

Section 2



KEY ELEMENTS AND STRATEGIES

“We just have to convince other people that they have the power. This is what they can do by participating to make change, not only in their own community, but many times changing in their own lives. Once they participate, they get their sense of power.”

“Once you see the outcomes and the results, and you see how many people are helped and benefitting, you want to keep on doing it because it’s so simple.”

— Dolores Huerta

3. Labor Market for Community Change Studies Graduates

The principal reason CLP was created was to develop pipelines of grassroots leaders and community-builders with the passion, knowledge and skills to build strong grassroots organizations and create positive change in communities like their own.

While preparing leaders and organizers for community-based organizations is central to our mission, since CLP’s inception we have seen it as equally essential to prepare low-income people and people of color for influential staff and leadership roles in other sectors of society – other nonprofits, government and politics, unions and business. Those entities must be pushed from within as well as from the outside to support significant social change and greatly improve opportunities for people often left behind. Progressive, skilled, and committed people are needed to work within those powerful institutions as well as to lead grassroots organizations because “inside/outside strategies” and collaboration are particularly powerful strategies for fundamental reform.

As we expected when we began our work, most CLP graduates enter careers in the fast-growing nonprofit sector. Other graduates choose careers in the public and private for-profit sectors where there is a strong demand for people of color and others from blue-collar and low-income backgrounds with strong cross-sector skills in critical thinking, problem-solving and strategy, and in bringing people together and building teams to tackle major challenges.

CLP’s Labor Market Analysis:

As CLP seeks to scale up our national impact, we know that nonprofit employment is projected to continue growing rapidly: According to a study by Johns Hopkins’ Center for Civil Society Studies, **the number of nonprofit jobs is growing at three times faster than jobs in the business sector, and their growth is steadier and less affected by recessions. The public sector will also grow rapidly:** the Center for State and Local Government Excellence projects a 4% growth in state government employment and over 7% in local government employment between

2016 and 2026. As we look ahead, we therefore see demand for a skilled community change workforce growing. The CLP Network's programs are well-positioned to help meet that demand.

In its early days, CLP conducted a study of the labor market in Southeast Michigan, where we subsequently helped develop two college pathways in the region. The study focused on nonprofit, for-profit and public sector careers. It consisted of both an analysis of available jobs across sectors, and focus groups with representatives from 75 local community groups, nonprofits, and government agencies which address issues ranging from community health promotion to youth development, neighborhood improvement and economic development.

Focus group participants were asked whether the leadership skills and competencies students acquire in our programs were relevant to their workplaces, whether they would hire our graduates, what additional elements they think our programs should include, and how they would like to be involved with our programs.

Key findings from this DACUM study, *Community Change Leaders in Southeast Michigan: A Study of Workforce Demand and Academic Curricula*, (*posted on CLP's website www.clpclp.org/publications*) included the following:

- **The Skills and Capacity Gap:** Community partners and potential employers face challenges finding experienced and skilled staff and emerging leaders with the backgrounds, skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to work on the region's most pressing issues. They find it especially hard to find people of color and others who have both first-hand experience with issues of poverty, neighborhood decline, and inadequate services and the needed knowledge and skills.
- **The Demand for CLP Graduates:** The community partners and potential employers expressed a clear demand for and interest in CLP's Community Leadership programs. They indicated the Certificate and Associate Degree would result in an increase in employee earnings. Thirty percent indicated they were not likely to find candidates with these skills in the current local job market. Over 85% indicated there is a need to develop CLP skills within their existing staff, and over 90% reported being interesting in hiring someone with a Certificate or Associate Degree in Community Leadership.

- **Relevance of CLP Skills:** Community partners and potential employers value the cross-sector skills gained by students in CLP programs. The skills learned are applicable to a wide range of community-oriented occupations and job postings requiring skills in team-building, strategic planning and community relations.
- **Value of Applied/Experiential Learning:** The community partners emphasized the importance of applied and experiential learning as well as credentials. Collaborating with community partners to identify specific opportunities for more project- and work-based learning opportunities is an important way to engage practitioners from the field in the teaching and learning process and ensure the courses being offered are closely aligned with specific, community-based issues and work. It also reinforces links between our students and potential future employers.

This early research demonstrated the need for a dramatically new approach to preparing people from disadvantaged communities for careers in community-building and leadership. It also helped CLP define the competencies which its students must develop to qualify for community-serving careers in the nonprofit, public and private sectors. This market study guided our planning and early success and has continued to inform our evaluation systems, program development and community partnerships. Our subsequent experience in a range of other settings has confirmed the findings and conclusions of the Michigan DACUM study.

A large majority of CLP students enter our core classes and Certificate/Degree programs already caring about social issues in their community, but they don't know what they can do to bring about change. Through our classes and programs, they learn concrete skills, get exposed to community-change careers, and develop a sense of direction and agency as leaders who can effect positive social change.

The findings from a recent CLP alumni survey suggest that our model is working. Of those who are working, **over 60% have found jobs with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, or educational institutions where they can contribute to community change.** These alumni work on a variety of issues, including access to health/mental health, education, community economic development, youth development, immigration, and environmental justice. Alumni have a variety of roles in these organizations, including community

planning, organizing, policy research and advocacy, direct service (e.g., counselors, case managers, peer navigators), and administrative support.

In smaller proportions, CLP students find work in the private sector, including starting small businesses that contribute to community economic development or working in community-facing positions, including community relations, outreach, community reinvestment and research.

However, some also struggle to find meaningful community change-related jobs and end up in jobs unrelated to their interests or goals. The experience of these students demonstrates the need for additional support navigating career pathways and obtaining well-paid student internships and part-time employment which is directly relevant to their career education.

Since many employers require **Bachelor's Degrees**, many CLP community college students enroll in BA programs that continue preparing them to be effective change agents. At the upper division level they prepare for careers in such fields as social work, urban planning, criminal justice, community and public health, public policy and public administration – all of which need people with the cross-sector skills our graduates have mastered. Our Network stresses the importance of creating articulation agreements and other bridges to ease the path for community college graduates to pursue advanced degrees and further develop their competencies in promoting positive community and social change.

Cross-Sector Skills and Issue-Specific Knowledge Students Learn and Career Opportunities for Them:

Employers from the nonprofit, governmental and private sectors all greatly value the cross-sector skills which CLP students gain. See chapter 11 on Linking Students to Jobs for listing of cross-sector skills businesses look for, as an illustration of how diverse the career opportunities are for CCS graduates.

In Community Change Studies programs from high school and early community college through their career education, students continually deepen their competencies in the following cross-sector skill areas:

1. Team-Building and Organizational Skills

- Interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
- Skills in bringing people together, team-building and reaching consensus.
- Skills in leading groups in problem-solving, planning and developing strategies for action.
- Other leadership skills, including skills in taking action, attracting support, reflecting on experience, refining plans for future action, and developing the capacity of others to lead.
- Developing advanced management and leadership skills over time.

2. Understanding and Capacity to Act in Diverse Communities

- Self-awareness, sense of identity and self-confidence.
- Understanding of culture, race, class, gender, power and privilege.
- Capacity for thinking critically and adapting to different contexts.
- Ability to analyze and understand different situations and communities, their culture and the broader economic, social and political environment, institutions, and actors.
- Skills in mediation and developing mutual respect and understanding.
- Skills in “managing”, starting with understanding and “managing” self, being systematic, and following through.
- Preparation for lifelong learning through reflective practice, evaluation and organizational learning.

In addition, as students advance along their education/career pathways and begin concentrating on the specific issues which most concern them, focusing on courses, field assignments, internships and connections related to those issues, they have opportunities to deepen their issue-related knowledge and skills as follows --

3. Issue expertise (e.g. jobs, youth development, community health, criminal justice, community development, etc.)

- Understanding the immediate issue and its root causes.
- Understanding the underlying policy, resource and institutional issues.
- Understanding how key decisions are made on an issue, who makes them, why, and what points of intervention exist.

- Identifying potential partners and allies inside and outside key institutions.
- Being equipped with the facts, technical analysis and strategic insights needed to influence decision-making.
- Developing vision and direction for achieving growing, long-term success on the issue.

They also begin to consider the full range of potential future employers they want to research and cultivate so they're well prepared to compete for the jobs they want most. The following section lists many of the types of employers which need people with their values, knowledge and skills.

Potential Future Employers for CLP Program Graduates:

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AS POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

- *Neighborhood organizations.*
- *Community organizing groups.*
- *Youth organizations.*
- *Congregation-based organizations, churches and community ministries.*
- *City-wide membership associations and coalitions.*
- *Civil rights, women's and other membership organizations.*
- *Community-based services groups – addressing health, youth, housing, reentry, jobs, addiction, or other needs.*
- *Economic and Community Development Corporations, or CDCs*
- *Social and political movements.*

OTHER NONPROFIT EMPLOYERS WORKING ON COMMUNITY ISSUES

- *Advocacy groups seeking members, staff and leaders from communities of color/other affected communities.*
- *Major nonprofits pursuing policy change.*
- *Hospitals and clinics needing people skills and outreach.*
- *Social services and youth-development agencies needing people skills and outreach.*
- *Nonprofits needing these skills in management.*
- *Criminal justice, community security reform and reentry.*

- *Employment and training.*
- *Housing and community planning.*
- *Addiction services.*
- *Community and mental health.*
- *Day care and child development.*
- *Public schools and education reform.*
- *Green jobs and environmental justice.*

COMMUNITY-FACING GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE POSITIONS

- *Elective office.*
- *Voter registration, turnout and electoral campaigns.*
- *Campaign staff positions.*
- *Community relations staff for elected and appointed officials.*
- *Front-line, community-facing government services – health, youth, etc.*
- *Neighborhood planning and development.*
- *Community policing and justice reform.*
- *Teaching and youth development.*

PRIVATE SECTOR POSITIONS NEEDING THESE SKILLS AND BACKGROUNDS

- *Small business development serving lower income communities.*
- *Marketing and sales.*
- *Customer services and community relations.*
- *Community reinvestment and corporate responsibility.*
- *Labor relations.*
- *Management requiring skills in –*
 - *Facilitating groups and leading teams.*
 - *Strategic thinking.*
 - *Dispute resolution/consensus building.*
 - *Human resource management.*
 - *Supervision of other staff.*

See Appendix A for listing of many relevant job openings as of January, 2020, including many family-supporting careers for which a Community Change Studies background and related credentials are very helpful.

4. Educational Pathways with Stackable Credentials

“You must be able and prepared to give until you cannot give any more. We must use our time and our space on this little planet that we call Earth to make a lasting contribution, to leave it a little better than we found it.”

— Former Congressman John Lewis

CLP’s founders brought people together from across the U.S. and around the world to advise on how to create new educational pathways to prepare people who have experienced poverty and discrimination to become the next generation of staff and leaders for the front lines of community change work -- strengthening communities, providing essential services with understanding and compassion, and addressing the issues which most concern them and their neighbors.

Our pathways include several steps, with opportunities for students to enter at different stages and to earn useful credentials as they move along the path. With our help, local community leaders and educators have designed each step to attract and serve the needs of students with limited incomes who have faced the challenges of poverty, discrimination and powerlessness.

The large majority of students enter CLP core classes, Certificate and Degree programs already caring about social issues in their community – from access to affordable housing, education, and health care to poverty, racism, and inequality – but not knowing what they can do to bring about change. Through our classes and programs, they learn concrete skills, get exposed to community-change careers, earn invaluable college credentials, and develop a sense of agency as leaders who can effect positive social change.

CLP's approach creates **step-by-step pathways that enable students to continually deepen the competencies they will need for the community change careers they plan to pursue.** Competencies -- what a person knows, knows how to do and has the confidence to do -- are the building blocks of career mobility since they can be acquired through education and work-based experiences and must increase in range and complexity as an employee gains increased responsibility and experience. Competencies are the currency that builds a resume and lets potential employers know what you know how to do. *(Chapter 3 describes CLP's initial job market, or DACUM, study and details on the kinds of job for which a CCS background is especially helpful.)*

Our competency-building approach enables students (and midcareer practitioners) to see a clear road map to life-long careers as community change agents working with a wide range of employers, especially those from the nonprofit and public sectors. This approach builds on CLP's initial job market research, which identified foundational, mid-level, and senior-level competencies in occupations our graduates typically pursue. These models are being further developed based on specific employment sectors using our CLP student, graduate and alumni experiences, and focus groups and interviews with community practitioners, community-based organizations, and academic institutions.

Competency-Based Career Pathway



Key Elements in Fully Developed Pathways:

CLP's *Pathways to Careers* are designed to eventually include four main steps. These steps are built one at a time, most often starting with a Community College Certificate or Degree because those programs offer great advantages in reaching large numbers of students with limited incomes, including many from communities of color, and issuing credentials which increase job opportunities and upward mobility.

CLP helps local community and academic leaders build increasingly ambitious and comprehensive pathways with the goal of eventually including –

- **College Credit for “Prior Learning”** – many people with great potential for careers in community organizing, planning and development have already developed extensive and relevant college-level knowledge and skills; a key strategy for increasing their upward mobility is through enlisting a higher educational institution in arranging for people to earn college credits for what they already have learned through community leadership or life experience, training programs, on-the-job learning and volunteer work. *Chapter 5 describes how this can be done through “Prior Learning Assessment”.*
- **Dual Credit for High School/Early College Courses** – the development of high school/early college courses preparing students for careers in community building and change leadership by enabling them to earn college credits which give them a head start toward earning a Degree or Certificate from a community or four-year college. *Chapter 6 covers this topic.*
- **Community College Certificates and Degrees** – the creation of Certificate and Associates’ Degree programs which offer courses in community-building and change leadership while accessing directly relevant on-the-job experience through internships and a practicum. Moving from taking one or two courses to earning a Certificate and then taking the additional courses needed to earn a Degree from a community college, a student can enter the workforce at any stage or, if it’s feasible, choose to expand their skills, knowledge and salary potential by continuing their education.

- **Bachelors' Degrees** --Some will choose to defer taking advanced courses and earning a BA until after working for several years, gaining on-the-job experience, and being able to save funds to pay for that advanced education.

The CLP Network is considering helping local partners develop systems of micro-certificates or “**badges**” or that describe and certify the increasing levels of competency students have developed as they complete courses and progress toward a College Certificate or Degree. We plan to test whether such a system helps students develop a sense of accomplishment, motivates them to continue on, and, if they need to work part-time, helps them gain access to paid internships and jobs which are directly relevant and helpful to their career development.

CLP has based its planning on the knowledge that many of our priority students would, for financial or other reasons, benefit from a flexible, step by step pathway which issues useful credentials at every step so they can access increasingly desirable part- and full-time jobs to help them meet their financial needs. The combination of education and work experience forms a pathway to a lifetime career as a change agent.

Community Colleges very often are the starting point for developing an increasingly extensive pathway. They offer four major advantages to community leaders and others who want to create a strong new stream of knowledgeable and skilled community organizers and change agents. First, because they are less expensive than public universities, they are the most affordable route to a higher education for people with limited incomes. Second, they attract large numbers of older as well as young students who have directly experienced poverty and discrimination – a distinct advantage for working in communities facing these issues. Third, they have very high admission rates and are thus unusually accessible to students whose public schools may well have been underfunded and inadequate. And fourth, they are accustomed to developing new career pathways by collaborating with associations of employers which need people with skill-sets and knowledge which prepare them for particular careers.

We have a strategy for moving students along an educational pathway that propels them into careers in community change. In addition, we have learned what additional supports students need to both enter into community-facing

careers and move into leadership positions where they can effect lasting change. *Chapters 8-11 below describe those supports.*

CLP's approach is ensured by partnership agreements among groups representing potential employers and high school, community college and university programs in community-building and leadership. Students continually deepen their skills and knowledge as they proceed along the pathway and choose when it's best to enter the community change workforce on a part- or full-time basis. *See chapter 20 on Partnerships.*

STUDENT STORIES

How Leadership Students at Macomb College Are Channeling Their Histories Into Action

The Community Leadership Certificate at Macomb Community College in Detroit is often used to enhance any number of degrees at the college, including those in the public service and social work.

Bob Anderson, a 52-year-old graduate of the certificate program, originally from Troy, Michigan, spent 28 years in prison prior to enrolling at Macomb College. And at first, he had little interest in pursuing higher education.



“I wanted to be a truck driver when I first got out,” he said. “I figured it would be easy, and a decent paycheck, but I couldn’t get the funding to afford the license.” So instead, he enrolled in school. He figured he’d eventually be able to find the money he needed, through a combination of grants, loans and work, to afford the license, so at first he said he just enrolled in “whatever coursework tickled my fancy.” He took a geology course, for instance, and a welding class.

Eventually, however, he met Professor Rachelle Zaranek, who introduced him to the CLP program, and helped inspire him to consider

his educational future. “Once I realized I wanted to pursue a degree, I got everything together, and took all the coursework I needed to for the community leadership certificate,” he said. Eventually, he transferred to Oakland University, where he is currently pursuing his social work degree.

He completed the certificate program at Macomb, and says he’s taken much of what he’s learned with him as he continues pursuing his studies. “I learned a lot about politics, politicians, lobbying, activism, social policies, workplace psychology, organizations, types of people, types of leaders,” he said.

As for his plans once he graduates with his degree, Bob says he’ll be “somewhere helping people,” he said. “I’m trying to turn my negative past into a positive future.” He says he specifically wants to work with others who have experienced incarceration since he knows, first hand, the many barriers that come along with those touched by the criminal justice system.

“I want to be an example to others to take advantages of the opportunities like the community leadership certificate when they come your way,” he said. “Once you’re out of prison it can help you stay out.”

“If what you hope to do is deal with people or care for people — really, anything to do with people — I definitely encourage you to look into the program.” —Isaiah White

Isaiah White, a 34-year-old graduate of the Community Leadership Certificate from Highland Park, Michigan, enrolled in the army in 2002, where he served until receiving a medical retirement discharge in 2014. That same year, he started at Macomb College with a simple goal in mind: “I wanted to find ways to help other veterans,” he said.

Isaiah figured the best way he could do so was through pursuing a social work degree. “I suffer from PTSD myself,” he said, using the acronym for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He said he personally understands, then, the beneficial role that psychology and social work fields can have

on the lives of veterans. “There’s such a high suicide rate among veterans, we really need people to talk to, but it can be hard for a lot of people to relate,” he said.

The most impactful part of the Community Leadership Certificate, he says, was the internship, a required component of the program, which he fulfilled at the Veterans Service Department of the college. “I learned there how important it is to not just have the veterans involved in these conversations, but their families, too,” he said. “Change doesn’t come without the families.”

Isaiah sees the applicability in the organizing and leadership components of the program to his future career —skills that couldn’t be more different, he says, from the way he was taught leadership in the military. “It’s easy to just point at someone and give direction and say, ‘do this,’ and expect people to not question whatever your superior tells you,” Isaiah said of his military training. “It’s a lot harder to understand what might motivate someone to do something, or how to guide someone to where they need to be.””



As for other students at Macomb who are considering the Certificate, Isaiah has this piece of advice to share: “If what you hope to do is deal with people or care for people — really, anything to do with people — I definitely encourage you to look into it,” he said. “The program helps you start to pay attention to things you might have been ignoring before.”

5. Earning Credentials Before College

Social movements, community struggles and neighborhood improvement efforts constantly surface people with the potential to become leaders, organizers and advocates as they learn from further experience and study. However, there seldom are systems for developing emerging leaders to take on greater responsibilities or to prepare for lifelong careers tackling vital issues and projects with increasing skill and sophistication. Only a fortunate few have an opportunity to work closely with and learn from skilled organizers and leaders who groom them for increasing responsibilities and even for family-supporting careers.

Can colleges help these emerging leaders increase their skills, knowledge and opportunities for growing responsibilities and authority earning family-supporting incomes? Obviously, the answer to this question depends on the academic program and priorities of a particular community college or university. They all have the great advantage of being able to provide credentials which can help open career and leadership opportunities for people, particularly for those who face discrimination or other obstacles. However, the challenge is to convince colleges to become serious about their civic obligation to help develop future generations of leaders and organizers of positive change, especially in communities of color and low-income and working-class neighborhoods.

The CLP Network's programs are aimed at rectifying this situation by creating new step-by-step educational pathways based on partnerships between community leaders and local community colleges and public universities and committed to this goal.

In addition to high school and early college programs in Community Change Studies, there are several other routes onto educational pathways preparing people for careers in community organizing, civic leadership and community-based research. These all relate to what prospective students may have already learned through experience.

Since people need to find ways to expedite their progress towards earning college Certificates or Degrees, CLP's strategy includes exploring several practical short-cuts.

1. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Providing College Credit for Learning Gained Through Experience:

Prior Learning Assessment, or PLA, is a flexible way of earning college credits for college-level knowledge which students gain outside a traditional college classroom. PLA is accepted by hundreds of colleges throughout the US and around the world. It is based on the understanding that people can learn in many ways outside colleges as well as inside. They can learn from workshops, experience on the job, as leaders or volunteers, or through their life experience. PLA is based on the belief that all learning should be recognized and accredited, whether or not it occurred in an educational institution.

Many people have already learned enough to earn college credits through PLA. One Buffalo leader recently reported that he had earned 29 college credits for his life and work experience, making it relatively easy to complete a Degree.

Many community colleges are prepared to test students for their prior learning, while others have not yet developed that internal capacity. CLP is currently searching for a college partner to work with us nationally, enabling all our network's students to have access to PLA as an important shortcut to earning college credentials and entering a pathway toward college Certificates and Degrees.

This approach is particularly useful for community leaders and organizers, given what they may have learned about assessing community needs, issues and assets, team-building, campaign planning and strategizing, coalition-building and the like. They may earn college credit from what they have learned from –

- Their experience as an organizer or leader.
- Learning from other jobs as well as life experience.
- Learning from training, youth and leadership development programs.
- College courses they've already taken in the US or other countries.

PLA allows students to reduce the amount of time it takes to earn a college Certificate or Degree, and this shortcut reduces their tuition costs. Furthermore, studies show that students earning PLA credits actually have higher graduation rates than other students – their practical experience pays off in many ways.

“There is a growing awareness that learning from experience, gained in a variety of work, politics and civil society contexts including, should be more substantially acknowledged and rewarded, especially in educational institutions.”

— **Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, or CAEL**

PLA does not refer to credit for the experience itself; rather, it is credit for the learning from that experience. If that learning is at a college level, it can be tested and given credit by a college through a PLA process. That process may involve documentation from training programs or past employers, tests and/or interviews, or preparation of essays or a portfolio demonstrating what a student has learned.

In short, PLA can be an important first step on a pathway to college credentials and a career. If students start with college credits already in hand, they can enroll in one or more courses which build on what they already know and continue on to earn a Certificate in Community Change Studies or a related field. That credential would be invaluable in itself, and also a big step toward moving farther along the educational pathway, learning more through additional courses and then earning Degrees at the Associate and/or Bachelors levels.¹¹

2. Pre-Certifying Learning Through Training Programs:

Unfortunately, there seldom are formal links between the many excellent training programs which organizing networks, community-based organizations and other nonprofits offer to young people and emerging leaders. While a PLA program may help someone demonstrate what he/she has learned from such programs, it

¹¹ See paper by Laurien Alexander, Vice Chancellor, Antioch University, *Advancing College Education for Communities and Democracy* at www.clpclip.org/publications

is well worth exploring whether a college partner will consider an alternative strategy. Are they willing to certify that a particular training program provides college-level learning and that any person who completes the training will automatically be given credit toward completion of some of the learning goals of a particular college course?

There are many examples of training programs which teach at a college-level, such as the national organizing networks' three full days of training by highly experienced community organizers, Camp Wellstone Weekends' classes on strategies and tactics for electoral organizing, and Continuing Education Credits earned through a university-based training program or on-line courses like those offered by EdX and e-Cornell.

Equally worthy of recognition are intensive leadership development programs for youth like the Black Male Leadership Program which Buffalo's Say Yes to Education offers to young men. One cohort of young Black men in this program learned initial organizing skills by collaborating in planning, organizing and then reflecting on what they had learned from a joint campaign through which they convinced authorities to revamp the bus-pass policies so students could travel free to afterschool activities, jobs, appointments, etc. That kind of experiential learning deserves recognition as a valuable part of their education and, whenever feasible, should be considered as part of their academic record.

It may be difficult to make such an arrangement with a college, but it offers great advantages to students who already have relevant experience. It also can strengthen partnerships with local practitioners: it demonstrates that the college respects and values the educational value of community-based learning and the partnership roles which local nonprofits and public agencies can play.

3. Participating in Public Allies, VISTA and Other Americorps Programs:

Graduates of Public Allies, VISTA and other federally funded Americorps programs often emerge from their year of service highly motivated to continue working in underserved communities. Many are promising candidates for further experience, training and education aimed at enabling them to enter long-term family-supporting careers working on issues of poverty, race, employment, community health and safety, and other issues. In their early years these

“volunteer” programs were a very significant stream of talent for organizations working for reform and positive change: they then stressed community organizing and advocacy as keys to significant progress, but – because of political opposition – that emphasis was blunted.

Nevertheless, CLP’s local affiliates have developed highly productive partnerships with such programs. This has worked especially well with Americorps’ grantee Public Allies because – like CLP – Allies emphasizes leadership development and the recruitment of people from lower income backgrounds and communities of color.

One early CLP initiative was a partnership with a citywide housing coalition – the Association for Neighborhoods and Housing Development in New York City. ANHD’s member organizations had grown increasingly concerned about the shortage of promising entry-level organizers of color whom they could recruit for jobs working on tenant and other housing issues.

CLP helped ANHD raise funds, plan and launch a partnership with Public Allies New York and create a Center for Community Leadership, which each year recruits, provides stipends to and places 10 young people to learn organizing on-the-job four days a week and in class the fifth day. The tenth cohort recently graduated, bringing the total number of graduates to almost 100, substantially boosting the level of action and collaboration among grassroots groups concerned about housing and community development in the city. (The CCL/ANHD program is not linked to college courses or credentials. It nevertheless is an impressive model for possible replication elsewhere.)

In Los Angeles, CLP’s affiliate CD Tech for many years has operated a major Public Allies program alongside its community college Certificate or AA Program. This leads to unique collaboration, giving Allies an opportunity to take courses for credit at Los Angeles Training and Technical College, and, if they choose, to continue their studies after completing their service as an Ally. In addition, this symbiotic relationship makes it easy for AA graduates to join the Allies program for a year of intensive on the job learning experience.

6. High School, Early College, and Youth Development Programs as Entry Points

In communities with substandard schools and tough social conditions, it is helpful to find new ways to reach and motivate students when they are young. An underdeveloped but increasingly important route into community change careers involves focusing on high schools in low-income and working-class neighborhoods. The CLP Network has therefore begun exploring the potential of “Early College High Schools” and other dual enrollment programs for introducing students to leadership and action on community issues.

Early College High Schools allow students to earn credits toward an Associate Degree in addition to a high school diploma. They are rapidly expanding and evolving to offer broad exposure to college-level coursework, and in some cases, career training. Currently, as part of the Early College High School Initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, more than 280 early college campuses have proliferated over 31 states and the District of Columbia, giving at least 80,000 students the opportunity to acquire free college credits. And this number does not account for early college high schools not funded by Gates.

The CLP Network currently includes two pilot programs in high schools linked to community colleges. CLP’s pilot high school/early college program in Detroit enrolled 15 high school juniors in a Community Leadership Program which offered them 19 college credits for taking a series of courses being offered by faculty at Henry Ford College – a community college -- and the high school.

This initial cohort started with a class on College Success, taught by a high school teacher who specializes in preparing students to succeed in college and whose course had been approved by the Community College. In their next semester, students took Introduction to Community Leadership Studies, a four-credit course taught on the high school campus by a Ford College faculty-member whose course had been vetted and approved by Henry Ford as college-level.

In year 2 the students began commuting by school bus to Ford College for two courses which were taught back-to-back to minimize their commuting time.

Those were an Introduction to the Fundamentals of Community Leadership and a sociology course on Working in Diverse Communities. The final twinned courses were an Internship, and an Introduction to U.S. Government which emphasized democratic participation. Graduates then had a smooth transition to the community college campus and an expedited path to earning a Degree.

Unfortunately, in the downsizing of Detroit's school system, Cody High School was closed and the program therefore closed down.

Despite this setback it is clear that there are growing opportunities for reaching teenagers through high schools and youth leadership programs.

- There is a growing number of “social justice high schools” in the US -- public or alternative nonprofit schools which include courses on social justice issues, history, strategies, etc. Make the Road New York is a strong community organizing groups with a solid membership in immigrant and other communities, and two of its own social justice high schools, or “leadership academies”. Prof. Charles Payne’s Teach Freedom has rich examples from African American Experience, including schools run by the Black Panthers and a network of schools connected to the Children’s Defense Fund. Organizing courses at Hartford’s Capital Community College are also offered in a local social justice high school.
- High schools which are involved in “The Mikva Challenge” offer a well-developed curriculum in “action civics” which has been refined over 20 years of its use in 22 cities, eventually reaching over 100,000 students. It is designed “to engage young people in meaningful civic action and coursework designed to teach student about their rights, how to get engaged in local and national politics, voter registration and turnout, hosting forums and speaking out on issue. Mikva offers a 250-page curriculum including exercises, resource materials and worksheets.
- Generation Citizen is another source of excellent materials for high school (and primary school). It, too, has a remarkable curriculum aimed at motivating and equipping students to become involved in civics. It has particularly good materials on participatory action research as a learning and action tool, all of which are available online. And The Institute for Civic-Organizing, or TICO, is developing teaching modules,

lesson plans and other material for inserting civic-organizing skills and knowledge in K-12 schools.

- The large network of “Community Schools” which help low-income students thrive and learn by offering them wrap-around services including free meals, tutoring, counselling, health and mental health services also speaks of building community partnerships aimed at helping strengthen the nearby community, building on its assets and prepare students to be active citizens. However, the potential for developing robust relationships along these lines depends on local school leadership rather than any national directive.

STUDENT STORIES

Reforming Student Government

Nyeelah Rousseau, a student in the CLP-affiliated Urban Community Change program at West Chester University in Pennsylvania reached back into her old secondary school to “give back” by helping high school students apply what she was learning about getting people involved in creating positive change. She hopes that her program will help recruit young people into a community change pathway.



“That very first day we defined what we wanted student government to look like at the school – Are you just voting on prom themes? Or do you want to go into the community?”

The high school students weren’t used to being asked such direct questions, which was a barrier Nyeelah worked to overcome. The pilot wasn’t about a college student lecturing to high school students, and telling them what to do. It was interactive. “We had two hours each session – So you tell us your thoughts on gentrification, or bullying, or whatever else is going on in the schools, and what we should do about it.”

At the beginning of her pilot program, Nyeelah said she had just a couple of students attending regularly. After four months of engaging with the high school student body – and listening to concerns and ideas for fixing them—she had upwards of 20 to 30 students attending each session. “About three months in, we had students self-organizing to

stuff like handing out flyers to get people involved in a neighborhood cleanup.”

“For me, this Minor was critical to helping me find out who I am, and what my purpose is.”

Intriguing Precedents for Preparing Early College Students for Community Change Careers:

From the Community Change Education point of view, there is an intriguing development in the secondary school teaching world which could become a precedent for preparing young people for community careers and leadership. Early college high school **“teaching academies”** are being developed and adopted by districts around the country. Seen as a way to expose students to the teaching profession, these teaching academies also are an excellent way to build the pipeline of qualified teachers to fill local vacancies in ways that reflect a school’s student population.

“In Charlotte, North Carolina, the University of North Carolina’s Cato College of Education and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system have teamed up to create the Charlotte Teacher Early College High School. The high school is housed on the UNC college campus and welcomed its first group of 55 ninth graders in 2017. The aspiring educators spend their first two years completing high school requirements and the subsequent three years taking general education college requirements and observing and supporting district classrooms. Graduating students will acquire up to 60 college credits that can be transferred to the Cato College of Education to earn teaching degrees.

“At Travis Early College High School in Austin, Texas, students have the opportunity to earn an associate degree or up to 60 credit hours towards a bachelor’s degree while in high school. One of the programs available to students is the Texas Association of Future Educators, which gives students the opportunity to explore the teaching profession and earn a paraprofessional certificate. Students in the program take courses on practices of education, early

childhood education, and instructional practices. During their sophomore year of high school, students begin going off campus to gain experience supporting classrooms in local schools.

“New Dorp High School in New York City houses “smaller learning communities” that include the Future Teachers Academy which enrolls 350 students who are interested in the teaching profession. Students enrolled in the teaching track take electives such as foundations in education and teaching methodology, and their senior year, students enroll in an internship as teaching assistants with local schools.

“Research on early college high schools has demonstrated positive outcomes for students. Compared to their peers, for example, **students enrolled in early college high schools have a higher chance at graduating high school and enrolling in college.** And at a time when tuition costs are on the rise, early college high schools provide students with opportunities to spend less time—and money—earning a postsecondary credential. And in the case of these early college teaching academies, students are encouraged to pursue a career in teaching at a time when teacher shortages top the list of concerns for many states and districts.”(Gates Foundation report)

While these programs do not provide income to cover the students’ educational and living costs, there are other models which cover those expenses for students who formally commit to teaching for several years in the local public school system. In Illinois, for example, until the State budget crisis there were several Grow Your Own Programs covering the full education costs of students who commit to teaching in local school systems.

There is a strong argument for creating similar programs for people preparing for careers in community service or public service which are extremely important to our cities and towns, indeed to society as a whole. **They offer a quadruple social benefit –**

- If they are targeted to educate low-income students, they reduce poverty immediately by providing low-income college students with a living wage, earning while they learn.
- Upon graduation they provide them with good career opportunities and upward mobility.

- They provide skilled, knowledgeable and understanding professionals for the important work of strengthening neighborhoods, providing essential services, and pressing for reforms which benefit society, and
- They strengthen the community by building collaboration, consensus, and collective action, weaving a stronger social fabric, and building ongoing organizations.

The CLP Network is preparing to work towards improvements in national and state policy, including the **development of pilot earn-while-you learn programs along these lines. The first such program along these lines will launch in 2021 as the California Youth Leadership Corps, a special project of the Community Learning Partnership.** *For more details, see Chapter 23.*