

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

### **Final Evaluation Report**

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

The goals of CEPS are to:

- *strengthen the capacity of community organizations to provide high quality and integrated youth development, support, and education services.*
- *enable returning youth to develop skills, attitudes, experiences, and credentials to achieve self-sufficiency and active involvement (in the classroom, the program, and the organization).*

### **I. The Evaluation**

This two year evaluation of CEPS sought to answer the following questions:

- How and to what extent do youth development practices at participating CBO pre-GED programs change?
- How and to what extent do instructional and student support practices at participating CBO pre-GED programs change?
- How and to what extent do administrative practices at participating CBO pre-GED programs change?
- How and to what extent are changes in CBO practices related to changes in participating student recruitment and retention?
- What is the impact of participating in CEPS pre-GED programs on young people's:
  - Literacy skills;
  - Math skills;
  - Time management skills as indicated by attendance and timeliness;
  - Continuing on in education such as entry into a GED program;

- GED attainment?

The evaluation included the following data collection efforts.

For the 2006/2007 year:<sup>1</sup>

- review of background information and reports from three Cohort 1 and the three Cohort 2 sites;
- fall student focus groups at two Cohort 1 and two Cohort 2 sites;
- spring student surveys at two Cohort 1 and two Cohort 2 sites;
- fall and spring observations at two Cohort 1 and two Cohort 2 sites;
- fall and spring interviews with the instructors at two Cohort 1 and two Cohort 2 sites;
- fall, early, and late spring interviews with the three Cohort 1 and the three Cohort 2 CEPS directors;
- fall and spring interviews with CEPS counselors, trainers, and advocates at the three Cohort 1 and the three Cohort 2.

For the 2007/2008 year:

- review of background information and reports from the four Cohort 3 sites;
- fall and spring observations at the three Cohort 1 and the three Cohort 2 sites;
- fall and spring interviews with the instructors at the three Cohort 1 and the three Cohort 2 sites;
- fall and spring interviews with the three Cohort 1 and the three Cohort 2 site CEPS program directors;
- spring observations at the four Cohort 3 sites;
- spring interviews with the instructors and program directors at the four Cohort 3 sites.

The 2006/07 evaluation report focused on changes in site implementation of the CEPS model,<sup>2</sup> while this report focused more on CEPS' impact on students.

## **II. Results**

### **Implementing the CEPS Model**

Currently there are ten New York City sites implementing CEPS, four in the Bronx and three each in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Three sites started during the 2005/06 year (Cohort 1), three during the 2006/07 year (Cohort 2), and four during the 2007/08 year (Cohort 3). Eight of the ten sites are planning to continue with CEPS. Two other sites, one from Cohort 2 and one from Cohort 3, will not be continuing on with CEPS. At these sites, the Ramp-Up curriculum and

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<sup>1</sup> Two sites were supported by the New York City Board of Education and had additional procedures that needed to be completed before IRB (Institutional Review Board) permission could be granted to access students, instructors, and student data, other than those data already being reported to YDI. Permission was received in summer 2007, so some data were not available for the 2006/07 data collection.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix for a copy of the first year evaluation report.

other aspects of the CEPS model were not a good fit with the sites' existing programs and Ramp-Up was only being minimally implemented. In both cases, YDI and site staff jointly decided that it would be better for the sites not to continue in CEPS. Staff from the Cohort 2 site have asked to continue to attend CEPS trainings.

### *The Curriculum*

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

Since Ramp-Up was designed for an in-school population with a 180 day school year, some CEPS sites have had difficulty using it "as is" in an adult education setting and have been adapting it to meet their needs. Too there has been concern that Ramp-Up doesn't deal with students with learning disabilities, which it's felt many of the CEPS students have.

America's Choice also has a math curriculum, Mathematics Navigator, which gives students who are struggling with specific mathematics concepts and skills, instruction that addresses the root causes of common misconceptions. Two of the six Cohort 1 and 2 sites began to work with Math Navigator at the end of the 2006/07 year. This year, while all CEPS sites had math instruction, most were implementing the Math Navigator curriculum minimally or not at all.

Sites varied greatly in terms of the hours of instruction they offered. While, on average, sites offered 11.25 hours of literacy instruction per week, individual sites offered anywhere from 4.5 hours to 24 hours of literacy instruction. The range was smaller for math instruction, but still considerable. Math was offered from 3 to 16 hours a week, with an average of 6.3 hours of math instruction.

### *Testing*

The primary vehicle for CEPS student assessment is the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE).<sup>3</sup> Students take the TABE at the time of their entry into the program and again periodically as long as they are in CEPS. TABE test results are used to assess student progress and, in most sites, used as one of the criteria to determine when students are ready to move to a GED program.

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<sup>3</sup> TABE Scores are reported as grade equivalents (GE). In GE, the integer is the school grade level and the decimal is the month of the nine month school year. Thus, a 7.4 GE indicates an academic level approximating that of the fourth month of the 7th grade.

TABE scores have been found to be highly correlated with GED and GED predictor scores. The degree of overlap between the content and skills covered by the Ramp-Up and Math Navigator curriculum and those covered by the TABE math and literacy tests is not known.

### ***Other Components***

Other model components include:

1. a primary person approach, where each student has a specific person to whom they go for guidance, support, and referral;
2. a process for staff to learn from each other and to learn about the young people with whom they are working;
3. collection and use of data to:
  - a. improve the program for individual students;
  - b. improve the program in general;
  - c. determine the need for counseling or referrals to social services.<sup>4</sup>

Different program components are expected to be combined into a “blended approach.”

This year, all ten CEPS sites had some form of the primary person system in place, although there were variations. In some sites, the student was given a primary person upon entry to the program; in other sites one person served as a primary person for the entire cohort. In one site, one staff member was the primary person for the male students while another staff person played that role for the female students.

Sites also all had some formal ways to learn from each other and communicate about students. While all sites had periodically scheduled formal case conferences that focused on students, some sites had weekly meetings while others met biweekly and others quarterly. These formal sessions were supplemented by reports on students at daily or weekly team and staff meetings and through informal staff conversations.

With some exceptions, sites were making minimal use of data for program improvement; although more were using data for assessing and counseling students. Sites tended to collect attendance data in different ways, using different formats, and it is not clear how accurate attendance records were. For example, there were instances where students with multiple TABE scores taken months apart were listed as attending for only two or three days; while at the other extreme there were students listed as attending more days than have passed since they entered the program.

Infused throughout the CEPS model, and the CEPS sites, are the following youth development practices: high expectations for youth; opportunities for youth to contribute; continuity of

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<sup>4</sup> During CEPS first year “administrator consultation with youth and staff on decision-making” was a fourth component; however there was less emphasis in this area after CEPS first year.

relationships with youth; engaging activities for youth; caring and trusting relationships; and physical, emotional, and psychological safety.

Each CEPS site received \$35,000 annually in funding from YDI, as well as access to the training and technical assistance. The bulk of the funding for the CEPS sites pre-GED programs came from the sites themselves.

***Student Recruitment and Retention<sup>i</sup>***

During both years of the evaluation, recruitment was not an issue. During the evaluation’s first year, five of the six sites had no problems with recruitment, while during the second year of the evaluation none of the ten sites have had any problems with recruitment. All sites had as many students as they could serve with some sites having waiting lists of up to 150 potential students.

While recruitment was not an issue, retention was to be a problem in some sites. Across the ten programs, 77% (342) of the students attended programs ten days or more. Fifty-four percent (241) of the students remained in CEPS long enough to take the TABE literacy test more than once (which is how retention is being defined for the evaluation).

**Table 1: Students Retention by Site**

Site	Total Number of Students	Students Attending 10 Days or More	Students with Two TABE Literacy Scores
All Sites	443	342/ 77%	241/ 54%
Site A*	41	31/ 76%	12/ 29%
Site B	23	23/100%	18/ 78%
Site C	64	44/ 69%	30/ 47%
Site D*	61	34/ 56%	20/ 33%
Site E*	42	20/ 48%	19/ 45%
Site F	53	40/ 75%	39/ 74%
Site G	62	60/ 97%	33/ 53%
Site H	20	18/ 90%	19/ 95%
Site I	42	37/ 88%	37/ 88%
Site J*	35	35/100%	14/ 40%

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

Individual site retention rates ranged from a high of 95% to a low of 29%. There were differences in retention rates by cohort. The four sites with the lowest rates of students taking the TABE more than once were all in their first year as a CEPS program (Cohort 3). Two of these four sites also had lower percentages of students attending for 10 days or less.

Retention did not appear to be related to the sex of the student. Women students were approximately 45% of both the students overall and the students who stayed in CEPS long enough to take the TABE literacy test more than once.

With one exception, there did not seem to be a relationship between incentives and retention rates. The exception was a job related incentive where some students, who were successfully participating in a site's CEPS program, were given opportunities to work for other site programs, like after-school programs. Three sites—I, H, and G—offered this incentive. Two of these sites, H and I, had the highest rates of retention. Sites H and I also provided internships and student stipends, but so did sites with the lowest retention rates. On average, sites had four different incentives with Metro cards being given at all 10 sites (although Site B gave Metro cards based on student need only); followed by gift cards and internships (six sites each); and stipends and student of the month awards (five sites each).

### ***Building Site Capacity***

A major goal of the CEPS program is to build the capacity of participating CBOs. This is happening. One indicator of increased site capacity was that between the second and third year, CEPS sites from Cohorts 1 and 2 almost doubled both the number of students they were serving and the number of students staying in the program, while keeping the same level of increase in literacy scores. During CEPS' second year (2006/07), 136 students were served by the three sites from Cohort 1 and the three sites from Cohort 2. Eighty-five of the 136 students (63%) took the TABE more than once. The literacy scores for these 85 students increased by 1.4 GEs, from 6.0 to 7.4. During the 07/08 year, these same six sites served 264 students, 176 (63%) of whom took the TABE more than once. The increase in mean literacy GEs for these students was 1.5, from 5.8 to 7.3.

In another indicator of the impact of building site capacity, the retention rate for the six sites of Cohorts 1 and 2 was significantly higher than that of the four sites of Cohort 3.<sup>5</sup> The overall retention rate for the six Cohort 1 and 2 sites was 63% (176 of 264), with Cohort 1 sites having a retention rate of 60% (100 of 168) and Cohort 2 sites having a retention rate of 79% (76 of 96). The four Cohort 3 sites had a retention rate of 36% (65 of 179).

There were not differences in the amount students gained in literacy and math by cohort. There were differences by cohort, in terms of the number and percent of CEPS students moving on to GED programs during the 2007/08 academic year. Fifteen percent (25) of the Cohort 1 students went on to GED programs, as did 32% (31) of the Cohort 2 students and 12% (22) of the Cohort 3 students.<sup>6</sup>

## **Student Outcomes**

### ***Student Demographics***

For the 2007/08 year, the majority of CEPS students were male and Latino with an average age of 19.

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<sup>5</sup> Chi square=39.6; p<.000.

<sup>6</sup> Chi square=18.6, p<.001.

**Table 2: CEPS Student Demographics**

	Women	Men	Total
African American	74/ 17%	84/ 19%	158/ 36%
Latino/a	109/ 25%	142/ 32%	251/ 57%
Other	12/ 3%	21/ 5%	33/ 7%
Total	194/ 45%	248/ 55%	442/100%*

\* Sex was not indicated for one student

The sex and race/ethnicity of CEPS student varied greatly by site. While on average, 57% of CEPS students were Latino/a, the percentage in individual sites ranged from 10% to 98%. The percentage of male students varied greatly, by site, as well (from 42% to 100%). There were no differences in terms of student age. Across sites, the average student age was between 19 and 20.

Relatively few CEPS students were parents (65/15%), including 22% (43) of the women students and 9% of the men students (22). Even fewer students (36/8%) were known to have an individual evaluation program, which is an indicator of special education status. This did not mean that only 8% of the students had special education needs; it meant that in most sites, particularly those not affiliated with the New York City Board of Education, special education status was not known because this information was not available to the sites.

### ***Literacy***

During the 2006/07 year, the 85 students who had initial and follow-up TABE Literacy scores had an average gain of 1.4 GEs. During the 2007/08 year, the 241 students who had initial and follow-up TABE Literacy scores increased their scores by 1.5 GEs. While the number of students with initial and follow-up scores almost tripled, the gain remained about the same (in 2006/07 from 6.0 to 7.4; in 2007/08 from 5.8 to 7.3). These differences were significant and large.<sup>7</sup> There were also significant differences by site in terms of student gain.<sup>8</sup> There were no differences by sex. Women student scores increased from 5.7 to 7.3 while men student scores increased from 5.9 to 7.4.

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<sup>7</sup> F=134, p=.000, d=.9. A d (effect size) of 0.8 or higher is considered large.

<sup>8</sup> F=1.95, p=.046.

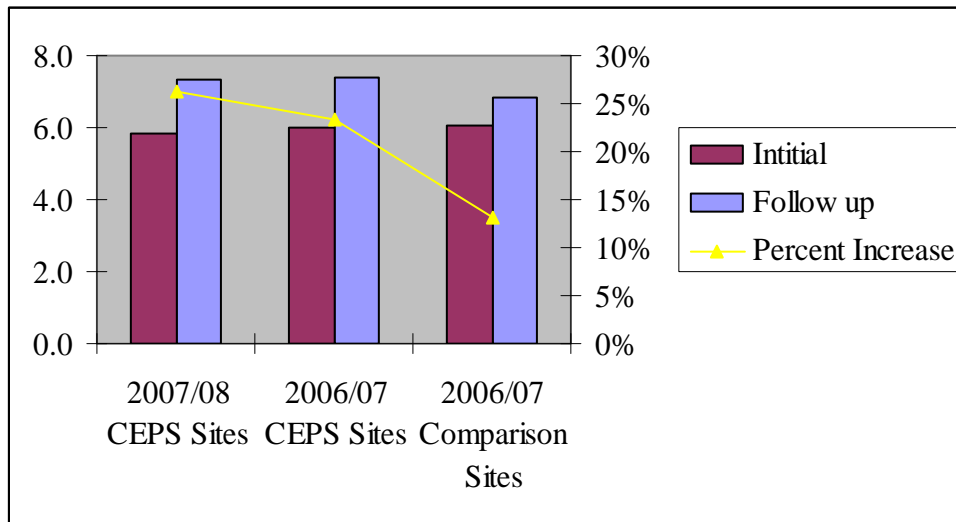
**Table 3: Changes in Literacy Scores**

Site	Initial Literacy Score	Most Recent Literacy Score	Change in Literacy Score
All Sites	5.8	7.3	1.5
Site A*	5.3	6.3	1.0
Site B	5.0	6.5	1.5
Site C	5.8	7.6	1.8
Site D*	6.0	7.3	1.3
Site E*	4.4	6.4	1.9
Site F	6.3	8.7	2.4
Site G	5.4	6.6	1.2
Site H	5.6	6.6	1.0
Site I	6.6	7.6	1.0
Site J*	6.5	8.0	1.5

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

To put the amount of change in perspective, changes in CEPS sites' TABE literacy scores were compared to changes in TABE literacy scores for students in five New York City pre-GED programs not associated with CEPS. The percent gain for 2007/08 CEPS sites was 26%; in 2006/07 it was 23.3%. These increases were significantly higher than the 13% increase of the comparison sites.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1: Literacy Gains by CEPS and NonCEPS Pre-GED Sites**



While the gains by CEPS students were impressive, gain scores alone are an incomplete measure of success. CEPS' success should be based on at least three variables—the number of students retained in the program, the gains that they make in the TABE, and the amount of time it takes them to make those gains.

<sup>9</sup> Similar analysis was not able to be done over TABE math scores since it wasn't clear which of the three TABE math scores were being used by the comparison sites.

When retention and gain scores are both used as indicators of success, it is important to note that higher rates of retention may have a negative impact on average student gain. In general, the students who drop out of a program are those who are not doing very well. More successful students tend to remain with a program. Thus when retention efforts become more effective, more students who aren't doing as well remain in the program. This can cause change scores to be lower than they would have been without those students. If, for example, only the top 20% of students are retained in a program, the program's average gain scores would be expected to be higher than if 80% or more of the students remained in the program.

**Table 4: Changes in Literacy with Other Indicators of Success by Site**

Site	Number of Students	Percent of Students with Two Scores	Total Days Between Pre and Most Recent TABE <sup>10</sup> #	Initial Literacy Score	Most Recent Literacy Scores	Change in Literacy Scores
All Sites	443	54%	131	5.8	7.3	1.5
Site A*	41	29%	122	5.3	6.3	1.0
Site B	23	78%	110	5.0	6.5	1.5
Site C	64	47%	136	5.8	7.6	1.8
Site D*	61	33%	156	6.0	7.3	1.3
Site E*	42	45%	110	4.4	6.4	1.9
Site F	53	74%	116	6.3	8.7	2.4
Site G	62	53%	118	5.4	6.6	1.2
Site H	20	95%	119	5.6	6.6	1.0
Site I	42	88%	119	6.6	7.6	1.0
Site J*	35	40%	313	6.5	8.0	1.5

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

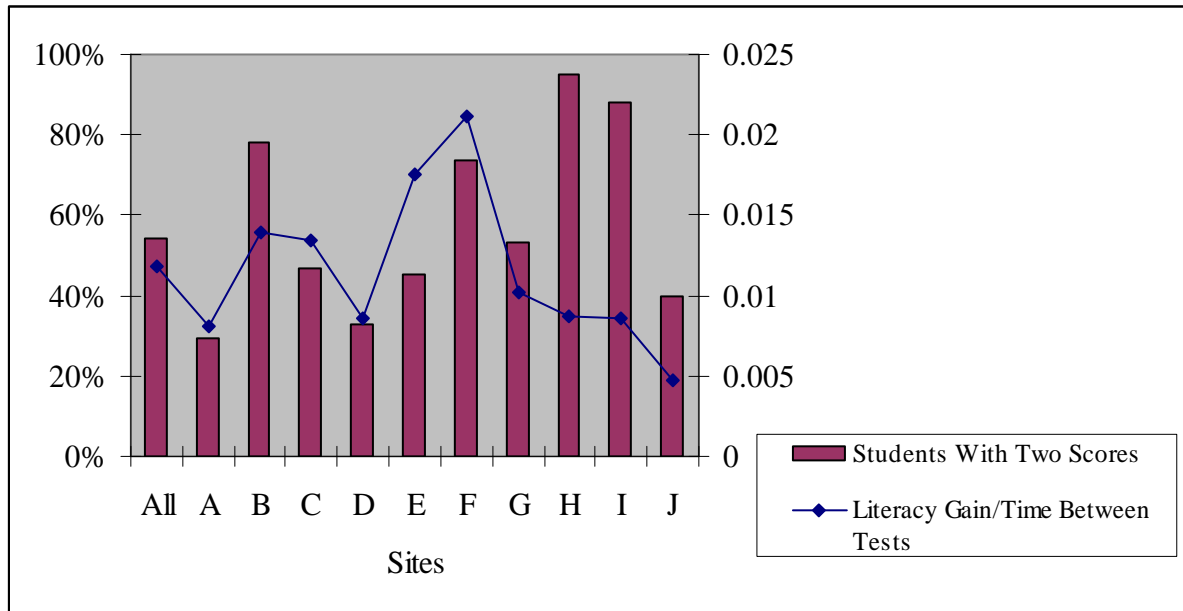
# Includes weekends and holidays

Under a definition of success as increases in TABE scores alone, Sites B and J would be considered equally successful, since both sites had average increases in literacy of 1.5. However, on average, the time between their first and most recent TABE score for students in Site B was 110 days (including weekends and holidays), while for students in Site J it was 313 days. Additionally, while 78% of the Site B students had pre and follow up TABE scores, this was the case for only 40% of the Site J students.

In the following graph, the bar indicates retention, as measured by the percentage of students with two TABE scores. The line indicates efficiency and is computed by dividing a student's literacy gain by the days between the pre and most recent TABE scores. Higher efficiency means larger increases in scores over shorter periods of time.

<sup>10</sup> Days between students taking the TABE was used as an approximate indicator of time in the program.

**Figure 2: Relative Literacy Performance by Site**



By this definition, Site F had the best overall success, while Sites A, D, and J (all first year sites) have had the least success. Site E, also a first year site, had high efficiency but relatively low retention while Site H had high retention but relatively low efficiency.

**Mathematics**

During the 2006/07 year, the 67 students who had initial and follow-up TABE scores in math had an average gain of 0.9 GEs. During the 2007/08 year, 194 students from eight sites had initial and follow-up TABE Composite Math scores. While the number of students with initial and follow-up scores almost tripled, the gain remained at 0.9 (2006/07 from 5.0 to 5.9; 2007/08 from 5.1 to 6.0). These differences were significant.<sup>11</sup> There were also significant differences in the degree to which students increased their scores by site.<sup>12</sup> As was the case with the literacy scores, there were no significant differences by sex. Women students increased from 5.3 to 6.0 while men students increased from 5.1 to 6.1.

<sup>11</sup> F=53.04, p=.000, d=.54. A d (effect size) of 0.5 to 0.79 is considered of medium size.

<sup>12</sup> F=2.36, p=.07.

**Table 5: Changes in Composite Math Score with Other Indicators of Success by Site**

Site	Number of Students	Percent of Students with Two Scores	Total Days Between Initial and Most Recent TABE*	Initial Composite Math Score	Most Recent Composite Math Score	Change in Composite Math Scores
Eight Sites	340	57%	130	5.1	6	0.9
Site A*	41	29%	131	5.2	5.7	0.5
Site B	23	83%	123	4.66	5.74	1.1
Site C	64	42%	110	5.2	6.9	1.7
Site F	53	62%	109	5.06	5.94	0.9
Site G	62	53%	116	5.1	5.5	0.4
Site H	20	95%	118	5.4	5.9	0.5
Site I	42	88%	119	4.9	5.9	1
Site J*	35	40%	313	6.2	7.3	1.1

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

As was the case with the literacy scores, math gain scores are an incomplete measure of success. Sites B, I, and J had approximately the same amount of gain, so if gain scores alone were the definition of success, they would be seen as equally successful; however, the percent of students with two math scores in Sites I and B was almost double that of Site J and the number of days between the initial and most recent TABEs was less than half.

Students in Sites D and E did not have Composite Math scores. They did, however, have Computation Math and Applied Math scores. These two sites had similar gains in Applied Math but dramatically different gains in Computation Math

**Table 6: Changes in TABE Math: Computation Scores by Site**

Site	Number of Students	Percent of Students with Two Scores	Initial Math: Computation Score	Most Recent Math: Computation Score	Change in Math: Computation Scores
Site D*	61	18%	4.8	7.7	2.9
Site E*	42	24%	4.8	5.3	0.5

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

**Table 7: Changes in TABE Math: Applied Scores by Site**

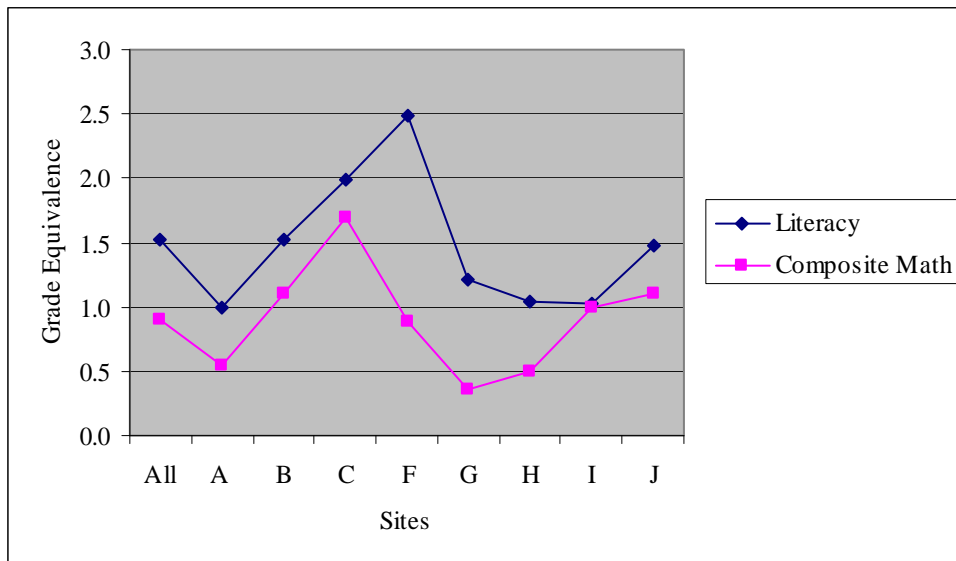
Site	Number of Students	Percent of Students with Two Scores	Initial Math: Applied Score	Most Recent TABE Math: Applied Score	Change in TABE Math: Applied Scores
Site D*	61	33%	5.2	5.8	0.6
Site E*	42	24%	4.9	5.5	0.6

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

***Relative Changes in Literacy and Composite Math Scores***

During the 2006/07 year, there was math and literacy data from five of the six sites. In all five sites there were increases in math achievement and in four of the five sites, those increases were less than the increases in literacy. As the following graph indicates, this pattern continued during the 2007/08 year.

**Figure 3: Student Gains in TABE Literacy and Composite Math Scores**



One hundred and ninety-two students from eight of the ten programs had both initial and follow-up TABE Literacy scores and TABE: Composite Math scores. Overall, students had significantly higher gains in Literacy than in Composite Math (1.5 vs. 0.9).<sup>13</sup>

In seven of the eight sites, students' gains in literacy were greater than their gains in math. In Site I, the gains were the same. The gains in literacy reflect the full CEPS model, including site use of Ramp-Up. Since most sites were using Math Navigator minimally or not at all, gains in Composite Math reflect the CEPS model without a mandated curriculum.

<sup>13</sup> t=7.86, p<.000.

## ***Progress Toward the GED***

During the 2007/08 academic year, 78 (18%) CEPS students went on to GED programs. This included 18% of all CEPS students and 35% of CEPS students who stayed in CEPS long enough to take pre and follow up TABE literacy tests. Twenty-one of these 78 students had already taken the GED, 13 of whom received their GED. As Table 8 indicates, there were significant differences by site.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 8: Number and Percent of CEPS Students Going To GED Programs**

Site	Number going on to GED Programs	Percent going on to GED Programs
All Sites	78	18%
Site A*	2	5%
Site B	4	17%
Site C	3	5%
Site D*	6	10%
Site E*	8	19%
Site F	24	45%
Site G	12	19%
Site H	3	15%
Site I	10	24%
Site J*	6	17%

\*Cohort 3 site, first year in CEPS

Site F had a dramatically higher rate of students going on to GED programs (24/45%), followed by Site I (10/23%). Sites A and C had the lowest percentage of students going on to GED programs (Site A: 2/5%; Site C: 3/5%).

## ***Stories of Student Success***

While numbers and comparisons are key to assessing program success, there are a variety of other successes that can be better captured by student stories. Many of the stories, like the one below, spoke about students leaving the program, then coming back and succeeding.

*Jamal was here for two years. The first year he had difficulties coming to the program, he dropped out but then came back. He was in Ramp-Up in 3 months and then promoted to a GED program. He got his GED in March with a 490 in reading and 510 in math.*

Other stories showed the difficulties students face and their determination:

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<sup>14</sup>Chi square=43.87, p=.0000.

*Jose gives this aura that he is very bright, but he is very behind. He has been diagnosed as emotionally disturbed by the Department of Education. He's almost violent at times. We've had to customize the program for him. He has fewer outbursts now. He is working in the building and we are trying to get him to think about working someplace else. It's still a struggle. He's coming on a regular basis; he feels he doesn't belong in the class, but he keeps coming.*

*James is reading. He finished his first book. He had it for 3-4 weeks and was reading it outside class. James works from 3:00 to midnight every night and helps support his family. It's hard for him to get here in morning; he's been working really hard and coming to class in addition to his job and having pressure to work overtime to pay bills. When he comes and he finishes his book that's a success.*

Some stories spoke of personal growth:

*Last term's class there was a student who didn't speak a lot—we would talk a little one-on-one but it was very hard for him to talk in class. To see him get up and read a report for a book talk was good. He was someone who broke down a little barrier....*

And still others showed how small actions can reflect large changes in behavior:

*Maria kept insisting she couldn't do math. When a woman from Math Navigator came to observe and help, Maria was able to explain answers, after saying "I can't do it."*

*Kiesha referred a book to another student—she remembered the author and described the book.*

## **Tying Site Activities To Outcomes**

### ***Remaking a Program***

During their first year in CEPS, Site F's outcomes were not strong. Only 13 students took the TABE more than once and, on average, students did NOT increase their literacy scores, although there was a minimal increase in math scores; by 0.6 GEs. During Site F's second year, student outcomes improved dramatically. The number of CEPS students taking more than one TABE tripled to 39. These 39 students increased their literacy scores by 2.4 GEs and their math scores by 0.9 GEs. And almost half of the students (24/45%) went on to GED programs.

These improvements were tied to Site F's efforts to more fully implement the CEPS model. Initially, Site F's primary person system had different staff members working with different students. This was seen as confusing and not as consistent as it could be. Starting in January 2008, the system was revised to make one person the primary person for all students. That person's other job responsibilities were reduced so that they had time to well support their students. The new primary person set up a buddy system, so each new student had a buddy to

take them through the process. In addition, Site F switched to the new streamlined YDI template for case conferencing and in general feel that it has improved their case conferencing.

While Site F used student surveys to get student feedback both years, during this past year they set up a suggestion box where students (and others) could drop in their concerns. During the 2007/08 year, there was also increased attention to data. Along with looking at the TABE scores, the program director was looking at the monthly group and individual student attendance data. In one-on-one meetings with students, staff went over their data with each student and developed strategies to improve student participation and achievement.

In Site F, there was an emphasis on going on to the GED, including having students take the GED predictor tests and going over the results with them. There were changes in the incentives as well. CEPS students became integrated into the young adult training program, where they received training and a stipend. In addition, 90% of the CEPS students were going through the site's life skills program

Equally or perhaps more importantly, there was a major change in instruction. The 2006/07 instructor was replaced with a former special education teacher who was enthusiastic about being at CEPS and about using the Ramp-Up model. As the instructor explained:

[Ramp-Up] is a program that in the beginning I thought was too structured. When I went to the workshops, I learned I don't have to do it exactly as it is. I read the book and am breaking it down into what works for my students... It is good to have [something that shows] what you should do today. I use it as a basis; I can put things in, take things out. Some are good, some I don't need to worry about.

To the instructor "the most important thing is that the kids are reading. They have to read the book in class and have to do reports on it. Some kids have read 3-4 books this year."

### ***Increasing Numbers; Decreasing Gains***

The major change between Site G's second and third years was in retention. In 2006/07, only eight students stayed in the program long enough to take the TABE more than once. In 2007/08 the number of students taking the TABE more than once increased four fold to 32. Indeed, more 2007/08 students went on to GED programs than 2006/07 students stayed in the program long enough to take the TABE more than once (12 vs 8). Between 2006/07 and 2007/08, there were however decreases in the size of gains. In literacy, the gains decreased from 2.3 GEs to 1.2 GEs, while in math, the increases declined from 2.2 GEs to 0.4 GEs.

The major change in Site G was in instruction. During 2006/07 and 2007/08 the program had three different instructors, the most recent coming this past winter. Observations saw major differences between the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 instructors. During the fall observation, the instructor appeared to be disinterested in the students and Ramp-Up rituals and routines were not being implemented and there was no independent reading. The spring observation found a new

instructor who was committed to the students and the program. Ramp-Up rituals and routines were being implemented and there was a great deal of independent reading. Along with a change in the instructor came a change in classrooms. The new classroom was for CEPS classes only, allowing student work to be displayed and providing a space where the CEPS instructor could meet with students outside of class time for tutoring or other assistance. The new classroom was also closer to the students' "primary person," making closer monitoring easier.

In addition, Site G changed to the streamlined model of case conferencing introduced by CEPS and increased the number of case conferences to three a month. More resources were added to the program including work support, a financial literacy component, and Friday book talks where students come in for donuts and coffee to lead discussions of books they are reading.

### ***Surviving a Difficult First Year***

Site A had a difficult first year. It had the lowest number and percent of students taking the TABE more than once (12/29%). Too, their gains in literacy and math were among the lowest for the 10 sites. Only 2 of their students (5%) went on to GED programs.

During its first year, Site A had to deal with several issues. They began with one instructor teaching both the GED class and the pre-GED CEPS class. This did not appear to work well. There were scheduling problems, with the instructor at times having to be in two places at the same time, causing non-instructional staff to cover parts of the classes. In addition, the original instructor had a strong accent and was uncomfortable doing the Ramp-Up read aloud in part because the students made fun of him. In January 2008, a new instructor was hired for the CEPS class and, in the words of the director, the "transition was something students welcomed." The current instructor followed the Ramp-Up Navigator model very closely, utilizing all aspects of the Ramp-Up literacy curriculum, including the recommended format and structure.

Site A had a primary person system; however, while originally one person served as the primary person for all of the CEPS students; after she left, the students were "split up" among the remaining staff members. Site A did do case conferencing, meeting every week or two.

### ***Making Math Work***

Between its second and third year, about the same numbers of Site C students took the TABE literacy test more than once (from 28 to 30). Their increases in literacy scores stayed at a strong level (from 1.7 GEs to 1.8 GEs). In math, almost 70% more students took the TABE math test more than once (from 16 to 27) and their gains in math scores increased dramatically (from 0.6 GEs to 1.7 GEs). Site C's gain was almost twice that of CEPS' as whole.

During the past two years, Site C's literacy instructor remained the same, as did site use of the primary person system and case conferencing. The major change was in math instruction. A new math instructor was hired for the 2007/08 year, one with strong math skills who was very experienced in working with out-of-school youth. This instructor had serious problems with

Math Navigator and mostly used their own curriculum. The instructor felt that Math Navigator was:

*...not designed for older youth who have dropped out of school; it's designed for students who most attend school. It is so sequential—a regular program has the luxury of being sequential. We don't have that. Between one class and to another—we have about 60% different students. Math Navigator was written for much younger kids. Handing students a curriculum written for 12 year old, is something that I don't want to do. So much of what I do as a teacher is to empower them as a learner.*

Instead, the instructor read what was supposed to be covered and developed their own activities and materials. The instructor explained “There is a lot of instability in the program. My first responsibility is to create stability and I can do that a lot easier when it is my own stuff.”

### ***Hitting the Literacy Road Running***

Even though 2007/08 was its first year in CEPS, Site E had one of the highest literacy gains (1.9 GEs), with almost half of their students taking the TABE Literacy test more than once and 19% going on to GED programs. They were not as strong in math, with minimal gains (0.5 GEs in Applied Math; 0.6 GEs in Computation Math) and with less than a quarter of the students taking the TABE math tests more than once.

Site E had “been shopping for a year for a curriculum for their program for out-of school youth.” They felt they had found it in CEPS and folded the CEPS model into their existing program. Site E reported initially implementing the Ramp-Up literacy curriculum “tightly” but then, after training, began to implement it with more flexibility. They did not begin implementing Math Navigator until spring, 2008. Site E felt that their primary person system was working well with each student assigned an advisor when they entered CEPS. This advisor was informed if there were problems in the classroom with a student and the advisor met with the student “immediately after class or next time they come in.” This spring, Site E was transitioning from “informal discussions” to quarterly “structured student conferences” supplemented with some review between meetings and some updates during weekly staff meetings. Site E was pleased enough with these processes that they are planning to have education and social science services work together across all site programs.

### ***Site Directors Perceptions of CEPS' Impact on Their Programs***

Cohort 1 and 2 CEPS site directors were asked about the impact of CEPS on their programs. Two of sites spoke about CEPS giving them, and their programs, a structure they could follow:

*All the technical assistance sessions have really been instrumental in helping me think to the next level. At the program level, CEPS has given us a program structure to start with and work from...[CEPS] has given us a place to anchor our programs.*

Cohort 1 Site

*[CEPS] has given us a structure especially around supportive services, paying individual attention to a student and finding out their needs. CEPS makes it manageable. Especially the second year, with CEPS we have a purpose a plan, a structure. That has been the biggest difference in second year. It has given us a vision; I'm not sure if we are completely there—but I can see it.*

Cohort 2 Site

A second Cohort 2 site director reported CEPS led them to “redesign” their program.

*Our experience has been that it has led us to enriching the program and expanding it. The blended approach came natural to us. Now we are doing it with a certain set of skills; before we were doing it with a heart now we are doing it with skills.*

A Cohort 1 site director said CEPS had “a critical impact” on their existing social support approach. “CEPS trainings and discussions around idea of primary person and caring adults...encouraged us to seek funds to fund primary person program.” The final Cohort 1 site director felt that CEPS and Ramp-Up targeting of the issues changed their agency. “The agency is now about being pro-active.”

A Cohort 2 site director spoke about the many ways CEPS made them a better program:

*We didn't have the right pieces last year. The literacy piece was a challenge we had to get our hands around; it was a big transition in a positive way. [CEPS] allowed us to use the youth development, which we are good at. We focused on the engagement of the students and what we need to make them more cohesive as a group. CEPS challenged us to be better. Otherwise [the program] would have just been a classroom experience and that isn't realistic with these students.*

### **III. Conclusions**

CEPS' two major goals are to strengthen the capacity of community organizations to provide high quality and integrated youth development, support, and education services and to enable returning youth to develop skills, attitudes, experiences, and credentials to achieve self-sufficiency and active involvement (in the classroom, the program, and the organization).

Their first goal was clearly being achieved. Working with CEPS allowed sites to expand and improve their services. Cohort 1 and 2 sites have been increasing the number of students they serve and improving their implementation of the major components of the CEPS model.

During their first year, Cohort 3 sites were implementing the model, working through the “kinks” while serving students. Eight of the ten sites were planning to continue their CEPS programs. At the other two sites, YDI and site staff, jointly decided that since their sites were not following the CEPS instructional model, it was not appropriate for them to continue.

It is more difficult to assess the degree to which the second goal of self sufficiency was being achieved. While regular attendance continued to be a challenge; the majority of students remained actively involved in the program; improving their skills. Too, while for most students, the improvement over their several months in the program was not enough for them to successfully enter GED programs, it did move them a considerable distance forward. In a little more than four months, students, on average, made a gain of 1.5 GEs in literacy and 0.9 GEs in math. And as instructors reported- students were enjoying reading; a major step forward.

Additional conclusions include:

***Across sites, the CEPS model was achieving student outcomes.*** During the 2007/08 academic year, CEPS student retention rates, as defined as remaining in the program long enough to take the TABE more than once, averaged over 50%, with literacy gains averaging 1.5 GEs and Composite Math gains averaging 0.9 GEs. Eighteen percent of CEPS students moved to GED programs. In addition, students in CEPS sites both in 2006/07 and 2007/08 increased their TABE literacy scores significantly more than did students in nonCEPS pre-GED programs.

***The support CEPS staff provided, combined with previous experience implementing the model, allowed sites to effectively scale-up their efforts.*** Between CEPS' second and third year, existing CEPS sites almost doubled both the number of students they were serving and the number of students staying in the program while keeping the same level of increase in literacy scores. Cohort 1 and 2 sites had retention rates significantly higher than those of the newer Cohort 3 sites. There were not significant differences in increases in literacy and math skills.

***Students continued to have significantly greater gains in literacy than in math.*** In nine of the ten sites, students had great increases in literacy than in math. Math continued to be less emphasized than literacy in CEPS, with sites spending on average about half the instructional time on math as they did on literacy.

***Recruitment continued not to be a problem.*** While there continued to be attendance/retention issues, they varied greatly by site, with experienced sites having better retention. Recruitment was not a problem. The population in need of such programs continues to be far greater than can be served by CEPS. Finding students for the programs was not a problem.

***CEPS seemed to be equally effective with women and men students.*** While the percentage of men and women students varied greatly by program, there were no sex differences in numbers of students taking the TABE more than once. Neither were there sex differences in pre and follow-up literacy or math scores.

## IV. Recommendations

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

It is recommended that in order to more fully assess the CEPS model or indeed any model for out of school youth, outcome variables to determine program success should go beyond increases in TABE scores. CEPS success should be defined by, at least three variables—the number and percent of students retained in the program, the gains that they make in the TABE, and the amount of time it takes them to make those gains.

It is recommended that CEPS staff and sites work together to:

- develop reasonable expectations of success in terms of percent of students retained, percent or absolute increase in scores, and time to achieve gains;
- develop guidelines for the approximate number of weekly instructional hours in literacy and math needed.

It is recommended that two-way directional mapping be made between the content and skills covered by Ramp-Up and Math Navigator and the content and skills tested by the TABE. The goal would be to develop the degree of overlap between the Ramp-Up and Math Navigator curricula and the TABE test. If the TABE test covers areas not included in Ramp-Up or Math Navigator, CEPS needs to integrate the teaching of these areas within CEPS. If Ramp-Up and Math Navigator cover areas not included in the TABE, then decisions need to be made as to what is important to teach and what the appropriate balance is between teaching TABE content and skills and those from Ramp-Up and Math Navigator. Regardless of the results of this mapping, more attention should be paid to the role of math instruction in CEPS.

It is recommended that to reduce possible problems during their first year, sites new to CEPS begin their training prior to their implementation of the model.

It is recommended that a decision must be made about the importance of collecting accurate data on student attendance and on instructional hours. If these data are required by funders or used by programs, then a standard way to define and collect attendance and instructional hours makes sense. If not, it may not be worth the site time and resources necessary to do this data collection well.

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