGES STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Docia Generette-Walker, Principal, Middle College High School,
2015-16 Memphis Principal of the Year

Middle College High School has a clear goal for its students: graduate high school and earn up to 60 college credits during junior and senior year. But back in 2012, when Docia Generette-Walker joined as the second new principal in two years, it seemed a distant dream.

The school was in disarray: test scores had fallen by 30 points and just six students qualified to enroll in college classes at Christian Brothers University. Its new location adjacent to the university was under construction and rat-infested. Teacher morale was low. "Our work was cut out for us," she said.

A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION

Just three years later, Middle College was named a National Blue Ribbon School and was in the top five percent of schools in Tennessee for both progress and performance. Three quarters of upperclassmen were eligible for college classes, 100 percent of seniors graduated and went on to college. New community service and athletic programs rounded out rigorous academics.

To transform students' experiences at Middle College, Generette-Walker started by focusing on instruction. She immediately introduced classroom observations and critical feedback—a change that was "difficult and very uncomfortable."

Teachers now meet frequently and are regularly coached and observed. They use common assessments, track

student data in three-week cycles, and map performance to goals for college readiness. After some initial attrition, turnover is low: a staff survey found the overwhelming majority planned to stay.

"We have challenges every day. I constantly ask myself, how do we get to the next level? How do I keep my staff willing to grow and learn?"

"We set a clear vision and an expectation for success," she said. "It's all about learning how to work with and motivate people, getting them to reflect — and also reflecting yourself."

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

Today, the school resembles those that drew Generette-Walker to apply for New Leaders' Aspiring Principals program years earlier, as a teacher on a fellowship in Washington, D.C.

"I saw a group of leaders getting dramatic results for really high-need students and I asked myself, 'Why is this school, in the same neighborhood, with similar students, doing so much better than the school down the street?'"

Her assistant principal, Andy Demster, is also a New Leader, which has "affected our results exponentially," she said. "Being a New Leader means being part of a mission and a movement that's changing education in this country."



FAST FACTS

MONTALVIN MANOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 3

GRADES SERVED: PreK-6

LOCATION: Richmond, CA

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 419

LOW INCOME: 93%

HISPANIC: 71%

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: 53%

STUDENTS MEETING AND EXCEEDING
COMMON CORE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY



MONTALVIN	DISTRICT	STATE
46%	32%	44%

Proficiency rates are higher at Montalvin even as the school serves many more English language learners.

SUSPENSION RATE



MONTALVIN	DISTRICT	STATE
0.2%	6.2%	3.8%

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES

EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING

OPPORTUNITIES • **FAMILIES** • LIVES

Katherine Acosta-Verprauskus, Principal,
Montalvin Manor Elementary School

Katherine Acosta-Verprauskus was a fourth grader when her family moved to Kansas from Peru. She was the first English learner her school ever enrolled, and lacking other supports, they placed her in a kindergarten class. Thanks to a handful of committed teachers, Acosta-Verprauskus excelled. Her brothers and cousins were not so lucky, and she remains the only member of her family to earn a college degree.

Today, as principal at Montalvin Manor Elementary in Richmond, California she is dedicated to ensuring that students and their families have the opportunities she did.

"My children face many challenges. Being a person of color and an English Language Learner — I empathize with all of it," she said. "I'm a model of what's possible."

BUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST

When she arrived as Montalvin's principal, many families reported feeling unwelcome. Acosta-Verprauskus was the only staff member who spoke Spanish, and signs throughout campus warned: "No Parents Allowed."

She tore down the signs, translated during meetings, and established new adult programs, starting with an ice cream social that attracted 100 parents. Now, monthly "Coffee Tuesdays" have built trust and "Parent University" seminars have helped families better understand their children's academic needs.

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION

Transforming achievement called for big changes in instruction, too. She coached teachers to give common assessments, analyze student data, and target instruction based on evidence of progress. Teachers began to meet, collaborate, and plan lessons together.

"It raises the stakes for teachers when they have parents coming in and asking specific questions about how they are supporting their child."

"It was a big adjustment," she said. "Some people don't like being pushed that way."

Two years later, Montalvin's reading scores made it one of the best-performing schools serving low-income Hispanic students in California, earning it a Gold Ribbon Award.

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

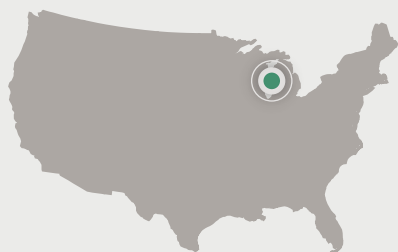
Acosta-Verprauskus credits her success to the preparation she received through New Leaders' Emerging Leaders and Aspiring Principals programs. She mastered proven strategies for school improvement, enabling her to give feedback to seasoned teachers in a manner they welcomed and applied.

"As a New Leader, I'm part of a community of school leaders that are focused on providing low-income students with an opportunity to dramatically change their futures."



FAST FACTS

MARIA SAUCEDO SCHOLASTIC ACADEMY



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 6

GRADES SERVED: K-8

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 1,215

LOW INCOME: 90%

HISPANIC: 96%

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: 40%

STUDENTS APPROACHING, MEETING, AND EXCEEDING COMMON CORE PROFICIENCY



MATH

SAUCEDO
62%

CHICAGO
49%



ENGLISH

SAUCEDO
67%

CHICAGO
56%

LEADERSHIP CHANGES STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Isamar Vargas, Principal,

Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy, Chicago, IL (2011-16)

Current Principal, Eliot Hine Middle School, Washington, D.C.

Isamar Vargas' first teaching job was at a "dropout factory" in a Chicago neighborhood dominated by gangs. The adults were focused on containing violence, instruction was weak, and students arrived at school angry and fearful. The conditions called for radical change, propelling Vargas out of the classroom and into school leadership.

"I needed to do something and it needed to be urgent," she said. "I had to lead so that our kids know that they can be something in this country."

COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE

Her first day as principal was daunting. Saucedo is situated between rival gang neighborhoods, and virtually all students are low-income and Hispanic. Teachers felt isolated, instruction was uninspired, and student progress was neither tracked nor supported by targeted interventions.

Vargas immediately focused on improving curriculum and teaching. She told teachers to box up their basal readers, introduced a leveled-reading program, and offered professional development on individualizing instruction. With a new Instructional Leadership Team, she created common assessments, introduced a daily shared prep period, and encouraged an open-door policy so teachers could observe and replicate successful lessons.

"We were really asking teachers to change how they think," she said.

TRANSFORMATIVE RESULTS

While she initially lost some staff, Saucedo has retained an average of 88 percent of teachers over the past three years. Now teachers regularly analyze student data and seek out feedback to bolster their instructional practice.

Student performance skyrocketed that first year and it has improved ever since. Today, Saucedo students outperform their Chicago peers on state tests, and the school has earned the city's highest 1+ rating for school quality.

"I will not make excuses to justify failure. If I have a successful school in a gang-infested neighborhood, with 95 percent of students poor, then the theory is debunked. You can have a successful school anywhere."

"I try to communicate urgency, so people don't feel obligated, they feel inspired," says Vargas. "Our success convinced teachers what we were doing was right."

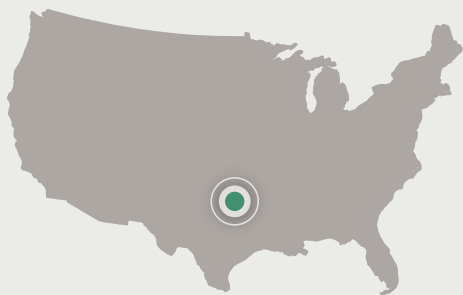
NEW LEADERS TRAINING

Vargas credits her Aspiring Principals training for giving her the strategies to deliver breakthrough results for students. "The most important thing for a leader is to build systems so people are successful," she said. "The support, the coaching, the open-door policy—these are all in place so teachers have the tools they need."



FAST FACTS

BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL



YEARS AT SCHOOL: 2012-15

GRADES SERVED: 9-12

LOCATION: Arlington, TX

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 3,053

LOW INCOME: 60%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 37%

HISPANIC: 34%

STUDENTS MEETING AND EXCEEDING
PROFICIENCY ON THE STATE BIOLOGY EXAM



BOWIE
HIGH
SCHOOL

88%

ARLINGTON
74%

TEXAS
78%

SMART GOAL PROGRESS:
FIRST-TIME TEST TAKERS PROFICIENT
ON THE STATE BIOLOGY EXAM

86%

2014



94%

2015

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES
EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING
OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Ray Borden, Assistant Principal, Bowie High School (2012-15)
Current Principal, Turning Point High School

Ray Borden was born with the heart to nurture children and the ambition to lead adults. After college, he pursued a career in sales—but a few years in, came home to Texas to do what he “should have done all along—become a teacher.”

He soon earned an administrative degree and became an assistant principal at Bowie High School.

A CULTURE SHIFT

After three years, he was accepted into Arlington’s Emerging Leaders program, which he saw as an opportunity to elevate his leadership practices, starting with more rigorous expectations for students and candid conversations with teachers.

“I thought I was coming into the program with knowledge that would accelerate my learning, but it was actually a hindrance,” he said. “I had to get rid of my old habits and go all-in.”

Borden regularly looked at student data and fostered what he considered to be strong relationships with teachers. But by winter, student achievement was hitting a plateau at Bowie, and with the help of his coach, Borden saw that he was coasting on charisma rather than true strategy when engaging staff. Underlying distrust stymied progress.

“My coach would not let me settle and would not let me avoid disagreement,” he said. “She made me think about my choices. Was this the right choice? Is there a better way?”

That translated into major changes in how Borden addressed culture and fostered instructional excellence. He studied state academic standards, implemented a data collection calendar, and began using tools from the program to structure conversations with teachers who needed to improve.

“I realized that I was driving the bus, but if we were going to move forward, my team had to do the driving.”

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

With a push from his coach, Borden also set more ambitious goals for student learning. One goal, which he initially set at having 89 percent of students pass the state biology exam on their first try, was raised to 92 percent. By year’s end, 94 percent of first-time test takers passed that exam, earning his school a distinction in science from the Texas Education Agency. Based on that success, district officials tapped Borden to serve as principal of Turning Point High School.

“Emerging Leaders provides a framework and essential principles to follow,” he said. “Now, I anticipate obstacles and plan for them. I guide people where I need them to go. The things I learned in the program — the mindset, the tools — I will use them forever. They are the core of my management style.”



FAST FACTS

LIBERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 7

GRADES SERVED: PreK-5

LOCATION: Baltimore, MD

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 464

LOW INCOME: 94%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 98%

STUDENTS APPROACHING, MEETING, OR EXCEEDING COMMON CORE PROFICIENCY



ENGLISH

LIBERTY
51%

BALTIMORE
38%



MATH

LIBERTY
42%

BALTIMORE
31%

STUDENTS MEETING OR EXCEEDING MARYLAND STATE SCIENCE STANDARDS



SCIENCE

LIBERTY
85%

BALTIMORE
32%

LEADERSHIP CHANGES STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • LIVES

Joe Manko, Principal, Liberty Elementary School

2015-16 U.S. Department of Education Principal Ambassador Fellow

In April 2015, protests swept across Baltimore in the wake of Freddie Gray's death. City schools were closed, leaving 80,000 students with nowhere to go—except at Liberty Elementary, where Principal Joe Manko also runs the recreation center next door.

Manko called in his teachers and opened the center to provide “a safe space to talk, relax, get a meal, and decompress,” he said. “We played the craziest game of dodgeball I’ve ever played.” After a neighbor called the mayor’s office and challenged officials to follow suit, every recreation center in Baltimore opened its doors.

“We look at data and academic achievement, and those things are fantastic, but we also have to realize that we’re in the business of working with kids and working with families. Our impact goes so much farther than a data point,” Manko said.

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

Manko became Liberty’s principal in 2010. After teaching in Baltimore schools for eight years, he completed his New Leaders training. It provided knowledge and adaptive leadership skills to foster strong relationships—key to his success at Liberty.

When he arrived, Liberty’s culture was strong, but instruction lacked differentiation and rigor. He introduced a richer literacy program, adding a library of leveled books to every classroom and initiating small-group

tutoring. By the end of his first year, Liberty had its first top-tier reader. Now, more than half of the fifth-grade class reads at “level Z.”

“Leadership is about inspiring people to work together to do something that is greater than themselves.”

BEYOND THE SCHOOL WALLS

Efforts to boost student learning go beyond the school walls. In 2012, when Baltimore announced that the recreation center adjacent to Liberty would close, Manko brokered a deal to take it over. The catch was that he would not receive city funding.

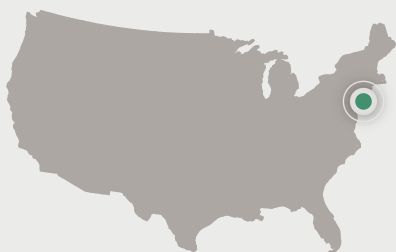
Manko galvanized the community and today, relying entirely on volunteer support, the center offers a free afterschool enrichment for students, Zumba, ceramics, and GED classes for families, and a “Baby University” program for new parents. “The education pipeline starts at age zero, not three or four,” Manko said. Volunteers also run a food pantry, provide family counseling, and lead a marching band.

“It’s a really powerful example of how a community can come together, wrap their hands around their students and families, and do something that is greater than and beyond ourselves,” he said. “The only way we could make this work was by harnessing the power of the community.”



FAST FACTS

EAGLE ACADEMY FOR YOUNG MEN II



YEARS AS PRINCIPAL: 8

GRADES SERVED: 6–12

LOCATION: Brooklyn, NY

STUDENTS ENROLLED: 576

LOW INCOME: 76%

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 85%

HISPANIC: 12%

SPECIAL EDUCATION: 21%



95%

OF EAGLE'S HIGH SCHOOL
SENIORS GRADUATED
ON-TIME



86%

OF EAGLE GRADUATES
ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

STUDENTS • SCHOOLS • COMMUNITIES
EXPECTATIONS • CULTURE • TEACHING
OPPORTUNITIES • FAMILIES • **LIVES**

Rashad Meade, Founding Principal, Eagle Academy for Young Men II

Rashad Meade learned the power of leadership early on. He grew up with an involved father at home—a rarity in the Queensbridge Houses. “He was a coach who helped kids who didn’t have a father figure,” he said. “His actions and sense of responsibility made an impression on me.”

That’s the role Meade plays today, as principal at Eagle Academy for Young Men II in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn.

BEATING THE ODDS

His mostly low-income, African-American students face daunting challenges. When the school opened in 2008, nearly two dozen entering sixth graders were homeless. Just 17 percent read at grade level.

Last year, 95 percent of seniors graduated on time, compared to 53 percent of black males citywide. Some 86 percent went on to college—including the class valedictorian, a formerly homeless student now attending Skidmore College on a full scholarship.

NEW LEADERS TRAINING

Meade credits his success to New Leaders training and ongoing support. He graduated from New Leaders’ Aspiring Principals program in 2008 and counts two New Leaders on his leadership team.

“New Leaders had a tremendous impact on who I am as an educator,” he said. “Much of my success as a teacher had to do with the fact that I’m a big, black

man. But to be an effective leader, that’s not enough. You need a vision, but you also need techniques and strategies to execute that vision.”

CHANGING CURRICULUM — AND LIVES

As founding principal, Meade recruited talented teachers and led them in creating a new curriculum—“there was no existing curriculum that really got black boys from a point of struggle to a point of success.” Together, they built a supportive culture of high expectations for all.

“We have an unconditional commitment to our boys. I’m never going to waver in my belief that they’ll be successful and that I’ll see them fulfill our expectations.”

Today, the school’s predominantly male, African-American teachers deliver rigorous lessons during extended school days and Saturday sessions, such as “Skills and Me,” in which students turn an analytical lens on challenges in their neighborhoods. And they respond to student needs outside school as well.

“I get calls from moms telling me, ‘My son refuses to go to school,’ and one of us will grab him out of bed, sit him down at the local IHOP and say, ‘Here are the two paths you can take. I suggest you come with me.’ And they do.”