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# How To Help Kids Succeed - School-Based Programs and Social Mobility

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School-Based Community Programs and College Graduation Access to Social Mobility for Kalamazoo Promise Students

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Lee Honors College Thesis

Thesis Committee: Don Cooney and Shawn Tenney

Keywords: Promise, Kalamazoo, college, education, graduation, poverty, resilience, social mobility, housing insecurity, basic needs, toxic stress

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### Abstract

Education is the key to Social Mobility and unless children from poor families get a college degree, their economic mobility is severely restricted (Tough, 2016 p. 2). In November of 2005, the City unveiled a college tuition incentive to Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) graduates, The Kalamazoo Promise. According to the Kalamazoo Promise website (2017), the purpose of the Promise is to, “provide a real meaningful and tangible opportunity for all students,” as “education is an important key to financial wellbeing.” Though access to an affordable college education is possible for Kalamazoo students eligible for The Promise, the numbers show that fee college tuition is not enough. “Number of Graduates Rises for Fifth Year in a Row,” reads the headline of the August 2018 edition of the Kalamazoo Public Schools newspaper, *Excelsior*. According to the Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information data, the 2017 high school graduation rates among KPS students increased by 5.44% from 2007. Yet a Brookings (2015) study showed that nearly ten years after the implementation of the program, “Kalamazoo high school graduates were little, if any, more likely than their counterparts statewide to have earned 24 college credits within sixteen months of graduating from high school.” This study also determined that middle class students were twice as likely to have earned 24 credits as compared to the economically disadvantaged. The study concluded that while, “free college tuition is certainly a key component of any effort to reduce inequality of opportunity in Kalamazoo. But by itself, it is insufficient.”

The programs, Becoming a Man, Harlem Children’s Zone and Flint Community Schools have various factors that aid in improving positive educational outcomes for their students. These programs are designed for students of impoverished families to address the complications that contribute to the lack of social mobility. Implementation of these programs in Kalamazoo could supplement the Kalamazoo Promise and increase the education of students achieving college graduation.

The purpose of this research study is to examine the relationship between these three school-based community programs’ impact on college graduation, and recommend a program model for Kalamazoo to increase Kalamazoo Promise recipients’ access to social mobility. I will investigate the relationship between the Kalamazoo Promise success and social mobility in the City by identifying how the lack of basic needs, resilience and housing security pose barriers impacting children. I will identify the best practices of the programs, Becoming a Man, The Harlem Children’s Zone and Flint Community Schools and how their programs address factors that inhibit social mobility of impoverished children. I will recommend the adoption of a holistic approach to support Kalamazoo Public Schools students and increase Kalamazoo Promise graduation and social mobility among families of poverty-concentrated neighborhoods. Lastly, I will discuss a proposal for development of a new organization, the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance (KPA), a coalition of community-based organizations that utilize the KPS buildings as satellite community centers in order to increase access, support and outreach to students and their families.

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### School-Based Community Programs and College Graduation Access to Social Mobility for Kalamazoo Promise Students

Owning a home in a safe, middle-class neighborhood is the vision of the American dream for many. Acquiring a home as an asset has long been a symbol of social mobility. The ability to have a stake in your neighborhood, choose a location based on the success of the school district, safety and accessibility to resources, factor into where people choose to live and build their futures. For most middle-class families, their largest financial investment will be purchasing a home and sending their children to college. “Housing is increasingly understood to be an important determinant of success in life, affecting health, access to education, and the opportunity for upward mobility” (Butler & Cabello, 2014). These ideals are distinctively positive and differ clearly from negative connotations typically associated with housing, yet highlight the differences between affluence and scarcity. This division of wealth can be seen in higher crime rates, lack of basic needs, unsafe neighborhoods and access to employment. In 2012, Robert Sampson wrote, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*, a book in which he dissects “hot spots” correlations between “homicide, low birth weight, infant mortality, teen pregnancy, physical abuse, or accidental injury” (p. 33). These “hot spots” can best be defined as clusters of concentrated impoverishment (poverty-concentrated neighborhoods) with devastating consequences to physical and mental health.

### Post-Secondary Education

Today is an information age, where the growth of technology increases the requirement for post-secondary education. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Unemployment Rates and Earnings by Educational Attainment (2018) data indicate those who have some college education, but no post-secondary degree have similar earnings and unemployment rates of those who only earned a high school diploma. Without a college degree, Reeves (2014) states that by age 40 less than 23% of those born impoverished will move beyond earning the median income of \$51,017. Reeves also points out:

It is not just the fact of being born poor that heightens the risk of staying poor, but poverty’s baleful accompaniments—in particular inadequate education and family instability. A child raised by a poor, unmarried mother has a 50 percent risk of remaining stuck on the bottom rung of the ladder, and just a 5 percent chance of making it to the top. Even crueler odds (54 percent and 1 percent respectively) face those who fail to complete high school.

Additionally, other studies have shown the importance of a post-secondary education and The U.S. Department of Labor (2018) found that the earning potential of a bachelor’s degree graduate compared to a high school graduate, increases the median weekly earnings by \$461

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(\$23,972/year<sup>1</sup>). This information is valuable to anyone pursuing post-secondary education as a means of social mobility. Increases in income after earning a college degree can have positive impacts throughout a lifetime, as displayed in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup>

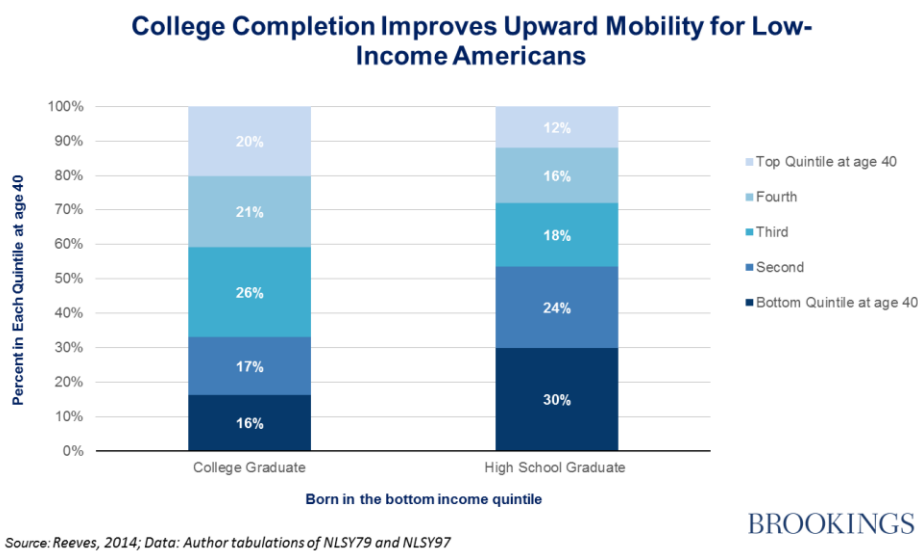


Figure 1 - Source: Reeves & Venator, 2015

### The Kalamazoo Promise

In an attempt to enhance the City’s economic development, a group of anonymous donors came together in 2005 to fund the Kalamazoo Promise (The Promise). The Promise is a tuition incentive program that aids in earning a bachelor’s degree<sup>3</sup> by sponsoring the cost of tuition and mandatory fees for various Michigan-based colleges and universities. Students must first meet specific graduation requirements in order to qualify, including meeting enrollment and residency within the boundaries of the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) district, high school graduation, and continuous enrollment and residency four years prior to graduation from a Kalamazoo Public Schools high school.<sup>4</sup> The percentage of tuition coverage is based on the number of years the student met residency and enrollment requirements at KPS prior to high school<sup>5</sup>. During students’ senior year, they are required to fill out two simple forms to sign up for the Promise. There is also an appeals process for students who experience a lapse in meeting graduation requirements due to hardship.<sup>6</sup> Not all Michigan colleges and universities are Kalamazoo

<sup>1</sup> Per year amount was calculated using, the median usual weekly earnings, multiplied by the number (52) weeks in a year.

<sup>2</sup> Top income within each Quintile: Q1-\$11,239; Q2-\$29,204; Q3-\$49,482; Q4-\$80,080; Q5 - \$178,202. Median income \$51,017

<sup>3</sup> Bachelor’s degree or 130 credits, whichever occurs first

<sup>4</sup> Enrollment and residency must be continuous through-out all 4 years of high school.

<sup>5</sup> Sliding scale beginning at 100% tuition for attendance K-12; 1-12 grades through 3-12 grades receive 95% tuition; 4-12 grades receive 90% tuition, decreasing by 5% increments for each year missed through 9-12 grades. Students who attend KPS 9-12 grades (meeting requirements) will receive 65% of the Kalamazoo Promise.

<sup>6</sup> e.g., custody, death in the family, and foster care placement

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Promise applicable, though of the 93 statewide, the Promise currently includes 15 universities, 29 community colleges and 15 private colleges. Upon receiving Promise funding, graduates are required to maintain a 2.0 grade point average, while meeting degree progress requirements per the college's Satisfactory Academic Progress guidelines.

The Promise donors and civic leaders believed the initiative would create economic growth by increasing professional and community development, and increasing the number of returning post-secondary graduates. The Promise would also be an incentive for new families who have college culture capital to move to the KPS district. For current economically disadvantaged students, the Promise would provide the opportunity of social mobility by decreasing the overall college debt, making it more affordable. In concept, the Promise would bring the City of Kalamazoo back to life; create wealth and strengthen the community. The reality is if economically disadvantaged students do not graduate from high school, they are not eligible to receive the Promise; and if economically disadvantaged eligible-students do not earn post-secondary education, social mobility is unlikely. A study conducted by Bartik, Hershbein, & Lachowska of the Upjohn Institute (2017, p. 5-6) determined,

As of six years after high school graduation, the Promise increased the percentage of students earning any postsecondary credential by 10 percentage points, from a pre-Promise baseline of 36 percent to 46 percent; this represents a proportional increase in credential attainment of more than one-quarter. About three-fourths of this boost in postsecondary credentials is due to more students earning a bachelor's degree.<sup>7</sup>

While KPS began to see increases in student enrollment, the district also began to see a rise in the rate of students receiving free and reduced lunch. While the Promise created the opportunity to attain post-secondary education, it incorporated little to combat the various barriers that directly impact impoverished families. Bartik, Hershbein, & Lachowska of the Upjohn Institute (2017, p. 55) states, "On the other hand, a Promise-like scholarship has the potential for solving only a portion of America's skills challenge." There is a presumption that having access to college will make attending easier for all Promise-eligible KPS graduates. However, covering the cost of tuition alone will not ensure post-secondary graduation (Bartik, Hershbein, & Lachowska, 2017).

### **The Barriers**

Kalamazoo Public Schools students who live in poverty experience a combination of barriers that may frequently prevent high school graduation and post-secondary graduation. Those factors include housing insecurity, food scarcity and toxic stress as a result of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). When implemented, the Promise did little to dismantle the

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<sup>7</sup> The study noted immediately after the introduction, Kalamazoo Public Schools enrollment increased in Promise-eligible grades. The correlation between the increase in enrollment and the increase in post-secondary credential/obtainment is not being tested or evaluated; therefore no assumptions are being made regarding the increase of credential/obtainment as a result of increased enrollment.

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barriers that inhibit economically disadvantaged Kalamazoo Public Schools students' achievement and utilization of the Promise. In a 2014 interview on *NPR: Morning Edition* with the author of *The Power of a Promise: Education and Economic Renewal in Kalamazoo*, Michelle Miller-Adams was asked, “why Promise students are almost as likely to drop out of college as other college students” to which she replied,

Yeah, I think that's one of the surprises that we find in the data. I think that we will see it change. This is a very long-term program. It's set up to continue in perpetuity. And, you know, we're only really eight years into it in terms of eligible classes.

The reality is that if you have things going on in your life, either academically or more importantly in your home life, that are keeping you from being successful in school ... the Kalamazoo Promise does not change those things. It doesn't take away a precarious home life, or insecure housing, or lack of access to food or really poor support in the home for your learning. ...

The reality is that we are still a very high-poverty district in a high-poverty city. And kids ... experience tremendous stresses. And so it's not that none of those kids can overcome those. But it is a lot harder for those students to really stay in school, be successful and make full use of the Promise. Lots of them are trying.

### **Housing Insecurity**

In the Kalamazoo County Community Needs Assessment (2013), members of a focus group shared concerns about the lack of safe, affordable housing. Among other barriers, housing has been identified as a key factor to social mobility. In the City of Kalamazoo, housing is one of those factors that both promote and limit social mobility of KPS students. On one hand, those from poverty-concentrated neighborhoods face barriers that limit attainment of successful graduation outcomes. On the other hand, the same neighborhood could provide the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree by meeting Kalamazoo Promise residency requirements. While the two-hand premise may seem practical in viewing social mobility associated with housing, there are other aspects to consider. Some children face a greater housing crisis, the absence of housing. The population of children who encounter living in a shelter, doubled up<sup>8</sup> or other homeless circumstances, experience a level of housing insecurity that leads to both immediate and long-term effects. The immediate affects can contribute to students' lack of security, focus, and the inability to develop strong friendships and a sense of community. The long-term effects contribute to toxic stress that effect development, learning, behavior and physical health (Center on the Developing Child, 2018). According to Butler and Cabello (2018),

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<sup>8</sup> 2 or more families sharing a single family unit



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Homelessness and housing stability have been shown to greatly affect a child’s near-term growth and long-term development, and they can have long-lasting effects on health, education and other social outcomes later in life. (p.12)

One concern is the degree to which children are exposed to housing-related environmental stressors, which, if chronic and in the absence of supportive buffers, can reach the level of “toxic stress,” significantly affecting long-term education achievement and other outcomes. (p.13)

The Center for Educational Performance and Information (2017) data indicates Michigan’s average graduation rate for homeless students is 67.9%. Kalamazoo Public Schools graduated 53.75% of its homeless students in 2017, and this suggests a need for safe, secure and affordable housing within the City. Since implementing the Promise, the district has seen a consistent increase in student enrollment (Bartik, Eberts, & Huang, 2010). With KPS students experiencing homelessness or previous housing-related environmental stressors, it becomes apparent why impoverished students lose focus on education.

### **Food Scarcity**

The Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (2007) data shows that one year after implementing the Kalamazoo Promise, 6,748 students were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Over a 10-year span that number increased to nearly 9,000 students. The number of students receiving free and reduced lunch is significant, because specific income guidelines are used to determine if families are eligible. Qualifications for free and reduced lunch are determined by family size and household income, and must fall within Federal Income Guidelines (FIG) poverty requirements.<sup>9</sup> For example, the 2017 FIG guidelines for a family of four in Michigan would be under \$24,600 to be considered at poverty level and below \$46,435 for free and reduced lunch.

Though the number of Promise-eligible students has increased, graduation of economically disadvantaged students has been minimal<sup>10</sup>. In 2007, Kalamazoo Public Schools graduated 58.71% of its economically disadvantaged students, ten years later it increased to 62.65% (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2007). In 2017, the percentage of district students who qualified for free and reduced lunch was above 70%. Sadly, students who participate in the assisted lunch program tend to be ineligible for the Promise, compared to Promise-eligible students (Bartik, Hershbein, and Lachowska, 2015).

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<sup>9</sup> Children residing in homes receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) automatically qualify. Daily breakfast cost reduced: \$0.30, full: \$1.50 – Daily lunch cost reduced: \$0.40, full: \$2.35

<sup>10</sup> KPS Economically Disadvantage Graduation rate for 2017 was 62.65% compared to the State average of 67.90%.

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### Toxic Stress

Kalamazoo ranks in Michigan’s top quarter for high poverty rates, with 51.7% of the County’s impoverished located within the city limits (Kalamazoo County Community Needs Assessment, 2013). Many studies have been conducted on the effects that living in a poverty-concentrated neighborhood have on toxic stress levels. The prolonged effect of Adverse Childhood Experiences results in chronic activation of elevated heart rate, blood pressure and stress hormones. Without supportive buffers or protective relationships, youth experience physiological changes to the brain. The toxic stress levels associated with the lack adequate access to healthy food, safety and education, have a critical impact on children’s health and development. The short-term impacts occur in behavior and mental health, while long-term damage impacts overall health and development of the brain (Butler and Cabello, 2018). Paul Tough (2016) explains the impact of toxic stress on a cognitive level,

Executive functions, which include working memory, self-regulation, and cognitive flexibility, are the developmental building blocks-the neurological infrastructure-underpinning noncognitive abilities like resilience and perseverance. They are exceptionally helpful in navigating unfamiliar situations and processing new information, which is exactly what we ask children to do at school every day. When a child’s executive functions aren’t fully developed, those school days, with their complicated directions and constant distractions, become a never-ending exercise in frustration.

Moderating emotional responses can be difficult as a result of toxic stress. As Tough (2016) indicates, “a highly sensitive stress-response system constantly on the lookout for threats can produce patterns of behavior that are self-defeating; more subtly, going through each day perpetually wary of connections...” The more a student lacks the ability to persevere through challenges, the greater the delay in on-time graduation. The Kalamazoo Public Schools economically disadvantaged continuing graduation students <sup>11</sup> 2007 cohort increased from 72.60% to 83.33% by 2017; this indicates a decrease in on-time graduation among economically disadvantaged students.

If Kalamazoo community leaders want the Promise to fulfill economic growth, there must be an analysis of the cultural capital of its most vulnerable population. Children growing up with a combination of various barriers inhibit the development of momentum towards social mobility. Consider the motivational theory perspective, using Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs; before an individual can advance in developing psychological or self-fulfillment needs, they must meet basic needs. Understanding the impact barriers pose aids in the development of systems to meet the need. Only when basic needs are met, can students begin to develop the

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<sup>11</sup> Total number of students who completed high school with a regular diploma in more than four years, or did not complete high school in four years and are still continuing in school (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2007).

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skills and resilience required to properly utilize the self-fulfillment notion of college. Putting in place supports to overcome the challenges of poverty will result in the ability to keep the promise of college to KPS students.

### **Community-Based Programs**

Kalamazoo Public Schools has been successful in increasing student graduation rates to 72.92% in 2017 from the 2007 graduation rate of 69.16%. At the same time, KPS has decreased the dropout rates by more than 56.96%. There is no doubt the Kalamazoo Promise greatly improves financial access to a college education though data suggest high school graduation and college tuition must be supplemented with additional resources to have a significant impact on impoverished students' success. Several national community-based programs have proven to increase secondary and post-secondary education outcomes without providing access to free college tuition. These programs demonstrate that by changing the mindset and cultural capital of impoverished students and families, they can increase the rate of high school graduation and chances of success in post-secondary education. The programs *Becoming A Man*, *Harlem Children's Zone* and *Flint Community Schools* have provided critical support in improving positive educational outcomes for their students. Though the three vary in programing structure, all are community-based programs; each program incorporates the use of the school building to supplement services benefiting the community. Individual research of each program provides a service description, best practices and educational related outcomes, and also examines the relationship among the three school-based programs' impact on students and families and whether adopting a school-based model to increase social mobility of KPS students living in poverty-concentration neighborhoods offers substantial benefits.

#### **Becoming a Man (B.A.M)**

The *Becoming a Man (B.A.M)* program was developed by Anthony Ramirez-Di Vittorio in Chicago Illinois in 2001, while working for the nonprofit organization Youth Guidance. The B.A.M program uses a Cognitive-Behavior Therapy model, partnered with mentoring, role-playing and group exercises that develop social and emotional skills. By developing these skills, students in the program learn to avoid some impulsive thought processes, ultimately resulting in improved social competencies, reduced involvement in the criminal justice system, successful post-secondary education and employment. This school-based program is held in groups of 8 to 15 students for 30 weeks in one-hour sessions. A room is provided by the school and is open throughout the day as a designated safe space for students. B.A.M counselors lead group sessions held during the school day, allowing students to replace a class by participating. Trained counselors address the students' risk for trauma and work to support students to develop anchors (social cognitive skills)<sup>12</sup> for decision making and the core values of the program. This program

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<sup>12</sup> “BAM students learn and practice impulse control, emotional regulation, recognition of social cues, and interpretation of the behaviors and intentions of others.” (Watson, Ramirez-Di Vittorio & Day, 2015)

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has also been used in the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center and reduced re-admission rates by 21%.

In June 2009, in an attempt to resolve the “revolving door” of children entering the juvenile system in Kalamazoo County, the County opened a new 85,000 sq. ft. \$29.25 million juvenile justice facility. The facility increased the number of beds to 64 and now includes 16 long-term treatment beds for seven month-long substance abuse treatment. As with other cities, Kalamazoo has issues with youth delinquency that must be addressed. Children who come from poverty-concentrated neighborhoods have less access to expendable income to afford private legal defense and attorney fees. Due to the large number of children who become repeat offenders later in life, criminal background becomes a strong predictor of continued poverty. Though numbers are decreasing since the construction of the new facility, there has been no single indicator to suggest why the numbers have reduced. One theory by Jeff Hadley, former police chief of Kalamazoo, suggests the emphasis of a new therapeutic approach to juvenile behavior issues being incorporated by Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (Mack, 2013). With the incorporation of Cognitive-Behavior Therapy programs like Becoming A Man into Kalamazoo Public Schools, the number of children returning through the revolving door of the criminal justice system will decrease. In addition, KPS students would develop the anchors needed to make better choices for their overall futures. Partnering these anchors with the Kalamazoo Promise gives students the ability to advance in a college going atmosphere with the strong sense of decision making associated with successful and meaningful high school and college experiences.

### **Harlem Children’s Zone**

The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ)<sup>13</sup> is a charter and community-based education organization, consisting of several programs which begin with the pre-birth Baby College for parents and spans through high school graduation and college. In addition to education, HCZ provides families with wrap around services that aid in addressing factors that contribute to the failure of successfully obtaining a college degree. HCZ is based in Central Harlem in New York City, NY, where its primary focus is on a 24-block radius, engaging 80% of children pre-birth through age 2. Today, the HCZ has successfully become a national model as a charter school/community program. A key element of the program is the belief that intervention at earlier ages has greater long-term benefits, requiring less intervention later in a child’s life. The program boasts a 90% rate of college acceptance for high school seniors. Some of the programs offered by Harlem Children’s Zone include:

- Baby College
- Harlem Gems
  - The Three Year Old Journey

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<sup>13</sup> Established in 1970 as a truancy program, became the Harlem Children’s Zone in 1990 with the beginning of a one block pilot program, growing to a 97 block neighborhood.

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- The Harlem Gems Head Start program
- Universal Pre-Kindergarten
- Uptown Harlem Gems
- Promise Academy
- Community Centers
- Healthy Harlem
- College Success Office
- Neighborhood Gold/Tenant Associations

The Harlem Children’s Zone has been successful in implementing a program that works due to the twin principle philosophies behind their mission. The HCZ Business Plan states, “children from troubled communities are far more likely to grow to healthy, satisfying adulthood (and to help build a better community) if a critical mass of the adults around them are well versed in the techniques of effective parenting, and are engaged in local educational, social and religious activities with their children.” The second part of the philosophy states, “the earlier a child is touched by sound health care, intellectual and social stimulation, and consistent guidance from loving, attentive adults, the more likely that child will be to grow into a responsible and fulfilling member of the community,” (HCZ business plan, 2009). The Harlem Children’s Zone uses community commitment to self-improvement as the broad and fundamental context through which it develops and delivers its programming. As a result the HCZ is a partnership of educational programs, social service, health programs and community-building programs. HCZ can credit its high success rate for high school and college graduation to the pipeline of support provided to students and their families.

### **Flint Community Schools**

Flint Community Schools incorporates community resources. After years of low student achievement, Flint Public Schools redesigned their system as a blend of public and private resources. Every Flint Community Schools building is provided with a nurse, Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS) worker, five AmeriCorps service members who serve as community outreach workers, as well as various other resources. Mass Transit Authority (MTA) partners to provide transportation for students to a local literacy organization, families to grocery stores, and wellness programs. In 2017, Flint Community Schools graduated 65.19% of their economically disadvantaged students compared to only 6% in 2007. In addition, within that same 10 years, they also managed to decrease the dropout rates of economically disadvantaged students from 46% down to 21.16%. Some of the programs from Flint Community Schools include:

- Early Childhood Model
- Community Health Workers
- Department of Health and Human Service
- Mott Health Centers
- Afterschool Programs

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- Saturday In-house Program
- Crim Fitness Foundation
- Housing Workshops
- Family Resource Centers

Flint Community Schools addresses the barriers faced by the students they serve and the community. While many of the programs were to serve the students, Flint realized that in order to have a positive impact they had to use a holistic approach. The school building shares the educational setting, providing community resources to students and their families. When Flint Community Schools brought in the Department of Health and Human Services caseworkers, the schools were able to resolve many barriers to children, in addition to increasing contact with parents. They positively addressed the barriers and developed a pipeline for additional services.

### **Supplementing the Kalamazoo Promise with School-Based Community Programs**

Understanding why Becoming A Man, Harlem Children’s Zone and Flint Community Schools have a high level of success can be explained by examining their missions. The heart of each program is the goal of improving the community. Whether it starts with decreasing violence, reducing poverty or increasing learning outcomes, each of these programs was developed with the community at the center. School-based programs have an impact because they provide a collective response to removing barriers for students, families and the community by localizing a holistic approach to services. The school buildings are viewed as public spaces rather than just places for academic education. For Harlem Children’s Zone and Flint Community Schools, the buildings function as a service warehouse for providing physical and mental health services, social service, counseling, housing assistance, and more. Becoming a Man, The Harlem Children Zone and Flint Community Schools work not only because they have a vision to improve the odds of child and family success, but because the most effective changes are achieved by taking advantage of every opportunity to impact students, remove barriers and increase students’ resilience to make them stronger and able of envisioning a college degree. To address the issues faced by impoverished KPS students and families, the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance model is being introduced. The KPA should be developed based on the preceding research and the assessed needs of Kalamazoo.

### **Kalamazoo Promise Alliance**

The purpose of the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance:

- Increase the number of students who earn bachelor’s degrees
- Reduce generational poverty
- Promote economic growth in the City of Kalamazoo

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The vision of the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance is building an empowered community that provides youth with more opportunities to achieve greater socio-economic status, encouraging educational achievement and sponsor exposure to optimistic life experiences.

The goal of the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance is to work with Kalamazoo Public Schools, governmental entities and local nonprofit organizations to address barriers that impact individual educational achievement. No single organization is equipped to meeting all the needs of a child. This is why collaboration is required in developing a holistic approach to serving families. Key organizations will function as the core of each satellite school-based community center, based upon the economic dichotomy of the neighborhood and school setting. The Coalition will utilize Kalamazoo Public Schools buildings to teach and promote resilience, increase access to supportive services and provide outreach to students and their families. The Kalamazoo Promise Alliance will achieve this by:

- Provide Academic Assistance
- Access to Basic Needs
- Offer Counseling Service
- Teach Resiliency
- Build Parental Support

Resilience is learned, so ensuring this skill is taught and practiced by students and families is the crucial goal of the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance.

The Kalamazoo Promise Alliance will be developed because of the necessity to support students' utilization of the Kalamazoo Promise and increasing achievement of post-secondary degrees. Many impoverished students live in homes where violence, abuse and scarcity are the norms. When students experience layered adverse childhood experiences without supportive buffers, educational achievement becomes difficult, if not impossible. Experiencing numerous barriers concurrently may cause students and families to lose belief in their ability to be successful. A lack of knowledge and/or access to community programs, transportation, childcare, resources, and services in the community leads to lost confidence. Failures are amplified when families do not qualify for programs that they believe would change the outcomes of family circumstances. By teaching students and family resilience, families learn supportive buffers to cope and adapt during stressful situations. Resilience is a skill that aids in the ability to reduce the effects of toxic stress.

Kalamazoo Public Schools will open K-12 schools to service organizations and expand hours of operation. KPS has supported schools with limited after-school programs. Under the Kalamazoo Promise Alliance, expanded programming will include resilience training, parenting classes, physical and mental health services, social services, counseling, and housing and food assistance. A designated space will be utilized during the school day, after-school and on Saturdays. Additionally, school buildings will function throughout summer recess as a service

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warehouse. The satellite locations will reduce overhead costs for local nonprofit organizations, allowing them to dedicate funding towards their missions of service. The same space could be utilized in the evening to provide services noted above. The school-based programs will intentionally engage families of the students in the individual buildings, with direct supportive services. The Kalamazoo Promise Alliance will work to ensure all staff of coalition organizations are trained in Cognitive-Behavior Therapy and resilience programming to provide the supportive services to students and families during the day. The Kalamazoo Promise Alliance will ensure all services are provided conveniently in the school building where the students attend school.

### Key Organizations based on Academic Setting:

- Elementary school buildings will serve as health centers to ensure well-child visits. The buildings will serve as food distribution centers and food pantries. Case workers from Department of Health and Human Services will provide access to social services and resources. Cradle Kalamazoo will offer pre-birth parenting programs.
- High school buildings, in addition to providing basic needs services, will serve as Promise Coordinator offices. Promise specialist will serve as the pre-college resource and will follow-up on Promise applications, answer questions regarding the program and ensure successful transition with paperwork, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and college enrollment.

### **Concentration of Resources per Neighborhood / Neighborhood Need**

- North Side service organizations include the Family Health Center, Douglas Community Center, Deacons Conference and Kalamazoo County Mental Health. This area has three elementary schools and one middle school.
  - Need: Housing assistance, food resources and employment assistance
- East Side service organizations include East Side Neighborhood Association and Hometown Urgent Care. This area has two elementary schools.
  - Need: Affordable preventative health care, housing assistance, food resources, employment assistance, counseling, parenting classes and community outreach.
- The South Side of Kalamazoo has access to a wide range of services and organizations compared to the East Side and North Side of Kalamazoo. South Side service organizations include the Department of Health and Human Services, Family Health Center, Housing Resources, Loaves and Fishes, Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, Family and Children Services and Urban Alliance. There are eight elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school.
  - Need: Employment assistance, counseling, parenting classes and community outreach.

Basic needs, resilience training, parental support classes, physical and mental health services, social services, counseling, housing assistance, employment assistance, affordable childcare and adult literacy are service needs through-out the City.



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### *Evaluation Plan*

The Kalamazoo Promise Alliance will use KPS continuing education and graduation rates among economically disadvantage students to evaluate whether increased contact with school-based services and resilience training improves on-time graduation among economically disadvantage students. KPA will perform monthly follow-ups with each organization to ensure that referrals for additional services are completed. Quarterly coalition meetings will be held to aid in collaboration efforts, resilience training and development of resources to ensure student and family participation. Evaluation will be facilitated by documenting students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch with the students who have received school-based services. Annual performance evaluation will be completed to ensure that economically disadvantaged students graduate on time and receive supportive services for college.

### **Conclusion**

Most of the resources for low income neighborhoods are concentrated in one location. By utilizing the schools as a central location for programs, people have greater access to the supports provided by these programs. The Kalamazoo Promise Alliance promote resilience, increases access to supportive services and provides outreach to students and their families, to promote a college-going culture. When individuals have stake in their community the cultural capital increases. The mission of the Kalamazoo Promise is to provide meaningful and tangible opportunities to KPS students, but the community must ensure students know their wellbeing, in addition to education, is a priority. By addressing multiple aspects of their lives and removing barriers by implementing a change in how these barriers are addressed, social dynamics change, giving hope and meaning that reinforces the importance of education and its potential for social mobility. According to the Urban Institute Unemployment and Recovery Project (2012), those who earned at least a bachelor's degree have a less than 4% chance of living in a household receiving food stamps or cash benefits. If community leaders insure that students are not just getting some level of college, but are obtaining a bachelor's degree and fulfilling the Kalamazoo Promise, it ensures that students' chance at social mobility increase.

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### Footnotes

1. Per year amount was calculated using, the median usual weekly earnings, multiplied by the number of weeks in a year.
2. Top income within each Quintile: Q1-\$11,239; Q2-\$29,204; Q3-\$49,482; Q4-\$80,080; Q5 - \$178,202. Median income \$51,017
3. Bachelor’s degree or 130 credits, whichever occurs first
4. Enrollment and residency must be continuous through-out all 4 years of high school.
5. Sliding scale beginning at 100% tuition for attendance K-12; 1-12 grades through 3-12 grades receive 95% tuition; 4-12 grades receive 90% tuition, decreasing by 5% increments for each year missed through 9-12 grades. Students who attend KPS 9-12 grades (meeting requirements) will receive 65% of the Kalamazoo Promise.
6. e.g., custody, death in the family, and foster care placement
7. The study noted immediately after the introduction, Kalamazoo Public Schools enrollment increased in Promise-eligible grades. The correlation between the increase in enrollment and the increase in post-secondary credential/obtainment is not being tested or evaluated; therefore no assumptions are being made regarding the increase of credential/obtainment as a result of increased enrollment.
8. 2 or more families sharing a single family unit
9. Children residing in homes receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) automatically qualify. Daily breakfast cost reduced: \$0.30, full: \$1.50 – Daily lunch cost reduced: \$0.40, full: \$2.35
10. KPS Economically Disadvantage Graduation rate for 2017 was 62.65% compared to the State average of 67.90%.
11. Total number of students who completed high school with a regular diploma in more than four years, or did not complete high school in four years and are still continuing in school (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2007).
12. “BAM students learn and practice impulse control, emotional regulation, recognition of social cues, and interpretation of the behaviors and intentions of others.” (Watson, Ramirez-Di Vittorio & Day, 2015)
13. Established in 1970 as a truancy program, became the Harlem Children’s Zone in 1990 with the beginning of a one block pioret program, growing to a 97 block neighborhood.