**Pathways to Education Narratives**

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**CMO-1: Activating a sense of ownership for local programs**

In 1995, founding member (Carolyn Acker) and staff from the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC) attended the first International Community Health Centre Conference in Montreal. Here they learned about the experience of Dr. H. Jack Geiger who launched a community health centre in 1965 in rural Mississippi that, along with primary care clinical services, also provided a variety of programs to break the cycle of poverty [H7 & E83]. Carolyn and her colleagues brought back the idea of creating a “community success” program at the RPCHC [H7] to the Centre’s board as a way of reducing the high school drop-out rate and breaking the cycle of poverty.

The concept of a “community succession” project was both motivated by a **passion** to break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that had engulfed the Regent Park community for so long [F14] and **inspired** to create a “vision of community succession” [G7] in which the children of Regent Park would become future doctors, nurses, social workers, community health workers and administrators of the RPCHC and in the community. Additionally, the Regent Park Community Health Centre’s board express the **desire** to be more than “a clinic” [Background A3] that offered primary health care services.

This passion to break the cycle of poverty and culture of hopelessness was spurred on by a rapid deterioration in the community. The Regent Park community faced key challenges (low incomes, high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, and a large proportion of single-parent families) that contributed to youth increasingly dropping out of high school [Background A6] and becoming involved in crime [Background A4] at a young age.

The RPCHC had a long history of working hand-in-hand with Regent Park residents, recognizing and building on community assets, bring in resources from outside the community, collaborating and partnering with other community agencies to build community capacity, and advocating for the community [F9].

RPCHC is also grounded in an understanding of the importance of community ownership. Community ownership is a fundamental value of the RPCHC and vital to the vision of “community succession” [E8]. Maintaining with this value, the RPCHC board and staff decided to hand over ownership of the RPCHC to the community [H7]. Community members played a major role in identifying obstacle, solutions and in developing the program to ensure the community was engaged and felt ownership over the program [E8].

After a year of reviewing research of other programs that may work in Regent Park setting [F84] and discussions with community members and other stakeholders [F84] the “community succession” project was founded in 1996 at the RPCHC.

**CMO-2: Building a sense of accountability through long-term commitment to seeing results**

The “community succession” program envisioned by RPCHC further evolved into the Pathways to Education program. Many milestones to bring the program to fruition took place in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. Research on program implementation was conducted to learn from other programs doing similar work [F13]. Funding proposals were submitted to Counselling Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation [F11] and were ultimately deemed successful. While this was just the beginning of financial support to realize the community’s vision, the program never would have been developed and implemented without this early support [H11]. Early on the decision was made to hire paid staff to support and advocate for the students, rather than volunteer positions. Despite the financial impact on the program, this decision acknowledged that this role was the “glue” that held the supports of the program together [H60]. Ultimately this role is central to developing caring relationships within the program and providing accountability to the youth. Job descriptions for staff were developed, including for the Direction and staff were hired early in 2000 [F12].

Over the years, the RPCHC worked withthe community to develop community strengths, working hand-in-hand with residents who had taken leadership and staff roles in the organization, recognizing and building upon community assets and bringing in resources from outside the community, collaborating and partnering with other community agencies and institutions to build community capacity, and advocating for the community [F9]. RPCHC’s **long-term commitment** to the community was certainly an asset to **building accountability** within the community, however given the long history of initiatives in Regent Park, the Pathways program needed to be truthful about the actual, rather than potential, benefits of the program [F29].

The inaugural Pathways to Education program was launched in September 2001 in Regent Park (Toronto, ON) [I14]. This first year 115 students living in Regent Park beginning grade 9 entered the program [H84].

**CMO-3: Fostering trust in the community by delivering positive results**

During the year leading up to the launch of Pathways to Education there was a palpable sense of despair in the community. There were nine murders in the community that year [E13]. The high school dropout rate in Regent Park was in excess of 50%, as comparted to 5% to 13% in Toronto’s wealthiest communities [E141].

The original program elements articulated in the funding proposals for the “community succession” project were ultimately not included in the Pathways to Education program plan. [F11] Shifting from a school-based initiative to focusing on the broader community became a driving force behind the design of the Pathways program. Pathways to Education recognized that risk factors for dropping out of high school are not limited to the school environment but rather many are found in the community in which they live {E142].

The Pathways to Education program was designed to overcome many risk factors for not completing high school, including poverty, lack of academic support, and a longstanding culture of failure [H15]. The Pathways to Education program was developed upon the foundation of community development using an “action research” methodology [F14]. Community input was gathered on barriers faced in education and employment and best practices from other programs were reviewed [I14].

The Pathways to Education program provides four supports to students: tutoring, mentoring, financial support and advocacy. [H19]

The success of the Pathways to Education program was dependent on **fostering trust** in the community that the program would deliver results [H59]. It was important to establish that Pathways would support the youth of the community over the long haul. Making this commitment was an important component of the trust placed in the Program by the community and the young people themselves. And this ability to provide support over a (relatively) long period has been confirmed as a characteristic of effective youth development programs (e.g. Partee and Halprin 2006). This “stability” is a key in providing the opportunity for the continuity of the relationships necessary to be effective. [F & H59]

The Pathways to Education program does research to ensure the ongoing and systemic collection of both qualitative and quantitative date which, taken together, are used to document the effectiveness of the supports, ensure accountability and program improvement and determine the replicable aspects of the program in other communities [F123]. A grant from the Wellesley Central Health Corporation allowed Pathways and the local school board to effectively and efficiently share quantitative data [F126]. This partnership development with the local school board [F32] allowed Pathways to collect baseline data in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Sharing data also reduces the cost of the Pathways program [H127]. Early results indicated that the high school drop-out rate was reduced from 56% to 11.7% per cent [H72]. Post-secondary participation increased from 20% to over 80 [H72].

**CMO-4: Creating excitement in other communities and funders**

RPCHC had a **desire** to share its learnings with other communities in order that other low income youth would have a fair chance at achieving their potential {F22]. They were also determined to sustain the program in Regent Park [F22 & F23]. Early results from the initial site in Regent Park **excited** a number of funders to inquire as to the implications for other communities and initiatives [G139; F137]. By 2005, representatives from other communities were visiting Pathways and expressing interest in the program for their own community [F21].

The Pathways to Education board at RPCHC began developing a vision for scaling up and a clear definition of program elements that would be scaled up [F-H24]. For example, in the development of a capacity for replication, it is clear that comparable data is obtained in each community seeking to replicate the Pathways program and that there is a commitment to research**.** These will be among the criteria for replication which will guide the selection of other communities [G139]. Additionally, program refinements were made based on data from students, volunteer mentors, parents and program staff [F52].

In order to begin expanding the program to other communities, several achievements were realized. The Ontario Ministry of Education became a partner with Pathways through a grant to the program in 2004 [F134] and Pathways to Education was able to secured a physical building through the generosity of a key donor (who later became chair of Pathways board) [F120].

In 2005, Pathways to Education Canada, a public foundation to support the scale-up of the Pathways program, was founded [H23]. The foundation was established to raise money and oversee expansion across the country [H85]. The goal of the foundation was to take responsibility for sharing the knowledge and for replicating the program in other communities [F121].

After successful start-up, development and design of a process for replication, Pathways to Education Canada received a two year grant followed by multi-year grants from other donors (Counselling Foundation of Canada, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Government, private donors) [F26]. A major Canadian corporation decided to invest in replicating Pathways to Education Canada and provided a start-up grant in 2006 [F25].

**CMO-5: Fostering interest among other communities to replicate the Pathways initiative**

The Chairman of the Pathways to Education Canada board was an exceptional fundraiser and was **committed** to replicating Pathways as far and wide as possible[H24]. Several communities and donors began expressing Interest in replicating the Pathways program [F21] beyond Regent Park and even beyond Ontario.

To be eligible for a replicated Pathways program, communities must demonstrate both need and capacity to effectively run the program [F108]. Neighbourhoods that are selected have: low high school graduation and post-secondary education enrollment rates, low numbers of highly educated individuals, a high number of immigrants, and are low-income. Pathways to Education does not provide further information about community selection, or what determines whether the community has the ‘capacity’ required to receive the Pathways program. The Pathways site selection and refusal process is vague which makes it difficult to determine why some sites are selected for a replicate program while others are refused [E115]. However, in several locations the capacity to run the program was filled by other local health centres (e.g., Rexdale Community Health Centre in Rexdale and Unison Health and Community Services in Lawrence Heights) [H87].

Demonstrating positive results allowed Pathways to Education Canada to attract funding from government, private and charitable contributors [F116] including the formation of major funding partnership with the United Way of Greater Toronto [F105] to expand to two additional sites in Toronto [H86] and securing $19 million over a four year period from the Government of Ontario to expand the program throughout the province [F105].

In 2006, Pathways to Education Canada decided to replicate the program in 6 communities, four in Ontario and two in Quebec. Five of six programs were approved [I123]. Pathways to Education Canada selected Rexdale Community Health Centre in Rexdale and Unison Health and Community Services in Lawrence Heights [H87] for replication in the Toronto area. In 2007, the Pathways to Education program was inaugurated in five similarly challenged low-income communities [I68], including the Lawrence Heights and Rexdale areas in Toronto, ON, the Pinecrest-Queensway area in Ottawa, ON, the Verdun neighbourhood in Montreal, QC and in Kitchener, ON [I68].

**CMO-6: Inspiring confidence in results**

In 2007, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) conducted a pro bono social return on investment study [F27] of the Pathways to Education program. The economic analysis demonstrated of the cost effectiveness of the program by showing that every dollar invested in Pathways to Education Canada generates a $25 return to society in terms of decreased social costs and an increased tax base, $400,000 in the cumulative life-time value for each graduate, $50,000 in the positive net present value for each student, and there is an internal rate of return of 9.4% [H27]. These tangible results allowed Pathways to Education Canada to leverage additional fundraising opportunities for further expansion of the program across the country [F28]. Additionally, the 2011 reports from the BCG and internal Pathways to Education Canada evaluations indicated an increase in student success, PSE enrolment, and graduation rates from generations two (2007), three (2009), and four (2010) Pathways sites. Due to affirmative findings across sites, the BCG claimed that the Pathways to Education program is portable across Canada. [F114]

This proven success of the program has **inspired** confidence in further replication across the country [F104]. In 2010, the federal government committed $20 million to fund Pathways [F106].

The Pathways to Education program has since been replicated in similarly low-income communities in Hamilton and Scarborough, ON in 2009 [I69], in Halifax, NS, Kingston, ON, and Winnipeg, MB in 2010 [I70], and in Shawinigan, QC in 2012 [I91].

**CMO-7: Activating funder commitment for initiative sustainability**

Positive results from evaluation findings [F102] and economic analysis [H27] as well as recent recognition of Pathways to Education with a 2013 World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) aware for innovative and effective work in education [H99] have helped Pathways to Education Canada receive the favourable attention required to attract funding. Additionally, these encouraging results have motivated **commitment** from funders to sustain Pathways to Education Canada through ongoing, permanent funding [F107].

Standard Life Canada has confirmed ongoing support and funding ($150,000 for three years) [F98] and in 2013, the Government of Ontario pledged permanent funding of $9.5 million annually to Pathways to Education Canada [F107].