



Every day, Elev8 initiatives in Baltimore, Chicago, Oakland and New Mexico are bringing together schools, families and other community partners to ensure that students succeed in school and beyond.

## ELEV8: MAKING SCHOOLS SAFER

According to annual surveys, students in Elev8 schools feel safer at school and in Elev8 activities than in their surrounding communities.<sup>18</sup>

One Elev8 New Mexico school reported a 50% decrease in disciplinary actions in the three years following Elev8's launch; youth arrests in the surrounding neighborhood went from 60 to 1 in a single year.

Suspensions in one Elev8 Chicago school were down more than 80% in 2009-2010.

Across schools, Elev8 has substantially broadened student acceptance and use of counseling services, which school staff link to notable declines in disciplinary problems.<sup>19</sup>

Elev8 is a flexible, full-service community school model that focuses on middle-grade youth in low-income areas. It builds on core elements that research has clearly linked with student achievement and success. These include extended-day learning opportunities, school-based healthcare, and support for families, all carefully integrated to make good use of resources and effectively support students.<sup>1</sup>

Elev8 recognizes that the best solutions are often locally driven. For this reason, Elev8 looks different in every participating school, with community members identifying local needs and opportunities. Elev8 engages students and families, so that over the long term, they can be successful advocates for themselves and their communities.

### Why Now?

- A decade ago, the US led the world in college completion; 10 countries have now surpassed us.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2010, among Latinos, just 56% of students graduated from high school on time; the figure was 54% for African Americans; and 51% for Native Americans.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly 1 out of 10 teens is not attending school or working.<sup>4</sup>
- Students from poor and minority communities continue to score significantly below their more advantaged peers on standardized tests.<sup>5</sup>
- More than one fifth of all children live in poverty; 23 million children live in families where no one has full-time, year-round employment.<sup>6</sup>
- It is estimated that every high school graduate produces a benefit to the public of more than \$200,000.<sup>7</sup>

### Lasting Impact: Elev8 helps students from vulnerable communities succeed...

By supporting student achievement—including learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom and traditional school year.

- Research shows that students who participate in high-quality out-of-school-time programs come to school more and do better academically.
- Over the last three years, nearly 7,000 youth have benefitted from Elev8's out-of-school-time programs, including math, science and technology classes; homework help; mentoring; anti-violence initiatives; community service and leadership opportunities; and arts and cultural activities.<sup>8</sup> Elev8 Baltimore's summer program featured the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools, which focus on teaching students strategies that make reading fun and engaging.
- Many of Elev8's OST programs deliberately reinforce and extend classroom learning—70% of surveyed youth say Elev8's after-school programs allow them to practice things they learn in school, while more than 80% say Elev8 staff challenge them to do their best.<sup>9</sup>
- **Examples of the local impact of these programs abound:<sup>10</sup>**
  - In Oakland, three quarters of interviewed parents reported improvements in the academic performance of students attending Elev8's extended-learning programs.
  - In Chicago, increasing numbers of Elev8 students are being accepted into competitive high schools known for keeping students "on track" to graduation.
  - One Elev8 New Mexico school has seen scores on standardized math tests increase by 45% since the introduction of Elev8.

## WHY MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Adolescence is an important developmental phase, when young people are gaining independence and making decisions that affect their futures. Research shows that the transition from middle school to high school is a particularly critical turning point. How smoothly students make this transition is strongly related not only to the likelihood of finishing high school but also to the odds of attending and succeeding in college.

Elev8 focuses on these vital middle school years, because young people who do well in middle school are much more likely to do well in high school, go onto graduate and have healthy, productive futures.

**By providing high-quality school-based health services—because healthier students perform better.**

- There is compelling evidence that inadequate healthcare can undermine academic performance. Students with untreated health problems, for instance, are absent more often and fall behind their classmates.<sup>11</sup>
- There were nearly 28,000 visits to Elev8's School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) during the 2010-2011 school year.<sup>12</sup>
- More than 70% of students in Elev8 schools say that SBHCs allow them to receive services sooner and to access information and resources that are otherwise unavailable.<sup>13</sup>

**By providing resources for families—addressing basic needs, so students can concentrate on learning.**

- Over the last three years, nearly 2,700 parents and other members of the community have tapped vital support services, including emergency services, through Elev8.<sup>14</sup> In Baltimore, for example, during the 2010-11 school year, Elev8 helped over 100 parents and other family members obtain job training, financial support and counseling.<sup>15</sup>
- Elev8 tax clinics have helped numerous families access the income tax refunds and credits they're entitled to. In Oakland, in 2011, Elev8 secured a combined tax refund of more than \$100,000 for 50 low-income families.<sup>16</sup>
- This work adds up to powerful results at the local level. In Laguna, a small American Indian rural reservation where 100% of the middle school students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, Elev8 New Mexico has returned more than \$400,000 to the community, by helping families access various work supports, including earned income tax credits, childcare subsidies, health insurance, and food stamps.<sup>17</sup>
- In sum, the evidence shows that Elev8 is providing a critical safety net for families and communities in tough economic times, which helps provide the stability that young people need to focus on their education.

**Elev8 creates positive changes school-wide...**

- By transforming schools into better places to learn and work;
- By making them safer and improving school climates;
- By giving teachers more time to teach and students more time to learn; and
- By increasing parent involvement in schools.

**Elev8 schools strengthen the whole community...**

- By welcoming parents and community members and including them in decisions;
- By engaging students in positive and safe activities during the after-school hours;
- By improving public health; and
- By helping students do well in school and go on to graduate, which results in a better educated workforce and safer, more economically stable communities.

*Elev8 is being independently evaluated, so initiative leaders and school officials can make real-time, data-based decisions for the benefit of students. Public/Private Ventures is conducting a national evaluation that examines program participation and identifies opportunities to improve services. P/PV is also conducting annual surveys at every Elev8 school to assess students' needs, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. In addition, local evaluators are delving into the experiences of key Elev8 stakeholders, recording student and community reflections on Elev8, and documenting changes in the school environment following the introduction of the Elev8 model. Together, these studies are contributing to a growing body of knowledge about innovative and effective approaches to education.*

### Notes

1. Integrated services are characterized by a shared vision, combined resources, and unified processes among all Elev8 participants and stakeholders. By carefully coordinating the services students and families receive, Elev8 aims to make wise use of available resources and foster more lasting change than could be accomplished through any single service in isolation.
2. US Department of Education, A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, March 2010.
3. "Graduation by the Numbers," Education Week, June 2, 2010
4. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Book, 2011.
5. US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, June 2011.
6. US Census Bureau, September 2011; Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Book, 2011.
7. Levin, H., et al., The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children, Columbia University, 2007.
8. Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) evaluation data, August 2011.
9. P/PV evaluation data, August 2011.
10. Elev8 program data and local evaluators' reports, 2011.
11. Basch, Charles, Healthier Students Are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reforms to Close the Achievement Gap, Columbia University, March 2010.
12. P/PV evaluation data, August 2011.
13. P/PV evaluation data, August 2011.
14. P/PV evaluation data, August 2011.
15. Elev8 Baltimore program data, 2011.
16. Elev8 Oakland program data, 2011.
17. Elev8 NM program data, 2011
18. P/PV evaluation data, August 2011.
19. P/PV summary of local evaluator reports, March, 2011.