



# Leading the Initial Implementation Phase of the TandemED Community Initiative in Relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools

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**Leading the Initial Implementation Phase of the TandemED Community Initiative  
in Relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools**

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)  
Capstone

Submitted by  
Brian Charles Barto Barnes

To the Harvard Graduate School of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

TandemED is a start-up entity that begins its efforts with a belief that Black community leadership is the key lever for the educational success of its K–12 youth. TandemED organizes and facilitates Black communities to create campaigns that highlight their positive racial identity and self-defined educational purpose toward this end.

This capstone examines my leadership of the initial implementation phase of the TandemED community initiative in relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS). Focusing primarily on the interactions with the superintendent and executive director of the superintendent's office, I analyze both the areas of reception and challenge in forming this relationship. The results of my engagement included ongoing support from PPS as TandemED formed a citywide steering committee of highly community-legitimated persons, executed a leadership and campaign academy for thirty-five Pittsburgh youth, and facilitated their design and delivery of various cable television commercials on identity and purpose that generated over half-million impressions within one month in the Greater Pittsburgh region.

In order to make sense of the evolving relationship between TandemED and PPS, I utilize the organizational framework established in *Reframing Organizations* by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal. In this work, Bolman and Deal offer four key frames from which effective organizations function—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Each of these entails specific interests and core assumptions. In my analysis, the structural frame posited the greatest challenge for our entities to partner; the political frame offered both positives and negatives for our organizations to collaborate; and the

human resource and symbolic frames helped to form and sustain our relationship. The implication of my analysis is that while a relationship with a public school district at the onset of TandemED city entry is of value, the greater value is found in first establishing a strong community-legitimated effort and intersecting with the district more deeply in later implementation phases. The implication for the sector, namely superintendents and school district leaders, is that there is transformative value in affirming and being responsive to Black community leadership efforts in education.

## INTRODUCTION

I was born and raised in the racially segregated city of Huntsville, Alabama, in the 1980's, where my Black community surrounded me as I developed. My parents, both from humble beginnings, provided primary guidance, along with Black institutions such as my church, Union Hill Primitive Baptist Church, and the local Historically Black College and University, Alabama A&M University. In regard to public schooling, the messaging from my community always provided me with clear purpose for why I engaged in learning, while simultaneously supporting my confidence in my intellectual capabilities which were akin to the many Black people in my community and throughout my rich cultural history.

In my public high school, however, this affirming message was not always echoed. I attended a school that appeared integrated from the outside, but was highly segregated on the inside: Most of the Black students were enrolled in general education courses, while White students made up the majority of the advanced and advanced placement (AP) courses. I was one of the few Black students who traversed both environments and was enrolled in AP classes. However, this did not protect me from negative messaging. One day, after giving a presentation in my AP English class, the teacher pulled me aside after class and told me, "You need to learn how to get the Black out of your voice." In another instance, in my pre-engineering magnet course, the teacher responded to my excited proclamation that I would like to attend MIT, that "MIT is for students like Jackson", a White male student who academically excelled who was also in my class. Though both of these instances and others like them confused and hurt me at times, they were not powerful enough to overcome what I had learned to be true from my

Black community: I am capable of high achievement and learning and I have a community-affirmed purpose for doing so.

When I arrived at Morehouse College after high school, the truth I had come to know was further affirmed by seeing masses of Black males from across America excel at high levels particularly in the area of mathematics where I majored. Furthermore, I recognized that each of us shared a story of having a person or community that believed deeply in us and provided us with the purpose, motivation, identity, and confidence to achieve. That experience initiated my lifelong commitment to ensure that future Black youth would experience academic success, unlike many of my high school peers. Furthermore, I resolved that each would experience communities that believe in the promising destiny of all children in the United States of America.

From that initial commitment, my service and work experiences have included mentoring and tutoring Black youth, high school student teaching, teaching middle school math, leading a small public school, along with the roles of director of youth ministries, coordinator of a city-wide schools and community and faith-based partnerships under the appointment of a district superintendent, and a school district network strategic manager. I recognized the meaningful impact of each of these roles on the lives of youth, but came to the conclusion that additional work in echoing the strength of the past and affirming that of the present is necessary to achieve transformational outcomes for Black youth in our country. It was not enough to be satisfied by focusing on improvement alone. After decades of school reform, I set out to answer the question of what will propel Black students to the great destiny that their brilliance and creativity demand.



This led to the creation of TandemED, an enterprise that organizes Black communities to collectively take up the leadership of youth development and the provision of messages of efficacy and purpose for Black students in public schools. TandemED seeks excellent school indicators (i.e., graduation rates, attendance, achievement and attainment measures); excellent social outcomes (i.e., reduced crime, drug use, incarceration, teen pregnancy); and vibrant, empowered, efficacious, and prosperous Black communities (i.e., increased employment, home ownership, financial assets, health). The TandemED community initiative unfolds in four key stages—organizing community leadership, facilitating the community’s design of messaging in identity and purpose, delivering these affirming messaging in innovative ways, and aligning city resources to messaging efforts. This process is inclusive of all actors in cities who have an interest in the advancement of Black youth and student achievement, with community-legitimated persons at the lead of decision-making.

I originally conceptualized TandemED during the spring of 2013 as a student in the Doctor of Education Leadership Program (Ed.L.D.) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE). This concept was then cultivated within a course entitled “Sector Change Project” taught by Mark Moore, the Hauser Professor of Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard Kennedy School of Government (HKS). Shortly after further developing the concept, I entered the idea of the enterprise (then named Faith-to-Connect) into the first annual Education Entrepreneurship competition at the HGSE. Through this competition, I was selected as one of the four school-wide winners out of 29 team applicants and awarded \$15,000 and summer residency space at the Harvard Innovation Lab on the campus of Harvard Business School (HBS) for further development. The Ed.L.D.

program also awarded an additional \$3,000 summer fellowship award in support of this development.

At the start of the Innovation Lab summer residency, I invited my fellow Harvard Ed.L.D. colleague Dorian Burton along with my closest high school friend Tokunbo “Toks” Adeshiyan, who had recently completed his M.B.A, to join me as co-founders. Both agreed, and together with support from my local Boston colleagues, we set out on a course to refine our theory of change, create an organizational business plan, and prepare plans for a pilot (See Appendix A for an excerpt of the TandemED business. One year later, during the spring of 2014, our team was selected as one of 80 finalists for the Echoing Green fellowship for social innovation out of a pool of over 3,000 international applicants. Shortly thereafter, we were selected as grantees of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest private foundation in the world, to support the piloting of our plan as a complement to their investments in effective teaching in select U.S. cities. They awarded a \$130,000 grant to cover the combined salary expenses for Dorian and I, which met the Ed.L.D. third-year residency requirements. With this support combined with that of HGSE master’s students, our Ed.L.D. colleagues, and faculty of the Ed.L.D. Program, we were able to devote our Ed.L.D. residency to TandemED.

Through a process of selecting a city alongside the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we settled on Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where the foundation had major investment in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Pittsburgh had gained our attention in part because prior to entry, Dr. Carol Johnson, my former boss and the former superintendent of Boston Public Schools connected me with Dr. Linda Lane, the superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS). Dr. Johnson described Dr. Lane as one who shared an

authentic desire to support all students, particularly African-American students, to be successful. The district had already shown evidence of some commitment to this domain in which I was interested through their *We Promise* program, designed to increase the number of Black male students who would be eligible to receive guaranteed scholarship funds offered through an initiative entitled the Pittsburgh Promise.

Shortly after entering Pittsburgh, we were granted \$125,000 in additional operational funds by The Heinz Foundation to support our work in creating a campaign centered on Black male achievement. Additionally, we partnered with the local POISE Foundation, the only public foundation in America created and managed by African Americans, and we named our local work the TandemED Pittsburgh Community Initiative.

While my overarching goal was to implement the TandemED initiative, I gave special attention to learning and understanding the dynamic associated with forming a relationship with PPS. I particularly wanted to best understand how a relationship with a school district could be successfully approached and engaged in a community driven initiative. Thus, the focus for the strategic project for my capstone became **Leading the Initial Implementation Phase of the TandemED Community Initiative in Relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools**. More specifically, this project was to figure out how to balance a relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools with the TandemED goal of establishing a youth-led and adult-supported citywide movement in support of Black youth development. I continually thought through the dynamics of the relationship with every interaction directly with the superintendent as well as the implications of these interactions for other relationships within the city.

This capstone describes the early interactions with the school district and later points of intersections as we moved into implementation of the initiative and reflected upon the school district versus the community role and the learning that would be useful for later implementation. The first portion of the capstone is a Review of Knowledge for Action (RKA) that sets the theoretical stage for the TandemED initiative, helping us to see why it may be important in education to pursue the lever of community leadership toward improved educational outcomes. Second, the Description section reviews the early interactions with the PPS superintendent and executive director of the superintendent's office. Next, the Results section provides the outcomes of the early interactions through the lens of the points of intersection with the district during the broader implementation of the TandemED initiative. The following Analysis section utilizes the framework offered by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal in *Reframing Organizations* to provide meaning on why and how the relationships formed and functioned as they did during early implementation stages. Finally, the Implications section offers the learning and insights culminating from the analysis that will be useful in the future for our site, TandemED, for the education sector as a whole, and for my self as an educational leader. The Conclusion will summarize the aforementioned as a means to bring clarity and cohesion to the entire experience and learning.

### **REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION**

The African-American community holds both a rich history and a present success in achievement and attainment in this country. However, this is not the narrative that is commonly represented in American society or even wholly internalized by members of the African-American community itself. Notable African-American author and

psychologist Na'im Akbar (1999) writes to this point that “we [African-Americans] have developed faulty ideas about ourselves and do not fully appreciate our capability and human potential” (p. 40). Others argue that this statement holds especially true for African-Americans in the area of educational achievement, and that many, including youth, possess a faulty sense of their African-American identity. In her chapter in the book entitled *Young, Gifted, and Black*, Theresa Perry (2003) outlines this challenge, writing:

...the dilemma of achievement for African Americans is tied to (a) their identity as members of a caste-like minority group; (b) the larger society's ideology of Black intellectual inferiority and its reproduction in mass media and in everyday interactions; (c) their identity as members of a group whose culture is seen, by all segments of the society, even other people of color, as simultaneously inferior and attractive; and (d) their identity as American citizens. (p. 79)

Many studies have been conducted that reflect the inherent truth in this statement that youth identity development is linked to educational attitude and achievement. For example, Shin (2011) conducted a study on the influence of Afrocentricism within African-American elementary age youth, and found a positive correlation between elementary-age children's identification with Afrocentric values and positive feelings of academic self-efficacy.

Similarly, in a study entitled *'I Do but I Don't': The Search for Identity in Urban African American Adolescents*, Gullan, Hoffman, and Leff (2011) researched the relationship between African-American adolescents' perception of their racial culture and self-efficacy. They similarly found that African-American adolescents in high poverty

urban areas feel that their self-efficacy is compromised by the challenge of navigating their perceived expectations of Black and White cultures. On a more practical level, there is also evidence from some of the most successful institutions for African-American youth that strong racial identity is a lever for educational success. In the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools, for example, students' cultures are affirmed as the key element of their educational experience (CDF, 2012). With the nationally notable work of the Efficacy Institute, the key lever is both teachers and students reframing their concept of the identity of African-American students. Their approach and training revolves around recognizing that African-American students are not fixed with a set level of intelligence, but rather have unlimited potential for growth in learning and achievement (Efficacy Institute, 2013).

Renowned author and researcher Geneva Gay points to both Afrocentric programs and culturally responsive pedagogy as key, pointing to the following outcomes:

Afrocentric programs produce improvements on all measures of achievement, and the students' performance is generally better than that of their peers in other schools within their districts. Among these achievements are: higher scores on standardized tests and GPAs; better attendance records; lower disciplinary infractions, detentions, and suspensions; increased feelings of academic capability and confidence; stronger personal self-concepts; and more frequent acknowledgement of being genuinely respected, supported and cared for by teachers. (Gay, 2000, p. 209)

This identity development is key, and myriad evidence shows improvements and gains when this element is provided the appropriate attention. The question that arises,

however, is one of who is primarily responsible for the identity formation of African-American youth toward educational achievement and attainment. Many approach this question by effortlessly pointing to the school institution as the central place to build this positive and healthy identity.

Schooling systems such as those designated as “no excuses” charter schools fall into this category, with a great deal of their approach resting on the school being the central place, even beyond parents, in building student values and codes of behavior for their majority African-American students. In his article entitled “An Appeal to Authority: The New Paternalism,” David Whitman described these types of “no excuses” schools in the following way:

By their very nature, the new paternalistic schools for teens tend to displace a piece of parents’ traditional role in transmitting values. Most of the schools are founded on the premise that minority parents want to do the right thing but often don’t have the time or resources to keep their children from being dragged down by an unhealthy street culture. But the schools do not presume that boosting parental participation is the key to narrowing the achievement gap. Parents’ chief role at no-excuses schools is helping to steer their children through the door (Whitman, 2008, para. 19).

This view is also often reflected in media with popular messages and storylines resting on the public school and teachers, often White, being the center of African-American youth identity formation. Though there are many examples of this dating to the present, one of the more emblematic examples is the movie *Dangerous Minds* (1995), where the only hope for the mostly African-American (and Latino) youth in the community came

through the ex-marine and newly installed White teacher played by Michelle Pfeifer. In this film, the students are referred to as “social problems” and are only saved by the heroic teacher from outside of their immediate community, with an implicit message that they would have been altogether doomed without her in her school role.

Additionally, many of the leading frameworks on parent engagement or involvement reflect a school-centered approach to the relationship or partnership with parents as they work with students. For example, in *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*, the “proficient” model of a school’s relationship with parents is described as a “Partnership School”, whereby the school takes great strides in fully integrating the parents into decision-making and leadership of student development (Henderson, 2007). However, even in the best model offered in this framework, still the nucleus of the leadership rests with the school and their task is framed as allowing for full immersion of parents as they retain primary leadership. An additional example of this leading school-centered framework is found in work *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago* by Anthony Bryk (2010). In reporting his Chicago study, Bryk outlines “Five Essential Supports” to ensure school system success. He presents “Parent-Community Ties” as being one of the essential supports, while he places “School Leadership” as the primary driver for change. Again, while in this frame the parent component is identified as absolutely critical to success, it is still presented as a supplementary role to the school-centered leadership of student development.

Regarding frames of reference that place schools and teachers at the center of youth development, my own experience as a middle school math teacher and school



leader in an urban school with a majority population of African-American students leaves me with an alternate view of the capacity of the school to assume this role that has been both revered in practice and glorified in media. I found that teachers do not have the resources, particularly time and emotional capacity, to be able to serve as the central figures for the identity development for the number of African-American students assigned to them. This holds especially true because teachers are counted upon to be the key experts and instructors in the academic subject matter content. This challenge is compounded even further given that at least the majority of the teachers who I have worked with in these schools were not of the same racial identity as the African-American students and did not live or experience the cultural context from which the students originated. Finally, even for those who would have opted to spend the majority of their time or energy on identity development, I found that the constraints of curriculum and accountability systems, coupled with the varied and diverse cultural needs of student populations, made it impossible to give the focused time and attention needed for identity development for a subgroup of African-American students.

Additional arguments beyond those of time and capacity that I mention here also come from the field, with scholars arguing why the public school is not best equipped to serve as the central institution for youth development. In the sub-areas, for example, of building purpose and motivation for African-American youth to excel academically, researchers Usher and Kober (2012) found that “many experts on motivation emphasize that actions to address children’s beliefs about learning and foster supportive parenting must begin early and cannot be accomplished by schools alone” (p. 5).. Similarly, Perry

(2003) questions the schools' frequent emphasis on career readiness to motivate African-American youth, asking the following question:

In our post-Civil Rights era, to what extent and among what generations of African Americans has the African-American philosophy of education of freedom, leadership, citizenship, and racial uplift been retained? The answer is unclear . . . the African-American intellectual tradition suggests that schooling for work (however) is probably not transcendent enough, powerful enough, sufficient to sustain, in African Americans as a historical oppressed group, the desire to achieve in school in our present society, where the ideology of Black intellectual inferiority still reigns. (p. 78)

In terms of the content that has particular relevance for identity development in African-American youth, others have found that the schools dilute necessary content. Akbar (1999) reviews this historical problem of schooling for African-Americans writing the following: "Our education encourages us to join other people's schools of thought and not to develop our own even when those other schools of thought may have been developed as a tool to insure our continued oppression. Our mis-education results in our participation in other people's environment of ideas with no sense of responsibility to develop our own." (p. 40) Those who have fully subscribed to the belief that public schools are not equipped to lead the identity and academic development of Black youth include those who lead or participate in independent Afrocentric schools. The Institute for Independent Education captures this idea as they define independent neighborhood schools as "self-help responses to educational needs that are not being met by large government or public school systems" (Ratteray, 1991, p.1). With a similar mindset,

there are also Black homeschooling efforts such as those led by the National Black Home Educators (NBHE) who state that their “primary objective is to target African Americans with the option of homeschool, and to empower parents to educate their children for excellence” (2011, para. 4)

On a societal level, there are those such as philosopher Ivan Illich who contend that the publicly funded school is problematic for all people. This philosophy implicates African-American youth as well, as Illich (1970) depicts in his seminal work,

*Deschooling Society*:

School appropriates the money, men, and good will available for education and in addition discourages other institutions from assuming educational tasks. Work, leisure, politics, city living, and even family life depend on schools for the habits and knowledge they presuppose, instead of becoming themselves the means of education” (p. 8).

This overarching critique of schools is shared with other researchers as it relates to the prognosis of schools’ ability to lead the restoration of African-American youth and communities. Jennifer Hochschild (2004) argues that the racial context in America, which was built upon a history that provided both advantage and disadvantage to races, is not likely to support decisions for schools that would undermine this status quo. She characterizes it as a paradox:

[This] paradox lies in the fact that schools are supposed to equalize opportunities across generations and to create democratic citizens out of each generation, but people naturally wish to give their own children an advantage in attaining wealth

or power, and some can do it. When they do, everyone does not start equally, politically or economically. This circle cannot be squared. (Hochschild, 2004, p. 4)

Hochschild goes on to write, “Americans want all children to have a real chance to learn, and they want all schools to foster democracy and promote the common good, but they do not want those things enough to make them actually happen” (2004, p. 6).

Finally, in a similar way, Gloria Ladson-Billings discusses the bleak promise for schools to lead in African-American youth development, particularly after the principles and actions that undergirded the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision. In her article “Landing on the Wrong Note: The Price We Paid for Brown,” Ladson-Billings (2004) cites the segregation of race and resources as perpetual and also impossible for those with advantage to desire to overturn. She writes:

The costs that I outlined—job loss and displacement over time, the re-inscription of Black inferiority, the rise of the segregation academies, the missed opportunity for working-class White and Black coalitions to work together for quality education, and the focus on race over quality education—all point to the high price that was paid in the name of getting the Supreme Court and the nation to acknowledge a principle it already understood to be important to democracy... Until K–12 parents have what I would call the ‘Bear Bryant/ Adolph Rupp epiphany’ they will continue to seek schooling in racially, economically, and culturally homogeneous communities. Currently, there is no compelling reason for people to leave the safe and comfortable confines of neighborhood schools

where they wield influence and can demand privileges. (Ladson-Billings, 2004, pp. 9–10)

These arguments, contrast sharply with those made by proponents of school as the central institution for youth development. Fortunately, there are researchers that provide clear insight on how communities can influence the identity of African-American youth outside of the context of the public school. For example, a study conducted by Graham and Hudley (2005) tracked the outcomes of youth with immigrant parents who communicated to their children a strong obligation to the family to succeed as the driving force. These researchers found that students who have a “feeling of duty to do well and consider one’s family rather than just one’s self when making decisions tend to have high-achieving children” (Graham & Hudley, 2005, p. 392). Similarly on the topic of influencing identity, a study by Gullan, Hoffman, and Leff (2011) found positive correlations between ethnic identity and sense of community. These researchers also identified positive correlations between civic responsibility and sense of community and community efficacy and trust (Gullan et al., 2011).

In practice, as well as research, we have examples such as the program *Leadership Excellence* (now Flourish Agenda), which was founded by Shawn Ginwright with a focus on developing African American youths’ skills to problem-solve for community-based issues. Steeped in a community context, the youth participants in this program who experienced the associated care with this project were able to show evidence of identity development. In his book *Black Youth Rising*, Ginwright (2010) writes on this topic of care in the following:

Caring relationships, however, can confront hopelessness and foster beliefs about justice among young people...Care builds hope, political consciousness, and the willingness to act on behalf of the common good. Care in this sense says, “Because I care about black people, I care about you” (p. 56).

As evident in my Review of Knowledge for Action thus far, there are persons on all sides of the question of whether the public school as an entity should be the center of youth identity development. Certainly, we have seen the school centered view. We have seen the “no excuses” public charter schools that presume youth development work should take place primarily within their walls. We have seen traditional public schools that take on the onus of youth development by subscribing to an overarching narrative in education that on their own they are the institutions that will be able to change outcomes for youth. Former Boston Superintendent Carol Johnson spoke to this reality when sharing the following in a conversation, “We’ve spent decades relying on the schools alone to take care of everything – the reality is schools alone can’t” (C. Johnson, personal conversation, August 10, 2014). We see independent private Afrocentric schools that focus on academic subjects as well as identity development such as the Afrocentric Paige Academy in Boston, Massachusetts, which has no faith in the public school system to be able to properly educate African-American students. Given that the majority of African-American students in the foreseeable future will continue to highly populate urban public schools across the country, we need a solution that works within this reality while also acknowledging that the core of identity development takes place in the community itself.

## **TandemED's Theory of Action**

This is the impetus for TandemED offering an innovative theory of change that takes the best of what the public school can offer, coupled with the best that the African-American community can offer, and clearly defines roles and appropriate and just assumptions for each. TandemED offers a theory that includes the following two principles:

1. The onus of identity development should be in the hands of the African-American community and not within the public school square. Any semblance of identity development that occurs within the public school should be a direct echo of that which has been established within the community's identity development and value messaging.
2. The onus of academic preparation should be in the hands of the public school, under the condition that the public school continues to be culturally responsive and accurate in its dealings with all subjects, particularly in the area of history and the origins of thought in academic subjects such as mathematics and philosophy. Academic development is not restricted from being delivered within the community framework; however, the public school, being funded as it is by tax-paying members of the community should be able to be relied on by members of the community for academic development purposes, without their feeling a need to replicate or duplicate efforts given limited time and resources.

Former Superintendent of Boston Public Schools Carol Johnson commented on this theory of change in the following way:

The work before us is to do the best job possible to ensure the success of the next generation. We can't have a meaningful impact on the next generation without the community and the children owning their own development. But we also can't do this without impacting the school to some extent because so much of the hope of the future is tied to directly to whether the children are well educated and whether we change the trajectory necessary to get them ready and through post secondary. We've spent decades relying on schools to take care of everything – the schools alone have never been able to do everything. We can't ignore the schools, but relying on a single partner is not the most effective strategy to alter the condition related to poverty and family background. We can't ignore the school because the power brokers are more connected to the formal structure of schools. Collectively, they have contributed to the communities being voiceless, but it is hard for either to own that because they have worked hard to intervene and believe they should be applauded for their efforts. Schools can be an advantage or disadvantage. They can reinforce existing inequities or create the conditions for more equal opportunity for all. Schools have the potential to create a forum for different thoughts, ideas, and diverse people and cultures coming together (C. Johnson, personal conversation, August 10, 2014)

TandemED's theory of change is as follows: If we (1) organize African-American communities around reclaiming the collective leadership of youth development, (2)



facilitate that community through a design process to customize a vision for collective youth development, an agenda, and the corresponding necessary messages, (3) align partners, resources, and policies to fund and complement these efforts, and (4) support the delivery of that customized content through both formal and informal delivery systems (i.e. media, technology, interactions), then young people will be motivated to engage in schools and will live purpose-filled lives. The more specific action that will need to take place from within the African-American community is to lead the identity development in a comprehensive manner. The action that TandemED proposes is a comprehensive community-customized campaign that is youth-centered and adult-supported and focuses on messages of identity and purpose. The target audience of such a campaign is youth and young adults ages 12–26, and the focus of the campaign is identity development using various methods of message delivery. We believe that when we take these aforementioned steps and youth receive the necessary messages about their identity in general and as it relates to education and learning, then over time we will see evidence of African-American youth entering into school highly engaged with purpose and motivation to construct their own sense of identity and meaning and engage learning in ways that are meaningful to their overall goals. Ultimately, we will see this translate into significantly improved educational outcomes in such areas as grade point average, graduation rates, attendance, academic test scores, and post-secondary enrollment.

The strategic project that I pursued in my 10-month residency was to implement the TandemED theory of action in a tangible way within a city, paying particular attention the nature of the relationship that our organization had with a public school district. The strategic project here is: Leading the Initial Implementation Phase of

TandemED in Relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools. More specifically, this project attempts to figure out the relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools and more generally for public school districts that would support TandemED's goal of establishing a youth-led and adult supported city-wide movement in support of Black youth development. While the overarching theory of change for TandemED revolves around the benefits of community leadership, a sub-theory of change that I test through this strategic project is that if I can effectively establish and maintain a positive relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools, we will be more likely to be successful in the implementation of the TandemED overarching theory.

### **DESCRIPTION**

During my residency, my main interactions with PPS were with Dr. Linda Lane, Superintendent, and Errika Fearbry-Jones, Executive Director of the Superintendent's Office. Dr. Linda Lane became Superintendent of PPS on January 1, 2011, the first African-American woman named to this position in the city's history. Her background in education included work primarily in the Des Moines Iowa school district as a teacher, executive director of human resources, chief operating officer, and deputy superintendent. For four prior years under the administration of the former PPS superintendent Mark Roosevelt, Lane also served as the deputy superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Accountability in PPS. She was a part of the team that worked to gain the \$40 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supporting the Empowering Effective Teachers plan, a partnership between the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers and PPS. This plan rested upon the belief that "effective teachers are the number-one school-based factor for improving student

outcomes” and their mission to ensure every child has a great teacher in their classroom at all times (Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2015). In addition to this work, the Board of Education also set as a priority for the district to increase its visibility throughout the city in the area of school and community engagement. Upon her installment as PPS superintendent she shared her priority with the public through a press release: “We are going to continue the work of our Empowering Effective Teachers, plan, deepen our work in underperforming high schools, and expedite our work to eliminate racial achievement disparities” (Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2010).

Under Lane’s administration, in 2013 PPS released a new strategic plan entitled “Whole Child, Whole Community.” Superintendent Lane initiated this new direction based on the data that showed that academic gains in 2013 had plummeted for the previous 2 years in both math and reading across grades 3-8, and there was the continuation of the trend of a diminishing student population, the same trend that had resulted in an enrollment decline of 30% since the year 2000. This plan prioritized district goals to accelerate student achievement, eliminate racial disparities, become a district of first choice, and develop a student-focused culture. This plan outlined four key areas of focus to accomplish these goals which were to improve fiscal sustainability, invest in people, invest in student performance, and partner with the community in a new way. For the last priority area of partnering with the community in a new way, the district aimed to implement a collective impact approach and facilitate the formation of a common agenda across partners focused on early childhood, third grade reading, and algebra readiness. The plan’s constituents included businesses, faith-based institutions, higher education institutions, parents, community-based organizations, private and other

public schools, foundations, government agencies, and service providers (Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2013).

One of the initiatives with which PPS formed a strong alliance was the “Pittsburgh Promise,” which is an initiative that guarantees \$40,000 of scholarship funding to Pittsburgh Public School students who meet the criteria of a minimum 2.5 GPA and 90% attendance upon acceptance to over 100 colleges or universities and trade or technical schools within the state of Pennsylvania. As a part of their plan for equity, along with the Pittsburgh Promise, the district also initiated *We Promise*, which focuses exclusively in supporting African-American males who are the cusp of reaching these GPA and attendance benchmarks to also be eligible for the scholarship award (Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2015).

In 2013, Dr. Linda Lane named Errika Fearbry-Jones, who previously served as a coordinator in the district’s office of teacher effectiveness, to be special assistant to the superintendent (Chute, 2013). In 2014, Errika’s job title changed to executive director of the Superintendent’s Office. This role is similar to a traditional district chief of staff positions, but with more direct leadership authority. Errika had served as the vice chair of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and the coordinator of the PPS Gang-Free Schools and Communities Program. Additionally, she had served as youth policy director for the Pittsburgh Mayor’s Office under Thomas J. Murphy, Jr. She was also currently the president of the board of directors of The Pittsburgh Project, a Christian nonprofit community development organization, a PPS parent, and a graduate of PPS’ Perry High School.

The relationship with the PPS School district, and specifically with Dr. Linda Lane and Errika Fearbry-Jones, is one that I closely monitored during the implementation of the TandemED community initiative. This was particularly important given our theory of action, which essentially attempts to reframe the role of school districts to be less central in youth development. The following captures some of the key interactions and elements of the interactions and relationship with the district. In our original intention, our theory recognized that, in both theory and action, the school district must be taken into consideration as an actor. Thus, this section of the capstone helps to illuminate how this manifested during our time in Pittsburgh. It describes the initial interactions with PPS, which culminated with an agreement to be supportive of our work. It then goes on to describe the real-time feedback and responses of the district as we moved further into implementation.

### *Residency Interactions with the Pittsburgh Public Schools*

In this section, I describe the initial interactions with PPS, namely the phone calls and meetings that helped to frame how we would move forward in the early months of the initiative.

#### *Initial Meeting with PPS Executive Team*

My first interaction with Superintendent Lane came through a phone call in June 2014 that included Dr. Lane, Errika Fearbry-Jones, and Dorian Burton. Prior to our call, both Dr. Lane and Errika had read our TandemED business plan, which highlighted a strategy that we argued would ultimately lead to higher student outcomes—grades, engagement, attendance, academic tests, and post-secondary enrollment. In response to our plan, Dr. Lane expressed concern that our argument was one that allowed us to take

accountability away from teachers and that schools were “off the hook.” Similarly, she felt concern that ours was an argument that says that the community is responsible for fixing itself. We noted these concerns. The follow-up action step from this meeting was that we agreed to send a write-up that condensed our overarching business plan into one that described the actual work that we proposed to do with their youth, families, and parents. We also agreed to find a time to meet together in Pittsburgh in person with her and Errika to discuss and finalize a plan for working together.

A few weeks later in July, we went to the School Department to meet with the superintendent and Errika to discuss the proposal and finalize if and how we would work together. Upon our arrival, we were surprised to find that the meeting actually included many more than the superintendent and the executive director. The invited attendees included two senior cabinet members, Dr. Donna Micheaux, Deputy Superintendent, and Dr. Connie Sims, Chief of School Performance; along with Melissa Friez, Assistant Superintendent of 9-12 Schools and Principal of Pittsburgh Allderdice High School; and Dennis Chakey, new Principal at Pittsburgh Perry High School. In her introductory comments, Dr. Lane reiterated what she shared in the initial phone conversation, that in considering such a community-based approach, she wanted to make sure that she was not sending the message that parents are the problem and that teachers are off of the hook. She added to this that she has a role to play independent of whether parents were involved, and that she was accountable for the academic success of students. She further stated that there were other urban schools that are getting the job done so that “we know that it can be done.” It was clear that Dr. Lane was accustomed to hearing teachers assign blame to parents for underachievement and she wanted to be careful that TandemED did

not exacerbate or reinforce a blame-the-parent culture. While we arrived expecting to meet only with Dr. Lane and Errika, Dr. Lane justified her rationale for including the assistant superintendent and principals of PPS in the meeting by stating that “this work that we are talking about doing cannot happen without the schools anyway, so the principals are here.” It was clear to us that she wanted their early involvement.

Dennis Chakey, the school leader who would be on the ground intersecting with our work, requested more clarity by asking: “What is it exactly that you will do for my school?” In response to Dennis’ concerns, I clarified that we would not be working inside his school, but that we would work outside of the school to help create the conditions with youth, parents, and families as leaders, and that this work would have students enter the school with purpose and motivation to appropriate the learning in a way that was meaningful to them. I explained that this would be a plus for the school in their efforts to focus on instruction because TandemED would help to create conditions to provide a counter-narrative in which Dennis and his teachers were not expected to be the ones who solely held youth motivation in their hands. To do this, I shared that there was a level of learning that would need to happen on both our ends to figure out how this paradigm shift looks. To this there was a concern expressed by Melissa Friez. She had read our business plan and shared concerns around community perception that Dennis would have outsourced the important work of community engagement and that it might be viewed that he was not interested in being in the community and preferred to hide in the school. She felt that working with TandemED would hurt his leadership in the community, and that the responsibility for being the face of community leadership would still fall on his shoulders once we concluded our work.

At this stage of the meeting, I felt that there was a clear misalignment between the thinking of the superintendent's team and the TandemED theory of both change and action. Because of this, at that point, I was careful not to make any commitments. I simply stated to Melissa and Dennis that I understood it would be high risk for them to approach their work and narrative dramatically differently as it relates to community engagement. Dr. Lane then proposed that the next step should be an additional conversation between only us and Melissa and Dennis to see if we could find a way to work together, a proposal to which I reluctantly agreed.

#### *Meeting Follow Up*

In my follow-up conversation with Errika a couple of days later, she shared that during this meeting, she became clearer on our approach. She shared that she understood that the work we were pursuing was a community-based empowerment approach and not one where we were looking to enhance or expand upon some existing element within the school. She shared that she would loop back in with the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and principals and be a part of the follow-up meeting with Melissa and Dennis to determine the next steps, if any.

After that meeting and with reflection, I resolved that we were going to go forward with our community-centered approach despite the response of the school leadership. I was unsure of the implications of my stance with regard to our relationship with the superintendent and district as a whole, but I was willing to accept the outcome. A couple of weeks later on Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, Errika, Melissa, Dorian, and I had our follow-up meeting over the phone. I opened the conversation by sharing that we saw ourselves as allies of the district in their work to get better outcomes for students, and that



we were open to the principal of Perry High School learning along with us what it means for a principal to be responsive, but we were going to move forward in implementing our community-based work as reflected in our business plan. Errika affirmingly responded that she and Melissa were of a similar mindset and that they had communicated to Dennis to go ahead with his school leadership agenda as he saw fit and not to worry about partnering inside the school with us. Errika further shared that the district would continue to work with us with Errika as the point-person. She shared that she wanted to see our work be successful, and that she believed that it did not necessitate a direct relationship inside the school with the principal of Perry, though she shared that it might be of value to us to stay abreast of his parent involvement activity. The meeting ended with us agreeing that we would continue to work together, and Errika invited us to the opening welcome back and professional development session for the school year with the principals and the district leadership to take place on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

A couple of weeks later as we attended the professional development return-to-school day, we were greeted by Errika along with Alison Huguely from Ed.L.D. Cohort 2, who supported our entry and served as an Assistant Superintendent. We greeted the senior cabinet members, spoke cordially with Melissa Friez and Dennis Chakey, and sat down amongst the district staff near the front of the session to observe and participate in the activities. At one point during an activity of individuals affirming one another, Errika affirmed me for speaking boldly and courageously about what I believed.

### *Solidifying Support*

Three weeks later in an impromptu meeting, Errika clarified additional reasons with Dorian and I for why she chose to support TandemED. In addition to being

personally supportive, she shared a goal for Superintendent Lane to be perceived in a positive light and that our effort represented such an opportunity if it were to be successful. I concurred that they had an opportunity to take a strong stance of being a district that is supportive without either defining or controlling community leadership in education.

Errika explained that she was in the process of requesting the Board to vote on providing \$20K to our initiative and wanted to confirm whether she should go forward and whether we wanted to take the money given our theory of action that spoke so firmly of the need for the leadership to come from the community and not be solely dependent on the schools. She shared that she was fine and supportive either way, but though it might provide some seed money for our effort and that it was a question for us to answer. Dorian and I spent time considering this opportunity. From a growth perspective, it would be beneficial to TandemED because it could help us secure a situation where there would be documented support for our effort from a school district. This could be helpful for future implementation in other contexts in which we might need to show evidence of having a district funding support. However, a drawback for me was in the question of whether receiving the funds would place a local perception in the community that somehow we were being controlled by the district, which is the narrative that we were trying to avoid and that worked wholly against the theory of change. After a couple of days of consideration, the pro trumped the con. I resolved that the integrity of our actions would be strong enough that, in the long run, people would know that it was an alliance and that we were not controlled by the district. I gave the “green light” to Errika to move

forward. A couple of weeks later, On August 28, Errika confirmed that the resolution had passed. The Board Resolution read as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of the School District of Pittsburgh authorize its proper officers to enter into a partnership with TandemED, Education by Communities in Tandem with Schools. The organization's founders are current Harvard Residents; Brian C.B. Barnes, M.Div, Ed.M., and Dorian Burton, M.Ed. The mission and goal of TandemED is to unite African-American communities around leading the leading educational development of youth, strengthening them to become purpose-filled, motivated, and self-directed adults. Both men will obtain the proper clearances so they will be able to interact directly with students, families and community members on the Northside. These relationships will be key in assisting the District in our efforts with the Whole Child Whole Community Plan: Partner with the Community in a New Way. This pilot effort will allow the District to gain new insights on engagement strategies to reach parents that have not responded to traditional methods. (Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2015)

#### *TandemED's City Entry: Leading a Community Campaign*

In this section, I describe how we moved from establishing a supportive relationship with the district to building additional private and public relationships that would help us delve deeper into implementation.

#### *Refining Our Strategy*

In September, we decided more specifically how we would actualize the creation of a community campaign. First, we decided to focus on youth as our core constituent in

the community, to ensure that youth would design and own the messaging on identity and purpose. We decided to enlist the adults and supporters and resource providers, to both ensure necessary capacity for the youth and leadership from the community-at-large. The specific activity that we outlined was for youth in the city to spark a campaign to transmit their own messages of identity and purpose to the target audience of 12–26-year-olds. This messaging would provide motivation for youth to engage all of life including that of learning and the appropriation of their schooling. Our theory of action thus became more defined and remained linked to educational outcomes: If we are able to have youth design a campaign for educational identity and purpose that is adult supported, then youth will be more motivated to appropriate learning spaces, including the schools of which they are a part.

#### *Steering Committee*

In October, we focused our efforts more on the community than on the school district, spending a great deal of our time meeting individuals and groups as a part of the implementation plan. Some notable individuals that we invited to join our TandemED Pittsburgh Community Initiative steering committee included the following people: Dr. Michael Quigley and Ryan Scott were Co-directors of the Black Male Leadership Development Institute, a joint initiative of Robert Morris College and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh that yearly supported 80 high-school African-American across Greater Pittsburgh in leadership development. Notably, Dr. Quigley was also an Assistant Professor of Organizational Leadership at Robert Morris University, and his dissertation work was titled *A Retrospective Critical Race Exploration of Adolescent Black Male Social and Schooling Experiences, Identity Development, and Educational/Life Outcomes*

*in Pittsburgh.* A former civics high school teacher and parent for Pittsburgh Public Schools, Dr. Quigley was a mentor in the PPS *We Promise* program at Perry High School and an active member of the 100 Black Men of Massachusetts. Maria Searcy was one of the foremost active parents in the city and arguably the state, while being a parent in PPS, a member of the PPS Equity Advisory Panel, and a member of the Title I State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC) created by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

Jason Rivers served as the Co-Project Manager for the Pittsburgh Public Schools' *We Promise* program, a regular presenter out of the PPS Equity Office to teachers, principals, and district staff on confronting the issues associated with institutionalized racism, a PPS parent, and the founder of the Pittsburgh AR3 citywide annual summer basketball league in honor of his young brother who lost his life to youth violence in the city. Brandi Taylor was the leader of the youth summits that toured various Pittsburgh Public Schools Pittsburgh as a part of the Coalition against Violence, the Community Director for A+ Schools, as well as a parent in PPS. Pastor J.E. Gamble was a youth pastor, youth football coach, mentor to As-One-United youth entrepreneurship group, leader in NEED's African American Male Mentoring Initiative at PPS' Barack Obama Academy of International Studies, and majority owner and co-director of TenDaJi Media Solutions. Sharnay Hearn was the citywide community liaison for the Office of Pittsburgh's Mayor Bill Peduto, as well as a former social worker in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Jonnet Solomon served as the Director of the Young Men and Women's African Heritage Association. This group would form the majority of our TandemED Steering Committee, whose collective role was to guide the growth of the initiative of creating the campaign and building a larger coalition to garner broader involvement and support from

the Pittsburgh youth and adult community (See Appendix B for examples of our Steering Committee Agendas and Plans). It is worth noting that Errika Fearbry-Jones was the person who was responsible for introducing us to both Maria Searcy and JE Gamble, the latter making introductions to Sharnay Hearn and being instrumental in connecting us with a number of additional individuals within the Pittsburgh community. Errika was instrumental in the early stages of our meeting many community leaders.

### *Community Introduction*

After our introduction to JE Gamble and Sharnay Hearn, these two individuals took the onus of planning a community introduction of us on September 5, 2015, to be held at the Young Men and Women's African-Heritage Association. Approximately 50 people from the civic, public school, and faith community, including 12 youth, came to hear about our backgrounds and the work that we were proposing to do in partnership with them and their community. Attending this meeting were State House Representative Ed Gainey; Latrenda Leonard, Deputy Chief of Operations and Administration for Mayor William Peduto who also oversees the My Brother's Keeper's Initiative for the city; and Errika Fearbry-Jones herself from the PPS Superintendent's Office.

In this meeting, Dorian and I proceeded with our presentation. We shared our personal narratives. I highlighted my ability to overcome racist narratives toward me in the deep south through the affirmation that came from a strong Black community, while Dorian shared a narrative that focused on the differences that occurred for him in becoming successful when he was eventually in an environment where education was the focus of dinner conversations (juxtaposed against his earlier years, where it was never identified as a major lever for success). We shared how our stories reflected on our

previous professional work and how troubling narratives propagated in education reform and even some Harvard classrooms led to our forming TandemED in response. We shared how we were finalists of the 2014 Echoing Green competition and came to be located in Pittsburgh through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We did not give a specific mention about any support from Dr. Linda Lane because we were not completely clear whether defining our work within the context of the school district might confuse the community about our interest in building community leadership and we wanted to establish and build our own personal and organizational legitimacy.

We shared our theory about the need for the community to reclaim youth leadership development from a school-centered approach and our idea for youth-designed campaign as a specific strategy toward this end. After presenting and answering questions, we received affirming comments and invitation from the group to move forward. The only consistent admonition in this invitation was that we always be cognizant and affirming of the work and workers in this area who had already been doing the work of building the Pittsburgh Black community. After the community meeting, I perceived that our not talking about the Pittsburgh Public Schools might not be looked upon favorably by Errika, yet when I asked her how things went she said “great” and did not offer any immediate comments. However, in a phone call after a couple of weeks, Errika shared her overall comments on our presentation as well as the concern that I originally suspected that she might have had.

Errika’s feedback at this time included the following: First, Errika affirmed the visuals that we used and a clear explanation of the paradigm shift that we sought, whereby we visually switched the community and school from the center of youth

development. Her feedback, however, was that we should have also utilized these diagrams and some explanation in our initial conversations and meetings with Dr. Lane. She shared that they would have helped us be much clearer about what we were trying to do and how we were seeking to position ourselves and the community leadership. She shared that this would have shortened the “uncomfortable” phase and kept the district from trying themselves to fill in the gaps of what we were seeking to communicate. Second, while Errika affirmed the way in which we told our personal narratives, she expressed concern that we did not publicly acknowledge Dr. Lane. She shared that she was not looking for us to go into great detail about our relationship with the district, but that she hoped that we would at least share that along our entry, we stopped by the Superintendent’s Office to share what we wanted to do, and that she offered her support. She also added that it was appropriate to do so as the funding that they offered to the project was a matter of public record as the Board had voted on it.

## **RESULTS**

As a result of our initial interactions with the school district as well as the interactions that occurred as we moved more deeply into implementation, there were a number of things that occurred which can be reasonably argued were affected by how the relationship played out. Despite the rocky start and even some critical feedback about our community introduction, Errika still remained committed to supporting our effort.

### *TandemED Steering Committee District Support*

First, the district was willing to join or provide networking to help us form a strong steering committee. First, when I probed Errika in late November as to whether she would be willing to join our steering committee, she responded by stating that she



would be willing to do whatever would be the most supportive given our theory of change. She was willing to join and be involved or remain supportive more from a distance and again, like the funding, left the ball in our court to decide. In this instance, I decided the opposite of what I had chosen to do with the funding, believing that her joining could possibly increase the risk of creating a wrong perception about our independence. She maintained a positive response and attitude with this decision not to have her join our committee. While recognizing Errika's strong ties and credibility in the community, I remained concerned that her key leadership role in the district might encourage some in our group to rely too heavily upon her. This would be a response that I had often seen in other settings and wanted to be careful not to encourage these conditions too early in the process. She did add value and was helpful in thinking through and inviting two potential prospects to the group, including the director of the Pittsburgh Project, Will Thompkins, which was a sign of her support of our work.

#### *District Involvement in TandemED Leadership Academy*

As a part of our implementation, we held a three-month TandemED Leadership Academy that drew 30 youth from Pittsburgh Public Schools and other schools across Greater Pittsburgh to provide identity development training and skills in campaign marketing and branding. This Academy engaged youth in activities that prepared them to produce a final product of messages of identity and purpose to spark a community-wide campaign. Dorian and I, along with some members of the steering committee, ran the identity development portion, while we brought in Dr. Delancy Bennett, marketing professor at Clemson University, to give them the direct branding and marketing skills. The majority of the youth were selected by members of the steering committee who

worked directly with youth in their respective organizations (See Appendix C for the initial meeting agenda).

As a component of this academy, we thought to interface the students with the superintendent. When we approached Errika and the district, they were willing to be supportive and the superintendent was willing to come. In late October, as I shared with Errika that momentum was building around our engagement with youth, and that we would want them to be responsive and have it intersect with the superintendent, she shared affirmatively, “We’re ready!” The next month, on November 25<sup>th</sup>, after a phone call where she offered the possibility of having our partnership featured on WPXI (NBC affiliate), I emailed Errika the following note:

Errika, thank you for taking time out today ... I want to also see if Dr. Lane will have any Saturday availability in February where we could get the young people to share what they are envisioning for their own educational identity and development, as well as providing opportunity for her to hear and begin to think about how she can be responsive. This is different than a youth group designed to inform the school district on policies, but rather would be more of an opportunity for the superintendent to hear what they are envisioning and planning to bring into fruition on their own apart from schools. February 7 and 21 would be first choices. Please let me know. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and great time with your family! (B. Barnes, personal communication, November 25, 2014)

Errika responded affirmatively to this invitation and request. In the month of January we worked to find a time that would work for Superintendent Lane to interface with our youth. The only ask of Errika came as the following message:

... Will you be able to share an overview of the key points? She won't want to be totally surprised or put in a position to respond on the spot. There can be some "surprises" but she will want to know the general direction. We have done this with other groups like the students who drafted the Student Bill of Rights that was later adopted by our Board. We actually got a draft of the document first. Thanks! (E. Fearbry-Jones, personal communication, January 23, 2015)

On January 27th, per Errika's request, I submitted a draft agenda for us to utilize in interfacing the youth participants of the Leadership Academy with the superintendent and Errika. In a follow up conversation, the feedback that I received was that they would prefer that the superintendent not begin with talking but rather that she be in a listening mode and be able to respond in a conversation style. I was in agreement with this as it reflected more of the spirit of what I wanted the relationship to be; I had opened up for her to talk first because I had heard her personal narrative and thought it was relevant to share given the context of the discussion. Nevertheless, I made the changes to the agenda to reflect this, plus added two additional pointed questions that the youth would be able to ask that opened the door for the superintendent to be responsive and supportive of the work that they were doing (See Appendix D for the final agenda for the meeting between superintendent and youth)

### *District Involvement in TandemED Advertisement Production*

Errika and Dr. Lane also remained supportive of the TandemED advertisement production that was distributed in regional Pittsburgh media. The youth in our Leadership Academy were able to go through the sessions and create four prominent ads, one of which was named “Black is Pittsburgh” (Gamble, 2015). In this piece, they attempted to create a truth narrative of what “Black Is” by choosing representative adjectives and then overlaying a visual with actual Black people in Pittsburgh that represented the adjective that they had chosen. This piece spoke to the area of “identity” that we were interested in exploring. The TandemED steering committee took the onus of contacting and organizing over 60 Black people in the city of Pittsburgh from various neighborhoods, backgrounds, professions, etc. who came to a shoot scheduled from 12–8pm on Thursday, February 26, 2015, many of whom I knew or had met during the entry phase of our work.

The steering committee invited both Dr. Lane and Errika to participate in the “Black is Pittsburgh” shoot. Errika agreed to be in the shoot. She also shared that she wanted to have Dr. Lane participate, and wanted to know if she could shoot on another date than the one we had established because she would be out of town during the week of the shoot. We only had one day to shoot in our contract, so we could not accommodate this request. However, Errika was filmed along with her daughter as the representative for “Black is Educated.” When we went to do the press release, and when Errika was given a choice, she indicated that Pittsburgh Public Schools desired to be named as a partner in our public communication about the initiative and the ads.

This advertisement, along with two of the three others that were created, was broadcast on Comcast-carried networks and channels, such as BET, Bravo, Syfy, A&E,

AMC, Comedy Central, CNN, E!, Discovery, ESPN, Food Network, Fox Sports, History Channel, NBC Sports, Spike, TNT, truTV, the Weather Channel, and VH1 in the Greater Pittsburgh region from March 11<sup>th</sup>–April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The ads were shown over 3,000 times within this time period including within TBS March Madness basketball games and made a total of roughly a half-million impressions. This worked in our favor as the 2015 March Madness ratings reached historic all-time high ratings for the first Thursday airing since 1991 (Melbach, 2015). On the radio station WAMO100.1, the audio version of our ad played a for a minimum of 50 thirty-second commercials, 10 15-second live reads, inclusion on the website with 30-second in-stream commercials, and on all social sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The total estimated impressions from this approach was another 31,000. (See Appendix E for press release and data on number of airings and impressions)

#### *“Own Your Story” Campaign and Other District Involvement*

The other ads that we created followed a theme of youth and young adults sharing their own stories of identity and purpose. These pieces included one of 10 Black male youth and another of 5 Black females, both entitled “My Story Is.” (Gamble, 2015). In these, each person shared a message of the words and symbols that best represent the story of their life in a very positive way and spoke to the area of “purpose” and “identity” that is so central to TandemED’s theory of action. A final fourth piece was written by 22-year-old young adult Leon Ford and filmed in a classroom setting (Gamble, 2015). He is shown sitting in a desk and encountering the inner frustration and distractions of life and coming to the realization that “if there is no enemy within, then no enemies from the outside can harm me,” drawing from a popular African proverb. Implicit in this ad was

the background story of Leon Ford, who in 2013 was shot and paralyzed during a traffic stop by Pittsburgh police officers who falsely identified him and subverted protocol in their engagement of him. Ironically, Ford was charged in this case and faced years in prison for this event, but eventually the district attorney dropped the charges after his fighting and the community protesting over the police and court's actions. In a twist of irony, this piece was actually filmed in Allderdice High School with the permission of Melissa Friez, who we met in the initial executive staff meeting. When I arrived on set during the day of filming, she greeted me favorably and was very positive about the shoot happening in her building.

Other people in the district also participated, namely the *We Promise* program. We announced a video contest around the ad for what we entitled the "Own your Story" campaign and made \$500 prizes available throughout the city for one youth and one young adult who would post their own ad telling their story. In doing this, Jason Rivers, Program Manager for *We Promise* PPS Initiative for Black males to receive the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship, was willing to publicly work together effort and expose their youth to these ads and invite them to participate in submitting videos. At the *We Promise* Summit on March 17th, Jason invited me to not only help co-lead a session with approximately 12 youth on the positive narratives, but to also present TandemED's work to the more than 90 students in the district program and personally advocate for them to participate in this contest. I did this presentation in in front of a number of school board members and the director of equity without concern, as they already knew me through my relationship with Errika Fearbry-Jones. Carla Rivers, the spouse of Jason Rivers, who worked with Urban Prep Academy through Neighborhood Learning Alliance, became

committed after this to push this campaign and contest to the students in that school. Finally, Sam Franklin, who was the leader of the Empowering Effective Teachers work for the district on which the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation spent \$40 million, also became interested. After being introduced to me by Errika and hearing what we were working on with the ads on purpose and identity, he wanted to have more discussion about possible intersection with his work. He proclaimed to Errika that TandemED's outcomes in student engagement were aligned with the goal of the Learning and Teaching Environment of the Empowering Effective Teachers initiative of Bill Gates Foundation. In his exclamation, he referred to student readiness as a factor that contributes to the ability for teachers to be successful.

The Principal of Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts 6–12 (CAPA), a magnet school located in the Cultural District of Downtown Pittsburgh, also shared her vision and plans to have students from across the city utilize their filming studio to create their own narratives and entries. Furthermore, the students of the Black Student Union after a forum in which I shared my personal narrative and invited their participation in the Own Your Story campaign, expressed their desire to have more time to develop and submit entries. Another example of responses from public schools include that of a charter school teacher who opened the “Own Your Story” contest as an assignment to all of her students. She sent the following message to the TandemED website:

Hello! I am a social studies teacher in the Hill District of Pittsburgh at the Hill House Passport Academy Charter School. I would really like to get more involved in the work that you are doing as well as get my students involved. . . . I have one particular student who I am putting to the challenge of this video

contest. I do not though want to limit my partnership to just taking part in the opportunities TandemED provides I would like my students to get involved so that they can be a voice of change within their communities . . . I would love more information on any opportunities for my students! Thanks, Jessica (J. Noyes, personal communication, April 1, 2014)

Her student Marcus Alvarez produced an ad describing his story of challenge to triumph, which became our winner for the youth age group of the Own Your Story contest (Noyes, 2014).

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of this analysis is to understand why the interactions and relationship unfolded in the way that that they did between TandemED and the school district. In order to do this, I will utilize the framework offered by Bolman and Deal in the book *Reframing Organizations*. In this text, the authors offer four frames out of which organizations operate and out of which effective organizations operate well—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. They describe these frames as offering “a coherent set of ideas or beliefs forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day” (Bolman & Deal, 1984, p. 41). I will use these four frames to discuss why the school district exhibited certain behaviors, as well as why TandemED initiated certain actions, and the intersecting responses between the two organizations. I will also at various instances rely upon the leadership lenses offered by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) in *Leadership on the Line*. This is especially helpful in understanding my own behavior, as their writing is particularly applicable to



my context, in which I entered with only a theory of change in hand. They introduce their work in the following way:

To lead is to live dangerously because when leadership counts, when you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold dear – their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking – with nothing more to offer perhaps than a possibility. (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 2).

### *Structural Frame*

Bolman and Deal write of the structural frame as operating from beliefs that “reflect confidence in rationality and a faith that a suitable array of formal roles and responsibilities will minimize distracting personal static and maximize people’s performance on the job” (1984, p. 45). One of the key assumptions that exists within this frame is that “suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh” (p. 45). The structural frame helps us to understand that because both of our organizations were protective of structure, roles, and mission, TandemED would not integrate into PPS when given the opportunity and likewise PPS would not bend far in their organizational roles to accommodate our initiative.

Two of the structural dilemmas, or “tough trade-offs without easy answers” (p. 70) within this frame, “Differentiation versus Integration” and “Gap versus Overlap,” are particularly helpful in understanding some aspects of Superintendent Lane’s and the principals’ response during the initial period of our partnership exploration.

“Differentiation versus Integration” is the “tension between assigning work and synchronizing sundry efforts,” whereby the challenge is found in the fact that “the more complex a role structure (lots of people doing many different things), the harder it is to

sustain a tightly coupled enterprise” (p. 70). Because of this tension, Dr. Lane chose to change our expected step of having a first in-person meeting between just her, Errika, Dorian and me. Instead, she invited, without our being prepared, four additional persons from her organization—two executives, an assistant superintendent, and a principal. It is possible that she wanted to create a more inclusive start to the engagement so that her staff would be less likely view her action as top down mandate. She knowingly or unknowingly encountered this tension, and was concerned that if she worked with us without them, we would be too loosely situated in a manner that was less comfortable and clear, whereas integrating us into an established organizational structure would provide less complication and more control, coordination, and ease of alignment. This would be especially important if as superintendent she were going to endorse our work; this is the impetus for why she stated emphatically that “we cannot do this without the principals anyway.”

A second tension in the structural frame, “Gap versus Overlap,” highlights the two following concerns: “If key responsibilities are not clearly assigned, important tasks fall through the cracks. Conversely, roles and activities can overlap, creating conflict, wasted effort, and unintended redundancy” (p. 71). Because of this tension, Dr. Lane felt a strong sense of responsibility for student outcomes and asserted her role as educational leader when confronted with a theory that shifted a portion of this educational leadership into the hands of parents and community. She seemed somewhat uncomfortable with the implications of letting go of some of the responsibility for student outcomes to parents. In the same way, Dr. Lane questioned the potential implications of our theory for teachers to be relieved of any part of the onus for student outcomes in their roles. She expressed her

concern that our theory could be interpreted as an out for teachers to be held or hold themselves accountable for quality instruction. It was clear that she was accustomed to hearing teachers assign blame to parents for underachievement and she did not want that to be the message.

When looking at our own organization, our operation out of the structural frame also explains the rigidity with which I appropriated our mission and my attitude of not compromising our community-based role to accommodate the district's pull. Our organizational priorities at the time of these discussions included proving that community leadership was the strongest lever for educational outcomes, sustaining our organizational development, and maintaining the integrity and legitimacy of our efforts within the community. With none of these organizational priorities being validated by the district's approach to integrating us into their existing structures, it left little room in my mind that we would be able to successfully collaborate in a way that would shift the mindset from responsibility inside the schoolhouse to one where the community drives the transformation. Thus, this frame helps to also explain my willingness after our earliest in-person meeting to let the prospect of a partnership go, should that frame of partnership be the only option. This bumping of the organizational commitments to structure helps to explain why there was not much headway gained in the earliest talks; we were unwilling to compromise our organizational position, and they were unwilling to accommodate the ambiguity of such a partnership with us outside of their existing structure.

#### *Human Resource Frame*

Bolman and Deal write of the human resource frame as operating from beliefs that "people's skills, attitudes, energy, and commitment are vital resources that can make

or break an enterprise” (1984, p. 117). One of the key assumptions within this frame is that “a good fit benefits both (people and organizations). Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed” (1984, p. 117). The human resource frame helps us understand that because there were human resource needs on both sides of the relationship in complementary areas, there was enough glue to keep us in relationship with each other despite the fact that we had drawn early organizational lines in the sand referenced in the previous structural frame discussion. The authors go on to note that the “human resource-oriented organization also recognizes that learning must occur on the job as well as in the classroom” (p. 147). Dr. Lane and Errika operated out of this frame in their willingness to go forward with seeking to allocate \$20,000 in funds to our initiative to help in getting us started. While we were not going to be official employees, they recognized that there were some benefits to their own learning through an investment in our learning that would come from our pilot. The value of a real experiment, in their eyes, would go well beyond the theory formation that we had done in the Harvard classrooms and Innovation Lab. The language of the Board resolution speaks to this learning goal as a portion reads, “This pilot effort will allow the District to gain new insights on engagement strategies to reach parents that have not responded to traditional methods” (Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2015). A sacrifice of \$20,000 would be relatively small in relation to the district budget and could possibly help gain some new insight or helpful strategy. On our end, the human resource benefit was that it helped to solidify access and relationship with Dr. Lane and Errika as we moved into the implementation of our initiative. These mutually beneficial human resource needs within this frame was one of the saving graces to maintaining

communication between TandemED and the district in the earlier portions of our relationship intersections.

### *Political Frame*

Bolman and Deal describe the political frame as operating from the belief of “organizations as roiling arenas, hosting ongoing contests of individual and group interests” (1984, p. 188). One of the key assumptions that exists within this frame is that “coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality” (1984, p. 188). The political frame helps us to understand simultaneous rejection and reception of our theory of change by the district given their political interests. In sharing my theory of change, I argued that a shifting of the paradigm of educational leadership from the school as the center of youth development to one of centering on community leadership was a necessary step to improving student purpose and motivation to engage all of life, including formal learning environments. However, when presenting this theory of change, the political interest of the district in protecting the community perception of their respect for community members conflicted with the way I presented this theory of change. Dr. Lane’s concern was that the argument would lead to the community perceiving that she was blaming their lack of leadership for the challenges the district experienced in student performance. The principals’ concern in translating this theory into partnering with our on-the-ground effort would in turn be perceived by the community as the principals’ lack of care and abdication of responsibility for community engagement. Both of these could be legitimate concerns.

Conversely, the theory of change and the actions that TandemED proposed were paradoxically received as political assets to the district’s concern about community

perception in other cases. First, this view was initially affirmed by Errika when she explicitly shared with me that her concern was in both supporting Dr. Lane as an effective leader and helping her to be viewed positively in the community. Second, this played out more prominently in the feedback that Errika offered me after the community introduction that she wished that we would have publicly acknowledged that Dr. Lane was one of the supporters of the community-based work that we were proposing to do. Third, we saw a level of responsiveness from Errika in areas such as desiring to have Dr. Lane included on the “Black Is Pittsburgh” commercial as well as the district choosing to be named as a partner in our public communication about the campaign later in the winter.

This political fluctuation between the district receiving our theory of action in some regards but not others is emblematic of the complexity involved in the political frame from which organizations and people make decisions. Heifetz and Linsky describe this as representative of the nature of allies and their fluctuating behavior in the political domain as they write:

A natural ally agrees with you on your issue and is willing to fight for it, but the alliance doesn't mean your partner will abandon all other commitments. No doubt your ally enjoys many relationships and identifies as a loyal member of other groups . . . In order to use your allies effectively, you need to be aware of those other commitments. If you forget about them or their influence on your partner, you risk undermining your effectiveness and destroying the alliance. (1984, p83).

As I described earlier, there were points of mutual interest in the human-resource frame and points of dissent in the structural frame. Interestingly, the political frame helps us to see elements of both alignment and dissent.

### *Symbolic Frame*

Bolman and Deal write of the symbolic frame as one that “interprets and illuminates the basic issues of meaning and belief that make symbols so powerful. It depicts a world far different from canons of rationality, certainty, and linearity” (1984, p. 117). One of the key assumptions within this frame is that “events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced. Their emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion” (1984, p. 117). I argue that the symbolic frame helps us understand that the symbols that mattered to both the district and to us were helpful to sustain our interests in remaining as communicating partners. One of the symbols that we created through our work was that of being integrated into the community, which was a symbol as we witnessed in the previous political frame that was of interest to Errika and Superintendent Lane.

First, we witnessed the positive feedback from Errika after she heard the symbol of community integration as was publicly expressed in our personal narratives. Recall that I shared a public narrative of being surrounded as a youth by a positive Black community in Huntsville, AL. This, I recounted, was the means that helped me to overcome negative racial messaging that I experienced as a youth in the deep South, such as being told that I needed to learn to “get the Black out of my voice” or that “students like me did not go to MIT.” Recall that Dorian shared his public narrative of being raised

in Rialto, CA, and experiencing the contrast of life without a strong Black community and failing out of high school, and that of having been reinstated to high school and performing and gaining acceptance into college after being relocated within a strong Black community.

Second, our symbol of community integration was also bolstered by the connections we made to people during both individual meetings as well as the formation of a community-legitimated steering committee. On one occasion Errika literally proclaimed, “Yes!” when I shared with her the name of one of the people who was a part of our steering committee. In another instance, Errika shared that she thought that we might have been holding a community meeting when she saw certain individuals leave a school board meeting before it was over. This was not the case at all, but represented the symbolism of the integration that Errika thought we had achieved. This symbol of community integration was also powerfully expressed during the day-long “Black Is Pittsburgh” photo shoot where over 60 influential people from across the city came to be involved, a portion of which Errika saw first-hand when she came for approximately an hour to be involved herself. Whether or how deeply the symbols reflected our true influence or integration into community is unknowable, but it is arguable that symbols such as these made access to and responsiveness from the superintendent’s office easier.

In a similar way, the symbolism that the district exuded, whether actual or not, was also valuable to us as an organization. In some instances, PPS had exhibited what Bolman and Deal describe as *isomorphism*:

[Organizations are] constantly buffeted by larger social, political, and economic trends. The challenge is sustaining isomorphism – that I, schools need to look like



schools “ought to” . . . in order to project legitimacy and engender support, faith, and hope among constituents . . . Structure and processes must reflect widely held myths and expectations. When production and results are hard to measure, correct appearance and presentation become the principal gauge of an organization’s effectiveness. (Bolman & deal, 1984, p. 289)

The Pittsburgh Public Schools portrayed symbols that represent a commitment to authentically engaging the community and making room for community leadership in education. This is significant in that we are drawn to the opportunity to leverage symbols that speak to and support the elements of community leadership that undergird our theory of change.

First, the PPS strategic plan and the language that they use, particularly in a willingness to “Partner with the Community in a New Way,” is significant in and of the title itself, as it reflects a symbol of commitment in this day and age to go beyond the traditional concepts of community engagement. We could not be sure whether “community” for the district truly meant parents and community-legitimated residents, or the typical partners in collective impact frames who are often seen as the “other” by community residents. However, to be able to cite the wording that at least the district *appears* to be an organization committed to community leadership when arguing for any affiliation with them in future contexts.

Second, the symbolism of having Errika Fearbry-Jones serve as the executive director of the Superintendent’s Office is a powerful symbol of a commitment to community leadership. Errika’s background as a native graduate of Perry High School, community leader and respected resident, previously serving as both youth policy

director for the mayor and the coordinator for the Gang Free Schools and Community initiative in the school district, sends a powerful symbol of what the superintendent values around community leadership. In circumstances where we had to talk about affiliation with the school district, Errika was a positive symbol of a person for us to point to given our theory of action and effort to maintain integrity around what we believe.

Third, the district's running of the *We Promise* program served also as a powerful symbol of commitment to the value of equity and to the African-American community as a whole. As with the other two areas, it is difficult to be sure how much of an impact the program had toward bolstering GPA or attendance, but it is a very timely and positive symbol in this current time especially with the national attention and initiatives on Black male achievement and President Barack Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* initiative.

Again, whether these symbols translated to effectiveness or represented a depth of what they exuded is not the question in the symbolic frame, what matters is whether they translate to meaning, intention, or potential in the minds of the beholders when associating the symbols with an institution as a whole. Symbols from both organizations contributed to the glue that helped to hold the relationship together along with the human resource frame and some elements of the political frame.

In sum, Errika monitored the human resource, political, and symbolic frames of the work and made decisions that were of low to moderate risk, but beneficial to the district's overarching goal for both effectiveness and perception. In the same way, it appears that we relied heavily on these human resources and symbolic frames, with some but not all alignment in the political frame, to make decisions that benefited our theory of

change without compromising our mission and goal for community legitimacy and sustainability.

We were both careful to draw upon the positives of symbolic frame while being wary of deep partnership in the structural frame. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) again help us to see how this line between symbolic and structural was one that both we and the district were careful not to cross, as they share this dynamic is a much deeper and challenging exercise in influencing an organization to change. They write on this as the difference between the technical and adaptive work that organizations will have to do to make these changes; that it is not as simple as an organizational fix, but has at its root deep beliefs and values that have to shift, which is a longer process. They write:

Remember that when you ask people to do adaptive work, you are asking a lot. You may be asking them to choose between two values, both of which are important to the way they understand themselves. . . You may be asking people to close the distance between their espoused values and their actual behavior. . . Of course, this takes time. Confronting the gaps between our values and behavior—the internal contradictions in our lives and communities—requires going through a period of loss. Adaptive work often demands some disloyalty to our roots”

(Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 92–93)

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR SELF, SITE, & SECTOR**

### *Implications for Site*

The implications stemming from this strategic project for the site of TandemED are numerous, particularly in understanding how to best intersect with a school district within a city. The first broad implication of this experience is that in the early stages of

implementation, the school district should be approached in a very similar way as other organizations that make up the landscape. They are one of the many institutions within the context that could eventually be of value in coalition building to be responsive and supportive of community led campaigns and actions. However, the school district should certainly be one of the stops during the early phases. There are at least two reasons for this.

First, if the school officials have an opportunity to view TandemED as a reasonable actor early, it provides safe cover for persons within the school district such as program managers, principals, and teachers who may at some point later in implementation desire to independently complement the community-led campaign initiative. This past year, we saw numerous emerging examples of this in persons within the district as they became comfortable with integrating the TandemED initiative into their work. In some cases, such as program directors inviting our participation in *We Promise*, the assistant principal opening Allderdice High School for filming, principals scheduling complementary campaign events, or teachers integrating the campaign into their classroom projects, the persons in each scenario saw value and actively engaged without concern. They either were already aware that there was some established supportive relationship with the superintendent's office or at least were not aware of any controversial or opposing public relationship that would work against them politically. The second reason to include the school officials during entry meetings is that it potentially charts a course of relationship building that will cause high ranking officials to be more comfortable in later stages reaching out to TandemED to find ways that they can further bolster the independent community leadership initiative that has a positive

impact upon their own work. Once the initiative begins to build communal steam, the school district leaders themselves would already know who TandemED is and be able to think about ways to be responsive and more inclusive as policies are discussed and educational decisions are made.

The warning, however, in opening the possibility of a relationship with a school district, is that there should not be any agreements that occur with limitations on freedom or flexibility to fully pursue a community led and legitimated effort. Regarding funding, it should only be received if there is clarity about the type of component of the initiative that it can be used toward. Equally important is to not be controlled by other partnerships or philanthropic interests that have a particular ideology that may or may not be reflected in the community's interest. Even in this case of limited restricted funding, still TandemED must be vigilant in ensuring that the terms are both clear and public so that it is not wrongly assumed that TandemED is controlled by the district, so as to not compromise community trustworthiness. This may in fact be the model through which we accomplish our work with the support of school districts in future efforts as they recognize the shared value of our efforts without feeling a need to control the effort. The implications for the sector in this regard will be discussed in the next section. The saving grace for us this year, despite the PPS passing a board resolution that made funds available to us, was that we were in a piloting and learning stage and the language of the resolution validated that. This allowed us to make pivots in our course of action along the way in the name of learning that ensured success without feeling pressure to follow a rigid script or set of limitations. Additionally, we had an advocate in Errika who sincerely desired for us to be successful given our mission.

In moving forward, in order to retain the independence that TandemED requires, our resource acquisition approach must fall into one of two strategies. First, the funds may be solicited from an institution such as a school district, government agency, or foundation that recognizes or believes that the outcomes of an authentic community leadership strategy will align with their own interests and advance their own target outcomes. This strategy will be successful if we persuade these institutions through showcasing our work in the Pittsburgh context (i.e., process, ads, relationship with school district, outcomes), sharing of our theory of action, and forming a trusting relationship with them. The challenge I expect in this approach is the potential hesitancy of such institutions to release full funds to such a project in advance, essentially letting go of all controls. In doing this, they run the risk that the community leadership efforts will choose to be directly opposed to their institution. The second resource strategy is for TandemED to serve as consultants to individual and organizations that we will have confirmed as having true legitimacy in their community, desire to carry out the TandemED initiative on their own, and have access to resources to pay us for guidance. The advantage of this strategy is that consulting allows TandemED to support individuals and organizations to implement the purest form of our model without the attempts from the funding source to compromise our service. The potential downside to this strategy is that the individuals and organizations who attain the funds to pay TandemED for consultation will feel pressure from their own funders not to implement the project in its purest form.

In the case of gaining the support of a high-ranking individual within the district who also had great community legitimacy, I believe that TandemED should be especially attentive to cultivating this relationship for an additional reason. The combination of

these two types of legitimacy – inside district and within the community – is particularly special and valuable. This is valuable in part because, as we argue, people have overwhelmingly bought into a narrative that schools are to be the center of youth development and thus look to school leaders for leadership or blame. This is an opportunity for great leverage. The admonition here, however, is to in no way perpetuate the school-at-the center leadership model, but rather to recognize the starting point of the mindsets of the people who will eventually be able to subscribe to an alternate narrative and model of youth development leadership.

The second overarching implication of this experience that neatly follows is that the best timing to be proactive in deepening a relationship with a school district to complement the community efforts should occur later in the campaign implementation stage. At this time, as the TandemED integration in the community becomes more fully realized, the legitimate community actors can co-lead in establishing the relationship while also adding additional integrity to the formation of a relationship. Secondly, at this stage, for the sake of the school district actors, TandemED does not only have to rely upon a theory or pointing to the work that occurred in another context, but can point to an actual campaign and momentum that is already occurring in the given context.

Though the timing is more ideal at this point, this does mean that a school district will not have the same concerns as initially expressed by PPS. For this reason, the argument that TandemED presents must be refined to take these concerns into account. First, in the argument to the school district TandemED must spend time emphasizing the benefits for the school district in terms of building a relationship with the community more so than in terms of improving student outcomes. The community relationship

building will be of more interest and results are more likely attainable in the short run. There are public relation advantages for a school district leader to be able to make a public statement through support about their seriousness in the area of community engagement. This is especially true for most superintendents and districts in urban settings that struggle with relationships with Black communities.

The second argument that TandemED should emphasize is that of the effort improving student performance, such as grades, attendance, graduation, or performance on high stakes tests. This assumes that there is no community-wide rejection of any of these outcomes from a position of advocacy, in which case TandemED would also not stand behind these outcomes as being of value given the community stance. In sharing the argument for student outcomes and the undergirding theory, this experience has helped me to anticipate the public school leadership concerns that may come up and be proactive in attending to them. First, to offset a concern that teachers are being given a theory that helps them blame parents, the TandemED argument must repeatedly affirm the role of the teacher as critically important. The district must understand that our theory holds that the commitment, skill, and accountability to provide expert and quality instruction is irreplaceable. In fact, our theory holds this more so than the default argument, because we argue that teaching academic content is the absolute primary role of schools, and that the time to focus on this should not be compromised, while ensuring that there is cultural relevance and responsibility at the same time.

Second, to offset the concern that our theory allows for an interpretation that the community and parents are to blame for failure, our argument must repeatedly affirm the current value of parental engagement efforts and to advocate to strengthen the bond



through our framing. The district must understand that our theory holds that parents have already exhibited leadership in many ways and we seek to maximize it. In fact, our theory holds this more so than the default argument because we believe that parents and communities have the most promise in leadership of youth development and that schools must be responsive to their leadership as experts. We advocate no blame, but alternately true recognition of their leadership.

The third overarching implication is that once a relationship is established, TandemED should always be alert about the interests that drive the behavior of school district leaders and be able to anticipate their responses and actions based on these interests. Through the analysis of PPS looking through the lens offered by Bolman and Deal, the following figure best captures the key interests about which TandemED should be aware in its dealings with a school district:

|                                                                      |                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Structural Frame</b></p> <p>Protect Organizational Roles</p>   | <p><b>Human Resource Frame</b></p> <p>Protect Resource Investments</p> |
| <p><b>Political Frame</b></p> <p>Protect Community Relationships</p> | <p><b>Symbolic Frame</b></p> <p>Protect Public Image</p>               |

Figure 1. *Anticipated General School District Priorities while Partnering with TandemED*

Before beginning this project, I sought to test the following theory of action: If I can effectively establish and maintain a positive relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools, we will be more likely to be successful in the implementation of the TandemED

overarching theory. The revised theory of action that I now assert after having the experience of **Leading the Implementation of the TandemED Community Initiative in Relationship with the Pittsburgh Public Schools** is the following: If we implement the TandemED Community Initiative with full fidelity and integrity, then we will have greater success with community ownership and greater potential impetus for institutions, including public schools, to seek ways to be supportive and responsive. This revised theory of action ends by acknowledging the value of responsiveness of institutions including school districts so the next component of change must center on the ability of institutions to reframe their roles and approaches. The implications of this will be captured in the following section, which provides a discussion of what the sector can learn as a result of this project that would allow the community and schools to educate in tandem.

### *Implications for Sector*

The key implication for the sector, which I define here as state and district superintendents, principals, teachers, education pundits, critics, and professors, is the need to invest in a different overarching narrative and set of actions when approaching the problem of urban education. This must begin with asserting the value of community leadership, intelligence, and ingenuity. The sector must recognize that the reality of persistent poor student outcomes is a symptom of false assumptions, and that focusing on greater funding, improved teacher effectiveness, or increased wrap-around services alone will cause minimal improvement. Additionally, the sector must recognize that the leadership needed to overhaul educational outcomes of Black youth can not be centered from within the school, and certainly not through conventional frameworks for parent and

community engagement. The sector must begin to explore what it means to be a school that assumes and anticipates community leadership and is courageous in being responsive to this leadership as a means to achieve greater outcomes despite the pressure of the status quo. The sector must begin to explore what it means to have the community as the driver of change and take the risk of getting out of the way enough for community leadership to vitalize more seamlessly.

In order to make these leaps, first individuals and institutions within the sector must reevaluate their beliefs. First, the revised beliefs must acknowledge that Black communities have the ability to activate parents and families and that they already possess the capability and care to lead youth development. This belief is in stark contrast to wrong assumptions that the school as an institution must be the replacement for parents and communities who do not care. Secondly, the revised beliefs must acknowledge that Black communities possess valuable assets and resources. This is contrast to belief systems that hold that these communities are only reservoirs for failure. This does not recognize the great leadership and love that rests within these communities that is either already or active or at the cusp of being released. Third, the sector must believe that Black communities can unite under a shared cause for a shared outcome. Too often, a picture is painted that members of Black communities are only at odds with each other and cannot work together in a unified manner. However, there is past and present evidence to the contrary of this view and the sector would do well to recognize this and rely upon unified action within the Black community as an aligned effort to improve educational outcomes.

The second overarching implication for this work is that the sector must go further in being affirming and supportive of community-initiated action to support Black youth. These actions especially include initiatives that spend a great deal of time promoting a truthful narrative about positive identity in African American communities. Heretofore, such communal groups and their messaging have been seen as threatening to the status quo. There has historically been societal aggression against Black communities when they assert their own leadership and assets, even when independent of comparisons to other ethnic groups. The education sector must however begin to understand that its greatest ally in the effort to educate African-American students are the very people, organizations, and initiatives that our society has deemed as being the most threatening.

The concrete implication of this truth is that institutions within the sector must publicly affirm these groups and initiatives when interacting with their existing stakeholders and seek alliances and partnerships with them. This must only be approached with a sincere desire to be responsive to such community leadership as opposed to the typical engagement strategies of only working with them on the terms of the district leadership agenda or selectively choosing which leaders to listen identify its legitimate representatives. This type of approach is in further contrast to the current dominant practices of only conceiving initiatives from within the district and then seeking the Black community support them, leaving the school again at the center of youth development. This means even extending to outsourcing and financially supporting initiatives that have been traditionally previously centrally funded or overseen by the school department and still sharing accountability for the outcomes. In this same way, institutions within the sector must publicly take a position on issues and debates that are

controversial with a slant toward affirming community assets and the capacity for community leadership. The courage needed to make these shifts in the sector should come from delving into the excitement of taking a new stance and reversing an existing frame in such a way that there is a chance that it holds the key to changing the life outcomes of Black youth.

Additionally, the courage for institutions in the sector can be drawn from possibility of attaining improved learning environments with engaged, motivated, purpose-filled students, and energized teachers who focus more squarely on academic instruction. Secondly, this approach offers greater sustainability, whereby the leadership of change is from within the community instead of from within often disconnected bureaucracies. Finally, this type of reframing offers superior accountability whereby the onus and responsibility for success is not levied through state accountability systems but rather through community expectations and accountability that may very well far exceed any measure of success that a state or a state test has to offer.

### *Implications for Self*

I have learned a great deal about myself as a leader through this project. First, I learned that there are two modes that I tend to work from and they are in sharp contrast to each other. One of the modes that I work from is operational, with a focus on details and implementation. In this mode, I am extremely task oriented, less relational, and prefer to work independently unless collaboration or coalition is absolutely necessary. Another mode that I tend to operate in is hands-off, whereby I completely desire to allow others to lead while I give feedback and direction as they work on a particular piece of work. This mode is enjoyable for me because it allows me to be the most creative in thinking through

how the many parts of the overarching work fit together and how to help individuals and teams reach a set of goals. This experience helped me to clearly observe myself operating in these two different modes and gain a real-time understanding of when I was operating out of one or the other. Moving forward in leadership, I believe that the implications of this experience will be that I can now move even further to not only recognize the mode out of which I work in the moment, but to be completely intentional about which mode is the most appropriate for me in an organization at a given time. I also have learned to embrace both of these modes at different times and that in doing so it allows for others in the organization to also be able to exercise different modes and gifts in leadership.

During this journey of launching and piloting TandemED, I have also learned that it is absolutely critical for me as a leader to take risks without having all of the answers. I have found that each step of this journey has opened a new door or a new connection that would not have otherwise been explored had the initial risk not been taken. I have also found that it is through taking risks and standing on an idea that one is able to attract other likeminded individuals who are looking for a similar initiative or frame of thought to which they can attach or support. One of my most challenging moments in the residency came in October when it became clear that although we had a budding relationship with the school district, we had not yet established any anchor institution with whom to connect our initiative and that could serve as operational support for our work. It was during this time that we had numerous meetings with individuals and organizations, some who rejected us and others who fully embraced us. It was the individuals and organizations that were likeminded and saw mutual interests in working

with us who became our anchor. Some of these individuals we also invited to join our steering committee, and as a result we had an anchor support group as well as individual actors in the city that we knew would be supportive as we needed it. The anchor came through sharing our vision and philosophy explicitly and allowing people to choose if they wanted to support us or not, but at least they were clear on our thinking and intentions. The faith and courage for me to continue to believe that an anchor would soon be on its way for our initiative also came from remembering leadership efforts in past circumstances where there were always likeminded individuals who would rally around a project or a vision as long they sensed a level of integrity, saw value in the project for their own interests, and that felt valued in the process for their contribution. This played out in the Pittsburgh context and our steering committee became that group of supportive and likeminded individuals.

Another implications of this experience for me is that I should always be intentional in assessing the behavior and interests of an organization through at least the four frames that Bolman and Deal outline in *Reframing Organizations*—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. This intentionality will help me to not get stuck in thinking one way and miss the many dynamics that will inevitable be in play in navigating organizational relationships. In the same way, this process caused me to reflect upon the framework presented by Glenn Singleton (2006) in *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. In this work, Singleton presents a *Courageous Conversations Compass* that in part helps to analyze the dynamics at play in conversations, where the four quadrants of the compass include thinking, feeling, believing, and doing. I recognized that I tend to focus much of my

conversation in every quadrant except for the “Feeling,” which according to his framework would place me in difficult conversations with people located in this quadrant when I am in a “Thinking” orientation. However, this is where I have spent a lot of my energy in the last three years especially in trying to find a theory and solution to improve the outcomes for Black youth. However, in this I recognize that I have been ignoring a major part of my own emotional experience as well as missing the opportunity to connect with others as they express the pain or the frustration of either being a Black male, the experiences of Black males in this country, or the Black community as a whole.

This also played out as I presenting my argument of the theory of change to the school district. Again, I found myself primarily in the Thinking quadrant, believing that I had a valuable theoretical framework that would help PPS to achieve greater student outcomes. They, on the other hand, were operating out of the Feeling quadrant, whereby they felt the fear of condemnation of critique and community perception if they were to operate differently or affirm potentially misinterpreted modes of community engagement. I was in no position at the time to operate from the feeling quadrant from which they communicated, as I was so entrenched in the thinking associated with theory, which helped to further explain why the presented theory of change was met with resistance. The implications for both of these examples are that I must allow my own emotions to have a chance to be expressed and met with support, but also to be able to connect and feel empathy for the many feelings of both joy and pain that are associated with the work of community building.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly to me, this experience has placed my religious ministerial background and work into greater focus. I now see clearly that my



ministry also includes the domain of psychological healing. This aspect brings new meaning to me and implications for the Black church of the scripture, Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1,2, New International Version). In this scripture, the reference to the “renewing of the mind” is the central action in being able to approach one’s orientation in the world differently. This is exactly what the campaigns have tried to accomplish and this adds a spiritual element to this very work, which is critically important in making the tremendous leaps that are poised to happen in the Black community. Whether through public speaking or preaching, writing or sitting on panels, I am enthused in the next phase of my personal trajectory to frame messages that help people change mindsets and see the critical importance of changing mindsets as a key tool for social change. I am additionally enthused to be supportive of individuals and communities be able to translate reframed mindsets into unified communal actions that have sustainable positive impact for the betterment of Black communities in America in the effort to provide love and compassion for all of humankind.

## **CONCLUSION**

In reviewing the landscape in education reform, we see that one of the assumptions in play is that of the public school as the primary leader of youth development, including the center of identity and purpose formation. Many have challenged this notion and completely shifted youth out of the public school system into

settings where they can fully control all of their development, including that of the academic. Even as these approaches have shown benefit for Black youth, still the abundance of Black youth are still enrolled in and part of traditional public school districts. TandemED as an entity recognizes this present day reality and offers a solution that repositions the Black community as the collective leader in providing its youth with the necessary identity and purpose formation, steeped in a realization of the rich cultural assets inherent with each of them.

The opportunity to take this concept and translate it into the action of organizing and facilitating youth and communities in designing and delivering this content took root this past year in Pittsburgh, PA. Here TandemED entered the landscape, gaining local support from community leaders, foundations, and organizations who held an aligned interest in the outcomes of Black youth achievement. As one of these entities was the Pittsburgh Public Schools, it offered TandemED a clear opportunity to discover the nature of the general relationship and dynamics that might exist both in this relationship and in the case of engaging another school district. The key interactions that helped to provide points of learning came from initial conversations and meetings to determine the nature and interests in working together as well as through ongoing communication in reaction to public decisions that TandemED made in the community itself. The results were such that a relationship between TandemED and PPS persisted throughout this phase to provide peripheral points of intersection.

We saw the school district respond through showing willingness to have the executive director of the superintendent's office join our community-based steering committee and recommend and network others to be apart of that effort. We witnessed

the superintendent's willingness to spend time in conversation with the youth participants in the TandemED Leadership Academy. And we received both in-person support from the superintendent's office in the creation of one of the youth-designed ads as well the public desire to be named as a partner to TandemED in our press release. Through analysis, using the four-point framework on organizational functioning offered by Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal, I was able to understand why the relationship formed and functioned in the way that it did.

The structural frame, which includes an orientation of organizations finding comfort in working through established roles, help to explain why there was initial challenge in finding a way for PPS to partner with our work in a deep way without being tied to the existing structures and roles at the district and school levels. Additionally, our theory held the possibility in their eyes to be perceived as both a way to shift responsibility from the superintendent as well as the expectations of quality instruction and ownership of student outcomes from the teachers. Likewise, recognizing the limited capacity and time to move on a theory deeply situated within community leadership foiled any possibility that the TandemED work would be a sub-component of the district initiatives. Another element that had the effect of keeping the two organizations from making initial strides was found in the political frame where a protection of community relationships were of utmost importance to the district, and again there was concern about the political ramifications of adopting a theory that could be potentially interpreted as a blaming the problem on a lack of leadership in the Black community. Furthermore, the political frame helped to shed light on the concern that the principals would have about community members believing that they had contracted the work of community

engagement to a third party organization. While these challenging elements existed in the political frame, the frame also helped me to understand which elements of our action and behaviors were of particular interest to the school district. They were particularly drawn to later opportunities to have their support for the initiative publicly recognized given the authentic community based orientation from which we launched, namely being mentioned as a supporter in public forums.

The human resource frame gave insight to the value that both organizations had to each other. The school district, for not much of an investment, became connected with two highly motivated persons who were seeking innovative methods to build community leadership in an area that impacted educational outcomes. And TandemED gained an opportunity to monitor and analyze how such an relationship is best managed during authentic community leadership initiatives. Similarly, the symbolic frame, which relies heavily on images as levers for leadership, gave TandemED's reasonable level of comfort of being associated with a district. This is found in their claim to desire to partner with community in a new way in their strategic plan, sustained the *We Promise* Program, and publicly supported the inclusion of an Equity Advisory Panel in their work. The symbolic frame shed light on the district's responsiveness to perceptions of TandemED's integration into the community that they hoped to engage, symbolized through elements such as the community-legitimated steering committee we had formed as well as the number of people who participated across Pittsburgh in the creation of the *Black Is Pittsburgh* advertisement.

After analysis, I found implications of the work that included the realization that while a relationship with a school district is valuable at the onset of city entry; the greater

value is found in establishing community legitimacy and allowing the initiative to gain a foothold. At that point, TandemED is in better position alongside the community members who will have also assumed ownership of the project, be able to interact with a school district. This became evident later in the project upon identifying various avenues opening to integrate the campaign into the school system through actors within or associated with the school district who saw value in their participation. The most important aspect of establishing the early relationship is to not accept any funding or resources that come with any restrictions on the movement of TandemED within the communal space. And at the point where a partnership is warranted, the argument for working together is best presented in stating its value for the school district in improving community partnerships and engagement. The secondary argument to make is in the impact that such an initiative will have on student outcomes, such as grades, attendance, graduation rates, and performance on high stakes tests. However, within the argument for either of these, it is important to affirm the role of the teacher as a necessary element and one who is fully responsible for quality instruction as well as framing the role of the parent as a valuable partner whose strengthened involvement is key for the school's success. These affirmations help to ease fears from the district that the initiative's messaging will serve to decrease teachers' view of their accountability or send a message of blame upon the parents or community for less than desirable outcomes.

In moving forward with this initiative in Pittsburgh, this strategic project and focus has helped me to be very cognizant of the interests and concerns of the Pittsburgh Public Schools and how the relationships evolved with individuals within and affiliated with the district. Furthermore, in the expansion of this initiative to another city, I will

include the school district as one of the organizations that I meet during entry, but will make an assessment on the way and speed with which I would consider working with them after exploring the context, leadership, and community capacity. My goal will be to at least have them be clear on what TandemED plans to do given that it does cut into the area of work that they and even people in the community have more recently and completely given over to the school district. This goal is to provide cover for later individuals within the school district who want to support the effort as well as to set the stage for reconnecting in later stages of implementation alongside community members who have joined in with the initiative. If for some reason there is no interest or rejection from the school district, it absolutely does not preclude the need or possibility for community action and youth leadership development activity. The school district will have the option to reassess their stance once they learn and see more about how the initiative is progressing within the city and youth and community voice emerge.

The implications that I drew for the sector as a whole centered on its need to recognize that there are powerful strengths in the community and that community leadership is a source from which to draw the most valuable attributes of identity and purpose that dictate much of what happens within classrooms, and ultimately the success of the schools and districts in meeting shared goals of educational outcomes. I recommend that schools move to focus on being responsive to community leadership by reassessing their assumptions and beliefs and re-positioning themselves to seek out, affirm, and partner with indigenous efforts within communities to guide Black youth. The courage and impetus for reframing to this approach is found in the fact that a shift that affirms the brilliance and leadership in the Black community versus fearing it may very

well be the key to true partnership and harmony in learning and teaching. The implications for self that I drew from this work was a confirmation that a major part of my call in the field of education, as well in the field of ministry, is that of affirming the cultural identity and brilliance of all humankind with special attention at this time on Black youth and communities. I also recognized prior to and through this process that this type of work and affirmation requires attributes of integrity, perseverance, and risk taking. These attributes are particularly salient when advancing this type of agenda through an entity that has to co-exist in the context of organizations, businesses, politics, and the remnants of history that have ingrained mindsets and deeply held assumptions and beliefs about who and how community leadership is manifested. Yet, this is the work to which I have been called and I am indeed fortunate, blessed, and thrilled to continue.

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## Appendix A

*Excerpt of TandemED Business Plan*

**TandemED<sup>TM</sup>**  
*Education by Communities in Tandem with Schools.*

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## FOUNDERS

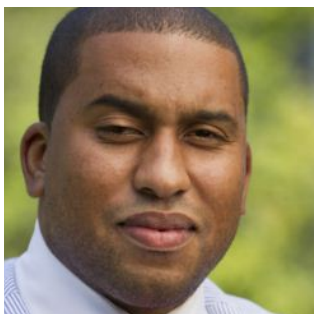
### Brian C.B. Barnes



**Background:** Middle School Math Teacher, School Leader, Youth Programs and Ministries Director, Youth Pastor, Schools and Community/Faith-Based Partnerships Coordinator (Boston Public Schools)

- *Doctor of Education Leadership candidate '15, Harvard University*
- *M.Div., Andover Newton Theological School*
- *Ed.M. Teaching and Leading in Urban Education, Harvard University*
- *B.S. Mathematics, Morehouse College*

### Dorian Burton



**Background:** Educational Agency Strategy Advisor, Community Organization Director (Stand for Children), Program Director (Ed Pioneers), External Relations and Strategic Initiatives Advisor (Harlem Children's Zone)

- *Doctor of Education Leadership candidate '15, Harvard University*
- *M.Ed. Higher Education Administration, New York University*
- *B.A. Sociology, Penn State University*

### Tokunbo Adeshiyan



**Background:** Business Development Consultant (Accenture), Software Development (IBM)

- *MBA, Duke University*
- *M.S. Computer Science, Vanderbilt University*
- *B.S. Computer Science, Tennessee State University*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### What We Do

TandemED organizes African-American communities to take up the leadership of youth development and the provision of feelings of efficacy and purpose of African-American students in public schools. Based on our analysis of the history of the social and educational experiences of African Americans in this country, the current landscape of urban education reform approaches and conversations, and our varied experiences in working in the field, we have developed a theory of action and approach to ensure that African-American communities and youth in public schools are engaged in learning, and additionally lead the efforts of improving school quality and gathering of resources to mitigate the effects of poverty on learning. TandemED seeks excellent school indicators (i.e., graduation rates, attendance, achievement and attainment measures); excellent social outcomes (i.e., reduced crime, drug use, incarceration, teen pregnancy), and vibrant, empowered, efficacious, and prosperous African-American communities (i.e., increased employment, home ownership, financial assets, health).

### How We Do It

TandemED serves African-American communities within major metropolitan areas that are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and unsatisfactory educational outcomes. Our process unfolds in four key stages and is inclusive of all actors in cities who have an interest in the advancement of youth and student achievement for African-American students. The stages are:

- **Organizing** African-American communities and youth to collectively lead in youth development.
- **Facilitating** a process whereby communities and youth collectively design and ratify vision, agenda, cultural and historical narratives for efficacy in learning, and purposes for engaging learning in public schools.
- **Aligning**, through relationship building, the complementary resources of schools, community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, colleges and universities, government agencies, philanthropies, etc., to the community-developed vision and agenda.
- **Delivering** the sustaining messaging designed by the community through a variety of communication venues, including those in media, technology, and community interactions both formal and non-formal.

## PROBLEM & OPPORTUNITY

African-American communities have a rich history of perseverance and greatness in our country, and at present, there are many assets and strengths embodied in its people and institutions. Examples of success within the African-American community abound. According to recent Census Data, 4.5 million African-Americans possess bachelor's degrees or higher.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, Black women enrolled in college at higher rates than any other racial group, male or female.<sup>2</sup> Illustrating the community's economic strength, 110,000 Black households have net worth over \$1 million.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Black-owned businesses grew at three times the rate of United States firms from 2002-2007.<sup>4</sup>

Yet too often, the statistical narrative for African-Americans that is too often pronounced and too widely accepted is one of a community steeped in poverty. The growing population of African-Americans in U.S. cities correlates with a dramatic rise in the levels of poverty and unemployment. Today, 35% of the Black population within the United States is struggling with the challenges of poverty.<sup>5</sup> The unemployment rate for Blacks is also consistently twice that of their White counterparts: the average rate of unemployment in White communities is 6.7%, whereas that in the Black communities is 13.4%.<sup>6</sup>

And in the area that represents to many a way out of intergenerational poverty – education – we are continuing to see statistics and outcomes that do not point to a significantly improved trajectory for achievement (as measured by standardized test scores). The dropout rate among African-Americans is still significantly higher than the nationwide rate (8% and 7.4% in 2008 and 2010, respectively<sup>7</sup>).

The ideas for changing this trajectory have been significant and have landed primarily in two areas: school quality and wraparound services. Most efforts to reverse these outcomes rest upon improvements for urban schools (e.g., teacher quality, curriculum, resources, extended day, etc.). More recently, there has been an increased shift to recognizing the effects of poverty on learning, and many wraparound and basic needs services, centered in schools, are administered to youth and families. While these efforts have made some gains and improvement, still we have not witnessed the transformative outcomes for high achievement that we are seeking.

Seeking that dramatic transformation for youth, we ask an essential question: whether our communities and youth feel invested in public schools and see education as highly valuable and relevant for their goals and aspirations. The case for such a question is found in research on motivation. In their writing “Student Motivation: An Overlooked Piece of School Reform,” authors Usher and Kober (2011) assert,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.jbhe.com/news\\_views/64\\_degrees.html](http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/64_degrees.html)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/2011/tables.html>

<sup>3</sup> Daniels, L. (2008). *Last Chance: The Political Threat to Black America*. New York: Perseus Books.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/business\\_ownership/cb11-24.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/business_ownership/cb11-24.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.pewresearch.org/files/2013/08/FT\\_13.08.202\\_BlackWhiteUnemployment.png](http://www.pewresearch.org/files/2013/08/FT_13.08.202_BlackWhiteUnemployment.png)

<sup>7</sup> [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11\\_116.asp?referrer=report](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_116.asp?referrer=report)

“Many experts on motivation emphasize that actions to address children’s beliefs about learning and foster supportive parenting must begin early and cannot be accomplished by schools alone.”

Therefore, instead of asking, from a deficit stance, what’s wrong with African-American communities or students who are not engaged in school and have higher drop out rates, we should instead ask the question: How is societal framing of school, particularly in urban education for African-American students, problematic? In a similar vein, Lani Guineer (2005), using the metaphor of the canary used in a coal mine as a barometer for toxicity, points out that we should not focus primarily on the canary when she sounds the warning. Instead, we should examine the toxic culture that causes the canary’s urgent cry, asserting “if we begin to examine the structure in which the canary is gasping for air, we can fix the atmosphere in the mine so that our democracy as a whole can not only survive, but thrive” (p.31).

The problem in urban education reform is that we have started the conversation about problems and solutions with an assumption that the public school in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century is the institution that is both capable and rightly situated to lead the charge for youth development for African-American youth. This view purports that public schools can be the key leader in providing purpose, engagement, role modeling, civic education, social and emotional supports, in addition to the work of leading the instruction of academic content, the role that they are most poignantly looked upon to fulfill.

Whether knowingly or unknowingly, reliance on school quality and wraparound services to transform youth’s lives mirrors an assumption that African-American communities as a collective cannot take the lead in youth development. Interestingly, in other settings and communities the schools are accustomed to being responsive and accountable to the leadership of the parents and communities of students, and there are even occasional complaints about parents and families becoming too involved or seeking to assert too much leadership. In these situations, the school is viewed as but one of many vehicles in the communal space for developing young people.

Why is it that we have denied the possibility of this same paradigm in our urban settings and when thinking about African American families and communities? Is it that we have given up any hope or even possibility that such a community could ever be the lead of such youth development? Do we think that it is impossible for the paradigm to be reversed so that communities engage schools and parents involve teachers? Our current solutions are deployed from an orientation that does not provide for the possibilities of leadership from our communities in youth development.

The opportunity that lies before us is to disrupt the assumptions, the current narrative of education

**The opportunity that lies before us is to disrupt the assumptions, the current narrative of education reform, and to position African-American communities at the leadership of youth development.**



reform, and position African-American communities at the leadership of the charge of youth development and education. Largely untold is the counter-narrative of a long and lasting history of African-American leadership, educational attainment, intellectual success, and economic strength. TandemED reframes the narrative by unifying the leadership of the African-American community to build on its strengths and take the lead in youth education.

The community voice brings several unique gifts to the conversation:

- Cultural narratives
- Norms and values for youth and community behavior
- Purposes for learning in general and school
- Standards of excellence and shared accountability

TandemED functions from the belief that we must rebuild an apparatus within communities to be the voice and leadership of youth development and position the public school as responsive to this new apparatus, versus being a surrogate for it. This will allow us to provide the majority of youth who enter public schools with the beliefs of efficacy rooted in their cultural and historical narrative and the purpose for engaging learning in the public school. TandemED sees this as a key missing component in a collective impact strategy that includes improving school quality and offering wraparound supports and services for schools, students, and families.

When the apparatus of community leadership is in place, it will result in highly motivated, efficacious and purpose-filled students engaging the learning in schools. Until we make this stride, we are bound to spin our wheels in education reform and only celebrate mild and sporadic improvements instead of the goal of transformation of outcomes for African-American youth.

The time for transformation is now.

## **TANDEMED ASSERTION:**

**motivated and purpose-filled students  
+ school quality & wraparound services**

---

**= maximized student achievement and  
attainment**

## **MISSION**

TandemED unites African-American communities around leading the educational development of youth, strengthening them to become purpose-filled, motivated, and self-directed adults.

## **VISION**

TandemED envisions vibrant, thriving African-American communities with a unified narrative about their rich history, present opportunity, and sustainability into the future.

# THEORY OF ACTION

## Key Beliefs

The key beliefs undergirding our theory of action and logic model are as follows:

- African-American communities and youth are brilliant and capable of learning and leadership
- Quality public schooling is valuable to African-American communities for intergenerational uplift and opportunity
- There exist authentic allies to the African-American community and the cause of uplift

## Theory of Action

**If** we organize African-American communities around reclaiming the collective leadership of youth development, and

**If** we facilitate that community through a design process to customize a vision for collective youth development, an agenda, and the corresponding necessary messages, and

**If** we align partners, resources, and policies to fund and complement these efforts, and

**If** we support the delivery of that customized content through both formal and informal delivery systems (i.e. media, technology, interactions)

**Then** young people will be motivated to engage in schools and will live purpose-filled lives.

TandemED supports local communities to self-design and deliver educational content that will instill youth with purpose and motivation as they engage in learning in public schools. Once TandemED arrives to a city and has assembled a city-based staff, TandemED engages the local community in programs and activities that the community members will ultimately lead on their own. The service offerings are executed during four key phases of engagement: organize, facilitate, align, and deliver.

## TANDEMED LOGIC MODEL

| Activities                                                                                           | Outputs                                                                                                                      | Outcomes                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Organize and unite community leadership, renew mindsets of efficacy, draw on internal assets.</b> |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                        |
| Site selection and local team entry                                                                  | Staffed neighborhood; asset maps; needs assessment                                                                           | Recognition of community assets; local staff poised to begin organizing                                                                                |
| Relationship and trust building with city/community leaders/stakeholders                             | Meetings; meeting minutes; rosters; testimonials; commitments; articulation of TandemED mission and approach                 | Stakeholders support TandemED's work; willing to help find and endorse participants for Leadership Academy; trust and awareness among all stakeholders |
| TandemED Organizing Academy                                                                          | Established and trained lead organizing group (50 people)                                                                    | Skills in community organizing, policy, and advocacy; knowledge of urban education; mindsets of agency and service leadership                          |
| Community Organizing                                                                                 | Events; critical mass of people; community roster; inventory of internal resources                                           | Collective understanding of leadership efficacy and purpose; willingness to begin design process; increased community engagement                       |
| <b>Facilitate the community's self-design of educational content that drives youth development.</b>  |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                        |
| Collective Visioning                                                                                 | Community vision for youth education                                                                                         | Collective ownership of youth educational outcomes; shared values and purpose                                                                          |
| Content Design                                                                                       | Content and programming with frameworks: cultural and historical narratives, values, mores, goals, and purpose for education | Shared understanding of vision, cultural and historical narrative, mores/norms/behavior, purpose, goals                                                |
| Convene Actors                                                                                       | Shared implementation plan; resource investment                                                                              | Mindset of servant leadership; responsiveness to community's educational objectives                                                                    |

| <b>Activities</b>                                                                         | <b>Outputs</b>                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Outcomes</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Align policy, resources, and community responsiveness.</b>                             |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Resource and Policy Alignment                                                             | Sufficient resources; secured policies                                                                                                                         | Responsiveness of funders, policy makers, government to community's objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Deliver and implement the youth development content through innovative approaches.</b> |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Delivery Design                                                                           | Articulated delivery plans: media, interactions, formal learning                                                                                               | Collective ownership of youth educational outcomes; shared understanding of role in delivery                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Delivery Implementation                                                                   | Media campaign; quantity and quality of interactions; learning hubs established<br><br>Student attendance and online activity; student-directed learning plans | Quality interactions in the community; shifted narrative about educational leadership; Increased youth confidence in ability to achieve and motivation to engage in schools<br><br>Self-directed and motivated learners; community members involved as learning facilitators and mentorship boards |

## **Impact**

- 1) Improved school indicators: graduation rates, attendance, achievement and attainment measures.
- 2) Improved social outcomes: reduced crime, drug use, incarceration, teen pregnancy; increased employment, home ownership, financial assets, health.
- 3) Vibrant, empowered, efficacious, prosperous African-American communities.

Appendix B

*Steering Committee Agendas and Plans*

TandemED Agenda | 2014

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**TandemED Steering Committee Meeting Agenda: 11/5/2014**

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**Prayer, Welcome, and Introduction** 6:00 – 6:15

**Strategic Update:** 6:15 – 6:25

**Strategy Breakout Sessions: First Round**

- Build Youth-Led Campaign Base with BMLDI and As One United: 6:25 – 6:40
- Build Steering Committee and Coalition to support Campaign for Black Youth Advancement
- Implement Black Youth Advancement Campaign:

**First Round Report Back** 6:40 – 7:00

**Strategy Breakout Sessions: Second Round** 7:00 – 7:30

**Second Round Report Back** 7:30 – 7:50

**Plus Delta** 7:50 – 7:55

**Next Steps and Closing** 7:55 – 8:00

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**Steering Sub-Committee Members: Build Youth-Led Campaign Base with BMLDI and As One United**

1. J.E. Gamble
2. Norlex Belma
3. Brandi Taylor

**Steering Sub-Committee Members: Build Coalition to support Campaign for Black Youth Advancement**

1. Maria Searcy
2. Ryan Scott
3. Sharnay Hearn

**Steering Sub-Committee Members: Implement Black Youth Advancement Campaign:**

1. Jonnet Solomon
2. Jason Rivers
3. Michael Quigley
4. Will Thompkins
5. Dontae Robinson

**Steering Committee Meeting**  
**@Young Men and Women's African Heritage Association**  
**Wednesday, December 17, 2014**  
**3:00 – 4:30pm (90 min)**

**Agenda**

**I. Check-In / Connections (How are you? What's happening?)**  
**(5 min)**

**II. Review Overarching Theory of Action - "In and Out"**  
**(3 min)**

(Mindset Shift → Asset-Based Internal Action → Unified External Action)

**III. Review Norms, Discussion, and Voting Method**  
**(2 min)**

(FIST/means "I'm for it!!" ---- THREE/FOUR means "Not for it, I'll share why" --- FIVE means "I block!!")

**IV. Review Campaign Action Plan and Resources (See Action Plan Attachment) (30 min)**

Discussion: Does this action plan help us to move efficiently through designing and executing the campaign? How do we best utilize the education and achievement based financial resources available for the campaign? What modifications or changes need to be made now? (See Action Plan + Appendix F)

**V. Make Key Decisions**  
**(40 min)**

**a. Youth Leadership Sessions (Appendix A)**

- i. Confirm dates (in meeting)
- ii. Confirm numbers of participants (in meeting)
- iii. Determine whether we do youth prizes (in meeting)
- iv. Finalize participants and teams (outside meeting – Brandi, Norlex)
- v. Determine additional location and transportation (outside meeting – Brandi, Norlex)

**b. Youth Leaders Collaborative Formation (Appendix B)**

- i. Collect youth leader and group nominations (in meeting)
  - ii. Follow up on planning (outside meeting - Jason, JE)
- c. Broad Coalition Gathering Meeting (Appendix C)**
  - i. Determine date for coalition gathering (in meeting)
  - ii. Follow up on planning (outside meeting – Maria, Ryan, Sharnay)
- d. Steering Committee Individual Recruiting (Appendix D)**
  - i. Determine three people you will reach out to coalesce around the work (outside meeting - All)
- e. Campaign Delivery (Appendix E)**
  - i. Draft timing, content, and repetition of community forums\* (inside meeting)  
\*pending earlier discussion
  - ii. Review campaign design resources and delivery methods (outside meeting – Jonnet, Michael)
- f. Additional Components Needed**
  - i. Evaluation Support w/ Delancy (recommendation: Michael)
  - ii. Social Media Publicity Support (recommendation: Sharnay)
  - iii. Documentation of Process Support (recommendation: JE)
  - iv. Key Assistant Ambassadors to Interested Org/Institution Types (recommendation: Each)
    - 1. Maria – Parents
    - 2. Norlex - Businesses / Entertainment
    - 3. Michael – Colleges/ Universities
    - 4. Dontae – Youth
    - 5. Ryan – Youth Groups
    - 6. Brandi – Faith Based Institutions
    - 7. JE – Non Profits
    - 8. Jason – Schools
    - 9. Sharnay – Government
    - 10. Jonnet – Cultural and Advocacy Groups

**VI. Send Off – Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
(10 min)**



## Campaign Action Plan Dec. 2014 – April 2015

**Campaign Action Plan Objective:** The objective of this action plan is to spark and coordinate a citywide campaign targeting our Black community ages 12 – 26 that (1) rewrites the negative narrative about our youth and community and (2) lays the foundation for internal and external collective visioning action to maximize our community assets.

**Campaign Theory of Action:** Our theory of action is *If* we create a campaign to positively affect the mindset of our community to recognize our assets, *Then* our community will be poised to create and implement a collective vision and action plan that (1) deploys internal community assets and (2) gains public resources and responsiveness to the action plan.

### Action Overview and Timeline:

| Campaign           | Key Activities                                                                                                                             | Timing                           |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Campaign Design    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Campaign Leadership Sessions (6)</li> <li>• Expanded Youth Leaders Collaborative</li> </ul> | Dec '14 – Feb '15<br><br>Jan '15 |
| Coalition Building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steering Committee Individual Recruiting</li> <li>• Broad Coalition Gathering Event</li> </ul>    | Dec'14 – Feb '15<br><br>Feb'15   |
| Campaign Delivery  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign Delivery</li> </ul>                                                                      | March'15 –<br>Apr'15             |

### Activities Descriptions:

|                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Youth Leadership Sessions</b><br/><br/>(Brandi, Norlex)</p> | <p><b>Objective:</b> The objectives of the Youth Campaign Leadership Sessions are as follows:<br/>           (1) To present the problem of a negative narrative of the African-American community found in marketing and media and used to exploit youth and communities.<br/>           (2) To prepare youth with the skills to combat this negative narrative through the use of branding, marketing, and community organizing skills toward their own design of a citywide positive narrative campaign.</p> <p><b>Attached (Appendix A)</b></p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Description</li> <li>• Follow-Up To Do List</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p><b>Expanded Youth Leaders Collaborative</b><br/>(Jason, JE)</p>                         | <p><b>Objective:</b> To collaborate with the youth leaders, organizations, and participants who are most closely aligned with the branding/marketing/campaign idea to support campaign delivery.</p> <p><b>Attached: (Appendix B)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning To-Do List</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Steering Committee Individual Recruiting</b><br/>(All)</p>                           | <p><b>Objective:</b> To utilize our steering committee networks and relationships to gain the commitment of individuals and organizations to provide resources to support the delivery of the youth campaign (e.g., infrastructure, resources, love encouragement)</p> <p><b>Attached (Appendix C)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steering committee names and initial contacts organizer</li> <li>• Sample email to invite initial contacts to support</li> <li>• Draft one-page document for recruitment of larger coalition of support</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Broad Coalition Gathering Meeting</b><br/>(Maria, Ryan, Sharnay)</p>                 | <p><b>Objective:</b> To bring together leaders and actors from around the city to join or further engage in the work of providing resources, infrastructure, love, and encouragement for the execution of the campaign (i.e., charitable individuals, peers/parents/families, faith-based institutions, public schools, government, non-profit organizations, colleges/universities, entertainers, businesses)</p> <p><b>Attached (Appendix D)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning To-Do List</li> </ul>                                         |
| <p><b>Campaign Delivery</b><br/>(Design/Venues TBD)<br/><br/>(Jonnet, Michael, Dontae)</p> | <p><b>Objective:</b> To deliver the youth and community designed campaign in the city using baseline marketing strategies as well as innovative and creative venues determined by the youth and community</p> <p><b>Attached: (Appendix F)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample campaign delivery budget</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| Design (TBD – consult by Delancy Bennett) | Delivery (consult by Delancy Bennett, Ph.D.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Television Advertisement</li> <li>• Local Radio Advertisement</li> <li>• Billboard Advertisement Space</li> <li>• Billboard Advertisement Design</li> <li>• Local Transportation Advertisement (i.e., Bus Wraps)</li> <li>• Local Magazine</li> <li>• Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)</li> <li>• Press Releases</li> <li>• Celebrity Spokesperson</li> <li>• Documentary</li> </ul> |

**Campaign Resources Needed (Baseline):**

**Available Resources:**

Pittsburgh Public Schools (August 2014) - Amount: \$20,000

Summary: Slated for learning new approach to parent and family involvement in a way that intersects with learning outcomes for youth, and targets Northside)

“ . . . These relationships will be key in assisting the District in our efforts with the Whole Child Whole Community Plan: Partner with the Community in a New Way. This pilot effort will allow the District to gain new insights on engagement strategies to reach parents that have not responded to traditional methods. The primary goal of TandemED’s work will be to strengthen relationships and to unite communities through education thus increasing academic achievement and having ALL our students graduate Promise Ready . . . These funds will only be used to support TandemED’s engagement activities (meeting locations, meals, materials, etc.).” (PPS Board Resolution August 2014)

Heinz Foundation (November 2014) - Amount: \$125,000

Summary: Slated for youth organizing and campaign that focuses on the intersection with learning outcomes for youth, and targets East Liberty, Homewood, and Northside)

“For funds to support a campaign centered on creating asset based pathways for black male achievement in the city of Pittsburgh, with a special focus on Pittsburgh’s Northside, Homewood, and East Liberty Communities” (The Heinz Endowments Grant Agreement November 2014)

**Budget Projections:**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Heinz Foundation – Current Projected Budget: \$125K</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Campaign Design and Delivery: \$47K</b></li><li>• <b>Miscellaneous Administration: \$13K</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructor Travel &amp; Lodging</li><li>• Poise Foundation Grant Management Fee</li><li>• Event Liability Insurance</li></ul></li><li>• <b>TandemED Project Staffing: \$65K*</b></li></ul> | <p><b>*Staffing Lead Support Areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project Management</li><li>• Campaign Management</li><li>• Strategic Planning</li><li>• Business / Finances</li><li>• Development</li><li>• Instruction, Marketing</li></ul> |
| <p><b>PPS Current Projected \$20K Budget: Needs to Be Determined</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Campaign Action Plan Appendices

### Campaign Action Plan Appendix A

#### **Youth Campaign Leadership Sessions**

**Objective:** The objective of the Youth Campaign Leadership Sessions is as follows:

- 1) To present the problem of a negative narrative of the African-American community found in marketing and media and used to exploit youth and communities.
- 2) To prepare youth with the skills to combat this negative narrative through the use of branding, marketing, and community organizing skills toward their own design of a city-wide positive narrative campaign.

**Program Design:** 35 youth participants from across the city, selected by existing city-wide youth development leaders, immerse in a 3-month 7-session training and research period, whereby they

- 1) develop the skills and techniques of branding and marketing from one of the foremost national experts in the field
- 2) utilize the developed skills to both survey their peers and community and design a city-wide campaign

**Program Logistics:** The following outlines the date, time, and location for key training sessions. Youth participants must be present for each of these sessions. Food served. Materials provided.

| <b>Date</b>           | <b>Time</b> | <b>Location</b>                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nov. 15, 2014 (Pilot) | 1:15-3:30   | <b>Robert Morris College</b><br><b><i>Downtown Campus</i></b><br><b>339 Sixth Avenue</b><br><b>7<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room</b> |
| Dec. 13, 2014         | 1:15-3:30   | Robert Morris College<br><b>Downtown Campus</b> (address above)                                                                         |
| Jan. 10, 2014         | 1:15-3:30   | Robert Morris College<br><b>Downtown Campus</b> (address above)                                                                         |
| Jan. 24, 2014         | 1:15-3:30   | TBD                                                                                                                                     |
| Feb. 7, 2014          | 1:15-3:30   | Robert Morris College                                                                                                                   |

|                |           | <b>Downtown Campus</b> (address above) |
|----------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| Feb. 24, 2014  | 1:15-3:30 | TBD                                    |
| March 14, 2014 | 1:15-3:30 | TBD                                    |

## Campaign Action Plan Appendix B

### **Expanded Youth Leaders Collaborative**

**Objective:** To collaborate with the youth leaders, organizations, and participants who are most closely aligned with the branding/marketing/campaign idea to support campaign delivery.

#### **Planning To-Do List**

- a. Initial meeting
  - i. Identify youth leaders to invite
  - ii. Invite youth leaders to attend at the date established in steering committee meeting
  - iii. Plan agenda for meeting (including Jason preparing an introductory presentation to this collaborative group using the content from institutional racism to set the problem and why the campaign approach is a solution)
- b. Interfacing w Youth Leadership Session
  - i. During or after meeting, invite their youth participants to attend and collaborate with the youth campaign leadership session scheduled for Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> at location TBD

## Campaign Action Plan Appendix C

### **Broad Coalition Gathering Meeting**

#### **Planning To Do List**

- Determine location and cost for coalition gathering given the date and time established by the steering committee
- Help publicize event and work with individual team members to inform the people/organizations
- Plan agenda
  - Steering committee open event together
  - open with publicize three groups already making strides in this domain (JasiriX, Emay (sp?), JE)
  - Break out groups to better understand campaign and how they can support – resource assessment sheets available
  - show commitments made already on a screen to give folks examples of how they can support
  - Have youth leadership participants be present to share about what they have learned and done in training

- Include way for people to donate or offer resources to support the execution of the designed campaign
- Review resource list

**Campaign Action Plan Appendix D**

**Steering Committee Individual Recruiting**

**Objective:** To utilize our steering committee networks and relationships to gain the commitment of individuals and organizations to provide resources to support the delivery of the youth campaign (e.g., infrastructure, resources, love encouragement)

**Initial Individual Outreach**

|                                 |                                  |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Maria</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3.  | <b>Jason</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3.   | <b>Brandi</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3.  |
| <b>Ryan</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3.   | <b>JE</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3.      | <b>Norlex</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3.  |
| <b>Daunte</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | <b>Sharnay</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | <b>Michael</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| <b>Jonnet</b><br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |                                  |                                  |

**Sample Email**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

(Any personal notes here)

Over the past two months, I have had the opportunity to get to know two African-American men who are doctoral students at Harvard – Brian Barnes and Dorian Burton – with backgrounds in education and community organizing, who are now here in Pittsburgh to join the great work that we are doing here with our youth! They have an idea to help our young people lead their own city campaign to tell a positive story about



themselves and their communities. These young men are committed to supporting youth in Pittsburgh to make this happen and I have been helping them to think through the approach as a member of the steering committee for what is called TandemED ([www.tandemed.org](http://www.tandemed.org)). On \_\_\_\_\_, we will bring a few more people together to also consider the idea and ways that they might also support. I shared with them that I especially want to make sure that you are there and that I would reach out to you! Can you be there? --- It will take place at \_\_\_\_\_ . Please let me know as soon as you can so that we can plan to have your important presence there.

Thank you \_\_\_\_\_ !

**Appendix D cont'd**

**DRAFT One Pager**

The TandemED Community Initiative Pittsburgh seeks to spark and serve as a coordinator of a youth-led and community supported campaign to reverse the negative narratives that impact our Black community. We believe that the primary spark for action arrives when the hearts and minds of our people are attended to in such a way that we realize even more strongly our great strength, intelligence, and assets.

In order to execute this campaign, we have begun with identifying 25 youth across the City of Pittsburgh, nominated by youth leaders and organizations, to undergo campaign training. These youth are first exposed to understanding the destructive narratives that pervade our Black community and the significant impact that it has had on our ability to unite. After understanding and wrestling with this problem, they are exposed to one of the nation's foremost marketing and branding experts, Delancy Bennet, Ph.D., professor at Clemson University, for skill development.



Photo Here of Youth Sessions

The youth's ultimate task is to collectively design a campaign, while consulting and surveying their peers and community, to spark a counter-narrative that further uplifts our Black community. They will deliver the campaign using baseline marketing and campaign approaches (e.g., television advertisement, local radio advertisement, billboard advertisement space, local magazine, social media - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, press releases, celebrity spokespersons, documentaries). In addition to these baseline approaches, these youth along with their peers, will create and employ innovative delivery methods that will speak directly and creatively to their youth and community. The ultimate goal of their action will be lay another bedrock of foundation for internal and external collective visioning action to maximize our Black community assets.

Does this approach speak to you? Do you believe in the power of mindset shifts and narrative changes? Do you believe that this is fundamentally important if we ever seek to find unity in action within our Black community? If so, we want to invite you to join this initiative through offering your time, infrastructure, resources, love, and encouragement to these youth and their peers to design and execute this campaign.

We invite you to come out to learn more on exactly how you or your organization/institutions can be supportive of this effort. Our next coalition gathering will take place in February 2015 at location to be determined. Thank you for your interest and commitment and we look forward to campaigning with you and uplifting our community!

Campaign Action Plan Appendix E

**Campaign Delivery**

**Sample Budget 1:**

|                                                       |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Youth Campaign</b>                                 | <b>\$37,236.77</b> |
| Television Advertisement                              | \$12,796.88        |
| Local Radio Advertisement                             | \$9,823.04         |
| Billboard Advertisement Space                         | \$4,506.34         |
| Billboard Advertisement Design                        | \$1,087.64         |
| Local Transportation Advertisement (e.g. Bus Wraps)   | \$2,922.76         |
| Local Magazine                                        | \$750.11           |
| Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) | \$350.00           |
| Press Releases                                        | \$0.00             |
| Celebrity Spokesperson                                | \$5,000.00         |

**Sample Budget II:**

|                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Youth Campaign</b>        | <b>\$40,936.68</b> |
| Billboard Ad space           | 1800.00            |
| Billboard Ad design          | 1087.64            |
| Facebook, Twitter, Instagram | 0.00               |
| Press Releases               | 0.00               |
| Radio Ads                    | 9800.00            |
| Documentary                  | 0.00               |
| TV Ad                        | 13500.00           |
| Newspaper                    | 0.00               |
| Local Magazine               | 750.00             |
| Movie Theater Preview        | 0.00               |
| Bus Wraps                    | 3000.00            |
| Celebrity Spokesperson       | 8000.00            |
| Flyers                       | 150.00             |
| Posters                      | 200.00             |
| Miscellaneous                | 2600.32            |

Campaign Action Plan Appendix F

**Approach w Education Theme Leading**

| <b>Phase I: Campaign</b>                                                   | <b>Key Activities</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Dec '14 – April '15</b>       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Campaign Design                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Campaign Leadership Sessions (6)</li> <li>• Expanded Youth Leaders Collaborative</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Dec '14 – Feb '15<br><br>Jan '15 |
| Coalition Building                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steering Committee Individual Recruiting</li> <li>• Broad Coalition Gathering Event</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Dec'14 – Feb '15<br><br>Feb'15   |
| Campaign Delivery<br><br><b>Youth and Community Town Halls (Education)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign Delivery</li> </ul> <p><b>Part I: Youth and Community Town Hall Presentation/ Speaker / Youth TED Talk (Education Theme)</b></p> <p><b>Presentations: (<i>Celebrating Our Intelligence! Rejecting Negative Narratives about Us!</i>)</b></p> <p><b>Listening: (<i>What is Our Purpose for Learning? What are Our Standards of Excellence in Learning? What Are Our Aspirations for Life Long Learning?</i>)</b></p> <p>NOTE! – See attached Original TandemED Overview to See Overall Vision (Attached Separately)</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To initiate conversations within the Black community that focus on our own visions for excellence, beyond those defined by institutions that we may not currently have direct leadership or control, in key areas that lay the foundation for strong community (i.e., education*, faith, finances, health, policing) *corresponds with existing funding</p> | Feb '15 – Apr'15<br><br>Feb'15   |

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                                     | <p>To Do List: (Maria, Michael, Jason, Sharnay, Dontae)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin intentional work with Delancy instructor to introduce education theme into some of the marketing design content</li> <li>• Begin to create parental support systems around helping to support the youth overarching design with emphasis on educational components</li> <li>• Begin planning for date, location, and publicity for February sessions to each take place in Eastside and Northside</li> <li>• Create calendar and publicity venues through June</li> </ul> |                         |
|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                         |
| <b>Phase II:<br/>Community Internal Action</b>      | <b>Key Activities:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>March – Aug 2015</b> |
| Community Visioning                                 | TBD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |
| Community Action Planning                           | TBD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |
| Deployment of Internal Assets                       | TBD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |
|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                         |
| <b>Phase III:<br/>Community External Action</b>     | <b>Key Activities:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Sep – Dec. '15</b>   |
| Negotiation for Public Resources and Responsiveness | TBD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |

**Steering Committee Meeting  
@UberConference  
Thursday, March 4, 2015  
4:00-5:30pm**

*Meeting Objective: (1) To ensure that each steering committee member is well informed and up to date with the upcoming campaign delivery methods and schedules (2) building support for each other as a steering committee moving into the next phase*

**Agenda**

- I. Check-In and Call Objectives**  
(10 min)
  
- II. Update on Campaign Ads and Delivery Methods**  
(15 min)
  - a. Update to “Black Is” Participants
  - b. Partnerships / Outlets to Share Ads
  
- III. Social Media and Radio Outlets / Survey and Prizes**  
(5 min)
  
- IV. Steering Committee Unity and Messaging**  
(15 min)
  
- V. Viewing Party / Student Acknowledgment/ Coalition Meeting Planning**  
(15 min)
  
- VI. Moving Forward – Leadership and Sustainability**  
(15 min)

## Appendix C

### *Meeting Agenda*

#### **TandemED Youth Leadership Training #1 (Pilot)**

November 13, 2014

1:30 – 3:15pm

#### **Objective**

The objective of this session is to 1) provide a baseline vision for a youth-led and city-wide campaign to rewrite the identity narrative for Black youth and 2) provide a introduction to marketing and branding concepts to as a foundation for the design elements.

#### **Estimated # of Participants**

25 (names attached)

#### **Estimated # of Adults**

5 (BMLDI staff person TBD, Dorian Burton, Jason Rivers, Maria Searcy, Brandi Taylor)

#### **Agenda**

| <b>Time</b>   | <b>Action</b>            | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:15pm        | Pizza available          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1:30 – 1:45pm | Opening<br>Dorian Burton | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Set context for gathering acknowledging the pre-work of BMLDI and AsOneUnited</li><li>2. Introduce new adults and youth outside of BMLDI and AsOne and ask group to make them feel welcome in this space as leaders of other groups</li><li>3. Give baseline vision for what a city wide campaign would look like and remind participants of the discussion of mindsets and the reason for this strategy (show powerpoint slide – Campaign Delivery)</li><li>4. Help participants understand why we</li></ol> |

|                 |                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                 |                              | <p>are bringing Delancey Bennett --- to</p> <p>1) introduce the concepts of branding and marketing and 2) help them go through a process that will include them interacting with their peers and community to design and deliver a campaign</p> <p>5. Introduce Delancey Bennett as presenter</p> |
| 1:45pm -3:15pm  | Delancey Bennett             | <p>Presentation: Branding 101</p> <p>Group Organizing (Anticipated Numbers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BMLDI – 10</li> <li>• AsOneUnited – 10</li> <li>• Brandi Taylor – 3</li> <li>• Maria Searcy – 2</li> </ul>                                                               |
| 3:15pm – 3:30pm | Dismissal – All Staff        | Transition of Youth outside of Robert Morris campus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3:30pm – 4:00pm | Team Debrief - Dorian Burton | Plus/Delta on Presentation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

**Confirmed Names of Attendees:**



## Appendix D

### *Youth Conversation w Dr. Linda Lane*

#### **TandemED Community Initiative Pittsburgh**

Youth Conversation w Dr. Linda Lane

Thursday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 DATE TO BE POSSIBLY CHANGED

Carnegie Library-Allegheny (Northside)

6:30 – 8:00pm

**Title: “A Conversation on Educational Identity and Purpose w Dr. Linda Lane”**

**Number of Participants:** 10 Youth (6 PPS; 4 Non-PPS)

**Number of Adults:** <10 of the following

- Brian Barnes
- Dorian Burton
- Jason Rivers
- Maria Searcy
- Brandi Taylor
- JE Gamble
- Sharnay Hearn
- Michael Quigley
- Ryan Scott
- Jonnet Solomon
- Norlex Belma

**Type of Meeting:** Business Casual; Closed Group

**Food:** Dinner served

**Documentation:** Video Recorded

**Meeting Objective:** The Objective of the meeting is for Pittsburgh Black youth (PPS and non-PPS students) to

- (1) share their insights about the negative perceptions that Black youth have largely internalized as it relates to their identity and purpose for engaging learning
- (2) present the strengths and talents that often go unaffirmed or unnoticed that are thriving amongst Black youth and could be capitalized upon by educators
- (3) give overview of the current project in which they are engaged to create a positive identity and purpose campaign in the City of Pittsburgh
- (4) seek the feedback and insights of Dr. Linda Lane, a respected Black educational leader within Pittsburgh, as they progress in their campaign development
- (5) forge a relationship with Dr. Lane in order to periodically keep her abreast of their work and open lines of communication for her allied support

**Agenda: (Moderator: Brian Barnes)**

- I. Welcome and Introductions (15 min)

- II.** Conversation: Youth Sharing (45 min)
  - a.** What are the negative perceptions that Black youth have largely internalized as it relates to their identity and purpose for engaging learning?
  - b.** What are the strengths and talents that often go unaffirmed or unnoticed that are thriving amongst Black youth and could be capitalized upon by educators?
  - c.** Youth sharing campaign development thus far
- III.** Questions for Dr. Lane (20 min)
  - a.** As we (youth) carry out this campaign, based on your experience how do we best navigate the educators that support us and also those who may not yet be aligned with our messaging?
  - b.** We want to invite you to be an ally to our campaign for a new narrative? (Here are some thoughts we have about how that could look) How might you also see yourself being an ally to this process for a new narrative (e.g. Does this align to some of the goals that you already have or are interested in moving toward)
- IV.** Thank You to Dr. Lane (5 min)

Appendix E

*Press Release and Data on Impressions*

**Press Release**



TandemED Pittsburgh  
Community Initiative  
603 Stanwix St., #1700  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
[www.tandemed.com](http://www.tandemed.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



**Youth-created ‘Black Is Pittsburgh’ campaign launches on major TV networks**

**Initiative’s goal is to showcase positive images, efforts in communities**

PITTSBURGH (April 6, 2015) — “Black Is Pittsburgh” has launched! It is spreading the news on social media and major television networks.

“Black Is Pittsburgh” is one of the campaigns created by 35 Pittsburgh youth and young adults to showcase positive messages and images from Pittsburgh’s Black community. The campaign includes commercials that started airing in the Pittsburgh area on March 11 and they will continue to air through April 11.

The ads will be used to kick off the “Own Your Story” campaign, in which youth and young adults in Pittsburgh will be challenged to create ads that reflect their own positive stories about themselves and the Black community.

“Own Your Story” is also a contest in which two \$500 winners, one youth and one young adult, or individual groups, will be awarded based on the ads they create and post on [facebook.com/blackispittsburgh](https://facebook.com/blackispittsburgh).

The youth-led media program is part of the TandemED Pittsburgh Community Initiative, a collaboration started in summer 2014 by TandemED, a start-up founded by Harvard Graduate School of Education doctoral students Brian C.B. Barnes and Dorian Burton, and the POISE Foundation, a Pittsburgh nonprofit.

“We wanted to facilitate community initiatives where youth and young adults create positive campaigns around Black communities,” Barnes said.

The youth-created commercials are posted on YouTube.com and Facebook.com, and are being broadcast on Comcast-carried networks and channels, such as BET, Bravo, Syfy, A&E, AMC, Comedy Central, CNN, E!, Discovery, ESPN, Food Network, Fox Sports, History Channel, NBC Sports, Spike, TNT, truTV, the Weather Channel, and VH1.

The ads are expected to generate over a half-million impressions within the greater Pittsburgh area.

North Side resident Brett Searcy, 16, was a member of the youth team that designed the “Black Is Pittsburgh” commercial.

“This process was valuable to me because it gave me a better perspective of who I am and how I should use that throughout my life,” she said.

Additional ads airing feature the youth participants sharing reflections on their values and motivations in life.

Pittsburgh resident Leon Ford, who was shot and paralyzed by Pittsburgh police in 2012, is also featured in an ad he wrote that shares his story of attaining peace and focus in the midst of adversity. The ad ends with the African proverb, “If there are no enemies within, the enemies outside cannot hurt me.”

The youth will continue to build the momentum of their campaign in the coming months. This includes participating in the design of events for Pittsburgh’s annual summer AR3 basketball league, which was founded by Jason Rivers in honor of his brother Anthony Rivers Jr., who died in 2008 as a result of gun violence.

“The organic nature of the movement allows Black youth to push through pain to places of peace, power and purpose,” Rivers said.

TandemED’s mission is to unite Black communities in leading youth and community development. The TandemED Pittsburgh Community Initiative includes Saturday sessions for youth that focus on leadership, marketing and branding skills. Dr. Delancy Bennett, marketing professor at Clemson University, is the instructor for these sessions.

The TandemED Pittsburgh Community Initiative is in partnership with the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Black Male Leadership Development Institute of Robert Morris

University and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, NEED's African American Male Mentoring Initiative, the As-One-United Youth Initiative, TenDaJi Media Solutions, and the Young Men and Women's African Heritage Association.

The initiative is made possible by support from the POISE Foundation, along with the contributions of time and resources from various individuals and supporters in Pittsburgh, including the Pittsburgh TandemED Steering Committee.

"We are extremely proud to support this project. Unfortunately, too many of the images we see of Black youth are negative and are not a true representation of our community. This project allows our community to tell our story and showcase the positive assets we do have," said Mark Lewis, president and chief executive officer of the POISE Foundation.

The POISE Foundation is a community foundation focused on assisting the Pittsburgh region's Black community in achieving self-sustaining practices, through strategic leadership, collective giving, grant making and advocacy. Created in 1980, POISE was the first public foundation in Pennsylvania created and managed by African-Americans. For 35 years, the foundation has provided financial support to nonprofits and advice to many serving Pittsburgh's Black community.

For more information, contact TandemED co-founder Brian C.B. Barnes at [bcb996@mail.harvard.edu](mailto:bcb996@mail.harvard.edu) or TandemED Pittsburgh Steering Committee Member Jason Rivers at [jasonrivers360@gmail.com](mailto:jasonrivers360@gmail.com).

###

## Comcast Spotlight Cable Impressions

|                                      | Rate<br>\$\$0.00 | Unit<br>Total | Impressions | Wk<br>1<br>3/2<br>'15 | Wk<br>2<br>3/9<br>'15 | Wk 3<br>3/16<br>'15 | Wk 4<br>3/23<br>'15 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total                                | \$17535.00       | 2924          | 382623      | 731                   | 731                   | 731                 | 731                 |
| 0985, PITT (PGH<br>Common)           | \$3630.00        | 120           | 79168       | 30                    | 30                    | 30                  | 30                  |
| 8536, PGH Advanced<br>Media          | \$2000.00        | 4             | 50000       | 1                     | 1                     | 1                   | 1                   |
| 0272, Pittsburgh                     | \$3515.00        | 560           | 69440       | 140                   | 140                   | 140                 | 140                 |
| 0636, Mon Valley/<br>McKeesport      | \$1785.00        | 560           | 27303       | 140                   | 140                   | 140                 | 140                 |
| 2665, Pleasant<br>Hills/West Mifflin | \$460.00         | 520           | 7307        | 130                   | 130                   | 130                 | 130                 |

|                                 |           |     |       |     |     |     |     |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1018,<br>Monroeville/Penn Hills | \$1800.00 | 520 | 40079 | 130 | 130 | 130 | 130 |
| 0634, Greensburg                | \$2785.00 | 520 | 36423 | 130 | 130 | 130 | 130 |
| 6688, Interconnect              | \$1560.00 | 120 | 16240 | 30  | 30  | 30  | 30  |

## WAMO100.1 Radio Impressions

### ON-AIR:

- A minimum of 50 (:30s) commercials, 6a-12mid Monday-Sunday
- A minimum of 10 (:15) live reads, 6a-12mid Monday-Sunday
- Inclusion on our website [www.wamo100.com](http://www.wamo100.com)
- Inclusion on WAMO Social Sites – Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook

-

### ON-LINE:

- :30s in-stream commercials, Monday-Sunday, 6a-12m (10,000 impressions)
- 300x250 jpeg ad ROS (5,000 impressions)
- 300x250 jpeg ad on Facebook (approx. 13,000 people)
- Twitter announcement weekly

