The Miracle on Cooper Street: A case study of community transformation and engaged scholarship

Institute for Research on Women
Distinguished Lecture Series
February 11, 2016 | Rutgers New Brunswick
Presenter

Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago
Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor in Public Policy and Administration, Rutgers-Camden;
Director of the Rutgers-Camden Community Leadership Center (CLC);
Founder and Chair of LEAP Academy Charter School
Case study of community transformation through a combination of elements:

- Quality Education
- Visionary Leadership
- Community Engagement
- University Partnership
VIDEO PRESENTATION
LEAP in Context

- Public charter schools drive neighborhood revitalization, merging the urban education and community development fields.

- Public charter schools foster stronger relationships with communities by de-centralizing operations.
• Schools have the ability to foster relationships between various power structures of communities and elites, creating a path to economic security.

• Schools that partner with anchor institutions have a major impact in neighborhood development efforts.
• Schools connect youth to adult conventional norms and adapting them to mainstream societal and economic structures.
The Collective Mission Statement

The mission of the LEAP Academy is to enhance opportunities for the children and families of Camden through the collaborative design, implementation, and integration of education, health and human services, professional development, and community development.
LEAP Historical Milestones

A dream about to come true

The Inquirer

Dream of Camden charter school nears
Stakeholder Analysis/Engagement

- Parents
- Neighborhood leaders
- Foundations/Funders
- Business
- Community based and service organizations
- Faculty and Staff
- University President
- Board of Governors
- Students
- Legislators (State and Local)
- Governor
- State and Local Officials
- Camden Board of Education
- Delaware River Port Authority
- Parents and community residents
- Private and Non-profit Sectors
- Rutgers University
- Government and the Public Sector
- Parents
- Neighborhood leaders
LEAP Values

1. Student Achievement – Comes first
2. We do what ever It takes to get the job Done.
3. We take the High Road
4. We are a Family
5. Positive and Caring Culture
6. We are all Accountable
7. Transparency with each other
8. Improvement is ongoing
9. Diversity is our Strength
10. We are one Team
Five Core Elements of the LEAP Model
1. Accountability for People, Time, Money and Programs
2. Pipeline of College Access for all students PreK-16
3. Teacher Development and Support
4. Parental Engagement
5. Early Learning means Later Earning
LEAP Academy
University Charter School

- Performance Based Compensation & Professional Development
- Strong Family Engagement
- Partnerships with Higher Education Institutions & Community Stakeholders
- Ongoing Assessment & Evaluation
- LEAP’s Mission aligned with Local Community Needs & Vision
- Rigorous Academic Program from PreK - College “Educational Pipeline”
- Extended Learning
- Entrepreneurial Governance/Leadership
- STEM Focus
A Focus on Pipeline Development
The Rutgers/LEAP Pipeline to College
BIRTH – 16 EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENTS AND INNOVATIONS
• School based centers to channel university support for the school.
  – **Health and Wellness**, offering primary health and social work services to families and children
  – **Early Learning Research Academy** offering a infants and pre-school curriculum
– Fabrication Lab, offering innovative products and project base learning opportunities;
– Parents Academy providing programs to strengthen the skills of families;
– **Center for College Access** working with students, teachers and families in ensuring college preparedness

– **Legal Enrichment Center** offering free legal services and educational programming to families; applied research, academic training, and experiential learning for law school and LEAP students
Enrollment Profile of the Birth-12th Pipeline

• 1,705 students Birth through 12th

• LEAP Academy
  – Lower Elementary Campus (K-3)
  – Upper Elementary (4-6)
  – Intermediate High School (7-9)
  – High School (10-12)

• Early Learning Research Academy
  – Infants (6 months - 1 year)
  – Toddlers (age 1-3)
  – Preschoolers (ages 3-4)
Children Impacted: Educational Pipeline
Five-Year Enrollment Trends
ELRA, LEAP, Combined
Factors of LEAP Model

**Organizational Factors**
- Entrepreneurial Governance
- Sustainable Educational Pipelines
- Systems Accountability

**Student Factors**
- Opportunity Based Curriculum
- College Access for All Students
- Structured Extended Learning Time
- Data Driven Instruction through Assessment Feedback

**Stakeholder/Alliance Factors**
- Parents Engagement
- Social/Community Alliances
- Partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education

**Teacher Development Factors**
- Performance Based Compensation
- Teacher Development Opportunities
Family Engagement
Core Elements of LEAP’s Family Engagement Framework

- Informed and Collective Decision Making
- School Participation and Civic Leadership
- Comprehensive School-Based Services and Support
- Training, Capacity Building and Personal Growth
LEAP Principles for Family Engagement

**TRAINING**
Parents are encouraged to be introspective about their own parenting.

**SCHOOL PARTICIPATION**
Parents are encouraged to consider what roles they can play to improve the school and the community.

**PERSONAL GROWTH**
Parents are trained to think about future possibilities and expectations, for both their children and themselves.

**CIVIC LEADERSHIP**
Parents are encouraged to provide leadership for change that is beneficial to the school and the community.
• 100% in 2005
• 100% in 2006
• 100% in 2007
• 100% in 2008
• 100% in 2009

• 100% in 2010
• 100% in 2011
• 100% in 2012
• 100% in 2013
• 100% in 2014
• 100% in 2015
Transforming Cooper Street and the Educational Corridor
130 North Broadway, Camden
SCHOOLS AS NEXUS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Theory of Action

**Assumptions**

1. Goals for students achievement are realistic and achievable.
2. Content standard and grade level expectations for college and career readiness are well defined.
3. High quality assessment systems are designed to align to academic expectations and measure students growth.
4. Goals for all School Leaders, including Directors and Principals, are aligned to student achievement and growth.

**Elements of Change**

Instructional Leadership Teams define students learning objectives which are aligned to a challenging curriculum and promote student growth. Teachers use curriculum materials that allow instruction aligned with grade level content for all students including Student Learning objectives and growth.

Increased access to quality Professional Development to enhance school leadership, improve teaching and increase student learning.

Support from the Board of Trustees (or District) provides Teachers, School Principals, and Directors appropriate resources to improve their practice.

Research based interventions are incorporated into each school to address specific needs

**Outcomes**

Educators improve their instruction to become highly effective.

Barriers to students success are eliminated.

All students achieve higher academic outcomes.

All student graduate from high school ready for college and careers.
Strong Early Childhood Programs
High Performing Schools
Effective K-12 programs
Higher high school graduation rates
Successful transitions from high school to college/career
Academic enrichment programs
Social, recreation and character building for children and youth

Quality health services
Social service programs
Adult learning opportunities and Job readiness training
Neighborhood based employment opportunities
Legal services

Safe schools and neighborhoods
Business development
Crime prevention
Local/community based leadership development
Better housing options and support for residents
Community Building and Ownership
Interagency Collaboration
Lessons Learned from our Applied Work
• We will never eradicate poverty without quality education for all Children
• Education counts because it helps eradicate poverty and hunger
• Education gives people the knowledge and skills they need to live better lives.
• Education can boost productivity and open doors to job credits
• Poverty is one of the main reasons why children are left out of education
• A collaborative, comprehensive approach, with intentional alignment across institutions and contexts (*e.g.* family, school, the broader community), instead of piecemeal, uncoordinated efforts;

• Participation by diverse partners instead of single-sector initiatives;
• A focus on geographically defined areas instead of being too broad in scope;

• A governance structure that includes a lead organization to drive the effort instead of a leaderless coalition;

• Active engagement by residents instead of purely top-down decisions;
• Cross fertilization between students and faculty to engage in research, service learning and community development;

• An asset-based approach that builds on existing resources and strengths rather than considering communities as deficits to be remediated; and
• Flexible, non-categorical funding from diverse sources instead of restricted funds that constrain nimble actions