Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth

Carolyn Acker and Norman Rowen
Co-Founders, The Pathways to Education Program

Abstract

This paper recounts the development of the Pathways to Education Program from its origins in the Regent Park community of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Program was conceived in 2000 as a response to the seeming intractable and longstanding problem of high school dropouts in one of Canada's most economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse communities. In the first section, the authors recount the development of the Program. Section Two documents the Program's remarkable success in significantly reducing the dropout rate and increasing post-secondary participation through the provision of comprehensive, community-based supports. The final section offers lessons first about the Program itself and, second, about possible implications for other social innovations. The Program's success has led to its replication in other low-income communities across Canada.

As Pathways to Education (Pathways) enters its second decade, it seemed like an appropriate time to reflect on its origins, achievements and lessons. As one of two founding funders, the Counselling Foundation of Canada helped unleash a powerful social innovation which has the ability to change the lives of youth in our lowest income communities; youth whose life chances have historically been so severely limited. Over the course of the creation of the Pathways program along with implementation and replication, we have had precious little time to publish some of the key findings, both results and lessons. This is an important moment to do both as Pathways develops in new ways and takes new directions.

The following paper is organized in three broad sections. The first describes the background and context for the de-velopment of the initial Pathways to Education Program in the Regent Park community of Toronto. The second part outlines the principal results and achievements of Pathways young people, providing data covering the past decade including both Regent Park as well as the second generation communities which have replicated the Program. The final part offers some lessons learned from Pathways' first decade focusing on lessons regarding the Program itself (and relevant to other youth development initiatives), as well as offering some lessons from our experiences with Pathways as a social innovation which, hopefully, will be of value to those considering other innovations to address similarly complex challenges in other communities.

Part I: Background, Context and Development of Pathways

The Canadian Council on Learning (2006) tells us that by 2013, up to 70% of all jobs will require post-secondary education. Therefore, a major challenge is how to ensure that capable young people from poor communities, "first generation" youth and aboriginal Canadians can access post-secondary education.[1] The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Fund (2009) has shown that these are the groups who have historically lacked access. This challenge was well understood in 2000 in developing the Pathways to Education Program in Regent Park. The high school drop-out rate for the wealthiest communities in Toronto is 5% to 13% (e.g. TDSB 2009) while youth in Canada's lowest income communities are dropping out of high schools at outrageous rates in excess of 50% to 60%. Since the 1960s policy makers, educators and governments have struggled to solve this problem. The Pathways to Education Program has had some important success in addressing this seemingly intractable problem through social innovation.

Pathways to Education is a community-based, youth-at-risk initiative developed in one of the poorest communities in downtown Toronto, Canada which helps youth in low-income, urban communities complete and succeed in high school by providing various forms of academic, social, financial and advocacy supports.

The origins and development of the Pathways to Education Program stem from the experience of failure for the majority of young people in the community. Regent Park is the oldest and largest public housing development in Canada and continues to be one of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the city of Toronto. The challenges faced by this community are many: low incomes, (the 2001 Canadian Census revealed that the median house-hold income for Regent Park was approximately $17,000 -with neighbouring Moss Park the lowest in the GTA - compared to approximately $54,000 for Toronto households as a whole), high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, and a large pro-portion of single-parent families.[2] In particular, the challenge of the experi-ence of failure was at the root of com-munity concern dating from the 1960s. Indeed, a high rate of youth dropouts and a growing achievement gap among minority and low income youth was and perhaps continues to be viewed as an in-tractable problem comparable to the longstanding challenges of Aboriginal communities in Canada.

While working at the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC), we [authors Carolyn Acker, Executive Director and Norman Rowen, Director Pathways to Education] founded the Pathways to Education Program. At the time we didn't think of ourselves as so-cial entrepreneurs. We were working hard to break the cycle of poverty and implement the Centre's vision of "com-

munity succession": that the young people growing up in the community would become the future doctors, nurses, social workers, community development workers and administrators of the Centre. Ten years later, we reduced the dropout rate by 70% and increased post-secondary participation four fold.

In 1992, the RPCHC primarily offered medical, dental, and nursing services. It was during the early nineties that the Board of the Health Centre expressed its desire to be more than "a clinic". They believed that, in order to improve the health of the community, they needed to engage in health promotion and community development strategies. After development of a strategic plan in 1993, the next few years were spent growing the Health Center's capacity in health promotion and community development. It was also during this period that we began to witness the rapid deterioration of the Regent Park community. Through the nineties, the Health Centre's budget grew from approximately $2.5 million to $6.5 million. Our services and programs expanded to meet the changing needs, encompassing everything from a strong Early Years program to growing community gardens, working with the community and police on safety issues, fostering community development and capacity-building and advocacy on housing issues and shelter for the homeless. Yet, as we were struggling to meet the needs of the community, the violence continued to increase. We witnessed young men involved in gangs, along with drug dealing, assault and murder from the increasing use of hand guns. The atmosphere in the community was one of hopelessness and the youth involved in these activities were getting younger and younger. We knew we weren't getting at the root cause and we felt as though the services of the Health Centre were more of a community band aid rather than a strategy to break the cycle of poverty. We were desperate to find a solution to the distress and despair engulfing the community.

In 1995 Carolyn, and two others from the RPCHC, attended the first International Community Health Centre Conference held at the Centre for Health Care Reform in Montreal, and heard a presentation by Dr. H. Jack

Geiger. Dr. Geiger presented on a community health centre he was instrumental in founding in rural Mississippi. The community was steeped in racial segregation. A video presentation showed people picking cotton, living in substandard housing with inadequate water and little hope for the future. Geiger launched a community health centre there in 1965 under the sponsorship of Tufts Medical School in Boston. Along with the primary care clinical services they were providing, he and his team introduced a variety of programs, including after-school programs, college and university preparation courses, as well as economic development initiatives that ultimately provided youth with employment opportunities to break out of poverty and some became health care professionals serving their community from the community health centre.[3] After listening to the story unfold we were told that a young woman who grew up in the community obtained her Master's degree and she was now the CEO of this Health Centre and that four young boys from this community were poised to graduate from medical school and were going back to their community to provide health services. Needless to say we were awed by this experience and brought the idea back as a way of actually breaking the cycle of poverty and handing over ownership of the Health Centre to the community. Staff and board were galvanized by the idea and, during the 1996 board/staff strategic planning retreat, we were inspired to create our own audacious vision of "community succession".

RPCHC is grounded in an understanding of the importance of community ownership. In fact, community ownership is a fundamental value of the RPCHC. Nothing was more important to the achievement of the vision of "community succession" than engaging the community. The Centre's mission statement commits it to involving community members in decision-making and in designing and running programs. In 1996-97, the RPCHC began a process of exploring with the community what achieving the vision of "community succession" would mean. How could the community help its children become the leaders and professionals of the Regent Park of the future? It's important to

remember that at this stage we had no idea that we would create the high impact, social innovation, we named Pathways to Education. We wanted to break the cycle of poverty and knew that the identification of the obstacles and solutions must be driven by the community. It took about three years before the concept for the Pathways to Education Program was fully developed. The vision is not a vision about program implementation or reform of the education system. The point may seem obvious, but many program models are driven by purposes that are more relevant to the professionals involved in delivering them. The Health Centre's vision flowed from the community, and the Pathways program was developed and implemented with the youth of the community as its focus.

In 1997, the vehicle or structure used to engage the community in the visioning process was the Community Succession Task Force. Later, based on the work of the Task Force, a Steering Committee was formed. Residents from the community played a major role alongside members of the RPCHC Board and staff, including the Executive Director. There was also representation from other local agencies and organizations. Records from one of the early "community succession" focus groups in 1999 indicate that residents were keenly aware of the need for people from Regent Park to feel respected and part of the process. They were asked how to ensure that non-resident members would not dominate the project's development. Among their suggestions were: facilitation of discussions; putting a resident in the chair's role; inviting youth to participate; and coaching for resident participants so they would not be intimidated by the language and style of professionals. All of these suggestions became part of the subsequent activities and processes from which the Pathways to Education Program grew.

A number of strategies were used to engage in a community dialogue in Regent Park, but it is important to understand the context in which the Health Centre was operating. Throughout the early nineties the RPCHC had demonstrated a long-term commitment to the community by developing community strengths, working hand-in-hand with residents who had taken leadership and

staff roles in the organization, recognizing and building upon community assets and bringing in resources from outside the community, collaborating and partnering with other community agencies and institutions to build community capacity, and advocating for the community. Some specific strategies used by the "community succession" project in Regent Park included: a survey of community residents to gather information, meetings with people who are seen as role models for Regent Park youth, focus groups with parents from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds in their first language, interviews and focus groups with young people who had graduated, who were still in school, or who had dropped out of high school, a staff survey at the Regent Park Community Health Centre, informal community soundings, and meetings with staff from local elementary schools and local agencies. To support some of these strategies, people who spoke languages other than English were needed to communicate with some residents; therefore, members of the community were hired and received training on how to conduct focus groups and had input into their design. We needed seed funding to pursue development of the vision because staff at the RPCHC did not have time on top of their normal duties to do this work. In 1999, a major milestone for the "community succession" project occurred when RPCHC received seed funding from the Counselling Foundation of Canada to further develop its ideas and create a multi-year funding proposal.

By engaging the community and sharing the vision of "community succession" with them through focus groups, and by working in a collaborative process with community members and other community based agencies, we elicited the community's input so we could develop a proposal to realize the vision. One thing that became very clear from the focus group data was how deeply parents cared about their children's future, and how interested they were in actions that would help their children succeed in the school system, and ultimately the workforce. Focus groups and interviews with youth revealed that a significant number of youth in the community had lost hope for the future. Even those who were

doing well in high school had very low expectations of being able to obtain student grants or loans and go on to post-secondary studies. The funding proposal that was developed through this process represented a variety of activities to implement the vision. The proposal was also the culmination of a great deal of work on the part of Centre staff, board and a consultant in nurturing funder confidence. The main components consisted of a number of mentoring activities and supported access to education, training and volunteer opportunities for adults and for older youth who had dropped out of high school. At this stage we were looking at a symptom - youth and adults without skills or preparation for employment - though we thought we were looking at the problem. We were still not clearly seeing the systemic issues contributing to the problem. The action research process that followed in 2000 illuminated the systemic issues which needed to be addressed as the root of the problem

At the end of 1999, after a year and a half of negotiations with two foundations, the Counselling Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we were granted funding based on a proposal comprised of the previously articulated program ideas that we believed could achieve the vision, none of which were the Pathways to Education Program. Achieving this vision was a daunting challenge we gladly took on because we were propelled by our passion for social justice. This was just the beginning of financial support to realize the community's vision, but without the initial support of these two founding partners, the Program would never have been developed and implemented.

Throughout the process of design and implementation many people told us we would be unsuccessful. An innovative approach to tackle the intractable problem of high school drop outs in low income communities was imperative. Not only was this extremely difficult because of the complexity and intransigence of the problem, but we also had to deal with resistance from many cynics and naysayers as we developed Pathways and fund-raised to sustain the work. Another complication arose when Ontario elected the Harris Conservatives in 1995. The cuts made by that

government included a 22% reduction in social assistance to families, effective loss of transportation subsidies for low income students in the former City of Toronto (after the amalgamation of the several school boards), loss of rent controls, and more psychiatric bed and hospital closures. We revisited our funders to explain that the floor had been pulled out from under the families we were working with which would make the vision that much harder to achieve.

By early 2000, job descriptions were being drafted, including one for Director of the Community Succession Project who was hired in the spring. (By 2001, the innovation was developed and this role evolved into the Director of Pathways to Education). In 2000, the year we began to research how we might implement our vision which resulted in the creation of Pathways to Education, there were nine murders in the community, and there was a palpable sense of despair. The parents in the community, of all cultures, feared for their children's safety, and feared for their future. Yet they wanted the same things for their kids as middle class parents. And they knew what our research would bear out; that we had a serious problem with young people who weren't finishing high school. Our research uncovered a dropout rate of 56%, fully twice the City of Toronto average. And for the children of single parents, and immigrants it was more than 70%.[4] On seeing these data, we were overwhelmed. It strengthened our resolve to address the tragic underachievement of so many of our young people.

Launched in September 2001, the Program was developed in the preceding year using an "action research" framework to elicit the community's experiences and perceptions of barriers faced in education and employment, coupled with a review of best practices from related programs. The process was guided by and built upon the solid foundation of community development outlined above, an action research methodology, a results-driven focus, and a passion for breaking the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that had engulfed the community for so long. We created Pathways by engaging the community in this action research process, along with community based agencies

and local schools. After listening to parents, schools, agencies and dozens of young people themselves, graduates and dropouts alike, we learned that the barriers to success were not things that could be addressed solely within the schools. The Pathways program was designed to overcome many of these risk factors, the most serious of which are clearly based in the community including poverty, lack of academic and social support, and a longstanding culture of failure.[5]

Challenges Pathways Needed to Address

There are a number of barriers which were initially identified through the development of the Pathways to Education Program. Additionally, the Program's evolution over the past decade, coupled with more recent research, enabled us to address additional challenges faced by Pathways' young people.

Initial Understandings

Four main barriers were identified in 2000 through extensive focus group discussions, individual interviews and research on best practices leading to the development of the four key Pathways supports.

Poverty. As a principal feature of Regent Park, the reality of low income asserts itself for residents and their families in multiple ways. Related to Pathways, the lack of transportation subsidies, coupled with the lack of a local high school, necessitated consideration of a direct financial support. This has taken the form of transit tickets for Regent Park Pathways youth based on their school attendance. The cost of this support, however, may be seen to be "offset" by the Program's design which utilizes this direct financial support to ensure contact with Program staff and the development of more direct accountability by the students.

A second aspect of the effects of poverty as an obstacle to success was the deeply held conviction that, if young people were to graduate high school, they believed the cost of post-secondary education was clearly beyond their reach. The Pathways scholarship was designed to directly address this barrier.

Beginning in 2005, the Provincial government amended the processes and requirements under the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP) to provide grants, rather than only loans, for those with the lowest family incomes, for first year tuition and half of second year tuition. This has allowed Pathways more limited financial support to be applied to costs not covered by the tuition grant (e.g. ancillary fees, books, residence costs outside Toronto, etc.), or simply applied to tuition in second and later years.

Perhaps the more striking aspect of the longer term financial support is its profound effect on high school achievement. This positive effect is specifically the change in perspective which results from the logic that many young people identified prior to Pathways; namely, that if you don't believe you can go on to college or university, it doesn't matter if you finish high school. Therefore, the promise of support at the post-secondary level allows young people to address their internalized pessimism – an attitude which was regrettably reinforced by others' perceptions (the stigma of the community) and which was itself exemplified by individual and collective failure to complete high school.

Poverty and risk. There is much evidence concerning the factors which place students at risk, and considerable agreement that risk is far from a random occurrence.

> The deleterious effect of poverty on education has been well known for centuries. Thirty years of careful social science has provided overwhelming evidence that socioeconomic status (SES) has been and continues to be the best single predictor of how much schooling students will obtain, how well they will do at their studies, and what their life prospects beyond school are. Much Canadian research confirms poverty's negative influence on students' behaviour, achievement, and retention in school (Levin 1995: 212)

> SES continues to be the strongest predictor of educational outcomes, as it has been since it came into

prominence as a research issue more than 30 years ago. Almost all educational outcomes, such as initial reading achievement, referrals to special education, discipline and behaviour problems, years of education completed, and grades achieved are strongly correlated with family income… Childhood SES is the strongest single predictor of long-term income and educational achievement. Other major life outcomes such as longevity, health status, criminal activity, propensity to political involvement, and so on have also been linked to childhood socio-economic status. In every case, low family income is strongly associated with poorer outcomes, a finding that has remained extraordinarily robust in the research and applies in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom… (Levin and Riffel 2000:184)

Commissioned research on Ontario dropouts (Fergusson et al, 2005) concluded that the determinants of risk include both school-based and non-school (i.e. community-based) factors which, in itself, suggests that school-based interventions by themselves are extremely unlikely to be effective, a conclusion supported in a review of Canadian research (Levin, 2005).

While the extent – and consistency – of the relationship between educational attainment and SES is clear, the contribution of other factors is far less so. Some of the risk factors identified by Ferguson et al (2005) as "non-school" factors are strongly associated with poverty and its concentration in communities; for example, immigration and settlement, moves/interruptions, social isolation, assumption of adult roles, and minority status are all present in the most impoverished and challenged communities and, more important, are the lived experience of the youth in these communities.

Given the above, there is also reason to ask the relative role of school factors. While there is somewhat more conflicting evidence, it is clear that such factors, after controlling for background, account for much less of the variance in educational attainment. This

understanding is augmented by findings from several studies. For example, in a review of research, Raptis and Fleming (2003) noted that community and background factors have a far greater impact on achievement than school-based factors, citing work showing 50-60% of the variance in achievement is based on background factors compared to 5-6% from school-based factors.

None of the above discussion is offered to suggest that efforts to improve schooling are irrelevant; rather, it is to note that "the negative impact of poverty on all education and life outcomes is well known, yet the issue does not seem to occupy as important a place in educational policy or practice as its effects would suggest." (Levin and Riffel 2000:183). It is, rather, that educational policy and programs, to be effective, would appear to require attention to poverty and to "community-based" rather than solely "school-based" approaches. As Levin noted: "One of the striking aspects of education reform, however, has been the lack of attention to the most important single determinant of educational outcomes — socio-economic status (SES) of families" (ibid.184). Pathways was intentionally designed to shift the lens from a singular focus on the school environment, to a broader focus on the community as a whole, inclusive of its schools. This was a driving force behind the design of the Pathways program.

The need for academic support and the challenge of the curriculum. Pathways addresses several aspects of this challenge directly through the academic support provided, of which tutoring is the major, but not the only, component. However, the need for such support must be understood as having several elements.

First, through the many focus groups (particularly those with parents in their first languages); it was clear that the limited English language skills of many parents precluded their direct support of their individual children's academic endeavours. Second, even where language skills were not a barrier, there are many parents whose own education was not at a level where they could support high school subject knowledge.

Third, even where a parent's background might include subject knowledge, a very clear difference was identified between the methods of instruction and expectations of the high schools (and teachers) attended by Pathways youth and the experiences of their parents. This is also a challenge for many tutors who "learned it differently" than what students are experiencing; and today's high school students are expected to demonstrate concretely these different understandings of many subjects (including math, but also science, history, geography and others). These direct needs for subject support are met largely through Pathways tutoring five evenings each week in the community.

Fourth, the structure and organization of the secondary school curriculum is extremely challenging even for parents well educated in Ontario. Courses, with vastly different destinations (not to be called "streams" any longer), are often not well understood by students or their parents. The result of this appeared to be inappropriate placements; most notably, students in courses at the wrong level of instruction or with a destination which did not correspond to their aspirations and/or abilities.[6] Assessment for special needs is both difficult to access, particularly for second language learners, and frequently supports which are mandated through the assessment process are not well understood, even if they are available. Support to understand choices and to advocate for appropriate placements was, therefore, a clear need. Pathways directly addressed this need through the staff position of Student Parent Support Worker (SPSW), as well as the unique "program facilitator" position. Created in the Program's third year, the facilitator position provided more specialized support to parents and staff needing to focus on particular students with special needs. This expertise is crucial to incorporate into the Program if the numbers of such youth are to be able to access the support the schools are mandated to provide for such learners.[7]

Finally, with respect to academic support, young people at this stage of adolescent development typically have challenges in organization, study skills, etc. exhibiting instead traits of procrastination, and disorganization, all of which

suggests that on these dimensions as well, Regent Park youth are more "normal" than they are different. What is quite different, however, was the lack of organized support to help these many young people through this phase in their development. Therefore, Pathways staff and volunteers work directly with young people to help develop these skills beginning with recognition of the need for such competencies if they are to succeed academically. For some students, one-to-one support is needed from time to time, and at key junctures ("teachable moments"), while for others, they are able to develop more successful work habits through positive identification in group environments (e.g. tutoring or mentoring). Pathways offers both individual and group support for these young people to see themselves as able to succeed in academic terms; and such support must not be isolated from their emerging self-images and images of their community – a community which, following the initial years of Pathways, has begun to develop a strong ethic of success for all youth.

Self-image and community image. A third set of barriers was also identified in the action research/community engagement work leading to the development of the Program. Somewhat more difficult to define, there appeared to be deeply felt obstacles related to the stigma of the community which had been, unfortunately, internalized by most young people in the community. Related to what Sennett and Cobb (1972) termed "the hidden injuries of class", in the absence of a vision of themselves as "successful", many young people in the community had turned to alternative venues for "inclusion"; some to gangs as a focal point for acceptance and support. Yet others, perhaps the majority from our initial work, learned the "skill" of becoming "invisible"; that is, of neither drawing attention to themselves or their challenges, nor making demands of the adults in their lives who were unable (often for basic material reasons) of providing support.[8]

These internalized self-images are, of course, intimately woven within the fabric of the community and the educational system as typified, for example, by the response of a vice-principal to

the initial description of the goals of the Pathways to Education Program prior to its inception who unashamedly responded with the question "why bother?"(see sidebar). While her particular expression was not typical, the unspoken message communicated consistently to Regent Park youth was felt nearly universally by those dozens of young people we listened to in designing the Program; and this view has been echoed in other communities in their own community engagement work prior to their implementation of Pathways. Most important, this attitude only served to further strengthen our resolve; it could not go unchallenged. The best refutation would be our students' success.

The depth of feeling of individual doubt was complemented by a further obstacle, that of the community's despair which reached its zenith in the year we developed the Program. Having endured the murder of nine young men, many felt their vision of a future shift from one of struggle, perhaps to be overcome, to one of fatalism for themselves and their children.

Additional challenges related to self-image are more specifically related to the transition from elementary to secondary school – a focal point of Pathways efforts – and include students' own concerns with the "loss of status" and anxiety about their academic abilities and performance. In recounting these and related concerns, Tilleczek (2007) notes that they are normal adolescent experiences, though we would note that their effects are exacerbated by the social context of "risk" that exists for those young people from disadvantaged communities such as Regent Park.

Pathways was deliberately designed to address these internalized images in several ways. First, the design of the group mentoring program specifically tries to address the need for young people through a group, rather than as individuals, to experience pro-social and positive activities where they can further develop age appropriate social skills (including problem-solving, team building, communication, negotiation, etc.). As the literature on mentoring indicates, the content of such relationships is far less important than the relation-

ships themselves. In the case of Pathways, we deliberately structured this aspect of the Program to encourage the development of relationships not only with adults, but among the youth themselves.[9]

The second major focus for addressing these needs is in the development of the specialty and career mentoring elements of Pathways. Specifically, as the young people moved from grade 10 to grade 11, it was clear that an alternative approach would be needed for them to view themselves as more successful, as capable – with support – of developing their talents and interests. Our understanding of the practical obstacles they faced included a lack of role models in the community representing the range of possible occupations, the lack of parental networks to access professionals or skilled workers in a variety of organizations, etc.; in short, the absence of the social capital required to imagine and experience possible futures which had heretofore been closed to them. Pathways response – the specialty and career mentoring elements – has evolved to include a variety of group and individual experiences which would otherwise not be available to youth in the community. These include, for example, a Steps to University course (Sociology 101) offered by UofT in the community, a post-secondary credit course in business by Ryerson, and a college general education credit course by George Brown; a mentoring opportunity (for Pathways youth to mentor younger children from similar communities) through the Youth Technology Mentoring Program, group projects with Soulpepper, CanStage, and others, one-to-one mentors from Junior League of Toronto for young women interested in business and professions; development of internships with law firms, unions, and other employers which would be otherwise unavailable to our youth, career nights involving professionals from a variety of occupations drawn from similar backgrounds to Pathways' youth (e.g. Black Lawyers Association, or teacher candidates in York's "urban diversity" focus), to name a just a few. Each of the Pathways programs in other communities have developed their own menus of opportunities

for specialty and career mentoring through the development of local relationships with a range of individuals and organizations.

Each and every one of these opportunities is broadening and allows each young person to develop a practical and concrete understanding of a field of study or work. And each requires, as part of specialty mentoring requirements, "reflection" which enables the young person to consider their experience and how it has helped them clarify next steps, even if those include a decision to pursue a different path.

Third, the obstacles of negative self-image are also directly addressed through several staff roles, most importantly, the SPSWs. The development of this support arose directly from two sources: the experiences of the youth recounted by groups and individuals in designing the Program, and the literature on best practices in youth development programs. Specifically, there is the need to demonstrate to each and every young person that they are indeed capable of achievement beyond that which would be "pre-determined" by their circumstance. Hence, the focus on ensuring that each young person feels they are capable of higher achievement by providing the supports necessary to see them actually meet higher expectations. This process – the everyday relationships of both expectations and support – begins with their initial registration in the Program and continues through the support provided for their post-secondary transitions.

Fourth, the community image challenge has also been addressed through the basic design of the Program. Throughout the research leading to the design of the program, many individuals and groups in the community spoke poignantly of what needed to be done and presented two conclusions. First, to have the positive impact on the community which everyone wanted it was incumbent on us to include all youth – neither targeting nor creaming, as is done in virtually every other similar intervention.[10] Second, that to be successful we needed to provide the supports for the full duration of their high school careers; i.e. not merely in grade 9 or 9 and 10, but throughout their time in high school.

Fifth, unspoken, but of great consequence, were the significant barriers which existed in the transition from high school to post-secondary activities. These barriers include financial challenges (the application fees and the need for a credit card to complete on-line applications for both universities and colleges), and academic counselling sufficient and appropriate to support the student to apply and be accepted by the institution and program most able to meet their needs, and the need for post-secondary institutions to provide support required (in some cases) for Pathways graduates to succeed. These barriers have been addressed by Pathways in very specific ways.[11]

The financial support provided through Pathways scholarship has been used for application fees and deposits. Pathways has facilitated the post-secondary on-line application process through use of credit card and, eventually, arrangements with the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) and the Ontario Colleges Application Service (OCAS) for direct payment of application fees for Pathways students.[12]

More important, the support required for students to envisage themselves in different programs and institutions has been provided through Pathways career mentoring. While public policy (to be discussed further below) has traditionally viewed funding and academic preparation as the principal obstacles to high post-secondary participation for low-income students, our experience suggests that two other factors play more prominent – and related – roles. In particular, while Pathways supports both their academic and financial preparedness, there is an element of "psychological" preparedness that is evident from the Program and is, of course, related to self-image. The success of students in high school has, hopefully, been internalized and gone some distance in demonstrating to students their worthiness to pursue post-secondary education. However, the steps beyond high school are similarly anxiety producing and many young people from the community are still extremely hesitant to accept their abilities at face value. Working with staff, the selection of programs and institutions to apply to provides the space to voice such anxieties and for staff to situate these in the context of the youth's trajectory; that is, the sum total of their experiences over the previous several years which have brought him/her to this juncture. The success of students in their transitions to post-secondary programs is a testament to the centrality of the relationships built throughout the young person's years in the Program. That they are psychologically prepared – as well as academically and financially prepared – to attend college or university and that they have the disposition to do so is a function of these relationships with Pathways staff.

In addition, Pathways staff in Regent Park worked with staff at several post-secondary institutions to develop college and university supports for "first generation" students which built on the supports provided through Pathways.

There is no substitute for students having supportive relationships with SPSWs, with mentoring staff, with volunteer tutors and mentors over their years in the Program. The ability to provide these relationships and to provide for the availability of a variety of adults was deliberately designed into the Program and follows from lessons learned over many years by youth development programs in a variety of jurisdictions. For example, the need for a "sustained adult contact" (what we have termed a "constant adult presence") is a characteristic of successful initiatives which features prominently in the evaluation of programs for youth from disadvantaged communities (see, for example, Long 1996 for HRDC), and is embodied in the SPSW role. Other commentators on youth development programs have noted the related need for "multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers" (Connell, Gambone and Smith; 2001).

Continuing to learn for program improvement. Finally, with respect to barriers, the research component of Pathways has played, and continues to play, an important role. Specifically, it is crucial that there be on-going monitoring of results and an ongoing commitment to research necessary for program improvement. These are serious commitments which have enabled the Program to ensure that the young people,

their parents, the volunteers and staff are all able to provide the feedback about whether or not the obstacles are, in fact, being addressed by the Program. Procedurally, annual surveys of students, focus groups with students, parents, tutors and mentors, as well as annual program planning with staff, all inform the Program as to whether the young people are benefiting from the supports provided and whether they are able (and willing) to take advantage of these supports. In addition to these formal vehicles, staff are responsible for (informally) monitoring participation in school and the Program, with a view to identifying challenges that students face to increased participation. These data are crucial to ensuring that the Program continues to evolve to respond to the needs identified through the actual experience of our young people.

The principal feature of the "action research" approach out of which Pathways grew is its ability – and the practical necessity – of engaging in ongoing program improvement based upon actual data including outcomes and perceptions of participants. Kemmis and McTaggert (1990) have noted that "Linking the terms action and research highlights the essential feature of this approach which involves the testing out of ideas in practice as a means of improvement in social conditions and increasing knowledge."

Obviously, the social conditions needing to be improved included the unconscionably high dropout rate in Regent Park and, by extension, in other similar communities. As well, however, are the conditions of intergenerational poverty which is both a major factor in and the result of the historical and persistent poor educational outcomes for large numbers of inner-city youth. The practices and factors which produced such a situation were expressly to be addressed through the Program; as Grundy and Kemmis (1981) noted, the features of action research include that:

> the project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a strategic action susceptible to improvement;(and the) project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activi-

ties being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated.

This approach to program development and improvement, consciously oriented to change in social conditions, but also to improvement in and development of the Program itself, is congruent with several other approaches to program development more recently described including "community action research" (Senge and Scharmer, 2006), "developmental evaluation" (Gamble 2006; Patton 2002), and "applied dissemination" (Pearson 2006); and "emergent learning" (Darling and Perry 2007). That Pathways' approach to program improvement and ongoing program development has been consistent with these frameworks is not coincident. Rather, the Program has developed from an understanding of the need to respond to the "ground" while also considering the systemic nature of the challenges being addressed.

Program Elements

If the extensive community consultations outlined earlier were the catalyst for understanding the types of support which would be required, it was a practical challenge to determine the specific supports and how they might best be delivered. Two key processes were used to address these questions.

First, a series of focus groups were held with a variety of stakeholders perhaps most importantly, with young people and parents from a variety of cultural groups, as well as with key informants from a range of institutions including the Health Centre, the local elementary schools, and several community agencies. Second, it was crucial to determine the experience of other programs which had, to that time, tried to address similar challenges among similar populations.

A third and key element in the background work was facilitated through the Toronto District School Board; namely, to determine the actual graduation/dropout rate for young people from the community. While this ability to generate data by neighbourhood may be taken for granted today, more than a decade ago, this was not part of the repertoire of school board research departments. Therefore, while residents, both young people and their parents, had a clear sense that the young people in the community were not being successful, there was a profound lack of data from which to determine both the extent of the challenge and possible factors which led to the poor outcomes. At the time Pathways was being developed, no such data by community was available. While it might be assumed that we can now take for granted that local school authorities can – and will – provide data on the outcomes of students by community, this has proven to be a significant challenge in many prospective Pathways communities.[13]

Based on this further research, several conclusions became clear:

> Pathways started to take shape as a program that would support young people to complete high school, addressing the high dropout rate of Regent Park youth. It was made clear that the negative image of the community, the fear (and in many cases hopelessness) experienced by many parents, and the despair identified by youth themselves, was rooted in the challenges of the transition to high school and lack of success of young people from the community. (Bales 2004:31)

It cannot be stated too strongly that the components of Pathways were designed to specifically address some of these important challenges. In particular, in addition to the challenge of direct academic and financial support, the mentoring and Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSW)/advocacy components were specifically designed to address the internalized hopelessness and despair that had come to dominate the emotional landscape of the community among both parents and young people.

The program is voluntary and open to all students within the defined geographic community, and since inception in 2001, over 90% of Grade 9 Regent Park youth have registered. Of the many things we learned from the community in the development of the Program, two in particular stand out: first, that to effect major changes we needed to include all the young people, neither targeting or creaming; and, second, that to have the impact we sought, we needed to support the young people for all their years in high school, rather than for just one or two years as many other programs had done. Pathways focuses on school attendance and grades to ensure students accumulate the credits needed in each year of secondary school, in combination with social supports such as advocacy and mentoring. Students and their parents' sign a contract in which they agree to comply with the program requirements related to school attendance and program participation in exchange for Pathway's support for the duration of secondary school enrolment. In partnership with parents, community agencies, volunteers, local school boards and secondary schools, Pathways provides four types of support.

Initially, program staff contacted students and parents through their grade eight classrooms where teachers and school administrators cooperated to help contact prospective students and parents by hosting information sessions. Over the years, the Program's reputation and the community's support have meant that grade eight students gravitate to the Program and registration of each successive cohort became more routine, with students and their parents contacting Pathways to ensure their registration.

The Four Supports[14]

"It is the scope of the program, its embrace of the whole child and child's family, school and social environment that is its genius." (Michael Valpy, Educating Adna, The Globe and Mail, Jan. 24, 2004)

This section describes the four supports provided by the Pathways to Education Program: academic, social, financial and advocacy supports. The innovative blend of supports provided by Pathways helps to redress the effects of living in a disadvantaged community where expectations of success in school have traditionally been low. Pathways raises the expectations of success among students, their families, their schools and their community, and provides the supports young people need to meet those expectations.

The four supports make up an integrated package that addresses a variety of barriers that youth from disadvantaged communities face. The experience of Pathways in Regent Park, as well as research from other programs (e.g. Jerald 2007), suggests strongly that offering two or even three of the supports will not create a strong enough program to change the expectations and achievements of a community of youth. Pathways' success demonstrates that low income youth, particularly those who may be struggling with educational, family, peer or personal issues, benefit from a critical mass of supports that provide sustained adult contact, monitoring, encouragement and incentives to succeed.

The following description of the four supports provides an introduction to what Pathways does. These supports will not necessarily look exactly the same in other communities as they do in Regent Park. But the core of what is provided will be the same – tutoring, mentoring, financial support and advocacy.

Academic Support

Students receive tutoring in nearly all academic subjects and guidance to navigate through the complex high school curriculum at all levels and for all grades. They learn study skills and gain general knowledge. There is tutoring available in language and literacy skills for those who need it. There is also a computer lab developed in partnership with another local agency. This setting provides an opportunity to receive tutoring in computer literacy, support to work on computer-based research and projects, and an opportunity to explore technology-related careers. The goal is to provide quality academic tutoring to all students on a regular basis within the community, addressing different learning styles and meeting a variety of course expectations.

Volunteer tutors are matched with students who can benefit from their knowledge and who can relate easily to them in terms of learning style, background or interests. The tutors are a diverse group including university students, professionals and community members. Tutoring is provided four evenings a week in safe community settings, supervised by staff. There are two main tutoring sites in the community in spaces provided for a nominal rent (largely to cover the cost of utilities).

Tutors work one-on-one or with small groups of (up to four) students. Textbooks and other resources are provided for use during tutoring. Following feedback in the Program's first year, the initial "optional" tutoring was – at the students' request – revised to include specific expectations. All students are required to attend tutoring when they enter Grade 9, and all are encouraged to continue. Students whose marks are below the Pathways standards (60% in Grade 9, 65% in Grade 10 and 70% in Grades 11 and 12) are required to attend twice a week. Students in special education programs or taking English as a Second Language (ESL) are advised to attend tutoring regardless of their marks.

Attendance is monitored. Tutors and students fill out log sheets after every session documenting what was covered and how well the student is doing. Program Facilitators for Tutoring, who are part of the Pathways staff team, are responsible for ensuring a safe environment and effective tutoring. They help the volunteers develop their skills in engaging students and identifying special needs and learning styles, and matching suitable tutoring techniques to each student. Pathways also found that many students who are doing well in school appreciate having a place to study that offers a safe and positive learning environment. High-performing students also choose to attend tutoring because they have developed a mentoring relationship with a volunteer tutor or staff person and want to maintain that contact and support.

One of the important lessons over the years has been that it is important for the tutoring space to include both high achieving and struggling students. While some might think there might be embarrassment for some of these young people, experience has shown that, while they know that they are receiving different kinds of specific academic support, it is a central tenet of the Program that all youth are receiving the support; that whether you are working on calculus or struggling with fractions, whether you are critiquing Shakespeare or struggling with literacy, Pathways will support every young person. As well, all students can benefit from study and organizational skills during these high school years.

Teachers from the high schools attended by Pathways youth are encouraged to provide advice on the study areas where tutoring could help their students the most. They provide feedback to the staff Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSWs) who spend time in the schools; and who ensure that information from teachers is passed along through comments to the Program Facilitators at tutoring. This communication can take a variety of forms but is fundamental to the ability of the Program to help students focus on their specific academic challenges and make the best use of the tutoring support.

Social Support

Mentoring is about relationships that affirm who the young person is and help promote positive choices about who they can become. The goal is to have all students engaged in mentoring relationships and programs suitable to their age, interests and abilities during each of their years in Pathways.

Group mentoring.

Young people are connected with adult mentors who develop supportive relationships with them through group mentoring activities for the younger teens (Grades 9 and 10). The mentoring groups, which meet every two weeks, help to reduce isolation, promote development of group and personal identity, provide adult role models and encourage both learning and fun.

There are 12 to 15 in a group, with two or three mentors. The mentors are volunteers who, like the tutors, come from different walks of life and backgrounds. The focus and intent of mentoring in Pathways differ from many other mentoring programs, which are directed at youth engaged in specific high-risk or anti-social behaviours and which try to change those behaviours. Pathways group mentoring is intended to create a positive sense of belonging to a peer group and to a caring commu-

nity, to break down isolation, and to contribute to the development of a range of social and communication skills including problem solving, team building, and leadership development.

The groups meet in safe settings, supervised by staff. In Pathways' first year, the groups initially met once a month, but both students and volunteers provided feedback that they wanted to meet more often. The groups subsequently met every other week as of the Program's second year. (Many Pathways participants have said they would like to meet weekly, but there was simply not the space available in the community or the program capacity to handle weekly group meetings.) Approximately half the sessions are from a menu of Pathways-generated activities; the other half determined by the group itself.

A Program Facilitator (Pathways staff) is responsible for ensuring that the group mentoring experience is safe and effective. The Facilitator develops volunteer mentors' skills in engaging students using a variety of techniques and activities that are age-appropriate and suitable for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition, the staff facilitates a regular "debriefing" discussion following each session to elicit feedback from volunteers and to provide volunteer mentors with the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Specialty and career mentoring.

Specialty and career mentoring activities are developed for the older students, based on their interests and aspirations. All Grade 11s and 12 are expected to participate in specialty or career mentoring. By Grade 12, the emphasis is on planning for life after high school, whether that is post-secondary education oremployment.

Specialty mentoring opportunities help youth explore their educational and career interests and make progress towards their goals. The experiences are matched to the talents, interests and strengths of individuals or small groups. The experience must involve relationship-building and some skill development or personal growth. The specialty mentoring experience may involve a

specific learning opportunity, volunteer or work experience. Mentoring may be arranged by Pathways or by the student. A number of students are involved in activities at their high school. Participation is monitored by their SPSW. The emphasis is on the quality of the experience because the opportunities are all so different.

Students have regular contact with their SPSW, who keeps track of what students are doing for specialty or career mentoring. Students and their SPSWs are expected to discuss planning for the student's educational and career choices on a monthly basis. Students are encouraged to document and reflect on their skills in preparation for post-secondary education and employment and be able to discuss what they are getting out of the mentoring experience and how it supports their personal and career goals. A form for recording students' and SPSWs' reflections on their learning and progress has been developed.

A Program Facilitator organizes activities and helps students crystallize their plans. The Facilitator also conducts career interviews and provides counselling on course selections and post-secondary and employment options and issues. S/he helps students make applications for mentoring experiences and for post-secondary education programs.

The impetus for the career mentoring element of the Program was the specific feedback from several grade 12 students in the first Regent Park cohort who requested support when they were applying for post-secondary programs. A quick informal survey of that first cohort showed that only two of 87 students had received such help from school guidance staff. As with other Pathways supports, the career mentoring element was developed directly in response to the experience of the young people themselves.

In addition to visiting university and college campuses to see what they look like and feel like, and to meet representatives who talk about post-secondary education, the career mentoring staff also facilitate student visits to workplaces to provide that direct experience, as well as information on different occupations through "Career Mondays" which began as informal meetings of

adults with groups of students potentially interested in different fields. Networks of staff and supporters of Pathways are used to identify people who are willing to come and talk about what they do and how they got there.

Pathways students are involved in a range of different specialty mentoring experiences. Some examples include students taking a university or college credit course, participating in a community-based media arts program, drama and music programs, etc. organized by Pathways but provided by a range of community partners. And, as noted above, Pathways students have increasingly been involved in specialty mentoring through their participation in extra curricular activities at their secondary schools, something very few young people from Regent Park did prior to Pathways given that many felt stigmatized and "uninvited" by those schools. Clearly, this increased level of participation is an important positive impact of Pathways (and a variety of other factors); that is, the culture of many secondary schools has become more inviting to young people from disadvantaged communities.

Financial Support

Pathway provides both immediate, practical financial assistance to high school students and their families, and a longer-term financial incentive to encourage students to stay in the Program, graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary studies. In Regent Park, students receive transit tickets to get to and from school because there is no local secondary school in the community. (Pathways programs in other communities use a combination of transportation and lunch vouchers where transportation is provided.) They are also given some school supplies at the beginning of each school year.

The practical impact – and benefit – of the immediate financial help is important. Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) fares are not cheap. Even with a student discount, a Metropass costs over $100 a month (up from $80 at the beginning of the Program). At $5 per day, lunch vouchers in other Pathways communities are an equivalent benefit. The financial support provides an incentive

for students to stay in the Program and stay at school. It eliminates some of the financial stress experienced by families – the cost of transit fare to get their children to and from school – and it gives the students confidence that they won't be denied the opportunity for post-secondary education because the family lives on a low income.[15]

The transit tickets (or lunch vouchers) also provide a degree of leverage for the Program. They are only to be used for school, and usage is closely monitored. Tickets are reduced for every day a student does not go to school. If a student starts skipping school altogether or does not attend Pathways program activities (tutoring and mentoring), staff will make every effort to find out why and to encourage participation. But if the student does not show any interest or improvement, the transit tickets may be withdrawn or suspended until attendance improves. And the withholding of the immediate financial support provides an important moment of accountability for students and occasion for connection with Pathways staff, as well as an important opportunity for parents to connect with their children and their challenges in meeting program requirements.

The scholarship provides a longer-term incentive. Upon graduation, students can receive up to $4,000 ($1,000 for every year they are in the Program), to be paid to a publicly supported post-secondary institution on their behalf. The assistance is held in trust and is contingent on the ability of Pathways to raise the necessary funding. This support also serves as an opportunity for Pathways to provide important information to both students and their parents with respect to financing post-secondary education, serving as a moment for discussion of "financial literacy" and the details of provincial financial support schemes. Pathways' role in this area became quite practical; for example, since few parents in Regent Park have credit cards, on-line applications for post-secondary programs were facilitated through the use, in the initial round of applications, of the Program Director's credit card. This immediate challenge led to the Program developing a relationship with both the college and university application services which

enabled Pathways students to apply with fees billed directly to Pathways. The Program, in turn, paid such fees from the scholarship funds set aside for this purpose. Similar arrangements were made with several colleges and universities for direct payment of scholarship funds upon enrolment of Pathways students. Such processes developed as a direct result of the Program's commitment to provide the practical support that students from low income communities require to avail themselves of the opportunities more privileged families take for granted.[16]

Advocacy Support

Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSWs) provide a human and personal link between the student, the school, the family and the Program. This is a staff role. They monitor the young person's progress and intervene to remove barriers, where possible. They track student attendance at school and at tutoring and mentoring. They help the student deal with problems at school, and liaise with teachers and other school staff. They provide a channel for information-sharing within the Program.

The SPSWs meet at least every two weeks with their students when the youth collect their immediate financial support. This is an opportunity to talk directly to students. The SPSWs provide informal counselling, and refer students who need additional services to other programs or agencies. They keep in regular contact with parents, encourage them to be involved in their child's education, and keep them informed about the program. The role may be seen as a form of active case management (with the emphasis on "active" when needed). Pathways research shows that approximately half the young people connect with their SPSWs at least once a week and more frequently when necessary to address an immediate challenge.

The average ratio of students to SPSWs is 50 to one. The pressure on SPSWs depends on how the students on their roster are doing at school and in the Program, and how many schools the SPSW works in. Some have suggested that this ratio is too high to be effective. However, unlike many other social services, Pathways is predicated on the as-

sumption – clearly validated by the Program's results – that the young people who participate are not, by definition, "ill" nor in need of intensive interventions (though a few may have such needs at a particular time). Rather than pathologizing the young people of low income communities, it is fundamental that Pathways views these youth as "normal". While some may have more serious challenges, the vast majority share the need for support to address the challenges of poverty, rather than immediate physical or mental illness. The evidence clearly suggests that most young people in the most impoverished communities can succeed with the appropriate supports.

In schools where there is a large cluster of Pathways students, the Program negotiates space on certain days and times for the SPSWs to be on site (usually in an office which is used at other times by the school social worker or nurse). Even in the schools where Pathways has a number of students, the young people from the Program are just a fraction of the total student population at the school. That means the SPSWs have to work to make their presence felt and their concerns heard to advocate for their students.

The SPSWs go to school staff meetings to introduce themselves and talk to teachers about what their role is. In addition to meeting the principal and vice-principals, they get to know attendance secretaries and other office staff, guidance counsellors and social workers, and other staff in the schools. There are a variety of ways in which SPSWs and teachers develop relationships including a letter which they distribute to introduce themselves and the Program, and offers to meet teachers and discuss how the particular teacher prefers to communicate about the progress of students (e.g. feedback form, e-mail, phone or personal conversations). This is important information that SPSWs need for the Program to work more effectively with students, including information on students' subject challenges or specific assignments, behaviour, communication challenges with parents, etc. This feedback from teachers goes into the communications loop at Pathways. SPSWs also are the conduit for feedback, in turn, from tutors or mentors to

the schools and/or to individual teachers.

SPSWs usually meet first-time Pathways parents in person at an Open House for Grade 9 parents. They also meet parents at registrations and re-registrations for returning students. In October, the SPSWs contact parents to make sure they have received the information they need about where and when their child is supposed to be at tutoring and mentoring. The SPSWs keep in contact with parents generally once a month, although this is often difficult due to parents' work schedules and other responsibilities. If there are issues to be resolved involving their child, the contact with parents can be more frequent.

Over the years, several specific questions have been asked about the SPSW role. First, some have wondered if it is a role that could be effectively provided by school staff. A longer discussion of the respective roles of schools and communities is necessary to answer this question, and is found in our discussion in the third part of this article. However, a short answer is that, while there are some school staff who have played such roles for some students, there is considerable evidence that a school-based approach to the role is neither more efficient nor more effective than having the role vested in a community-based agency. Secondary schools lack the resources to ensure this support. More important, many in the schools feel this is not a priority since it can be provided by other agencies whereas school staff must focus on their principal instructional mandate. This is coupled with an understanding that the advocacy function would suffer if attempted by school staff and that school staff would be in a difficult position if their advocacy put them in conflict with other staff members or school board employees (including school principals or superintendents) as has sometimes been the case.

In addition, the reality of school transfers strongly suggests that, for the many students who change schools for a variety of reasons, such support organized through a particular school would lack the continuity the SPSW provides through Pathways.

Perhaps most important, was the judgment that the "distance", both literal and figurative, between the school and the community, coupled with the need to address community-based risk factors, works against the likelihood of success were this function vested in a particular school-based role. That judgment was based on the long experience of the young people, their parents, older youth and adults, and a range of practitioners; it was not simply a reaction the then current government[17]

This is not to suggest that the relationships between Pathways and local schools (and school districts) are not important; quite the contrary. Pathways success is predicated on having solid and respectful relationships between the Program and the schools. Such relationships are, in fact, a function of the clarity of roles which Pathways has helped to bring to the support of at-risk students.

Second, some have wondered about the backgrounds of SPSWs. One of the initial decisions was to have a diverse group of staff. Diversity is sometimes understood to mean cultural diversity; and Pathways has always strived to ensure that the major cultural groups are represented among staff; that the young people of the community see themselves and their cultures represented in those who are often role models. The diversity of staff, however, also includes a diversity of education and employment backgrounds. Some SPSWs have been certified teachers whose knowledge of the educational system is crucial to support our young people. Others have training as professional social workers, and child and youth workers, where their background and experience approaches the challenges of adolescent development with a repertoire of its own. Still other staff have little professional training, but a wealth of practical employment experience in youth serving programs or in community development, bringing yet other experience and knowledge to the challenges at hand. While such diversity of professional background has made the development of a common Pathways culture somewhat difficult, it is also crucial for the Program's ability to meet the diverse needs of our young people.

Third, some have wondered whether, in a world of social media and technology, the role might be possible to provided through a technologically-mediated relationship, and whether this might allow for higher ratios and, therefore, at a lower cost. There is much evidence on the importance of establishing meaningful relationships as part of an array of otherwise comprehensive supports to at-risk youth. There is little evidence, however, that such relationships can be effective in the absence of face-to-face interaction. The trust needed is unlikely to develop in the absence of such face-to-face relationships. Proof of this proposition may be the fact that many (if not most) Pathways young people are themselves using a variety of social media and its place in their lives is likely little different from their more economically privileged peers. However, despite this fact, their preferences are clearly and overwhelmingly to meet with their SPSWs, for support, for problem-solving, for encouragement, for the relationships they require to thrive. While technologically-mediated relationships may be effective for some young people, there is good reason to believe that the necessary relationships for Pathways youth are those which have a personal character and are face-to-face.

Finally, and as noted above, with respect to the SPSW role, perhaps the most consequential decision in the development of Pathways was that of having the "advocacy" and informal mentoring support provided through paid staff, rather through volunteers. This decision was coupled with a purposive decision to have the mentoring program focus on group, rather than individual, activities through the development of a range of social, communication, and problem-solving skills aimed at breaking down isolation, as much as more traditional "skills building". The result was that the role of the SPSW became a crucial link to each of the other Pathways supports while, at the same time, meeting the need for a "constant adult presence" to support the individual needs of Pathways young people. This decision was consistent with both the available best practices in youth development programs and the informal, but clearly consequential experiences – the lived experiences – of many successful young people in the community. Unfortunately, there were few ex-

amples of how to "institutionalize" such relationships.

A Brief Note on Research

While a longer discussion of the role of research in Pathways and its relationship to both accountability and program improvement appears in Part III, a number of points may be useful at this juncture. Specifically, the program was consciously designed to include a research function from the outset that could provide simple and clear measures of success; in particular, two interim measures (or "leading indicators" well documented in the literature: the comparisons of attendance and credit accumulation of Pathways young people with those of pre-Pathways students from the same geographically defined communities. After four years, these data were supplemented with comparative data on graduation rates and post-secondary participation. Those supporting the Program, including so many long-term private individuals, foundations and corporations, and continuing to include both provincial and now Federal governments, have often noted the importance of strong and consistent results on these metrics as a factor in their decisions to grant multi-year funding.[18]

Some have suggested that these metrics are far too simple and that they have come to dominate the Program's orientation. It can be stated unapologetically that there are at least three reasons which justified a focus on such metrics. First, without positive and easily conveyed results few of the initial and now long-standing funders and donors would continue to provide financial support. Second, in the absence of positive results, Pathways is frankly too complex and difficult an undertaking; the time and energy, as well as funding, for the Program could be better spent in finding a more effective approach. And, third, if frontline staff have the relationships with the young people that Pathways expects, the results will, in fact, be forthcoming. While the first two of these rationales have been continually affirmed (since the results over the past decade have been consistently strong), the third has been well understood, not only in the initial site in Regent Park, but now in each of the newer Pathways sites as well.

These interim indicators, however, are not solely important to assuage the concerns and inspire the confidence of students, parents, or funders. Rather, they are the basic data from which program staff are able to begin to unpack the relative benefit (or lack) that the Program is fostering in its participants; and, further, it provides the basis for additional and more detailed analyses of those effects. For example, it was through a more detailed analysis of these basic indicators that the need for additional special education supports for some youth who were not receiving them was discovered; as well, these data provided important insight into the likelihood of dropping out for students by stream (academic, applied, locally developed) and by gender. Therefore, these data are absolutely essential for an ongoing examination of effects which, in turn, spurred efforts at specific program improvements, e.g. more intensive support by SPSWs to address those students with serious attendance problems.

Perhaps more important is that the research capacity of Pathways from the outset has included a broader understanding of the purpose of the research. Specifically, the Program emerged using an action research approach which has been sustained, in large measure, over the past decade. This approach is rooted in an understanding of, and in values which began from the knowledge and aspirations of the community; and, through a disposition to engage many types of participants, continues to hold existing practices (of both the school system and the program itself) up to scrutiny. The orientation and use of an action research approach, therefore, has been purposeful: the social purpose being the amelioration of the numerous disadvantages that confront these young people and the community (leading to demonstrably greater educational attainments), as well as the more located purpose of first determining and, subsequently, building upon and improving the specific program elements which have come to be Pathways.

Several lessons from the research approach adopted by Pathways are discussed in Part III, following the more detailed presentation of some of the Program achievements in Part II.

Funding the Program

When Pathways launched in September 2001, aside from the two grants we received from the Counselling Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we had only raised $2,000 and two weeks' worth of transit tickets. Funding the Program meant adding additional funders. Because RPCHC had no prior history of long term fundraising, the Counselling Foundation of Canada supported the work of two consultants to assist with fundraising and building the fundraising capacity of the Health Centre. They facilitated links between the Health Centre, the business world, and other institutions, and helped create new funding opportunities. In the fall of 2001, we hired a Manager of Development. A project structure was agreed to and two board committees were created. The new structure would provide the board with clear oversight of Pathways and the potential to sustain the Program, or at least get it going. The responsibilities of the two board committees were: (1) the Pathways Committee of the RPCHC Board, consisting of board members and community representatives, was responsible for effective trusteeship of the Pathways to Education Program, ensuring clear lines of accountability, as well as setting policy and processes to ensure systems for monitoring and evaluating the project; and (2) the Development Committee, consisting largely of people from outside the community, especially business leaders who could support fundraising efforts. This latter committee was responsible for overall development functions, fundraising, project-related marketing, and public relations. Existing board committees simply did not fit the needs of Pathways. Its scale was too great and its demands unique. Getting the reporting relationships worked out took time, and this was another major milestone in the life of Pathways. The reporting relationships meant that the RPCHC Board was clearly in an oversight role. Hiring a Manager of Development was also a major step. This resulted in a greater ability to focus fundraising efforts and link with potential and existing funders.

Fundraising for Pathways was very difficult. In particular, during the first

year we hadn't as yet produced any results; however, we managed to make our annual goals by the "skin of our teeth". The fundraising was very time-consuming for us as Executive Director and Director of Pathways and it wasn't until we produced hard data on the first student outcomes that we had a real value proposition to offer. Our strategies included (a) targeting corporations, foundations, high net worth individuals, and the provincial government, and (b) always asking for multi-year commitments. We developed a five year business plan and made some initial overtures to the Ontario Government. Our first major grants came from the banks. Then another major milestone was reached when we received a multi-year grant from the Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice Fund. The volunteer members of the Development Committee became more committed to fundraising for Pathways as they began to see the results which showed the huge differences in attendance and achievement between students in Regent Park before the Program and students in Pathways. This allowed people to see we were on the right track and multi-year commitments became more frequent. They knew no similar program had tried to include all young people in the community, to attempt so quickly to improve the achievement of so many. The fact that more than 90% of the eligible parents and young people had voluntarily joined Pathways was but one of the many achievements that helped sustain Pathways.

Gala events and golf tournaments were organized annually; we created a newsletter and started getting recognition, but it was never easy. Each year we made our budget thanks to some very special "angel donors" who intuitively understood we were "on to something" which could potentially impact thousands of low income youth in Canada and beyond. In 2004, we finally received an initial, one time grant from the Ontario Government. In 2004/05, after four years of work, Pathways funding was composed of 17% from government, 37% from individuals, 30% from foundations and 15% from corporations. Each year as a new cohort of youth joined Pathways increased funding was required and it was consistently rein-

forced to us, by each kind of donor (governments, individuals, corporations, and foundations), that the tracking of results and the results themselves were what mattered to them. The reason Pathways was having this significant impact was because of two primary commitments underpinning the design of the Program: (a) a shift in the "lens", from a singular focus on the school environment to a broader focus on the community as a whole and (b) ensuring a comprehensive community-based approach to the provision of the necessary supports.

Our marketing efforts were finally paying off and the Program and its results were beginning to be recognized and disseminated, primarily through newspaper articles. By 2005, interest in replicating Pathways to Education was coming from other communities and donors. Other communities were coming to visit Pathways more frequently and expressing interest in the Program for their community. Interest in seeing the Program in other communities was also being increasingly expressed by donors. RPCHC wanted to share its learnings with other communities in order that other low income youth would have a fair chance at achieving their potential. We also determined that to sustain Pathways in Regent Park we had to replicate the Program. These expressions of interest led to the creation of a public foundation called Pathways to Education Canada in 2005, another major milestone in the life of Pathways.

Pathways Canada's primary purposes would be transferring knowledge, ensuring program quality and outcomes, supporting the community agencies and their staff who would deliver the Program locally, and raising the considerable funds needed for replication. The Chairman of the Pathways Canada Board was an exceptional fundraiser and he was committed to replicating Pathways as far and wide as possible. By 2005, Pathways to Education had reduced the dropout rate from 56% to 11% and increased post-secondary participation for the first cohort from 20% to 80%.[19] Because of the large impact Pathways was having, a major Canadian corporation decided to invest in replicating Pathways to Education and provided a start-up grant in 2006. After successful

start-up, along with the development and design of a process for replication, a generous two year grant followed along with multi-year grants from other donors including the Counselling Foundation of Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Government and several individual donors. The replication process proved successful in five additional low income communities in Ontario and Quebec.

Another milestone was reached in 2007 when the Boston Consulting Group did a *pro bono* economic analysis of Pathways. BCG undertook a detailed study of the Program to determine the social return on investment (SROI). The final analysis showed the Program's SROI is high and positive. The specific calculations include that every dollar invested in Program generates a $25 return to society in terms of decreased social costs and an increased tax base, $400,000 is the cumulative life-time value for each graduate, $50,000 is the positive net present value for each student, and there is an internal rate of return of 9.4%. The SROI includes more easily identifiable "hard" benefits such as incremental tax receipts and lower transfer payments, and it includes a very conservative estimate of savings from other key benefits such as a lower crime rate, lower teenage pregnancy, healthier youth, etc., as well as "second generation" effects. The BCG study leveraged our fundraising ability immensely as we now had hard data proving Pathways was an incredibly cost effective program. Questions such as "can society afford Pathways?" changed to "we can't afford not to replicate Pathways".[20] The Development Committee and staff worked hard at meeting our annual fundraising goals which we never failed to do. The beginning of Pathways Canada and the development of a process for replication opened up new funding opportunities and we received multi-year funding from the Ontario Government, the Manitoba Government and, most recently, the Federal Government.

The replication of Pathways in the five second generation communities is a story that goes beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say there are now eleven Pathways programs from Halifax to Winnipeg with students getting re-

sults that mirror those reported in Part II of this paper for Regent Park. In addition, Part III will discuss some of the principal learnings from the development of the Program.

In Part II, we present a detailed look at Pathways results, what Pathways has achieved, both in Regent Park over the past decade, and in the second generation communities.

References

Bales, Vicki (2004) *The Community Succession Project and Pathways to Education*. Report to the Ontario Trillium Foundation (November)

Barr, Douglas, "The Regent Park Community Services Unit: Partnership Can Work" (1979), in C*ommunity Work in Canada,* Brian Wharf, Editor, McClelland and Stewart, pp. 27-49.

Boston Consulting Group (2007) *Final Compilation: Pathways to Education (Toronto)*

Brown, Robert S. (2008) *The Grade 9 Cohort Of Fall 2002: A Five-Year Cohort Study, 2002-2007*; Report # 08/09-8 (Research and Information Services, Toronto District School Board; September)

Brown, Robert S. (2006) *The TDSB Grade 9 Cohort Study: A Five-Year Analysis, 2000-2005*; Report #05/06-05 (Research and Information Services, Toronto District School Board; April)

Brown, Robert S. (2004) *TDSB Secondary Student Success Indicators, 2003-04* (Toronto District School Board December).

Brown, Robert S. (2003) *TDSB Secondary Student Success Indicators 2002-03* (Toronto District School Board, December)

Brown, Robert S. *(*1999) *A Study of the Grade 9 Cohort of 1993, 1993-1998: The Last Grade 9 Cohort of the Toronto Board of Education* (Toronto District School Board; Report #229; April 1999).

Canadian Council On Learning (2006) *Post-Secondary Education: The Crucial Link To Employability*. Submission to the Standing Committee On Human Resources, Social Development And The Status Of Per-

sons With Disabilities (Senate of Canada; September 6, 2006)

Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (2009) *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*.

Chu, Carolyn (2006) "Out in the Rural: A Health Center in Mississippi" *Social Medicine*; Volume 1, No. 2 (August).

Connell, J.P., Gambone, M.A., & Smith, T.J. (2000). Youth development in community settings: Challenges to our field and our approach. In Public/Private Ventures (Ed.), *Youth Development: Issues, Challenges, Directions* (pp. 281-300)*.* Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

Darling, Marilyn and Charles Parry (2007) "Growing Knowledge Together: Using Emergent Learning and EL Maps for Better Results" *Reflections: The SoL Journal* Vol.8, No.1 (Society for Organizational Learning)

Ferguson, Bruce Kate Tilleczek, Katherine Boydell, Joanna Anneke Rummens, Dara Roth Edney, and Jacques Michaud (2005) *Early School Leavers: Understanding the Lived Reality of Student Disengagement from Secondary School;* Final Report; (Community Health Systems Resource Group, The Hospital for Sick Children; for the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Special Education Branch, Toronto, Canada; May 30, 2005).

Gamble, Jamie A. (2008) *A Developmental Evaluation Primer* (The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation)

Greenwood, J. (1996). Lessons learned on the effectiveness of programs and services for youth. Background Paper, *Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth: Lessons Learned from Past Experience*; Human Resources Development Canada.

Grundy, S. and Kemmis, S. (1981). *Educational Action Research in Australia: The state of the Art*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Adelaide as cited in Grundy, S. (1988) "Three Modes Of Action Research" in

Kemmis,S. and McTaggert,R. (Ed). (1988). *The Action Research Reader* (3rd edition) Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Hahn, A., Leavitt, T., & Aaron, P. (1994). *Evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP): Did the program work? A report on the post secondary outcomes and cost effectiveness of the QOP program (1989–1993).* Waltham, MA: Brandeis University

Herrera, Carla, Zoua Vang and Lisa Y. Gale (2002) *Group Mentoring: A Study of Mentoring Groups in Three Programs* (Public/Private Ventures and National Mentoring Partnership)

Jaffe, Natalie (1999) "Mentoring in 1998: Four Models for the 21st Century" in Grossman, Jean Baldwin (ed)*Contemporary Issues in Mentoring* (Public/Private Ventures)

Jerald, Craig (2007) "Keeping kids in school: What research tells us about preventing dropouts" The Centre for Public Education (Posted April 5, 2007 http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org)

Johnson, Amy (1998) *An Evaluation of the Long-Term Impacts of the Sponsor-A-Scholar Program on Student Performance. Final Report to The Commonwealth Fund.* Princeton: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Kahne, J. and Bailey, K. (1999). "The role of social capital in youth development: The case of 'I Have a Dream'." *Educational Policy and Prevention*, 21(3), 321-343.

Kemmis, S. and McTaggert, R. (Ed.) (1988). *The Action Research Reader* (3rd edition) Deakin University Press Kozol, Jonathan *Ordinary Resurrections* (Vintage, 2000).

Levin, Ben (1995) "Educational Responses to Poverty" *Canadian Journal of Education*; Vol. 20, No.2

Levin, Ben and J. Anthony Riffel (2000) "Current and Potential School System Responses to Poverty"; *Canadian Public Policy;*Vol. XXVI, No.2.

Levin, Ben (2004a) "Students At-Risk: A Review of the Research". Paper prepared for The National Dialogue on Students At-Risk (The Learning Partnership)

Long, D. A. (1996). What works? Evidence from evaluation research on programs for disadvantaged youths in the United States" Background Paper, *Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth: Lessons Learned from Past Experience*; Human Resources Development Canada.

Maxfield, M; Schirm, A.; and Rodriguez-Planas, N. (2003). *The Quantum Opportunity Program demonstration: Implementation and Short-Term Impacts*. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research.

Patton, Michael Quinn (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd edition Sage)

Pearson, Katharine (2006) *A Summary of Lessons from Applied Dissemination Grants* (J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Montreal)

Senge, Peter and Otto Scharmer (2006) "Community Action Research" in Reason, P. and H. Bradbury (eds.) *Handbook of Action Research* (Sage)

Sennett, Richard and Jonathan Cobb (1972) *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (Vintage Books)

Toronto District School Board (2009) *Maps of dropout rates by community* (Toronto District SchoolBoard, Research and Information Services, October)

Tilleczek, Kate (2007) "Fresh Starts/False Starts: A Review of Literature on the Transition from Elementary to Secondary School" (Paper prepared for the Ontario Educational Research Symposium, Ontario Ministry of Education, Toronto, January 18-20)

United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development (2004), *Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty 1981-2001*

[1] "First generation" refers to those young people who are the first generation of their family to attend a post-secondary program.

[2] The 1996 census data available at the time included that the Regent Park/Moss Park communities had over 40% single parent families, fully twice the City average, more than half the residents were immigrants, and nearly 80% visible minorities.

[3] The roots of Jack Geiger's initiative drew on his own studies of health centres in South Africa. Geiger first proposed a medical school-sponsored community health centre in 1958 as part of his senior thesis as a medical student. "Along with the residents … Dr. Geiger worked to establish a center that would combine local resources with federal funds to empower this economically devastated community of the Mississippi Delta. By establishing a network of aggressive outreach and education efforts, and developing multiple health employment opportunities, the Delta Health Center and its participants became an engine for social reform." (Chu 2006: 139).

[4] The original data referenced here was produced by Dr. Robert Brown of the Toronto District School Board as a special tabulation in the Fall of 2000. We are indebted to him for his continued support of Pathways and, more important, for his longstanding commitment to the issues of student success.

[5] Fergusson et al 2005 offered a more complete overview of factors, both school-based and non-school based, in work for the Ontario Ministry of Education five years after we designed the Pathways program

[6] This is not a recent phenomenon as evidenced by the consistent results of the Every Student Survey conducted by the former Board of Education for the City of Toronto, which showed that young people from poor and immigrant communities were often "streamed" into vocational, rather than academic, programs. As Pathways results strongly demonstrate, this need not have been the case since the distribution of ability is clearly "normal" in a community the size and diversity of Regent Park.

[7] It should be noted that, over the first several years of Pathways in Regent Park the actual proportion of designated special needs learners (i.e. those formally assessed) is no greater in Regent Park than in the province as a whole (approximately 12.5% of secondary students). While there are undoubtedly others requiring focused supports but not yet assessed, this is a challenge across the city and province. However, there is some suggestion that students from low income areas are more likely to have difficulty accessing such services and assessments. Even if this is the case, it is still doubtful that the result would change the basic finding: that Regent Park youth as a whole are more similar to learners across the province than had been assumed based on their past performance; which suggests that their challenges were not primarily cognitive. Through the data collected over a longer time period, and which now includes Pathways students in other communities, it seems clear that there is a great variation in the proportions of students with identified special needs; variations both within and across the initial five Ontario Pathways communities, ranging from just 2% (RP Cohort 4) to fully 30% (Rexdale Cohort 1). This variance itself is cause for concern.

[8] Jonathan Kozol, the well-respected chronicler of inner-city education in the U.S., has written extensively about the phenomenon of "invisibility" in, for example, his book *Ordinary Resurrections* (Vintage, 2000).

[9] It should be noted that "group mentoring" was called "one of four models for the 21st century" by a leading expert on mentoring (Jaffe in Grossman 1999; Herrera et al 2002) in reviewing promising practices in the U.S. However, at the time there were no empirical studies of group mentoring with high school students. Indeed, Pathways can reasonably be understood as a pioneer in this area, as well as several others.

[10] The programs identified as most similar to Pathways by Boston Consulting Group (2007) include, for example, I Have A Dream, Sponsor a Scholar, Quantum Opportunities Project, to name a few, some of which have been demonstrably effective, but none of which has had as broad a reach as Pathways; and each includes both a smaller number and a more select (even if self-selected) groups of students. See also the evaluations of these initiatives in Kahne and Bailey (1999) for I Have a Dream, Johnson (1998) for Sponsor-A-Scholar, and Hahn et al (1994) and Maxfield et al (2003) for Quantum Opportunities Program. The findings, while positive, suggest that Pathways' results have sur-

passed those of each of these programs, and has done so for more students, a more heterogeneous group of students, and at lower overall cost per student. See Boston Consulting Group (2007). For example, Johnson notes that Sponsor-A-Scholar, the program BCG suggested is closest to Pathways in scope, served a total of 180 students in four years, which is a similar number for each Regent Park cohort, and Pathways serves four to five cohorts at any given time. The Sponsor-A-Scholar number of students compares to nearly four times that number involved in Pathways in its first four years.

[11] The involvement of Pathways in supporting post-secondary applications arose from direct feedback from students in the first cohort who, in the Fall of their fourth year, asked for such support. It evolved as a response to an informal poll which showed that only two of 87 students said they had received any such help from their school guidance counsellors. This support eventually developed into the "career mentoring" component of Pathways.

[12] Supplemental fees for particular programs at particular institutions still must be paid directly via credit card to the specific institutions, and Pathways has developed procedures for this, as well. These agreements were developed during the initial years and for the Program in Regent Park and mechanism for doing this in other Pathways communities are still being worked out.

[13] The challenge of providing such data today is not a function of the technology which it was, to some extent, a decade or more ago. Rather, the immediate and ongoing challenge for some school boards has become the lack of research staff with the ability and interest to pursue such questions.

[14] Much of these descriptions are based on a *Guidebook* prepared in 2006 for internal Pathways use with prospective communities. The authors wish to acknowledge the contribution of Cheryl Hamilton to the preparation of the initial *Guidebook*.

[15] It should be noted that, since the Program's inception, the subsequent Government in Ontario re-instated a program of tuition grants, rather than solely loans, to post-secondary students from the lowest income families. The future of such grants is unknown, given the current fiscal challenges facing the Province.

[16] A story often told, and confirmed several times, recalled the loss of a post-secondary space by a Regent Park student who simply lacked the funds for a "deposit" following their acceptance to the university. Unable to "hold" the space, the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education was effectively lost for that young person. This was a common occurrence in the community.

[17] A part-time staff member, a former long-time teacher in the community, suggested in the second year of the Program that all had been fine (or at least better) for these young people before the school board amalgamation when the former Toronto Board of Education funded projects and special school designations which yielded additional staffing in the schools; and which, coupled with a political commitment, had offered a modicum of hope for success to both parents and youth. Rowen's response was that "the 'good times' were not very good to the young people of Regent Park." This exchange offers both a view of the good intentions of many educators and a reminder of the unspoken distance between the perceptions of some professionals and those they were genuinely working to serve. Pathways development was purposefully designed to bridge that distance.

[18] The origin of the two interim indicators – attendance and credit accumulation – en route to more definitive metrics of dropout and graduation rates owe their use to the long history of research conducted by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (now the Toronto District School Board). In short, the studies conducted over many years and for many cohorts demonstrated the clear relationship between each of strong attendance and credit accumulation, and graduation; and, conversely, between poor attendance and credit accumulation and likelihood of dropping out. Pathways to Education, and the authors personally, are indebted to Dr. Robert Brown, Research Coordinator at the Toronto District School Board, for his abiding commitment to evidence-based practice leading to school success. Not only did he produce the original custom tabulation which provided the first community-based tracking of students, and which showed the baseline dropout rate for Regent Park, Dr. Brown has consistently provided Pathways with additional tabulations, analyses and insights into the relationships between community factors and school performance. While the ability to continue to provide data on program results has benefitted from many at the TDSB, the consistent data analyses which have informed Pathways over the past decade is a direct result of his support. On the specific item of attendance, credit accumulation and graduation data, see his numerous reports on secondary school indicators (e.g. Brown, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2008).

[19] More detailed and extensive results are the subject of Part II of this article which includes nine Regent Park cohorts and four cohorts from four Pathways "second generation" communities. However, at this juncture it should be mentioned that the dropout rate for the initial Regent Park cohorts have increased as a result of students who remained in secondary school longer than they might have without Pathways, but still did not graduate (to 14% to 19% for the first three cohorts). We did not know that this would be the case in 2005, assuming that the "holding" of students in secondary school would ultimately lead to their graduation. That said, the reduction in dropouts remains quite impressive compared to the 56% prior to the Program.

[20] In 2010, with more students and sites to study, BCG undertook another round of analysis to refresh the three-year-old study. These most recent results, once again, confirm the enormous social return that is generated from an investment in education: $24 is the social return for a $1 investment in Pathways to Education, $600,000 is the lifetime cumulative benefit to society for each graduate.