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Reflection Two

After hearing the presentation about the Harlem Children's Zone it made me wonder whether the model could be replicated. I first became aware of the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) through watching the movie *Waiting for Superman*. In the movie they highlighted the Promise Academy Charter School. At the time I was not aware of the enormity of the HCZ; I did not know that it covered over ninety blocks in Harlem and that it not only contained the Promise Academy charter schools, but also programs for parental education like 'Baby College', and health initiative programs like the Asthma Initiative (HCZ, 2009). I was completely impressed by the model that was devised by Geoffrey Canada that planned to stay with a child from birth until they graduate from college. I wanted to look at Canada's model, but also President Obama's plan to replicate this model, and reasons why or why not this replication would be possible.

Geoffrey Canada is the President and CEO of Harlem Children's Zone. He started the program in the mid nineties as a one-block pilot program that provided various support services initially with a budget of six million dollars. As mentioned above the program not only supports the children of Harlem, but also the entire community. The goal is not to simply help children to get a good education, but to empower entire communities so that the cycle of poverty can be ended. To do this Canada decided in to write a ten-year business plan with built- in assessments to be able to track the programs progress (HCZ, 2009). He also connected with Stan Druckenmiller as one of the board members to help run the non-profit. Druckenmiller is one of the most successful hedge-fund managers ever. He along

with the rest of the board members donated money to the program. Their donations and donations from private donors and the government make up the budget of the HCZ.

Looking at the foundation that Canada set it is easy to see that he uses a business model to run HCZ although it is a non-profit.

(Erickson, 2012).

President Obama was impressed by HCZ and pledged along with other lawmakers to provide the means to replicate the program in similar neighborhoods throughout the country. As a presidential candidate he proposed that he would create 'Promise Neighborhoods' and use a few billion dollars annually to twenty neighborhoods with high crime, high poverty and low student achievement rates (Aarons, 2009). In September of 2010 Obama along with the Board of Education gave a total of ten million in grant awards to twenty- one Promise Neighborhood communities. Promise Neighborhoods is the cornerstone of a broader White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative that focuses and coordinates federal resources in order to build communities that promote cradle to career success like that found in the HCZ (Barnes, 2010).

It is important to mention that all applicants to the Promise Neighborhood Grant program must match dollar- for -dollar the grant they hope to receive. Finances is one of the big arguments that proponents of replicating the HCZ. They also cite the fact that Canada has the help of Drukenmiller and other donors who are willing to continually donate to HCZ. They point to Canada himself who not only devised the business plan for HCZ but is also a passionate and visionary leader who was able to create a management structure, buy new technology and develop an evaluation process (Erickson, 2012).

Canada has also been able to become a champion for his cause getting national recognition and support from some of the most powerful politicians and philanthropists in the country. They draw attention to the support that HCZ has from local government that enabled him to change local public schools into charter schools. Lastly, they will emphasize the unique environment of Harlem that has a rich cultural history and defined identity. Due to this history and identity it is easy to rally support for HCZ and Canada because Harlem is a hub of African-American life and culture (Erickson, 2012).

In December of 2011 the first set of grant winners learned that they would be awarded money from the Promise Neighborhoods grant program. Among the group was the Parkside-Kenilworth neighborhood in Washington, D.C. This neighborhood won five hundred thousand dollars for its proposal to have continuous academic, medical and social support for its families. They titled their project the D.C. Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI) and will be led by Irasema Salcido. Salcido is an educator like Canada who founded the four Cesar Chavez Public Policy Charter schools in D.C. They will partner with seventy non-profits, businesses, churches and foundations (Gordy, 2011).

This neighborhood has much in common with Harlem being mostly African-American, and struggling with poverty, unemployment, crime and failing schools. They also have a dynamic leader in Salcido and a community that is willing to band together to fight for a common cause. While reading an interview with Salcido it seemed that she was completely aware of the what would be required of them and took into account the challenges to replicating the HCZ program (Gordy, 2011).

In relation to the concern with finances she brought up the fact the they were able to raise more funds than necessary to match the five hundred thousand grant they received.

She made sure to emphasize that in order to raise the over one million dollars they had to work together, network and reach out to others to get support. She said that they know that the federal government money is just seed money and that in the future they would have to support themselves. It was inspirational to hear they she told the community members that whether they got the grant or not, that they would go ahead and start the community initiative (Gordy, 2011).

Along with the financial elements, Salcido said that the neighborhood has partnered with Urban Institute to help establish data sets to track their progress. They want everything they do to be data-driven. They want to be able to know what percentages of students are scoring at proficiency and what contributes to those scores. Like Canada they have built in assessment measures. Along with the community DCPNI has launched mobile medical units at its schools, a new early childhood center, year-round tutoring programs , a legal-advice clinic and monthly community dinners. The residents are collectively developing a parenting-workshop curriculum, and data-collection tools. I especially found it impressive that before launching the program Salcido met with community members in a two-day retreat to learn what has worked in the past and getting their ideas for possible future programs. She also discussed with them what exactly would be required of them as a Promise neighborhood by the Department of Education (Gordy, 2011).

The DCPNI program is very young but it gives me hope that HCZ can be replicated. They have tried to use HCZ as a model and have tried to take into account the different factors that they will have to face. I hope that they will be successful but I am optimistic because they have mobilized the entire community as well as business, institutions and influential members of the D.C. area. The community members have a sense of ownership

of the program and they all have a common goal to equip the children with everything that they need in their environment so that they can be successful.

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