

## Concept and Impact The ‘proof of replicability’ phase

*“America’s future will be determined by the home and the school. The child becomes largely what he is taught; hence we must watch what we teach, and how we live.”*

*Jane Addams*

### **Bringing School Home means closing the achievement gap for low-income children via a ‘91% school’ in the public housing environment**

The *Bringing School Home* research project, being co-incubated by the Affordable Housing Institute (AHI) and Boulder Housing Partners (BHP), will demonstrate that:

1. We can break the cycle of poverty for disadvantaged American children by making public housing a ‘91% school’ to complement the ‘9% school’ of weekday education.
2. Success achieved at small scale (Boulder and New York City) is replicable via ‘free franchise kits’ being developed at Bringing School Home.

We want to make housing part of a value ecosystem that embraces young children entering their school years and results, when they exit formal schooling, in a successful young adult who is employable and ready to navigate the world without social subsidy. We want to test policy principles that catalyze the role of housing in education delivery and fundamentally change the achievement odds for low income children.

Bringing School Home (BSH) is looking for evidentiary sources that bear on our theory of impact, advisors with domain expertise, locales for test sites, advocates and friends, and funding of \$350,000 to support these activities over the next 18 months.

### **The proof-of-replicability phase has two goals and several objectives**

Over the next eighteen months, Bringing School Home three principal goals:

1. *Bring Boulder and New York programs to scale.* The model is successful in both cities and the next challenge, before expansion to test sites, is to understand the mechanism and the durable funding model to go to scale.
2. *Test the model in at least 3 more locales.* We believe many entities throughout the country are experimenting with place-based children’s-education initiatives whose experience will resonate with Bringing School Home principles. We want to find them and add at least 3 new locales to the BSH test-site model.
3. *Build out the BSH franchise kit, including optional features.* We intend to have an open-source how-to guide that presents what BSH sites have found and provides a road map for others to join the BSH movement.

By the end of 18 months, that is by December 2018, we intend that:

1. At least five locales will be operating BSH-model programs and pooling their findings.
2. Our theory of impact around the ‘learning value ecosystem’ will be recognized as sound and supported by both academic research and practical experience.
3. The open-source franchise kit will be published and electronically available to all.
4. BSH will have secured visibility, funding, allies and momentum for the next stage of growth.

**The challenge: Our schooling ecosystem isn’t a learning-value ecosystem because it overlooks the role of home in enabling or disabling learning.**

Though the correlation between the high school dropout rate and prison incarceration is higher than the correlation between smoking and lung cancer<sup>1</sup>, every year in the United States, more than one million students drop out of high school<sup>2</sup>. These are incredibly expensive failures, for both the student and society. Their persistence demonstrates that the complex education structure as it exists now is not delivering outputs equal to the goal for which it exists – and therefore that schools cannot be responsible for the solution alone.

This shouldn’t be surprising: of a child’s first 18 years, only 9% is spent in school: afternoons and evenings, weekends, and nights make up the remaining 91%. And what may be done in the 9% can be undone by the 91%, as constant moving, poor quality environments and sleep disturbances/ disruptions undermine cognition and emotional well-being. All of this 91% is home-centric: housing quality, location, stability, and affordability have enormous impact on measurable in-school performance<sup>3</sup>.

In New York City, 45% of low-income children do not graduate from high school. This waste of human potential is a financial and moral stain on our society and an enormous drain on national economic resources. In a 2009 report on the economic cost of the achievement gap, McKinsey and Co. researchers pegged the economic number at hundreds of billions of dollars<sup>4</sup>. They describe the current gap among U.S. students of differing ethnic origins, income levels and school systems as a “staggering economic and social cost of underutilized human potential.”

Many of these children, not only in New York City but nationwide, live in public housing; more than 1,200,000 families often struggle mightily for influence against the street, peers, popular culture and the soft bigotry of low expectations for their children. Their parents, all

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<sup>1</sup> Wartgow J. *Why School Reform Is Failing and What We Need To Do About It*. 1st ed. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education; 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The Chicago Maroon — Ed. Secretary Arne Duncan: Achievement gap is “morally unacceptable.” <http://chicagomaroon.com/2012/10/30/ed-secretary-arne-duncan-achievement-gap-is-morally-unacceptable/>. Accessed April 1, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Lynch D. Poor Quality Housing Is Tied to Children’s Emotional and Behavioral Problems. 2013:1-4

<sup>4</sup> Auguste BG, Hancock B, Laboissière M. *The Economic Cost of the US Education Gap*; 2009.

too often, themselves lack a high school diploma, full English proficiency (especially reading), or the confidence to advocate for their children in an educational system that they find foreign or threatening.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the child's daily commute, schools have too little time and too few resources to tackle the challenges that children living in poverty bring with them to first grade. Even the best trained teacher in the best equipped classroom cannot always overcome learning barriers associated with housing insecurity, hunger and health problems.

### **Theory of impact: Bringing School Home by making the home a learning enabler**

It's axiomatic that a stable home (quality accommodations, affordable rent, and no fear of eviction) buttresses learning. But for disadvantaged children encumbered by invisible learning blinders, housing must be much more – it must be a key complement to the schooling and hence a key partner for education reform.

And it can be. Test-site partnerships stretching back a decade and a half between the I Have a Dream Foundation (IHDF) and the public housing authorities of New York City and Boulder, Colorado have shown for scores of students that housing authorities can be the nexus for a comprehensive, consistent, and sustainable education model that brings all the disparate pieces of child and family support together in one program: stable housing, early intervention, pre-school education, academic support, high expectations, student mentorship, parent engagement, strong community foundation and post-secondary funding.

The theories advanced in Bringing School Home are evidence-based. We have the statistics to prove our thesis: a twenty-year experiment in New York City has boosted graduation rates by 88% (from 45% secondary school completion among low-income children to a consistent 85% in the IHDF-housing authority partnership); Boulder's program is producing similar results.

As proposed here, the combination of broad access to housing and a comprehensive long-term program of educational support costs as little as \$13,000 per student per year<sup>5</sup>. Contrast this with just two of the many costs associated with getting it wrong:

- A year in juvenile detention costs \$88,000<sup>6</sup>, **6½ times BSH's cost.**
- A year in a New York City jail costs almost \$168,000<sup>7</sup>, **13 times BSH's cost.**

Bringing School Home works because it is home-based, child-centric and parent-persuasive. Children will not aspire to post-secondary education if parents define work as physical labor and, learning (or reading to learn) is not perceived, or understood, as the path to success. Unless the parents can see other children whose learning did lead to better work and better adult lives, this cycle will continue.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on BSH experience, assumes an average housing voucher cost of \$8,250 per household plus \$5,000 per student in educational program wrap-around. Families with more than one student bring down cost per capita.

<sup>6</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2011). No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration. Baltimore, MD: Retrieved from [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

<sup>7</sup> "NYC's Jail Population: Who's There and Why?" 2013. New York City Independent Budget Office. August 22. <http://ibo.nyc.ny.us/cgi-park2/?p=516>.

The model that has been developed over 20 years in New York and in Boulder creates a path to create a new paradigm:

1. Use housing as the platform to an expanded learning partnership with school districts and community partners; bring learning as a guest into the home and into the community.
2. Use housing policy to create a housing-based families and community-accepted expectation of learning and of success.
3. Buttress that expectation with a seamless and stubborn system of supports that refuses to let a child fail.

Public housing is ‘home base’ for education, parents are the ultimate teachers and the community brings resources in a new formula. Show all stakeholders how children can succeed, and are succeeding, and they flip from skeptics to committed, dedicated believers.

### **Moving towards a movement: Replicating the Bringing School Home model**

This initiative will prove that affordable housing policy can transform the effectiveness of education and open a vast new field of potential innovations between schools and educators on one side and affordable and public housing practitioners on the other.

During 2016-2017, with a combination of additional research sites and broader academic and practitioner outreach and analysis, we will:

1. Understand specifically what is working and why in Boulder and New York City.
2. Determine how to bring to each program to scale; and expand into three new cities.
3. Determine what are the most promising policy and practice innovations related to housing and education.

### **Research Methodology**

Bringing School Home will examine the potential for innovative housing policy to impact school outcomes. One of the many culprits in creating an achievement gap is a systemic disconnect between families and schools, schools and community, community and family. The brilliance of the IHDF model is that it brings all of the players together, through the commonality of home and neighborhood and it does so *without interruption* throughout the entire school career, *to and through* college. We will ask:

- What are the greatest points of leverage in housing policy to help schools produce world-ready employable adults?
- How does neighborhood and place contribute to school success?
- Can a program like I Have a Dream Foundation achieve its success without a housing component?
- What other systems need to conform and interact so that education becomes a true path out of poverty?
- What will it take to bring the existing two successful models to scale?

The evidentiary research program is straightforward. It will consist of:

- On-site analysis of the two IHDF models to understand program determinants for success
- Review of the housing-education research with a focus on these key triads:
  - Stability-mobility-school performance
  - Quality-harm reduction-school attendance
  - Affordability-investment-success
  - Trust-confidence-parent engagement and buy-in
  - Place-connections-aspirational social networks
  - Commitment-dreams-achievement

In addition to the evidentiary research, we will increase BSH's test sites by scaling up Boulder and New York City to move from 50 children annually to 250 children in each program, and adding three new locales. The new locales will be selected to maximize diversity relative to the Boulder/ NYC established sites, such as community size, pre-BSH activity consistent with the BSH theory of impact, housing authority size, donor appetite, and ESL need/ cultural heritage. Each new locale will follow the BSH model: a three-way partnership among local school system, public housing authority, and community non-profits and donors in a seamless and comprehensive program that spans at least ten years of a child's education.

### **What we need; where you can come in**

Bringing School Home is open-source and open-mind. We're on to something, and we think it's much bigger than we know. We also know there's a lot more than we could know: we're convinced hundreds of others like us in mission-oriented affordable and public housing around the country are on to the same thing, and that we are all catching fleeting glimpses of the same major truth that offers the same transformative potential.

- We currently have thirty housing authorities and housing organizations interested in the program.
- When we reach critical funding, we'll begin the work of narrowing from 30 to three.
- The Urban Institute is our research partner and we're currently working with them to raise funds for the evidentiary research phase of the program. Their research will give rise to the data-informed policy recommendations and toolkit.

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