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CITY HEIGHTS YOUTH FOR CHANGE: CASE STUDY PART II CONNECTING TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH A YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP

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SUMMARY OF PART I: GENERATING AUTHENTIC DEMAND

Part I of this Case Study, ***Generating Authentic Demand***, was released in March of 2015. It defined the concept of Authentic Demand and described the Civic Engagement Model being applied. It also told the story of how the organization, ***City Heights Youth for Change***, was formed and how it came to focus on the disparities in educational outcomes. It describes the process used by the youth to analyze and assess these disparities as well the conclusions they drew from their work. In short, the youth identified three root causes:

1. The schools don't expect us to succeed
2. They teach us differently here than they do in wealthier communities
3. We are treated differently because we live in City Heights

In their analysis of what can and should be done to "Close the Achievement Gap among schools in the San Diego Unified School District," the youth developed a Theory of Change that identified five conditions that must exist in order to achieve their goal. These are:

1. Teachers have a personal investment in the students' success
2. Teachers are qualified to teach the courses they are teaching
3. District Resources are distributed equitably so that schools with the greatest needs get the most resources
4. Parents and community are fully engaged in the schools
5. Parent and student perspectives are included in teacher evaluations

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INTRODUCTION:

Part I of this case study opened by stating that it was telling the story of a group of refugee youth “who made a commitment to confront the huge gaps in educational outcomes between schools in low-income neighborhoods such as theirs and those in wealthier neighborhoods.” Part II continues the story of how these youth, having generated the Authentic Demand for equity in education, pressed their demands. Part II, however, is not the end of the story of these young people, just the next segment. Achieving equity in education is a long-term struggle. The story told here continues the description of this struggle and the development of these young people as leaders in their community.

This segment begins where Part I left off. In particular, during the period covered in Part I of this case study, the youth participating in City Heights for Youth for Change have:

- Completed a Root Cause Analysis that defined institutional expectations as the key causal factor for poor educational outcomes at their school
- Examined their own experiences and created a Theory of Change that identifies five conditions that must exist if the District is to close the achievement gap
- Studied the LCAP to assess how well it addressed the conditions identified in the Theory of Change
- Identified three specific changes they want to see in service of increasing the equity with which resources are distributed within the District
- Agreed upon a strategic framework for moving their Authentic Demands forward

Part I ended by naming the task/challenge before the group as “continuing to develop its Authentic Demand” in order “to ensure that it strengthens and documents its connection to its constituency and creates ways of establishing their accountability to that constituency.” The group took on this challenge by deciding to conduct a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project that would assess and document their community’s concerns about the quality of education their children are receiving.

Success

In the time between Part I and Part II of this case study the refugee community, led by the Parent-Student-Resident Organization (PSRO), successfully had specific language about interpretation services inserted into the District’s 2015-2016 LCAP, i.e.:

Provide translation and interpretation services to facilitate effective communication, engagement, and participation. Review and respond to cluster-specific needs and communication preferences (e.g. Crawford cluster – need for services in key languages including Somali, Kizigua, Swahili, and Karen with preference for verbal/oral interpretation).

The PSRO is a coalition of students and parents of students attending schools in the Crawford Cluster from the Bantu, Somali, Karen speaking, Spanish speaking and the Swahili speaking communities. Members of City Heights Youth for Change are the Bantu contingent of the PSRO and, in fact, the founders of City Heights for Youth for Change were also among the founders of the PSRO.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Having identified what they see as the major contributing factors to the inequity in educational outcomes and what changes are required to bring equity, the participants were asked to think about their connection to the larger community and how their own understanding of the issue matches that of their

community. In order to assess the community's understanding of the issues the group was asked the four questions listed below. It was through the conversation generated while answering these questions that the research design emerged.

1. Who in the community agrees with your analysis and assessment?
2. How do you know the people listed agree with you?
3. Who should you ask for their perspective?
4. What is the best way to gather information from the people you speak with?

In responding to the question of who in the community agreed with them and how they know they agree, the participants basically assumed that the whole community would agree with their analysis as evidenced by the parents' present level of engagement and interest. This assumption of full agreement, however, did not extend to teachers, counselors and nonprofit agencies. The participants expressed that *some* teachers, counselors and nonprofit agencies would agree with their analysis as evidenced by the fact that they saw *some* teachers and counselors take actions that address the issue and that there were *some* nonprofit agencies that offered programs that addressed the issue.

In response to the question regarding whose perspective is important, the participants named the community (students, parents, alumni from last five years, people living in and/or raised in the community), school personnel (teachers, counselors, and administrators) and nonprofit agencies. The final question about the best way to gather information led to some discussion on culture and perspective. Given the diversity of people involved the youth decided that it was not possible to develop a single way to gather the information needed. Considering this diversity, the participants decided on the following:

- Community: Assessing the community required two strategies - one for students and alumni and one for the parents. Students and alumni would be assessed using a survey while the information needed from the parents would be gathered through focus groups.
- School Personnel: Assessing the School Personnel also required two strategies. The first of these strategies would involve holding focus groups with particular teachers and counselors, i.e., those they see as addressing the issue. The second strategy would be to hold key informant interviews with certain administrators, teachers and counselors.
- Nonprofit Agencies: The strategy for gathering the information from Nonprofit Agencies was the same as that for School Personnel, i.e., focus group and key informant interviews.

With the parameters of the possible data collection strategies defined, the youth then focused on what they wanted to know from each of these constituent groups. They generated a broad set of questions for each group, i.e.:

- Students/Alumni:
 - Who are they demographically?
 - How prepared to move on to the next stage in their lives do they feel?
 - What kind of support do/did they get?
 - What kind of support do/did they need?
 - What other resources would help (counselors, class size, other)?
- Parents:
 - Who are they demographically?
 - How do they support their children's education?

- What is their level of knowledge of the educational system?
- What is their level of engagement?
- **School Personnel:**
 - What are their qualifications?
 - How do they prepare students for their future?
 - Do they have enough resources?
 - Should there be more afterschool programs?

Seeing the size and scope of the questions led the youth to consider the “doability” of such a project and the need to scale back their expectations. It was acknowledged quickly that doing focus groups with teachers, counselors and people working in nonprofit agencies was not feasible. And, while key informant interviews with school personnel and staff at nonprofit agencies might be possible, they were not a high priority. The focus of the research was to be on students and parents.

Survey Development: Having decided to focus on students/alumni and parents, the youth began to develop their survey.¹ Based on their Theory of Change and the list of things they wanted to know from students/alumni the participants developed a survey that covered the following topics:

- **Background:** These variables included things such as student and parent’s country of origin, language, place of birth, arrival in the United States, access to the Internet, etc.
- **Preparation for Graduation:** These variables included such things as student knowledge of graduation requirements, whether or not they were taking the required courses, did they have an academic plan, how frequently they saw an academic counselor, self-rating of their readiness to graduate, etc.
- **Preparation for College/Technical School:** These variables included such things as knowing the process for applying to college or technical school, knowledge of and readiness for SAT/ACT, self-rating of their readiness to go on to college or technical school, etc.
- **Teacher Investment:** This assessment has students report the percentage of “teachers and other school personnel (who) show they care about students and expect them to succeed” using seventeen ways identified by the youth as how teachers and school personnel communicate their level of investment in them.

The youth began developing the survey in late April of 2015 and completed it in late May of 2015. The completion of the survey, unfortunately, coincided with the school year coming to an end. In addition, three of the members of the group were graduating from high school in June and would be spending much of their time participating in Senior Year events and preparing for graduation, leaving little time to conduct the survey. Given the timing the group decided to postpone conducting the survey until the Fall of 2015 and to conduct the focus groups with their parents over the summer.

Focus Groups: The youth began working on the parent focus groups in June of 2015 and completed the last of three in early October 2015. The process involved three stages. These are:

1. **Framework Development:** Earlier work defined the things they wanted to know from parents of school-aged children, i.e., their understanding of the educational system, how they support their children’s education and their level of engagement in the schools. Before asking parents about

¹ For copies of the survey contact Bill Oswald at wtoswald@gmail.com

“support” for their children’s education, the youth developed an operational definition of “support.” This definition came out of a process that involved the youth reflecting on their own experiences in school and what they have learned over the past year in the Youth Leadership Academy.

This process had the participants break into three groups, one representing parents of elementary school children, one representing parents of middle school children and one representing parents of high school youth. The groups were divided by age and experience. The group focused on elementary school was made up of members who were young enough when they arrived in the US to have attended early elementary school (pre-school to about 3rd grade), the second group consisted of members who entered later in elementary school (4th-5th grades), and the third group were members who began in middle school. The participants were presented with the following:

“Imagine you are the parent. Given what you know from your experience in school and what you’ve learned over the past months studying the school, what would you do as a parent to support your children in school?”

The youth identified fourteen different things they would do to support their children, i.e.:

WAYS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to join clubs • Parent-Teacher Conferences • Homework Check • Check in with teacher regularly • Attend Open Houses • Know how the educational system works • Join the PTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a reading log • Go to School Events • Meet with principals and counselors • Attend all school sponsored meetings • Talk to their children about school regularly • Ask teachers what student needs to improve • Make in-class visits

Having identified the ways to support students, the participants were asked to sort their answers into broader categories. They identified three:

Parent-to-Child	Parent-to-School	Parent-to-School District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your children about school regularly • Keep a reading log • Homework check for completeness • Homework check for quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the teacher what your child need to do to improve • Check in with teacher regularly • Attend Open Houses • Parent-Teacher conferences • Make Visit to your child’s classroom • Meet with Principals and Counselors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how the educational system works • Go to school events • Join the PTA • Attend all school-sponsored meetings • Encourage students to join clubs

The youth were then asked to rate how capable they thought the parents were to provide this support at each grade level on a scale from 1 to 4 where:

- 1 = Parent can carry out activity without support
- 2 = Parent can carry out activity with interpretation
- 3 = Parent can carry out activity with interpretation and support of an advocate
- 4 = Parent cannot carry out the activity

The average rating across all three levels was 2.6. Participants felt that nearly every parent (92%) would need interpretation and a third (33%) would need interpretation and support while 17% would not be able to carry out the activity even with interpretation and support.

The fifteen items listed above are the operational definition of “support.” It should be noted that as the youth moved forward using this operational definition, they increased the number of variables from fourteen to fifteen by splitting “homework check” into two, i.e., “homework check for completeness” and “homework check for quality.” It was felt that most parents could do the former but, due to the lack of experience with school and the level of literacy among the parents, many could not do the later.

Having operationally defined “support,” the youth then addressed the question:

“What questions do you need to ask your parents and others in their generation to find out what they would need to do the things you identified as important?”

Out of this process came the final questions for the focus group, i.e.:

- What schools are your children attending and what grades?
- How do you like your child’s school and teachers?
- Do you meet or talk to your child’s teacher regularly?
- How many of you have access to the internet at home?
- How many use the internet at home?
- Do you volunteer at your child’s school now?
- Do you go to events at your child’s school?
- Do you ever participate in District-wide events? (For example: Cluster meetings, DELAC, School Board, etc.)

2. Preparing for the Focus Groups

Having developed the framework and the questions, the next stage involved designing the process for the focus groups and defining the roles the youth would play in conducting those focus groups. The plan was to hold three sessions, one for parents of elementary school children, one for parents of middle school children and one for parents of high school youth. Each group was to be conducted in Kisagua and each one was to be facilitated by two members of the group, one male and one female. Youth who were not facilitating were assigned the roles of recorder and observer.

It should be noted that the decision to conduct the focus groups in Kisagua was a critical incident in the project. Once the youth understood that they would not only be facilitating the focus groups but would be doing so in Kisagua, there was a palpable change in their energy. The group as a whole could be described as high energy and distractible with a process that has always been a bit chaotic. It would easily appear to an outside observer that meetings were unfocused with very little business actually getting done. At one of the group’s meetings, for example, they were given the exercise of being silent for one minute and to reflect on what they had learned and accomplished to date. The rules were that they all had to stay silent for one minute. If anyone broke the silence, they would start again and continue until the group was successful at being silent for the entire minute. They were able to stay silent on the first try, however, more than one of them reported that they were concentrating so hard on being silent that they couldn’t reflect on their experiences. With the realization that they were going to be facilitating these focus groups in Kisagua came an increase in their level of attention.

The youth participated in five training sessions throughout the month of August 2015 that included further developing the questions, learning and practicing facilitation skills and sharpening their language skills. While all of the youth had fluency in Kisagua at some level and often spoke to each other in Kisagua, they were not confident enough in their language to feel comfortable having a

conversation with their parents on these issues. One of the most obvious shifts in the group's behavior was seen in how members interacted with each other. Teasing, which was part of the natural discourse within the group, nearly stopped. During the practice sessions the participants went from teasing each other for not knowing and/or mispronouncing a word to helping each other. Additionally, in a culture where elders are respected and youth's role is to serve them and to listen and learn from them, having the youth conduct these focus groups required the elders to, in a sense, give the youth permission to lead these discussions.²

3. Conducting the Focus Groups

The three focus groups were conducted over a four-week period ending in early October 2015. While the plan was to have each focus group consist of parents with children in one of the three levels (elementary, middle and high), all of the focus groups included parents with children at all three levels as most parents had children attending school at two or more levels. Total attendance over the three focus groups was thirty adults (8, 12, and 10 participants at each of the three groups respectively) with 22 different people attending. Three people attended all three focus groups and two people attended two of the focus groups. Their children attended six schools, three located in the Crawford Cluster (Crawford High, Mann Middle, Marshall Elementary) and three in the Hoover Cluster (Hoover High, Monroe Clark Middle, Hamilton Elementary).

As stated earlier, each focus group was facilitated by two members of City Heights Youth for Change, one male and one female. Four members were assigned the role of note taker and were given direction on what to record (e.g., who was speaking and what did they say, what was the group's reaction, etc.). The remaining members were assigned the role of observer and directed to watch the group process – help the facilitators by pointing out raised hands, clarifying a question, etc. In addition, a key community leader assisted the facilitation by clarifying terms, explaining concepts when necessary, encouraging the youth facilitators, etc. Each session lasted approximately ninety minutes.

FINDINGS

The responses to the questions quickly made it clear that the parents both understood the importance of their children getting an education and how grateful they were that they were being educated. While most parents expressed positive feeling towards their children's schools and teachers because they were "teaching their children," they were also clear that there was very little real communication between them and the teachers because of language. Some parents expressed that, because they didn't know the system or understand English, they could not judge if a teacher was good or bad. And while the parents generally felt positively toward the schools and the teachers, there were also negative experiences. In particular:

- Some parents spoke about some teachers not communicating with them about their child
- Some teachers wait too long to notify them of a problem with their child
- Sometimes teachers report that the child is doing well when s/he isn't
- Some expressed that there were teachers who weren't qualified and/or trained well enough.

The two main themes running throughout the conversations in all three focus groups was the parents' desire to be involved in their children's education and the barriers to doing so. Language being the most

² It should be noted that while the youth facilitators led the focus groups by asking the questions, one of the community Leaders assisted the facilitation in each focus group in order to insure the youth and adults fully understood each other.

pervasive of challenges. In response to the questions about their level of engagement in the schools, parents responded:

- We go and show our face but at the end we don't understand anything
- Not speaking the language is like being deaf or blind
- We go but they don't see us or recognize us. We are invisible
- Because I don't speak English – I sometimes get confused
- We don't go because we are scared
- I can't help my kids when they need help with their homework because I don't speak English

An issue that emerged from the conversation was the feeling of being excluded from some aspects of school life such as field trips, school plays, etc. The parents spoke of a feeling of mutual discomfort between them and school personnel due to the language barrier and cultural divide. This discomfort was seen as suppressing parent engagement because it stopped some parents from engaging and it led some school personnel to limit what they invited parents to participate in. This discomfort, identified as a core barrier to parent engagement, was seen as rooted in the fact that school personnel in general did not know who they were linguistically or culturally and that they, the parents, had little to no experience with educational institutions in Somalia or in the United States.³

The parents were also adamant about not using their children as interpreters in school matters as they did not trust them to be fully truthful. There was consensus among parents that their children soften or “sugar coat” the school’s message when interpreting for the parent.

In response to the questions concerning internet access and use it was learned that most parents have access to the internet in their homes but do not have computers. While most parents reported having Wi-Fi, it was used through their phone and not a computer. This finding is consistent with a report by the Pew Research Foundation that indicated that the size of the digital divide shrinks considerably if smart phones are included.⁴

Once the focus groups were complete, the youth spent time reflecting on what they learned from the experience of conducting these groups. Three insights emerged, i.e.:

1. Youth saw just how much their parents were concerned about their education and their strong desire to be involved in that part of their children’s lives
2. Their parents took them seriously” and that they were looking to them to help make meaningful parent engagement in the school possible
3. The parents were proud of the youth’s efforts and excited to see them sharpen their language skills in Kisagua. The parents participating in the focus groups spontaneously applauded the facilitators at the end of each focus group.

³ When the Bantu arrived in San Diego in 2004 they were called the “Somali Bantu” as they were coming out of Somalia. While the Bantu lived in Somali for more than 300 years they are not Somali. They are not only physically different from Somalis, but also have their own distinct culture and languages (Kisagua and Maay-Maay) that predate their time in Somalia. Only a few Somali speak Kisagua or Maay-Maay and only a few Bantu speak Somali. The Somali and Bantu people were segregated in Somalia and the Bantu had little or no access to institutions such as education, healthcare, etc.

⁴ Perrin, Andrew (2015). Social Media Usage: 2005-2015. Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN – A SHIFT IN FOCUS

The focus of the group shifted as the participants moved through the process of preparing for and conducting the research. While no discussion was held or any formal decision made, the group shifted its focus off the student/alumni experience to the needs of the parents. In retrospect, this shift began with the exercise in which the members of City Heights Youth for Change identified the fifteen things they would do for their children to support their education and then rated the capacity of the parent's in their community to provide that support. As stated above, they learned from the focus groups just how important being able provide those things to their children were to the parents.

With that understanding and a clearer picture of what the barriers are for their parents, the youth identified four conditions that need to exist in order for the parents to be meaningfully engaged in their children's education. These are:

1. Interpretation is available as needed. As noted in the introduction, the District has already agreed to provide interpretation and has included specific language in the 2015-2016 LCAP that commits them to providing such services.
2. The District provides training to the parents on how to monitor their children's progress –including how to use Power School on a smart phone and/or tablet. Interpretation in Karen, Kisagua, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili is available in all trainings (or separate trainings by language).
3. Members of the Parent-Student-Resident-Organization (PSRO) in the Crawford Cluster provide training for parents on how to read report cards, progress reports, state test results, etc. These parent-to-parent trainings are to be held in each of the languages named above.
4. More meaningful opportunities for parent engagement and for structured interactions between parents and school personnel. The purpose of these opportunities is not to just educate each other but to build positive relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Action Plan:

In order to create the necessary conditions, the members of City Heights Youth for Change created a plan of action that they believed would contribute to creating those conditions. The group's goal was to have the PSRO work with them to implement this plan that, building on the earlier success, focuses on developing the parents' capacity to both monitor their children's progress and to be engaged in the schools. To this end, City Heights Youth for Change developed the following proposal that was presented to the PSRO at its November 2015 meeting.

1. Present to the plan to the Areas Superintendent before the holiday break. This plan includes calling on the District to:
 - a. Provide training on monitoring students as described above
 - b. Have members of the PSRO do presentations on Cultural Issues with a focus on increasing communication between parents and school personnel
 - c. Form Learning Circles consisting of parents and school personnel that are designed to build relationships by having conversations focused on how to best educate the children, the role of the school, the role of the parent and the role of the child.
2. Begin offering training to parents on report cards, progress notes, standardized tests, etc. in late January – early February. Members of the PSRO would be trained on these documents and then develop and implement the best ways to communicate this knowledge to other parents.

After a brief discussion led by the youth, the PSRO accepted the plan and will begin working on it immediately.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the Youth Leadership Academy is to support this critical cohort of youth⁵ in their role as the families' bridge between their previous life and their new life. What has emerged out of the community is the need to support their parents in carrying out their parental role in their children's education. While this case study focuses on the work of City Heights Youth for Change are doing in education, they are also playing similar roles in areas of access to healthcare and healthy food. They are being groomed by their elders to be tomorrow's community leaders and the Youth Leadership Academy provides training on both specific priority issues and on leadership skills.

To reinforce the purpose of developing leaders, the youth were asked to reflect on the work they had doing for the past fourteen months and to identify two to three things they believed they accomplished over that time. Three accomplishments were named:

1. The School District and the broader community now know who the Bantu are (see footnote 3 for more information on the Bantu).
2. The School District committed to providing interpretation in Karen, Kisagua, Somali and Swahili in the 2015-2016 LCAP. The District has begun to contract with local organizations to provide interpretation and translation when needed (e.g., the Somali Bantu Community Organization, the Karen Organization).
3. The parents in their community have increased their knowledge of how the educational system works and what they can do as parents to support their children.

Given these accomplishments, the youth were then charged with identifying two or three things they learned over the same time period. They learned:

- If you raise your voice and you are persistent you can make things happen
- Students should not be judged by their test scores
- We are better than the expectations
- How much our parents care about our education and the challenges they face to being involved

When they were asked what story they wanted to tell about their work, they said:

Our story would tell of a group of youth who didn't like what was happening so they came together to make changes to improve their community with a particular focus on education. We do not want those coming behind us to have repeat our struggles. We cannot fix what has happened but we can change the future. Our story would tell of a group of youth who made their community visible to the School District and the broader community.

⁵ As defined in Part I, this cohort generally consists of those youth who were born outside the United States but arrived in the United States young enough to start school in high school or earlier

It would tell of how we believe we have an important insight into the problems with education and by staying connected to the community we can bring about change and improve educational outcomes for the youth in our community.⁶

The Emergence of a Youth-Adult Partnership

While not explicitly stating it, the Youth Leadership Academy is built on the principles of Community Youth Development. This approach to youth work combines the best/promising practices of positive youth development with the best/promising practices in community development. Core to this approach is the development of Youth-Adult Partnerships, i.e., an approach where youth and adults work side-by-side, sharing not only the work but the planning and decision-making. Defined by practitioners as:

“ . . . one in which each party has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions and in which the contribution of each is recognized and valued. A youth-adult partnership is one in which adults work in full partnership with young people on issues facing youth and/or on programs and policies affecting youth.”

(<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/workingwithyouth/910?task=view>)

“Youth-adult partnerships take place when youth and adults plan, learn and work together, with both groups sharing equally in the decision-making process. This dynamic is very different than many relationships in which adults take the leadership roles and youth are assigned inferior roles, or programs where youth make all the decisions while the adults sit back and watch. Instead, youth-adult partnerships build on the strengths of each group and the final program or activity is stronger than a program or activity devised and delivered individually by either group.” (Shelley Murdock, Contra Costa 4-H Youth Development Advisor; <http://4h.ucanr.edu/About/Framework/YAP/>)

The generational dynamic examined in this case study adds a new dimension to the definition of Youth-Adult Partnerships. As can be seen in the above definitions, these partnerships are usually formed to address issues that directly affect youth and focus on creating programs and/or activities that generally target youth. In this case, however, it is the adults that are the target for activities and/or programs with the youth conducting them. While the parents are the target, the outcome of this work is designed to serve the youth. Members of this community face unique challenges due to their experiences as refugees. First, they come to the United States with nothing and have no voice as to where they are placed. Secondly, the cultural gap between where they come from and the United States is often enormous and they have had little or no time to prepare for the change. As soon as they arrive their children enter American schools where they pick up the language and begin to assimilate almost immediately. In a very short time these youths have learned the language and can maneuver the American system better than their parents. This situation is both helpful and dangerous. It places enormous pressure on youth who are expected to support the family by being the interpreter, translator, cultural guide, etc. Many youths accept and carry out this responsibility with grace while others struggle with this demand as it can and does disturb the family hierarchy, a disruption that is often identified by the community as causing the problems they have with some of their youth. This cohort plays a very special and important role.

In this project the adults have selected these youths and have granted them permission to educate and lead the adults in this area. Because the adults have had little to no experience with formal educational institutions they need their youth to help them understand how those institutions function and how they, as parents, can meaningful engage it for the sake of the youth. The adults need the youth to use the

⁶ While the words here come directly from the youth during the exercise, the statement was constructed post hoc in order to present the “story” in a coherent manner. These two paragraphs were then presented to the group to verify that they accurately represent the story they wish to be told. The group was unanimous in its agreement with the statement.

skills gained through their assimilation to open a channel for communication with the schools, not just as individual parents but as a community. The youth's role is to educate the parents on the educational system and then listen to their wisdom as to how to address the issues confronting them. Their role in this partnership is to support the adults as they advocate for the youth by ensuring the parents are both aware of the challenges facing the youth and that they have enough knowledge and information to identify and advocate for the solutions to the challenges – solutions that have been co-created by the youth and their parents.