

Enhancing College and Career Expectations across School Communities

Introduction to the Save for College Program's Integration with the Local Social Infrastructure and the Role of Schools

By providing a tangible financial asset for every student's educational future from their first days of kindergarten, the Save for College Program provides a powerful mechanism for school communities to rally around their children's long-term success. The 39 founding partner schools of the Save for College Program have integrated this platform into their day-to-day operations to enhance their schools' college- and career-going culture, co-creating a model for new school districts across New York City.

WHAT: Throughout the pilot area—home to one of the most diverse school districts in the country—public elementary schools have integrated the Save for College Program into their operations to promote their goals around post-secondary readiness, family empowerment, and family-community ties in alignment with the DOE's Equity and Excellence Agenda and College Access for All initiative. Participating schools are using this platform as a tool to:

- Engage students and their families in conversations about their college and career aspirations from a young age through school-wide events and community partnerships;
- Support participating families to activate their children's NYC Scholarship Accounts, earn more funds for their children's scholarship accounts, and learn about the resources available to them through the Program;
- Partner with NYC Kids RISE and community based organizations to host financial empowerment and college access workshops, events, and one-on-one sessions for parents/guardians; and
- Teach customized, standards-aligned financial education lessons in the classroom, starting in kindergarten. These lessons introduce students to important financial concepts and teach them about their NYC Scholarship Accounts and how the Save for College Program can support their future.

WHY: Elementary schools are at the heart of every neighborhood and are a core component of the neighborhood social infrastructure, defined as “the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact.”¹ The Save for College Program is designed to support, leverage, and reinforce this neighborhood social infrastructure—the ecosystem of associations, organizations, and institutions in each neighborhood that impact a child and family's likelihood

of educational and economic success. The Save for College Program is also rooted in the principle that each community is unique and must have ownership in shaping the ways in which it interacts with the platform.

For these reasons, the Save for College Program is designed not as an add-on or outside program that NYC Kids RISE “provides” and schools “host.” Rather, it is a tool that schools can integrate as a core component of their day-to-day operations and customize to meet the needs and desires of their own school community. The Program can increase schools' capacity to get all of their students on the path to post-secondary education by complementing, strengthening, and deepening the work they already do every day.

HOW: The district administration and school leadership and stakeholders in the pilot schools co-created core components of the Save for College Program with NYC Kids RISE and integrated it into each school community.

Co-creation. Prior to the Program's launch, the district leadership, school principals, parent coordinators, and other key stakeholders provided extensive feedback about the Program's structure, informational materials, and how it could be best adapted to each school community. This feedback informed core elements of the platform's design and rollout. Further, since the Program's launch, NYC Kids RISE has worked to foster Communities of Practice within each school and across the district for ongoing professional learning and feedback, best practice sharing, and iteration to further refine the model and make it work better for each school.

Integrating into School Operations. Schools have worked with NYC Kids RISE and the DOE to develop, prototype, and iterate upon systems for integrating this platform to build and reinforce a college- and career-going culture in their school. One piece of that approach is a calendar of six family empowerment “anchor events”

that each participating school leads during the school year to engage parents/guardians with the Program and support them to activate their children's NYC Scholarship Accounts. Based on the successes and possibilities of the first two years, the district superintendent made supporting every parent/guardian to activate their child's NYC Scholarship Account a district-wide goal in Year 3. According to the superintendent, activating this account "encourages families to think about post-secondary education early, and it ensures they know that the community is investing in their future."² To support schools to reach these goals, NYC Kids RISE has expanded its professional learning and technical assistance offerings to build greater capacity and strengthen communities of practice.

These relationships and networks enabled NYC Kids RISE and its partners to take swift action together when COVID-19 severely and unexpectedly impacted pilot school communities: \$1.1million in emergency cash relief was raised and distributed, in collaboration with school partners, directly to participating families enrolled in the Save for College Program between April and July.

WHAT'S NEXT: Thanks to the leadership, creativity, and insights of pilot school communities, the Save for College Program is now a tool that NYC public schools can use to better support their students' journey to post-secondary education and economic success. Going forward, the pilot schools will be critical partners in continuing to build out and deepen the model, particularly as both families and schools adapt to a blended and remote learning context during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As the Program expands to other schools and districts, it will be an important tool for strengthening post-secondary possibilities across NYC's elementary, middle, and high schools—from the first days of kindergarten, to high school graduation and beyond.

Learn how you can help bring this platform to every family in every school across New York City at nyckidsrise.org.

**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all NYC public schools transitioned to remote learning in March of 2020 for the remainder of the school year and through the end of the pilot in June 2020, impacting metrics and milestones for the final quarter.*

ENDNOTES

- 1 Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.* 2018.
- 2 Dr. Philip A. Composto, "District 30's Plan to Support Our Children's College and Career Futures This Year," 11.6.2019.

The NYC Kids RISE Save for College Program is a scholarship and savings program administered by NYC Kids RISE, Inc., a nonprofit, in partnership with the NYC Department of Education and the City of New York. NYC Kids RISE is neither affiliated with, nor an authorized distributor of, New York's 529 College Savings Program and does not solicit investments or provide investment advice. The City of New York and the NYC Department of Education offer no endorsement or recommendation about, and do not control, own or are affiliated with the program manager for New York's 529 College Savings Program and any particular college savings or other investment vehicle, including ones which families may learn about through the Save for College Program.

The NYC Kids RISE Save for College Program is a public-private-community partnership that provides families, schools, and communities with a way to work together to save for their children's futures. It's a universal scholarship and savings platform designed to make college and career training more accessible and achievable for all NYC public school students—regardless of their family's income or immigration status. NYC Kids RISE, a nonprofit organization, manages the Save for College Program in partnership with the NYC Department of Education and the City of New York.

SELECTED METRICS FROM THE PILOT PHASE

(as of June 30, 2020*)

- **756 school staff and stakeholders** attended a Save for College Program professional learning and feedback session
- **78 professional learning and feedback sessions** held for school stakeholders
- **690 Save for College Program workshops** and events hosted by participating schools
- **136 school-led** Save for College Program events and activities
- **92% of school stakeholders** who attended a 2019-2020 professional learning and feedback session reported being equipped to support families to activate their NYC Scholarship Accounts
- **\$1.1M in emergency cash** distributed to over 4900 unique families with the support of schools between April and July 2020

