Adventure Girlz: A Restorative Leadership Program Model for Interrupting Black Girls’ School Pushout in New York City

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Adventure Girlz: A Restorative Leadership Program Model for Interrupting
Black Girls’ School Pushout in New York City

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

Submitted by
Moriska V. Selby

To the Harvard Graduate School of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education Leadership.

May 2016
Dedication

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”

- Audre Lorde

First and foremost, I give thanks to my mother, Shermin M. Selby. As my model Black woman, your unconditional love served as my foundation. Thank you for keeping me in your heart and mind as I took a journey through life’s moments of happiness, grief, joy, confusion, and enlightenment. I couldn’t have made it this far without your understanding, encouragement and patience – cause lord knows I can be a handful at times. Sher, I love you!

My sisters, Nichola M. Selby and Onika C. Selby – we laugh together, argue with one another, and most importantly continue to love one another. Meme and Nika, I love you both!

Nadia K. Selby, better known as NERD! My cousin by blood, and my sister by love. Over the years, you have been my role model for strength, loyalty, resilience, and unconditional love. I love you Nads!

To my HGSE-momma-friend, Tracie D. Jones. You are love. You are truth. You are laughter – oh boy…that laughter that could be heard throughout restaurants everywhere! Thank you for showing interest in me and offering me words of encouragement when it seemed like I was ready to give up. Thank you for challenging me by calling me out when my behavior was a bit much. Thank you for trusting me to lead and develop Adventure Girlz. I look beyond graduation and am excited we will continue this journey together. I love you Tracie!

My DREAM TEAM committee – Professor Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell, Soffiyah Elijah, and Professor Gretchen Brion-Meisels. Thank you for unwavering commitment and skillful ways in which you were able to coach a high achieving, determined (some might say stubborn! ha!), and creative Black woman. Ebony – as my advisor thank you for being so down to earth and honest with me. You helped me be more relaxed and happy while at HGSE – you made a world of difference in that regard and I appreciate you for being a source of strength and love that helped me get to the finish line. Soffiyah – thank you for giving me the space to get tangled up and the gentle (yet firm) advice to get untangled. Gretchen – thank you for “getting me” and what I was trying to communicate in my writing. Your level of support let me know that your students are top priority!

Tanesha Ingram – As my supervisor at the Correctional Association of New York, you spoke truth to power when you pushed me, in your very special “momma-knows” kind of way, to be more forgiving to myself. You encouraged me to appreciate my wins, no matter how small. You are a phenomenal woman and I appreciate that I have you in my life!
Thank you to everyone at the Correctional Association of New York for being so welcoming, generous and thoughtful. You all checked in on me and offered words of encouragement that made a world of difference. The work you do is necessary and I look forward to doing great things in the near future!

The KAMA pod – Kevin King, Alaina Minor Harper, and Adina Lopatin. From our first breakfast at a diner to our last video call before defense, you each asked difficult questions, gave me sound advice, pushed me to celebrate my personal growth, and showered me with lots of love and laughter. I look forward to continuing this journey to shake up the education sector well beyond us walking across the stage at graduation.

To my Ed.L.D. community – I came here to learn how to transform the education sector and the past three years were truly packed with opportunities to start that journey by first transforming myself. I will continue to leverage the lessons learned and the Ed.L.D. network to provide Black girls the educational experiences they deserve.

My Citizen Schools and Edwards Middle School family – Jamie Lee Manning, Keith Mascoll, Eric Schwarz, Jean Seigle, John Werner, Jennifer Blackmon, Paul Daniels, Pat Kirby, Megan Bird, Colin Stokes, Jennifer Walker, Alex Teitel, Zeb Zankel, Paula Coyle, Christian Pagan, Tony Dugas, Caroline Beasley, Claudia Alfaro, Rebecca Vogel, Emily Bryan, Jimmy Thomas, Dave Bryson, Dan Seifert, Alissa Farber, Ned Rimer, Elliot Ewert, Stephanie Edmeade, Michael Sabin, Ron Bayless, Amrita Sahni, Ted Chambers, John Rice, Laurence Ollivierre, Dr. Hassan Mansaray, Sean McIndoo, Team Eddy, and the entire Baystate region – in my ten years of service I was encouraged, challenged, but most of all loved by all of you. I thank you all a million times over for having my back and helping me grow as an educator.

And, to all the loving, good-humored, and beautiful Black women in my life…

Cynthia Winn, Silma Selby, Donnette Samuel, Allison Selby, Skyla Pore, Zanette Samuel, Noelle Abasi, Leah Samuel, Jessica Graham, Patricia Williams, Martine Woodis, Shushanna Mignott, Sharlene Jeany, Robin Nelson, Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Norene Johnson, Linda Wells, Darnisa Amante, Jacquinette Brown, Marlee Henderson, Laura Davidson, Stephanie Lubin, Jacqueline Iloh, Kechia Burnett, Dr. Lynette Tannis, Miecha Ranea Forbes, Dr. Gislaine Ngounou, Elyse Oliver, Korrey Lacey-Buggs, Aysha Upchurch, Ebony Ford, Avery Drake, Nadhege Jean Raphael, Cherlynn Monette, Anisah Sabur, Dr. Heather Harding, Annette Warren-Dickerson, and all the participants of Adventure Girlz!

…we are powerful beyond measure. Let us continue to build a sisterhood that will last a lifetime!
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Abstract

Young, poor, and undereducated women of color make up the majority of women who are incarcerated in the U.S. correctional system (Covington & Bloom, 2003). Black girls, in particular, are at risk of incarceration when schools leverage policies and practices (e.g. exclusionary discipline) that focus on discipline and control rather than providing a high quality education and support services for Black girls’ development.

The restorative leadership program model employs unique methods to engage students and elevate their unique talents and perspectives in a school system that does not “effectively adjust and reform to fit the needs of its entire population” (Dr. Dorian Burton, personal communication, March 26, 2016). The program prioritizes educational attainment for Black girls through physical sports and field trips, critical conversations about what it means to grow up as a Black girl, events to collaborate and build relationships with peer and adult mentors, and workshops to learn personalized goal setting and reflection techniques.

A restorative leadership program is an effective tool public middle schools can use to (1) increase the social emotional support provided to Black girls in order to reduce delinquent behavior and (2) reduce the number of Black girls who are pushed out of schools into the juvenile justice system.

Keywords: Black girls; school-to-prison pipeline; juvenile justice; mass incarceration; school pushout; social emotional competencies; adventure sports
Prologue

During the 1994-1995 school year, I was a 7th grade Black girl eating and playing card games at lunchtime in a middle school in Brooklyn, New York. After lunch, as everyone spilled into the tight stairwell, the laughter and friendly chatter were abruptly silenced by a collective gasp. With wide eyes and mouths hanging open, everyone watched as I – a straight A student – exchanged punches with another Black girl. Within a few seconds a school security officer had sliced through the crowded stairwell and separated the two of us. We were whisked away to the Assistant Principal’s office.

The Assistant Principal asked us if we were okay then listened to each of us tell our side of what led to the fight. He told us to promise not to fight ever again then pivoted and preceded to ask us to take turns spelling words from a prepared list he held in his hand. When my fellow classmate fumbled the spelling of one word, I was declared the winner and subsequently tapped to represent the entire school at a district-wide spelling bee competition that afternoon. I packed up my belongings and travelled with the Assistant Principal to participate in the event where I made it through only a couple rounds. By participating in that experience, I came to believe that the next day was going to be a brand new day. I never worried this stairwell fight would become my middle school legacy. I never worried about being kicked out of school. I never imagined the possibility of spending time at a juvenile offender detention center. I was determined to be successful in school.

At the time, I didn’t have the language to refer to the Assistant Principal’s response as a restorative intervention – a practice of giving youth a chance to
reintegrate into the school community after a disruptive and/or harmful behavioral incident (www.dignityinschools.org). The Assistant Principal invested in me and chose to reengage me as a contributing member of the school community who was worthy of love, care, and compassion.

Now, in 2016, my actions from 20 years ago might result in handcuffs around my wrists and time in a detention center meant to punish me for my behavior. Black girls are at risk of incarceration when schools focus on punitive and isolating disciplinary policies and practices. Therefore, I am writing this Capstone to introduce restorative leadership programs – a term I developed to describe a developmentally appropriate leadership program that includes seven key elements. These elements are (1) restorative practices, (2) ethnic studies, (3) social emotional learning, (4) trauma sensitive schooling, (5) family engagement, (6) academic goal setting, and (7) adventure sports. Ultimately, I view restorative leadership programs as an approach schools could leverage to provide a culturally responsive, high quality educational experience that leverages the assets of Black girls to teach them how to think critically, question their reality, and how to personally construct strategic plans to maximize the gains from their schooling experience.
Introduction

Kimberle Crenshaw from the African American Policy Forum conducted focus groups in New York City and Boston about the factors that lead to Black girl school pushout and the availability of any preventative initiatives that are leveraged to combat the trend. The report summarized impressions in the following way (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 29):

Overall, the observations of participants and stakeholders in this report indicate that Black girls face obstacles both similar to and different from those confronted by their male counterparts. Participants in the focus groups articulated a broad range of concerns that contributed to their detachment from school, including caretaking responsibilities, financial hardship, living circumstances, homelessness, indifference, and the actual dislike of school. The girls also touched upon the particular dynamics of the schools themselves, including their perceptions that discipline and order are priorities that transcend the educational mission of the school. Other issues that contributed to their detachment from school include doubts about the relevance of the curricula and their teachers’ cultural competence; the poor physical condition of their schools; violence, harassment, and abusive experiences within their schools; perceptions of unfair policies and disinterested teachers; the lack of effective counseling, conflict resolution, and problem-solving interventions; the absence of academic support and the appropriate incentives to complete school; and the threat of psychological and physical abuse, both within their schools and in their neighborhoods.

Stakeholders also identified these concerns and amplified them further. They drew attention to values, attitudes, and behaviors that affect dropout rates. They emphasized that these rates are affected by experiences that often begin in middle school. Particularly troubling were their observations that when girls sense that teachers do not value them or celebrate their achievements, they are more likely to leave school.

Additionally, youth behavior is criminalized and Black youth especially are disproportionately referred to the juvenile justice system (Crenshaw, 2015). Black girls in particular are pushed out of schools, an act that does not “address the root cause of behavior, and may be related to higher rates of juvenile
incarceration and lower rates of academic achievement” (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 7).

During the NYC 2011-2012 school year, 90% of girls expelled from school were Black girls (Crenshaw, 2015). In school districts across the United States, behaviors that lead to expulsion can fall within a wide range of infractions given the subjective nature of school personnel interpretation and account of student behaviors. For instance, Crenshaw (2015, p. 6) referenced several infractions where students faced expulsion and/or criminal charges for:

- **Writing ‘Hi’ on a locker room wall** (12-year-old in Georgia faced expulsion and criminal charges)
- **Refusing to change the look of her natural hair when her private school required her to do so** (12-year-old in Florida was threatened with expulsion)
- **Having a tantrum** (6-year-old in Florida was arrested)
- **Dropping cake on the floor and failing to pick it up to a school officer’s satisfaction** (16-year-old in California was arrested).

Wald and Losen (2003) describes an interdependent relationship between laws that govern school safety and Black girl school push out. The relationship that has emerged is known as a school-to-prison pipeline, which is “a link between the use of punitive disciplinary measures and subsequent patterns of criminal suspension and incarceration” (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 7).

On the one end, many school districts have institutionalized “new statutes mandating referral to law enforcement for code violations...such as shouting, refusing to cooperate, and verbal altercations” that are “increasingly punitive and isolating” (Crenshaw, 2015, p.3). Use of these statues can lead to students who are likely “to be placed in restrictive special education programs, repeatedly suspended, held back in grades, and banished to alternative “out placements”
before finally dropping or getting “pushed out” of school altogether” (Crenshaw, 2015, p.3). On the other end, the administration of these statutes cause students to feel uncared for while at school which leads to increased “substance abuse, violence, suicide attempts, pregnancy, and emotional distress” (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 7).

With the school-to-prison pipeline, more Black girls are left vulnerable to come into contact with the juvenile justice system. There are several entry points to tackling this problem: (1) demand changes to the overarching practices within the juvenile justice system, (2) address law enforcement interactions with Black girls in the community, (3) reform school discipline policies and practices, (4) educate Black girls about the law and their civil as well as human rights, and, as the NAACP recommends, (5) “reform sentencing and drug policies” (NAACP, 2011, p. 4). There is a sixth, and new, entry point – reimagining school-based leadership programs that are meant to empower Black girls during their middle school years. Specifically, I intend to focus on working directly with middle school “Black girls, in hands on ways, to help us understand how they make meaning of the world and what they need, want, and see” in their school experience (Capstone Committee, personal communication, April 14, 2016).

Stephanie Covington and Barbara E. Bloom (2001) state, “the current system has been designed to deal with the problems of boys and young men and, in doing so, has neglected the gender-specific programming and treatment needs of girls and young women” (p. 3). Therefore, “the “what works” literature has been focused primarily on boys and men and little is known about the applicability of these interventions for girls” (Covington & Bloom, 2001, p. 5). I want the education and justice systems as a whole to change. While others in my position
might rather “work with educators, administrators, policy makers and lawmakers” (Soffiyah Elijah, personal communication, April 14, 2016), I will focus on teenage Black girls and ensure they have opportunities to unpack their school experiences and serve as the authors of their own narrative. And part of doing so is to engage Black girls in being more aware of self and taking the perspective of other people so that they could have a more well-rounded understanding of the context that they are existing in. A core assumption is that when young people are given the opportunities to construct meaning from their lived experiences they are more likely to internalize the lessons that stem from those experiences. Young people are then able to turn around and make decisions that are relevant to their future orientation. To further explain this decision requires a deeper analysis of the intersection of education and the juvenile justice system, which is where I will begin this paper.

In this Capstone, I explore why Black girls are at risk of incarceration and the impact of incarceration on their ability to serve as contributing members of society. To do so, I first examine the disproportionate incarceration of Black people and the symbiotic relationship between the prison industrial complex – the highly profitable business sector that involves actors in the justice system working together with private organizations to build prisons and jail citizens – and an education system that utilizes policies and practices. I argue that one key mechanism of the prison industrial complex is Black girls being pushed out of school. Additionally, I narrate the impact school policies and practices have on the social identity and academic achievement of Black girls. You will also read about my efforts in the classroom to ensure that Black girls understand what changes in their school experience could possibly look like in order to shift their
A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

performance in school and subsequently stem their trajectory into the juvenile justice system. Finally, I explain how a restorative leadership program can interrupt the trajectory of Black girls being pushed out of schools into correctional facilities. Specifically, prioritizing educational attainment for Black girls through four key activities can interrupt this trajectory. These activities are physical sports and field trips (MOVE), critical conversations about what it means to grow up as a Black girl (TALK), events to collaborate and build relationships with peer and adult mentors (MENTOR), and workshops to learn personalized goal setting and reflection techniques to improve life outcomes (LEAD).

Specifically, I make the argument that, unlike restorative justice programs that “bring students together in peer-mediated small groups to talk, ask questions, and air their grievances” (Davis, 2015), schools should leverage restorative leadership programs. Restorative leadership programs integrate restorative practices, ethnic studies, social emotional learning, trauma sensitive schooling, adventure sports, and family communication to provide a space for Black girls to develop an awareness of self and others. With that skill, Black girls could mitigate their trajectory towards encountering the juvenile justice system. A restorative leadership program will also create a school environment that recognizes, validates, and promotes the experiences and knowledge of Black girls.
Review of Knowledge for Action

1. Background and Overview

Mass Incarceration is a Major Issue. Mass incarceration refers to the scale and acceleration of the prison population of the United States that is, as of 2002, “five times as high as in 1972 and surpasses that of all other nations” (Roberts, 2004, p. 1272). With a disproportionate impact on the Black community, mass incarceration is a form of social control. On the surface, its explicit social control purpose is to punish, correct and rehabilitate individuals identified as violating the law. Beneath the surface is a more subtle and insidious form of social control. Because people of color are disproportionately incarcerated (Alexander, 2010) and because incarceration effectively results in social, economic and political disenfranchisement (Alexander, 2010), mass incarceration is a form of social control, which maintains a social order that benefits whites and relegates people of color to second-class citizenship (Alexander, 2010).

Mass incarceration has a devastating impact that extends beyond the individual and into the Black community. Bruce Western (2008) states that, “to be young, black and unschooled today is to risk a felony conviction, prison time, and a life of second-class citizenship” (para. 6). Western (2008) goes further to say that, “growing rates of incarceration [across the Black community] mean that, in the experience of African-Americans in poor neighborhoods, the advancement of voting rights, school desegregation, and protection from discrimination [is] substantially halted” (para. 7).

One reason behind mass incarceration is the disproportionate funding of prisons rather than schools. For example, instead of funneling money to educate
Black youth to ensure equal footing in accessing opportunities, New York State currently incarcerates one young person at $352,663 per year (Justice Policy Institute, 2014) while the median dollars spent per each student’s education is about $23,000 (Billmyer, 2014). In her article for the California Endowment, *Do the Math: Schools vs. Prisons*, Mary Lou Fulton (2014) reported that California spent “$62,300 a year to keep one inmate in prison, and just $9,100 per year per student in [their] public schools” (para. 3).

Given this prioritization of funding prisons over schools, youth attending underfunded schools are likely unable to acquire the proper tools (reading, writing, critical thinking, etc.) that would prepare them to have equitable opportunities (Western, 2008). Wald and Losen (2003) reported, “seventy percent of women state prisoners have not completed high school” (p. 4). This lack of educational progress has persistently perpetuated a structural barrier in Black communities. Depriving Black people of education and other resources was a tactic for ensuring Black people internalized the inadequacies placed upon them by Whites (NACCDR, 1968).

Laking and Mahoney (2006) state “youth who successfully cultivate both empowerment and a sense of community are more likely to develop skills necessary to becoming healthy, productive adults” (p. 517). With an adequate education, Black people can challenge the practices and policies that disproportionately affect Black people. Educated Black people also serve as leaders and an inspiration for others in the Black community. This is one reason why so many in the Black community celebrate the few they see as making it out.
However, in communities across the country, a lack of adequate funding threatens educators’ abilities to adequately prepare Black youth for success in today and tomorrow’s global economy; this remains a constant factor in the Black community’s inability to scale the number of Black people who acquire academic and financial success. Lack of educational opportunities and over-investment in the prison system by both law enforcement and for-profit businesses has contributed to the growth of the prison industrial complex.

In 2015, the United States had approximately 2.5 million citizens behind bars and an additional 5 million citizens under correctional supervision (i.e. probation, parole); a number that is exponentially larger than any other country in the world (Sentencing Project, 2015). The effects of the prison industrial complex are acute for Black women and Black girls who are respectively incarcerated and suspended at six times the rate of their White counterpart (http://www.sentencingproject.org). Guevara, Herz, and Spohn (2006) state that “girls, particularly Black girls, represent a growing share of children in the criminal justice system” (as cited in Goff et al., 2014, p. 540). Since the 1980s, the “number of women in prison has been increasing at a rate 50 percent higher than men” (http://www.sentencingproject.org). Today, women of color are one of the fastest growing demographic of individuals who are incarcerated.

School-to-Prison Pipeline. Beginning in 1998, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani ceded all control of responding to school disciplinary incidents to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) (Weiss, 2008). Currently, all New York City public school safety officers receive law enforcement training at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and have direct supervisory reporting lines to the NYPD, not the officials at the school they are assigned to patrol. These officers are
authorized to use personal discretion to interpret disruptive student behavior and its impact on classroom and overall school climate (Theriot, 2009). This is similar to the dynamic of educators and correctional officers at Riker’s Island. This policy shift has resulted in young people facing the NYPD in both their neighborhoods and schools. The NYPD in schools exercise full authority to “perform traditional law enforcement functions like patrolling school buildings and grounds, investigating criminal complaints, handling students who violate school rules or laws, and trying to minimize disruptions during the school day and at after-school activities” (Theriot, 2009, p. 281). The result is referrals that “establish criminal records for students, with serious repercussions for their futures” (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 8).

One reason police presence and the criminalization of school infractions is so problematic is that in New York, adolescents are automatically recognized, charged, and incarcerated as adults if they are 16 and 17 years of age (Creelan, J., Elijah, S., et al., 2015). Consequences for convictions on charges brought against adolescents include incarceration at a correctional facility in New York State and probation that does not carry any jail time but mandates that youth remain under correctional supervision (i.e. report to a parole officer, restricted movement due to a mandatory curfew). Additional consequences can be life without parole, the death penalty, or an alternative program that will provide rehabilitative social/emotional support to prevent a reoccurrence of the criminal behavior (Creelan, J., Elijah, S., et al., 2015). However, it is not simply the ceding of youth to the criminal justice system that fuels the school-to-prison pipeline. It is also the disciplinary procedures and organization of schools, which some observe have many similarities to prisons.
Brian Crosby, the author of *Smart Kids, Dumb Schools: 38 Ways to save America’s Future*, captured the similarities between the two institutions by suggesting that the practices, from dress codes to the designated times in the day to eat and play, utilized by school and correctional facilities share many similarities. In New York State, the title ‘warden’ is not used to identify the overseer of a correctional facility. Instead, like individuals who manage school systems, prison wardens are known as ‘superintendents’. When there is an emergency in a school building, school personnel go into “lockdown” mode where all classroom doors are locked and no one is granted access into or out of rooms. The same occurs in correctional facilities where individuals are locked in their cells and are not permitted to resume regularly scheduled activities until the authorities confirm the emergency has subsided.

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<td><strong>PRISONS</strong></td>
<td><strong>SCHOOLS</strong></td>
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<td>Bells</td>
<td>Bells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardens</td>
<td>Administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gates and walls</td>
<td>Gates and walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>One unlocked door for access</td>
<td>One unlocked door for access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timed schedule for activities</td>
<td>Timed schedule for activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High inmate-to-guard ratio</td>
<td>High student-to-teacher ratio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lots of inmates</td>
<td>Lots of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>A cafeteria</td>
<td>A cafeteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drab-looking facades</td>
<td>Drab-looking facades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockdowns</td>
<td>Lockdown drills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramped quarters</td>
<td>Cramped quarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socialization mentality</td>
<td>Socialization mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass showers</td>
<td>Mass showers (at secondary level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell mate</td>
<td>Classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per prisoner = $24,000</td>
<td>Cost per student = $9,000</td>
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Beyond the similarities between school and prisons, there is also an increasing trend for school environments to facilitate the dehumanization—“denial of full humanness to others” (Haslam, 2006, p. 252)—of Black girls by pushing them out from their school environments into correctional settings (Fowler, 2011).

While in their schools, Black girls are constantly pulled out of class for small “redirecting” pep talks in the hallway. If the student’s behavior is deemed to interrupt the education process, students are removed from class and suspended for a number of days. Misbehavior is determined by the subjective perspective of school personnel and without the inclusion of student voice to determine further context of a given situation. The consequences for perceived misbehavior is based on regulations outlined in discipline policies that result in students missing critical class time (Mergler et al., 2014). All of that time away from the classroom amounts to loss of instruction time required to successfully pass on to the next grade level. Students are also expected to jump back into the academic content when they return to school, regardless of how many lessons they may have missed due to disciplinary sanctions. As a result of these practices and policies, many Black youth in schools receive little to no education (Morris, 2012).

The pattern of prioritizing control and discipline over education continues through the experience of youth who are incarcerated. At Riker’s Island, youth attend the East River Academy that is an alternative school setting within NYC’s School District 75. Educators who are assigned to lead core content sessions with youth have secondary authority to that of correctional officers (COs) and other prison staff (Rikers Island, site visit observation notes, May 2014). At times, COs
leverage classes as an incentive for good behavior and/or use classes as a privilege that can be revoked as a result of non-conformity to the rules of the facility (Rikers Island, site visit observation notes, May 2014). Also, once a youth reaches the age of 18 they can submit a request to discontinue schooling while locked up at Rikers Island; essentially receiving permission to drop out of school despite not having earned a high school diploma or equivalent (Rikers Island, site visit observation notes, May 2014).

Living in contexts where education is denied, at both the school and in the correctional facilities, means that Black youth are therefore often placed on a path to “low-wage work, unemployment, and incarceration” (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 10). With the mass incarceration of the Black male, a Black woman is often positioned as heads of “single-wage-earning families” (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 27). Additionally, the increase of Black women in correctional facilities makes the Black family unit vulnerable and at risk of collapse when Black girls experience stress, silencing of personal expression, violence, and low quality education during their school experience. The inhospitable learning environment that criminalizes Black girls’ existence through ineffective, exclusionary school policies and practices also lacks specific interventions to “support healing, social emotional learning, and healthy development” for Black girls (Professor Gretchen Brion-Meisels, personal communication, March 27, 2016).

**Juvenile Justice and Black Girls.** At its point of inception in 1985, the juvenile justice system was meant to provide “prevention, protection, and redirection to youth” ([http://www.sentencingproject.org](http://www.sentencingproject.org)). Instead, there is evidence that many youth involved in the juvenile justice system over the past 30 years “experience tough sanctions and adult-type punishments”
A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

(http://www.sentencingproject.org). Goff and colleagues (2014) explains that Black children are particularly vulnerable to being treated like adults when White people view them as adults and not children. The perception held by White authority figures essentially strips youth of color of any “rights” associated with the innocence of being a child. In New York City, youth of color encounter two systems of authority, school and law enforcement, which are dominated by White people. Motoko Rich from the New York Times wrote “in New York City, where more than 85 percent of the students are racial minorities, 60 percent of the teachers are White” (http://www.nytimes.com). While Jeremy Ashkenas and Haeyoun Park, also from the New York Times, shared data depicting racial minorities as making up 67 percent of 8.1 million residents in New York City while 55 percent of the city’s 35,216 police officers are White (http://www.nytimes.com).

This process of viewing youth of color as adults, can lead to the “racial disparities in sentencing and even the disparate use of force by officers” (Goff, 2014, p. 527) and, I argue, youth of color being subject to criminalization of their behavior in schools. Goff (2014) states that the disparate treatment of Black males in relation to their White male counterparts ranges from:

- **Perceiving Black boys as not being childlike due to an implicit bias of seeing them as much older than their biological age** (“Black felony suspects are seen as 4.53 years older than their actual age”); to
- **Comparing the characteristics of childhood labels applied to Black boys by examining the perceived culpability for their actions which result in negative outcomes for children; and**
- **Dehumanizing Black males by perceiving them as apes subject to primal instincts that cause them to be inherently more violent beings.**
Increasingly, the same type of disparate treatment occurs for Black girls when their predominantly white teaching staff hold a perception that they are *super predators* – a term coined by then First Lady Hillary Clinton in 1994 to describe Black youth who were perceived as threats to others and therefore required tougher and more restrictive sanctions to reign in their behavior (Alexander, 2010).

The Black girl experience is also often overlooked when researchers “fail to disaggregate information by both gender and race [such as the greater racial disparity that Black female students face]” (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 25). Mistrust and a lack of care endure once adults label Black girls as anti-education and disengaged (Archer et al., 2007). Additionally, research states that educators criminalize and punish Black girls at a higher rate than their Latino and white counterparts (Crenshaw, 2015). Most recently, the African American Policy Forum in conjunction with the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies published a report *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected* (2015). In that report, themes of disproportionately dehumanizing Black girls were documented in a Top Ten list of observations of how Black girls “experience inhospitable educational environments” that contribute to the criminalization and incarceration of Black girls (Crenshaw, 2015). The list of observations includes:

1. harsher forms of discipline than their White counterparts; 2. discipline is prioritized over educational attainment; 3. increased presence of law enforcement personnel in schools make Black girls feel less safe and less likely to attend school; 4. black girls are overlooked and undervalued; 5. lack of restorative responses to conflict separate girls from school and funnel them to juvenile justice system; 6. insecurity of Black girls due to inaction of school personnel to address bullying and sexual harassment incidents; 7. counseling needs are overlooked and disregarded; 8. high incidence of interpersonal violence
among Black girls; (9) burden of familial obligations that undermine their capacity to achieve academic goals; and (10) pregnancy and parenting make engaging fully in school difficult (Crenshaw, 2015, pp. 11-13).

Practices utilized by schools that result in the underachievement and criminalization of Black girls exacerbate the vicious, destructive cycle of increasing the number of women of color who end up in the prison industry complex (Morris, 2012). To further understand the growing number of Black girls and women entering the prison industry complex, we have to understand the intersection of two intersecting causes: (1) Black Girl Narrative – the negative impact of school policies and practices that hinder the social emotional development of Black girls and (2) Black Girl School Push Out – the use of school suspensions and other punitive responses to Black girls’ performance in school.

In response to these converging elements, I propose an initiative to cultivate Black Girl Empowerment – making available school-based programming that could transform a school environment in order to provide learning spaces that promote the social emotional development of Black girls.

2. Black Girl Narrative
An unconscious perception of Black girls not requiring additional support has emerged given their resiliency in the context of economic and social oppression that directly and indirectly “devalues and stigmatizes black womanhood” (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007, 34). In the National Center for Educational Statistics (2012) report on degrees conferred by sex and race, of those who attended a higher education institution, “among U.S. residents, Black females earned 68 percent of associate’s degrees, 66 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 71 percent of master’s degrees, and 65 percent of doctor’s degrees
awarded to Black students” (https://nces.ed.gov). With such statistics, Black girls are viewed as super invincible (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007). However, the Black girl narrative that is hardly paired with this analysis is the drop off of school-aged Black girls who do not matriculate to higher education institutions.

Black girls are an under served population when it comes to in-school and out-of-school learning. The African American Policy Forum (2015) reported that during the last decade (2005-2015), over 100 million dollars has been invested in achievement, dropout prevention, and mentoring initiatives exclusively targeting Black and brown boys. During this same period, the total funding for initiatives supporting Black and brown girls was only 1 million dollars. Black women are treated as a monolithic group whose success is often discounted as calculated opposition to the success of underachieving Black men (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007), resulting in the underfunding of programs aimed at supporting black girls. Resources are leveraged for Black boys educational development and not for Black girls educational experiences that include unique risks that are specific to their lived experiences at the intersection of race (Black) and gender (female) (Crenshaw, 2015).

For instance, when the “standards of femininity and behavior developed for middle-class, white women...i.e. white, good, and quiet” are countered by behaviors that are celebrated in the Black community as positive and functional attributes – strength, persistence, expression of anger, and intelligence – the result is strained relationships between Black girls and their male peers as well as educational personnel and the police (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007, pp. 34-35). Programs that have been designed to support Black girls have often overlooked the phenomenon of Black girls who are rapidly moving into the juvenile justice
system when school personnel perceive their presence as dangerous. This group of marginalized Black girls reject the notion of “silencing or losing their voice as young Black women” for the sake of attaining education success (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007, p. 34). In turn, they become subjected to “greater scrutiny, surveillance, and questioning from school staff and security” (Arnold, 1990), rather than receiving the social and emotional supports to help improve the quality of their educational experiences. The resulting “inhospitable school environment” (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 11), leads to students dropping out of school, which is a major factor “for most of the rise in African American incarceration rates” (Forman, 2012, p. 132).

The divestment in Black girls by institutions that are supposed to ‘protect and serve,’ pushes these girls to seek out a supportive network amidst other individuals who reject the dominant cultural image of the obedient, high achieving student that chooses to “suppress their Black female identity and take on the gender attributes valued by their school settings” (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007, p. 35). Research has shown that disengaged girls that reject a school environment they perceive as requiring them to not embrace their Black identity will position themselves as structurally dislocated from the institution (Arnold, 1990). With little to no room for them to reenter the school community with opportunity to be themselves, some of these dislocated Black girls continue to butt heads with school personnel.

During a lecture, Professor Kaia Stern (2015) at Harvard University stated, “rehabilitation happens in the context of positive social relationships.” However, not only do schools disproportionately exclude and dehumanize Black girls by
reacting to their behavior as dangerous, but they also create a cycle that often escalates feelings of disconnection and disenfranchisement.

3. Black Girl School Pushout

During the 2011-2012 academic year, school districts across New York State had approximately 2,745,143 students enrolled in 4,864 public schools. As illustrated in Table 2, the 2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection reported that New York State public schools had many punitive responses to Black girls’ behavior that were greater in number of instances than White and Latino girls. Black girls without disabilities had 1,492 referrals to law enforcement that accounts for 52% of 2,794 total law enforcement referrals for girls across all three races. These law enforcement referrals were almost triple and a little more than double their White (556; 20% of 2,794) and Latino (776; 28% of 2,794) counterparts, respectively. With 16,464 in-school suspensions that account for 41% of 39,816 total in-school suspensions for girls across all three races, White girls received more in-school suspensions than both Black girls (14,887; 37% of 39,816) and Latino girls (8,465; 21% of 39,816). However, Black girls with 11,724 out-of-school suspensions or 43% of 27,311 total out-of-school suspensions for girls across all three races, continued to outpace both White (10,910; 40% of 27,311) and Latino (4,677; 17% of 27,311) girls in the number of out-of-school suspensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline (New York STATE public schools)</th>
<th>Black or African-American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino of any race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One or more in-school suspensions</td>
<td>14,887 (37%, n=39,816)</td>
<td>16,464 (41%, n=39,816)</td>
<td>8,465 (21%, n=39,816)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more out-of-school</td>
<td>11,724</td>
<td>10,910</td>
<td>4,677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the same academic year, school districts across New York City had approximately 1,002,751 students enrolled in 1,589 public schools and show a starker contrast between all three races for the same punitive responses administered for student disciplinary infractions. In New York City, the Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning is the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) disciplinary code. Students’ behaviors that require disciplinary action “are grouped into 5 progressive infraction levels (see Table 3) based on the severity of the infraction and amount to a range of disciplinary procedures that are used to hold students accountable” (NYCDOE, 2015, p. 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Progressive Infraction Levels for Grade 6-12 (NYCDOE, 2015, pp. 26-32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Level 1 | **Uncooperative/Noncompliant Behavior**  
e.g. unexcused absence, engaging in verbally rude or disrespectful behavior, cutting classes, using school equipment without permission |
| Level 2 | **Disorderly Behavior**  
e.g. smoking, gambling, misusing property belonging to others, engaging in or causing disruptive behavior on the school bus |
| Level 3 | **Disruptive Behavior**  
e.g. defying or disobeying the lawful authority or directive of school personnel or school safety agents, engaging in scholastic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarizing), vandalism |
| Level 4 | **Aggressive or Injurious/Harmful Behavior**  
e.g. making sexually suggestive comments, engaging in harassing, intimidating and/or bullying behavior, possessing controlled substances, making a bomb threat |
| Level 5 | **Seriously Dangerous or Violent Behavior**  
e.g. starting a fire, engaging in gang-related activities, possessing a firearm, selling or distributing illegal drugs, inflicting serious injury upon students or others |

As illustrated in Table 4, the 2011 Civil Rights Data Collection survey reported that disciplinary measures used by schools to sanction Black girls behavior had punitive responses that were greater in number than the numbers associated with White and Latino girls. Black girls without disabilities had 254
referrals to law enforcement that accounts for 62% of 413 total law enforcement referrals for girls across all three races. White girls had 56 (14% of 413) and Latino girls had 103 (25% of 413) referrals to law enforcement. Black girls received 5,975 in-school suspensions that account for 55% of 10,933 total in-school suspensions for girls across all three races while White girls received 1,907 (17% of 10,933) and Latino girls received 3,051 (28% of 10,933). In addition, Black girls received 533 out-of-school suspensions or 61% of 872 total out-of-school suspensions for girls across all three races and continued to outpace both White (115; 13% of 872) and Latino (224; 26% of 872) girls in the number of out-of-school suspensions.

We must have increased investment in the education of Black girls and find alternatives to this trend of using suspensions and law enforcement to address discipline cases involving youth, and especially Black girls. More Black girls should receive the support that does not push them into the prison industrial complex. Suspensions have been shown to have no transformative effect on correcting student behavior (Wald & Losen, 2003). Instead, schools should utilize interventions that promote social emotional development of Black girls who violate school expectations. Such practices would result in Black girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Black or African-American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino of any race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One or more in-school suspensions</td>
<td>5,975 (55%, n=10,933)</td>
<td>1,907 (17%, n=10,933)</td>
<td>3,051 (28%, n=10,933)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-school suspension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Only one</td>
<td>533 (61%, n=872)</td>
<td>115 (13%, n=872)</td>
<td>224 (26%, n=872)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More than one</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals to law enforcement w/o disabilities</td>
<td>254 (62%, n=413)</td>
<td>56 (14%, n=413)</td>
<td>103 (25%, n=413)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
internalizing self-regulation skills such as personal identity awareness and acting upon pro-social behaviors to stay on track to graduation and career success (Scales et al., 2004). The data from the Census and FBI arrest records “suggest that completing high school reduces the probability of incarceration by about .76 percentage points for whites and 3.4 percentage points for blacks” (Lochner and Maretti, 2001, 2). Programs that can address the social emotional development of youth aide in stemming the number of Black youth who are subject to a lifetime of second-class citizenship due to contact with the criminal justice system.

In their study of defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline, Wald and Losen (2003) argue that “the single largest predictor of subsequent arrest among adolescent females is having been suspended, expelled, or held back during middle school years” (p. 4). Furthermore, Fowler (2011), references a 2005 study by the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University that states “students involved in one or more disciplinary incidents were 23.4 times more likely to be referred to the juvenile justice system” (p. 16). A restorative leadership program offers schools an alternative option to these practices, which research shows “do not address the root cause of behaviors” (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 7) but instead disproportionately places Black and brown youth on a path to incarceration.

4. Black Girl Empowerment

In their 1992 statistical analysis report, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: Characteristics of At-Risk Students in NELS:88, the National Center for Educational Statistics defined at-risk youth as students who, by the eighth grade, have not acquired proficient levels of performance in basic math and
reading or have dropped out of school. A panelist at the And Still We Rise Conference on Black Girls and Women in Education event at Columbia University on February 20, 2016 shared research about how a lack of literacy relegates youth of color into physical labor jobs that are, in the 21st century, significantly lower in pay. New York State’s carceral population has an average 29 percent woman in custody that have “less than a fifth-grade reading ability” (Mallicoat, 2011, p. 464). Additionally, a “lack of education is a key factor contributing to the underemployment and unemployment of many women in the criminal justice system” (Mallicoat, 2011, p. 485) and low wages, which limit the opportunities for Black women to provide for herself. As a result, Black women can cultivate a dependency on supplemental income that is generated by engaging in criminal behavior.

According to Wald and Losen (2003), “despite the strong relationships that exist between troubled educational histories and subsequent arrest and incarceration, the specific ways in which schools may either contribute to or prevent the flow of students into the criminal justice system remains largely unexplored” (p. 11). Could education reform that integrates restorative leadership programs in schools help reduce the number of Black girls entering the juvenile justice system?

Through a high quality educational experience, Black girls could receive “access to the types of tools and strategies that would help them navigate institutions that are often discriminatory towards Black girls” (Professor Gretchen Brion-Meisels, personal communication, March 27, 2016). Furthermore, a school community that provides opportunities for at-risk students to explore
their learning environment promotes resiliency amongst at-risk students (Borman et al., 2001).

The responsibility of raising children and preventing them from entering the juvenile justice system should not solely rest with the school system. School personnel must focus on supporting the whole child before they are involved in the juvenile justice system. This means increasing the amount of resources school leaders allocate to developing a discipline system, professional development training to align school personnel around the school-wide disciplinary system, the communication between school personnel and local law enforcement officials, and the integration of restorative leadership programs. The mindset of school personnel must also be invested in the social, emotional, and academic success of Black girls. The July 2015 report, Safety with Dignity, published by New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio’s School Climate Leadership Team, shared the following as part of the City’s mission statement for safe schools:

“The New York City Mayor’s office, Department of Education, and New York Police Department believe the City’s schools must foster environments most conducive to learning” and “that overly punitive methods of discipline are not in the best interests of students, fail to advance school safety and can harm students’ long term potential” (p. 1)

Around the same time, New York State Governor’s Commission on Youth, Public Safety, and Justice cite brain development research about young adolescents lacking maturity in three areas: “[1] self regulation, particularly in emotionally charged contexts, [2] sensitivity to peer influence and immediate awards, and [3] ability to make decisions that require an orientation toward the future” (Creelan, J., Elijah, S., et al., 2015, p. 17). The Commission concluded that youth have an underdeveloped ability to leverage these aforementioned social
emotional competencies in a way that aligns with policies and practices developed to govern the actions of adults.

Therefore, in order for New York City to reach their school safety goals, I submit that more should be done to look further into the ability, capacity, and willingness of school personnel to leverage a restorative leadership program. Doing so will help foster a developmentally appropriate and responsive school environment that addresses how youth in general, but Black girls in particular, increase their capacity to leverage their social emotional competencies to maximize life outcomes. As a result, we would have a promising in-school lever to help address a strand of inequity – school push out – that prevents many Black girls from pursuing their diplomas and future long-term success. Even further, providing a reasonably funded balance of education and social services would dramatically reduce the risk of criminal justice involvement across the United States at a total cost equaling about one tenth ($7 billion) of the entire budget currently allocated to correctional services across the nation (Western, 2008).

Both educators and law enforcement officers are ill prepared and require training to adequately identify and address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of Black girls (Ramirez, U. & Schiraldi, V., et al., 2015). Too often their responses to Black girls who are perceived as loud and are academically underachieving is a matter of presuming guilt then swiftly administering punishment (Archer et al., 2007). School personnel and school safety officers need the skills for observing then categorizing Black girls as youth requiring the space to unpack a seemingly unstable and unhealthy situation in order to improve school climate and safety (Ramirez, U. & Schiraldi, V., et al., 2015). In a 2015 article, Black Girls Matter, Cooper states that a “department spokesman
A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

provided national statistics showing the suspension rate for Black Girls rose from 9 percent in 1994, the first year data was available, to 12 percent in academic year 2011-12” (p. 17). For both forms of authority, there aren’t enough questions posed about the effectiveness of the unwavering commitment to utilize a crime and punishment system in response to the perceived deviant behavior of Black girls. Additionally, “when cultural differences in cognitive style are unrecognized or ignored, and teachers fail to modify instruction to better address those variations, they create the very behaviors about which they complain” (McIntyre, 1996, p. 361).

Founded in 1958 by Merton P. Strommer, the Search Institute utilized “social science research to understand the lives, beliefs, and values of young people” (http://www.search-institute.org). In 1990, the Search Institute published its Developmental Assets Framework (Appendix D) as a way to operationalize the varying perspectives around prevention, resilience, and youth development that promote the “positive relationships, opportunities, competencies, values, and self-perceptions that young people need to succeed” (Scales, P. et al., 2004, p. 1). Of the 40 Developmental Assets, “the average young person experiences only about half of the 40 assets” (http://www.search-institute.org). The assets youth develop, the more often they report fewer risk behaviors – “patterns of negative risk taking behavior outside of those risks that are developmentally appropriate and necessary [i.e. walking to school without a guardian]” (Scales, et al., 2004, p. 4); more resilience – “[ability to] function at adequate levels despite facing adversity and vulnerability” (Scales et al., 2004, p. 4); and greater thriving outcomes – “[ability to] engage in positive actions that
suggest optimal development and on path to a hopeful future” (Scales et al., 2004, p. 4).

There are eight asset categories that are divided into Internal Assets “composed of the values, skills, and self-perceptions young people develop gradually in order to become self-regulation” – commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identities; and External Assets “that adults, and to a lesser extent, peers provide young people” – support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time (Scales, P. et al., 2004, p. 5). Table 5 lists some examples of the academic, mental, behavioral health, and social development outcomes that these eight asset categories promote with respect to positive youth development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Youth Outcomes Stemming from Increased Developmental Assets (Scales et al., 2004)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asset Category + Definition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Support</td>
<td>Higher grades and standardized test scores (p. 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Supported young people know they can rely on positive, fulfilling relationships with many adults in their families, schools, and communities.” (p. 33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Empowerment</td>
<td>Intrinsic motivations for doing well in school (p. 65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Young people are empowered to the extent that they are seen by others as resources, make contributions to society, and feel free of threats to their safety.” (p. 57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Boundaries and Expectations**  
“Boundaries and expectations are the rules, standards, and norms in families, schools neighborhoods, and communities that guide young people’s choices and regulate their behavior.” (p. 81)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Higher achievement scores (p. 90)</th>
<th>Self-efficacy, lower levels of aggression, inattention, and impulsivity (p. 93)</th>
<th>Improved self-discipline, prosocial behavior and social competence (p. 89)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. **Constructive Use of Time**  
“A healthy community offers a rich array of constructive, engaging opportunities and activities to all young people.” (p. 115)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reduced risk for school failure and early school drop out (p. 123)</th>
<th>Fewer teacher-rated problem behaviors (p. 124)</th>
<th>Increased social skillfulness with peers (p. 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. **Commitment to Learning**  
“A person’s commitment to learning is strongly influenced by relationships with family, peers, and others, as well as by the school environment.” (p. 145)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elevated willingness to perform challenging academic tasks (p. 156)</th>
<th>Reduction of alienation and withdrawal (p. 157)</th>
<th>More positive conduct in school (p. 160)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. **Positive Values**  
“Positive values learned in the family and elsewhere eventually become deep commitments that guide how young people think and act.” (p. 177)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Higher grades (p. 185)</th>
<th>Higher self-esteem and more hopefulness (p. 186)</th>
<th>Being socially preferred among peers (p. 186)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. **Social Competencies**  
“Social competencies are skills young people need to develop satisfying relationships with others, deal with new and challenging situations, and sharpen their decision-making capacities.” (p. 195)

|  | Fewer direct aggressive behaviors in school and decreased behavior problems (p. 205) | Increased sense of self-worth and increased problem-solving ability (p. 206) | Higher level of agreeableness for girls (p. 205) |
**8. Positive Identities**

“Developing a sense of confidence, worth, and positive outlook, and beginning to think about life’s meaning, are important developmental ‘building blocks’ as children construct their personal identity.” (p. 231)

| Better school attendance and increased school engagement (p. 237) | Internal locus of control (p. 241) | Improved peer status among initially rejected children (p. 237) |

When their learning spaces provide Black girls with support and opportunities to practice utilizing their developmental assets in order to face challenges in difficult circumstances, Black girls will know how to acquire an educational experience that will prepare them for future success. A future, Black girls could see, filled with hope and possibility.

In line with the above logic, a restorative leadership program focuses on developmental assets throughout its model to increase the developmental outcomes of Black girls. The program model utilizes research-based frameworks that have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on youth development. These frameworks include restorative practices, ethnic studies, social emotional learning, and trauma sensitive school environment. I describe the underlying logic and components of the four frameworks below.

**Restorative practices.** When utilizing restorative practices in a school environment, educators encourage youth to “take responsibility to repair harm [for everyone involved, including the person who initially created the harm] when it occurs, hold each other accountable, and build skills in collective problem solving” so that “shared values of prosocial behaviors are learned through modeling, conflict resolution, and mutual support” (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 300). Professor Gretchen Brion-Meisels stated that restorative practices “cannot
be punitive or based on exclusion or shame, which is part of why they are both useful and hard to enact in some schools” (personal communication, March 27, 2016).

By establishing learning spaces for Black girls to reflect on their actions with the support of caring adults and peers, restorative leadership programs increase a school’s capacity to shift institutional practices away from “punitive and zero tolerance discipline policies” in order to “create positive communities for youth “that will counteract the risks for delinquency associated with academic failure, suspension, expulsion, and dropout” (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 335).

Ethnic studies. A restorative leadership program leverages ethnic studies to develop the social and interpersonal competence of Black girls. Belgrave et al. (2011) proposes “programs that strengthen ethnic identity could link youth to positive African American adults, provide a historical and contemporary context for African American accomplishments, and expose youth to African American events and activities” (p. 1021). Efforts to institutionalize opportunities for students of color to have a more complete and accurate exposure to their history in the traditional school setting began with the creation of an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California Berkeley. Since then, proponents of the benefits of ethnic studies have pushed to infuse ethnic studies into the preK-12 school curriculum.

A restorative leadership program is also able to integrate teachers of color in an education system that does not do well to recruit and retain people of color. The 2012-2013 School and Staffing Survey (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/) reported that of the 3.3 million teachers certified to teach in the United States, only 220,000 identified as African American. Further, roughly 12 percent of the
total number of African American teachers left the profession during that same year.

By integrating ethnic studies and teachers who mirror the demographic of the student body through a restorative leadership program, Black girls can strengthen their ethnic identities, which “is likely to lead to more prosocial and less aggressive behaviors” (Belgrave et al., 2011, p. 1014). This, in turn, might help form a counter-narrative of who Black girls are and ever could be – positive, contributing, respected, celebrated members of society.

**Social emotional competencies.** If students are given the opportunity to develop their social emotional competencies they will have the practical tools to effectively enhance their developmental assets, building blocks for holistic, healthy youth development. Specifically, by utilizing the social emotional competencies developed by the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (Appendix C), it is possible to promote the development of young people who are able to engage in responsible and health-promoting behaviors. Young people will also have a positive self-image, an ability to develop mutually supportive relationships, success in school, and serve as contributing and caring members of their peer groups, families, and communities (Payton et al., 2000, pp. 180-82).

“Angry Black Woman” is the default label Black girls and women receive when they question and push outside the acceptable boundaries of roles assigned to them by a dominant culture that elevates whiteness above the black experience (Ashley, 2014). Such a stereotype has a negative impact on Black girls’ “self-esteem and how they are viewed by others” (Ashley, 2014, p. 28). Some Black girls are prone to suppressing emotions such as anger that in their minds,
validate this stereotype. On the other hand, some Black girls fully lean into the stereotype and are seen as “irate, irrational, hostile, and negative despite the circumstances” and validity of the argument they are trying to communicate (Ashley, 2014, p. 28).

Like Goldilocks from the children’s story *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, Black girls encounter situations where they are perceived as either too hot or too cold. A Black girl is paralyzed and damned if she does and damned if she doesn’t…never just right. Leaning too much in either direction does harm to Black girls’ self-esteem and their relateableness to others. So how can Black girls navigate building and maintaining relationships with peers and adults?

A restorative leadership program provides practical and reflective opportunities for Black girls to regulate within this too hot too cold spectrum. They do so without compromising their identity and without punitive sanctions such as suspension and other exclusionary or demeaning practices. Specifically, it is important for the restorative leadership program to provide opportunities for participants to increase their capacity to recognize and leverage social emotional competencies. Students need these competencies to “recognize and manage their emotions, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish prosocial goals and solve problems, and use a variety of interpersonal skills to effectively and ethically handle developmentally relevant tasks” (Payton et al., 2000, p. 179).

**Trauma sensitive schooling.** Baumeister and colleagues (2001) states that “a single traumatic experience can have long-term effects on the person’s health, well-being, attitudes, self-esteem, anxiety, and behavior” (p. 327-28). While they go on to say trauma cannot be countered by a single positive event, it is possible
for Black girls to seek out “positive and good interactions” that could “outnumber the negative and bad ones by at least five to one” (p. 329).

Instead, survival through a traumatic experience currently involves Black girls showing great strength through the silencing of their pain (Bell, 1998). Black girls are hesitant to be vulnerable for fear of being labeled as deficient. The protective barrier of silencing her physical and emotional pain “enables a Black girl to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth, dignity, and beauty in the face of social standards clearly signaling” (p. 286) that is not appropriate or welcomed for her to have an authentic expression of her raw emotions – especially if they are emotions of anger and pain. School environments do a tremendous disservice in the healing process of Black girl trauma when their policies and practices do not create opportunities for Black girls to process these raw emotions with the support from school personnel. On the other hand, it is also important to note that Black girls’ expressing joy, positive sisterhood, and happiness are also perceived (by some) as loud and obnoxious behaviors that should be silenced. For instance, a group of Black women were removed from a Napa Wine Train in Napa Valley, California for complaints that their laughter and enjoyment of each other’s company during a birthday celebration was intrusive and unwelcomed by the predominantly white patrons sharing the space (Los Angeles Times, October 1, 2015).

A trauma sensitive school experience must view Black girls as individuals and allow for them to “process their individual and collective experiences, learn coping strategies, and feel less isolated” (Day-Vines et al., 2003, p. 48). Fredricks and Eccles (2008) report that “a middle school youth begin to individuate from parents, they seek emotional support from caring non-familial adults” (p. 1029-
A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

30). A restorative leadership program creates a learning environment where Black girls experience good moods. Thereafter, time is spent processing ways to prolong those emotions relative to habits of silencing their pain and joy.

5. Existing Interventions for Black Girls

For Black girls to build the capacity to enhance their social emotional competencies they must engage in a program that prioritizes a holistic approach to positive youth development. Throughout New York City there are many organizations that promote youth empowerment but very few that specifically provide positive youth development opportunities for Black girls.

One example of a program that targets Black girls who are in need of social emotional support is Black Girls Smile. This program consists of workshops and classes of various lengths (one day, three days, or 8-12 weeks) and topics such as coping skills, distress tolerance, and yoga. Black Girls Smile is an “interactive, mental health program that aides in educating youth on mental health, illness and wellness” (http://blackgirlssmile.org). Established in 2012 as a non-profit organization, Black Girls Smile is “dedicated to promoting positive mental health for young African American females” (http://blackgirlssmile.org).

STEM From Dance is another non-profit organization established in 2012 (http://stemfromdance.org). This non-profit operates in the unique slice of education reform that seeks to engage more minority girls in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). By leveraging dance as a culturally relevant tool to build confidence and STEM skills like spatial awareness, STEM From Dance increases the number of minority girls who dream of being scientists and engineers (http://stemfromdance.org).
A third program, Black Girls Rock, has worked “to change the world by empowering Black girls to lead, innovate, and serve...through leadership, education, and positive identity development since 2006” (http://www.blackgirlsrockinc.com). Many celebrity women of color, including Tracie Ellis Ross, have loaned their star power to promote the organizational efforts. Also, their annual Black Girls Rock! Awards ceremony yields millions of viewers each year. The show, which airs on the Black Entertainment Television (BET) cable network, “celebrate the accomplishments of exceptional women of color who have made outstanding contributions in their careers and stand as inspirational and positive role models in the community” (http://www.blackgirlsrockinc.com).

Finally, Black Women’s Blueprint was established in 2008 as an effort to “engage in progressive research, historical documentation, policy advocacy and organizing steeped in the struggles of Black women within their diverse communities and within dominant culture” (http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org). Black Women’s Blueprint places “Black women and girls’ lives as well as their particular struggles squarely within the context of the larger racial justice concerns of Black communities” (http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org).

As a collective, these few development organizations place an emphasis on women and girls of color discovering and leveraging their individual and collective strengths to enter into new spaces. The goal of these programs is to increase the number of Black girls who are seen as smart, innovative, and powerful leaders. For example, Black Girls Rock specifically looks to change the narrative of how women of color are portrayed in the media. And, Black
Women’s Blueprint seeks to create spaces where Black women can tell their story since they are silenced by a culture where “white women tend to speak for the sex and Black men speak for the race” (http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org).

However, a restorative leadership program is distinct from these other leadership development programs because of its focus on engaging a subset of marginalized youth within the minority community. Namely, this is Black girls – descendants from the African Diaspora – who are at risk of school push out from underperforming middle schools in New York City into the juvenile justice system.

Some Black girls who are at risk of school pushout during their middle school experience need a way to pass core academic classes, avoid school suspensions, build positive relationships with school personnel and peers. Additionally, schools need a way to utilize alternative policies and practices that provide social emotional support to Black girls in order to reduce risk of delinquent behavior and therefore, reduce the number of Black girls who are disproportionately pushed out of schools into the juvenile justice system.

During my experience leading the original weeklong summer camp program model with high school girls of all demographics in Charleston, South Carolina in summer 2015, I observed girls taking risks, showing interest in their history, building relationships across differences, and developing a thirst for more opportunities to showcase their talents. I wanted to see if taking on the role of Adventure Coach to implement a restorative leadership program in an urban school setting, specifically for Black girls, would have similar, observable outcomes.
6. Theory of Action for a New Restorative Intervention

The National Education Longitudinal Study that focused on eighth graders argued for effective intervention for at-risk youth during the formidable years of middle school given the amount of damage (i.e. dropout of school by 10th grade) that can occur otherwise (NCES, 1992). This suggest that a restorative leadership program targeted to girls in middle school may be able to provide the social emotional support for Black girls as a way to prevent the trend of Black girl school push-out. Specifically, a restorative leadership program, as I define it, is one that empowers Black girls to learn transferable skills (i.e. active listening, perspective taking, collaboration) they can leverage to traverse the many obstacles created by their oppressive school system. Additionally, a restorative leadership program is a strategic educational tool reformers could leverage to advocate for schools to interact differently with young women of color.

Given the features of a restorative leadership program and the needs and experiences of black girls as described throughout this Review of Knowledge for Action, I propose the following theory of action:

**IF** a restorative leadership program convenes a group of Black girls attending an underperforming middle school in New York City and introduces them to a learning environment filled with opportunities for Black girls to practice enhancing their developmental assets through modified instructional techniques such as in-school and out-of-school adventure sports, mentor relationships with peers and adults, leadership opportunities, and genealogy research,

**THEN** the Black girls involved in this intervention might improve their awareness of self and others – a self-regulation skill that can increase their
resiliency, knowledge of self, collaboration, and commitment to reclaim (and share) a positive narrative about their experiences.

**ADDITIONALLY**, participating middle schools will have a viable option for increasing the availability of services, policies, and practices that support Black girls social emotional development and prevent Black girl school push out which increasingly places Black girls at risk for incarceration.
The Strategic Project – Adventure Girlz NYC

1. Logic Model of a Restorative Leadership Program
Richard Weissbourd (2015) and the Making Care Common team at Harvard Graduate School of Education published a report “Leaning Out: Teen Girls and Leadership Biases” that included a checklist of key components for a girls leadership development program (pp. 22-23):

- **Exposure**: Leadership programs should expose girls to a wide range of professions (career exploration, opportunities to hear from and/or meet inspiring female leaders in a wide range of fields, resources and support for finding internships and volunteer or shadowing opportunities)
- **Skill Development**: Leadership programs should focus on concrete skill development (public speaking, conflict resolution, effective or assertive communication, problem solving, networking and self-advocacy, goal setting)
- **Collaboration**: Leadership programs and strategies should promote collaboration and a sense of solidarity among girls (team or group-based projects/activities, relationship building experiences or skill-building, opportunities to work with diverse groups (i.e. ages, cultures, etc.))
- **Mentorship**: Leadership programs should connect girls with older, respected girls and women who can model and inspire them to seek out leadership and guide them in navigating barriers they face to pursuing leadership (counselor in-training, big sisters, or other program elements that connect girls with older girls and women, peer leadership programs, trained staff and volunteer)
- **High Expectations and Meaningful Opportunities**: Leadership programs should hold girls to high expectations and provide them with real, meaningful opportunities to take responsibility for others (youth-led projects or initiatives and programs that give girls opportunities to choose causes that matter to them, opportunities for girls to teach and lead others, programs that incorporate chores, tasks, and expectations)

Nurturing learning environments that promote leadership practices, mentoring, and noncognitive skills development, as Weissbourd (2015) describes, are beneficial to all students of all backgrounds and races. However, a “high percentages of girls don’t participate in these programs” (Weissbourd,
Additionally, many girls “don’t have access to high quality programs” (Weissbourd, 2015, p. 5) which is likely to be the case when girls live in low-income communities and attend underperforming schools.

For my strategic project I will launch a pilot of a restorative leadership program called Adventure Girlz, which addresses the above gap. Adventure Girlz has a long-term goal of dismantling the larger unjust system that deprioritizes the educational attainment of Black girls. The original Adventure Girlz program was initially NOT in a school setting and was considered an experiential outdoor empowerment program for girls that focused on adventure sports, personal narrative, genealogy research, and informal mentoring. For my academic, school-year pilot of Adventure Girlz, the program was implemented at one partner middle school in New York City and serve twelve Black girls. Across the course of the year, I projected that participants would: (1) interact with others of different personalities and backgrounds; (2) reflect on their decision-making process and performing tasks outside of their comfort zone; (3) develop skills for sharing ideas, questions, and feelings with family, friends, and school personnel; and (4) research and celebrate their Black girl identity as they engage in classroom instruction that includes journaling, roundtable discussions, collaborative team activities, and academic goal setting.
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Figure 1
Logic Model: Adventure Girlz

A restorative leadership program is a developmental approach schools can leverage to include policies and practices that create an educational experience that promote Black girls and stem their delinquent behavior and subsequent school push out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
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<td>Programs that are designed to empower Black girls have often overlooked the number of Black girls who are rapidly moving into the juvenile justice system.</td>
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<tr>
<th>SUBPROBLEM</th>
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<td>Black girls are at risk of incarceration when schools focus on discipline and control rather than providing a high quality education and support services for Black girls’ development.</td>
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<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
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<td>Provide public middle schools an effective program that: 1) Helps reduce the number of Black girls who are pushed out of schools 2) Provides social emotional support to Black girls in order to reduce delinquent behavior</td>
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<tr>
<th>INTERIM OBJECTIVES</th>
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<td>Participants will: 1) Interact with others of different personalities and backgrounds 2) Reflect on their decision-making process and performing tasks outside of their comfort zone 3) Develop skills for sharing ideas, questions, and feelings with family, friends, and school personnel 4) Research and celebrate their Black girl identity</td>
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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
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<td>Participants will engage in a learning environment that prioritizes educational attainment through modified instructional techniques such as a variety of adventure sports, collaborative learning with peers and adult mentors, and genealogy research.</td>
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<tr>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOME MEASURES</th>
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<td>Adventure Girlz will: 1) Implement program at one partner schools 2) Engage 12 participants 3) Offer classroom instruction that includes journaling, roundtable discussions, collaborative team activities, and academic goal setting 4) Eight, adventure sport days during the academic year 5) One, service learning day 6) One, week-long overnight trip to South Carolina 7) Bi-weekly phone calls and family newsletter during the academic year 8) Family Open House/Workshop dinner</td>
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<th>METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Constituent (student, family, school personnel) surveys and interviews 2) Observations of participants during school day 3) Official academic and disciplinary school records 4) Reports from school resource officers 5) Student journal responses</td>
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<tr>
<th>SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES</th>
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<td>By the end of the academic year, participants will: 1) Increase/ maintain a ‘B’ average across all core classes 2) Reduce the total number of referrals/demersits 3) Increase the # of positive interactions with school personnel and peers 4) Make two presentations about Black girl identity and the impact of school push out</td>
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<th>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</th>
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<td>School personnel, families, and the community will consistently prioritize ongoing conversations and efforts to include a restorative leadership program, such as Adventure Girlz, as an effective approach that is an alternative for using school policies and practices that result in the criminalization, underachievement, and subsequent school push out of Black girls.</td>
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2. Activities

Adventure Girlz will utilize key mechanisms of change that are focused on personal youth development. Subsequently demonstrating to school personnel and families how leveraging alternative policies and practices for engaging and supporting Black girls throughout their schooling experience is possible with a restorative leadership program. The Adventure Girlz infrastructure that includes eight adventure sport days during the academic year, one service-learning day on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and a week-long overnight trip to South Carolina at the end of the school year, will offer opportunities for participants to:

- MOVE (physical sports and field trips),
- TALK (critical conversations about what it means to grow up as a Black girl),
- MENTOR (events to collaborate and build relationships with peer and adult mentors), and
- LEAD (workshops to learn personalized goal setting and reflection techniques to improve life outcomes).

**Move.** According to Fredricks and Eccles (2008), extracurricular activities, such as adventure sports – non-traditional sports that often involved speed, height, a high level of physical exertion, and highly specialized gear – are organized and afford “youth the opportunity to form supportive and caring relationships with adults in the wider community who can provide them with social capital” (p. 1029-30). The participants in a restorative leadership program engage in adventure sports to step away from their school environment and embrace their local and out-of-state communities as expanded classroom settings. While in these “outdoor classrooms” participants are exposed to physical games and collaborative activities to expand their social emotional
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competencies. These activities also contribute to “identify development and personal exploration” (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008, pp. 1029-30) and provide participants the opportunity to master new skills, which will empower them to develop healthy habits for success in school and beyond.

**Talk.** Black girls will be able to reflect and make meaning of their everyday experiences in their school and communities as they learn about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Girls Matter campaign through a range of media (e.g. videos, articles, museum exhibits, guest speakers). A restorative leadership program also integrates a literacy component where participants engage in a Sista Reading Circle that includes reading literature with characters that mirror Black girls’ physical features and lived experiences. My assumption is that Black girls having exposure to such literature will allow them to explore the perceived and real positions of girls and women of color in the United States. Participants will share personal stories about being a Black girl and give/get advice to tackle obstacles during the Sista Reading Circle. The first book, *The Skin I’m In*, is written by Sharon G. Flake (2011) and is “a story of seventh grader Maleeka Madison who has low self-esteem because of her dark skin color” (book cover). After the group read-aloud of Chapters 1-4, a participant shared her impressions of one of the main characters, Charlese, who makes rude, disrespectful remarks to her teachers, makes fun of her friends, and cuts class.

**Tina:** She is as sassy as me. I sometimes act the way she does.

**Facilitator:** Do you like Charlese?

[a long pause as Tina stood in deep thought]

**Tina:** Well…If I say I don’t like her, then I am saying I don’t like myself and need to change my behavior.
Reading books such *The Skin I’m In* will allow the girls to reflect and make connections to their lived experiences and who they want to be. Participants will actively practice reading, critical thinking, and public speaking skills as they consider and respond to the various narratives depicting Black girls and women in the mainstream media and society at large.

**Mentor.** Restorative leadership programs are able to integrate teachers of color in an education system that does not do well to recruit and retain people of color. The 2012-2013 School and Staffing Survey reported that of the 3.3 million teachers certified to teach in the United States, only 220,000 identified as African American. Further, roughly 12 percent of the total number of African American teachers left the profession during that same year. Adventure Girlz will invite Black girls and women in the community who are leaders in their field to discuss their challenges, triumphs, and how they have claimed their Black girl identity. Women from Black Adventuristas (a group of more than 20,000 Black women adventurists) will also receive invitations to participate in events where they will meet with Adventure Girlz participants to share their interest in adventure sports such as rock climbing, scuba diving, skiing, and more.

**Lead.** With an intentional effort for reflecting on implications for individual personal growth and development, Adventure Girlz participants complete journal entries to capture specific evidence of practices they have used to impact changes in their development. With that information captured, participants can reflect on how to duplicate said practices for transferable, long-lasting changes outside of the Adventure Girlz program time. Specifically, participants would discover individual and collective strengths Black girls could utilize to bring about changes for the Black girl school experience at their school.
For instance, through their academic goal setting efforts (Appendix F), participants sought to maintain at least a ‘B’ average in all core subject classes. They were pushed to be honest with themselves about the grade for each core subject, number of disciplinary referrals, and how they felt during each core class. Then, participants went deeper and identified personal strengths (what they were doing well) and gaps (areas for improvement) they should be mindful of in three distinct areas: (1) homework, (2) class participation, as well as (3) conduct and attendance. With these data, participants were coached to identify actionable steps to maintain and/or improve performance areas in core subject classes. Thereafter, each Adventure Girlz session included opportunity for girls to reflect on efforts to meet goals. Girls were also encouraged to have open dialogue with school personnel and family to discuss and receive support in reaching the goals outlined in their academic action plan.

_Claire: I am so upset_

_Ms. Selby: Why is that?_

_Claire: I don’t like Ms. Arturo because she dropped my grade. I went from a 89 to a 88. I do all the work and she still dropped my grade._

_Ms. Selby: Well why do you think she dropped your grade?_

_Claire: I don’t know…_

_Ms. Selby: Well have you thought about asking her?_

_Claire [with wide eyes and a vigorous shake of her head]: Ohhh noooo…I don’t know about that_  

_Ms. Selby: Well then you wont ever know why she dropped your grade. What do you think would happen if you go to her and say “Ms. Arturo, I was looking at my grade from quarter 2 to now and I noticed my grade was lowered. Can you help me understand why that happened and what I could do to bring it back up?”_  

_Claire: Uhhhhmmmm…I don’t know Miss…_

3. Implementation Outcome Measures

By the end of the academic year, based on constituent (student, family, school personnel) surveys and interviews, observations of participants during
school day, official academic and disciplinary school records, and reports from school resource officers, Adventure Girlz will show evidence of each participant increasing/maintaining a ‘B’ average across all core classes. Additional outcome measures are reducing the total number of referrals/demerits, increasing the number of positive interactions with school personnel and peers, and making two presentations about Black girl identity and the impact of school push out.

Building on the above outcomes, school personnel, families, and the community will consistently prioritize ongoing conversations and efforts to include a restorative leadership program. Doing so is as an effective approach that is an alternative for using school policies and practices that result in the criminalization, underachievement, and subsequent school push out of Black girls. Overall, at the end of this pilot, Adventure Girlz would leverage participants, school personnel, family, and community organizations to implement and reinforce new practices and policies that do not lead to Black girl school push out. As a result, the Black girls will see their learning space where they are acknowledged for having ideas and celebrated for their growth, expand beyond the designated programming hours of Adventure Girlz. With this communication and the involvement of other adults, participants can have a direct hand in helping to shift the public mindset of how Black girls are perceived and treated in society. That is the level of school transformation and participant empowerment that a restorative leadership program can facilitate.
Results and Analysis
The following sections of the Capstone is a detailed account of (1) launching the Adventure Girlz program; (2) students’ initial perception of their restorative leadership program experience as captured in the data yielded from Youth and Program Strengths (YAPS) survey developed by the Search Institute; and (3) real-time changes I made based on YAPS survey responses as well as first-hand observations of participants during Adventure Girlz.

1. Launching Adventure Girlz

The Correctional Association of New York. My work to launch Adventure Girlz began with a residency at the Correctional Association of New York (the Association). The Association was founded in 1844 and remains the only private organization in the state that has the power to conduct on-site examinations of the conditions of New York State prisons and report its findings and recommendations to governmental authorities and the public.

The Association has three purposes which include, “the amelioration of the condition of prisoners whether detained for trial, or finally convicted, or as witnesses; the improvement of Prison Discipline and the Government of Prisons; and the support and encouragement of reformed convicts after their discharge, by affording them the means of obtaining an honest livelihood, and sustaining them in their efforts at reform” (Reich, 1994, p. 3). In 1943-44, the Association worked to have legislature referred to as Youth Offender Laws passed in order to “prevent young offenders from being stigmatized as offenders” (Reich, 1994, p. 49). Efforts were also made to allow the courts to differentiate between issuing consequences for an adult vs. youth committing criminal acts. Additionally, the Association worked to have youthful offender records sealed and/or expunged.
to ensure the mistakes of the youth did not follow them into adulthood as barriers to accessing resources such as jobs (Reich, 1994).

With regards to system involved youth, the Association created the Juvenile Justice Project (JJP) to reduce youth detention and incarceration, to transform the youth justice system from a punitive model into one grounded in positive youth development principles and to support and empower young people who come in contact with the youth justice system. JJP is further committed to working toward a youth justice system that is transparent and accountable to children and their families, communities, legislators and policy-makers, and the public.

The Association has close connections to a wide area of policy makers in New York State and City. This includes policy makers for the NYC Department of Education, the Office of Children and Family Services, the Administration of Child Welfare, the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice Services and the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, just to name a few.

Establishing a partnership between Adventure Girlz and a New York City public school to reduce the number of Black girls who are pushed out of school into the juvenile justice system is currently a body of work to which the Association does not assign dedicated staff and resources. Therefore, the Adventure Girlz program was an important addition to youth programming the Association supported.

As such, the Association’s Youth and Community Coordinator offered important insights for how to approach developing the content of a restorative leadership program (pre-planned curriculum vs. organic experiences for each class session), building relationships with all stakeholders (communicating with
school leaders, families, and potential funders). She also coached me to recognize the importance of listening to the voices of students to best integrate opportunities that closely align with their interests, comfort level in the group, and academic skills.

**Citizen Schools.** Another important partner for the Adventure Girlz launch was Citizen Schools. Citizen Schools is a non-profit that expands a middle school’s learning day by connecting a team of adults to provide relevant learning experiences that give students the skills access, and beliefs they need to succeed in school, college and careers. When deciding on how to cultivate a school partner to recruit students for the Adventure Girlz program, I leveraged my 10-year relationship with Citizen Schools and reached out to their regional office in New York City. Instead of a stand-alone after-school provider, Adventure Girlz folded into the Citizen Schools apprenticeship model.

As part of their core programming, Citizen Schools recruits volunteers from the community and major corporate partners (i.e. Google) to teach ninety-minute hands on, project-based workshops for 10 weeks to a group of middle school students. A few weeks before the new school year started, I had several meetings with staff members from Citizen Schools. During those meetings they discussed the details of how Adventure Girlz could fit into the apprenticeship model without compromising the integrity of organizational goals and operational structures of both organizations.

The Citizen Schools staff was able to recruit Adventure Girlz to meet their recruitment goals of providing students with a diverse selection of apprenticeships for the semester. Adventure Girlz was able to have access to a group of Black girls in addition to a school environment that was willing to
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embrace Adventure Girlz as a strategic tool for reengaging Black girls.

Leveraging Citizen Schools as a partner allowed Adventure Girlz to focus on developing engaging curriculum and learning about the school environment students were a part of. Since Adventure Girlz didn’t have to work to establish a direct school partnership, we had the capacity to fully carry out efforts to launch, teach, and support participants in the program.

Before the school year commenced, I met the Teaching Fellow – Citizen Schools’ “national two-year AmeriCorps service opportunity for individuals dedicated to directly impacting the futures of middle school students in low income communities across America” (www.citizenschools.org) – who would partner with me in the classroom to serve as an Adventure Coach. She was a Black woman from the island of Jamaica who experienced a learning environment that had limited opportunities to enhance her own developmental assets. The Citizen Schools apprenticeship model required each volunteer to have a “staff member support” that provides in-class planning and teaching support. As the staff member support, she was paired with Adventure Girlz given her personal background mirroring the demographic of girls who would eventually participate in the program.

Urban Assembly at Unison. The pilot implementation of Adventure Girlz took place at the Urban Assembly at Unison middle school (grades 6-8) in Brooklyn, New York between September 2015 and June 2016. The Urban Assembly network of small public schools spans across low-income communities in NYC. The schools are structured around individualized school themes that integrate various external partnerships to enhance the curriculum and school culture that provides every student with a high quality education that will
prepare them for college and career success ([http://urbanassembly.org](http://urbanassembly.org)). With about 200 students enrolled and a 90% attendance rate, the school-wide philosophy of Unison focuses on “teaching learners to learn for themselves and developing the whole person through emphasizing critical thinking, writing and public speaking” ([http://uaunison.org](http://uaunison.org)). The student body consists of 15% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 73% Black, and 2% White with 11% English Language Learners (ELL) and 23% Students with Special Needs.

Adventure Girlz enrolled a total of 12, 7th and 8th grade girls who (1) identified as being a part of the African Diaspora (descended from the historic movement of peoples from Africa); (2) had failed 2+ core classes and/or had been suspended from school on one or more occasions; and (3) received free/reduced lunch. With regards to participant eligibility, one example of student recruitment well-illustrates the important sets of issues involved in program enrollment. For instance, Citizen Schools’ school personnel reasoned that one participant, Alissa, should be enrolled in the program so she could experience a learning environment that could potentially ignite some extrovert qualities such as speaking up in class. Therefore, we decided to focus on both ends of the Black girls’ spectrum of school performance; from high engagement on one end to habitual disciplinary case on the other end.

Without reinforced self-regulation skills that are applicable in a range of social context, high achieving Black girls can also encounter situations that could potentially disrupt their performance and cause them to start on a destructive path towards the juvenile justice system. From observing Alissa’s contributions early on and reflecting on my own high school experience in which learning appropriate norms and mores from those who had more facility with them, I
drew an important conclusion about program enrollment for Adventure Girlz. The program’s main aim is on supporting Black girls who might be perceived as more typically at risk for school pushout. I concluded that a restorative leadership program would benefit Black girls at two ends of the schooling experience spectrum. These include Black girls who are on track to successfully completing school requirements, with little to no school disciplinary cases and Black girls who are habitually involved in school disciplinary cases.

2. Early Program Assessment and Results

The Search Institute developed the Youth and Program Strengths (YAPS) survey – a 98-question online survey that takes less than 20 minutes to complete – to assess the quality of youth development programs that are used to support the enhancement of participants’ Developmental Assets (http://www.search-institute.org). As a restorative leadership program, Adventure Girlz administered the survey to students five weeks after the start of the Fall semester. As a note, the Search Institute requires a minimum of 30 survey participants to account for measurement and sampling errors and cautions against generalizing survey results stemming from sample sizes that do not meet that minimum requirement. The Adventure Girlz pilot included 12 participants.

For the purposes of assessing whether or not a restorative leadership program such as Adventure Girlz can have an impact on the behavior and academic trajectory of participants, the survey results and program observations are relevant for the specific participants in the pilot program. It was our hope that we could utilize this information to improve the experience for Adventure
A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

Girlz participants in the near future where we would expand our sample size to a minimum of 30 participants.

The Search Institute (2015) describes the YAPS survey as eight program quality survey components that are the elements of a high-quality program: (1) **physical and psychological safety** – degree to which young people feel safe during program; (2) **appropriate structure** – degree to which young people feel the program is well-run and organized; (3) **supportive relationships** – quality of the relationships young people have with adults and other youth in the program; (4) **opportunities to belong** – degree to which young people feel the program is inviting and that they fit in; (5) **positive social norms** – degree to which young people feel the program clearly builds how adults and youth treat each other and behave, as well as the values all participants should have; (6) **support for efficacy and mattering** – degree to which youth feel the program provides opportunities to feel competent, accepted, and valued in the program; (7) **opportunities for skill building** – degree to which the program help young people grow in their capacities and expertise; and (8) **integration of family, school, and community efforts** – degree to which young people feel the program is a partner with families, schools, and other programs, and provides opportunities for parents and families to be involved.

Each item on the YAPS survey has five response options (e.g. Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often). Responses from each participant are coded on a scale of 0 to 4 (e.g. Never – 0, Rarely – 1, Sometimes – 2, Often – 3, Very Often – 4) then averaged and multiplied by 10 to get the overall score for each component. Component scores are then assigned one of four quality levels depicting participant perception of programming in the given area (The Search Institute, 2015, survey report; Scales, P. et al., 2004):
• **Challenged (red):** Scores of 0 to 19 points – at risk of illicit drug use, antisocial behavior, physical aggression/violence, and frequent sadness

• **Vulnerable (orange):** Scores of 20 to 27 points – on the cusp of falling into either risky behavior and showcasing resiliency

• **Adequate (blue):** Scores of 28 to 33 points – able to function despite facing adversity and vulnerability

• **Thriving (purple):** Scores of 34 to 40 points – optimal development space where a hopeful future is foreseeable

Using the bracketed scores provided a clearer picture of which program components needed improvement as well as areas that were of high quality and should be maintained. As seen with Figure 2, the restorative leadership program quality was at ‘Adequate’ and ‘Thriving’ for 6 out of 8 quality components – structure, belonging, social norms, efficacy and mattering, skill building, and integration of efforts. However, the program was classified as ‘Challenged’ with regards to safety and ‘Vulnerable’ with regards to relationships. With these results it was clear that in order to see meaningful impact on targeted outcomes for participants, it would be a priority to retool the program to increase the number of participants who felt safe and confident that they had supportive relationships within the group.

Individual participant responses are also bracketed into the four quality categories (Challenge, Vulnerable, Adequate, and Thriving) to show the concentration of participant responses in each program component. The following is a breakdown of how the restorative leadership program was initially structured and facilitated to support each program component, the distribution of participants’ survey responses, and the subsequent efforts to address gaps and maintain areas of strength across each program component.
Physical and psychological safety. In order to focus on schoolwork, students must believe that they are free from potential harm from their peers and teachers (Scales et al., 2004). This safety can include their physical wellbeing as well as their emotional state of being. If a student is anxious and constantly fearful of the possibility of physical or verbal attacks from classmates and teachers, that student will experience significant barriers to learning such as depression, loneliness, avoidance, attention difficulties, and poor peer relationships and social skills (Scales et al, 2004). They will hesitate to share their ideas. They will lash out at other students who make them “feel stupid” or who “abandon friendship lines” once group dynamics shift.

The first few weeks of Adventure Girlz served to establish a culture of vulnerability in the group that would allow each participant to interact with a diverse set of personalities and cultural backgrounds. The first module in the restorative learning program curriculum focused on building group rapport.
Through “getting to know you” activities participants started the process of coming together as a team in preparation for the first adventure field trip – a Low and High Ropes Challenge Course. In doing so, I started to identify different alliances that tended to shift from week to week. For our first adventure, 11 out of the 12 girls came out on a Saturday to spend the day at Ally Pond Park Adventure Course in Queens, New York.

During the trip, the alliances between participants switched up by the hour. The physical and psychological safety was a concern – girls cursing at each other, calling each other names, and not listening to any instructions given by the Ally Pond Park staff. At one point, a participant shared she was upset because, "We can't even have a day when we can all come together and have fun". They were all genuinely excited for the opportunity and shared that they were enjoying the day and having fun. However, when leaving the park we had to switch the occupants of each mini van to prevent a physical fight from happening between several of the girls. On the ride home, participants shared more stories about individual conflict between different clusters of the entire group that stem as far back as one year earlier. When asked if things would change, the girls resorted to saying “If everyone minds their business and stick to your own corner then everything would be fine.

“Mind your business and stick to your own corner” is a mindset that many of the participants relied on to navigate toxic relationships. As illustrated in Figure 2, out of the 40 possible points on the YAPS survey, Adventure Girlz scored 17 for physical and psychological safety; which is in the lowest quality category. The histogram in Figure 3 represents the distribution of the responses across all 12 participants. Six participants (50%) are in the challenged category.
meaning they felt extremely unsafe and fearful that others in the program would physically and psychologically harm them, five participants (42%) are in the vulnerable category, and one participant (8%) reported in the thriving category. This data served as confirmation that after the first five weeks of programming, participants did not feel safe.

![Physical and Psychological Safety Histogram](image)

**Figure 3.** 2015 YAPS pre-survey report for Adventure Girlz

The Search Institute, 2015

**Appropriate structure.** Students perform better in learning environments with clear expectations and routines in addition to believing they have competent teachers who can lead the group ([http://www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)). A restorative leadership program balances communicating a few non-negotiable expectations to participants (e.g. one speaker at a time) and creating the space for them to brainstorm and agree to additional expectations that will govern the learning environment. The histogram in Figure 4 represents the distribution of the responses across all 12 participants. Five participants (42%) are in the vulnerable category meaning they felt extremely unsafe and fearful that others in the program would physically and psychologically harm them, five participants
(42%) are in the adequate category, and two participants (17%) reported in the thriving category.

![Appropriate Structure Histogram](image)

**Figure 4. 2015 YAPS pre-survey report for Adventure Girlz**

The Search Institute, 2015

With a closer look at the specific questions and participant responses (Table 6) there is evidence that the majority of participants Agree and Strongly Agree that staff really know what they are doing (58%), are ready to go when program starts (59%), provide clear explanations for class time (67%), start and end on time (84%), hold participants accountable to rules at all times (93%), and fairly enforces rules (75%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6 Appropriate Structure 29/40</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do you agree or disagree with the following?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff really know what they are doing.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff are ready to go when our time together starts.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. We start and end on time. 0% 8% 8% 42% 42%
7. The staff make sure we follow the rules all of the time. 0% 0% 8% 42% 50%
8. Rules are enforced fairly for everyone. 0% 8% 17% 33% 42%

2015 YAPS pre-survey report for Adventure Girlz
The Search Institute, 2015

**Supportive relationships.** The restorative leadership program strives to achieve a learning environment filled with mutual respect across all individuals, whether participant or facilitator, which result in a willingness for everyone to go above and beyond to ensure everyone’s needs are met ([http://www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)). During their core classes, participants expressed having little to no opportunities to share their ideas with teachers and school leaders. Participants shared their hesitation for engaging in conversations with school personnel since, from their perspective, the conversations would more than likely be negative lectures about their disrespectful behaviors. Evidence (Table 7) showing that participation in the restorative leadership program had the opposite effect where participants felt there was someone on the teaching team who they could confide in. Participants Agree and Strongly Agree that the restorative leadership program has someone they could talk to (58%), staff shows participants that they enjoy working with young people (59%), and the staff respects the participants (67%).

| Table 7 |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Supportive Relationships 26/40 | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| **How much do you agree or disagree with the following?** | | | | | | |
| 3 There is at least one staff member I can talk to if I have a problem. | 0 | 17% | 25% | 33% | 25% |
| 5. The staff in this program shows that they enjoy working with young people. | 8% | 8% | 25% | 42% | 17% |
The supportive relationships histogram (Figure 5) shows that one participant (8%) is in the challenged category meaning they do not believe the restorative leadership program provides supportive relationships. Seven participants (58%) are in the vulnerable category where they have encountered supportive relationships on an inconsistent basis. One participant (8%) is in the adequate category and three participants (25%) reported in the thriving category which means they have a positive view of supportive relationships they have encountered while participating in the restorative leadership program.

Having the restorative leadership program as an outlet is great for participants to practice regulating their emotions by being able to talk about their feelings. Participants can also process possible alternative approaches for responding to a range of emotional moments in their school experience. Related
to the facilitation of supportive relationships, when reviewing the participant responses to specific questions, there is evidence (Table 8) the restorative leadership program currently does not do an effective job of offering opportunities for participants to make new friends (17% say Never, 25% say Rarely, 42% say Sometimes) and for young people to encourage each other to develop their interests and talents (17% say Never, 17% say Rarely, 25% say Sometimes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th>Supportive Relationships 26/40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often in this program...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Do you make new friends?</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do each of these people help or encourage you to develop your interests and talents?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Staff of this program</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Other young people in this program</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you spend time in this program, how often do you...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Develop good relationships with kids your age?</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Develop good relationships with adults?</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opportunities to belong. The restorative leadership program aims to create a learning environment that serves as a solid support system for Black girls to build a sisterhood. While in this network, each participant is encouraged to take risks and share intimate, personal stories. To set expectations for supporting each other and working as a team to accomplish goals, participants were broken up into teams to prepare a shared meal in the second class session.
of Adventure Girlz. Given the importance of the black community convening around the kitchen table for critical conversations and intimacy building, especially for women, cooking was used to begin the process of ensuring the restorative leadership program was an intimate space for all participants. On that day, students (both boys and girls) who were not enrolled in the restorative leadership program, waltzed in and out of class without any apparent consequences from school personnel. The sacred space that was needed to promote vulnerability in the group so that participants could open up and unpack some personal matters that were clearly impacting their academic performance/experience, was interrupted.

A young woman, Larissa, stopped by and insisted that she was placed in Adventure Girlz. She was disrespectful towards the entire class. My staff support told Larissa that if she was placed in Adventure Girlz she needed to get a pass that said as much. Larissa left the room and returned roughly 30 minutes later, without a pass, yet still adamant that she belonged in Adventure Girlz.

*Larissa:* “Why are you speaking to me?”

*Ms. Selby* [to Larissa]: I am speaking to you because you are in the Adventure Girlz classroom where you are not assigned to be and if you don’t want me to talk to you then you need to leave and go to your correct class assignment. The behavior you are displaying is rude and disgusting and you need to not be in the room because you are taking away the learning opportunity from the girls who are a part of this class. Your behavior, attitude, and remarks will not take you far in life and you need to leave the room and get back to where you are expected to be during this time.

*Ms. Selby* [to the group]: I apologized for there being so many students entering and wandering about the classroom during a space that was supposed to be sacred and safe for you all to share your personal thoughts and opinions.

Larissa spent the better part of the allotted 90-minute block of time in Adventure Girlz and no adult at the school was able to get her to leave and
return to her assigned class. At one point, I flagged down a school administrator and asked for her assistance. Larissa stood her ground and refused to leave in a timely fashion (took about 10 minutes). However, less than one minute later, Larissa burst back into the room and proudly announced "I'm baaaaaaaack".

For the remainder of the time up through dismissal, Larissa tried to enlist other students to disrupt the class. She tried to eat the food we had prepared. When I told the Adventure Girlz not to serve any student who is not in Adventure Girlz any of the food and they must eat everything or throw the remaining food in the garbage before they leave for dismissal. Larissa parroted my every word and mimicked my gestures. At the end of the day, Larissa snatched the spoon out of one of the bowls and put a spoonful of food in her mouth. At this point I was standing by the door to watch students dismiss. Larissa stared in my face as she passed, got real close, then deliberately chewed the food in my face. I told her "I hope you don't choke on it!" to which she responded, “You could choke on my Daddy's dick”. For subsequent Adventure Girlz sessions, I requested to have the classroom door locked to prevent students from entering, uninvited. I also covered the window so participants would not have watchful eyes on them from other students in the hallway.

Soon after this incident, I had an update meeting with the Executive Director of the Correctional Association of New York. I was so worked up from the exchange with Larissa that I spent the better part of the meeting recapping the situation and what was going through my mind since then. Here is a paraphrased account of my exchange with the Executive Director:

*Moriska: In all my years of working with young people, I never felt so disrespected. Larissa’s behavior was a new encounter for me.*
Executive Director: You do realize that Larissa fits the Black girl demographic you have chosen to target with this programming, right?

Moriska: I know…

Executive Director: Do you have space in the program for Larissa to join?

Moriska: I mean, we budgeted for only 12 participants but I can make room for her and another student who told me she really wanted to join.

Executive Director: And how did the other girls react to the scene between you and Larissa?

Moriska: Some of the girls continued working on the shared meal. Some laughed at Larissa and jokingly encouraged her to behave herself and leave class. However, no one spoke ill of her when she was in the room. For the few minutes she was out of the room, some of the girls expressed their frustration with how Larissa was behaving.

Executive Director: What would it take for you to decide to enroll Larissa so she could gain the proposed benefits of your Adventure Girlz programming?

Moriska [sighing]: I’ll need to think about it…

I spent the rest of the week into the weekend, going back and forth as to the pros and cons of enrolling Larissa. All of the pros mirrored Executive Director’s remarks during our conversation – Larissa is part of your target demographic, Larissa could benefit from your program. The cons however centered on a gut feeling. Without knowing much about the school at that point, my gut was telling me that if another situation with Larissa was to surface, it was unlikely that I would get the immediate support from the school to deescalate the situation. My gut was telling me that the school community rewards Larissa with what she wants without any accountability for her inconsiderate tactics. My gut also told me that Larissa’s energy was too toxic to take on in an unproven program pilot. I also acknowledged the limitations in my expertise as a practitioner to manage a learning environment that is interrupted by someone with behavior that is similar to Larissa. In the end, I decided not to enroll her.
Despite the intrusion, Table 9 shows evidence that participants Agree and Strongly Agree that they feel like an important part of the program (84%), can be herself during program (66%), and feels proud to be a part of the program (92%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9</th>
<th>Opportunities to Belong 30/40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you agree or disagree with the following?</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I feel like an important part of this program.</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I can be myself at this program.</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am proud to be a part of this program.</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the histogram (Figure 6) shows one outlier who is in the Challenged category. When reviewing individual responses to specific questions, that participant Strongly Disagree that she feels like an important part of the program and believes she cannot be herself during the program.
Positive social norms. The restorative leadership program didn’t have a list of expectations for how group members should treat each other. Those sorts of norms are necessary for participants to understand “how we do things around here” and are a starting point for ensuring clear communication and fair treatment of everyone. After observing how students interacted with each other, participants completed an activity to brainstorm positive social norms for the group.

To start the conversation, during the third class session in the Fall, we watched a video depicting my personal narrative about my school experience. Participants were given a handout with an image of half of a photo headshot of myself (Appendix E). In groups they brainstormed adjectives to summarize what they thought I represented and what I would bring to the group. Based on what they had learned about me thus far, they also completed three sentences from my perspective:

• I joined Adventure Girlz because, I believe (something positive about yourself)
• While in this class, I will (one way you will help the group be successful)
• I want others to (one way you want others to treat you)

After sharing each group’s responses, each participant was given their own individualized handout with their name and blank space for them to respond to the same three sentences from their perspective. In their responses (Appendix G), there is a general consensus of everyone treating each other with respect. However, I never structured in space for the group to clearly define actions and verbal responses that would be considered respectful. Moving forward, I made a note to have a more intentional practice in engaging
participants in conversations to explicitly state how the group expectations would sound, look, and feel when everyone is adhering to them.

For example, before leaving for a scavenger hunt activity at the local library, the group spent twenty minutes discussing the expectations for pro-social behaviors during the short walk to the library and the actual time spent at the library. I shared with students that as I prepared for this adventure, four words came to mind – Positivity, Respect, Safety, and Teamwork. I asked the girls to share what each of those words looks like and sounds like in practice. One student took the lead in calling out different responses for each word – “no cursing,” “listen to directions,” “no play fighting,” “full participation,” “encourage each other.” The remaining girls nodded their heads in agreement. Some mumbled remarks and I asked them to use a louder voice so that the entire group could hear their great idea. After covering each word, we made our way to the library. We hadn’t passed the end of the school building before several expectations were disregarded including one where students made the decision to throw snow at each other. After stopping the group and expressing that I would like to continue this trip but only if they are going to live up to the expectations they came up with back in the classroom. They apologized and called each other out for misbehaving and the group continued walking to the library.

In the histogram in Figure 7, 75% of participants reported in the Thriving (50%) and Adequate (25%) categories, meaning they experience positive social norms during the restorative leadership program. Specifically, as represented in Table participants felt encouraged to stay away from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (84%), work hard at school (91%), and do things to help others (67%).
Support for efficacy and mattering. Participants in a restorative leadership program are provided with opportunities to showcase their individual strengths. Whether it is their problem-solving skills or creativity, it is important for youth to know that despite difficult life circumstances and missteps in their actions, they are capable of doing remarkable things. They only require the proper resources, opportunities, and encouragement to do so. If students are constantly berated, only their mistakes are recognized. They are not entrusted to practice improving their abilities so it is harder for youth to see
possibilities and hope for their future. Instead, a restorative leadership program pushes participants to utilize their skills then reflect on and celebrate outcomes.

For instance, when the group arrived at the library, they split up into two teams. After being given a few minutes to review and strategize around the library scavenger hunt, I explained to students that while they would be separated into 2 different teams, they ought to still operate as one team. Each team could earn a maximum of 475 points if they completed the scavenger hunt without any penalties for running or being loud in the library. That meant, as a whole team, they could earn a maximum of 950 points. However, in order to "win" the team prize, they had to earn a combined score at least 800 points. The "prize" was placed in a jar and the girls were encouraged to leverage everyone’s skills to be successful in opening the jar.

After the two groups answered all of the clues, their total score amounted to 750 points. The one remaining clue on either team was for the girls to open a library card account or, if they already had a library card, to check out a book. Neither team was able to open an account because they didn’t have school IDs (Unison doesn’t provide IDs), and the one student in the group who had a library card account didn’t have her card with her. The girls huddled around a table and started brainstorming possible ways to show proper identification.

One, eighth grader had an idea.

**Carla:** Could I use my homework? It has both my name and the school name on it!

**Ms. Selby:** That is a very creative and out-of-the-box way of thinking but you would have to go and ask the librarian if you could use your homework.

She jumped up and with two other classmates behind her, returned to the circulation desk. She pleaded her case to the librarian and was able to use her
homework to sign up for a library card. Getting the library card resulted in the team securing the points needed to win the prize in the jar. Once they earned the 850 points, the group selected Carla as the team MVP and she was asked to open the jar to reveal that they had won an ice cream party!

The histogram in Figure 8 represents the distribution of the responses for 10 of the 12 participants. It is likely that two participants skipped questions. Zero participants reported in the Challenged category, three participants (30%) reported in the Vulnerable category, five participants (50%) reported in the Adequate category, and two participants reported in the Thriving category (20%). Overall, the restorative leadership program does an effective job of inviting participants to contribute opinions or help make decisions about program activities and made to feel capable.

![Support for Efficacy and Mattering Histogram](image)

Figure 8. 2015 YAPS pre-survey report for Adventure Girlz The Search Institute, 2015

**Opportunities for skill building.** The restorative leadership program is an experiential education program that is designed to enhance confidence,
leadership, decision-making, collaboration, and communication skills that are required for constructing and managing a plan to achieve life goals. Participants engage in hands-on activities, whole group discussions, field trips, and personal journal reflections to identify interests and grow their capacities and skills. Participants reported they Often and Very Often spend time learning skills like teamwork, leadership, or how to resolve conflicts peacefully (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Skill Building 32/40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When you spend time in this program, how often are you...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Learning how to cooperate with others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Given chances to be a leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Learning how to solve personal life problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When you spend time in this program, how often do you...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Learn skills that you can use in a future job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Learn skills like teamwork, leadership, or how to resolve conflicts peacefully?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instance, participants practice their social interaction skills through real time accountability and second chances for self-correcting.

After arriving at the school several hours before I stopped a school administrator in the hallway to discuss setting up a meeting regarding teaching expectations for the Spring semester. Several seconds after we started our conversation the classroom transition started and several Adventure Girlz participants passed us in the hallway. One participant, Jasmine, stopped and interrupted our conversation to ask me a question.

**Jasmine:** Ms. Selby, what are we doing today?

**Ms. Selby:** Excuse me?

**Jasmine:** Oh...sorry sorry...my bad for interrupting. Let me start over...Hiiii

**Ms. Selby.** How are you doing today?
Ms. Selby: I’m doing well, thank you for asking.
Jasmine: It’s a beautiful day right?
Ms. Selby: Yes, yes it is…thank you for correcting yourself after you noticed you were interrupting our conversation.
Jasmine: So what we doing today?
Ms. Selby: Because I don’t want you to be late for your next class, you will find out when you arrive at Adventure Girlz today. See you in a bit…

The histogram in Figure 9 shows evidence of seven participants (75%) reported in the Adequate (33%) and Thriving (42%) categories. For the 25% of participants who reported in the Vulnerable category, it is likely that while the opportunities for building skills are available, they are not yet feeling safe and supported to take advantage of said opportunities.

![Histogram showing the distribution of participant categories. The bars represent the 0%, 25%, 33%, and 42% categories with corresponding counts of 0, 1, 2, and 3 young people.]

Figure 9. 2015 YAPS pre-survey report for Adventure Girlz
The Search Institute, 2015

Integration of family, school, and community efforts. Family, school, and community stakeholder engagement is essential to understanding all sides of a student’s experience. The histogram in Figure 10 shows that 50% of participants reported in the Adequate (42%) and Thriving (8%) categories.
Sharing information about program content and moving beyond the transactional aspects of requesting parent signatures on permission slips and enrollment forms is essential to sustaining a high quality program for students. When reviewing responses to specific statements, 88% of participants reported they Agree and Strongly Agree that program staff makes sure parents know what participants are doing in program. Additionally, 84% of participants Agree and Strongly Agree the program help them see how what they learn in school is useful in life outside of school. However, 25% Agree and Strongly Agree that the program tries to involve family in some activities.
Table 12
Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts 28/40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree/Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. The staff makes sure my parents know what we are doing in the program.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. This program tries to involve my family in some activities.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. This program helps me see how what I learn in school is useful in life outside of school.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2015 YAPS pre-survey report for Adventure Girlz
The Search Institute, 2015

By including these stakeholders everyone is more aware as to the individual Adventure Girlz’ experience and can be better equipped to support the students’ overall plan for success. On the Friday before our Saturday morning trip to the bowling alley, I texted the mothers of each of the eight Adventure Girlz participants who were confirmed to go. One participant’s mom shared her excitement for her daughter being able to go on these trips. However, the matter of her daughter getting good grades in her core classes was a bigger priority.

Ms. Selby: Good evening! This is Ms. Selby. Thank you for letting Regina go on the bowling trip tomorrow. She should’ve shared with you a document with all the details about where we are going and when we will return. The group will meet at the turnstiles at the train station for 9:30AM tomorrow morning.
Ms. Carter: Regina [was] suppose to give me an update on her work for this marking period she didn’t I told her that was the only way she would be allowed to go if she has no missing work. I am not sure if she has or not so she won’t be going. Sorry.”
Ms. Selby: Thanks for letting me know
Ms. Carter: Ok
Ms. Selby: Did you check the Jupiter Grades? [*Note: Jupiter Grades is an online grade book shared between parents, students, and teachers.]
Ms. Carter: No but I will as I reach home
Ms. Selby: oh ok…if you check and things change please let me know…Regina has been an exceptional leader and a tremendous help to me all throughout the first half of the year in Adventure Girlz and it would be great for her to go bowling to celebrate with us

Ms. Carter: I will let you know am real tired of her and her [school] work so this is what I have to resort to

Ms. Selby: quite understandable…for the Spring semester we will be focusing more heavily on making academic goals and working to meet them while painting the picture of what happens when, as a Black girl, one doesn’t acquire a strong educational background…let me know if there is anything in particular you want her to work on

Ms. Carter: Ok
[20 minutes later]

Ms. Carter: Am sorry she wont be going she has two missing work plus the fact that I told her my rules and she just didn’t care to finish up her work. Plus in science she has some work that can not be made up

Ms. Selby: ok…we will definitely miss her tomorrow

Ms. Carter: She needs to know am serious

Ms. Selby: I agree…I will keep you posted about the Spring semester and what we are doing to help with grades

Ms. Carter: Thanks

Starting in the Spring semester, given the success of connecting with families via text message, Adventure Girlz utilized a newsletter called *The Adventurer* (Appendix B) – a bi-weekly publication sent out via picture text message to families and shared with school personnel via email. Information include dates for upcoming events, a summary of students’ goal setting efforts, and a preview of the book used for read-aloud discussions in reading circles as well as written and visual art reflections from participants.

3. Lessons Learned and Revised Theory of Action

After launching Adventure Girlz, I made changes to the original program concept. With my real time implementation, I added in-class teambuilders, a reading circle, parent engagement, one-on-one conferences, peer mediation, school personnel communication/engagement, as well as a workshop series for
grades improvement planning and preparing shared meals. The following two Tables are summary assessments of how the Adventure Girlz Logic Model (Table 13) and Theory of Action (Table 14) played out in practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13</th>
<th>Logic Model Assessment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation Outcome Measures</strong></td>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Implement program at one partner schools</td>
<td>Facilitated program at one partner school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Engage 12 participants | • Enrolled 12 girls in the Fall semester;  
| | • 9 girls during January and February;  
| | • Continued with 10 for the Spring semester |
| 3. Offer classroom instruction that includes journaling, roundtable discussions, collaborative team activities, and academic goal setting | • 16.5 hours in the Fall Semester  
| | • 16.6 hours in January and February  
| | • 24 hours projected for the Spring semester |
| 4. Eight, adventure sport days during the academic year | • 3 scheduled adventures; 2 completed, 1 with not enough permission slips to continue  
| | • 11 out of 12 girls participated in the Ropes Course Challenge Course  
| | • 6 out of 10 girls participated in the Makeup workshop |
| 5. One, service learning day | • 6 girls attended New York Cares service day on January 18, 2016 |
| 6. One, week-long overnight trip to South Carolina | • Scheduled for June 24-30 on the campus of the College of Charleston |
| 7. Bi-weekly phone calls and family newsletter during the academic year | • Text e-newsletter to parents  
| | • Average 4 families respond with “Thanks”  
| | • One mom called me to discuss daughter’s suspension and overall school experience  
| | • One mom asked to chaperone overnight trip to Charleston to ensure her husband is comfortable sending daughter on trip |
| 8. Family Open House/Workshop dinner | • TBD date in May to share details of overnight trip with families |
| **Interim Objectives** | **Status** |
| 9. Interact with others of different personalities and backgrounds | • Some girls are Black Americans, Caribbean-Americans, and mixed  
| | • Some girls are extroverts while some are more introverted  
| | • During the adventure days and in-class events, participants meet Black girls and women with different life experiences |
| 10. Reflect on their decision-making | • Use of journaling, 1:1 conferences, and |
process and performing tasks outside of their comfort zone

11. Develop skills for sharing ideas, questions, and feelings with family, friends, and school personnel

• Few moments to engage in these types of conversations with participants but it is unclear as to whether or not transferable skills were improved to aide in this type of communication

12. Research and celebrate their Black girl identity

• Lots of celebrations but minimal opportunities to research the history of Black women and girls

**Short-term Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>13. Increase/ maintain a ‘B’ average across all core classes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Status</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Final quarter 4 grades will be used to determine if participates moved the needle on this goal</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>14. Reduce the total number of referrals/demerits</strong></th>
<th><strong>Status</strong></th>
</tr>
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</table>
| • 2 Adventure Girlz suspensions; one for a fight  
• Continuous complaints about getting referrals “for no reason” |

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<tr>
<th><strong>15. Increase the # of positive interactions with school personnel and peers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Status</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Once participants complete the post-YAPS survey, we will have more data to assess this objective</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>16. Make two presentations about Black girl identity and the impact of school push out</strong></th>
<th><strong>Status</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • One presentation was done in December 2015  
• Second opportunity will be available in May 2016 with a possible third opportunity at a conference |

| **Table 14**  
**Theory of Action Assessment** |

| **IF** Adventure Girlz, a restorative leadership program,  
1. Convenes a group of Black girls attending an underperforming middle school in New York City and  
2. Introduces them to a learning environment filled with opportunities for Black girls to practice enhancing their developmental assets through modified instructional techniques such as in-school and out-of-school adventure sports, mentor relationships with peers and adults, leadership opportunities, and genealogy research | **Status** |
| --- | --- |
| Outstanding Performance securing school partnership and confirming participants  
Achieves Expectations but in need of improvements in facilitation and teambuilding to have a greater impact |

| **THEN the Black girls involved in this intervention might**  
1. Improve their awareness of self and others – a self-regulation skill that can increase their resiliency, knowledge of self, collaboration, and commitment to reclaim (and share) a positive narrative about their experiences | **Status** |
<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few observations to show medium impact in Achieving Expectations</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| **ADDITIONALLY, participating middle schools will have** | **Status** |
1. A viable option for increasing the availability of services, policies, and practices that support Black girls social emotional development and prevent Black girl school push out which increasingly places Black girls at risk for incarceration.

| High potential for a more solidified school partnership | So far, low impact on educating constituents on the issues facing Black girls |

The following section of this Capstone identifies some program efforts that, if leveraged more effectively, could move Adventure Girlz towards successfully achieving its desired outcomes.

**Invested students.** Eligible girls heard a five-minute pitch about the apprenticeship class then completed a preference sheet provided by Citizen Schools’ staff. After collecting their sheets, the staff reviewed responses and selected girls to participate in Adventure Girlz. At the end of the Fall semester, participants were able to share

- *Adventure Girlz challenged me to be a student who knows how to work and get along better with other people* – 7th grader, Fall 2015
- *Adventure Girlz challenged me to have more respect for myself and other”* – 8th grader, Fall 2015
- *At Adventure Girlz, I get to learn new things and express myself* – 8th grader, Fall 2015

For future enrollment, it is important to add an interview for me to learn about the academic status (particularly reading and writing comprehension), family context, past relationships with other participants, motivations for joining the program, and general interests of perspective participants before enrolling them into program. Doing so will inform enrollment decisions in addition to subsequent activities focused on individual and group development.

**Invested School Personnel (Appendices H-I) and Families.** The Principal and Assistant Principal at Unison were great champions in supporting Adventure Girlz. They were responsive with requests for grant endorsements
A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

(Appendix, H) and teacher communication. I had the opportunity to sit down with the Principal and shared Adventure Girlz program goals and observations of what has been successful as well as challenging. By the end of the meeting, the Principal offered to continue open conversations about resources the school could leverage on behalf of Adventure Girlz:

- Entered my profile as an advisor in Jupiter Grades so I could have direct access to grades and discipline referral notes for Adventure Girlz participants
- Proposed allocating funds from the school’s Achieve Now Grant to support Adventure Girlz programming in the next school year
- Introduced me to the leader of a restorative justice program called "Partners with Children" that Unison is partnering with to transform the school into a restorative justice school
- Recommended that Adventure Girlz register as a community based organization (CBO) to get access to more NYC funding opportunities
- Explained the protocol for Adventure Girlz could leverage to secure free school buses AND food from the NYCDOE for use during our adventures
- Added me to the weekly staff email so we are kept in the loop and I can send updates out to the staff

An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for 6-8 grades was very generous with Adventure Girlz sharing her classroom space. Due to a scheduling conflict, she accepted all but one invitation to participate in our events. She also wrote a powerful endorsement for a grant application we submitted (Appendix I). The Parent Coordinator has also shown her support by showing up to events. When she heard about the Healthy Skin and Make-up: A Discussion about What it Means to be a Beautiful Black Girl adventure workshop, she shared a copy of a documentary that focused on the perception of Black girls and women in the media. She also invited the Adventure Girlz to participate in a Tea Party Fundraiser she helps coordinate.
I view these relationships as a huge win for Adventure Girlz as we look to continue building our presence at the school. One group that will be a priority to ensure we meet our quest to spill over into the overall fabric of the school is to engage more core subject teachers. *The Adventurer* e-newsletter (Appendix B) is a great start but more face-to-face exchanges with core teachers is the next step to better inform all school personnel of Adventure Girlz’ efforts and impact.

**Genealogy.** Adventure Girlz has worked with Ancestors unKnown – a research-based online history curriculum, genealogy research projects, and local communities leveraged to inspire young minds – to inspire participants and had previously seen high levels of student engagement with the content. However, with the academic year pilot, genealogy research was not integrated as well due to limited capacity for me, as lead facilitator, to implement the curriculum with great fidelity. Citizen Schools has a unique opportunity to transform their academic program component to center around providing authentic learning spaces through the utilization of the Ancestors unKnown curriculum resources. Both staff and students are able to own their educational experience by researching (and sharing) historical information and experiences custom fit to their individual genealogy. Since the girls who enroll in Adventure Girlz also receive academic support from Citizen Schools, Adventure Girlz can still address students’ knowledge gaps. However, Citizen Schools would provide a greater number of students with the opportunity to research their personal history.

**Tracking Developmental Assets.** Identifying each developmental asset and tracking to specific activities was a missed opportunity to check for progress. From those activities I could have leveraged follow up conversations and classroom time to walk the group through a goal setting process. This would
have enabled each participant to reflect on their efforts towards making incremental changes.

**Focus Groups and Guests.** Adventure Girlz hosted two informative focus groups - one in Cambridge and one in New York. Invited guests include social workers, graduate students, assistant principals, and education leaders in the NYC area. The feedback received helped to shape the spring semester of Adventure Girlz. For instance, a guest at the Adventure Girlz Spring semester kick-off event noticed the points system we were using to incentivize the overnight trip to South Carolina was setting the girls up for a lack of personal investment and motivation towards earning the trip. She recommended we start everyone with 100 points. The assumption was that everyone was scheduled to go on the overnight trip so long as their points never dropped below 49 (Appendix M). If their actions during Adventure Girlz took away from the group fostering a productive learning space, then points were taken away. With the introduction of this revised incentive program, the group appeared more focused and intentional about participating in class.

One aspect of the recommendation that I haven’t been able to test is facilitating opportunities for the group to decide if another member can earn back lost points. Instead, I place emphasis on participants earning an extraordinary amount of positive points in each class (Appendix N). I am deliberate in saying to the girls: “Try to get as far above 49 as you can. Keep earning those positive points!” As a result, participants show an increase in their awareness of self. If a curse word slipped from Carla, she immediately looked around and apologized to the group. Instead of walking out the class, Tina made the decision to ask if she could take some time outside of the class to reset.
Revised theory of action. Based on the research I reviewed and the observations from piloting the restorative leadership program, my original Theory of Action is not at its full potential for making an impact. As seen in Tables 13 and 14, Adventure Girlz was able to meet the majority of implementation outcomes. However, the program fell short in meeting the goals related to scaling the program to influence efforts to reform policies and practices used by the school. Professor Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell compartmentalized the Adventure Girlz Theory of Action in the following way to show its layered approach to shifting the culture of school-to-prison pipeline:

If girls Move, Talk, Mentor, and Lead THEN they will gain Developmental Assets that will THEN help them develop an awareness of self and others that will THEN move forward their social emotional competencies that will THEN reduce the kinds of behaviors which might make them subject to school pushout and THEN if enough of that happens for enough of the girls we might have an impact on the school-to-prison pipeline. (Professor Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell, personal communication, April 14, 2016)

When implementing Adventure Girlz, I engaged the participants in this theory but did not do enough to educate and inform school personnel as to why programs like Adventure Girlz could be leveraged to ensure the learning environment is supportive of growing Black girls developmental assets and subsequently dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. Additionally, I didn’t engage in conversations with core subject teachers nor observe Adventure Girlz participants in core subject classes to better understand how Adventure Girlz mechanisms could be integrated to support all students growing their developmental assets throughout the entire school day. Therefore, the following is my revised Theory of Action:
IF a restorative leadership program works collaboratively with an underperforming middle school in New York City to engage school personnel in a reflective professional development training series that culminates in creating, implementing, and continuously assessing the impact of a school-wide learning environment filled with opportunities for all students to practice enhancing their developmental assets;

AND engages Black girls in particular through modified instructional techniques such as in-school and out-of-school adventure sports, mentor relationships with peers and adults, leadership opportunities, and genealogy research;

THEN the students involved in this intervention might improve their awareness of self and others – a self-regulation skill that can increase their resiliency, knowledge of self, collaboration, and commitment to reclaim (and share) a positive narrative about their experiences.

ADDITIONALLY, participating middle schools will have a viable option for increasing the availability of services, policies, and practices that support all students’ social emotional development and prevent Black girl school push out which increasingly places Black girls at risk for incarceration.

With this revised theory of action, I argue that real change cannot happen within the vacuum of solely targeting the students’ individual development. Participating Black girls will need to utilize their newly developed awareness of self and others within the context of learning spaces at their school. Even if all participants in the restorative leadership program were to improve their awareness of self and others, the learning spaces they then enter must allow for said skills to flourish. Thus, my revised theory of action places greater emphasis
on engaging school personnel in a professional development training series that provides similar opportunities to become more aware of self and others with regards to treatment of students.
Implications for Self

As a leader, teacher, and mentor it is important to share the learning spaces in my personal and professional lives to ensure meaningful learning occurs for everyone involved. Operating in that space of shared instructional leadership was something I wrestled with throughout the residency experience. I was fortunate to receive guidance from my residency supervisor to grow in this particular area, which in turn had a positive impact on the Adventure Girlz program.

The work environment at the Correctional Association of New York is extremely supportive. They encourage personal care like no other place I have worked. My supervisor, the Youth and Community Coordinator, checked in with me several times a week with inspirational quotes and videos for me to reflect on. We also had conversations that pushed each other to consider a different way of approaching the work. During one of my initial meetings, I shared with my supervisor how scheduled I am with just about everything in my life. For example, I have a series of alarms, starting at 5:15AM that wakes me up, pushes me to workout (5:30AM) then take a shower (6:30AM), get dressed (6:50AM), make and eat breakfast (7:30AM), and eventually leave the house (8:30AM). We had a good laugh about it but I was serious. I tell myself that I need that level of structure to make sure I don’t “diddle daddle and waste time in the morning.”

Another piece of information I shared with my supervisor was about feeling anxious and uncomfortable stepping into this leadership role.

**Supervisor:** How are you feeling?
Moriska: Well, I’ve got my lesson plans drafted and I am trying to figure out just how class sessions will flow.

Supervisor [smiling with a slight chuckle]: How are you feeeling?

Moriska: I am not sure if I am the right person to lead this work. I know the importance of the work but maybe I’m not the right person to lead it. I still have so many issues my damn self that I don’t want to be hypocritical while leading the work. Tracie Jones, the founder of Adventure Girlz, has such a sound understanding of her history. I don’t have that. She can also sell water to a well. Some of my other classmates are sharing their work at conferences and seem so “woke” – I’m not sure if I have what it takes to convince others that I know what I am talking about when I say “Black girls matter and here is how the school system is failing them.” I get so much anxiety around failing at what I have set out to do that I look to control every single factor leading to my success. I am scared of disappointing everyone who is rooting for me to be successful at this venture. Yet here I am leading a program that asks participants to take risks and believe in themselves when I was scared out of my mind and very doubtful of my capabilities.

Supervisor: You have to step into uncomfortable situations to feel your power. Then you have to step into the room with your power cause when you are called to do the work, as you have been called, it is time for you to do the work.

This exchange with my supervisor made me think back to a time right after my first six months as a doctoral student in the education leadership program at Harvard Graduate School of Educate, when I wrote the following reflection (2015) about my Theory of Learning for a class taught by Professor Richard Elmore:

It has been 6 months since I started the doctorate in education leadership (Ed.L.D.) at Harvard Graduate School of Education as a member of cohort 4. My first day with the other 24 people in my cohort consisted of a PowerPoint that outlined the parameters for the Ed.L.D. program and teambuilding games meant for us to start forging relationships with one another. In a way, that day was the launch of examining a range of beliefs that I held with regards to what was the best way for me to go about influencing the education sector as a systems level leader. I came into this program with an idea that learning required a supportive environment – actual safe space – and a network of masterful individuals who held the knowledge that would eventually transfer to the novice student. The “banking model” described by Paolo Freire was heavily integrated into my theory of learning when I first entered Ed.L.D. and I am now wrestling with how to infuse more divergent thinking in my theory of learning to allow room for the
teacher and student to transition to a shared partnership in the learning process with a focus on creating and/or exchanging knowledge. This is a huge shift for me for it requires that I rethink my position around “control” and who is in charge of a learning space.

Two years have passed since writing that reflection but the experience of facilitating a restorative leadership program emphasized how much I continue to struggle with creating a balanced learning environment where both adults and young people share control over the learning space. In my role as facilitator, I am still committed to a pedagogy that relies on the learner (participants) acquiring knowledge from a source (me) that already has the knowledge. With such a stance on facilitating the classroom environment I realized that I was inadvertently stifling a lot of the creativity and freedom of expression within the group.

During residency, the turning point for me to do differently came when my supervisor asked me “Who do you have in your group? What do they like? What do they want to be?” I was certain I looked like a deer in headlights because after a long pause I blurted out a few generic insights I had gleaned from an “All About Me” worksheet I had the girls complete during the second session of Adventure Girlz. However, with all of the time I was spending on preparing to lead Adventure Girlz – the worksheets, the lesson plan templates, the project management plans, the running list of ideas – my supervisor’s question pinched me and made me feel selfish and undeserving of this opportunity to lead the program. The reality of the matter was that I was so caught up in completing tasks and structuring an effective program. In the process I had completely overlooked the students I had set out to support and focused on MY ideas of what participants needed and MY ideas of how participants would have those
needs fulfilled. I wasn’t truly listening to what the participants were bringing to the learning space despite my overarching goal of providing Black girls with a learning space that elevated their experiences and expertise. I had made this whole experience about me, and my successful performance leading the pilot. I was ashamed of myself for having done so.

While reflecting, I made a commitment to not be so heavily reliant on consistent structure and being in control of the learning space. I started making jokes with the girls, asking them if certain content would be of interest, and letting conversations about an unfair behavior system or the upcoming school talent showcase take up class time rather than holding firm to the planned focus on practical skills such as active listening. My shoulders weren’t tucked up under my ears and I abandoned “the I-am-waiting-look” – a hard stare accompanied by pursed lips, shallow breathing, and silence that I had mastered to show students that their behavior was delaying the scheduled class items and that prompted the group to shush each other. Instead, I verbalized my observations by asking participants to explain what was happening and why. Getting the girls to take notice of their environment and how they were contributing to or taking away from the class was effective in getting participants to practice their self-awareness. As a result, class felt much more relaxed and participants were more engaged.

I also started asking clarifying questions so the girls could articulate their motivations for choosing to go in a particular direction during Adventure Girlz classes while bridging to experiences that they might encounter in other settings. For instance, during a workshop Healthy Skin and Make-up: A Discussion about What it Means to be a Beautiful Black Girl with a professional make-up artist and
educator friend of mine, the girls decided that for the day they would all commit to showing participation and respect. After sharing out how both participation and respect would sound, look, and feel during the workshop, the girls decided they should be the ones to determine whether or not they all kept the commitment and could therefore open up the team prize box. A tense, yet thoughtful, exchange between the girls ensued as they each voiced their opinions as to whether or not they earned the privilege of opening the box. At different points in the conversation, they kept turning to me, expecting me to make the decision for them.

Participants [looking at Ms. Selby]: So could we open it?
Ms. Selby: Y’all said this is your decision. What do you all think? This is not about me or the other adults in the room. This is a moment where a difficult decision is literally placed in front of you and you have to make the decision and deal with the outcome. How many times have you been in a situation like this? You believe you should do one thing and those around you, your friends, believe you should do a different thing? How have you made a decision during those times? Can you use some of those skills in this moment?

The group continued to go back and forth until someone made a declarative statement that they should open the box. However, rather than immediately ripping open the box, the group paused to acknowledge the statements from those who believed they shouldn’t open the box because of spotty participation and respect for 100 percent of the time in the workshop. That type of thoughtful awareness is what I was striving for all year long but wasn’t able to experience until I let go of controlling the class. I needed to acknowledge the learning space as a joint space meant for my learning to lead powerfully and supporting the participants on their journey. However, I also needed to acknowledge the learning space as belonging to the participants as well.
Implications for Site

1. Citizen Schools

After phoning all the participants and inviting them to a New York Cares Service Day in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy, we ended up being a group of six girls and three adults. After meeting up in front of the school, we walked over to the service day location where we were tasked with making blankets, pillows, and some other items for families in need. To kick things off, I passed out a poem that captured Dr. King’s work.

*Ms. Selby:* Who are we here to celebrate?
[silence]

*Destiny:* Uhmmm...doctor...uhmmmm...‘king-something’...

*Ms. Selby:* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Tina:* Where?...where is he?

I realized I had made a huge assumption about what they knew about Dr. King coming into this day. I assumed they would have engaged in some sort of activity at their school to discuss the upcoming day off from school and the reason for it. And quite frankly...they are 7th and 8th graders so I assumed they had a basic understanding as to the importance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!

After this exchange, all the other assumptions I had made really hit me such as the moment I said statements like "Your behavior is not honoring Dr. King's legacy". They must have wondered what the heck I was talking about! The Wednesday following the service day, I decided the Adventure Girlz session was going to focus on Black History and Black excellence. I crafted a Jeopardy board in PowerPoint with the following five categories:

- **Black History:** clues about Madam C.J. Walker, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, and other Black pioneers
• **Speak and Act for Change:** clues about the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and forms of non-violent protest led by various Black people

• **Black People Do Great Things:** clues about Shirley Chisholm, Bree Newsome, and other Black women who have done/are doing brave things to make a difference for Black people

• **Educating Black Girls:** clues from the African American Policy Forum’s report on the plight of Black girls and women in America

• **Black Lives Matter:** clues about different activists such as DeRay McKesson and the founders of the Black Lives Matter movement

I divided the girls into three different teams; each team with a laptop connected to the Internet. For each clue, the girls had to work as a team and use their Google skills to find the answer. Regular Jeopardy rules applied with the addition of teams being able to "steal" the question if the first team gives a wrong answer. Some of the clues were really surprising for the girls to learn about and in the end I gathered that they enjoyed playing Jeopardy. More importantly, they appreciated gaining some knowledge about their Black history.

Currently, Adventure Girlz does not have the bandwidth to thoughtfully integrate more classroom experiences like the Black History Month Jeopardy game. As mentioned in the Revised Theory of Action, Adventure Girlz could best serve youth at Unison by brokering a partnership between Ancestors unKnown and Citizen Schools. Citizen Schools can integrate Ancestors unKnown to meet similar organizational outcomes. The Ancestors unKnown curriculum complements the Citizen Schools program model where students engage in hands-on learning activities that promote critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, and other 21st-century skills needed to thrive in today’s global economy.
2. Urban Assembly at Unison

Every Sunday, the principal at Unison sends out an email to all staff and school partners. In her email on February 21, 2016, the principal offered a quick reminder to staff as to why they have formed as a team. She did so by sharing Unison’s Vision and Mission Statement:

Vision
The Urban Assembly Unison School is a middle school where every child has a seat at the table. Every student has a right to learn and that right is respected, protected and promoted by everyone in the school. The Urban Assembly Unison School is devoted to developing student self-determination, collaboration, and responsibility in service of accelerated and individualized academic growth. Unison students find purpose in their learning. They become critical thinkers and communicators who take responsibility for pushing themselves and others to grow. The Unison student leaves school with a deeply developed sense of self, a broad sense of the world and an ability to be active agents in their own lives.

Mission Statement
The Unison school exists to provide all students with a literacy and communication-based approach to teaching and learning in which students are taught to make choices about their own learning pathways and are supported in following those pathways by teachers throughout their time at the school.

Unison, as with other learning institutions, is pushing to help students develop into their best selves. Another way to look at these statements is to say Unison is seeking to increase the Developmental Assets of each student with varied activities throughout their Unison school experience. Similar to Adventure Girlz leveraging the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets and Youth and Program Survey (YAPS) to learn of student needs and programming gaps in addressing those needs, I strongly recommend that Unison administer the survey to all students in October (pre-survey) and June (post-survey) of each academic year. Administering the pre-survey in October – four to five weeks after the 1st day of school – will provide school personnel with data as to whether
or not they are on track to meeting the goals outlined in the Vision and Mission Statement.

Once the results are tallied, the school can structure and engage staff in a professional development series and student-involved town hall meetings. The focus of which would be the creation of actionable plans for maintaining ‘Adequate’ and ‘Thriving’ elements of the Unison schooling experience. Action plans would also address ‘Challenged’ and ‘Vulnerable’ areas highlighted in survey results. The increased ownership and transparency in the educational experiences at Unison would make everyone more aware of how school policies and practices impact everyone in the learning environment. With more people invested in understanding what it would take to ensure Unison offers a high quality school experience, at the end of the year, both school personnel and students would be able to say whether or not Unison met its performance bar of fostering a learning environment to nurture every child’s Developmental Assets.

3. The Correctional Association of New York

The Correctional Association of New York does great advocacy work to address the conditions of adult and juvenile correctional facilities, reentry of formerly incarcerated people, and marginalized youth populations who are system involved. The majority of initiatives respond to individuals already in contact with the justice system, while prevention isn’t as prevalent in the ongoing conversation. For instance, as previously mentioned, the Association does not explicitly include work that seeks to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. There are two direct ways the Association could pivot towards investing resources in prevention starting at the preK-12 school system.
The first is to serve as a coalition builder that works closely with the NYCDOE to identify school-based efforts that can counter the policies and practices that push an increased number of youth into the juvenile justice system. Convening programs like Adventure Girlz that address students Developmental Assets with their specific program model will be effective in coalescing initiatives to improve school climate and safety across NYC schools.

The second recommendation is for the Association to create an annual interactive, day-long conference conceived, organized, and facilitated by a cross section of people from the Association’s Juvenile Justice Project, Women In Prison Project, and the Prison Visit Project to inform school communities of the intersection of education and mass incarceration. Conference goers will leave with the tools for (1) analyzing their experiences within their educational context; (2) talking expertly about contributing factors of the school-to-prison pipeline and reform efforts; (3) networking and supporting one another.

Convening and educating more people about the work done at the Association to reform the juvenile justice system can build the organization’s capacity for engaging more champions to help reform a broken system.
**Implications for Sector**

Shifting the narrative about Black girls and women is going to take coordinated movement that influences people’s beliefs and will to provide Black girls with a high quality educational experience in which their presence is not criminalized and/or made invisible. From a sector level, personal perspective (i.e. as a woman of color) and a professional perspective, there are three overlapping sectors I encountered throughout my residency – education, social entrepreneurs, juvenile justice – that I believe could be leveraged to provide solutions to the practice of Black girl school pushout and incarceration.

1. **Education**

   Through the implementation of this pilot initiative, I discovered certain conditions that are required for practitioners to implement a restorative leadership program as an academic year program that aims to increase participants’ awareness of self and others as well as transform school policies and practices that currently create inhospitable learning environments for Black girls. The following is an explanation of the major conditions (time, curriculum, interactions between school personnel, the Adventure Coach, and participants, as well as participant relationship dynamics) that had an impact on the outcomes and therefore, the major conditions that other practitioners should consider when integrating a restorative leadership program at their school.

   **Time.** We lost significant time at the start of each 90-minutes class session due to students “settling down” into their respective classrooms after returning from their snack break in the cafeteria. Students would chase peers up and down the school hallway or stand in the doorway to “see who else is in the hallway”
before coming into the restorative leadership program classroom space. Also, other students who were not a part of the program would enter the classroom and have conversations with some of the participants while we waited for the rest of the group to arrive. There was a lack of urgency to start class on time. When I observed hallway transitions throughout the day, I realized students were not held to strict standards of making quick transitions to maximize opportunities for learning. The behavior I saw with the participants was the norm and my asking for otherwise was an uphill battle that I quickly abandoned. After the first session I started planning for 75 minutes sessions instead of the full 90 minutes.

For the Spring semester, I made an effort to get back some of the lost time by setting up the classroom with participants journals and reading book on each desk. I then sit down and stared at the door to make eye contact with, and say hello to, each participant as they entered the classroom. Additionally, I integrated an incentive system for the overnight trip and explicitly included an opportunity for participants to earn points towards the overnight if they “Come to class and immediately settle in to start class” (Appendix N).

My goal was to give the impression that I was ready to start class and will recognize their efforts in getting to class on time. Participants started coming to class and immediately settled in. We were able to get back ten minutes of time. For other practitioners, I would recommend a similar approach in showing the girls that the start of class is just as important as what happens in the middle and end of class.

Curriculum. There were several moments where the participants would have side conversations about the latest gossip, chase each other around the
room, and throw insults across the room at each other. This all would occur while I stood in front of the room and made an attempt to share updates about the program (field trips, guests, etc.) or as I was setting up the next collaborative activity. I found myself lecturing students with statements like “you are wasting your own time.” But was it their time I was really concerned with or the time I had deliberately allocated for different portions of the lesson? And was it seeing my agenda and daily objectives become irrelevant as class time allocated to explore and discuss content slowly disappeared?

I didn’t want participants to simply take the information presented during a restorative leadership program at face value. Participants should pushback and ask questions. They should introduce new perspectives on how to think about the content we were discussing as well as suggest that class take on a different direction. However, in their school experience, the participants are subject to school policies and practices that condition them to not pushback or ask questions for fear of receiving harsh discipline sanctions. For example, the students who speak up to probe the motivations of some teachers for conducting class in a given way or to further understand the content, they are seen as disruptors who should be silenced or removed from class.

Given this context, I recognized that a restorative leadership program has to balance implementing a program with predetermined outcomes based on researched needs of the population being served. This is in addition to allowing space for exploring the content that organically surfaces from participants’ interests and concerns. I made note of how nimble I have to be when leading the class. While I have an overarching arc of content, I have to pivot to more
explicitly using the content that organically surfaces in the classroom as a way to have the girls unpack their lived experiences in the moment.

I tried to create room for their voices to be heard by pausing more, asking them more questions, and presenting more hypothetical situations the girls could respond to. However, the participants weren’t ready to take advantage of the opportunity. They looked down at their desks or shrugged their shoulders as if to say, “I don’t know…,” anytime they inadvertently made eye contact with me. As an observation, their demeanor was a stark contrast for the normally chatty girls who engaged in side conservations and inside jokes about each other. They silenced themselves, were hesitant to ask clarifying questions, and share their opinions. That is when I made note of participants’ limited exposure to flexing their critical thinking skills on an academic level. They didn’t show signs of having practiced communicating a specific point of view that related to structured academic content. At the time, when I shared my observations with students, they continued to smile and shrug at me.

Additionally, the text message exchange about the bowling trip highlighted that the restorative leadership program was missing a critical component – coaching students on how to set and track academic goals. It became clear that the structure of the restorative leadership program was focused more on creating the space for participants to reflect and make behavior goals without any additional opportunity to make academic goals to ensure students are making the academic gains we anticipated. Sometimes, if there is ample time available, it is appropriate to first address the social emotional goals before academic goals. However, a dual strategy to address both ends of the goals spectrum was necessary. It wasn’t going to be enough for students to build
relationships with each other and to learn a bit about their history. They needed practical skills that would help them improve their academic performance.

Subsequently, I added twenty-minute mini lessons around active listening, identifying a personal leadership style, and making group decisions. Instead of direct teaching on each topic, I was deliberate about engaging participants in a teambuilder and sharing a metacognitive narration of what I was observing. I would pause for participants to answer and ask questions. This indirect way of teaching the practical skills was observed to be more engaging for participants. However, I had to keep in mind that I had to shift the locus of control so that participants did more of the heavy lifting (thinking, sharing ideas, etc.).

**Interactions between school personnel, the adventure coach, and participants.** Throughout this experience, the girls seem to respond to requests that are yelled at them rather than a tone of voice that is calm and soft. They are more likely to change their behavior if I show them how frustrating it is to keep all of them safe if they are goofing off and not listening. The moment I raised my voice above their chatter they settle down and apologize for goofing off. However, when I speak to them with an even paced tone, I have to call for their attention several times which results in a loss of instructional time. Moving forward, we used a series of questions to reflect on exchanges that require the teacher to yell or call their name several times to get their attention.

Asking the girls to take notice of the moments they are perceived as ignoring instructions or expectations led to them reflecting on the toxic relationships they had with various school personnel. In February 2016, we had a celebration to acknowledge the group reaching the halfway point in the school
year. Invitations (Appendix L) were sent out to family and school personnel. While no families could make it due to conflict with work schedules, the principal), assistant principal, parent coordinator, ESL teacher, an eigth grade Science teacher, and my mother attended the entire hour-long event. Prior to the guests arriving, I shared the guest list with participants and they started sucking their teeth and asked if they could rescind the invitation for some people. They wanted to do so because they perceived the school personnel as mean, unfair people who never listened to them and were always trying to get the girls in trouble.

Ms. Selby: What evidence do you have that says you are being treated unfairly? Participants: When we have parent conferences or when someone calls home, they always switch up the story to make sure they look good. Teachers pretty much lie and never say what mean things they said to us. They give a ton of referrals for the littlest things. They say I am the one doing bad even when I’m not doing anything.

Ms. Selby: Well you might feel that way about your teachers but does that mean we should celebrate you today? Sometimes you have to work with people you don’t like to make sure your own situation is on point; meaning that you shouldn’t let other people prevent you from taking advantage of opportunities just because you don’t personally like the person. These guests are coming because they want to know what you have been learning in Adventure Girlz. This is a chance for you to show them a different side of you. This is a chance for you to show them that you are not your referrals.

I kept repeating, “You are not your referrals” until the start of the event. Participants were able to welcome all the guests and engaged in collaborative games with all of the guests. They also participated in a “speed learning” exercise where each girl 1:1 conversations with guests for 2-3 minute each rotation. They shared their experiences and predictions for what they are looking forward to in the spring semester.
Once the girls were able to go through the first round of speed learning and they realized that they had a prime opportunity to influence their guests to see them as more than their referrals, the participants relaxed and owned the space. Additionally, throughout the experience, I made it a point to circulate around the room and share affirming words of appreciation to each participant. I observed them show a great sense of pride in sharing their Adventure Girlz experiences with guests.

**Participant relationship dynamics.** As the lead program facilitator for the Adventure Girlz program, and despite my years of experience working with middle school students, I underestimated the tension that existed between various subsections of the group. Often times, I would hear remarks from participants that included: “Why would you put all these girls in the same room?” and “All these problems only surface when we are all in Adventure Girlz together.” It was as if the girls interacted with each other throughout the school day on a superficial level. Adventure Girlz was requesting that they go beyond passing each other in the hallways to a level where they could share information about themselves to build friendships with one another. There was resistance to the idea of talking to an enemy with hopes of changing the relationship to be less combative and more friendly and supportive. However, when there was conversation of adding three new students for the spring semester of Adventure Girlz, the group banned together to express their desire to not invite new participants. They didn’t want any new person in their learning space.

*Kassandra [to a 7th grade boy]:* We are not a part of Adventure Girl because of the trips. We are a part of it because of the positivity in the group. We could have never talked to the 8th graders before, now we are all friends.
To outsiders looking to berate their collective efforts, the participants unify and pushback. However, the girls are highly competitive and have a hard time understanding that they do not have to be in constant competition with each other. It is important for students to have individual success while making a connection to the group’s success. Moving forward it became a priority for a restorative leadership program to get participants to see, in a real tangible way, the importance of each person leveraging her individual skills and expertise for the greater success of the entire group. One way we tried to engage participants in acknowledging each other was to facilitate more practice communicating with each other and through getting to know you games and peer mediations.

For instance, two participants, Natalie and Kassandra, started off the year as friend but currently ignore each other. They used to laugh together, hug each other, and work well in groups together but by the time December 2015, the friendship had dissolved. Natalie chose not to participate in Adventure Girlz throughout January.

\textit{Natalie:} I just don’t want to be in it anymore.

Respecting her decision and without pushing her to return to the program, the rest of the group continued without her. A few weeks before the spring semester started, Natalie approached me.

\textit{Natalie:} What we doing today?

\textit{Ms. Selby:} We? You chose not to be in Adventure Girlz. I’m not sure what youoouuuuu are doing today, but wwwweeeeee are going to talk about the spring semester”

\textit{Natalie:} [smiling] Ms. Selby, I want to come back to Adventure Girlz.

\textit{Ms. Selby:} Why?

\textit{Natalie:} Because it’s fun and the only reason I left in the first place was because I don’t get along with the other girls.
Ms. Selby: Well I would love to have you back but you do know that the same girls are still in Adventure Girlz, right?
Natalie: I know but I will just ignore the girls I don’t get along with. If they stick in their corner, I will stick in mine. But if they want to start then it might be something.
Ms. Selby: You know we don’t rock like that in Adventure Girlz.

Without another word, Natalie smiled and walked away. I followed up with my co-teacher and the Citizen Schools staff to figure out next steps for re-enrolling Natalie into the program.

The day Natalie returned to class, Kassandra sulked the entire class. She refused to speak and was visibly upset to see Natalie back in class. Natalie also didn’t make things easy when she would talk loud enough for Kassandra, who was in earshot, to hear the slight jabs she was tossing her way. Seeing this dynamic prompted me to arrange lunch mediation between the two girls. When I went to the courtyard to gather both girls for the lunch conversations, two other participants came up to me. First, Alicia let me know how ineffective this effort would be.

Alicia: Natalie and Kassandra can’t be friends.
Ms. Selby: This does not concern you.
Alicia: Oh yes it does!
Ms. Selby: Really?
Alicia: Yes, they tell me stuff.
Ms. Selby: See? That’s the problem. All of you talking in their ears and stepping back to watch the messy fall out without doing anything to try and fix it.

Then Tina had a question for me.

Tina: Why you trying to make them talk to each other?
Ms. Selby: Y’all need to stop egging this on and let Natalie and Kassandra figure things out.

When Natalie, Kassandra, and I finally made it to the teacher’s lounge to have the conversation, I explained that this conversation would hopefully get to
the bottom of why they do not speak to each other and help pave a path for the both of them to take full advantage of interacting with one another during the Adventure Girlz experience.

Natalie: So why you wanted us to have this lunch meeting?
Ms. Selby: I see and feel the tension between the both of you and it won’t help to create a healthy space in Adventure Girlz if you are busy throwing cold stares and actively trying to ignore each other. We have tons of group activities and I want to be assured that the both of you won’t pop off into a fight when you come near each other.
[Silence]
Ms. Selby: Okay, so Natalie, do you know why Kassandra doesn’t speak to you?
Natalie: No
Ms. Selby: Kassandra, do you know why Natalie doesn’t speak to you?
Kassandra: Well, I don’t care…
Ms. Selby: No, no, no, no, that’s not my question. Not caring is part two of my question. Right not I am asking if you know why she isn’t speaking to you
Kassandra: No…but I don’t care…
Natalie: Well I can tell you why I don’t talk to her
Ms. Selby: Okay, go ahead…
Natalie: Well, basically, she talks about me to other people who come back and tell me what she says. If that is supposed to be my friend why she gonna do that?
Kassandra: I never said anything about you
Ms. Selby: So it seems like you both are in this situation because of what other people are saying to you. You took their word and never circled back to have a direct conversation with each other.
Natalie: So what you want us to do? Say hi and bye or something?
Ms. Selby: I don’t want you to do anything you are not fully committed to doing. But if that is what you want to do then that’s great.
Kassandra: Yea, I can agree to saying hi and bye
Ms. Selby: I also need for you to work in groups whenever the time comes
Both girls: Okay
Ms. Selby: So you agree to say hi and bye as well as work together during class?
Both girls: Yes
Ms. Selby [smiling]: Is it too much to ask you to shake on it?
Both girls: Yes, bye Ms. Selby…

At this point, the conversation had run over into a portion of their core subject class that immediately following their lunch hour. After reminding the girls not to share information from the conversation with their friends, I walked
them to class. I later learned that the school personnel usually facilitate similar sessions between conflicting students but Natalie and Kassandra’s case was overlooked. A conversation between the two never happened. For the immediate purpose of getting Natalie and Kassandra in the Adventure Girlz classroom, this conversation was necessary. However, further follow-up conferences are needed to get them closer towards healing in their relationship. Leading mediations was never a part of the restorative leadership program model but it became clear that to see desired outcomes – building a sisterhood – prioritizing out-of-class conferences were necessary. Some Black girls are wrestling with some complex emotions and require the space to unpack those emotions in a productive and supportive environment.

**In-class alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary practices.** It was difficult to determine alternative consequences for student actions that are detrimental to the overall success of the group. The initial thought was to take away privileges and access to activities participants enjoy. Then eventual removal from class is the ultimate consequence. For instance, during one of the Kitchen Table sessions, a participant, Jasmine, refused to work with others to prepare the meal.

**Jasmine:** But Miss, I raised my hand and you didn’t pick me to be in the group I wanted.

**Ms. Selby:** The group you wanted is full so you should help the entire group by working with a different team.

Instead of joining a group, Jasmine wandered around the classroom and made every effort to start up side conversations and play games with the participants who were preparing the meal.
Ms. Selby: Jasmine, it is okay for you to choose not to participate but it is not safe for you to go around distracting others while they are cooking. Please have a seat.

After refusing to follow instructions and continuing to distract others, I called for an administrator to remove Jasmine from class. At that point Jasmine decided she wanted to cook.

Jasmine: Miss, I am helping them now.
Ms. Selby: Jasmine, it is too late for you to make the decision to participate after repeatedly ignoring my requests for safety. You must now step out of class and have a reflective moment with the administrator.

After ten minutes, Jasmine and the administrator came back. From her appearance of bloodshot eyes, it appeared that Jasmine had been crying.

Jasmine: Ms. Selby can I come back to class?
Ms. Selby: Jasmine, there are consequences for your actions – being unsafe, ignoring directions – and you should take some additional time with the administrator to think about what you could’ve done differently to not be removed from class.
Jasmine: Ok…

The following week, Jasmine was the first to arrive. She made a B-line towards me and said, “I’m sorry for my behavior last week. I will do better and stay more focused.” She followed through on her promise but the next week Jasmine was back to goofing off and disregarding expectations.

With a classroom where the majority of students are participating and supporting one another, it was difficult to know what to do with the one student who was not engaged and choosing to act out. Without the prework of engaging the class in conversation about differentiating expectations based on individual student needs, keeping Jasmine in class and letting her do what she wanted would’ve been a sign that the class could be disregarded by everyone. However, my making the decision to remove Jasmine to protect the educational experience of the majority mirrored the common practice of school personnel who respond
to disruptive behavior with similar isolation practices. So in those instances, the restorative leadership program was not promoting and modeling alternative practices that do not isolate Black girls. In that moment, pausing the class to have an open discussion on how Jasmine’s actions impacted the learning environment could have been a teachable moment for all involved. Even more, the other students might have been able to help decide on a plan for reengaging Jasmine. So why didn’t I have such alternative responses at the ready?

I would imagine school personnel wrestling with a similar dilemma each day – protect the majority versus allow students to disrupt the learning environment. My theory asserts that school personnel should utilize alternative practices for these exclusionary disciplinary procedures but here I was doing just what they do. When I came to that conclusion, I reflected on the fact that I hadn’t been deliberate in defining the “alternative practices” in the moments where a student is disrupting class. I didn’t have a plan. I hadn’t asked the participants what should happen, in the classroom, when a group member gets off track. We had talked about the collective DOs and DON’Ts but we never went further to identify how we celebrated each other when we adhere to those terms or how we held each other accountable when we went off track. During the make-up workshop, I was able to try my hand at asking the girls to construct the expectations for the learning space and I tied their performance to a team incentive. The group saw the prize, knew what they had to do to access the prize, and they thoughtfully worked as a team to earn the prize. With this clarity of how everyone should be in the space, participants appeared more engaged and invested in not violating the expectations. Some girls who were typically silent
started speaking up with reminders and encouragement for those who were struggling to stay committed to the group cause.

For school personnel, it is unclear how much preparation they have done to have alternative practices at the ready. Even more so it is unclear that school personnel facilitate conversations with students to establish these school-wide and individual class community expectations where both the voice and ideas of students and school personnel are present. To get school personnel to use alternative practices they must first know alternatives exist and they should spend time during structured professional development to determine what they will do to engage students in developing such alternatives.

One particular strategy I came up with was shifting the disturbance to be a teachable moment that all participants could dissect. For instance, during one of the journaling sessions, participants were given motivational quotes that were written on individual display boards. Each girl was asked to read the quote then write a reflection as to what the quote meant and how it was applicable to their lived experiences. Before they started writing, I asked each girl to read their quote out loud. When it was Jasmine’s turn she went into a laughing fit and was unable to read the quote. We waited patiently for her to collect her thoughts to focus on reading the quote. Each time she started and read a few words, Jasmine would burst into another laughing fit. Some of the other participants became frustrated and remarked that Jasmine is playing around too much.

**Participants:** Come on Ms. Selby, just skip her. She is playing around too much

**Ms. Selby:** No, we are not going to skip her. Each person in this classroom learns and operates at different paces so we are going to give Jasmine the time she needs to focus.

**Carla:** But she is doing it on purpose! She is being so annoying right now.
**Re: Regina:** Yea Ms. Selby, there is a difference between genuinely needing the time to refocus and taking advantage. Jasmine is taking advantage and goofing off.

**Ms. Selby:** Well, she has to make that decision as to whether or not she wants to continue down this path while knowing she is causing the class to stall right now. When you are in your other classes, do situations like this surface? If so, what do you do? These are the things you need to think about and make decisions about.

After a couple more minutes, Jasmine became focused and was able to read the quote, which allowed the class to move on. In this particular case, students saw that you could hold students accountable without punitive measures. More educators need to look beyond making their way through a pre-determined lesson plan and be prepared with adjusting class in order to leverage similar types of teachable moments in order to apply in-class alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices.

We need training programs and ongoing professional development that focus on school personnel engaging in deep introspection to uncover any personal biases and vices that might prevent them from fully engaging and treating our young people as individuals who can have intellectual conversations, be able to voice their opinions, and get support when they have questions. I went through this process and made a commitment to be open to grow; be able to see the information at hand and react to it. We have to create spaces for school personnel to go through a similar reflective journey. The process for self evaluation with regards to interactions with Black girls, and youth in general, will better prepare school personnel to understand and recognize what they are doing when reprimanding students, the positive and negative impact on students that results, and their will to want to make changes to the school policies and practices.
2. Social Entrepreneurs

As a social entrepreneur, I strongly recommend identifying the core values that will govern your approach to addressing a given education issue. I first identified my core values – transparency, open mindedness, communication, dependability, honesty, and integrity – during the year-long L100 Workplace Lab course during Year One of the Ed.L.D. program. The importance of my core values surfaced later on in the summer before the start of Year Two, when I encountered the 4.0 (pronounced four-point-oh) Schools community – an organization that equips entrepreneurial people to create new educator start up companies and schools (www.4pt0.org) – at an Education Pioneers workshop on July 11, 2014.

The founder of 4.0 Schools wore an orange headband and shared a rather compelling and engaging presentation about his experiences in education and his vision for the future of schools. I had to sit on my hands and bite my lips to not shoot up out of my seat and curse him out for what I had determined was his absurd idea of supporting entrepreneurs with their experiments on Black and Brown youth while masking their efforts as "Big Ideas" for reforming a failing educational system.

However, I couldn’t sit still or keep quiet for long. I raised my hand and calmly (but with furrowed brows) told the founder how what he had just shared – with such excitement and delight – had impacted me. I needed to ask him how comfortable he was with the collateral damage caused by these experimental education initiatives. In response, he basically asked me (paraphrased):

**Founder:** Then what is the alternative? Stay with a broken system that we KNOW damages countless youth or try our hand at discovering new and better ways of doing things?
I left New Orleans that summer obsessed with trying to reconcile the emotions that exchange stirred in me. This of course meant joining the 4pt0 community and seeing for myself how the work he talked about can truly make a difference if done well. The past year of piloting an academic year version of Adventure Girlz to empower Black girls who are at risk of rapidly moving into the juvenile justice system was essentially an experiment. The same experiments I worried caused tremendous collateral damage in student bodies that are predominantly composed of Black and Brown students. A month after launching Adventure Girlz, I wrote the following reflection:

Am I doing too much?!?! Am I doing the right things?!?! I stepped into this work with the goal of convening 12 middle school Black girls who are struggling academically. I wanted to provide them with experiences where they could start to tell a more positive narrative about their lived experiences. I wanted them to talk about their personal history...meet successful Black women...prepare shared meals...look towards each other for support...explore NYC. Right out the gate, I found myself scaling back the pace at which these things could happen due to the group dynamics (LOTS of history across several girls - fights, gossip) and their low academic skills (writing and critical thinking). Additionally, I noticed that most of the girls could point out how everyone else was doing wrong. However, they resist acknowledging how they could have personally contributed to the unproductive class environment. When the focus is on blaming others it is definitely harder for the Adventure Girlz to focus on making personalized changes. Each 90-minute class session is emotionally draining. I am questioning whether or not some of my efforts are in fact my lowering expectations and in a sense “giving up”. I am wondering how many people have given up on them. Lots to process...

I didn’t know for certain Adventure Girlz would make a difference but I KNEW something different had to be introduced to interrupt the vicious cycle of schools lagging in their efforts to provide social emotional support to Black girls in order to reduce delinquent behaviors and reduce the number of Black girls who are pushed out of schools into the justice system.
There was a reason I applied for Education Pioneer and was accepted into the program in New Orleans. I needed to join the 4.0 Schools community. That day in July, unbeknownst to me at the time, set me on a path of serving as a social entrepreneur invested in creating healthier learning spaces for my people – Black and Brown people. Through a range of prior experiences, I had the skill set (e.g. project management, operations, creativity) and the passion to put something in motion but I need to immerse myself in a community to make sense of it all and to determine what that "something" would be. And as an educator with a social entrepreneur spirit, staying true to my core values while engaging in such a community has made a tremendous impact on my role as an educator seeking system-wide reforms.

3. Two Extreme Ends of the Juvenile Justice Spectrum

On the one end of the juvenile justice spectrum as a correctional facility established 1932, Rikers Island in New York City has 10 separate jails capable of housing up to 17,000 inmates. Most of New York’s residents stay at Rikers when they are (1) convicted of crimes with short sentences, (2) awaiting a court appearance due to ineligibility for the option of bail or inability to gather funds to pay bail, or (3) awaiting transfer to a facility in upstate New York. There is a separate facility for women (including adolescent females) and one for adolescent males 16 to 18 years of age. Individuals are locked up with limited to no high quality services that could set someone up for success once released. Additionally, New York State law has specific restrictions on certain civil liberties due to felony convictions. Once someone is convicted of a felony they will have an extremely hard time getting on track towards once they are released.
from the correctional facility and are essentially silenced and made to feel invisible in their community. For example, getting convicted of a felony will make you ineligible for NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing for 6 years after completion of sentence. Forman (2012) describes a snowball effect that awaits a young person convicted of a felony that essentially lands them right back in a detention facility in the following way:

“By barring the felon from public housing, we make it likely that he will become homeless and lose custody of his children. Once he is homeless, he is less likely to find a job. Without a job he is, in turn, less likely to find housing on the private market – his only remaining option. Without student loans, he cannot go back to school to try to create a better life for himself and his family” (p. 110).

On the other end of the juvenile justice spectrum, as an alternative to incarceration program, the Andrew Glover Youth Program (http://www.agyp.org) was established in 1979 as a crime prevention program in New York State that provides social/emotional support services to youth who are incarcerated as a way to stem recidivism. The organization “serves over 300 youthful offenders each year, and more than 90% never commit another crime” (http://www.agyp.org). As part of the program, youth engage in a range of opportunities that places emphasis on the need for better understanding of self, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and future orientation of efforts and beliefs. The goal is for youth to “cultivate previously hidden talents that lead to a new life without prison or crime” (http://www.agyp.org).

Similar to my call for schools to abandon exclusionary policies and practices that hurt rather than help its youth, it is time for New York State to lean more towards a public safety plan that takes preventative measures to eliminate the cycle of imprisonment. I am recommending the Division of Juvenile Justice
and Opportunities for Youth put forth reform initiatives that builds a partnership with the New York City Department of Education to direct adequate funds for educational, health and mental health, and social programs (Irwin et al., 2000) like Adventure Girlz, a school-based restorative leadership program, long before youth are faced with time in jail (Rikers) or at an alternative program (AGYP).
Conclusion

The inequity we experience in the American school system is a symptom of deeper layers of inequity that cuts across social, economical, judicial, and political systems. In NYC and Arizona, there are laws in place that promote racial profiling based on “a reasonable suspicion” that an individual is a criminal (NYC Stop & Frisk law) or an illegal immigrant (Arizona SB 1070). Parallel to this reality are the school discipline policies and practices that gradually shifted the role of addressing the behaviors of school-aged children from the principal’s office to either the courthouse or medical facility (http://www.advancementproject.org) because the majority of school personnel do not think about a student’s social-emotional needs when structuring lesson plans, applying disciplinary responses, and organizing learning environments (Elmore, 2014). For instance, during a luncheon hosted by the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL), I learned about the extreme consequences imposed by No Excuses schools in New Orleans:

A 6-year old attending school in New Orleans decided to bring a pack of Rolaids to his kindergarten classroom. He thought he had a roll of candy so he decided to share them with his classmates. After a few hours of students ingesting the “candy” many started to show signs of illness. School officials called for ambulances that took the sick children to the hospital, they notified parents as well as the local authorities. The 6-year old was arrested and charged for “drug possession”. The story continues…the child’s legal advocate was present at the luncheon and shared how the courts filed the 6-year-old’s case file under “drug dealer.” When the presiding judge skimmed the case folder and saw the label, he automatically landed on a decision to order mandatory, supervised drug tests for the 6-year-old for an extended period of time. This child had to get up and go with his mother to a detention center where other adult drug offenders were standing in line awaiting their turn to pee in a cup for the officials administering the drug test. The 6-year-old was confused and couldn’t comprehend why he had to endure such an experience. (Child Advocate, personal communication, January 2013)
Then, while attending a training led by Legal Services NYC, I learned that there are an overwhelming number of school disciplinary cases that are referred to Emergency Rooms (ER).

In a classroom where a student is throwing a tantrum and/or refusing to follow directives, school personnel would call 9-1-1 to have the child transported to the ER. Although calling 9-1-1 is for medical assistance, the police are automatically dispatched to the school along with the EMS. Upon arrival the police have discretionary power to use handcuffs for restraining the student. (Legal Services NYC, personal communication, September 3, 2015)

Unfortunately, as summarized in this Capstone, the citizens that are disproportionately impacted by these policies and practices are Black and Brown youth, women, and men. I explained how the mechanism of a restorative leadership program prioritizes high quality and supportive educational experiences specifically for Black girls. I also provided evidence of what Black girls experience in toxic learning spaces, the impact on their social emotional development and ability to successfully engage in their learning, and the impact on their life outcomes if something isn’t done to correct these unjust schooling environments. I introduced Adventure Girlz, an intervention known as a restorative leadership program. I detailed how Adventure Girlz helps teachers and administrators create school environments that support Black girls before they are introduced to the juvenile justice system. Then, I included evidence from participants to show how Adventure Girlz has influenced their awareness of self and others as well as their eagerness to explore the world.

As the education and justice communities continue to intersect, it is necessary for leaders to leverage a restorative leadership program to provide opportunities for Black girls to fully embrace the intelligence, creativity, love, and power that resides within.
References
and hurt? profiles of african american adolescents with prosocial and aggressive behavior. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40*(8), 1012-1024. doi:10.1007/s10964-010-9608-4


A RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MODEL


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McIntyre, T. (1996). Does the way we teach create behavior disorders in


Panelist (February 20, 2016). And Still I Rise Conference on Black Girls and Women in Education. *Teacher College, Columbia University*


http://www.bostonreview.net/bruce-western-reentry-reversing-mass-imprisonment
# Appendix A

List of Participants in Pilot Academic Year Program

*All participant names are pseudonyms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age at Start</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Enrolled in Program (Y/N)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Alissa</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Carla</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Destiny</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Desiree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jessica</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Jasmine</td>
<td></td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Kassandra</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Kim</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Moved out of the country in December 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Natalie</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Stopped coming to program throughout January 2016; returned 2/29/16; continued to have inconsistent attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Alicia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sporadically attended program throughout January 2016 and then switched into a different program at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Regina</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Tina</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Family Communication_Newsletter

THE ADVENTURER

A newsletter about how we choose to...

MOVE. TALK. MENTOR. LEAD

FEBRUARY 29, 2016

Ms. Selby
Chief Program Officer
& Adventure Coach

Contact me with questions
and comments:
347-913-3703
mselby@adventuregirlz.org
www.adventuregirlz.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

2/29 First day of the Spring session
of Adventure Girlz

3/19 Healthy Skin & Makeup: A
Discussion about what it
means to be a Beautiful Black
Girl

6/24-6/30 Overnight trip to South Carolina
will include a week on the
campus of the College of
Charleston. Girls will also go
surfing and sailing, engage in
history lessons, and celebrate
each other’s accomplishments.

Grades Improvement Plan

This semester, each Adventurer (student) made a plan for getting a ‘B’
average in their core classes — Math, Reading, Writing, Science, and
Social Studies.

Some goals include: getting work done on time, no play fighting, asking
for help, and putting away cell phone during class.

Each week, adventurers will look at their individualized grades
improvement plan and ask themselves: How am I doing? Where have I
been successful? Where am I struggling and in need of support?

Ask the adventurers about their goals and how they are doing in meeting
those goals!

Sista Reading Circle

We will be reading “The Skin I’m In” by Sharon G.
Flake. The book depicts the story of seventh grader
Maleeka Madison who has low self-esteem because
of her dark skin color. Students will practice reading,
critical thinking, and public speaking skills.

ABOUT ADVENTURE GIRLZ

Adventure Girlz is a leadership program designed for Black girls to Move, Talk, Mentor, and Lead. We prioritize educational attainment for Black girls
through physical sports and field trips, critical conversations about what it means to grow up as a Black girl, events to collaborate and build relationships
with peer and adult mentors, and workshops to learn personalized goal setting and reflection techniques to improve life outcomes.
Appendix C
Key Social Emotional Learning Competencies

(Payton et al., 2000, p. 180)
# Appendix D

## 40 Developmental Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Asset Name and Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>1. Family Support—Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive Family Communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 3. Other Adult Relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. Caring Neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring School Climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 6. Parent Involvement in School—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empowerment</strong></td>
<td>7. Community Values—Youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth as Resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to Others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boundaries &amp; Expectations</strong></td>
<td>11. Family Boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person’s whereabouts. 12. School Boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood Boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. 14. Adult Role Models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive Peer Influence—Young person’s best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High Expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructive Use of Time</strong></td>
<td>17. Creative Activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. Youth Programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. Religious Community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. Time at Home—Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commitment to Learning</strong></td>
<td>21. Achievement Motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. School Engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. Bonding to School—Young person cares about her or his school. 25. Reading for Pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Values</strong></td>
<td>26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people. 27. Equality and Social Justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 29. Honesty—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.” 30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Competencies</strong></td>
<td>32. Planning and Decision Making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. Resistance Skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Identity</strong></td>
<td>37. Personal Power—Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.” 38. Self-Esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 39. Sense of Purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.” 40. Positive View of Personal Future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Positive Social Norms Brainstorm Activity

Fill in the blanks.

I joined Adventure Girlz because, I believe (something positive about yourself) that I can make
my grades go back up since it went down. While in
this class, I will (one way you will help the group be successful)
follow the teacher directions
so I won't get in trouble. I want
others to (one way you want others to treat you) treat me the way I treat
them like, being respectful to teacher & students

in you are
a nice
black
woman

Smart
Pretty

Promotive

intelligent

responsible

Strong

creative

Strong

respectful

Responsible

Strong

Intelligent

Promotive

Smart

Pretty
Appendix F
Academic Goal Setting Worksheet

**ACADEMIC GOALS**

Every adventurer must maintain at least a ‘B’ average in all classes (Math, ELA, Science, and Social Studies)

**Name:**

---

**STEP 1:** Be honest about where you are at in each class.
1. Write the letter grade you received on your last report card,
2. Write the name of the teacher,
3. Write the current number of referrals you have from this teacher, then
4. Circle the face that summarizes how you feel when you are in the class

![Happy](image1)
(Happy, excited, confident)

![Unsure](image2)
(Unsure of myself, confused, nervous)

![Unhappy](image3)
(Unhappy, frustrated, lost)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math</th>
<th>WRITING</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Emojis" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Emojis" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Emojis" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Emojis" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2:** Identify your strengths and gaps in each class

**HOMEWORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you complete all of your homework every day?</td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="No" /></td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you know what your teacher considers quality work?</td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Yes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does your homework look neat?</td>
<td><img src="image16" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image17" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image18" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image19" alt="Yes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you turn in all your work on time?</td>
<td><img src="image20" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="No" /></td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Yes" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLASS PARTICIPATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you focus on what you are learning while in class?</td>
<td><img src="image21" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image22" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image23" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image24" alt="Yes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you ask questions and contribute ideas during class?</td>
<td><img src="image25" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image26" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image27" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image28" alt="Yes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you respond immediately when the teacher calls your name?</td>
<td><img src="image21" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image22" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image23" alt="Yes" /></td>
<td><img src="image24" alt="Yes" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Do you avoid talking with your friends while the teacher is addressing the whole class? Y N Y N Y N Y N
5. Do you avoid talking with your friends during silent work time? Y N Y N Y N Y N

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDUCT &amp; ATTENDANCE</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you get to class on time and immediately sit down in your assigned seat?</td>
<td>Y N Y N Y N Y N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you avoid leaving your seat or class without permission?</td>
<td>Y N Y N Y N Y N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you get along well with your teacher?</td>
<td>Y N Y N Y N Y N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you get along well with your classmates?</td>
<td>Y N Y N Y N Y N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you avoid using your cell phone during class?</td>
<td>Y N Y N Y N Y N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 3: Create an Action Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I will...</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For each class you selected: Based on the data on the previous worksheets, what is ONE very specific action step you can commit to for the next couple of weeks that will help you maintain or improve your grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adventurers will spend time reflecting on their progress during Adventure Girlz and give advice to support each other.*
Appendix G
Positive Social Norms Brainstorm Activity

- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe that girls should be treated the right way no matter their color. While in this class, I will help the group be successful by being promotive and keeping an open mind about others. I want others to treat me with respect and I’ll do the same in return.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe that black girls should be positive about themselves. While in this class, I will help girls be successful in this class. I want others to treat each other right.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe that any girl should feel confident about their selves. While in this class, I will respect others and make other girls feel loved. I want others to respect me while I respect them.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe that black girls should be happy with who they are. While in this class, I will find a way to help black girls be more successful and try to find their self. I want others to treat each other right because we all black girls.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe that when I get unfocused I can get back to being focused. While in this class, I will not distract other people from doing their work. I want others to be nice to others also in school.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe I can make my grades go back up since it went down. While in this class, I will follow the teacher’s directions so I won’t get in trouble. I want others to treat me the way I treat them like being respectful to the teacher and students.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe black girls are smart and beautiful no matter what. While in this class, I will be promotive. I want others to treat me with respect.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe I can be ME and express myself no matter what. While in this class, I will learn new things and have fun. I want others to have respect for each other and treat others how you wanna be treated.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe that it would be fun and interesting. While in this class, I will work with my group and help others. I want others to treat me the way they would want me to treat them.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe I’m smart and I thought it be fun. While in this class, I will talk to new people. I want others to treat me with respect.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe it looks fun. While in this class, I will stay on task and do my work. I want others to treat me with respect.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe black girls have power and are strong. While in this class, I will work together as a team and help others. I want others to treat each other the same way you will want them to treat you.
- I joined Adventure Girlz because I believe in myself and that I have the potential to do something great. While in this class, I will help the girls realize their potential and strive for excellence. I want others to respect me, respect themselves and respect others.
Appendix H

Letter of Support_Principal

To Whom It May Concern:

As the principal of The Urban Assembly Unison School I have had the privilege of working with Adventure Girlz and I am a strong proponent of their program. I recommend Adventure Girlz enthusiastically as an after-school program provider to increase the social emotional support of Black girls in order to reduce delinquent behavior often stemming from the pattern of young women of color being disenfranchised in the school system.

The Adventure Girlz program model employs unique methods to engage students. The program is comprised of four main elements: moving, talking, mentoring, and leading. The program prioritizes educational attainment for Black girls through physical sports and field trips, critical conversations about what it means to grow up as a Black girl, events to collaborate and build relationships with peer and adult mentors, and workshops to learn personalized goal setting and reflection techniques to improve life outcomes.

The administration and faculty of our school are wholeheartedly committed to continuing a robust and successful partnership with Adventure Girlz. With its first year of implementation, Adventure Girlz staff is developing strong partnerships with teachers and faculty. They also enhance the relationship between our school and our families by engaging in effective communication with parents, students, and teachers.

The Urban Assembly Unison School and Adventure Girlz strive to put into practice a belief that all of our students can be successful in their academic pursuits, in middle school through graduate school. I support Adventure Girlz’ request for funding as it will help us achieve our mission as a school – to have every Unison student leave our school with a deeply developed sense of self, a broad sense of the world and an ability to be active agents in their own lives and in the world around them. Adventure Girlz’ focus on building a safe environment for our young Black women to become leaders in our school and in the community at large provides the school with a means to tap into the potential in these young women that all too often goes ignored and gets oppressed.

Sincerely,

Principal, The Urban Assembly Unison School
Appendix I
Letter of Support_Teacher

To whom it may concern:

As a teacher at the Urban Assembly Unison School I have had the pleasure of teaching majority of the young ladies involved in the Adventure Girlz program. Over the last two years I have witnessed the girls in multiple school settings, including in the classroom and involved in extracurricular activities through their extended learning day program, Citizen Schools.

In a school where approximately 85% of the young ladies that we serve are Black girls, I was excited when the Adventure Girlz program arrived in Fall 2015. After hearing about the program’s mission, I felt as though it would serve as a positive place for our Black girls to deal with issues that were not being directly addressed within the classroom; issues such as race, self identity, their role in the community, and the importance of teamwork. Since coming to our campus, Adventure Girlz has addressed the aforementioned issues and many more. Thus far, the program’s impact on the girls has been invaluable.

I have been able to be involved in many of the Adventure Girlz sessions and it is a lovely thing to see the girls interact with one another in such a positive and respectful way. A culture has been created within the program that has helped to foster an environment of respect and appreciation. Each girl knows that they will be celebrated for their individual and collective strengths that they bring to the group. This type of environment has helped to build a quiet, yet bold, confidence in the girls that they did not have before their involvement in Adventure Girlz.

Not only has the Adventure Girlz program tended to the intrapersonal and interpersonal needs of its participants, but it also tends to their academic needs as well. With the help of their Adventure Coach, Ms. Selby, each Adventure Girl set personal academic goals for core subjects and are very dedicated to reaching their own goals, as well as helping the other Adventure Girlz reach their goals too. I have heard them talk to one another about their progress in class and even exchange words of encouragement and praise with one another. In addition to just setting academic goals, Adventure Girlz
are increasing their reading comprehension, critical thinking, and public speaking skills through collective reading using books about other young Black girls such as themselves. In the regular academic setting it is rare for students to have opportunities to read books where they can identify with the characters. Through their shared reading, the Adventure Girlz program is helping to expose students to new forms of writing and helping to foster a love for literature.

Personally, one of the biggest things that I appreciate about Adventure Girlz is that it gives our students the opportunity to go places and be exposed to activities that they have never done before; all while teaching them how to work together. Many of our students have never done things like rope climbing and ziplining, with Adventure Girlz they have the opportunity to do these activities and others. Knowing how to navigate within new settings, working as a team, and taking on leadership roles are all skills that are valued when considering which students are college and/or career ready. In a safe space, Adventure Girlz have the opportunity to practice those skills and so many more through their journey of Adventures together.

I have witnessed the positive impact that Adventure Girlz has had on the students at the Unison School and it is my hope that other Black girls across the United States have the opportunity to be exposed to such a wonderful program. I want as many Black girls as possible to build the self confidence, respect for themselves and others, academic knowledge, and trusting community that I have seen my students build since the implementation of Adventure Girlz at our school.

Best,

[Name redacted]
ESL Teacher
The Urban Assembly Unison School
170 Gates Ave, 3rd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11238
Appendix J
Interest Form_Student 1
Appendix K
Interest Form_Student 2

ADVENTURE GIRLZ • 2015-2016

STUDENT EXIT + INTEREST FORM

Adventure Girlz is a restorative learning program that partners with public middle schools as an academic year class that culminates in a weeklong adventure sports summer camp focused on building four specific self-regulating skills - [a] self-reflection, [b] self-advocacy, [c] better decision-making, and [d] personal relationship development and management. Adventure Girlz prioritizes the educational attainment for Black girls through physical sports/games, field trips, opportunities for collaboration with peers, and reflection about the power of one's words and actions.

DIRECTIONS: Complete your part of the form and turn it into Ms. Sally so she could interview you. Take the completed form home and have your parent/guardian read and sign the form as well as the enrollment form. There is space for only 12-14 girls so return both completed forms to Ms. Sally or Ms. Johnson to secure your spot!

STUDENT INFORMATION
Student’s First Name: [Redacted]
Middle Name: [Redacted]
Last Name: [Redacted]

I have walked out of semi/all of my classes (Math, Science, etc.)
Yes
No
Number of times I have been suspended from school:

Number of times I was sent home early because of my words/actions:

What kind of grades do you mostly get on your report card?

WHY DO YOU WANT TO JOIN ADVENTURE GIRLZ?
Circle “Yes,” “Kind of,” or “Not really” to describe what you hope you will be able to do by participating in Adventure Girlz.

Add 2 of your own personal reasons at the end!

Improve my grades in school
Try harder in school
Participate more in class activities
Get along better with classmates
Get along better with teachers
Make better decisions
Take responsibility for actions
Be more of a leader
Try different sports and games
Share my own ideas with others
Work as a team to meet different goals
Meet successful Black girls and women
Travel outside of New York City

I like Adventure Girlz coz it is a really cool way to learn now we are important

STUDENT’S BELIEFS AND GOALS
(1) What is your favorite subject?
Why? Books are interesting and fun to read.
(2) What is your most difficult subject? Why? Math. I am not really good at it.
(3) What high school do you plan to attend?
(4) What do you want to be when you grow up?
(5) What TWO things make you special? My personality and being myself

FEEDBACK FROM CURRENT PARTICIPANTS
(1) Since joining Adventure Girlz, what have you learned about yourself?
I learned that I am unique.
(2) What would you need to change in Adventure Girlz so that everyone could gel along and focus more?
To stop talking about each other and be productive.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE
I have read my child’s reasons for wanting to join Adventure Girlz and the requirement that she will need to attend field trips outside of school hours to get the most out of the program. I gladly give my permission for her to participate this semester and have also completed the 3-page enrollment form with important information about how and how best to contact me.

Parent/Guardian Name: [Redacted]
Parent/Guardian Signature: [Redacted]
Date: [Redacted]

**DON’T FORGET TO COMPLETE THE SEPARATE ENROLLMENT FORM. RETURN BOTH THIS FORM AND THE ENROLLMENT FORM TO MS. SALLY OR MS. JOHNSON BEFORE FEBRUARY 12TH.
Appendix L
Event Flyer

**ADVENTURE GIRLZ SPRING KICKOFF!**

179 Gates Avenue 4:00PM Tue 11 5:30PM // Feb 29th 2016

**Who?**
Family, friends, teachers, and everyone who support Adventure Girlz!

**What?**
The Spring semester of Adventure Girlz is starting! We want to invite guests to join the adventurers to create and enjoy a shared meal.

You will learn a bit about each girl and what they are looking forward to in the Spring semester.

On the menu:
- Fettucine & Meat Sauce
- Mixed Greens Salad
- Garlic Bread
- Water

**THE KITCHEN TABLE!**
JOIN US IN ROOM 310

**CAN YOU MAKE IT?**
TEXT TO LET US KNOW BEFORE FRIDAY, 2/26

Please text/email Ms. Selby (314-435-6282 or miceby@adventuregirlz.org) the following info:
1. Your First and Last Name
2. Whether or not you are the parent, guardian, or teacher of an Adventure Girlz
3. Whether or not you are bringing anyone else with you.
CONGRATULATIONS!!

You are going to South Carolina!!

You now have 100 POINTS...
Keep them all, earn more, do whatever it takes to stay above 49 points.

When
Friday, June 24 - Thursday, June 30

Where
College of Charleston
(spend an entire week in the dorms at a college campus)

What
Learn about your history!
Go surfing, sailing, and more!
Meet with different Black women!
Celebrate reaching your goals!

50 pts and above
Pack your bags!!

49 pts and below
Stay in New York

Adventure Girlz
### Appendix N

**Overnight Points System Student**

**Scorecard**

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<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

**Extra Points Earned**
- Return a signed Grades Improvement Plan (5 points)
- Return Permission Slips by Wednesday after receiving (3 points)
- Publish a piece of writing/artwork for newsletter (5 points each)
- Participate & support others during adventures (2 points each)
- Come to class and immediately settle in to start class (1 point)
- Complete written journal reflections about grades plan (1 point)
- Engage during 'The Skin I'm In' Sista Reading Circle (3 points)
- Try 'The Right Stuff' skills development activity (3 points)
- Complete an end of school day journal response (1 point)
- Encourage another Adventurer to stay on track (1 point)
- Speak with guests during class/adventure (1 point)

**Points Lost**
- Use your cell phone during class
- Distract others as they complete work/participate in class
- Walk out of class
- Put others down with curses and other harsh words
- Engage in side conversations when teachers or fellow adventurers are sharing out in whole group

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50 pts and above
Pack your bags!!

49 pts and below
Stay in New York

**Directions:**
- Place this scorecard on your table during each Adventure Girlz class.
- Keep a tally of the number of times you lose a point.
- At the end of class, enter the total EXTRA points.
- Add columns and enter points in the last column.