

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

Final Evaluation Report

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Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) is a citywide initiative, created by the New York City-based Youth Development Institute (YDI), to assist young people in completing their education, entering college, finding work, and contributing to their communities. CEPS and its partner community-based organizations (CBOs) target out-of-school youths, 16 to 24 years old with reading levels below 8th grade, who are interested in preparing for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and/or improving their skills. Over the four year project period, ten CBOs, in three Cohorts, participated in CEPS. Cohort 1 included three sites that entered CEPS in 2005/06, all of which participated for the full four years. Cohort 2 included three sites that entered CEPS in 2006/07. Two Cohort 2 sites participated in CEPS for three years while the third site left after two years. Cohort 3 included four sites that started CEPS in 2007/08. Three Cohort 3 sites participated in CEPS for two years, while the fourth site left after one year.¹

The goals of CEPS are to:

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

The CEPS model has high quality instruction at its core. To date, CEPS' literacy instruction has been based on the America's Choice Ramp-Up curriculum, which has been implemented at all sites. Ramp-Up is a year-long curriculum tailored specifically to the needs of adolescents who have never known academic success. Instructors are provided with daily lesson plans, homework assignments, and ways to illustrate key concepts. The daily schedule focuses on rituals for entering the classroom, independent reading, daily word study, and read aloud/think aloud. Sites also use the America's Choice math curriculum, Mathematics Navigator, which gives students who are struggling with specific mathematics concepts and skills instruction that addresses the root causes of common misconceptions. In support of the instruction, the CEPS

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¹ At the two sites (Sites H and J) who left CEPS, the Ramp-Up curriculum and other aspects of the CEPS model were not a good fit with the sites' existing programs and Ramp-Up was only being minimally implemented. In both cases, YDI and site staff jointly decided that it would be better for the sites not to continue in CEPS.

model includes an ongoing assessment of each student's progress using the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE).

The model assumes that there will be:

- a process for staff to learn from each other and to learn about the young people with whom they are working;
- a “primary person” approach in place, where each student has a specific person to whom they go for guidance, support, and referral;
- the collection and use of data for program improvement;²
- the combining of different program components into a “blended approach.”

Infused throughout the CEPS model are the following youth development practices: high expectations for youth; opportunities for youth to contribute; continuity of relationships with youth; engaging activities for youth; caring and trusting relationships; and physical, emotional and psychological safety.

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

I. The Evaluation

The third and final year of the evaluation of CEPS sought to answer the following questions:

- How and to what extent have youth development practices at participating CBO pre-GED programs changed and what practices appear to be institutionalized?
- How and to what extent have instructional and student support practices at participating CBO pre-GED programs changed and what practices appear to be institutionalized?
- How and to what extent have administrative practices at participating CBO pre-GED programs changed and what practices appear to be institutionalized?
- What is the impact of participating in CBO pre-GED programs on young people's:
 - Literacy skills;
 - Math skills;
 - Retention;
 - Continuing on in education, such as entry into a GED program;
 - GED attainment?
- What factors appear to be most closely tied to student retention and improvement?

For the 2008/09 year, data collection activities included:

- review of background information and reports from the remaining eight sites;
- observations at the eight sites;

² The original model included administrator consultation with youth and staff on decision-making; after the first year of CEPS there was less emphasis in this area.

- interviews with instructors, directors, counselors, trainers, and advocates at the eight sites;
- final interviews with the eight site directors;
- collection, review, and analysis of student data;
- development and testing of different hypotheses, with the assistance of site staff, as to why across sites, some students increased their scores dramatically and others either had minimal change or had scores that decreased.

During the 2006/07 and 2007/08 years, the data collection activities included:³

- a review of background information and reports from sites from Cohorts 1, 2, and 3;
- fall 2006 student focus groups and spring 2007 surveys at two Cohort 1 and two Cohort 2 sites;
- fall and spring observations at Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 sites;
- spring observations at the Cohort 3 sites;
- multiple interviews with instructors, directors, counselors, trainers, and advocates at all CEPS sites;
- the collection, review, and analysis of student data.

The 2006/07 evaluation report focused on changes in site implementation of the CEPS model and the 2007/08 report focused more on CEPS' impact on students.⁴ This final report focuses on trends in student data and program implementation as well as on-site institutionalization of the CEPS model.

II. Results

Implementing the CEPS Model

While there was some variability across sites, the 2008/09 sites were implementing the components of the CEPS model.

The Curriculum

As indicated earlier, CEPS' literacy instruction has been based on America's Choice's Ramp-Up curriculum and its math instruction has been based in part on America's Choice's Mathematics Navigator. The eight 2008/09 CEPS sites all used Ramp-Up and were, for the most part, quite satisfied with it; although recently sites have been expressing the need to include more time for

³ During the 2006/07 year, two sites that were supported by the New York City Board of Education had additional procedures that needed to be completed before IRB (Institutional Review Board) permission could be granted to access students, instructors, and student data, other than those data already being reported to YDI. Permission was received in summer 2007, so some data were not available for the 2006/07 data collection.

⁴ See the Appendix A for a copy of the second year evaluation report.

student writing. There is less satisfaction with Math Navigator. For the most part, sites used Math Navigator as a supplement to other curriculum materials and activities rather than as a curriculum itself. Opinions about Math Navigator varied. One site felt that although their math curriculum was strong without Math Navigator, Math Navigator helped the math teacher rethink their approach to teaching math. A second site felt that Math Navigator “gives a foundation, skill set, better understanding of building skills.” Staff at a third site felt that while Math Navigator helped students understanding math concepts, it didn’t always fit in with the way math instruction was usually done.

Others had concerns about the perceived level of the Math Navigator materials, feeling that it was “too structured” and the language sounded too formal “like it was little kids.” One teacher addressed this potential issue in class, by offering students a “disclaimer” about the books, telling them: “It may look simple but it is easier to learn with easy numbers and [you] will understand the concepts.” Another teacher acknowledged that the literacy level of the books was a flaw but felt that concerns about the low level were overblown explaining: “You can get over it and the kids get over it quickly. Concerns about book being babyish are overcome quickly.”

Testing

As indicated earlier, the primary vehicle for CEPS student assessment is the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE).⁵ Students take the TABE at the time of their entry into CEPS and again periodically as long as they are in CEPS. TABE test results are used to assess student progress and, in most sites, used as one of the criteria to determine when students are ready to move to a GED program. Studies by the TABE’s publisher, CTB/McGraw-Hill, found TABE scores to be related to GED and GED predictor scores.

Across sites, CEPS staff members have expressed concerns about the use of the TABE for CEP student assessment. As one site director explained, there was concern that the TABE “doesn’t capture the true picture of [student] growth.” To explore TABE’s content validity⁶ as a measure of CEPS student literacy gains, the evaluation team did an analysis of the degree of overlap between the content and skills covered by Ramp-Up and those covered by the TABE reading subtest.⁷ The results of the analysis confirmed CEPS staff concerns. Ramp-Up covers the skills and content areas tested in the TABE Reading Subtest, but 62% of the Ramp-Up objectives are not covered by the TABE Reading Subtest. Since Ramp-Up covers the areas included in the TABE, the TABE is a valid measure, but since Ramp-Up covers many areas not included in the TABE; it is an incomplete measure of what students should be learning under Ramp-Up.

Other CEPS Components

⁵ TABE Scores are reported as grade equivalents (GE). In GE, the integer is the school grade level and the decimal is the month of the nine month school year. Thus, a 7.4 GE indicates an academic level approximating that of the fourth month of the 7th grade.

⁶ Validity means that a test is valid—that it measures that what it is supposed to measure. Content validity means that the test covers the appropriate subject matter.

⁷ See Appendix B for more about the analysis and the results.

The CEPS model also includes a “primary person” approach; a process for staff to learn from each other and to learn about the young people; collection and use of data; and the bringing together of different program components into a “blended approach.”

In 2008/09, all CEPS sites had some form of the primary person system in place and all had some formal ways to learn from each other and to communicate about students. While all sites had periodically scheduled formal case conferences that focused on students, some sites had weekly meetings while others met biweekly and others quarterly. These formal sessions were supplemented by reports on students at daily or weekly team and staff meetings and through informal staff conversations. Sites have become quite innovative in their student conferencing. For example, at one site, two to three team members now do the conferencing and the resulting report/summary is sent by e-mail to all team members who can then provide more input and ideas as needed. If something important is missed, then another meeting is scheduled.

Sites have been making progress in their use of data but, with some exceptions, sites continued to make minimal use of data for program improvement. One exception was a site that started an inquiry team on-site to look at their data. This team was meeting weekly to look at attendance patterns and planned to do experiments to test the effectiveness of such strategies as incentives and phone calls. They plan to meet monthly to talk about the results of their experiments and to decide what interventions to implement. A second site has been tracking student attendance in terms of the course hours that students miss by being tardy and absent, and then making program decisions based on the data as well as using it with individual students. Unfortunately, other sites were using data less in 2008/09 than previously, in part because they had to switch databases as they could no longer receive free/low cost support for their existing database.

Student Outcomes⁸

Student Demographics

In 2008/09, reflecting earlier data, the majority of CEPS students were male and Latino, with an average age of 19.

Table 1: 2008/09 CEPS Student Demographics

	Women	Men	Total
African American	58	66	124/32%
Latino/a	112	119	231/59%
Other	13	23	36/ 9%
Total	183/47%	208/53%	391/100%

⁸ Sites were provided opportunities to correct/update 2007/08 data which may lead to small differences from the data reported in the 2007/08 evaluation report.

As was the case in previous years, the sex and race/ethnicity of CEPS students varied by site. For example, while on average 59% of CEPS students were Latino/a, the percentage of Latino/a students in individual sites ranged from 14% to 100%. There was less variation by sex. The percentage of male students by site ranged from a low of 42% to a high of 67%. There were no differences in terms of student age. Across sites, the average student age was around 19. Relatively few CEPS students were parents (56/14%); 22% (41) of the women and 7% (15) of the men were parents.

Only 5% (19) of the students were known to have an individual evaluation program, which is an indicator of special education status. This did not mean that only 5% of the students had special education needs; it means that in most sites, particularly those not affiliated with the New York City Board of Education, special education status was not known because this information was not available to the sites.

Student Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment continued to not be an issue for CEPS sites. While some sites continue to struggle with retention, four of the eight sites have retention rates of 70% or more. Retention rates are not tied to student sex but may, in some ways, be related to incentives.

There are so many out-of-school youth and so few available programs that, during the three years of the evaluation, student recruitment has never been in issue for CEPS. All sites have had as many students as they could serve, with some sites having waiting lists. Students have been known to travel significant distances to attend CEPS, including one student who traveled from Staten Island to Brooklyn to attend a CEPS program.

Previously, student retention was a problem and while it continues to be a challenge at some sites, in general it has become much less of an issue.⁹ In 2007/08, the retention rate was 54% and in 2008/09, it increased to 63%. In 2007/08, three sites had retention rates below 50% while in 2008/09, only one site had a retention rate less than 50%. In 2008/09, five sites increased their retention rates, two decreased their retention rates, and the remaining site's rate stayed at about the same level. In 2007/08, their first year participating in CEPS, the Cohort 3 sites had an overall student retention rate of 35%. In 2008/09, the average retention rate for these sites increased to 47%.

⁹ Retention was defined as the number and percent of students remaining in CEPS long enough to take the TABE literacy test more than once during the 2008/09 year. However, also included in the 2008/09 computation of retention rates were 19 CEPS students who only took the TABE once during 2008/09 but did move on to GED programs in 2008/09.

Table 2: Student Retention by Site by Year

	Individual Sites	2007/08 Students with Two TABE Literacy Scores	2008/09 Students with Two TABE Literacy Scores*	Number of Incentives Offered to 2008/09 Students
All Sites		208/54%	247/63%	5
Cohort 1		100/59%	127/74%	6.3
	Site C	30/47%	48/70%	4
	Site G	33/53%	41/80%	11
	Site I	37/88%	38/73%	5
Cohort 2		57/75%	50/71%	4
	Site B	18/78%	15/50%	2
	Site F	39/74%	35/88%	6
Cohort 3		51/35%	70/47%	3.7
	Site A	12/29%	25/56%	4
	Site D	20/33%	29/38%	3
	Site E	19/45%	16/57%	4

*Also included are 19 CEPS students who went on to GED programs and only took the TABE once during 2008/09.

In 2008/09, individual site retention rates ranged from a high of 88% to a low of 38%. The three sites with the lowest 2007/08 retention rates all improved their retention rates in 2008/09. As was found in 2007/08, retention rates were similar for women and men students. In 2007/08, women students were approximately 45% of both the students overall and of the retained students. In 2008/09, women students were approximately 47% of both students overall and of retained students.

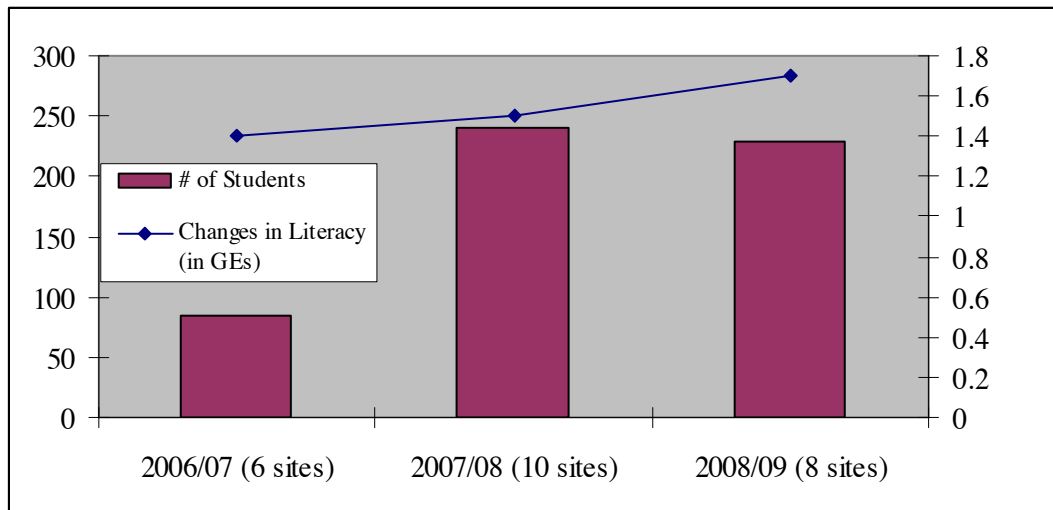
It is difficult to determine the relationship between the use of incentives and retention. Sites offered between 2 and 11 different student incentives with an average of almost 5 different incentives offered per site. The sites with the largest numbers of incentives had the highest retention. Site F, which offered 6 different incentives had a retention rate of 88% while Site G, with a retention rate of 80%, offered 11 different incentives. However, other patterns weren't as clear. For example, student stipends and internships were offered by sites with both the highest and lowest retention rates. Metro cards were the incentive used most frequently (7/88%), followed by student of the month awards (6/75%), followed by stipends, employment opportunities tied to CEPS, and gift cards (5/62% each).

Literacy

Over time, CEPS student gains in literacy have been increasing.

Over time, there have been increases in the numbers of students staying in the program long enough to take the TABE more than once and, at the same time, increases in the average gains in literacy as measured by Grade Equivalent (GE).

Chart 1: Increases in Student Numbers and Literacy Gains (in GE) by Program Year



Over the three years of the evaluation, the number of students taking the TABE more than once in a program year increased from 85 students (at six sites) to 241 (at 10 sites)¹⁰ to 228 students (at 8 sites). Over the same time period, the average gain in literacy increased from 1.4 GE to 1.5 GE to 1.7 GE in 2008/09. The gains have all been statistically significant and are increasingly large.¹¹ As was found in previous years, differences by sex were not statistically significant. Pre/post gains by individual site varied from the highest gains of more than two grade equivalents in Sites F and E to lower gains of 1.1 and 1.3 in Sites G and I.

Table 3: Changes in Literacy Scores by Site

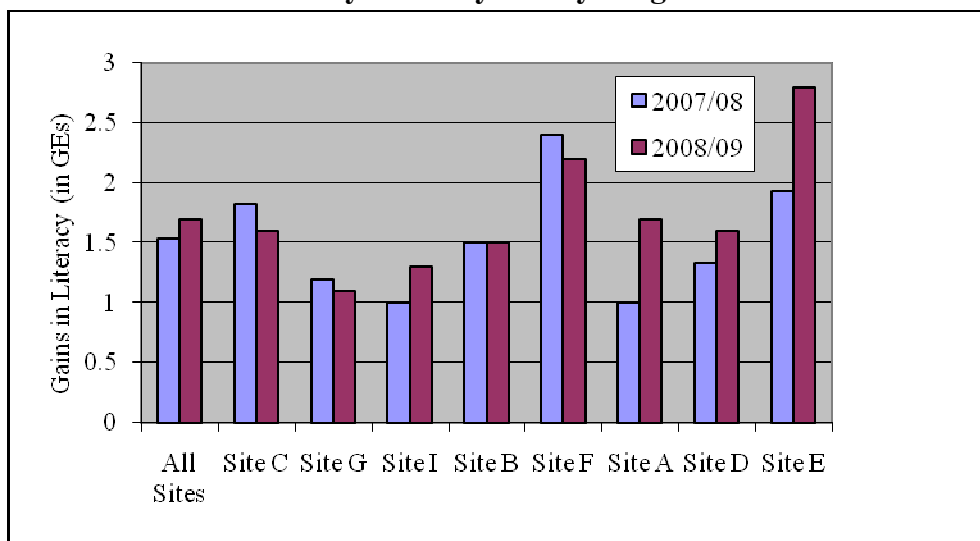
	Individual Site	2008/09 Initial Literacy Score	2008/09 Most Recent Literacy Score	Change in 2008/09 Literacy Score
All Sites		6.0	7.7	1.7
Cohort 1		6.1	7.4	1.3
	Site C	5.9	7.5	1.6
	Site G	5.9	7.0	1.1
	Site I	6.7	8.0	1.3
Cohort 2		5.9	7.9	2.0
	Site B	4.7	6.2	1.5
	Site F	6.4	8.6	2.2
Cohort 3		6.0	7.9	1.9
	Site A	6.3	8.0	1.7
	Site D	6.5	8.1	1.6
	Site E	4.7	7.5	2.8

¹⁰ Two of the 10 sites did not continue into 2008/09. The 8 sites that did had a 2007/08 enrollment of 208.

¹¹ $F=156.5$, $p=.000$, $d=.96$. A d (effect size) of 0.8 or higher is considered large.

As seen in Chart 2, literacy gains in Cohort 1 sites (C, G, I) and Cohort 2 sites (B, F) remained about the same between 2007/08 and 2008/09. However, Cohort 3 sites (A, D, E), all of whom were completing their second year in CEPS, increased the size of their literacy gains.

Chart 2: Student Literacy Gains by Site by Program Year



Efficiency

Gains in literacy provide important evaluation information, but the size of these gains may be misleading unless these data are examined in a broader perspective that includes:

- the number of students served;¹²
- the number and percent of students retained by the program;
- the amount of time it has taken students to achieve these gains;
- instructional time.

¹² When retention and gain scores are both used as indicators of success, it is important to note that higher rates of retention may have a negative impact on average student gain. In general, the students who drop out of a program tend to be those who are not doing as well. More successful students tend to remain with a program. Thus, when retention efforts become more effective, more students who aren't doing as well remain in the program. This can cause program change scores to be lower than they would have been without those students.

Table 4: Changes in 2008/09 Literacy Scores with Other Indicators of Success by Site

Site		Total Number of Students	Percent of Students with Two Scores*	Total Days Between Pre and Most Recent TABE ¹³ #	Initial Literacy Score	Most Recent Literacy Scores	Change in Literacy Scores
All Sites		391	58%	129	6.0	7.7	1.7
Cohort 1		172	70%	139	6.1	7.4	1.3
	Site C	69	70%	117	5.9	7.5	1.6
	Site G	51	80%	149	5.9	7.0	1.1
	Site I	52	60%	159	6.7	8.0	1.3
Cohort 2		70	70%	103	5.9	7.9	2.0
	Site B	30	50%	124	4.7	6.2	1.5
	Site F	40	85%	93	6.4	8.6	2.2
Cohort 3		149	40%	131	6.0	7.9	1.9
	Site A	45	44%	125	6.3	8.0	1.7
	Site D	76	32%	172	6.5	8.1	1.6
	Site E	28	54%	72	4.7	7.5	2.8

*Not included are the 19 CEPS students who went on to GED programs and only took the TABE once during 2008/09.

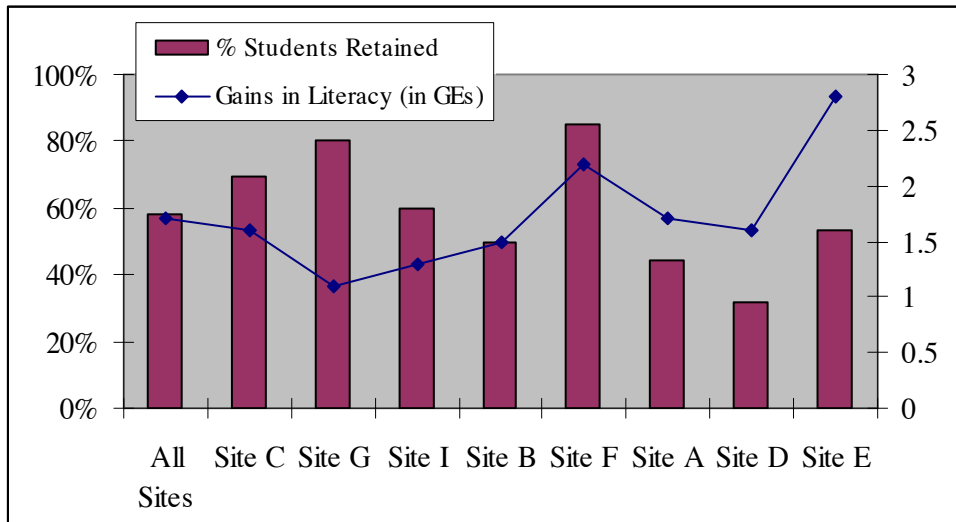
Includes weekends and holidays.

Under a definition of success looking at increases in TABE scores alone, Sites C and D would be considered equally successful, since both sites had average increases in literacy of 1.6. However, on average, the time between their first and most recent TABE score for students in Site C was 117 days (including weekends and holidays), while for students in Site D it was 172 days. Additionally, while 70% of the Site C students had pre and follow up TABE scores, this was the case for only 32% of the Site D students.

Chart 3 looks at literacy gains and retention rates. Some sites, like Site F, have both high retention rates and larger literacy gains while some other sites, like Site E, have larger gains in literacy and lower retention rates and yet other sites, like site G have higher percentages of retained students but relatively lower gains in literacy.

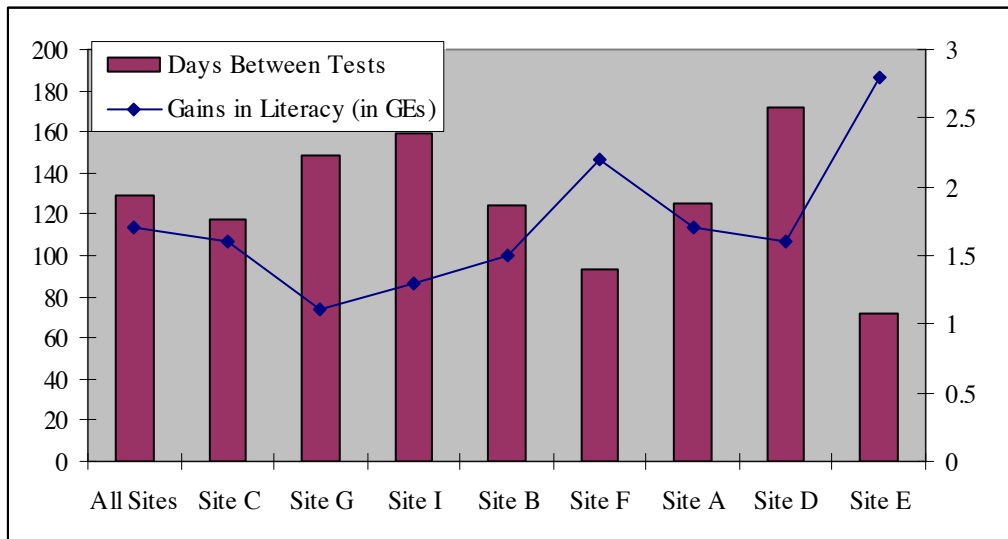
¹³ Days between students taking the TABE was used as an approximate indicator of time in the program.

Chart 3: Student Literacy Gains and Percent of Students Taking the TABE More Than Once



As indicated earlier, another way to put literacy gains in context is to look at the amount of time it took individual students to make those gains. In this case, **lower** numbers of days are related to higher efficiency. For example, as seen in Chart 4, sites F and E have large increases in literacy in a relatively short period of time.

Chart 4: Student Literacy Gains and the Number of Days between Students' Pre and Follow-Up Tests



Sites differed in terms of the numbers of literacy instructional hours offered each week. While on average they offered 8 hours a week, individual sites offered anywhere from 5.5 to 11 hours of literacy instruction each week. The average number of hours of literacy instruction offered in 2008/09 was lower than in 2007/08 (8 vs. 11) and the range of hours offered was narrower for

2008/09 than it was for 2007/08 (5.5-11 vs. 4.5-24). Analysis found there was not a statistically significant correlation between available instructional hours and student literacy gains.

Mathematics

Over the evaluation period, the number of students with initial and follow-up TABE Composite Math scores increased from 67 students in six sites in 2006/07 to 194 students from eight sites in 2007/08 and 182 students in seven sites¹⁴ in 2008/09. During the first two years of the evaluation, the average math gain was .9 GE and in 2008/09 the average math gain increased to 1.2 GE (5.1 to 6.3).¹⁵ As can be seen in Table 5, there were differences in student gain by site, with gains varying from .8 to 1.9.

Table 5: Changes in 2008/09 Composite Math Score

	Individual Site	2008/09 Initial Math Score	2008/09 Most Recent Math Score	Change in 2008/09 Math
All Sites		5.1	6.3	1.2
Cohort 1		5.0	6.0	1.0
	Site C	4.7	6.0	1.3
	Site G	5.1	6.0	.9
	Site I	5.1	6.1	1
Cohort 2		5.2	6.7	1.5
	Site B	4.6	5.4	.8
	Site F	5.4	7.3	1.9
Cohort 3		5.2	6.7	1.5
	Site A	5.5	6.9	1.4
	Site D*	NA	NA	NA
	Site E	4.7	6.3	1.6

* Site D did not provide Composite Math scores; they provided Math Computation and Applied Math scores.

Students in Site D did not have Composite Math scores. Per Table 6, they did, however, have Math Computation and Applied Math scores.

Table 6: Changes in Site D Math Scores

	Initial Math Score	Most Recent Math Score	Change in Math Scores
Math Computation	5.2	6.3	1.1
Applied Math	6.4	7.0	.6

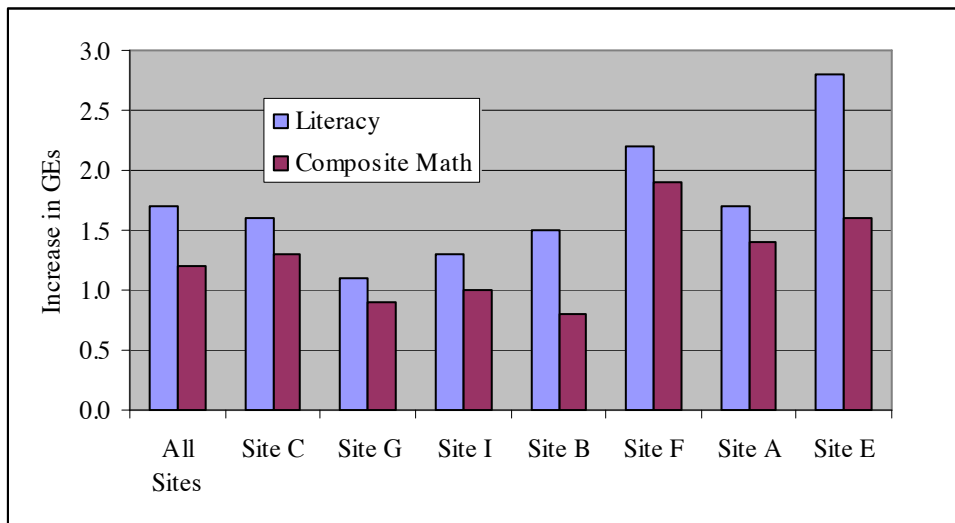
¹⁴ The eighth site, Site D, didn't report Math Composite scores; they provided Math Computation and Applied Math scores.

¹⁵ $t=9.66$, $p=.000$, $d=.74$. A d (effect size) of 0.5 to 0.79 is considered of medium size.

Relative Differences in Literacy and Math Instruction and Gains

Over the three years of the evaluation, gains in math achievement have been less than gains in literacy. In 2006/07, at four of the five sites with both literacy and math data, math gains were lower than literacy gains; in 2007/08, at seven of the eight sites where there was comparable math and literacy data, math gains were lower. As Chart 5 indicates, this pattern of sites having higher literacy than math gains continued for the 2008/09 year.

Chart 5: Student Gains in TABE Literacy and Composite Math Scores



One hundred and eighty-two students from seven of the eight sites had both initial and follow-up TABE Literacy scores and TABE: Composite Math scores.¹⁶ Overall, these 182 students had significantly higher gains in Literacy than in Composite Math (1.6 vs. 1.2).¹⁷ While the size of the gaps varied, at these seven sites students' gains in literacy were greater than their gains in math. The gains in literacy reflected the full CEPS model, including site use of Ramp-Up. Since most sites were using Math Navigator as a supplement at best, gains in Composite Math scores reflect the CEPS model without a mandated curriculum. As was the case with the literacy scores, there were no significant differences by sex in terms of math gains.

The patterns for math instruction reflected those for literacy. While sites offered, on average, 5 hours of math instruction a week, individual sites offered from 4 to 7.5 hours of math instruction per week. The average number of hours of math instruction offered in 2008/09 was lower than that offered in 2007/08 (5 vs. 6.3) as was the range in the hours of math instruction offered by individual site (2008/09: 4-7.5; 2007/08: 3-16). There was not a significant correlation between the number of math instructional hours offered and student gains in mathematics.

¹⁶ Site D did not provide Composite Math scores; they provided Math Computation and Applied Math scores.

¹⁷ $t=1.77, p=.04$.

Progress toward the GED

Between 2007/08 and 2008/09, the number of CEPS students going to GED programs increased by over 44%, with increases coming in all three cohorts. These increases are even more impressive since the 81 2007/08 students going on to GED programs included those who went into GED programs in both 2007/08 and 2008/09. Percentages of students going on to GED programs during the 2008/09 year ranged from a high of 55% to a low of 18%. The most dramatic increases were from site G (21% to 41%), site A (10% to 33%), and Site B (17% to 33%).

Table 7: Students Going on to GED Programs by Site by Year

	Individual Sites	2007/08 Students going on to GED Programs in 2007/08 and 2008/09*	2008/09 Students going on to GED Programs in 2008/09**
All Sites		81/21%	117/30%
Cohort 1		34/20%	49/29%
	Site C	10/16%	13/19%
	Site G	13/21%	21/41%
	Site I	11/26%	15/29%
Cohort 2		24/34%	32/46%
	Site B	4/17%	10/33%
	Site F	21/45%	22/55%
Cohort 3		22/15%	36/24%
	Site A	6/10%	15/33%
	Site D	6/15%	14/18%
	Site E	10/24%	7/25%

*Includes site corrections and additions to data for 2007/08 students.

**Included are the 19 CEPS students who went on to GED programs and only took the TABE once during 2008/09.

During the 2008/09 year, 29 (25%) of the 117 students who went on to GED programs also took the GED. During the 2007/08 and 2008/09 school years, 40% (32) of the 81 2007/08 students who entered GED programs took the GED.

Indicators of Success: Students Who Moved On to GED Programs and Those Who Did Not.

Comparisons were made between CEPS students who went on to GED programs and other CEPS students. Students who went on to GED programs came in with significantly higher TABE literacy scores and gained more during their time in CEPS than did other students who stayed in CEPS but did not go on to GED programs during 2008/09 (6.6 to 8.9 vs. 5.8 to 6.7).¹⁸ The pattern was similar for Composite Math scores (5.4 to 7.0 vs. 4.8 to 5.8).¹⁹ While there were

¹⁸ $f=44.14$; $p=.000$.

¹⁹ $f=6.66$; $p=.01$.

no correlations between hours of weekly instruction and individual student TABE score gains, students who went on to GED programs had access to significantly more hours of weekly literacy instruction than did students who were still in CEPS (8.0 vs. 7.5),²⁰ although there were no differences in terms of their hours of math instruction (5.6 vs. 5.7). Demographically, there were no differences between students who went on to GED programs and other students in terms of age, sex, or race/ethnicity.

*Stories of Student Success*²¹

To provide a deeper understanding of CEPS and its impact on students, CEPS staff and instructors were asked to tell stories of student success. This year, stories about groups of students spoke of GED attainment and/or progress toward the GED.

Kids are little more focused, they've been able to see former CEPS students get their GED and they are now a little more enthusiastic. They have a direct link—CEPS students can get their GED.

Successful students have the same story. In the beginning students had behavioral and academic issues and low self-esteem. Once they worked on whatever the issues they had, often academic and behavioral issues go hand in hand, they saw themselves doing better. Once they get a GED or move on from CEPS to a GED program; their personality does a 180.

Other stories showed the difficulties students face and overcome.

Samantha at 25 is the oldest in the program. She has been out of school since 18, is a single mom and clinically depressed, believing she is not good enough for anything. The program worked with her to her change her mindset to “you can do it; you can do it.” She ended up scoring high on the TABE, got 700 on the GED predictor and scored 2250 on GED but failed the math. She is proud of herself and is now doing math tutoring preparing to take the GED Math. Now she says about herself “I did it, I underestimated my skills—I didn’t realize I knew so much.”

Manuel has been in CEPS longer than anyone (1.5 years). He came in at the first grade level in reading and math and we almost didn’t take him because of the low scores but he was really adamant about being here. He quit for about 3 months and came back rededicated and scored at the 5th/6th grade level on a recent retake. He has seen others transition out but it’s not getting him down. He shares the routines with new students and calms students down. He’s moving from never wanting to say anything to being the one who wants to volunteer and wants to go up to the board.

²⁰ $t=2.18, p=.03$.

²¹ All student names have been changed.

Kamile is 17, he wasn't attending school and came to a non-CEPS program at the site. Since he was having a hard time showing up for the other program; he didn't think he would be able to "hack" CEPS. In the program, he studied but it was sporadic; he "didn't crash land but it was shaky flight." Several months later he wanted to try CEPS. Since he's been in CEPS, he's been outstanding, he was student of the week twice, and is now student of the month. He's been great.

Finally, stories spoke of the ways that the CEPS program helped to stop students from falling through the cracks.

George scored really low on the TABE and was put into lowest level basic ed class. He came every day but slipped through the cracks for a little while. We found out late in the game he can't read and write. He is 18, has just gotten by. He is now doing 1:1 work with one of the staff members and coming consistently. He still goes to class even though he can't follow much but he's steadily improving and reading on his own. We wouldn't have been discovered this if there wasn't such an interweb of staff.

Five CEPS graduates went on to other GED programs. Now that the site is starting a GED program based on the CEPS model, the five former students are asking to enter the program. They miss the support of the CEPS model.

Daren was arrested recently. CEPS site staff members went to the jail to see him. His mother was surprised that they came and happy that they cared. Daren came back to CEPS and is now starting an internship.

Tying Site Activities to Outcomes

Sustaining Excellence after a Difficult Start

During their first year in CEPS, Site F's outcomes were not strong. Only 13 students took the TABE more than once and, on average, students did NOT increase their literacy scores, although there was a minimal increase in math scores (0.6 GE). During Site F's second year, student outcomes improved dramatically. The number of CEPS students taking more than one TABE tripled to 39. On average, these 39 students increased their literacy scores by 2.4 GE and their math scores by 0.9 GE. Almost half of the 2007/08 students went on to GED programs. This pattern of increase continued for a third year. Retention rates went up to 85% with 34 of the 40 students taking the TABE more than once. Their average literacy score gain stayed high (2.2 GE) while increases in math more than doubled to 1.9 GE. And during 2008/09, 55% of Site F's CEPS students went on to GED programs.

In 2008/09, site F continued with the 2007/08 instructor, a former special education teacher who remained enthusiastic about being at CEPS and about using the Ramp-Up model. In 2008/09, he focused on doing more small-group work with students and on doing more work with individual students. To reduce student tardiness, he switched the times math and reading were taught and

used math, particularly Algebra, as a hook to get students to get to the program on time. Difficulty in replacing a counselor meant that for much of the 2008/09 year, the CEPS project director had to do double duty. However, by spring 2009 a full-time primary person was hired. In addition, during 2008/09, case conferencing continued. Student data, particularly attendance data, were collected, analyzed, and used to counsel students. In 2007/08, a buddy system was set up for new students. In 2008/09, this was replaced by having students enter the CEPS program in cohorts. CEPS students also continued to be integrated into the young adult training program, where they received training and a stipend.

Site F's emphasis on having students go on to GED programs continued and included such activities as having students take the GED predictor tests and having staff go over the results with them. In addition, CEPS student group meeting times were used to have conversations about what transitioning to a GED program meant for the ones who were leaving and those who were not.

While Site F will be opening a GED program in 2009/10, they had no GED program in 2008/09. They did however provide services to former CEPS students who were in GED programs, including biweekly checks with the former CEPS students and monthly drop-ins at the GED sites to check on how the students were doing.

Focusing on Retention

The major increase between Site G's second and third years was in retention. The number of students staying in the program long enough to take the TABE more than once increased from 8 to 33. In 2008/09, this number increased to 41 students for a retention rate of 80%. Between 2007/08 and 2008/09, the number of students going on to GED programs increased from 13 (21%) to 21 (41%).

Between 2006/07 and 2007/08, there were major decreases in the amount of academic gains. Literacy gains decreased from 2.3 GE to 1.2 GE and math gains declined from 2.2 GE to 0.4 GE. In 2008/09, the literacy increase stayed at about the same level while the size of the math gains more than doubled from 0.4 GE to 0.9GE.

Site G had a different instructor in 2008/09 than it had in spring 2008. Both instructors were committed to the students and the program. Ramp-Up rituals and routines were being implemented and there was a great deal of independent reading. The 2008/09 instructor put more emphasis on writing and geography than did the previous instructor, and also provided math tutoring. CEPS students continued to be taught in their own room, which was close to the students' "primary person," making close monitoring easier. In 2008/09, Site G continued their case conferencing and primary person systems. They also added an afternoon career development class and a "reality workshop" which covered such areas as health, hygiene, nutrition, mental health, and abuse. As Site G CEPS students moved to GED classes, they stayed in the same building, kept the same primary person and had access to the same resources. When Site G students transition to a GED program, their primary person as well as their old and new teachers meet to smooth the transition.

Remaking a Program

Site A had a difficult first year. Of the 10 2007/08 sites, Site A had the lowest number and percentage of students taking the TABE more than once (12/29%), and its gains in literacy and math were among the lowest for all sites. During the 2007/08 year, only 2 Site A students went on to GED programs.²² Reflecting Site F's path, Site A's second year was dramatically better. The number of students taking the TABE at least twice, doubled to 25 (56%) while the number of students going on to GED programs increased to 15 (33%). The average literacy gain increased as well, from 1.0 GE to 1.7 GE, and the average math gain increased from 0.5 GEs to 1.5 GE.

During its first year, Site A had to deal with several issues. They began with one instructor teaching both the GED class and the pre-GED CEPS class. This did not work well. There were scheduling problems, with the instructor at times having to be in two places simultaneously, causing non-instructional staff to have to cover parts of the classes. In addition, the original instructor had a strong accent and was uncomfortable doing the Ramp-Up read aloud in part because the students made fun of him. In January 2008, a new instructor was hired for the CEPS class and continued on through the 2008/09 year. This instructor followed the Ramp-Up model very closely and, in January 2009, reported being "100% more comfortable" with Ramp-Up and Math Navigator than during the previous year. While Site A had case conferencing and the primary person system in place for both years; during its first year, the staff member serving as the primary person for the CEPS students left and the students were "split up" among the remaining staff members. In its second year, Site A added a counselor who was able to respond more quickly to students in crises as well as being part of student assessment, intake, and orientation.

Moving from a Strong First Year to a Stronger Second Year

Even though 2007/08 was its first year in CEPS, Site E had one of the highest literacy gains (1.9 GEs), with almost half of their students (45%) taking the TABE Literacy test more than once. During its second year, although the absolute number of students taking the TABE more than once decreased (from 19 to 16) the retention rate increased to 57%. The average literacy increase in 2008/09 was an impressive 2.8 GE and the average increase in math scores was also impressive at 1.6 GE.

When Site E joined CEPS, they had "been shopping for a year for a curriculum for their program for out-of-school youth" and they felt they had found it in CEPS. Site E folded the CEPS model into programming throughout their site. Site E initially implemented the Ramp-Up literacy curriculum "tightly" but, after training, began to implement it with more flexibility. A new literacy instructor began in fall 2008 who was felt to have had a strong positive impact on instruction. During 2008/09, Site E's primary person system was more structured than before and staff felt it was working well. In spring 2009, Site E transitioned from informal discussions

²² Four 2007/08 students went on to GED programs in 2008/9.

to quarterly structured student conferences supplemented with reviews and updates between meetings. Too in 2008/09, Site E changed their educational orientation to be more in-depth and to provide students with opportunities to meet with instructors, an advisor, and staff.

Institutionalizing the CEPS Model

The eight sites all felt that they had institutionalized most, if not all, of the CEPS model, although one site hadn't yet figured out what they would be doing in terms of the primary person system. When asked what other pieces they might institutionalize, three sites pointed out that there was nothing else to institutionalize. In the words of one site: "We use the whole, entire model. We know that it works. We've seen it." Not only had all the sites institutionalized the CEPS model, six of the eight sites were implementing pieces of the CEPS model in other site programs and a seventh site planned to do so. Five sites were using the primary person model with non-CEPS programs and two expanded case conferencing to include non-CEPS students. Two sites were using the CEPS model (with more advanced curricular materials) with GED classes and a third was planning to do so in fall 2009. One other site explained that they won't be expanding the Ramp-Up rituals and routines to the higher level classes because the other teachers hadn't been trained in the concept and because it was felt the rituals and routines wouldn't work as well in upper level classes.

Math Navigator was the only component of CEPS that wasn't being institutionalized in most sites. Four sites had concerns about institutionalizing Math Navigator. One site only uses it as a tool to "assess the gaps that young people have" while a second site may use it if they can "tweak it to better make it fit into a class settings." Two other sites will not be using Math Navigator for a variety of reasons including (a) they felt the activities were at too a low a level, (b) the students did not like it, and (c) it demanded too much preparation from teachers.

As positive as the data are about CEPS institutionalization in participating sites, there are two major threats to CEPS institutionalization. At the end of the 2008/09 year, four CEPS program leaders left their agencies. Their reasons for leaving were diverse, including moving to different fields and going on to advance their education; but their exiting leaves a large void. While these sites all have plans to continue the CEPS model, this potential threat to institutionalization was best expressed by one of the departing program leaders who explained; "[CEPS] has become part of our DNA here; however, when I leave I don't know what will happen next." A second threat to ongoing institutionalization is funding. CBOs have significant funding challenges; indeed, because of reductions in funding, some sites have already had to shut down internships and lay off teachers.

III. Conclusions

CEPS' two major goals are:

1. to strengthen the capacity of community organizations to provide high quality and integrated youth development, support, and education services;

2. to enable returning youth to develop skills, attitudes, experiences, and credentials to achieve self-sufficiency and active involvement (in the classroom, the program, and the organization).

CEPS is achieving its first goal. It is clear that there is great value added to CBOs and their pre-GED programs in their first two years of participation in CEPS' extensive training and technical assistance. As would be expected, the first year implementing the CEPS model can be challenging for sites; however, by the end of their second year, sites become more effective and more efficient. While the value of the first two years of intensive participation is clear, it is less clear how much value is added during the third and fourth years of participation in the intensive training and technical assistance. For some sites, like Site F, that had a weak first year, a strong second year and an even stronger third year; the ongoing participation appeared to make a difference. For other sites, like Site I, third and fourth year participation did not lead to major changes in retention rates or the size of academic gains.

CEPS is achieving its second goal. CEPS has been effective in helping returning youth move toward self sufficiency. Even though students came into CEPS with 6th grade reading levels, during the 2008/09 year, 30% of them were able to move on to GED programs and 7.5% went from entering a pre-GED program to getting a GED in one academic year. And, in a little more than four months time, students achieved literacy gains of 1.7 grade equivalents and math gains of 1.2 grade equivalents. While students were developing skills and credentials, they were also developing habits of responsibility. Over 60% of students who came into CEPS stayed with it.

Other conclusions include:

CEPS has been institutionalized within all eight sites. With the exception of the math curriculum, CEPS' major components have already been institutionalized in all eight sites. Six of the eight sites have gone further with their institutionalization, implementing CEPS components, most frequently the primary person strategy, in other programs in their CBO.

Academically, CEPS is primarily a literacy program. In CEPS, much more attention is paid to literacy than to math. There is a common literacy curriculum, but not a common math curriculum; Math Navigator is used as a supplement at best. There is more instruction in literacy as well. On average, students had eight hours of literacy instruction a week but only five hours of math instruction. And as was the case in pervious years, students had significantly greater gains in literacy than in math. Less attention is paid to social students and science. Five of the eight sites offer no science and three offer no social studies.

Recruitment is not a problem. Student recruitment has never been an issue for CEPS. The population in need of such programs, young people whose academic skills are too low to qualify for GED programs, continues to be far greater than can be served by CEPS.

As sites mature, retention becomes less of a problem. During their first year in CEPS, sites tend to have student retention challenges. As they implement CEPS student support components,

including establishing formal ways of sharing information about students and a primary person system, retention rates improve.

CEPS continues to be equally effective with women and men students. While the percentage of men and women students varied greatly by program, there were no significant sex differences in retention. Nor were there sex differences in pre and follow-up literacy or math scores.

IV. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

The CEPS model be widely expanded. CEPS is an effective program. It improves students' skills and moves significant numbers of students on to GED programs. The eight participating sites have institutionalized the model and continue to implement it. The needs of out-of-school youth not eligible for GED programs are great and, as the waiting lists at the CEPS sites indicate, young people want to be a part of CEPS programs; once they enter CEPS, they tend to remain..

CEPS provide sites with recommendations for effective math curriculum. Currently, CEPS does not have a recommended math curriculum. Math Navigator is more of a supplement than a curriculum and it is not seen as appropriate by some of the sites. CEPS should review middle and middle/high school math curricula that have been found to be effective such as Connected Mathematics; Saxon Math: An Incremental Development; Prentice Hall: Tools for Success; and University of Chicago School Mathematics Project to determine if any of these curriculum might be appropriate for pre-GED students.

CEPS provide sites with recommendations for additional measures to use. For a variety of reasons, including the requirements of some funders, the TABE will continue to be the major academic measure used by CEPS sites. Since the areas covered by the TABE are included in Ramp-Up while most of Ramp-Up's objectives are not covered by TABE; the TABE is a valid but incomplete measure of CEPS student achievement. Having other measures available could allow sites to get a more complete look at student achievement.

CEPS consider adding a component to the overall model that focuses on student transition between CEPS and GED programs. Increasing numbers and percents of CEPS students are moving on to GED programs. Currently, sites have been developing their own strategies to assist students in their transition. Adding a transition component to the model has the potential to increase the effectiveness of transition efforts as well as to make them more consistent.