

The **Research Alliance** for
New York City Schools

Preparing Black and Latino Young Men for College and Careers:

A Description of the Schools and Strategies in
NYC's Expanded Success Initiative



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November 2013



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Micha D. Segeritz and Dyuti Bhattacharya for their technical assistance and support on the analytic work involved in this report. In addition, we would like to thank E. Christine Baker-Smith, Brandon Guidry, and Lori Nathanson, who participated in reviews of this work. Our colleagues contributed insights that led to substantial improvements at different stages in the development of this report. Our Executive Director, James Kemple, provided critical guiding questions, advice, and commentary throughout the development and production of the report. We would also like to thank Paul Forbes, Hector Calderon, Jevon Willims, and Lillian Dunn at the NYC DOE for promptly providing all of the materials needed to produce this report and for their helpful feedback.

We would like to acknowledge our communications team, Chelsea Farley and Shifra Goldenberg. Their editing and formatting contributions have made the report more coherent and accessible. We thank them for patiently reviewing many iterations, with a keen attention to detail.

Finally, we would like to thank The Fund for Public Schools for generously supporting the Research Alliance evaluation of the Expanded Success Initiative.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2011, New York City launched the Young Men’s Initiative (YMI)—a three-year, \$127 million effort to improve outcomes for Black and Latino males. Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Open Society Foundations, and a number of city agencies, YMI is the largest effort of its kind in the country. It supports programming in four areas—health, employment, the justice system, and education—with the overarching goal of helping Black and Latino young men “build stronger futures for themselves and their families.”

The bulk of YMI’s education effort is the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), which provides funding and technical support to 40 high schools to help them improve college and career readiness among their Black and Latino male students. In NYC, while graduation rates have steadily increased across all racial and ethnic groups, gaps remain between the graduation rates of Black and Latino males and their White and Asian counterparts. There are even larger gaps when it comes to college readiness. Among young men of color who entered as freshman in 2006, only about one in ten graduated ready for college-level work, based on the New York State Aspirational Performance Measure.^{ii, iii} The hope is that ESI will boost college and career readiness, as well as other outcomes, at the 40 participating schools—and that it will point to successful approaches that could be expanded across the district.

The Research Alliance for New York City Schools, in collaboration with MDRC, is conducting a mixed-method, longitudinal evaluation of ESI’s implementation as well as its impact on a range of academic and non-academic outcomes. The evaluation extends to December of 2016, allowing us to observe the development and refinement of ESI over four school years and to follow and assess its impacts for at least one cohort of 9th-grade students through their scheduled high school graduation (we will follow three additional cohorts of 9th graders through the 2015-2016 school year).

This executive summary presents highlights from our first report on the ESI evaluation, *Preparing Black and Latino Young Men for College and Careers: A Description of the Schools and Strategies in NYC’s Expanded Success Initiative* (see textbox on the next page for other publications in the series). The report describes the key components of ESI, the 40 schools that were selected to receive funding, the supports that were already available in these schools, and the strategies that they planned to implement

in the initiative's first year. We hope this baseline analysis informs the NYC Department of Education (DOE) as it manages ESI in the 2013-2014 school year, and that it may serve as a guidepost for schools trying to improve or build upon ESI programming.

What Is ESI?

ESI is an investment in 40 high schools that have already demonstrated relative success in graduating Black and Latino young men, but have not achieved the same level of success with college readiness rates for the same population. Schools were selected through a competitive application process—the ESI Design Challenge. To be eligible to apply, schools had to meet three criteria: (1) student enrollment that includes at least 35 percent Black and Latino males, with at least 60 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch, (2) a four-year graduation rate above 65 percent, and (3) an “A” or “B” on the latest high school Progress Report.^{iv} A total of 81 schools in the district met these criteria and were invited to apply; 57 schools ultimately submitted applications; and 40 schools were selected to participate.

Other Reports Related to the Research Alliance Evaluation of the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI)

Moving the Needle: Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness Among Black and Latino Males in New York City (July 2013)

- While not part of the evaluation, this report was developed to inform the initiative by examining the trajectory of NYC's Black and Latino young men on their path to college, particularly the points along that path where schools might provide more effective support. It describes college-related outcomes and other indicators that help predict college readiness, as well as key contextual factors—or “opportunity gaps”—that influence the educational outcomes and experiences of young men of color.

Year 1 summary report on ESI implementation and impact (Winter 2013)

- Findings from ESI's first year, with a focus on initial challenges implementing intervention components across 40 sites. We will explore opportunities and challenges that schools faced during program rollout, as well as the initiative's cost in its first year.

Year 2 summary report (Winter 2014)

Year 3 summary report (Winter 2015)

Year 4 summary report (Winter 2016)

- These annual reports will track ESI's progress, focusing on the challenges of continued implementation, further cost analysis, results from student survey, and an analysis of ESI's ongoing impact on student outcomes.

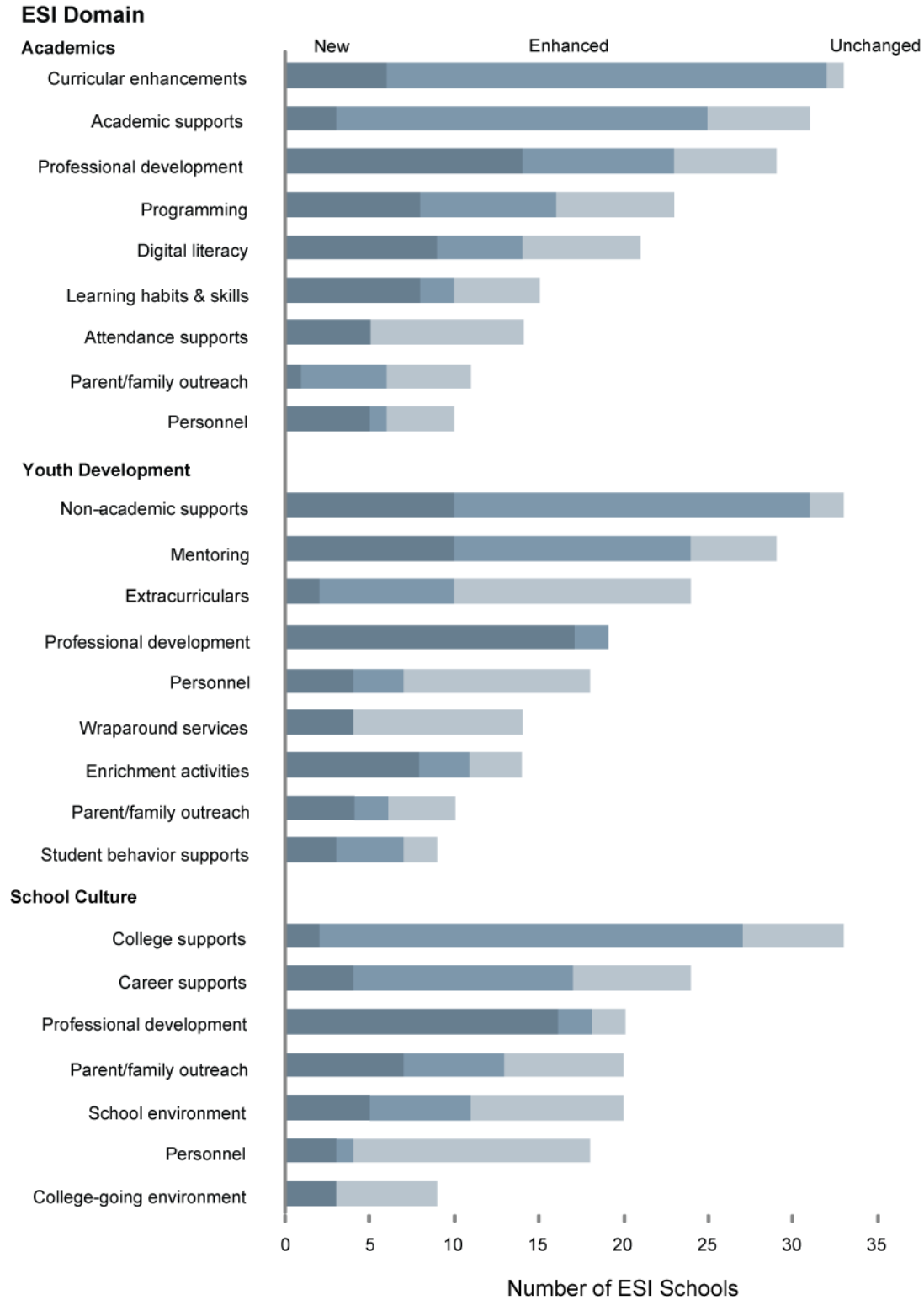
These schools can use initiative funding to enhance or expand existing efforts or to develop new strategies aimed at better engaging Black and Latino young men and preparing them for a successful transition to post-secondary education and work. ESI supports programming in three broad domains: academics, youth development, and school culture. By strengthening schools' practices in these three areas, ESI's designers hope to increase the number of Black and Latino young men who graduate at college- and career-ready levels, while identifying successful practices that can be adopted by other schools throughout the City.

Do ESI Schools' Plans Align With the Design and Goals of the Initiative?

The short answer is yes. Our analysis of ESI schools' applications and Year 1 work plans showed that, with a few important exceptions, schools' planned work matches up with the goals of the initiative:

- **School plans are well aligned with ESI's theory of action:** The theory of action driving ESI centers on integrating three different domains—academics, youth development, and school culture—to increase college readiness. In all but two schools, strategies from all three domains were well represented in the work plans. ESI's Design Challenge also encouraged schools to create a balance between expanding existing programs and creating new ones, which a majority of schools did. On average, ESI schools were slightly more apt to propose enhancing academic and school culture strategies (rather than launching new ones), whereas they were more likely to propose creating new programs in youth development. Some of the most common strategies (either enhanced or new) center on curriculum, professional development, mentoring, and college and career supports. (See Figure ES-1 on the next page.)
- **School plans are driven by individual school's needs and resources:** While the DOE provided schools with an overarching framework and suggested practices in each of the three domains, it refrained from being overly prescriptive, allowing schools to come up with their own plans to fit the needs of their particular school community. Consequently, we saw wide variability across the 40 schools in the specific strategies they plan to employ.

Figure ES-1: Strategies Planned in ESI Schools



Source: Research Alliance analyses of ESI work plans and applications.

Note: See textbox on page 17 and Appendix C for detailed explanations of how we defined and identified strategies, and a full list of ESI strategies.

- **Some key strategies were underrepresented:** Several strategies that were featured in the ESI Design Challenge—and highlighted as potentially important in our recent report, *Moving the Needle: Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness Among Black and Latino Males in New York City*—were *not* evident in most schools’ work plans. These included wraparound services, attendance, behavior supports, and family outreach. Providing ESI schools with more information, resources, or partnering organizations that specifically address these underrepresented strategies could boost the initiative’s odds of success.

Is There Potential to Apply ESI More Broadly?

By focusing ESI on relatively high-performing schools, the initiative’s designers hoped to “reach a new bar” in terms of postsecondary outcomes and leverage the capacities and best practices developed in relatively successful schools to effect change across the district. To understand the potential for scaling up strategies developed in ESI, it is important to know how ESI schools compare to other high schools in NYC. Thus, the report provides detailed comparisons of ESI schools and non-ESI schools. We looked at key student outcomes (e.g., graduation and college readiness rates) and student characteristics (e.g., English language learner and special education status, being overage for one’s grade, and eligibility for free or reduced price lunch) for both the full populations of schools and Black and Latino males, in particular. We also examined important school characteristics, such as size, configuration, and location. We found that:

- **ESI schools are generally comparable to other schools:** ESI and non-ESI schools differed in expected ways, given the criteria for participation in the initiative. ESI schools enrolled a higher proportion of Black and Latino male students, had a higher percentage of students who receive free or reduced price lunch, and slightly outperformed non-ESI schools in terms of graduation rates. But, overall, with a few exceptions, ESI schools looked very similar to non-ESI schools on school-level characteristics and student demographics. For instance, they enroll comparable numbers of special education students and students who are overage for their grade, and they are similar in size and configuration. This overall resemblance has positive implications for the potential to scale up successful programs and apply strategies developed in ESI to a larger body of schools.

Other aspects of ESI's design should also inform opportunities for broader application:

- **The initiative has been characterized by strong support and infrastructure:** ESI is not solely a funding source enabling schools to add programs; rather, it is a mechanism by which schools can critically assess the needs of their Black and Latino male students, implement strategies that are well integrated into their existing programs, and reevaluate new strategies and programs from year to year. In the start-up of ESI, the DOE provided every school with support in the development and multiple revisions of their plans for using ESI funding. They also provided an online platform and regular email communication with information about deadlines, trainings and workshops, and vendors. In addition, members of the ESI team visited schools and offered targeted professional development, in areas like culturally relevant pedagogy, throughout Year 1 (which we will describe in our next report). Successfully launching a program like ESI requires more than funding. A strong infrastructure of personnel and support are critical to ensure that school staff have the resources they need to expand existing strategies and get promising new ones off the ground.
- **It may take time to see results:** Ultimately, the question of whether it is advisable to scale up ESI's approach will depend on its ability to produce positive impacts for students. A strong part of ESI's design is that it extends through the scheduled graduation year of the first set of 9th grade students receiving ESI-funded supports and services. Examining students' experiences and outcomes over four years and providing feedback to schools along the way will create opportunities to refine programming and should increase the likelihood that ESI achieves its goals. While test scores and four-year graduation rates will be important measures of success, other outcomes matter as well. To that end, our evaluation is also investigating ESI's effects on students' belief in their ability to succeed and aspirations for the future. By examining a wide set of outcomes and carefully assessing how services and supports are implemented, we will be able to say which aspects of ESI should be replicated, for whom, and under what conditions.

ESI's aims are highly relevant in the context of an increasing national focus on supporting Black and Latino students more effectively. At this point in our

evaluation, many more questions are raised than answered. For example, how do schools' work plans differ from their actual implementation? What obstacles will schools face as they attempt to implement these strategies? Will schools with more emphasis on any one of the domains have more effective implementation—or better results? Future reports will explore these and other important questions.

Executive Summary Notes

ⁱ “New York City Young Men’s Initiative” (2013). Retrieved 10/7/13 from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/yml/html/home/home.shtml>

ⁱⁱ Villavicencio, et al. (2013). *Moving the Needle: Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness Among Black and Latino Males in New York City*. New York, NY: The Research Alliance for New York City Schools. <http://media.ranycs.org/2013/0>
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ⁱⁱⁱ According to New York State’s Aspirational Performance Measure, students are deemed college ready if they earn a Regents or Advanced Regents diploma within five years of starting high school and score a 75 on the English Regents exam and an 80 on a math Regents. The Research Alliance is currently engaged in work to help create better measures of college readiness.

^{iv} Schools applied in Spring 2012; eligibility criteria applied to the 2010-2011 school year.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In August 2011, New York City launched the Young Men’s Initiative (YMI)—a three-year, \$127 million effort to improve outcomes for Black and Latino males. Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Open Society Foundations, and a number of city agencies, YMI is designed to address the myriad challenges and inequities facing NYC’s Black and Latino young men. For example, 30 percent of Black and Latino children in New York City live in poverty (Banks & Oliviera, 2011). Less than 60 percent of Black and Latino males graduate from high school, and only about one in ten graduate ready for college-level work (Villavicencio et al., 2013). Outcomes after high school are also troubling: Currently, more than a quarter of the City’s Black and Latino men are neither working nor employed, and 91 percent of admissions to NYC correctional facilities are young men of color (Banks & Oliviera, 2011).

These statistics hammer home the need for initiatives like YMI. The problem with stressing such statistics is that it can have the unintended consequence of pathologizing young men of color and perpetuating negative stereotypes that have very serious real-world consequences. In truth, many, many young men of color are succeeding in New York City and around the country (Harper et al., 2014; Toldson & Lewis, 2012). The critical question is how to help more Black and Latino youth achieve this kind of success, on a playing field that is frequently very uneven.

YMI is taking on this challenge. The largest effort of its kind in the country, YMI supports programs—and aims to improve outcomes—in four areas: health, education, employment, and the justice system. The bulk of YMI’s education effort is the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), which focuses on 40 high schools that have been relatively successful in graduating Black and Latino males, but have not achieved the same level of success with college readiness rates for the same population.¹ In some ways, the experience of these schools mirrors that of NYC as a whole. Citywide graduation rates for Black and Latino males have increased substantially over the last decade, but college readiness rates remain startlingly low. The 40 high schools selected for this initiative are thus charged with using ESI funding (\$250,000 per school) and technical support to provide a range of programs and services that aim to increase college and career readiness among young men of color. ESI’s longer-term goal is to apply the lessons learned by these schools to the entire school district.

In the spring of 2012, the Research Alliance for New York City Schools, in collaboration with MDRC, was selected to be the independent, third-party evaluator of ESI. The evaluation team has developed a mixed-method, longitudinal assessment of ESI implementation and impact that began in June of 2012 and extends through December of 2016. This timeframe will enable the evaluation team to observe and measure the development, implementation, and refinement of ESI over four school years. It will also allow us to follow and assess ESI impacts for at least one cohort of 9th-grade students through their scheduled high school graduation in June 2016. The study will follow three additional cohorts of 9th-grade students through the 2015-2016 school year.

The ESI evaluation consists of three core components—an implementation study, an impact study, and a set of case studies. The implementation study will examine the services and supports that are planned and implemented under ESI, the challenges schools confront along the way, and the strategies they use to address those challenges. Over the first three years of the initiative, we will conduct fieldwork in all 40 ESI schools. We will use these data and related documentation provided by the schools to construct individual assessments of the fidelity, intensity, and sustainability of each school's ESI programming.² We will also analyze the data across all 40 schools to make broader statements about ESI implementation overall, including whether different services and supports are associated with varying impacts on student outcomes.

The impact study will determine whether students who are exposed to ESI-related interventions and supports achieve better outcomes than they would have if their school not been involved in ESI. We will compare academic outcomes (e.g., credit accumulation, grades, Regents examination scores) and non-academic outcomes (e.g., academic self-perception, post-secondary goals) with outcomes for current cohorts of students in similar high schools that did not participate in this initiative. We will also be able to compare academic outcomes with those of previous cohorts of students in the same schools prior to ESI. The analysis of ESI's impact on key non-academic and youth development outcomes will rely on survey data collected specifically for the ESI evaluation. Finally, we will be conducting in-depth case studies led by staff from MDRC. Each case study will take place in three of the ESI schools that are executing a distinctive or intensive approach to a particular ESI strategy.

The findings from these studies will be reported annually (see text box in the Executive Summary). This report is the first in that series. Its purpose is to describe (1) the key components of the initiative, (2) the 40 schools selected to receive ESI funding, (3) the supports that were already available in these schools before ESI, and (4) the strategies that they planned to implement in the first year of the initiative (i.e., the 2012-2013 school year). This baseline analysis will provide a snapshot of how these schools were already supporting their Black and Latino young men toward graduation and how they planned to use ESI funding and supports to either expand existing programs or create new programs for young men of color. We hope our preliminary findings inform the NYC Department of Education as it manages ESI in Year 2 (i.e., the 2013-2014 school year), and that it may serve as a guidepost for schools trying to improve or build on ESI programming. This first report also lays the groundwork for future Research Alliance publications examining the implementation of ESI services and supports in participating schools and the impact of ESI on students.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS THE EXPANDED SUCCESS INITIATIVE?

ESI is an investment in 40 high schools that have demonstrated success in graduating Black and Latino young men. ESI provides these schools with funding and technical support to better engage Black and Latino male students and prepare them for a successful transition to post-secondary education and work. The goals of ESI are to increase the number of Black and Latino young men who complete high school at college- and career-ready levels *and* to identify and disseminate successful strategies that accomplish these goals throughout the City. This chapter describes the key components of ESI, including the theory of action driving the initiative and the launch of ESI through a competition-based Design Challenge.

ESI Theory of Action and Design

While graduation rates have been increasing across all racial and ethnic groups, gaps remain between the graduation rates of Black and Latino males and their White and Asian counterparts. There are even larger gaps when it comes to college readiness. Just 9 and 11 percent of Black and Latino men who entered as freshmen in 2006 graduated ready for college-level work, respectively, based on the NY State Aspirational Performance Measure (APM), compared with 40 percent of White men and 50 percent of Asian men in the same cohort (Villavicencio et al., 2013).³

In response to these disparities, the DOE identified three broad domains that they propose are essential to increasing college and career readiness—academics, youth development, and school culture.⁴ The academic domain centers on increasing academic rigor and opportunities for students to take more advanced coursework. Youth development focuses on supporting students' socio-emotional needs and improving school discipline policies. Finally, the school culture domain targets schoolwide efforts to prepare students for college and careers. The DOE's theory of action is that by strengthening schools' practices in all three domains, it will be possible to increase the number of Black and Latino males graduating from these schools prepared for college and a career (see Appendix A).

In addition to this explicit theory of action, there are other important components of ESI's design that are worth describing here. Perhaps most notably, the Department decided to invest ESI resources in relatively high-performing schools.

For example, the average graduation rates for Black and Latino young men at ESI schools is 68 percent, more than 7 percentage points higher than that of non-ESI schools (we describe the differences between ESI schools and other schools more fully in Chapter 3). The rationale for targeting successful schools was twofold. First, by selecting schools with relatively high graduation rates, the initiative could focus on “reaching a new bar” in terms of postsecondary outcomes—particularly around college and career readiness. Second, the DOE hopes to leverage the capacities and best practices developed in these relatively successful schools to effect change across the district.

Another key component of ESI is its time frame and funding structure. ESI is designed to begin with the 9th-grade cohort and extend for four years through these students’ 12th-grade year. Underlying this decision is a belief that postsecondary planning that starts in early high school will have more of an impact on students’ access to higher education and work. While ESI is designed to last for four years, the \$250,000 that each ESI school receives is distributed over the first three years of the initiative. By not providing funding for the length of the initiative, the funders and the DOE are challenging schools to develop programs that are sustainable

ESI Domains

The DOE defines the three ESI domains as follows:

Academics: Strategies that relate to Common Core standards and expectations for what students must know and demonstrate to be on track for college success. For example, schools can opt to redesign course curricula to increase the number of students enrolled in four years of math and science, Advanced Placement, and other rigorous college-level courses.

Youth Development: Strategies that emphasize building student resilience, commitment to life beyond high school, and restorative approaches to school discipline that prevent negative outcomes, such as suspension. For example, the selected schools possess structures where adults use a strengths-based approach with students, provide social and emotional support, and set clear behavioral expectations and standards for college and career readiness.

School Culture: Strategies that promote a college and career focus among 9th grade Black and Latino young men, influencing the ethos, mission, and explicit (and implicit) communications in the entire school building, even outside the classroom. For example, these strategies can include workshops for students to develop their interests and opportunities for students to acquire skills outside the classroom; chances to join a variety of extra-curricular offerings; options to participate in academically aligned internships and workplace experiences; and programs that give students and their families a clear voice within the school.

Source: New York City Department of Education (2013c).

beyond the funding period. Thus, there is an implicit emphasis on creating programs that can be led and managed by school staff or with partners, within a school's regular budget.

Beyond funding, ESI provides schools with a range of supports, including opportunities for staff to discuss biases that may impede progress toward college for young men of color and professional development sessions related to culturally relevant pedagogy. The DOE ESI team also offers an online community forum and visits the schools throughout the year for troubleshooting and general support. In addition to these resources, the DOE provides ESI schools with data “snapshots” four times each school year, which include attendance rates (and rates of chronic absenteeism), suspensions, credits earned in the 9th grade and in later years, and scores on the PSAT, Regents exams, and Advanced Placement exams. Together, these efforts are intended to increase awareness of the critical issues affecting young men of color, build teachers' instructional skills, and help schools use data more effectively.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the DOE has positioned ESI as a “research and development” initiative, in which schools are actively encouraged to try new things and refine their ideas over time. ESI was designed to balance the use of evidence-based strategies with the freedom to take some informed risks. Not everything schools try is expected to succeed, but the hope is that even the initiative's less impactful strategies and programs will produce valuable lessons about how to help more of NYC's young men of color graduate ready for college and careers.

The ESI Design Challenge

In the spring of 2012, the DOE launched the ESI Design Challenge, a competitive application process in which schools submitted detailed plans for how they would utilize ESI funding.⁵ The challenge was open to a select number of high schools that fit three criteria: (1) student enrollment that includes at least 35 percent Black and Latino males, with at least 60 percent of students qualifying for free and/or reduced price lunch, (2) a four-year graduation rate above 65 percent, and (3) an “A” or “B” on the latest high school Progress Report.⁶ A total of 81 schools met these criteria and were invited to apply, and 57 schools ultimately submitted applications.⁷

During the application process, the DOE provided schools with specific research-based strategies for each of the three domains described above (academics, youth

development, and school culture). The application then charged schools with creating detailed plans covering each domain, as well as descriptions of the data they would rely on to assess the implementation and impact of their programs. Schools also had to submit a budget worksheet showing how they would use ESI funds to implement the services and supports they described. In addition, the application required schools to provide multiple points of data on their students' performance, including GPA, credit accumulation, Regents scores, and college readiness rates. (Appendix A includes these application documents.)

The Design Challenge stipulated that the 40 schools with the highest-scoring applications would receive ESI funding. In addition to a few members of the DOE's Office of Postsecondary Readiness and representatives from several school networks, faculty from the City University of New York (CUNY), Harvard University, Howard University, New York University, and Columbia University's Teachers College scored the schools' applications based on a rubric.⁸ The rubric contained 19 items across four large "challenges": (1) expanding success for Black and Latino young men, (2) aligning success with postsecondary readiness indicators, (3) building sustainable practices as part of the school organization, and (4) capacity for implementation (see Appendix A for the full rubric). Most of the 40 schools that were selected to receive ESI funding scored among the top 40. A few schools were selected based on other criteria, namely the representation of Black and Latino students from the City's most high-poverty neighborhoods—specifically, Harlem, East New York, South Bronx, Jamaica, and Brownsville. When two schools subsequently dropped out of the initiative, two schools with scores immediately below the top 40 were invited to participate.

The DOE sought to foster a spirit of competition among the schools applying for ESI funds and to ensure schools with the greatest capacity for innovation and change were selected. At the same time, because these 40 schools were not selected randomly from the 81 eligible schools, there is a question around how representative the 40 schools are with respect to the larger body of eligible schools and the broader population of NYC schools serving high school students. We will talk more extensively about the implications of this aspect of ESI's design in the next chapter.

After schools were selected, at least two people from each school (usually the principal and a member of the "design team" that prepared the application) met with

the DOE ESI team to discuss their ESI work plan and budget for the year in more detail.⁹ Though there was still wide variability in proposed programming across the schools, these work plans consolidated and standardized how each school described their ESI programming (see ESI Year 1 Planning Template in Appendix A). These planning meetings took place in June and July of 2012. Members of our team attended about half of these meetings to get a better sense of the types of changes being made to the work plans. During these meetings, the DOE ESI team would walk through the school's work plan, suggesting modifications that generally fell into three broad categories: adding much more specificity around deliverables and outcomes for each program; adjusting the budget so that less would be used on personnel, digital equipment, or an outside vendor; and making the connection between the work plan and the line items in the budget more explicit.

Summary

ESI's focus on improving college readiness to address a district-wide problem, its targeting of relatively successful schools, and its emphasis on changing culture at the school level are important distinguishing features of the initiative. The Design Challenge used to select schools and ESI's attempt to balance evidence-based strategies with informed risk-taking are also noteworthy. The following chapter will look more closely at the 40 schools that were selected for ESI, to examine how they compare with other schools in NYC. This discussion has important implications in terms of how representative these schools are, the generalizability of their experience, and the potential to scale up ESI's successes by expanding key practices to other schools.

CHAPTER 3: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ESI SCHOOLS?

As previously described, ESI intentionally did not select a random sample of New York City high schools to participate in the initiative. Rather, the ESI strategy was to engage a group of schools that were experiencing relative success with the target population and support these schools so they could expand existing services and programs and surface new, innovative ways to improve the outcomes of Black and Latino young men.

As a result of this approach, the schools participating in ESI have previously demonstrated higher-than-average outcomes for the initiative's target population. Keeping in mind that ESI's long-term goal is to disseminate successful practices throughout the district, it is important to understand the ways in which the current sample of ESI schools are both different from and similar to the overall population of NYC schools. Comparing ESI and non-ESI schools sheds light on the potential for eventually scaling up strategies that prove effective in ESI. If the sample of ESI schools exhibits many distinctive characteristics or faces special challenges that set these schools apart from others in the City, then it may be difficult to apply lessons learned in ESI more broadly across the district. On the other hand, if the two groups of schools are relatively similar, this would have positive implications for expanding ESI's successes to additional schools in NYC.

Thus, this chapter describes the 40 schools participating in ESI (see Appendix B for a full list) and compares them with non-ESI schools in the City.¹⁰ There are 366 schools included in this non-ESI group. We examine a number of characteristics for both sets of schools, including the percentages of students on track to graduate after 9th grade, four-year graduation rates, the New York State APM (designed as an indicator of college- and career-readiness), and student demographics. Our comparisons look at both the full student populations of schools and the outcomes of the Black and Latino male populations, in particular.¹¹ The final section of the chapter examines other school characteristics, such as size, selectivity, and location.

School-Level Academic Outcomes

To get an overall picture of how the ESI and non-ESI schools have performed on the target outcomes of the initiative, we examined the on-track rates, four-year

graduation rates, and rates of students who met the New York State APM, for both groups of schools, using the most recent data available for each outcome. In this section of the report, for each of these measures, we first present comparisons across all students and then zoom in on comparisons that include only Black and Latino males. (See Table 1 below.)

Table 1: Comparing Key Outcomes for ESI and Non-ESI Schools

	Percent of All Students		Percent of Black and Latino Male Students	
	ESI Schools	Non-ESI Schools	ESI Schools	Non-ESI Schools
On track after 9th grade	59.1	55.7	54.9	47.9
Graduate in four years	70.7	67.5 ^a	67.6	60.6 ^b
Regents diploma	67.2	63.8 ^a	63.7	55.7 ^b
Local diploma	3.5	3.7 ^a	3.9	4.9 ^b
NYS Aspirational Performance Measure	11.2	14.0 ^a	9.4	7.3 ^b
Number of schools	40	366	40	256

Source: Research Alliance calculations using longitudinal data provided by the NYC DOE.

Notes: On-track rates are based on the 2011-12 9th-grade cohort. All other outcomes are based on the 2008-09 cohort of 9th graders.

^a The sample size for these data points is 312, because some schools were new and did not yet have graduating classes.

^b The sample size for these data points is 220, because some schools were new and did not yet have graduating classes.

See page 28 for other notes, including sample definition.

There is growing recognition that the percentage of students who are on track to graduate after 9th grade is an important indicator of a school's progress and performance. In this paper, "on track" refers to students who, during their first year of high school, earned at least 10 credits and passed at least one Regents examination with a score of 65 or higher, a measure that has been found to be highly predictive of graduation rates (Kemple, Segeritz, & Stephenson, 2013). Using data from the 2011-2012 9th grade cohort, we found that ESI schools had a slightly higher on-track rate than non-ESI schools (59 and 56 percent respectively). This remained true when the sample was limited to only Black and Latino male students (55 percent for ESI schools vs. 48 percent for non-ESI schools). This was expected, given the eligibility requirements to apply for ESI funding.

A comparison of four-year graduation rates yielded similar results. For this report, we used graduation rates for the 2008-2009 cohort of students—that is, those who were scheduled to graduate in 2012.¹² Graduates included students who earned

either a local diploma or a New York State Regents diploma.¹³ When we compared all students in ESI schools and non-ESI schools, graduation rates were slightly higher in ESI schools (71 and 68 percent respectively). Notably, ESI schools had a slightly higher rate of students graduating with a Regents diploma than non-ESI schools (67 vs. 64 percent), while the two groups had nearly identical (low) rates of graduates with the less rigorous local diploma.¹⁴ ESI schools continued to outperform non-ESI schools when we limited the sample to only Black and Latino males (68 vs. 61 percent graduating in four years). Once again, ESI schools had higher rates of students graduating with a Regents diploma (64 vs. 56 percent), and a *lower* local diploma rate than non-ESI schools (4 vs. 5 percent). Again, this result was not surprising, given that ESI targeted schools already experiencing relative success graduating Black and Latino males.

Lastly, we compared the rates of students who met the APM. Developed by the New York State Education Department to serve as an indicator of college and career readiness, this measure requires that students earn a Regents diploma within five years, score at least a 75 on the English Regents exam, and score an 80 or more on a math Regents. Percentages of students who met this benchmark were quite small across both groups of schools. Unlike on-track rates and graduation rates, when we compared outcomes on the APM for all students, we found that ESI schools were slightly outperformed by non-ESI schools (11 vs. 14 percent). When we limited the sample to Black and Latino males only, ESI schools did better than non-ESI schools, but only by two percentage points (9 vs. 7 percent).

A Profile of the Student Populations in ESI and Non-ESI Schools

To understand more about how the students in ESI and non-ESI schools compared, we examined key student demographics for 9th graders in both groups of schools, including race, English language learner (ELL) status, being overage for one's grade, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, country of origin, and special education status. We also compared attendance rates, as well as students' incoming proficiency rates in math and English Language Arts (ELA) on standardized assessments.¹⁵ (See Table 2 on the next page.) These variables provide a good picture of how comparable the student bodies are across the two groups of schools. When we considered the full population of 9th graders across ESI and non-ESI schools, a few differences arose with respect to student demographics. ESI schools had a greater percentage of males, compared with non-ESI schools (54 vs. 48 percent).

While both groups of schools had similar percentages of Latino students (42 and 43 percent respectively), ESI schools had a higher percentage of Black students (48 vs. 34 percent) and fewer White students (2 vs. 8 percent) and Asian students (4 vs. 9 percent). About half of the 9th graders at ESI schools were Black or Latino males (49 percent), compared with 38 percent at non-ESI schools. ESI schools also had a higher percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch (81 vs. 75 percent). Differences in the percentages of English language learners,

Table 2: Profile of 9th Grade Students at ESI and non-ESI Schools, 2011-2012

	Percent of All Students		Percent of Black and Latino Male Students	
	ESI Schools	Non-ESI Schools	ESI Schools	Non-ESI Schools
Male	53.7	47.6	n/a	n/a
Ethnicity				
Asian	3.8	9.4	n/a	n/a
Black	48.2	34.2	n/a	n/a
Latino	42.0	42.9	n/a	n/a
White	2.3	7.7	n/a	n/a
Other	2.4	2.9	n/a	n/a
Black and Latino males	48.5	37.5	n/a	n/a
8th grade academic performance				
English Language Arts proficient	25.7	28.1 ^b	20.8	18.2 ^d
Math proficient	44.1	46.8 ^b	42.2	38.0 ^e
Background characteristics				
English language learner status	9.1	11.9	10.0	14.0
Born outside the US	19.5	23.2	18.6	21.6
Overage for grade	30.6	31.9	36.5	38.2
Receive free or reduced price lunch	80.8	74.9	84.1	80.1
Receive related special education services	15.1	13.9	20.5	19.9
Attendance rate^a	91.3	90.9 ^e	91.1	90.3
Number of schools	40	366	40	256

Source: Research Alliance calculations based on data provided by the NYC DOE.

Notes: n/a indicates these categories are not applicable to the group solely comprised of Black and Latino males.

^a Attendance rate represents the mean attendance rate across each group of schools.

^b Due to missing data, The sample size for these data points is 364.

^c Due to missing data, the sample size for this data point is 365.

^d Due to missing data, the sample size for this data point is 253.

^e Due to missing data, the sample size for this data point is 255.

See page 28 for other notes, including sample definition.

foreign-born students, overage students, and special education students were small (less than 4 percentage points).¹⁶ Likewise, differences in students' 8th-grade proficiency in ELA and math were not substantial. Finally, attendance rates in ESI and non-ESI schools were nearly identical.

When we narrowed our comparison to include only Black and Latino males, the results looked similar. ESI schools had a somewhat higher percentage of Black and Latino males who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch (84 vs. 80 percent) and a somewhat lower percentage who were English language learners (10 vs. 14 percent). Percentages of overage students, foreign born students, and special education students among Black and Latino males were basically comparable across the two groups of schools. Average ELA proficiency rates were similar for Black and Latino male students entering ESI and non-ESI schools, but young men entering ESI schools were somewhat more likely to be proficient in math. Attendance rates for Black and Latino males were about the same across the two groups of schools.

Other School Characteristics

Other school characteristics, like size, configuration (e.g., grades 9-12, grades 6-12, etc.), selectivity, geographic location, and Progress Report grades, are also important for understanding how ESI and non-ESI schools compare. (See Table 3 on the next page.) Like the other variables examined in this chapter, these characteristics provide insight about the potential to scale up ESI strategies to a broader population of schools.

To be eligible for ESI funding, schools were required to have received an A or B grade on their latest high school Progress Report.¹⁷ Thus, it is not surprising that the group of ESI schools had a slightly higher average high school Progress Report grade than the group of non-ESI schools. On average, ESI schools had a Progress Report grade of 3.2, and non-ESI schools had a high school progress grade of 2.9.¹⁸

With respect to the distribution of schools across boroughs, we found that ESI schools are most highly represented in Brooklyn (43 percent), followed by the Bronx and Manhattan (23 percent of ESI schools are in each borough). There is a small representation of ESI schools in Queens (13 percent), and there are no ESI schools in Staten Island. The non-ESI schools are more equally distributed across the boroughs, with the exception of Staten Island (3 percent). It is worth noting the difference in distribution across boroughs between ESI and non-ESI schools,

particularly the higher percentage of ESI schools in Brooklyn and the lower percentage in Queens.

With regard to school size, we defined small schools as those with 110 or fewer 9th-grade students, mid-size schools as those with between 111 and 200 students in the 9th grade, and large schools as those with more than 200 9th-grade students. The ESI schools are mostly comprised of small and medium-sized schools (43 percent small schools, 48 percent mid-sized schools, and 10 percent large schools). Similarly, the majority of non-ESI schools are also small or mid-sized (50 percent small schools, 34 percent mid-sized schools and 16 percent large schools). The two groups are also quite similar in terms of grade configuration. Twenty-three percent of ESI schools are grades 6-12, and 78 percent are grades 9-12. The distribution is nearly the same for non-ESI schools.

In NYC, high schools have a variety of admissions methods, which correspond with different levels of selectivity. We compared ESI and non-ESI schools using three categories of selectivity: selective, non-selective, and mixed. (Please refer to the textbox on the next page for further explanation.) We found that ESI schools are less selective than non-ESI schools. Fifty-eight percent of ESI schools are non-selective, 23 percent are mixed, and 20 percent are selective. In the non-ESI group of schools, 44 percent are non-selective, 29 percent are mixed, and 26 percent are selective.

Table 3: School Characteristics, ESI and Non-ESI Schools, 2011-2012

	ESI Schools	Non-ESI Schools
School size (%)		
Small (<110 9 th grade students)	42.5	49.5
Mid-sized (111-200 9 th grade students)	47.5	34.4
Large (>200 9 th grade students)	10.0	16.1
Borough (%)		
Brooklyn	42.5	27.9
Manhattan	22.5	24.6
Bronx	22.5	27.1
Queens	12.5	18.0
Staten Island	0.0	2.5
Grade configuration (%)		
9-12	77.5	79.0
6-12	22.5	20.5
Admissions method (%)		
Non-selective	57.5	44.0
Selective	20.0	26.0
Mixed	22.5	28.7
Average progress report grade	3.2 ^a	2.9 ^b
Number of schools	40	366

Source: Research Alliance calculations based on data provided by the NYC DOE.

Notes: ^a Because the DOE did not release Progress Reports for certain schools, the sample size for this data point is 39.

^b Because the DOE did not release Progress Reports for certain schools, the sample size for this data point is 303.

See page 28 for complete notes, including sample definition.

High School Admission Methods in New York City

High schools in New York City admit students through one of the following methods:

Selective Methods

- **Test:** Admission based solely on applicants' score on the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). (These schools were excluded from our analysis for this report.)
- **Screened:** Rank applicants based on their final report card grades from 8th grade, reading and math standardized test scores, attendance, or other criteria.
- **Audition:** Require applicants to demonstrate proficiency in a specific performing arts/visual arts area. May also review attendance and grades.

Non-Selective Methods

- **Limited Unscreened:** Prioritize applicants who demonstrate interest in the school by attending a school information session or open house event, or by visiting the school's exhibit at a High School Fair.
- **Unscreened:** Randomly select among applicants.
- **Zoned:** Prioritize applicants who live in the geographic zoned area of the high school. Residency is the sole admission criterion.

Partially Selective

- **Educational Option:** Meant to serve a wide range of academic performers. Based on standardized test reading scores from the prior school year, applicants are admitted based on the following target distribution: 16 percent high reading level; 68 percent middle reading level; 16 percent low reading level.

Source: New York City Department of Education, (2013a).

Summary

ESI and non-ESI schools differ in expected ways, given the criteria for participation in the initiative. When looking at the percentage of students on-track for graduation and four-year graduation rates, we see that ESI schools slightly outperform non-ESI schools. However, ESI schools do not outperform non-ESI schools in terms of the percentage of students meeting the New York State APM. Thus, while ESI schools graduate students at higher rates than non-ESI schools, they do not necessarily better prepare students for college and careers.

The group of ESI schools, with a few exceptions, looks very similar to the non-ESI schools on student demographics and school-level characteristics. ESI schools enroll a somewhat higher proportion of Black and Latino males, but differences in the percentages of English language learners, foreign-born students, overage students, and special education students are small. While ESI schools are less selective than

the non-ESI schools, they do not substantially differ in terms of size or configuration.

In sum, ESI schools appear to differ from the broader population of New York City high schools mainly in the ways that were intended by the ESI Design Challenge. This has positive implications for the potential of scaling up successful programs and applying strategies developed in ESI to a larger body of schools.

CHAPTER 4: HOW ARE SCHOOLS PLANNING TO IMPLEMENT ESI?

This chapter summarizes ESI schools' plans for utilizing ESI funding and technical support to increase college readiness among Black and Latino young men. Based on a systematic analysis of the schools' applications and Year 1 work plans, the efforts ESI schools are pursuing are well-aligned with the intentions of ESI. The DOE's Design Challenge required that ESI schools provide supports across the three domains of academics, youth development, and school culture. As our analysis revealed, schools have in fact designed plans that employ strategies across these three domains. The Design Challenge frames ESI as "investments [that] build on existing work or jump start new approaches." And indeed, we found that schools are introducing new strategies as well as enhancing strategies that were already in place prior to ESI. Finally, schools were encouraged to use strategies "that have an

How We Analyzed Schools' Plans

Of the 40 ESI schools, two joined late and so did not have materials ready as we wrote this report. Two others did not start ESI in Fall 2012 due to delays caused by Hurricane Sandy. Three schools did not fully describe existing initiatives in their applications. We excluded these seven schools from our analyses of ESI strategies, creating a final sample of 33 schools.

We used the following seven steps to analyze the strategies underway or planned as part of ESI:

Step 1: Identified list of existing and proposed strategies based on review of Design Challenge, school applications for ESI funding, and school ESI work plans. Generated initial codebook from this list of strategies to structure our analysis.

Step 2: Trained team of researchers in codebook by collectively coding ESI applications and work plans.

Step 3: Revised codebook based on researcher feedback.

Step 4: Completed first round of coding (5 to 12 schools per coder).

Step 5: Completed second round of coding (17 applications and 20 work plans reassigned to a different coder).

Step 6: Assessed inter-rater reliability.

Step 7: Collaboratively re-coded materials designated as having low inter-rater reliability.

Each of the 25 codes in the codebook represents a different strategy* by which ESI schools support, or plan to support, their Black and Latino male students. Each strategy falls into one of the three ESI domains (academics, youth development, and school culture), and a variety of supports and services fall into each strategy. It should be noted that many programs described in a school's application or work plan incorporated more than one strategy. See Appendix C for a full list of codes and a detailed description of our coding process.

* Our choice to define each code as a "strategy" is in part driven by the language of the ESI Design Challenge Description, which indicates that "ESI will support 40 high schools that have shown promise in graduating Black and Latino young men and develop *strategies* that work to raise the bar," and specifies that design teams should select "*strategies* that build on and connect" ESI's three domains (emphasis added).

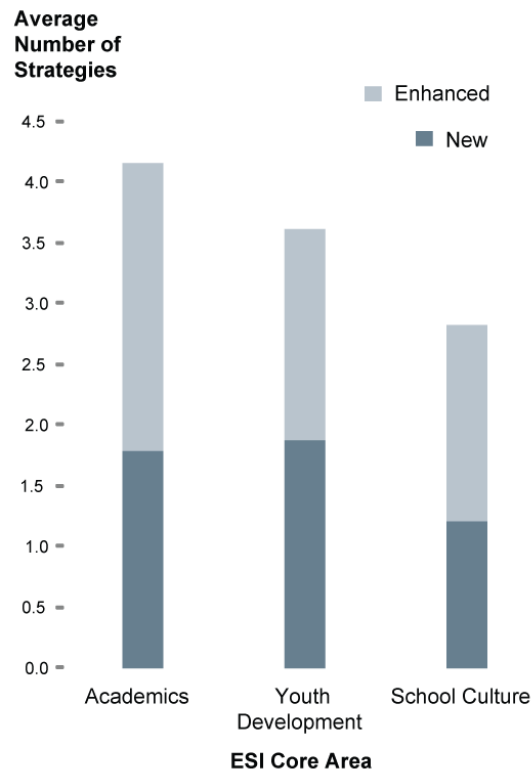
evidence base for achieving postsecondary outcomes for Black and Latino young men.” Many of the specific evidence-based strategies that were featured in the Design Challenge and other official ESI materials are indeed being pursued by a broad swath of schools, while other strategies endorsed by ESI appear less frequently in schools’ plans (see Appendix A for the ESI Design Challenge).

Enhancing Existing Strategies and Creating New Ones

Many schools selected to participate in ESI were already pursuing an integrated set of strategies across ESI’s three domains. Based on schools’ applications, we found that on average, ESI schools were implementing 10.3 strategies prior to receiving ESI funding. Of these strategies, there was a fairly even mix across the three domains, with an average of 3.9 pertaining to academics, 3.3 to youth development, and 3.1 to school culture. Under the auspices of ESI, most schools will continue to pursue a mix of academic, youth development, and school culture strategies. The average ESI school planned to utilize 10.6 strategies in the first year.¹⁹ Of these, an average of 4.2 pertained to academics, 3.6 to youth development, and 2.8 to school culture (see Figure 1). As noted in Chapter 2, school culture in ESI pertains largely to college and career readiness. Thus, the reduced emphasis on school culture as compared to academics or youth development may reflect the fact that the first year of ESI is geared solely toward 9th graders.²⁰

The ESI application process encouraged design teams to

Figure 1: New and Enhanced Strategies in Each ESI Domain



Source: Research Alliance analyses of ESI work plans and applications.

Note: See textbox on page 17 and Appendix C for detailed explanations of how we defined and identified strategies, and a full list of ESI strategies.

expand existing work or launch new approaches. Design teams were about as likely to enhance an existing strategy as to introduce a new one—of the 10.6 strategies that the average ESI school planned to utilize, an average of 4.9 were new and 5.7 were enhanced.²¹ This mix of new and enhanced strategies has implications for the scalability of ESI. Had our analysis revealed that most ESI schools were primarily pursuing new strategies, it would be hard to imagine how these schools could sustain their programs, or how other schools could replicate the successes of ESI, without a substantial financial investment.²² Alternatively, had our analysis revealed that ESI schools were solely enhancing existing strategies, it would suggest that replication is only possible for schools with a strong base of programming already in place. Because ESI schools plan to pursue a mix of new and enhanced strategies, however, the possibility of replicating any ESI successes may be open to schools with limited financial resources to direct toward new strategies as well as schools with a limited base of successful strategies on which to build. Notably, the average ESI school leaned slightly more toward enhancing existing strategies versus creating new ones, especially in academics (2.3 vs. 1.8) and school culture (1.6 vs. 1.2). In contrast, schools were slightly less likely to create new strategies in youth development, versus enhancing existing ones (1.7 vs. 1.9).

Most and Least Popular Strategies

Table 4 on the next page outlines some of the most and least popular strategies in ESI schools. Figure 2, on page 22, shows which ESI strategies were most often new, enhanced, or unchanged from existing programming. Curricular enhancements, such as Common Core alignment, new course materials, AP courses, and culturally relevant curricula, constituted the most widely planned academic strategy. In youth development, the most widely planned strategy was non-academic supports, such as team-building, leadership training, advisory, service learning, and life-skills training (e.g., training in persistence, grit, and resilience). The most widely planned strategy in school culture was college supports, such as college trips, college workshops, push-in and pull-out college counseling, and alumni panels. All of these were overwhelmingly enhancements of existing strategies. For example, of the 32 schools incorporating curriculum interventions into their Year 1 ESI planning, 26 were enhancing existing curriculum development efforts. Similarly, 31 schools were incorporating non-academic supports; of these, 21 had been utilizing non-academic supports prior to ESI. And of the 27 schools that planned to incorporate college supports, 25 had some form of college support in place prior to ESI. Thus, many

schools have approached the ESI Design Challenge by building on an existing base of strategies related to curriculum, nonacademic supports, and college supports.

Other popular strategies in academics include academic supports (e.g., tutoring, Regents prep, remediation classes, Saturday school, collaborative team teaching, and other initiatives aimed at helping struggling students), as well as professional development (e.g., trainings for teachers focused on the curriculum, instructional methods, culturally relevant pedagogy, and other academic areas). In youth development, mentoring was quite popular, as was professional development (e.g., trainings for teachers and school staff in areas such as culturally responsive approaches to youth development). In school culture, popular strategies included professional development (e.g., trainings for teachers on topics including the CUNY or SUNY application process, financial aid, SAT prep, and college advising) and career supports (e.g., career days, internship programs, vocational trainings, and workshops on resume writing and other job-related skills).

Professional development was thus a popular strategy across all three ESI domains, and notably, more schools were pursuing professional development as a new strategy than

Table 4: Popularity of ESI Strategies, by Domain

Most and Least Popular Strategies	Number of Schools
<u>Academics</u>	
Most popular	
Curricular enhancements	32
Academic supports	25
Professional development	23
Least popular	
Personnel	6
Parent/family outreach	6
Attendance supports	5
<u>Youth development</u>	
Most popular	
Non-academic supports	31
Mentoring	24
Professional development	19
Least popular	
Personnel	7
Student behavioral supports	7
Parent/family outreach	6
Wraparound programming	4
<u>School culture</u>	
Most popular	
College supports	27
Professional development	18
Career supports	17
Least popular	
Personnel	4
College environment	3
Number of schools	33

Source: Research Alliance analyses of ESI work plans and applications.

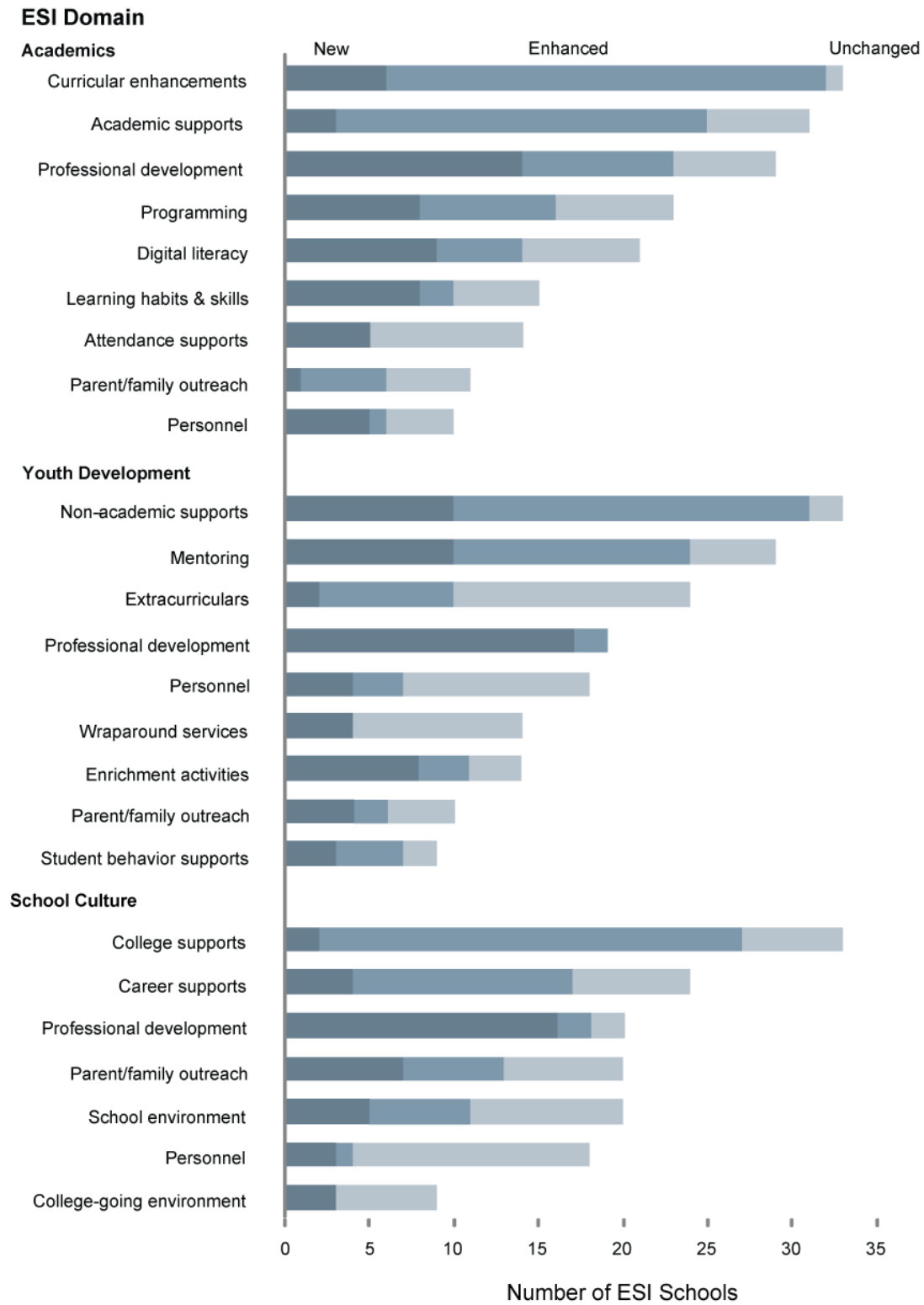
Note: See textbox on page 17 and Appendix C for detailed explanations of how we defined and identified strategies, and a full list of ESI strategies.

as an enhanced strategy. Of the 18 schools pursuing professional development in school culture, 16 were doing so for the first time as a part of ESI. Of the 19 schools pursuing professional development in youth development, 17 were doing so for the first time under ESI. This finding suggests that many ESI schools are newly introducing professional development explicitly geared toward college readiness and youth development for Black and Latino young men.

Several strategies stand out for how infrequently they appeared in the Year 1 work plans. The least widely planned strategies in academics were new personnel, family outreach, and attendance supports. The least widely planned strategies in youth development were wraparound programming, family outreach, student behavioral supports, and new personnel. And the least widely planned strategies in school culture were personnel and developing a college environment (e.g. by creating college-themed displays or formally recognizing seniors with college acceptances).

It is noteworthy that new personnel was one of the least popular strategies across all three ESI domains, and family outreach was one of the least popular strategies in both academics and youth development. During several of the ESI planning meetings we observed, DOE ESI staff explicitly discouraged schools from investing ESI funds in new personnel. It is, therefore, not particularly surprising that so few schools planned to devote ESI resources to personnel, whether in academics, youth development, or school culture. However, other strategies utilized in relatively few schools were highlighted in ESI materials, webinars, and other official sources. For example, wraparound services (such as counseling services for students and their families) were highlighted as model strategies in the Design Challenge. Yet of the 33 schools we analyzed, only four planned to introduce wraparound services under ESI, and none of the 10 schools with existing wraparound services planned to enhance them under ESI. This means that 19 of the 33 ESI schools included in our analysis would be offering no wraparound services at all. Similarly, the Design Challenge explicitly listed restorative justice and other alternatives to suspension as model ESI supports, but only seven schools planned to implement student behavioral supports under ESI (three of these were introducing this for the first time, and four were enhancing existing strategies). Of the remaining 26 schools, only two had existing student behavioral supports, meaning there are 24 ESI schools with no current student behavioral supports geared toward Black and Latino young men, and no plans to implement this strategy under ESI (though certain programs may indirectly impact behavior in schools).

Figure 2: Strategies Planned in ESI Schools, by Domain



Source: Research Alliance analyses of ESI work plans and applications.

Note: See textbox on page 17 and Appendix C for detailed explanations of how we defined and identified strategies, and a full list of ESI strategies.

Summary

ESI schools are using funding and technical support to both enhance existing strategies and create new ones. With work planned across the three domains, schools are slightly more apt to be enhancing academic and school culture strategies and slightly more likely to be creating new programs in youth development. The most common strategies center on curriculum, professional development, mentoring, and college and career supports, while little work is being planned in the areas of wraparound services, family outreach, and attendance and behavior support. The implications of some of these findings are discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As one of the largest education initiatives in NYC, ESI presents a rich set of policies and practices, being implemented at both the district and school levels, with the goal of improving college readiness among Black and Latino young men. This report has outlined these efforts, including findings from a preliminary analysis of how schools plan to implement ESI programs and services in the first year.

Chapter 3 presented a comparison of ESI and non-ESI schools, to illuminate how representative these 40 high schools are of other high schools in the district. Not surprisingly (given ESI's selection criteria), when we compared Black and Latino male populations across the two schools, we found that ESI schools outperform non-ESI schools with respect to on-track status and four-year graduation rates. However, college readiness rates (based on the NYS APM) were quite low across both groups of schools (with fewer than one in ten Black and Latino young men graduating college ready). With a few exceptions, ESI schools look very similar to non-ESI schools with regard to key school-level characteristics (e.g., size, configuration) and student demographics (e.g., percentage designated special education, percentage foreign born).

Chapter 4 described how the 40 ESI schools are planning to use ESI funding and support in Year 1 of the initiative. On average, schools are planning to implement strategies fairly evenly across all of ESI's three domains, though there was slightly less focus on school culture. In addition to creating new programs, ESI schools also plan to use the funding to expand existing programs, especially in academics. The most popular strategies overall were curriculum interventions, non-academic supports, mentoring, college and career supports, and professional development in both specific academic disciplines and youth development principles. Some of the areas highlighted by the ESI Design Challenge and other ESI communications with schools were not as evident in schools' work plans, including wraparound services, attendance and behavioral supports, and family outreach.

The findings we present here do not capture the fieldwork we conducted in schools during ESI's first year.²³ Based on our preliminary analysis, however, we believe there are several promising features of the start-up process that bear highlighting. We discuss these below and present some early thoughts about how this work might be extended to other schools or districts.

Do schools' plans align with the design and goals of the initiative? The short answer is yes. ESI's start-up process—including well-thought-out criteria for participation, clear guidance during the Design Challenge and support for schools as they refined their work plans—resulted in a robust, coherent set of strategies that have the potential to affect the kinds of change desired by the ESI. With a few important exceptions, schools' planned work matches up with the goals of the initiative:

- **School plans are well aligned with ESI's theory of action:** The theory of action driving ESI centered on integrating three different domains—academics, youth development, and school culture—to increase college readiness. In all but two schools, strategies from all three domains were well represented in the Year 1 work plans. ESI's Design Challenge also encouraged schools to create a balance between expanding existing programs and creating new ones, which a majority of schools did.
- **School plans are driven by individual school's needs and resources:** While the DOE provided schools with an overarching framework and suggested practices in each of the three domains, they refrained from being overly prescriptive, allowing schools to come up with their own plans to fit the needs of their particular school community. This philosophy was evident in the DOE's approach to involving external partners. It provided schools with a list of almost 100 ESI-approved vendors that specialize in areas such as youth leadership and instructional coaching, but did not require schools to engage any of them. Consequently, we see wide variability across the 40 schools in their use of external partners—and in the specific strategies they plan to employ.
- **Some key strategies were underrepresented:** Some of the least popular strategies in the work plans included wraparound services, attendance, behavior supports, and family outreach. These strategies were part of the explicit aim of ESI, and they were highlighted in our report, *Moving the Needle: Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness Among Black and Latino Males in New York City*, as being important potential contributors to academic success. Poor attendance, for example, has been clearly linked to academic declines, so strategies to track and support attendance may be vital for keeping ESI students on a positive path. Providing more information, resources, or partnering organizations that specifically address these underrepresented strategies could boost ESI schools' odds of success.

Is there potential to apply ESI more broadly? ESI's aims and design are highly relevant in the context of an increasing national focus on supporting Black and Latino students more effectively. While there is much to learn about the challenges of implementing ESI and what, if any, impact it has on students, we believe the initiative is already beginning to generate lessons that are meaningful for other schools and that may inform larger educational policy discussions.

- **ESI schools are comparable to other schools:** One critique of some reform efforts is that their success depends on specific school characteristics or student compositions. However, ESI schools appear to be largely similar to other NYC high schools. While ESI schools serve higher percentages of Black and Latino young men and have slightly higher graduation rates, on average, they also share many characteristics with non-ESI schools. They enroll comparable numbers of special education students and students who are overage for their grade. ESI schools serve slightly more students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch. They are less selective but similar in size and configuration, when compared with other schools in the district. This overall resemblance has positive implications for the potential to scale up successful programs and apply strategies developed in ESI to a larger body of schools, including those serving significant numbers of high-needs students.
- **The initiative has been characterized by strong support and infrastructure:** ESI is not solely a funding source enabling schools to add programs; rather, it is a mechanism by which schools can critically assess the needs of their Black and Latino male students, implement strategies that are well integrated into their existing programs, and reevaluate new strategies and programs from year to year. In the start-up of ESI, the DOE provided every school with support in the development and multiple revisions of their work plans. They also provided an online platform and regular email communication with information about deadlines, trainings and workshops, and vendors. In addition, members of the ESI team visited schools and offered targeted professional development, in areas like culturally relevant pedagogy, throughout Year 1 (which we will describe in our next report). Successfully launching a program like ESI requires more than funding. A strong infrastructure of personnel and support are critical to ensure that school staff have the resources they need to expand existing strategies and get promising new ones off the ground.

- **It may take time to see results:** Ultimately, the question of whether it is advisable to scale up ESI's approach will depend on its ability to produce positive impacts for students. A strong part of ESI's design is that it extends through the scheduled graduation year of the first set of 9th grade students receiving ESI-funded supports and services. Examining students' experiences and outcomes over four years and providing feedback to schools along the way will create opportunities to refine programming and should increase the likelihood that ESI achieves its goals. While test scores and four-year graduation rates will be important measures of success, other outcomes matter as well. To that end, our evaluation is also investigating ESI's effects on students' belief in their ability to succeed and aspirations for the future. By examining a wide set of outcomes and carefully assessing how services and supports are implemented, we will be able to say which aspects of ESI should be replicated, for whom and under what conditions.

At this point in our evaluation, many more questions are raised than answered. For example, how do schools' work plans differ from their actual implementation? What obstacles will schools face as they attempt to implement these strategies? Will schools with more emphasis on any one of the domains have more effective implementation—or better results? While this report is preliminary in its findings, we hope it lays the groundwork for our subsequent implementation report, which will not only assess fidelity (by comparing ESI programming against schools' work plans), but also the intensity of implementation across the 40 schools and the degree to which these programs and strategies are likely to be sustainable past the funding period. In addition, this forthcoming report will highlight the challenges schools are facing in implementing these strategies, and provide recommendations to the DOE about how to better support these schools.

Figure and Table Notes

General Table Notes

The group of non-ESI schools includes all other NYC schools serving 9th graders with the exception of the nine specialized schools, district 79, district 75, and schools serving fewer than 25 students. District 79 is comprised of alternative high schools, and District 75 is made up of schools designed to meet the needs of special education students. When we compare Black and Latino populations across the two groups of schools, we limit the non-ESI group to schools with at least 25 Black and Latino male students or those whose student populations are at least 25 percent Black and Latino male. The sample size for this group is 256.

Table 1

A student is considered to be on track at the end of 9th grade if he or she earned 10 or more course credits and passed at least one Regents Examinations with a 65 or higher.

Graduates include those who earned a local diploma or a New York State Regents or Advanced Regents diploma by October of their fourth year following initial enrollment in high school. Students who received a GED or IEP certificate are considered non-graduates.

The diploma types in the table are defined as follows:

- *Regents diploma*: As of 2011, required that students earn a minimum of 44 course credits (one for each semester-long class that a student passes) and pass a minimum of five end-of-course Regents Examinations with a score of 65 or higher.
- *Local diploma*: Required that students earn a minimum of 44 course credits but does not require passing scores on Regents Examinations. Beginning in 2012, the local diploma was phased out for general education students, who must earn a Regents diploma to graduate from high school in New York State.

See New York City Department of Education (2012) and New York State Education Department (2012).

In this report, we define college ready as meeting the New York State Aspirational Performance Measure (APM), which was developed by the NYS Education Department as an indicator of students' readiness for college and careers. The APM involves earning a Regents or Advanced Regents diploma within four years of starting high school, passing at least one math Regents examination with a score of 80 or higher, and passing the English Regents examination with a score of 75 or higher. Little research has been done to validate the accuracy of this measure in predicting college readiness and success. The Research Alliance is currently working to identify better college readiness indicators.

Table 2

This table presents average school-level aggregates of student-level characteristics. ELL status, ELA and math 8th grade proficiency, 8th grade attendance, overage status, special education/related services, and free or reduced price lunch status are based on 8th grade data for the 2011-2012 9th grade cohort (i.e. the 2010-2011 school year).

See endnotes 15 and 16 for a definition of the measures in this table.

Table 3

School size was based on the size of the 2011-2012 entering 9th grade cohort.

The high school Progress Report grade is a numeric conversion of the letter grades assigned to schools by the NYC DOE. Letter grades of 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'F' were converted to numeric values of 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0, respectively.

Notes

- ¹ The Expanded Success Initiative also includes the School Design Fellowship, which is dedicated to the design and launch of eight new high schools focused on preparing Black and Latino students for college and careers. Fellows will become school leaders in these eight new schools, which are slated to open in September 2014. These new schools and the fellowship are not a part of our evaluation.
- ² *Fidelity* refers to the extent to which implementation matches a school's work plan. *Intensity* refers to the degree of implementation in terms of frequency, duration, and number of students served. *Sustainability* refers to a school's capacity to implement their programs beyond the funding period.
- ³ The New York State Aspirational Performance Measure (APM), was developed by the NYC Education Department as an indicator of students' readiness for college and careers. The APM involves earning a Regents or Advanced Regents diploma within four years of starting high school, passing at least one math Regents examination with a score of 80 or higher, and passing the English Regents examination with a score of 75 or higher. Little research has been done to validate the accuracy of this measure in predicting college readiness and success. The Research Alliance is currently working to identify better college readiness indicators.
- ⁴ Note that "school culture" in this context is very much focused on postsecondary readiness, rather than a more general focus on the overall school environment.
- ⁵ Eligible schools that submitted an "intent to apply" letter were awarded a planning grant of \$3,000 to prepare their applications in "design teams" at their school.
- ⁶ Schools applied in Spring 2012; eligibility criteria applied to the 2010-2011 school year.
- ⁷ We do not have information about why some schools did not apply.
- ⁸ Network representatives were barred from scoring applications from schools in their own network.
- ⁹ ESI design teams at each school were typically comprised of the principal, an assistant principal, several teachers, other non-instructional staff members, and a few students.
- ¹⁰ The group of non-ESI schools includes all other NYC schools serving 9th graders with the exception of the nine specialized schools, district 79, district 75, and schools serving fewer than 25 students. District 79 is comprised of alternative high schools, and District 75 is made up of schools designed to meet the needs of special education students.
- ¹¹ Please note that when we compare Black and Latino populations across the two groups of schools, we limit the non-ESI group to schools with at least 25 Black and Latino male students or those whose student populations are at least 25 percent Black and Latino male. The sample size for this group of schools is 256.
- ¹² Throughout this paper, graduation rates are calculated using criteria that are consistent with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and NYC DOE. Graduates include those who earned a local diploma or a New York State Regents Diploma. Non-graduates include those who received a GED or IEP certificate, those who dropped out of high school, and those who remained enrolled in a New York City high school without yet graduating. Also, like the NYSED and DOE calculations, graduation rates here include those who earn diplomas over the summer following scheduled graduation. For example, graduation rates for students who began high school in September 2005 reflect the percentage of these students who earned a diploma as of October 2009. Unless otherwise noted, graduation calculations do not include those who were identified as transferring from the New York City public school system with an indication that they enrolled in another jurisdiction. Finally, the analyses in this paper do not include students who transferred into a New York City high school

after their 9th grade year. Such students are included in the overall graduation rates reported by the NYSED and DOE. Thus, the graduation rates reported in this paper are different (typically 4-5 percentage points higher) than those reported by the NYSED and DOE.

¹³ Non-graduates include those who received a GED or IEP certificate, those who dropped out of high school, those who remained enrolled in a New York City high school, and those who were discharged from the New York City public school system. Since it is unknown whether or not discharged students will graduate after leaving the NYC district, we consider these students non-graduates.

¹⁴ The local diploma was phased out for general education students beginning in 2012.

¹⁵ Exam scores are from students' 8th grade year. "Proficiency" refers to a score of 3 or 4 on the standardized NYS English Language Arts (ELA) and math assessments.

¹⁶ English language learners are students who speak a language other than English at home and who score below the state-determined level of proficiency on the Language Assessment Battery. Foreign-born students are students whose country of origin is not the United States. Overage students are students who are older than would be expected for their grade, based on the NYC school enrollment cutoff date. Special education students are students who receive special education or related services. Related special education services include Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for learning or behavioral disabilities that can be accommodated in regular education.

¹⁷ Progress Report grades are assigned to schools by the New York Department of Education and are intended to provide a snapshot of the school's performance during the previous year in five areas: (1) student progress, (2) student performance,

(3) school environment, (4) college and career readiness, and (5) closing the achievement gap (New York City Department of Education, 2013b).

¹⁸ The high school Progress Report grade is a numeric conversion of the letter grades assigned to schools by the NYC DOE.

Letter grades of 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'F' were converted to numeric values of 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0, respectively.

¹⁹ Of course, this number varies by school—for example, one school plans to utilize only four strategies under ESI, while two schools plan to utilize 17. However, the number of schools at either extreme is minimal; over 75 percent of ESI schools plan to utilize between seven and 12 strategies.

²⁰ The Design Challenge emphasizes the importance of addressing college readiness as early as 9th grade, but it is likely schools' emphasis on school culture will increase as ESI expands to 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

²¹ We defined existing strategies as any strategy present in a school's application but not in its work plan; enhanced strategies as any strategy present in a given school's application as well as its work plan, and new strategies as any strategy absent from a school's application but present in its work plan.

²² We assumed that schools already undertaking a given strategy would not need to invest in the same level of infrastructure as schools implementing that strategy for the first time. Refer to MDRC's forthcoming cost study for more concrete data and findings regarding the costs of ESI.

²³ We will be releasing a full implementation report in early 2014.

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