

**Newburgh Armory
Unity Center
Literacy Education
Advocacy Partnership:**

Efficacy of an Innovative
Community-Based
Collaborative Program



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 2010, the City of Newburgh acquired the Newburgh Armory from the State of New York with the leadership of New York State Senator William J. Larkin, Jr., for just one dollar. Since that time, philanthropist William Kaplan has led the creation of the Newburgh Armory Unity Center (NAUC) within it. NAUC is a non-profit community organization with a two-pronged mission that is both direct and ambitious: to broker collaborative relationships among not-for-profit organizations that increase the capacity for programming aimed at inner city children, youth, and families; and to serve as an incubator of innovation, enabling participating organizations—singly or together—to employ their expertise to fashion programs of value to community stakeholders. Instructional spaces, basketball and soccer facilities, and meeting rooms are state-of-the-art. In just four years, NAUC has come to offer educational, health, and sports programming in these spaces to hundreds of Newburgh youth. Additionally, many of Newburgh's adults are provided programs in English as a Second Language, classes in computer usage, GED, and preparation for citizenship.

In the area of education, literacy is a major focal point for NAUC; there are programs serving families of toddlers to bridge the word gap as well as direct instruction to improve the literacy skills of elementary school students. A particularly innovative NAUC initiative is the organization of unique multi-party collaborations among the region's colleges, the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, and community groups to expand educational opportunities for both children and adult learners. One such effort is the particular focus of this essay: the Center's program, called the Newburgh Armory Unity Center,



Literacy Education Advocacy Partnership (NAUC LEAP), to provide literacy instruction for elementary school aged children to supplement school offerings.

There is a critical need for such support. The Newburgh Enlarged City School District (NECSD) enrolls a diverse population of approximately 11,000 students; 48 percent of NECSD students are Hispanic, 27 percent are black, and 22 percent are white. Seventy-five percent of students are classified as economically disadvantaged. In 2014–15, 19 percent of NECSD students in grades 3–8 were found proficient in English Language Arts, as measured by New York State tests. This is far below the New York State average of 31 percent (New York State report cards, 2014–15).

Mount Saint Mary College (MSMC), an anchor institution in Newburgh, has provided literacy support for children in Newburgh schools as part of its teacher preparation curriculum; in spring 2013, MSMC began providing these services at NAUC. In 2014, the State University of New York at New Paltz joined this partnership. This collaboration, which included NAUC, MSMC, SUNY New Paltz, and NECSD, became known as NAUC LEAP.

Researchers from The Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at SUNY New Paltz, in collaboration with faculty from the Schools of Education at Mount Saint Mary College and the School of Education at SUNY New Paltz documented the work and progress of NAUC LEAP during the 2014–15 school year. This monograph reflects those efforts, describes some the elements of the NAUC LEAP program, and presents outcome data related to targets of the multi-faceted intervention. Specifically, data are presented on (a) the academic achievement of

students who participated in NAUC LEAP compared to matched controls; (b) the effects on graduate candidates; and (c) parents' perceptions of the program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Four goals and corresponding activities are at the core of the NAUC LEAP initiative:

- Improve the literacy performance of elementary students in the school district by providing personalized, direct, one-on-one **literacy instruction** to identified students;
- Enrich **pre-service teacher preparation** by offering practice-based, clinically-rich training in a high-needs setting;
- Enhance **in-service teacher development** through by fostering collaboration with literacy center instructors to support the needs of specific students; and
- Integrate **family and community involvement** through required, defined tasks and responsibilities connected to specified goals for each child.

To implement NAUC LEAP, graduate candidates from The Collaborative for Equity in Literacy Learning at Mount Saint Mary College and the Literacy Program of the School of Education at SUNY New Paltz provided direct literacy support to Newburgh students who were reading below grade level. Instruction was delivered through one-on-one tutoring in summer and after-school programs. Upon entering the program, students were assessed on a range of skills and measures. With support from faculty, graduate candidates analyzed the assessment data and then used the results to tailor appropriate evidence-based instructional approaches to specific student need. All NAUC LEAP instructional strategies were evidence-based (e.g., Wanzek et al., 2010; Wanzek et al., 2013) and centered on four functional literacy domains: word recognition and fluency; vocabulary development; text comprehension; and writing.

When providing instruction, graduate candidates were supported by faculty from their respective colleges, with

both on-site supervision and guidance during academic class-time. This approach provided synergistic benefits from the NAUC LEAP tutoring program: Newburgh students received literacy support while graduate candidates received practical, hands-on training in literacy instruction and also valuable experience working with students in a high-needs, urban setting. In general, graduate candidates from MSMC worked with Newburgh students for a total of 30 hours each semester (fall 2014 and spring 2015); tutoring was provided for 10 weeks, 3 hours a week (1.5 hours on two separate days). Graduate candidates tutored 25 students in the fall 2014 and 29 in spring 2015. Graduate candidates from SUNY New Paltz worked with Newburgh students for a total of 26 hours each semester (fall 2014 and spring 2015); tutoring was provided for 13 weeks, 2 hours a week (one session a week). Graduate candidates tutored 14 students in the fall 2014 and 28 in spring 2015.

To augment the effects of the NAUC LEAP program, efforts were made to strengthen and enhance literacy instruction in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District through communication with and professional development opportunities for Newburgh teachers. Some classroom teachers received individualized "NAUC LEAP report cards" for each participating student which contained individual assessment results, a summary of the remedial practices employed with the student, and recommendations of specific instructional resources and strategies that might be used to support students' literacy development.

Finally, parent and family involvement, critical to students' sustaining literacy achievement (Walker et al., 2009) was addressed by: (a) creating "literacy kits" to be sent home with participating students to facilitate continued literacy engagement at home between sessions; (b) providing an adapted NAUC LEAP report card to parents; and (c) implementing "parent workshops" that provided resources and tips to parents about ways to support literacy learning at home.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To assess the efficacy of NAUC LEAP, three specific project outcomes were considered: (1) the academic achievement of students who participated in NAUC LEAP; (2) graduate candidates' perceptions of working in a high-needs, urban environment; and 3) parents' perceptions of the NAUC LEAP program. The sample, data, and methods used to analyze each of these aspects of the project are described briefly below and summarized in *Table 1*.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants included students whose parents consented to their participation in the research, graduate candidates, and parents.

Students. Included in this analysis were 25 NESCD students who participated in NAUC LEAP activities for either a full academic year or who began their engagement in January for a half of a year. Some students who participated in NAUC LEAP attended local private schools; these students are not included in this analysis. For the analysis of academic achievement, cases were further divided by those who completed one literacy semester and those who completed two or more semesters. To assess program efficacy and assess growth beyond what would be typically expected progress, program students were matched 2:1 with control students; when matching control students, consideration was given to grade level, race/ethnicity, gender, and special education status.

Graduate candidates. All participants were graduate candidates completing the requirements for the Master of Science in Literacy Education. Participating graduate candidates were in varying stages of their graduate program; most had taken, or were taking concurrently, a series of core courses in literacy and pedagogy and various electives. Some graduate candidates were working toward dual certification in special education and literacy. Unlike MSMC students who typically completed field experiences in Newburgh, SUNY New Paltz graduate candidates completed their clinical work in New Paltz—a lower-needs, fairly homogenous community. However, the New Paltz program's engagement with NAUC LEAP

offered an opportunity to work with a high-needs, urban population and to explore graduate candidates' perceptions of working in an urban setting as well as the implications of these perceptions. There was a total of 15 graduate candidates from SUNY New Paltz who participated in this part of the research. All were Caucasian, the majority (14) were female, and their ages ranged from 22–35.

Parents. Four parents, all women, were included in the analysis; two were black, one was Hispanic, one was white. Parents were chosen based on availability and willingness to participate in the research.

DATA, MEASURES AND ANALYSES

Students' reading achievement. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) composite scores were used to compare reading gains among program students to their matched controls. The DIBELS are a series of standard measures commonly used to gauge early literacy skills for students in grades K–6. The measure used for analysis is a composite score of multiple elements as prescribed by the DIBELS assessment manual. The DIBELS assessment was administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year by NECSD. To prevent misclassification of baseline measures for students who began NAUC LEAP in January 2015, the decision was made to use mid-point DIBELS score (rather than beginning year DIBELS) as the baseline, since these program students were nonparticipants in the time period between the beginning of the school year and mid-point of the school year. For continuity, mid-point DIBELS were used as a measure of baseline for all program students. End-of-the-year DIBELS composite scores were used as the end-point.

Data were analyzed using a generalized linear model (GLM) with repeated measures to assess changes in DIBELS scores comparing program students and controls. Significance tests compared controls to program students and then separated program students into two groups; those who completed one session at NAUC LEAP and those who completed two or more sessions. Deltas were calculated for each youth (program and control) as the difference between baseline (mid-point DIBELS) and endpoint (end-of-the-year DIBELS) and assessed descriptively.

Graduate candidates' perceptions. Graduate candidates participated in focus groups at the end of each semester to assess the impact of their working in a high-needs environment. In addition, reflective writings were required for coursework and were submitted after each tutoring session; these were collected at the end of each semester and analyzed qualitatively.

Parent engagement and perceptions of program. Parent workshops, which were conducted throughout the program and parent nights held at the end of each semester provided opportunities to assess engagement and ascertain perceptions regarding the value of the NAUC LEAP program. These impressions were aggregated and analyzed qualitatively. In addition, four parents were interviewed.



TABLE 1: Participants, Dependent Measures, and Research Focus

SAMPLE	MEASURES	RESEARCH FOCUS
<p>25 program students (MSMC and NP, both semesters)</p> <p>50 NECS D control students, matched on grade, race, gender, and special education status.</p>	<p>Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS); mid-point (baseline), end-of-year (endpoint).</p>	<p>Student academic achievement</p>
<p>15 graduate candidates; participants were all white, age range 22–35, 14 female and 1 male.</p>	<p>Focus groups, reflective writing.</p>	<p>Graduate candidates' perceptions of working in a high-needs, urban environment</p>
<p>4 parents, all women (mothers); one black, one Hispanic, two white.</p>	<p>Observations of parent workshops, observations of parent night, interviews.</p>	<p>Parents' perceptions of the NAUC LEAP program</p>

RESULTS

We begin this section with a description of relevant student demographic data. We then present the results of each of the analyses.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Student data associated with those who participated in NAUC LEAP (only those for whom we had parental consent) and the total NECSD population are presented in *Figures 1–5*. In general, we noted the following:

- NAUC LEAP served more male students and more white students than the NECSD; 50 percent of NAUC LEAP students were white, while approximately 21 percent of the NECSD student body is white. Concomitantly, NAUC LEAP served a smaller proportion of black students (15% vs. 23%) and Hispanic students (31% vs. 50%) than did the NECSD. NAUC LEAP also served slightly fewer English Language Learners than the NECSD control students.
- NAUC LEAP served more students with special needs (38%) than NECSD (13%).
- The students who attended NAUC LEAP had lower test scores (174) than their NECSD peers (186), as measured by baseline achievement on the DIBELS.

FIGURE 1

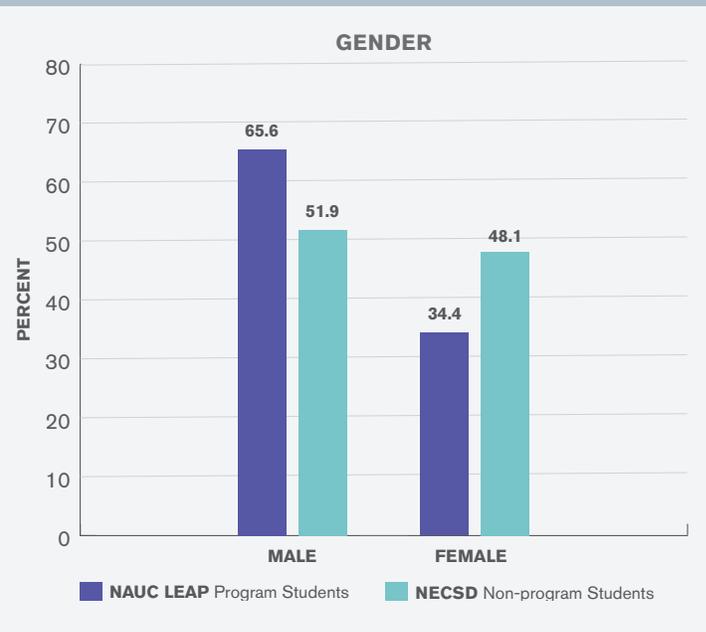


FIGURE 2

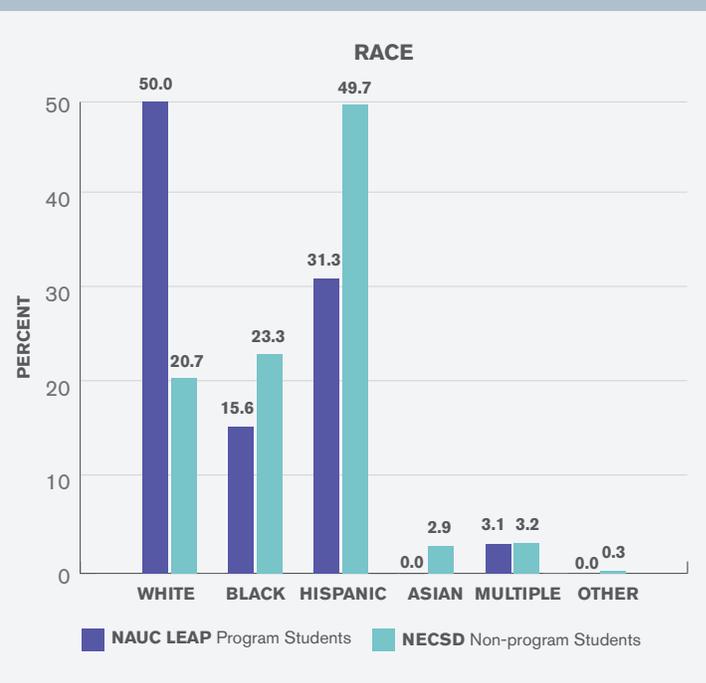




FIGURE 3

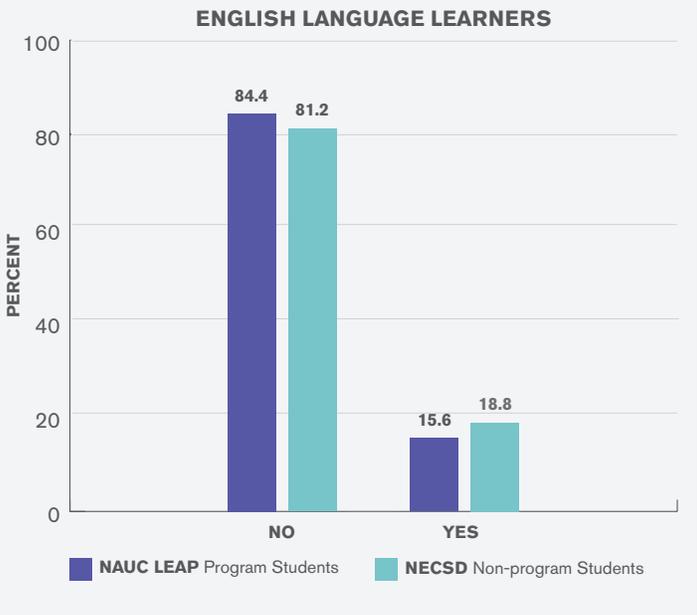


FIGURE 4

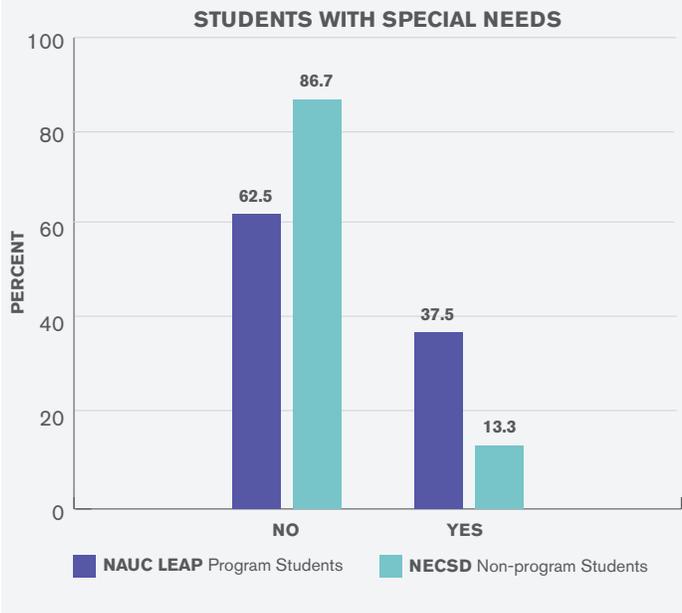
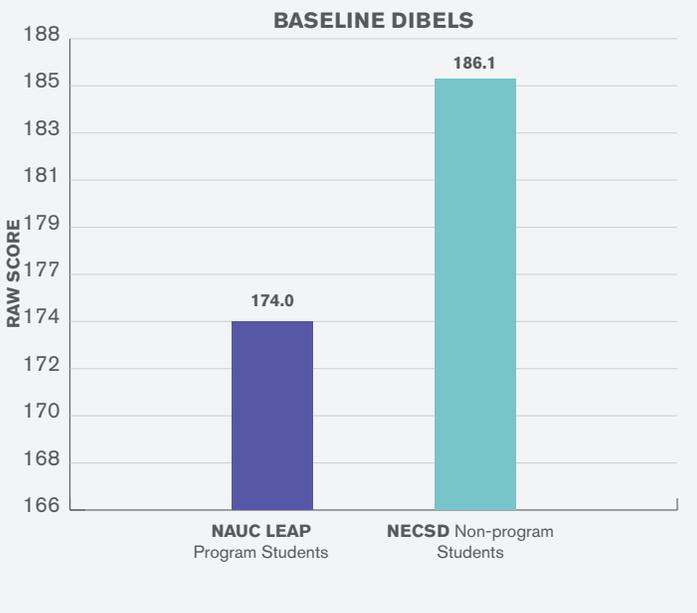


FIGURE 5



STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT: NAUC LEAP STUDENTS COMPARED WITH MATCH CONTROLS

NAUC LEAP participants scored lower than their matched control counterparts on the baseline DIBELS (174 vs 184.6). However, NAUC LEAP program students' endpoint scores were significantly higher than control students ($p=.04$; *Table 2, Figure 6*). Interestingly, student outcomes varied based on the number of semesters (one semester vs. two or more) in which they participated in

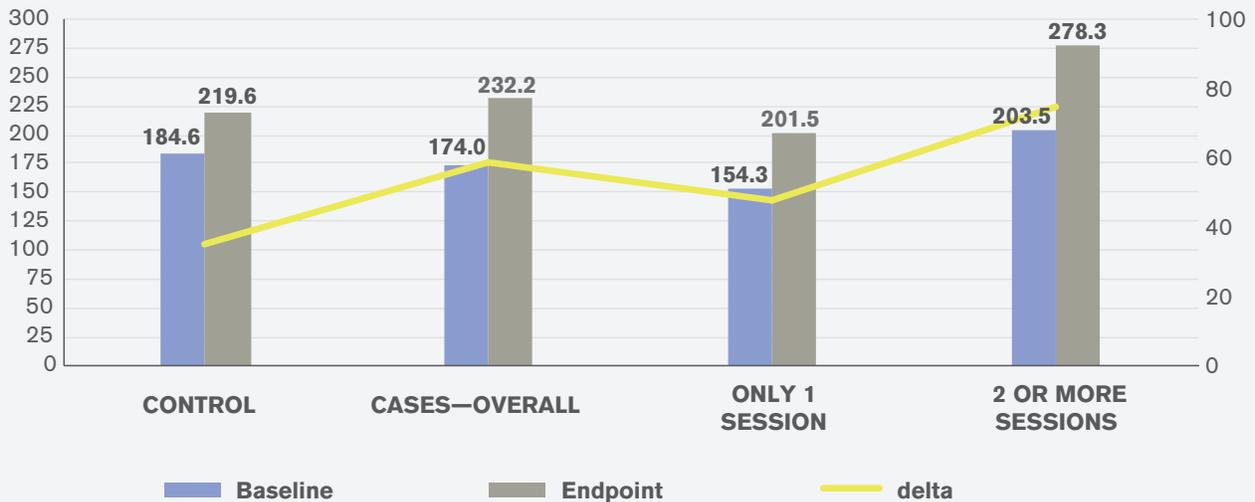
NAUC LEAP, indicating that there is a “dosage effect” associated with program participation. Specifically, although endpoint scores for program students who were engaged in NAUC LEAP for one semester were higher compared to the matched controls, these results were not significant ($p=.35$). However, program students who engaged in two (or three) semester-long sessions showed significantly greater improvement in endpoint DIBELS scores compared with the control group.

TABLE 2: Impact of NAUC LEAP on DIBELS scores

	BASELINE	ENDPOINT	P-VALUE*	DELTA	SD
CONTROL	184.6	219.6		34.9	45.7
PROGRAM STUDENTS (N=25)	174.0	232.2	0.04	58.3	46.2
only 1 session (N=15)	154.3	201.5	0.35	47.3	40.0
2 or more sessions (N=10)	203.5	278.3	0.02	74.8	52.1

* Comparison group: Matched control

FIGURE 6: Impact of NAUC LEAP on DIBELS scores



Results suggest participation in NAUC LEAP had a significant impact on student performance; program students outperformed the matched control group. Moreover, the impact of NAUC LEAP increased as the amount of participation increased. Program students who participated in NAUC LEAP for more than one semester showed significantly greater gains than their matched counterparts. This is an important finding: more time in structured literacy support has a significantly positive impact on student outcomes. This speaks to the importance of the sustained, consistent support over time, which NAUC LEAP can provide. Because program participation was voluntary, we must be careful about generalizing these results (e.g. to students who did not volunteer to participate). Nevertheless, the significance of the results demonstrates a potentially meaningful effect for program participants.

GRADUATE CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS

While most students in Newburgh are black or Hispanic, most of the graduate candidates who participated in NAUC LEAP were white. This pattern is not unusual for New York; just 45 percent of the state's public school student population is white¹, while 76 percent of the teaching force is white². This disproportion will likely persist, as New York grows more diverse and schools of education continue to draw teachers from white rural and suburban areas. Thus, it is now important, and will become even more important, for teachers to know how to work—and be comfortable working—with diverse populations of students and their families. It was in this context that investigation proceeded on the effects of tutoring on graduate candidates with little or no experience in a racially diverse, high-needs, urban area. Three themes emerged from consideration of impacts of this program on graduate candidates:

- Distinctions between preconceived notions and the reality of the tutoring environment.
- Changed attitudes about students' literacy skills and behavior.
- Developing a real rather than a preconceived view of parent engagement in high need areas.

Tutoring environment. Concerns about safety and resources were paramount for graduate candidates; their initial assumptions about what it would be like to work in Newburgh were fraught with anxiety and apprehension. Before beginning their work at NAUC, graduate candidates candidly shared that their concerns stemmed from fear:



"I was intimidated..." because the "area is impoverished."

"I was not sure what the setting was going to be like, but I was a bit nervous about being in that part of Newburgh at night."

"I didn't feel safe going there."

"I was nervous about being in the city; where to park, walking in Newburgh."

"The first night, my dad dropped me off [at NAUC] due to the thought of the center being in a bad area."



Candidates also assumed that NAUC would be lacking in resources.



"I was expecting that we would be tutoring on the floor of a gym."

"I was worried we'd have very little in terms of resources and materials."

"I thought we would be 'on our own' and I was afraid that I was going to feel lost."



¹ Eighteen percent of the NYS public school population is black, 25% are Hispanic or Latino, 12% are American Indian, Asian, or multiracial. New York State School Report Card, 2014–15. <http://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2015&state=yes>

² Schools and Staffing survey, NCES, Total number of public school teachers and percentage distribution of school teachers, by race/ethnicity and state: 2011–12. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013314_t1s_001.asp

After spending some time at NAUC, candidates reported that their initial expectations were unfounded;

“

“I appreciated the security there and I never felt unsafe walking to my car.”

“I didn’t expect NAUC to be this great or grand.”

“I was pleasantly surprised by how nice the Armory was.”

“The armory environment was nice because we could spread out to meet different student needs and also collaborate easily.”

“I was pleasantly surprised by...how many resources we did have.”

”

Candidates were happy to discover that their expectations about insufficient resources were also unsubstantiated. Books, iPads, wireless internet—even access to a copy machine—were all available at NAUC. Concerns about (lack of) safety and (lack of) resources shaped graduate candidates’ expectations of working in a high-needs, urban environment. Had these fears been realized, they likely would have dominated the candidates’ experiences and influenced their approach to their work and their engagement with students at NAUC. Fortunately, these fears were assuaged as soon as candidates visited NAUC and saw that concerns about security and resources were addressed. With these alleviated, candidates were able to attend to the needs of their students and to engage with their students’ parents. The safety of the space, and its quality, allowed them to devote their full attention to their students—and parents—and not to concerns about security and resources.

Students’ literacy skills and behavior. Graduate candidates also had assumptions about the children with whom they would be working. In the area of literacy skills, candidates reported that they:

“

“imagined that the kids would have lots of needs, that they would be a lower level of learners than at [the New Paltz tutoring site],”

“believed that the students would have many needs that weren’t being met in school.”

”

Several candidates expressed concern about their ability to work with diverse students;

“

“It frightened me to work with children of such a diverse background.”

“I did not know if I would be able to meet all of their potential needs because of my lack of experience working with an individual student in this type of setting.”

One candidate explained that she originally opted not to work at NAUC because she was afraid that she would not be able to “reach” the students.

”

Candidates’ perceptions about students’ needs were, generally, confirmed.

“

“I was right about my assumptions about student needs. My student required a great deal of support.”

“It amazed me to see how poor his comprehension was, even when a story was read to him. It almost didn’t make sense to me that he could hear a story that many times and not be able to explain what happened.”

“I was very surprised when I found out my student was a very fluent reader with amazing decoding skills, yet struggled a lot with comprehending texts.”

”

This is not surprising, given that the goal of NAUC LEAP is to serve struggling students. Nonetheless, graduate candidates were, generally, struck by the depth of the literacy deficiencies they saw in their students and the amount of support their students needed.

In a few instances, graduate candidates worked with students who were not struggling. As one graduate candidate commented,

“I was expecting very low-level readers. But that hasn’t panned out,” and
“I was surprised by how talented my student is.”

Graduate candidates also had preconceived notions about the affect and behavior of Newburgh students. Candidates expected that the students would be:

“defiant and a complete nightmare,”
“resistant to work and learn,” and
“uninterested in working with me and my peers.”

Participating in NAUC LEAP challenged these assumptions. Graduate candidates were pleasantly surprised by students’ behaviors and their apparent motivation to learn.



“My student is here every week, on time, prepared for the lesson. I didn’t expect that coming into an urban place with kids with lots of needs.”
“I was surprised by how motivated the kids are. My student is an eager learner. She enjoys coming to the center.”
“I was surprised by how eager my student is to learn.”

Graduate candidates’ perceptions of the students they would encounter—prior to encountering them—reveal deep-seated assumptions that children living in high-poverty, urban areas lack motivation and do not care about school and learning. Such assumptions can affect initial interactions, which, in turn, set the stage for teacher/student relationships. One teacher stated that she anticipated having to be strict and stern with her student, and that she would not be able to rely on the student being responsible for work between sessions. Upon meeting, and working with, her student, she realized that her assumptions were not accurate; she relaxed her style and assigned work, usually just some reading between sessions, which was almost always completed.

Parent engagement. Graduate candidates’ expectations about parents mirrored their assumptions about students. They assumed:

“Parents would not want to be involved in helping.”
“Parents would not invest time or energy in their child’s learning.”

At the end of the semester, graduate candidates reported that parents were very engaged and supportive.

“

“Parents were great and very involved with their kids. This surprised me.”

“Parents are so appreciative [of the work we are doing with their children].”

“We tend to associate learning problems [in children] with absent parents. This was not the case here.”

”

Graduate candidates conceded that they had adopted prevailing assumptions about people in poverty (e.g., lack of motivation, disengagement) and projected them onto the parents of their students. Their experience at NAUC LEAP helped dispel these assumptions.

The qualitative data indicate that the experience at NAUC LEAP changed graduate candidates’ understanding and appreciation of families from culturally diverse backgrounds. In addition, graduate candidates’ contact with parents altered—for the better—initial misconceptions regarding parent support of children and the value they place on education. Even in the instances where there were complications—a student was absent multiple times or arrived late or did not complete homework at home—candidates could rely on their broader experiences with NAUC LEAP. They realized that a high-poverty, urban area could be a place of genuine learning and caring about education.

As such, candidates’ experiences at NAUC LEAP were greater than just instruction in how to teach; it was transformative for many of the candidates who had never worked in a high-poverty, urban area, and who were initially fearful. It is through their experience at NAUC LEAP that candidates developed confidence in their ability to work with diverse, inner-city youth and began to envision it as a possible career track for themselves. As noted by one candidate,

“

“This is the population I want to work with now and this [experience] has prepared me well.”

”

PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND PERCEPTIONS

Engaging parents in their children’s literacy progress was a critical aspect of both the Mount Saint Mary College and the SUNY New Paltz program. Each program approached parental involvement in a different fashion. MSMC graduate candidates met with their students’ parents at the beginning of each semester and then maintained contact throughout the tutoring session. In addition, MSMC developed a template, called a Tutoring Report, for sharing information with parents; this report also formed the basis for meetings at the beginning and end of the semester. Parents were given a copy of the report to keep and to share, if they desired, with their child’s classroom teacher. Literacy Kits, which helped families provide further support at home, were given to each family. MSMC found this process—the multiple meetings, the Tutoring Report, and the Literacy Kits—useful for many reasons. First, graduate candidates gained experience working with parents and, importantly, established the expectation that they will work with parents when they become teachers. Moreover, graduate candidates learned, with support from faculty and other graduate candidates, how to deal with complicating situations, e.g., parents who do not show up for scheduled meetings, or parents who do not speak English.

SUNY New Paltz graduate candidates called parents prior to the first tutoring session. They introduced themselves, answered parents’ questions, and asked about their child’s interests and specific concerns about progress in school. They also provided contact information, so that the parent could reach out to them during the semester, and asked for contact information for their students’ teacher. This initial exchange guided the first few lessons while also establishing a rapport with the parents. Throughout the semester, graduate candidates shared their students’ progress with parents, through telephone contact and informal conversations at pick-up and/or drop-off.

Graduate candidates from SUNY New Paltz created and implemented workshops to provide parents with strategies and materials for providing literacy support to their children at home. These workshops were conducted after tutoring sessions. (On these days, tutoring ended 15 minutes early.) Small groups of graduate candidates

focused on specific strategies to teach skills at home such as sight words, word work, building comprehension, vocabulary, and writing support. Parents were given lists of websites, reading games, and bookmarks with prompts for building their children's skills in different areas.

Both Mount Saint Mary College and SUNY New Paltz showcased students' work at an end-of-the-session celebration to which parents and families were invited. At this event, students either read from a select book or presented their work, if they had created a project. In all instances, this celebration of students' work was joyful and triumphant; each time, the room was filled to capacity and, despite the number of people in attendance, the audience was respectfully quiet to allow young readers to be heard. Students were excited to present their work and to demonstrate all that they had learned. These end-of-term sessions served to validate, and celebrate, important accomplishments of students over the course of the tutoring sessions. Students were very proud of what they achieved and happy to be able to share it.

As part of the research initiative, researchers sought parents' perspectives about the tutoring center and on the help and support that their children were receiving. Responses were overwhelmingly positive; parents were grateful to have this opportunity for their children and saw clear and enduring value in it. Many parents stated that they noted growth in their child's literacy skills and also in confidence and independence. Parents often cited the individual attention as the primary contributor to this growth. Because of the small sample size, results are indicative and not necessarily generalizable. Nevertheless, each parent that we spoke with had many good things to say about the experience of NAUC LEAP:



“

“Our experience in the program has been excellent.”

“This program is worth its weight in gold. I have seen a lot of growth in her confidence.”

“They love it here. My kids have flourished.”

“[The tutoring] helped with his comprehension. He has become more fluent in his reading. They (the teachers) have time to help him here. The one-on-one is important. They can understand his strengths and weaknesses here and then address them.”

“Another good thing about this program is the focus on cultural diversity.”

”

If anything, parents wanted to see an expansion of the program, both in the number of students who could be tutored and in the ages of eligibility:

“

“I think they could have more kids in the program.”

“It would be good to continue through the older grades, when it gets harder to get support.”

”

Parents were appreciative of the support their children were receiving through the tutoring at NAUC and were very happy with the children's progress. In essence, they thought highly of the program and recognized it as a valuable support for their child.

DISCUSSION

The Newburgh Armory Unity Center is a community-based organization that offers educational, health, and sports programming to Newburgh youth and adults in state-of-the-art instructional and athletic spaces and meeting rooms. It is a dynamic and energizing center with an elaborate schedule that includes tutoring for youth; a variety of sports; exercise classes; academic enrichment classes; a lending library; English-language, GED, and computer classes for adults; and health and immigration resources – all of which are available to the people of Newburgh seven days a week all year long. In addition, NAUC aims to facilitate collaboration among regional entities for the purpose of expanding educational, health, and wellness opportunities for the children and adults of Newburgh. NAUC LEAP grew out of this expressed goal to foster collaboration and partnership among regional organizations; in this instance, universities joined with NAUC and the Newburgh Enlarged City School District to offer educational programming at NAUC that would help develop, and enhance, the literacy skills for the children of Newburgh; community groups and organizations are invited to use NAUC space and resources to develop and deliver their programming.

These types of partnerships can play an important role in promoting educational goals because they marshal the energy and commitment of multiple community entities in the support of children and families (Valli et al., 2014). When plans for partnerships are linked to school goals for student success, such community involvement can measurably affect students' learning and development (Weiss & Siddall, 2012; Sheldon, 2003; Epstein, 2001). These partnerships unite the “three major contexts in which students learn and grow, the family, the school, and the community,” in a common undertaking (Epstein, 2010, p. 82). The joint effort among these “overlapping spheres of influence” (Epstein, 2001) is the keystone; when schools, families, and community organizations align priorities to support children, “connections are made, information is exchanged, respect is built, and ties develop between and among teachers, parents, students, and others in the community” (Epstein & Sanders, 2002, pg. 412). The reinforcing effect of positive, productive support from multiple sources in a child's life is the important potential

**These partnerships unite the
“three major contexts in which
students learn and grow, the family,
the school, and the community,”
in a common undertaking**

—(Epstein, 2010, p. 82).

of community-school-family partnerships. NAUC has actualized this potential through its diverse programming, its accessibility, and the linkages that it promotes among community organizations.

Moreover, this reinforcing effect of support from multiple sources can be seen in the outcomes of NAUC LEAP. The school-community-university partnership of NAUC LEAP yielded tangible results; participating students had higher scores, and exhibited greater growth, on a standardized measure than comparable peers. The growth was even greater for those students who participated in NAUC LEAP for more than one semester. This demonstrates that consistent, sustained support through a community-based entity can impact school-based outcomes. In addition to impacting student academic growth, NAUC LEAP also influenced the growth and development of graduate candidates. Data show that the experience at NAUC changed graduate candidates' understanding and appreciation of students and families from culturally diverse settings. As such, candidates' experience at NAUC was more than instruction in how to teach; NAUC offered a safe, productive space that allowed teachers to learn how to teach in, and feel comfortable with, diversity and in a high-needs area. These data highlight the value of training teachers in such high-needs settings.

NAUC LEAP is a model of a community-based collaborative program that has had substantive impact on multiple outcomes, including student learning. By linking school, community, and family, NAUC LEAP unites critical community partners in the support of children and families—in a way that yields important outcomes for students and also future teachers. This work validates the benefits of linking schools, communities, and families that has been identified by research (Sanders, 2006; Bryan, 2005; Ferguson, 2005). As such, NAUC LEAP can serve as a model for the way that such partnerships can enhance children's academic growth.

RESOURCES

Bryan, J. (2005). *Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools through school-family community partnerships*. Partnerships/Community, University of Nebraska, Omaha, paper 22. <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcepartnerships/22>

Epstein, J., L. (2010). School/Family/Community/Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(3), pp. 81-96.

Epstein, J., L. (2001). School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Epstein, J., L., Sanders, M., G. (2002). *Family, School, and Community Partnerships*. In Handbook of Parenting. Second edition, Volume 5. Practical Issues in Parenting. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers: New Jersey.

Ferguson, C., Jordan, C., Wood, L., Rodríguez, V., Buttram, J. (2005). *Beyond the Building: A Facilitation Guide for School, Family, and Community Connections*. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: Austin, TX.

New York State Department of Education, School Report Cards, 2014–15. <http://data.nysed.gov/>

Sanders, M. G. (2006). Building school-community partnerships. Collaboration for Student Success. The Johns Hopkins University.

Schools and Staffing survey, National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013314_t1s_001.asp

Sheldon, S. B. (2003). Linking school-family-community partnerships in urban elementary schools to student achievement on state tests. *The Urban Review*, 35(2), 149-165.

Valli, L., Stefanski, A., Jacobson, R. (2014). Typologizing School–Community Partnerships: A Framework for Analysis and Action. *Urban Education*, p. 1-29. <http://ue.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/09/06/0042085914549366.full.pdf+html>

Walker, J. M. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Ice, C. L., & Whitaker, M.C. (2009). Parental involvement supports better student learning. In R. Deslandes (Ed.), *International Perspectives on Student Outcomes and Homework: Family-School-Community Partnerships* (pp. 25-38). NY: Routledge.

Wanzek, J. Wexler, J., Vaughn, S., Ciullo, S. (2010). Reading interventions for struggling readers in the upper elementary grades: a synthesis of 20 years of research. *Reading and Writing*, 23(8), 889-912.

Wanzek, J., Vaughn, S., Scammacca, N.K., Metz, K., Murray, C.S., Roberts, G., Danielson, L. (2013). Extensive reading interventions for students with reading difficulties after grade 3. *Review of Educational Research*, 8(2), 163-195.

Weiss, A. R., & Siddall, A. J. (2012). Schools at the hub: Community partnerships in the Boston Public Schools. http://www.fssroundtable.org/pdfs/Roundtable_Report_FINAL_2_1_12.pdf

CITATION

Jacobowitz, Robin, Lord, Kathleen. (2016). *Newburgh Armory Unity Center Literacy Education Advocacy Partnership: Efficacy of an Innovative Community-Based Collaborative Program*. New Paltz, NY: State University of New York at New Paltz, Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives.

RESEARCHER BIOS

Robin Jacobowitz, Ph.D., is the director of education projects at the Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at SUNY New Paltz. Previously, Robin worked with Janice Hirota and Associates on an evaluation of school reform initiatives in New Orleans, Washington DC, New York City, and Dallas. She also worked at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, where her research centered on the growth and development of charter schools in New York State, New York City small high schools, and leadership transitions in new schools in New York City. She worked with the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children, where her research focused on the relationship between constituency building and policy work in effecting systemic school reform in New York State. Prior to beginning her career in research, Robin worked with the Public Education Network in Washington DC. Robin holds a MEd in education policy from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and a Ph.D. from the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. She is currently a trustee on the Kingston City School District Board of Education and serves on the executive committee of the Ulster County School Boards Association.

Kathleen Lord, Ph.D., is an associate professor of literacy at the State University of New York at New Paltz. She holds a Ph.D. in cognitive studies in education and an MA in educational psychology from Columbia University. Before joining the SUNY faculty, Kathleen worked as a regional manager for the literacy office at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education where she provided professional development and direct literacy support for teachers and administrators from urban schools and districts. Her primary research interest is comprehension; specifically, she investigates how learning is supported by conceptual knowledge, particularly in the area of social studies instruction. Kathleen is also interested in preparing literacy specialists to teach and provide leadership in high-needs schools and districts.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Michael Rosenberg, Gerald Benjamin, Janis Benincasa

NEWBURGH ARMORY UNITY CENTER

The Newburgh Armory Unity Center (NAUC) is a non-profit community organization located in the heart of Newburgh. Its mission is two-fold: to broker collaborative relationships among not-for-profit organizations that increase the capacity for programming aimed at inner city children, youth, and families; and to enable other community organizations to develop, and then implement, new and innovative programming that addresses the needs of the Newburgh community. In actualizing this mission, NAUC offers educational, health, and sports programming to the youth, adults, and families of Newburgh. Specific programming includes tutoring for youth; soccer and basketball; gardening; exercise classes; academic enrichment classes; a lending library; English-language, GED, and computer classes for adults; and health and immigration resources. Instructional spaces, basketball and soccer facilities, a lending library, and meeting rooms are cutting-edge. NAUC serves the community seven days a week, all year long.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to this research and the development of this report. Graduate candidates, students, and parents gave generously of their time and allowed us to observe teaching and learning. Faculty at Mount Saint Mary College, most notably Dr. Janine Bixler, Professor of Education, and Dr. Rebecca Norman, Assistant Professor of Education, provided critical guidance and support in the development and implementation of the research. Dr. Eve Waltermaurer conducted the statistical analysis. Mr. David Brown and Ms. Karen Pellino, administrators with the Newburgh Enlarged City School District were supportive of, and provided great assistance with, our efforts to collect data. Dr. Michael Rosenberg, Dean of the School of Education at SUNY New Paltz and Dr. Gerald Benjamin, Director of the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz assisted with the writing and editing of this work. A very special thank you to the staff at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center, particularly Dr. James DeViscio, Ms. Jennifer Trelles, Ms. Kara Smith, Ms. Lissette Martinez, and Mr. Cesar Roman, who were always so gracious and accommodating. Finally, this work would not have been possible without the generous support of Elaine and William Kaplan Family Foundation and the enthusiasm and foresight of Mr. William Kaplan, founder of the Newburgh Armory Unity Center and chair of its Board of Directors.

THE BENJAMIN CENTER for Public Policy Initiatives

Independently and in collaboration with local governments, businesses, and not-for-profits in the Hudson Valley, The Benjamin Center (formerly CRREO):

- **conducts studies on topics of regional and statewide importance;**
- **brings visibility and focus to these matters;**
- **fosters communities working together to better serve our citizenry;**
- **and advances the public interest in our region.**

The Benjamin Center connects our region with the expertise of SUNY New Paltz faculty. We assist in all aspects of applied research, evaluation, and policy analysis. We provide agencies and businesses with the opportunity to obtain competitive grants, achieve efficiencies, and identify implementable areas for success.

www.newpaltz.edu/benjamincenter



The Benjamin Center
SUNY New Paltz
1 Hawk Drive
New Paltz NY 12561
(845) 257-2901