



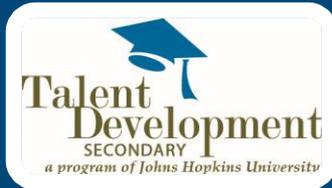
*Presentation to the Corporation for National and Community Service Board of Directors on the Diplomas Now i3 research report*

June 24, 2016



# The Diplomas Now Partnership and Model

- 1 Partnership** - Generate greater student outcomes through creating a new school improvement collaboration combining Talent Development's whole school reform practices with City Year's Whole School Whole Child services and Communities In Schools' integrated student supports to partner with the nation's highest need secondary schools



Johns Hopkins University's Talent Development Secondary provides curriculum/instruction support and early warning system



City Year's "near peer" AmeriCorps members provide individualized, whole-class and whole school academic and social-emotional support



Communities In Schools provides case-managed support to students with the highest needs

- 2 Model Dissemination** - Drive systemic change through validating and promoting the broad adoption of early warning indicator systems combined with evidence-based whole school reform practices, academic and socio-emotional supports powered by AmeriCorps members and master level case management

# Diplomas Now Addresses Early Warning Indicators



Future Dropouts  
can be Identified  
as early as 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Research shows sixth-graders without **one** of these early warning signs (*Poor attendance, sustained poor behavior and course failure in English or math*) graduate at rates **two to three times higher** than students with an indicator<sup>1</sup>

Diplomas Now identifies those students early, provides individualized support and helps them get on track

<sup>1</sup> Baltimore Education Research Consortium. (2011). "Destination Graduation: Sixth Grade Early Warning Indicators for Baltimore City Schools Their Prevalence and Impact." Retrieved from: <http://baltimore-berc.org/pdfs/SixthGradeEWIFullReport.pdf>; Mac Iver, M.A., & Messel, M. (2012). "Predicting High School Outcomes in the Baltimore City Public Schools." Retrieved from <http://baltimoreberc.org/pdfs/PredictingHighSchoolOutcomes.pdf>, p. 23.

# Investing in Innovation (i3)



In 2010, Diplomas Now won a federal **Investing in Innovation (i3) grant** to implement model across 11 school districts and validate its impact on students through a randomized control trial.

PepsiCo Foundation is the founding sponsor of Diplomas Now and provided the matching grant to the i3 grant

# i3 Study Details

## Critical Research Questions

- Can it be implemented and sustained in high-needs schools?
- Does Diplomas Now increase the percentage of students without Early Warning Indicators (poor attendance, sustained poor behavior, course failure in English and math)?
- Does it help improve entire schools?
- Does it lead to better outcomes for most vulnerable children?

## Research Design

- Studies 62 low-performing secondary schools in 11 high-poverty districts, recruited in two cohorts
  - 32 schools randomly assigned to implement Diplomas Now
  - Other 30 schools that did not get Diplomas Now pursued alternative school improvement strategies

*Note: The study included randomization for separate blocks of high schools and middle schools and therefore was not designed to assess the impact of combined support through a feeder pattern approach (i.e., students receive supports in either Middle or High School but not both)*

# Research Focused on High-Needs Schools and Students

## Baseline for Schools Before Diplomas Now Intervention (6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade)

	Diplomas Now Schools	Comparison Schools
Chronically Absent (<90%)	35.7%	34.3%
Suspended	31.9%	28.0%
Failing One or More Courses	34.0%	35.6%

## Baseline of Students in i3 research study as they entered 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (before treatment)

	Diplomas Now Schools	Comparison Schools
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	90.8%	90.6%
Male	54.2%	54.5%
English Language Learner	17.5%	16.0%
Special Ed	18.5%	18.2%
Over age for Grade	32.3%	32.5%
Proficient in English	37.5%	39.1%
Proficient in Math	36.0%	38.0%

# Seven-Year Study: Five Reports of Lessons and Findings

*Diplomas Now was awarded the i3 in summer of 2010 and began recruiting schools in two annual cohorts for implementation beginning in SY2011 (5 years of implementation for HS, 4 years for MS)*

Report	Year	What the report includes:
1	2014	First year of implementation, validity of randomization and comparison of model elements in DN and control schools
2	2015	Second year of implementation and contrasts of model elements between Diplomas Now and control schools from first to second year
<b>3</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>Early student outcome findings from first year of intervention (school years 2012-13 and 2013-14)</b>
4	2018	Examines relationship between fidelity implementation and outcomes
5	2019	Provides long term student outcomes, including graduation rates and 9th-grade success of middle-grade students

# Reports 1 & 2: Implementation and Service Contrast Findings

Key components, such as early-warning system and student support, **quickly & successfully** established

Led to **statistically significant “service contrasts”** for students and teachers compared with schools without Diplomas Now

## For teachers, increased frequency of:

- Using data to drive instruction and target struggling students
- Teacher collaboration
- Support from instructional coaches

## For students, increased frequency of:

- Coordinated academic and non-academic services
- Math/English academic help
- In-class behavioral support

Contrasts emerged in first year and increased in second year



EARLY IMPACT FINDINGS FROM 3<sup>RD</sup> MDRC REPORT  
RELEASED JUNE 21, 2016

# KEY FINDING: Diplomas Now Reduces Early Warning Indicators

Diplomas Now schools had **positive, statistically significant, increase in percentage of sixth- and ninth-graders with no early warning indicators** (poor attendance, sustained poor behavior and failing math and English)

This is key metric Diplomas Now was designed to improve

## Why this matters:

- Eliminating such indicators can triple students' odds of graduating from high school from 25% to 75%<sup>1</sup>
- Gaining positive, statistically significant results after only first year of multi-year intervention under challenging conditions is encouraging

<sup>1</sup> Robert Balfanz, "[Putting Middle Grades Students on the Graduation Path](#)," Keynote Address, National Middle School Association, 2009, slide 14,

# Important Finding for Nation

This is the first large scale  
Experimental Evidence that we can  
consistently reverse a student's  
trajectory **from the path towards  
dropping out to the path towards  
high school graduation** in high needs  
Middle and High Schools

# Diplomas Now Increases Impact Over Time

Diplomas Now schools achieved a statistically significant increase in impact from the first to second year of implementation for students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades\*

Differentiation in service practices in Diplomas Now schools increased from year 1 to year 2 compared with control schools

## **Why this matters:**

- Diplomas Now can implement, strengthen and sustain a distinct set of practices that improve outcomes for students.

\* Measured using the percent of students meeting ABC Stability threshold

# Strongest Early Impacts are in the Middle Grades

Diplomas Now middle schools achieved **positive, statistically significant** impact on reducing:

- Percentage of students with early-warning indicators
- Chronic absenteeism

*Robust results achieved even when sample size was cut in half to include only middle schools*

# Important Finding for Nation

First rigorous evidence that chronic absenteeism can be reduced in high-poverty middle schools by using early-warning system and student support

Validates using Diplomas Now strategies fueled by AmeriCorps in major efforts, such as White House's My Brother's Keeper chronic absenteeism initiative

# Emerging High School Findings

Diplomas Now had positive impact on percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students with no early warning indicators. But finding not statistically significant with smaller sample.

Future reports will examine Diplomas Now impact on incrementally reducing 9<sup>th</sup> graders' early warning indicators, such as from three to one indicator.

## **More detail:**

- Strongest impact with first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders with no early warning indicators in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Kept them from falling off-track.
- Impacts not as strong with 9<sup>th</sup> graders who had multiple early warning indicators in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They likely require more than one year of support to achieve no early warning indicators, a core Diplomas Now tenant.

# Important Finding for Nation

In high poverty environments academic proficiency is not fully predictive of school success

Nearly 1/3 of students who were academically proficient at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade developed an early warning indicator in 6<sup>th</sup> grade highlighting the importance of prevention support for students that are on-track

# Diplomas Now schools create stronger learning environments fueled by AmeriCorps

- Students at Diplomas Now schools\*:
  - were more likely to report a **positive relationship with an adult at school who was not a teacher**
  - were more likely to **participate in academically-focused after-school activities** than students in non-Diplomas Now schools
- Additionally, Diplomas Now had positive and statistically significant impacts on teachers' perceptions of school climate during the second year of implementation.

# Answering the Critical Questions

Can it be implemented and sustained in high-needs schools?



**YES** - Implementation and difference from comparison schools grew over time (Year 1 to Year 2)

Does Diplomas Now reduce the number of students with Early Warning Indicators?



**YES** - Shown in 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade after first year of multi-year intervention

Does it lead to better outcomes for the most vulnerable children?



**So far YES** - Fewer high-needs students with early warning indicators in 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. Future reports will track longer-term outcomes

Does it help improve entire schools?



**Positive indications** - 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade attendance and course passing up, and suspensions down over time

# Areas for improvement

The MDRC findings both support many insights Diplomas Now partners identified in the early years of implementation and also highlight ongoing areas for improvement:

- **High School** - There are nearly twice as many off-track students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in comparison to 6<sup>th</sup> grade which places a greater strain on resources needed to meet the scale and intensity of need
- **School-wide Strategies** - Beginning in the third year, Diplomas Now enhanced school wide prevention strategies such as “start strong” and “finish strong” efforts and attendance challenges to further bolster efforts to keep students on track
- **Behavior** - Diplomas Now put in place in year three and continue to implement strategies to strengthen outcomes on student behavior in year three including restorative practices, which empowers students to resolve conflicts



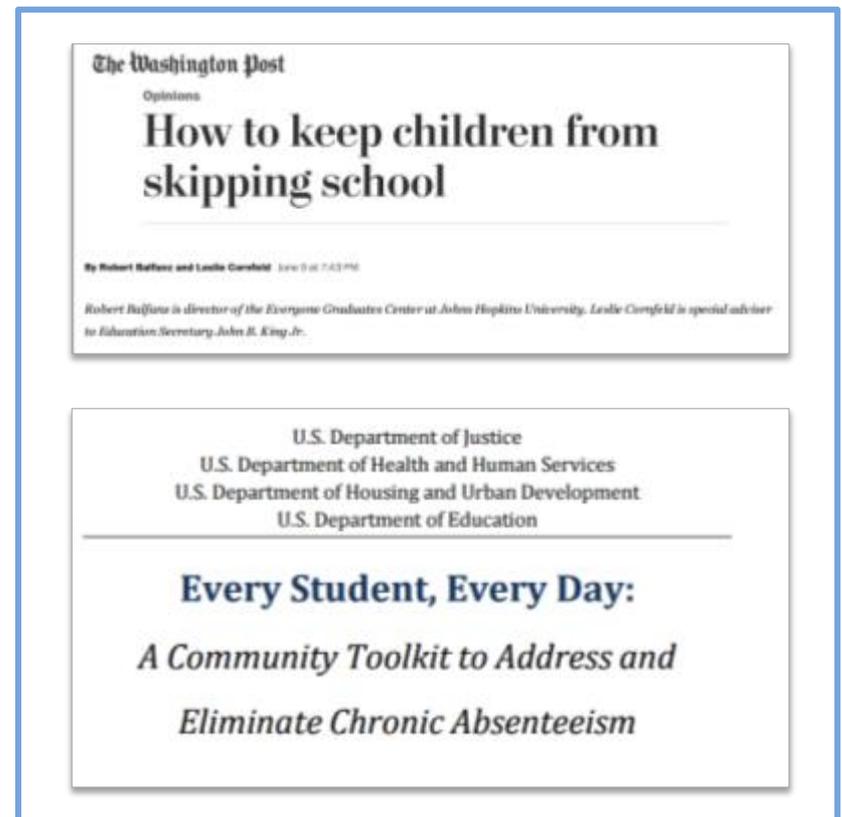
Diplomas Now Practices Are Being Replicated

# My Brother's Keeper Success Mentors Initiative is modeled on Diplomas Now

Inspired by Diplomas Now's work in an initial "Success Mentors" pilot, which involved working with chronically absent students in NYC

Utilizes Diplomas Now's Early Warning System approach:

- weekly meetings to address student ABCs (attendance, behavior, and coursework),
- engagement with school mentors (i.e., City Year AmeriCorps members), and
- referrals to professional supports (i.e., Communities In Schools)



# Implications for AmeriCorps as a critical component of building the urban graduation pipeline

- Demonstrates that human capital provided by **AmeriCorps** is a critical element of whole school improvement in a study that provides the first empirical evidence that shows successful interventions to reverse Early Warning Indicators
- Activities implemented by **AmeriCorps** members were among the strongest practice contrasts between Diplomas Now and control schools (e.g., student supports, academic focused afterschool, school climate)
- Validates the importance of well designed, impact-focused partnerships grounded in an elementary to high school continuum of support powered by **AmeriCorps**
- Highlights the importance of combined academic and social emotional supports to recover off-track students and prevent students from falling off-track as they transition to middle and high school
- Underscores the importance of performance measures that track course grades and maintaining students on-track status (prevention) through utilizing an Early Warning System

# Highlights from i3 study release

“The results underscore the impact of the Diplomas Now approach of using a multi-tiered model of combining early warning systems with additional student supports provided by teachers, school staff and other school-linked partners, such as **AmeriCorps**.”

- *Leslie Cornfield, Special Advisor to U.S. Secretary of Education, John King*



## The Washington Post

“Diplomas Now includes... City Year, an **AmeriCorps** program, [that] provides volunteers who work full time to help teachers in classrooms, run after-school activities, and serve as mentors who reach out to struggling students and their families...”



Arne Duncan ✓  
@arneduncan

Want to reduce HS drop out rates? Can't wait until junior year, it's too late! Focus on Early Warning Indicators.

[diplomasnow.org/research/i3-st...](http://diplomasnow.org/research/i3-st...)

“City Year **AmeriCorps** members were successful in providing extra and complementary services to students across all schools...” -MDRC

EDUCATION WEEK

*Diplomas Now i3 Project: Early Monitoring Protects At-Risk Students*

# Appendix

# How Does Diplomas Now Impact Broader Student Outcomes?

- Diplomas Now targets the most struggling students by eliminating early warning indicators to keep them on path to high school graduation.
- But the study also examined impact on a broader group of students to see if there were increases in those who regularly come to school, don't require disciplinary action and pass all their classes.
- Study defines this as meeting the **stability ABC** threshold: passing all courses (including science and social studies)\*, zero suspensions\* and 90% or higher attendance.

Note: Diplomas Now specifically targets students who have already exhibited at least one suspension and by definition would be disqualified from reaching the Normative ABC threshold and focuses on helping students pass math and English.

# Early Indications of Diplomas Now's Potential Broader Impact

For 3 out of 4 subgroups, Diplomas Now achieved positive and meaningful, though not statistically significant impacts\*:

1. *students who entered 6<sup>th</sup> grade proficient,*
2. *students who entered 6<sup>th</sup> grade not proficient and*
3. *students who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade having achieved stability ABC threshold in 8<sup>th</sup> grade\**

Did not achieve positive or significant impact on

4. *students who entered for 9<sup>th</sup> graders who did not achieve stability ABC threshold in 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

## Why this matters:

- By providing focused support for the most vulnerable students, Diplomas Now appears to enhance a school's capacity to help other students improve as well.

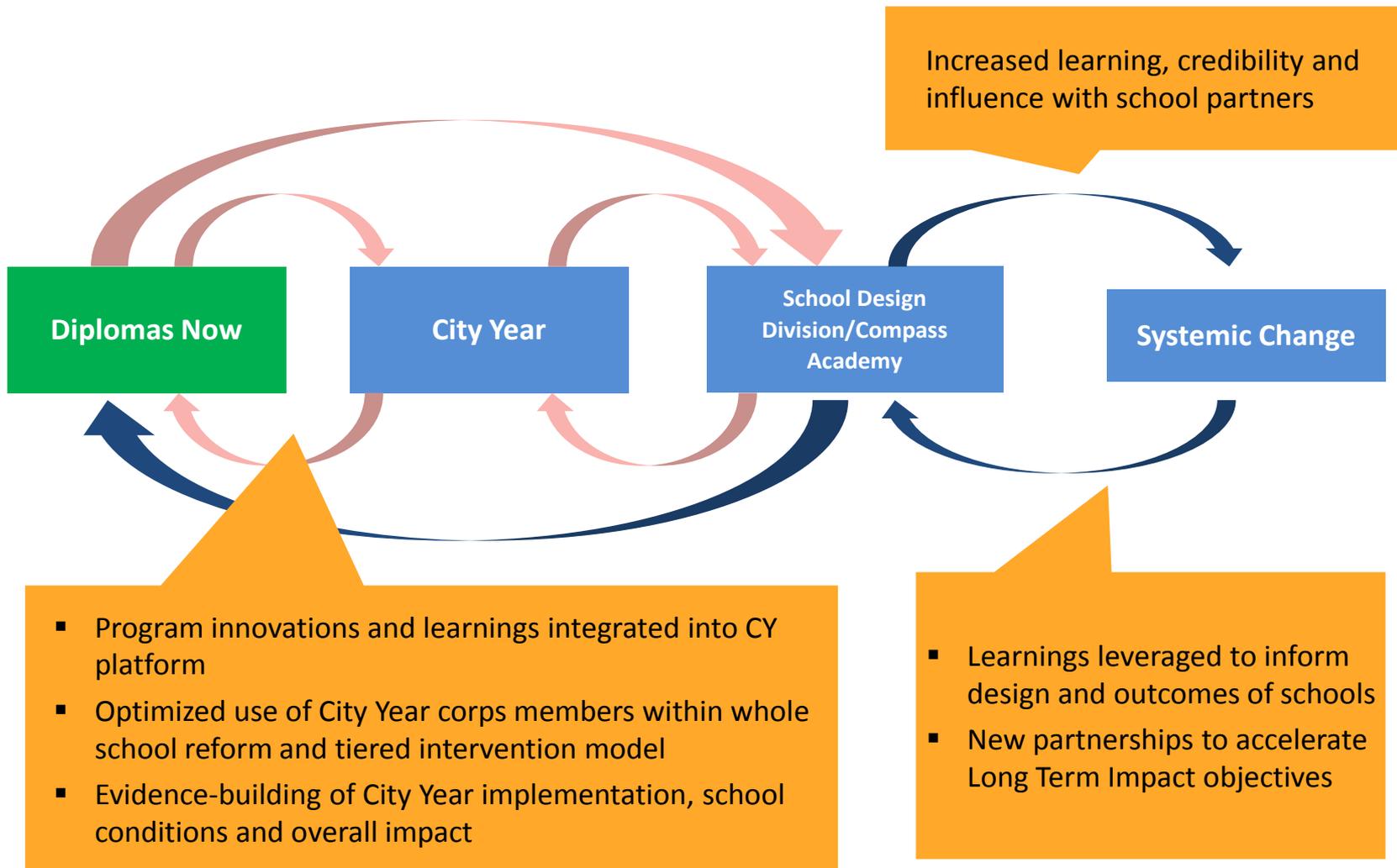
\*Sample size is significantly reduced when looking at sub-groups requiring very large impacts to be statistically significant

# Diplomas Now and Comparison Schools Improved in Individual Attendance, Behavior and Course Passing Indicators

The report further segmented individual indicators in addition to the key composite outcomes across all indicators:

- The 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades in Diplomas Now schools increased overall attendance and course-passing rates, and saw decline in suspensions. Comparison schools without Diplomas Now, many of which implemented solid reforms, also improved.
- As a result, Diplomas Now schools had slightly higher, though not statistically significant, outcomes for attendance and course performance, and slightly higher, though not statistically significant rates of suspensions compared with schools without Diplomas Now.

# Diplomas Now is a key accelerator for City Year's innovation and learning agenda



# We will continue to innovate and build the next generation of Diplomas Now

As we work to continually improve the DN model and its impacts we will use the study results, along with all that we have learned and are learning from Diplomas Now sites and field teams, recent advances in the learning sciences and findings from our innovation School (Compass Academy) to create the next generation Diplomas Now model and partnerships

Moving forward we will intensify our efforts to work with partner districts to create DN feeder patterns with DN partner middle grade schools sending students to DN partner high schools.