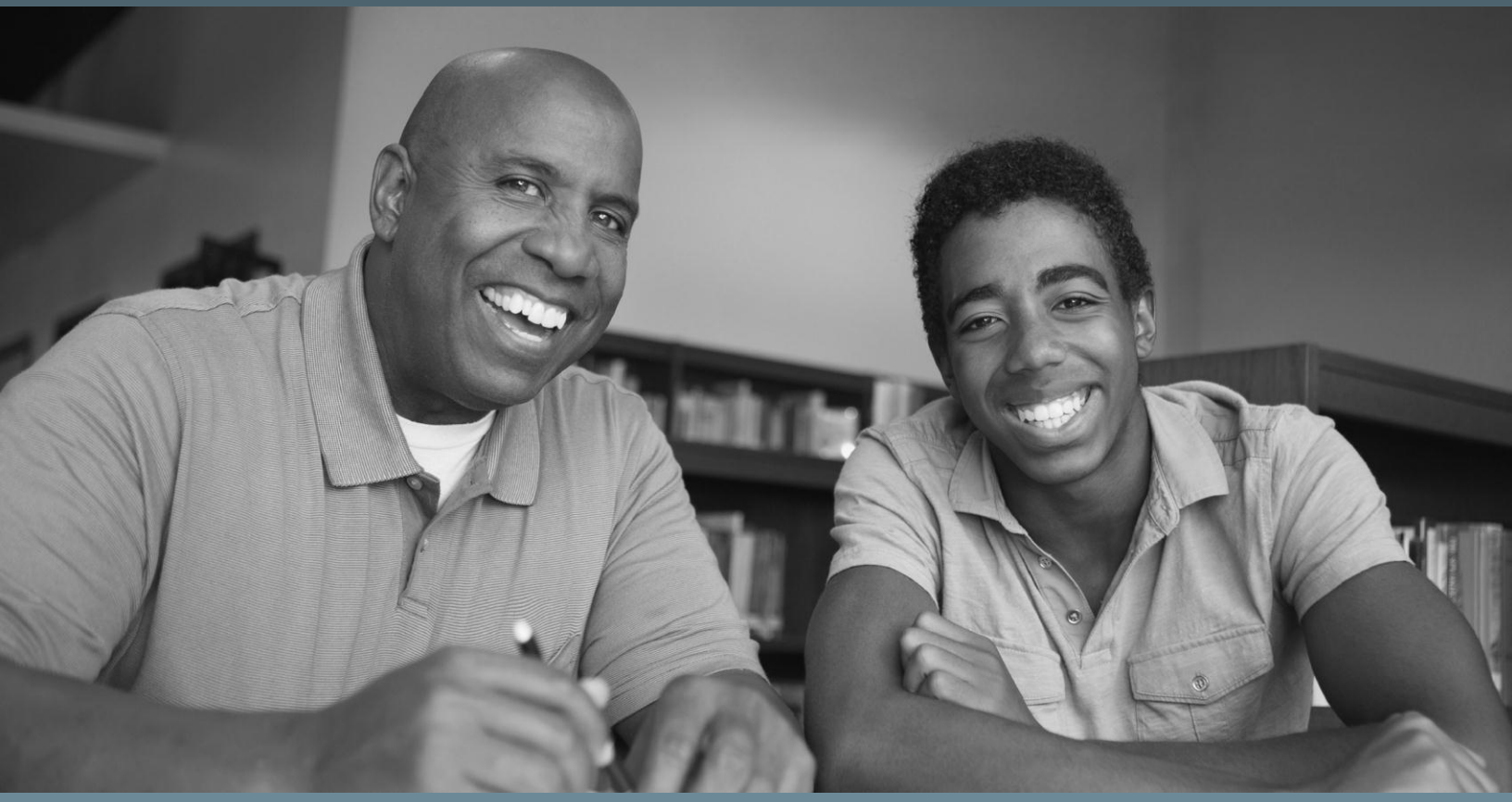
REPORT

The Research Alliance for New York City Schools

Changing How High Schools Serve Black and Latino Young Men:

A Report on NYC's Expanded Success Initiative



Adriana Villavicencio
Sarah Klevan
David Kang

May 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improving opportunities for young men of color has become a centerpiece of national conversation and policy. A growing number of initiatives around the country are attempting to tackle longstanding inequities, including higher rates of school dropout, incarceration, and unemployment among Black and Latino men. In 2014, for instance, President Obama unveiled My Brother's Keeper, a national effort, involving philanthropists, business leaders, and government, to improve educational and employment opportunities for young men of color. Cities including Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, and New York have developed their own initiatives designed to advance similar goals.

New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI) has been at the forefront of these efforts. Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Open Society Foundations, and 22 City agencies, YMI was launched in 2011 to address disparities in education, employment, health, and criminal justice. The New York City Department of Education (DOE) developed YMI's educational component, the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), to focus on the issue of low college readiness among Black and Latino young men—a problem that had persisted in NYC even as high school graduation rates were rising. ESI provided funding[i] and professional development designed to help 40 NYC high schools boost college and career readiness among their Black and Latino male students. The hope was that the initiative would spur innovation in these schools and improve outcomes for the students they serve—while also generating larger lessons about preparing young men of color for success in college and beyond.

By design, the 40 schools selected to participate in ESI all had high percentages of Black and Latino males and low-income students.[ii] While ESI schools boasted stronger graduation rates for male students of color than schools Citywide (67 vs. 58 percent for students entering 9th grade in 2008), they had not made equivalent strides on college readiness.[iii] In fact, just 9.4 percent of Black and Latino males in ESI schools were graduating college ready in 2012—slightly better than the City average of 8.7 percent for Black and Latino young men, but still far below the 37 percent seen among the City's White and Asian male students.[iv]

ESI is providing these 40 schools with considerable leeway to develop or expand programs that meet the needs of their Black and Latino male students. Schools are required to address three domains in their programming: strengthening academics,

supporting youth development, and creating a college- and career-focused school culture. They are also asked to undergird these programs with culturally relevant education (CRE)—a framework that recognizes the importance of students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.[v] Within these broad areas, ESI schools are free to develop specific programs and services that are a good fit for their school community.[vi] The initiative's leaders hope that this flexibility, combined with support from the ESI central team, will enable schools to "move the needle" on their own college readiness rates and at the same time highlight effective practices that might be replicated in other high schools.

As part of the effort to learn from ESI schools' experiences, the Research Alliance for New York City Schools is conducting an independent evaluation of the initiative's implementation and impact over four years. The study will shed light on how ESI is being realized in schools and, ultimately, whether it is improving outcomes, including college and career readiness, for Black and Latino males. This summary highlights key findings from our report, *Changing How Schools Serve Black and Latino Young Men*, which focuses on Year 2 of ESI (the 2013-2014 school year). The report extends and deepens our ongoing examination of ESI's implementation. It first looks at implementation "fidelity"—by assessing how well schools' programming was aligned with the broad tenets of ESI—and "intensity"—by assessing the frequency and duration of programming as well as the number of programs offered. The report then describes specific elements of ESI that educators identified as particularly important for their Black and Latino male students. Finally,

Other Reports Related to the Research Alliance Evaluation of the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI)

This report focuses on Year 2 of ESI and follows three past reports related to the initiative:

- *Moving the Needle* (2013) examined the trajectory of Black and Latino males on their path to college, describing the key contextual factors that underlie their educational outcomes and highlighting opportunities to provide them with better support. http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/moving_the_needle
- *Preparing Black and Latino Young Men for College and Careers* (2013), described the key components of ESI, the 40 schools that were selected to participate in the initiative, and the strategies they planned to implement during the first year. http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/esi_baseline
- *Promising Opportunities for Black and Latino Young Men* (2014) looked at ESI's first year of implementation, highlighting changes that ESI schools made in Year 1, particularly practices that held promise for reaching ESI's goals. http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/esi_year1

it outlines several more far-reaching changes to school culture or community that appear to be taking hold in ESI schools.

In addition to a comprehensive description of implementation, the report also presents a preliminary look at ESI's impacts on the first group of students who had access to its programming—that is, students who were 9th graders the year ESI was launched in their high school and were (mostly) in 10th grade during ESI's second year. While 10th grade is clearly too early to assess students' college and career readiness (or ESI's overall effectiveness), our analysis begins to look at possible antecedents to college readiness, including students' credit accumulation, grade point average (GPA), aspirations for the future, and feelings about their school.

How Was ESI Implemented in Year 2?

Our implementation study draws on interviews with educators in all 40 ESI schools and a group of comparison schools,[vii] as well as an analysis of schools' annual plans for implementing ESI-funded programming. Our data collection focused largely on the presence or absence of assorted programs and services, and did not include methods that would allow us to capture fine-grained variations in program quality across schools. We hope to gather more information about program quality in future years of the evaluation. Our key findings on ESI's implementation in Year 2 are summarized below.

Implementation was generally strong.

We found that ESI schools are generally implementing ESI as intended, with robust programming being provided to students across ESI program areas. In addition, ESI schools differed from the comparison schools in ways that align with the goals of the initiative.

- **High fidelity and intensity**: Almost three quarters of ESI schools implemented ESI with high fidelity—meaning their programs aligned with the tenets of ESI, including 1) programming in academics, youth development, and school culture, 2) training in CRE, 3) early college supports in the 9th and 10th grades, 4) programming for males, and 5) attendance at DOE-led professional development meetings. Nearly all schools implemented ESI with high intensity—meaning they offered at least some programs weekly or more often to their 9th and 10th grade males throughout the school year.

- **Programming across the three domains and CRE**: ESI schools provided students with a variety of supports and services across all three domains—academics (e.g., summer bridge, tutoring), youth development (e.g., mentoring, alternative-to-suspension programs), and school culture (e.g., college trips, internships)—as well as culturally relevant education (e.g., CRE training for staff, culturally relevant curriculum for young men of color). Programming in the area of college preparation was particularly strong and widespread across the 40 schools. Programming in academics was less widespread.
- **More early college support and CRE in ESI schools than in comparison schools**: ESI schools were more likely to provide college supports in the 9th and 10th grades than the comparison schools we visited. In addition, educators in ESI schools were much more likely than those in comparison schools to participate in CRE or professional development related to Black and Latino males.[viii]

ESI schools are making changes beyond programming.

Beyond specific programs, we also found evidence that ESI has changed schools in deeper, more cross-cutting ways. These changes to school culture may bode well for schools' ability to sustain ESI beyond the funding period.

- **Improved relationships**: Educators consistently asserted that ESI had improved relationships within their school, including relationships between teachers and students and between students themselves. They attributed this, in part, to increased opportunities for members of the school community to come together outside the classroom.
- **Greater emphasis on college**: Educators reported that they have expanded their understanding of their school's core mission, moving from high school graduation as the primary goal to a clear focus on college readiness and enrollment. As a result, staff reported that students are showing awareness of college earlier on in their high school career.
- **More reflective practice**: Staff in many schools described how ESI has led them to critically examine their own practice and promoted continuous learning among staff in an effort to better serve Black and Latino male students. Teachers reported becoming more focused on making their classes

relevant to students. They also described rethinking approaches to discipline, including a conscious effort to reduce the use of suspensions.

What Was ESI'S Impact on Students After 2 Years?

We assessed ESI's early impact on students by examining academic data before and after the introduction of ESI in schools, and comparing student performance in ESI schools to that of their counterparts in a set of similar schools.[ix] We also surveyed students to collect information about key skills, attitudes, and aspects of the school environment that are associated with college readiness. For the purposes of this report, we focus on ESI's impact on 10th graders (see Appendix N for 9th grade impact results).

ESI improved students' access to programs and supports related to college culture and youth development, but not academics.

Students in ESI schools are more likely to be aware of *and* report participating in programs and supports related to youth development and school culture, compared with their peers in non-ESI schools. This included college trips, college advising, mentoring, counseling, and young men's/women's groups. We did not find a similar difference for students' participation in academic programs. These results corroborate findings from the implementation study; educators in ESI schools reported having a range of distinct youth development and school culture-related programs, while academic programs tended to involve Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses—which 10th grade students might be less inclined to take—or relatively diffuse efforts to provide culturally relevant education.

By and large, ESI has not yet improved student outcomes.

The survey we administered to students in ESI schools and comparison schools asked about numerous outcomes related to academics, youth development, and school culture. For most of these outcomes,[x] there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups of students. The one exception was that ESI students were more likely than comparison students to report having conversations about future careers with adults at their school.

We also assessed ESI's impact on a variety of academic outcomes, including grade point average (GPA), credit accumulation, and rates of passing Regents examinations. So far, ESI does not appear to have produced a systematic impact, positive or negative, on these outcomes. There are several possible explanations for

why this is the case. For example, ESI schools' youth development and school culture programming—even when well implemented—may not have a direct effect on academic performance, at least as measured by things like GPA and Regents exam scores. It is even possible that these programs are taking instructional time away from academic subjects. On the other hand, ESI may simply need more time to produce academic gains. We have identified a number of changes in ESI schools—in terms of tone and culture—that could be laying a foundation for students to eventually improve their connection to and performance in school. Future analyses will provide a much clearer picture of ESI's impact on academics.

Changes in school culture also point to *other* kinds of outcomes that are important to assess. For instance, as noted above, ESI educators described efforts to alter their approach to student discipline. Given well documented and large disparities in rates of suspension for young men of color in NYC and around the nation,[xi] this is a potentially important development, which we decided to investigate further.

ESI schools appear to be handling student disciplinary matters differently than comparison schools.

To assess the impact of ESI's schools' efforts to reduce the use of suspensions, we analyzed disciplinary data collected by the NYC DOE. We found that while suspension rates for behaviors categorized as "violent" and "aggressive" remained constant in both ESI and comparison schools, there is evidence that ESI schools are reducing the number of suspensions related to "disruptive" infractions, which include "minor altercations," vandalism, and academic dishonesty. We observed a statistically significant decrease in the rate of this type of suspension for ESI 9th graders, relative to comparison schools (the decrease for 10th graders was not statistically significant).[xii] We will continue to examine ESI schools' approach to discipline and assess the initiative's impact in this area in the remaining years of our evaluation.

Looking Ahead

The fact that so many schools are implementing ESI as envisioned by its designers is an important finding, considering the heavy lift of developing and expanding a school-wide set of programs, working with new external partners, and focusing heavily on a subset of students, all while trying to meet district expectations related to the Common Core State Standards[xiii] and new teacher evaluations.

Our first look at ESI's impact also shows some hints of success, particularly students' exposure to youth development opportunities and early college planning, as well as the reduction of certain kinds of suspensions in ESI schools. We do not yet see any impact on students' academic outcomes as a result of ESI, which is not entirely surprising. Past research indicates that whole-school models and programs often do not result in significant increases in student achievement[xiv] or, at the very least, require four or five years to have an impact.[xv]

Although we are now at ESI's mid-way point, it is too soon to draw conclusions about the initiative's overall effectiveness, especially since the most important measures of success—college readiness and enrollment—cannot be determined until students' 12th grade year or later. This is an opportune time, however, to take stock of aspects of the initiative—and our evaluation—that might be improved.

- **Develop a more explicit focus on academics**: While ESI has boosted students' participation in a multitude of youth development and college-related activities, their participation in academic activities appears similar to that of comparison students. Indeed, many ESI programs only indirectly affect academics. Yet schools and the district ultimately hope to see impacts in this area. ESI schools may want to consider introducing supports that more directly influence academic achievement (e.g., expanded learning time, more rigorous courses), especially those directly tied to college related skills (e.g., advanced math and science classes, research-based projects). Schools may also want to address competencies within specific subjects—writing longer reports, for instance, or strong number sense—to better prepare students for college-level academics.
- **Build on early success offering college supports**: Our study suggests that ESI is providing a very different experience to 9th and 10th graders in terms of their exposure to early college programming and supports. As ESI students become juniors and seniors, there will be more opportunities for schools to build knowledge about post-secondary options and encourage college going (e.g., completing applications, seeking financial aid). Schools should also consider expanding supports around career skills (e.g., time management, public speaking, computer skills) through work-based learning opportunities, which is not currently a prominent feature of ESI programming. Past research suggests these skills can be important for students' success in postsecondary settings.[xvi]

- **Broaden the Research Alliance evaluation:** Based on Year 2 findings, we plan to examine additional outcomes in future years, in an attempt to better capture the impacts of ESI. For example, according to school staff, one of the biggest changes related to ESI has been improved relationships, especially between teachers and students, as well as a stronger sense of school community. In order to measure these outcomes, we added questions to the ESI survey about students' sense of belonging in school, and we will assess impacts related to relationships using questions from the annual NYC School Survey administered by the NYC DOE. In addition, we hope to deepen our implementation evaluation by obtaining more information about program quality and cohesion across schools.

Across the country, policymakers, funders and community leaders are looking for ways to improve opportunities and outcomes for young men of color. While our evaluation is only in its second year, we hope that this report and our ongoing research on ESI may be able contribute to this larger conversation by documenting innovative strategies and providing empirical evidence about their impact.

Executive Summary Notes

[i] Each school received $250,000 over three years. In the context of the schools we studied, this amount represented between 3 and 10 percent of their annual budget. In the fourth year of the initiative, schools do not receive any funding, but are still expected to implement programs initiated under ESI.

[ii] ESI schools were required to meet three criteria: (1) student enrollment of at least 35 percent Black and Latino males, with at least 60 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch, (2) a four-year graduation rate above 65 percent, and (3) an "A" or "B" on the 2010-2011 high school Progress Report.

[iii] Unless otherwise noted, the college readiness measure used in the report is based on the New York State Education Department's Aspirational Performance Measure, which is defined as earning a New York State Regents diploma and receiving a score of 80 or higher on a math Regents examination and a score of 75 or higher on the English Regents examination. The Research Alliance is engaged in ongoing work to develop better indicators of college readiness.

[iv] Research Alliance calculations based on data obtained from the NYC Department of Education. Note that these calculations do not include students in NYC's specialized high schools; the rate for Black and Latino males also excludes schools without significant numbers of Black and Latino students.

[v] Ladson-Billings, 1994.

[vi] Schools are required to submit annual plans that clearly describe how ESI resources are being used to increase college and career readiness for young men of color. They are encouraged to use strategies with some evidence of effectiveness, but also to take informed risks, try new things, and refine their programs over time.

[vii] For the implementation study, we rely on interviews in 12 comparison schools. For the impact study, we rely on survey data from 22 comparison schools and academic data from 80 comparison schools. See Appendix A for more information on the matching process.

[viii] Note that we did not systematically compare ESI schools with comparison schools across all ESI program areas. Rather, we specifically investigated college supports and CRE training.

[ix] We estimated the effects of ESI using Comparative Interrupted Time Series (CITS) analysis. A CITS design uses data from multiple years before a change occurs or a program is implemented (in this case, ESI) to create a stable baseline. See Appendix N for more detail.

[x] The six survey outcomes included critical thinking, academic self-concept, conversations with adults about college, conversations with adults about career, sense of fair treatment, and gender and culture climate. See Table 1 in the full report for definitions of these outcomes.

[xi] U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014.

[xii] Some of the difference in suspension rates may be explained by district changes in discipline policy. A more detailed discussion of suspension data and these results are in Appendix O.

[xiii] 2013-2014 was the first year that New York State fully implemented the Common Core State Standards, a set of college- and career-ready K-12 standards that has now been adopted by forty-four states. The development of the Common Core was led by the National Governors Association for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. (http://www.corestandards.org)

[xiv] Dynarski, et al., 2004; Gottfredson, et al., 2010; Zief, Lauver, & Maynard, 2006.

[xv] Borman, Overman, & Brown, 2003.

[xvi] Kemple, 2008.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As we write this report, national attention remains fixed on protest movements around the country (including those in Ferguson, MO, Baltimore and New York City, to name a few), which have formed a collective outcry to examine and change systems that reproduce historical inequalities. For decades, relative to other groups, Black and Latino young men have faced heightened risks for dropping out of school, being unemployed or employed in low-wage jobs, being incarcerated, or being the victim of violent crime. Community leaders are demanding new responses to these problems, and a growing number of publicly and privately funded initiatives are explicitly focused on improving opportunities and outcomes for young men of color.

The most prominent example is My Brother's Keeper, which President Obama introduced in 2014—and which recently produced a spinoff nonprofit, the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, aimed at "catalyzing a national ecosystem of support to help boys and young men of color."[1] Cities including Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, and New York have developed their own initiatives designed to advance similar goals.

New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI) has been at the forefront of these efforts. Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Open Society Foundations, and 22 City agencies, YMI was launched in 2011 to address longstanding disparities in education, employment, health, and criminal justice. The New York City Department of Education (DOE) developed YMI's educational component, known as the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), to focus on the problem of low college readiness among Black and Latino young men—which had persisted in NYC even as high school graduation rates were rising. ESI provided funding[2] and professional development designed to help 40 NYC high schools boost college and career readiness among their Black and Latino male students. The hope was that the initiative would spur innovation in these schools and improve outcomes for the students they serve, while also generating larger lessons about preparing young men of color for success in college and beyond (see text box on the next page).

By design, the 40 schools selected to participate in ESI all had high percentages of Black and Latino males and low-income students.[3] While ESI schools boasted stronger graduation rates for male students of color than schools citywide (67 vs. 58 percent for students entering 9th grade in 2008), they had not made equivalent strides on college readiness.[4] In fact, just 9.4 percent of Black and Latino males in

ESI schools were graduating college ready in 2012—slightly better than the City average of 8.7 percent for Black and Latino young men, but still far below the 37 percent seen among the City's White and Asian male students.[5]

ESI is providing these 40 schools with considerable leeway to develop or expand programs for their Black and Latino male students. Schools are required to address three domains in their programming: strengthening academics, supporting youth development, and creating a college- and career-focused school culture. They are also expected to incorporate culturally relevant education (CRE)—a framework that recognizes the importance of students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.[6] Within these broad areas, schools are free to develop specific programs

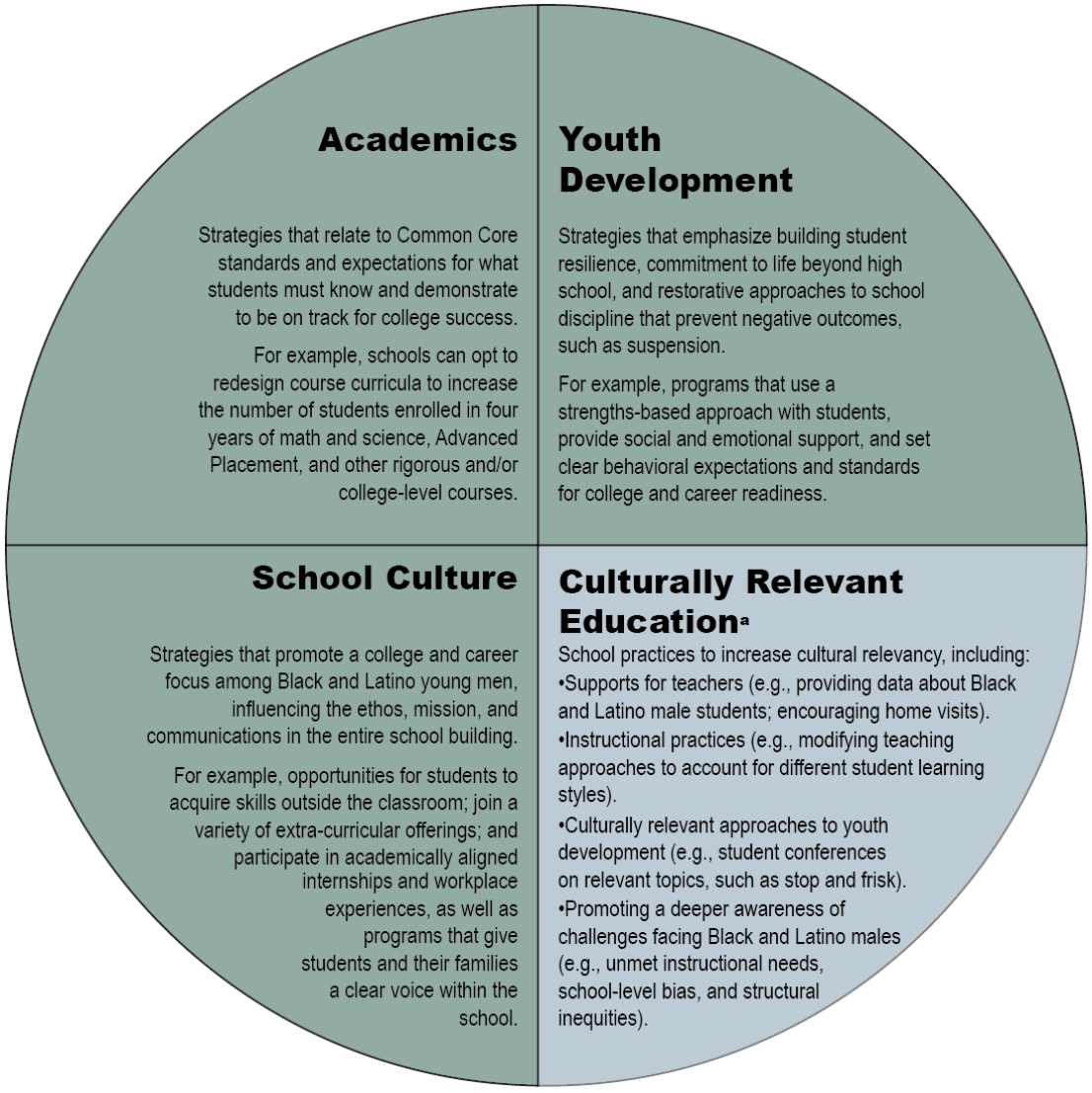
A Brief Introduction to ESI

- ESI is being implemented in schools that have relatively high graduation rates, but are only on par with other NYC high schools in terms of college readiness. This reflects a desire to leverage the capacities and best practices of these schools—to close the gap between their high school graduation and college readiness rates, identify strategies that are most impactful in the preparation of students for college and careers, and ultimately effect long-term change across the district.
- ESI programming begins in 9th grade, because postsecondary planning that starts in early high school is expected to have more of an impact on students' access to higher education and work.
- ESI supports the creation or expansion of programs in four areas of focus—academics (increasing academic rigor and access to advanced coursework), youth development (supporting students' socio-emotional needs and improving school discipline policies), school culture (school-wide efforts to prepare students for college and careers), and culturally relevant education (incorporating students' cultural references in all aspects of learning).
- ESI challenges schools to shift the narrative about Black and Latino young men from a deficit model that focuses on negative stereotypes to an asset model that focuses on capacities for success. Related to this, ESI expects schools to shift their mindset from dropout prevention to college and career readiness.
- Each ESI school is awarded $250,000 over the first three years of the four-year initiative to create programs that support Black and Latino male students toward college and career readiness. The funding structure challenges schools to develop programs that are sustainable beyond the funding period.
- In addition to funding, the NYC DOE's ESI team provides schools with a range of supports, including professional development sessions related to culturally relevant education, data snapshots about their Black and Latino male students, and an online forum to communicate with other ESI schools.
- The DOE has positioned ESI as a "research and development initiative," in which schools are expected to try new things and refine ideas over time. The initiative attempts to balance the use of evidence-based strategies with the freedom to take informed risks and design programs that meet the distinct needs of each ESI school.

and services that are a good fit for their school community.[7] ESI's designers hoped that this flexibility would enable high performing schools to "move the needle" on their own college readiness rates and at the same time highlight effective practices that might be replicated in other high schools.

As part of the effort to learn from ESI schools' experiences, the Research Alliance is conducting an independent evaluation of the initiative's implementation and impact over four years. The study will shed light on how ESI is being realized in schools and, ultimately, whether it is improving outcomes, including college and career readiness, for Black and Latino males. The evaluation draws on extensive student survey and academic data, interviews with educators in ESI schools and a group of

Figure 1: Key Elements of ESI



Source: Definitions of academics, youth development, and school culture from NYC DOE (2013). Description of culturally relevant education developed by the Research Alliance for NYC Schools.

Notes: [a] Culturally relevant education was not one of the original domains of ESI. Rather, it is a cross-cutting element that undergirds much of ESI programming.

comparison schools, and analysis of schools' workplans (annual plans for implementing ESI-funded programming that are created by each school).

This report focuses on Year 2 of ESI (the 2013-2014 school year) and follows three past reports on ESI. The first was *Moving the Needle* (2013), which examined the trajectory of Black and Latino males on their path to college, describing the key contextual factors that underlie their educational outcomes and highlighting opportunities to support them more effectively. Our second report, *Preparing Black and Latino Young Men for College and Careers* (2013), described the key components of ESI, the 40 schools that were selected to participate in the initiative, and the strategies they planned to implement during the first year. *Promising Opportunities for Black and Latino Young Men* (2014) looked at ESI's first year of implementation, highlighting changes that ESI schools made in Year 1, particularly practices that held promise for reaching ESI's goals.

The current report both extends and deepens our ongoing examination of ESI's implementation. It first looks at implementation "fidelity"—by assessing how well schools' programming aligned with the broad tenets of ESI—and "intensity"—by assessing the frequency and duration of programming as well as the number of programs offered. The report then describes specific elements of ESI that educators identified as particularly important for their Black and Latino male students. Finally, it outlines several more far-reaching changes to school culture or community that appear to be taking hold in ESI schools.

In addition to a comprehensive description of implementation, the report also presents a preliminary look at ESI's impacts on the first group of students who had access to its programming—that is, students who were 9th graders the year ESI was launched in their high school and were (mostly) in the 10th grade during ESI's second year. While 10th grade is clearly too early to assess students' college and career readiness (or ESI's overall effectiveness), our analysis begins to look at possible antecedents to college readiness, including students' credit accumulation, grade point average (GPA), aspirations for the future, and feelings about their school.

Chapter 2 of the report describes our data sources and analytic process. Chapter 3 presents our implementation findings in each of ESI's four key focus areas—academics, youth development, school culture, and culturally relevant education—paying particular attention to those elements that may be directly related to student outcomes. In Chapter 4, we report on ESI's preliminary impact, based on our analysis of students' survey results and academic records.

By providing a clear description of how ESI was implemented in Year 2, along with an early look at the initiative's impact, we hope this report provides participating schools, the NYC DOE, and funders with useful formative feedback as they continue to implement and improve ESI in Years 3 and 4. To that end, we conclude by reflecting on how ESI, and our evaluation, might be strengthened in subsequent years.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Our evaluation of ESI is designed to answer two broad questions: 1) What services and programs did ESI schools provide to their staff and students as a result of this initiative? And 2) How did ESI impact students' outcomes? This chapter will provide a brief summary of the data collection and analytic processes used to answer each of these questions in the context of this report.

Comparison Schools

In order to evaluate ESI's impact on students, we needed to know what would have happened to the same students had they not participated in ESI. Through a multi-step statistical process, we identified 80 schools (two for each ESI school) that were most similar to ESI schools in terms of student demographics and recent student achievement trends, out of the more than 400 NYC high schools that did not participate in ESI. We used all 80 of these schools as comparison schools in our analysis of ESI's academic impact, administered a survey to 23 of them, and included 16 in our fieldwork (described below). See Appendix A for more details on the matching process and the characteristics of ESI and comparison schools.

Implementation Data and Methods

Our implementation study was designed to examine how ESI programming took shape across the 40 schools, and the challenges that schools encountered throughout the implementation process. To shed light on these questions, we conducted focus groups with ESI liaisons (the staff member at each ESI school charged with leading ESI implementation), as well as principals, teachers, and students in all 40 ESI schools. We also conducted field visits to 16 comparison schools to learn about the services and supports they offered to their 9th and 10th grade Black and Latino males (i.e., ESI's target population in Year 2). In the following section, we describe the steps we took to collect and code implementation data and identify prominent themes. More information about data collection and analytic methods used in our implementation study is available in Appendix B.

Measuring Fidelity and Intensity

Fidelity, a measure of how closely schools' programming aligned with ESI's theory of action, and intensity, a measure of the robustness of ESI supports, served as important lenses through which to understand ESI's implementation. We used a structured questionnaire, collected during field visits, to assess the fidelity and

intensity of implementation at each school. The questionnaire was designed to gather the following information: a basic description of program activities; the number of students served by each program; the frequency and duration of the program; and any partners involved. We analyzed the fidelity and intensity of ESI programming using a rubric that we designed (see Appendices C and D.)

Field Visits

We collected the bulk of our implementation data through visits to 40 ESI schools in the spring of 2014. Researchers collected data from all 40 ESI schools through the following activities:

1. A 60-minute focus group with the principal and ESI liaison (see Appendix E);
2. A structured questionnaire completed by the principal or ESI liaison about the details of ESI programming at his or her school (Appendix F);
3. A 45-minute focus group with three to five 10th-grade teachers[8] (Appendix G); and
4. A 45-minute focus group with three to five 10th-grade Black and Latino male students (Appendix H).

These activities were designed to gain the perspectives of various stakeholders, each with a distinct role to play in ESI. Principals and liaisons maintained budgetary oversight, developed ESI workplans, and worked to ensure that all the components of ESI programming fit together. Teachers were primarily involved in the implementation of specific programs, and students, of course, participated in ESI supports and programs.

We also visited 16 comparison schools.[9] These visits aimed to get a sense of the challenges facing Black and Latino males as well as the services and supports offered to Black and Latino males in non-ESI schools. We undertook the following data collection activities in comparison schools:

1. A 60-minute interview with the principal (Appendix I); and
2. A 45-minute focus group with three to five 10th-grade teachers (Appendix J).

Focus groups in both sets of schools were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Researchers also took notes as subjects spoke. The conversations were semi-structured, in that researchers were expected to cover a defined set of questions but were also encouraged to depart from the protocol if they felt it would yield valuable data. Our protocols included questions about overall impressions of ESI, implementation challenges, and approaches to educating Black and Latino young men, among other topics. In comparison schools, we asked generally about college

and career supports and programming for Black and Latino boys, rather than asking specifically about ESI programming and supports. Student focus groups (conducted in ESI schools only) were designed to learn about students' successes and challenges in school, their relationships with school personnel and peers, their involvement in ESI programming, and their post-secondary goals.

We used an iterative, five-step process to analyze transcripts of interviews and focus groups conducted in ESI schools. This method was developed to lead researchers from initial reflections about how ESI operated in individual schools to the identification and fine-grained analysis of major themes across schools. This allowed us to focus on important insights (in particular, those that might help explain impact findings), closely analyze the responses of educators, and identify patterns. Descriptions of these five steps are provided in Appendix B.

Transcripts from visits to comparison schools were not coded using this method. Instead, we analyzed these transcripts using a rubric we designed (found in Appendix K) to measure the presence of specific supports (e.g., professional development on culturally relevant education or college- and career-related programming). While findings from our analysis point toward meaningful differences between the ESI schools and the comparison schools, it is important to note that the sample of comparison schools in which we conducted interviews (16 schools) was considerably smaller than the group of ESI schools (40 schools). Still, this analysis of differences complemented our other interview and survey data and helped confirm some of what we learned through other data collection activities.

Impact Data and Methods

The impact study was designed to determine whether students who are exposed to interventions and supports through ESI achieve better outcomes than they would have if their school had not been involved with ESI. As described above, in order to do this, we collected data on students in ESI schools along with students in similar comparison schools (see Appendix A for details). Given the breadth of ESI programming, we are examining the initiative's impacts on a variety of outcomes. We collected survey data to gauge "non-cognitive" skills, such as academic self-concept and critical thinking. To begin to assess ESI's impact on students' post-secondary readiness, we collected data on academic outcomes associated with college readiness and success, such as credit accumulation and Regents exam results. We then compared how students in ESI schools fared on these measures compared to students in similar high schools that did not participate in ESI.

Student Survey

Many of ESI's programs are devoted to increasing students' non-cognitive skills as a way of promoting academic success and eventual college readiness, an approach based on a significant body of research.[10] Our Year 2 ESI survey was designed to measure many of these skills. It also included important questions about students' perspectives on their school's environment and programming, as well as their own behaviors, attitudes, and experiences.

The Year 2 survey included 82 items. Thirty-four of these items were used to create six survey constructs, each associated with one of the three ESI domains: academics, youth development, and school culture. Table 1, below, defines the survey constructs; please see Appendix L for a list of associated items. The additional 48 items on the survey included questions about students' backgrounds (e.g., ethnicity and racial identity, immigrant status, socioeconomic status) and their exposure to specific kinds of school programming. We developed constructs and chose individual items that were previously tested for high levels of reliability and validity.

The Research Alliance administered the Year 2 survey to a total of 8,998 9th graders and 8,763 10th graders from 40 ESI schools and 23 comparison schools between April and June 2014. Of the 23 comparison schools, 22 administered surveys to both 9th and 10th grade students; one administered surveys to only 9th graders and one to only 10th graders.[11] Across the 40 ESI schools, the response rate was 67 percent for 9th grade students and 63 percent for 10th grade students. In the comparison schools, the response rate was 61 percent for 9th grade students and 59 percent for 10th grade students. The response rate for Black and Latino males was 62

Table 1: Definition of Constructs from the ESI Year 2 Survey

Domain	Measure	Definition
Academic	Academic Self-Concept	Students' perceptions of their academic abilities and success.
	Critical Thinking	Students' cognitive strategies for problem-solving and decision-making.
Youth Development	Gender and Culture Climate	Students' perception of the prevalence of in-school tensions related to race, ethnicity, or gender differences.
	Sense of Fair Treatment	Students' perceptions of the fairness of their school's disciplinary practices.
School Culture	Conversations about College	How often students engaged with adults at school regarding college preparation.
	Conversations about Career	How often students engaged with adults at school regarding their interests, goals, and careers.

percent for both 9th and 10th grade students across ESI and comparison schools.[12] The surveys were administered on paper, and all questions were in a multiple choice format.

After administering the surveys in ESI and comparison schools, we assessed the reliability and validity of each of the items and constructs. Both reliability (as measured by Cronbach's alpha) and validity (as measured with variability analysis and intra-class correlations) were well within accepted standards (see Appendix M).

For each survey construct, we measured the effect of ESI on students' responses using regression analyses, with participation in ESI being the main explanatory variable; surveyed students in the comparison schools were the control group. The analyses controlled for demographic differences, as well as differences in prior academic achievement, as measured by 8th grade New York State math/English Language Arts scores and 8th grade attendance (see Appendix N). Survey analyses were conducted separately for 9th and 10th graders.

Academic Records

Since ESI's goal is to prepare young men of color for college success, a key part of our evaluation is to track the initiative's impact on academic outcomes that are important precursors to high school graduation and college readiness. These include attendance, GPA, credit accumulation, and performance on the New York State Regents exams.

To estimate ESI's effects on these academic outcomes, we used a method called Comparative Interrupted Time Series (CITS) analysis. A CITS design creates a stable baseline using data from multiple years before a change occurs or a program is implemented (in this case, ESI). After schools implement the program, differential improvement rates between schools provide evidence of a program's impacts.

CITS analysis controls both for school characteristics that remain consistent over time (e.g., feeder patterns, location, and school culture) and for system-wide effects that could be occurring as ESI is implemented (e.g., district-wide improvements to curriculum or increased district funding). This is important because an improvement in participating schools' academic performance after the introduction of ESI might be due to ESI, but it also might be due to system-wide reforms, budget increases, or other external events. CITS allows us to distinguish between these possible causes by comparing schools participating in the program with others that were not exposed to ESI during this period, but which are part of

the NYC school system, and thus would be affected by any systemic influences. More details on our methods can be found in Appendix N.

Suspension Data

We used suspension data from the NYC Department of Education to track trends in disciplinary actions in ESI and comparison schools and assess ESI's impact on the number of suspensions accrued by students. We compared the rate of different types of suspension (indicated by infraction codes) in ESI and non-ESI schools, to evaluate ESI's effect on school disciplinary practices.

Strengths and Limitations

As with all research methodologies, the approaches we used to collect and analyze implementation and impact data have strengths and weaknesses. The intention of our collection and analysis of implementation data was to obtain a clear understanding of how ESI implementation worked on the ground and then to compare the supports in ESI schools to similar schools not participating in ESI. Dense, descriptive data collected systematically from school actors at multiple levels across all 40 ESI schools and a set of comparison schools were well suited to answer the questions at the heart of our implementation study. The questionnaires we administered to principal and design team members in ESI schools were used to assess how closely school-level implementation aligned with ESI's theory of action. Focus groups provided the data we needed to understand the types of supports and programs ESI schools were providing to Black and Latino boys and how those supports differed from those offered by a similar group of comparison schools. Carefully collecting and analyzing such data ensured that our findings are based on a balanced array of perspectives within and across schools and allowed us to identify patterns and unearth complexities in school-level implementation.

As noted above, we conducted field visits in a smaller number of comparison schools than ESI schools (16 comparison schools vs. 40 ESI schools); furthermore, we could not include four of those 16 interviews in the analysis.[13] In addition, we only asked staff in comparison schools about some aspects of ESI. Therefore, we cannot draw broad conclusions about overall differences between ESI schools and comparison schools based on these field visits alone. However, in combination with student surveys, our visits to comparison schools provide valuable insight into the programs and supports offered by non-ESI schools.

An additional limitation of our data collection process is that our measures of fidelity and intensity do not capture the quality of ESI programming at a granular level. While our fidelity and intensity measures gauge the robustness of ESI programming and supports (in terms of their frequency, duration, etc.), as well as the alignment of programming with ESI's theory of action, they do not measure qualitative differences across specific types of programming. For example, while we know that 29 mentoring programs were implemented across ESI schools, our data collection methods do not allow us to capture differences across mentoring programs such as the number of staff involved, the presence of external partners, or whether a curriculum is used. The data that we have collected does not allow us to drill down into the quality of individual programs and supports, limiting our ability to connect student outcomes to the quality of specific program offerings across schools.

Our survey instrument was checked for reliability and validity, and we had an acceptable response rate in both ESI and comparison schools. We were also able to match nearly every student who took a survey to administrative records, which allowed us to control for a variety of demographic and academic characteristics, without solely relying on self-reported information. Yet some limitations to our survey analysis should be noted. First, due to the survey's length, some students did not complete every item (in response to this issue, we have shortened the ESI survey for Year 3). Second, due to resource constraints, we are only administering one survey in each year of ESI, instead of a baseline and follow-up survey. Finally, since our impact analysis is designed to compare student outcomes in ESI schools with those in schools that did not have ESI, our survey impacts are only measured for the 22 ESI schools whose comparison counterpart took the survey. This may be constricting our ability to measure differences between ESI and comparison schools.

The strength of CITS analysis is that it allows us to create an accurate estimate of ESI's impact by clearly addressing possible alternate explanations for changes in student outcomes. Before measuring ESI's impact, CITS controls for trends at ESI schools and across the City (based on comparison schools). This is a critical element of the analysis because, at any given time, schools are often implementing multiple programs, and are also subject to district-wide policy and administration changes.

One drawback of the CITS method is that it is very data-intensive. To create the baseline trend, we needed five years of data prior to the start of ESI for each ESI and

comparison school. This limited our potential pool of comparison schools to schools that were at least five years old at the start of ESI.

While all research methodologies present a set of strengths and weaknesses, we are confident that the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study provided a reliable and robust set of findings. By utilizing a mixed-methods approach, we were able to gain a clear understanding of both the implementation and impact of ESI at a midway point in the initiative.

CHAPTER 3: HOW WAS ESI IMPLEMENTED IN YEAR 2?

This chapter examines the implementation of ESI across all 40 participating schools. Our implementation study serves several purposes: First, it highlights some of the practices that are most common to ESI schools, helping to build a shared definition or description of the initiative. Second, the study provides important context for making sense of the emerging impact findings, helping us understand what type of impact we might expect at this stage and/or why we are or are not seeing an impact. Third, our implementation data puts us in a position to provide formative feedback to the ESI central team and to ESI schools about how they might strengthen ESI implementation.

ESI is providing schools with funding over three years to create or expand programming (with or without external partners) to help prepare Black and Latino male students for success in college and careers. Rather than requiring schools to adhere to a pre-determined model, ESI encourages schools to design their own programming based on their existing capacity and needs of their students, which allows for a great level of responsiveness to particular school contexts.

At the same time, this flexibility presents a challenge as we try to understand ESI as a whole school model, since there are 40 different iterations of the initiative across the participating schools. Our implementation study is thus an exercise in trying to discern both what holds ESI together (i.e., what activities or vision should all ESI schools share?) as well as the differences in how schools choose to implement ESI.

As described in Chapter 1, ESI's theory of action proposes that schools can help improve post-secondary readiness for Black and Latino male students by implementing evidence-based practices across academics, youth development, and school culture, all undergirded by culturally relevant education (see Figure 1 on page 3). We examined implementation against these broad expectations.

We found that a majority of ESI schools are in fact implementing ESI with high fidelity (i.e., in adherence to the core tenets of ESI) and with very high intensity (i.e., in terms of frequency, duration, and number of programs offered). In particular, ESI schools are providing programming in each of ESI's focus areas, with an especially intense focus on college-related supports. Below, we describe some of the most prominent programming elements within each area. We present evidence that ESI schools are not only implementing a more expanded set of supports than

they were before ESI, but that they are also implementing different supports than a set of comparison schools.

Beyond distinct programming, we found evidence that ESI is changing schools in other ways. Staff in ESI schools report that relationships between teachers and students have improved, that there is now a greater awareness of and emphasis on college from the earliest grades, and that teachers are more reflective in their practice overall. These changes to school culture may have positive implications for the initiative's sustainability beyond the funding period.

Implementation is generally strong.

We found that implementation was generally strong across the 40 ESI schools, with most schools implementing ESI with high fidelity and nearly all schools implementing ESI with high intensity. We saw robust programming in ESI's program areas: academics, youth development, college and career culture, and culturally relevant education. While specific programs and external partners varied, the core principles of ESI were in evidence across schools. We should note that our data collection focused on the presence or absence of various programs and services, and did not include methods (e.g., systematic program observations) that would allow us to capture variation in program quality across sites. For example, we cannot say whether one school's mentoring program is more robust than a similar mentoring program at another school. This may be an important area for future research, particularly if, in later years of the initiative, we find that ESI schools vary in terms of their impact on students.

DOE'S ESI Central Team

The NYC DOE's central ESI team is responsible for supporting schools as they plan and implement ESI programming. Schools reported that the ESI central team supported Year 2 implementation in multiple ways, including:

- *Planning:* The DOE central team provided schools with templates for their Year 2 workplans and budgets, as well as "data snapshots" about schools' Black and Latino male students. They also provided a list of approved vendors from which ESI schools could choose partners to assist with the implementation of various programs and services. Prior to the start of Year 2, the ESI central team held individual meetings with ESI principals and liaisons to discuss schools' plans and provide feedback.
- *Ongoing support:* The central team provided ongoing supports for ESI schools, including professional development, individual visits to all ESI schools, and monthly email newsletters. They also facilitated monthly meetings for ESI liaisons, which provided opportunities for schools to learn about research-based practices, discuss challenges, and share effective strategies.

Finally, our interviews with staff in comparison schools demonstrated that ESI schools are, in fact, providing a different set of supports than those in similar schools not participating in ESI, particularly around early preparation for college and culturally relevant education. We discuss all of these findings in more depth below.

Fidelity and Intensity

We used two measures, fidelity and intensity, to examine the strength of ESI's implementation. Because ESI has a loose program model, we did not assess fidelity to a set of uniform programs or structures; rather, we assessed schools' fidelity to the core principles of ESI. With the DOE ESI team, we created a set of five indicators of fidelity: 1) representation of academics, youth development, and school culture in their programming, 2) evidence of CRE training, 3) programming for only males, 4) college supports in 9th and 10th grades, and 5) attendance at professional development meetings for ESI liaisons. Schools could receive a total of three points per indicator. Almost three quarters of the ESI schools (27 out of 40) scored at least 13 fidelity points out of a possible total of 15. Another 11 schools scored either 11 or 12 points, and two scored 10 points. Schools scored the highest on attendance at ESI liaison meetings and evidence of CRE: 36 schools reported having some type of CRE training and 35 schools offered at two or more early college supports. On the other measures, 29 attended all or nearly all of the liaison meetings, 30 schools represented all domains, and 30 school offered programs to just male students. (Some staff told us that they purposefully provided programming to all students, so as not to exclude girls.)

Intensity scores—which were based on 1) the number of programs, 2) their frequency and duration, and 3) the number of programs serving 9th and 10th grade males—were even higher. Thirty-four schools scored an 11 or 12 out of a possible total of 12 intensity points (23 of these also had high fidelity scores, or at least 13 fidelity points). The remaining six received a score of 8, 9, or 10. Three-quarters of ESI schools provided at least three programs that met weekly or more often and lasted throughout the school year. All but two ESI school offered at least three programs for 9th and 10th grade males. These high intensity scores confirmed data collected from field visits and school workplans, wherein we learned that most schools were implementing several programs for 9th and 10th grade males, that these programs met frequently (e.g., weekly or semi-weekly), and that they occurred throughout the year.

Overall, across schools, both fidelity and intensity were relatively high, though more schools received high intensity scores. For the most part, schools are doing what they set out to do—no small feat considering the diffuse nature of the initiative and the time required to create or expand several programs at once.

Academics

The ESI theory of action outlines several types of academic strategies that schools are encouraged to implement. These include increasing academic rigor (both in terms of higher level courses and more challenging coursework in existing classes), incorporating culturally relevant curriculum, and offering more academic supports, such as tutoring. By and large, ESI schools did, in fact, report a variety of efforts that were in line with these expectations (see Table 2 below).

For example, some schools increased rigor by offering Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which fit into the larger effort to prepare students to enroll and succeed in college. Summer bridge programs were designed to engage incoming 9th graders and help them acclimate to their new school community by combining an academic component (often a math course) with youth development elements (e.g., leadership training or sports). Many educators thought summer bridge provided strong support for the students who attended, but admitted that attendance was fairly low, since it can be difficult to attract students to school in the summer. The tutoring provided in ESI schools ranged from general after-school help to targeted tutoring for certain students in specific subjects during the school day.

In addition, staff in 23 ESI schools reported either adding or modifying curriculum as part of their ESI programming. Staff predominantly described developments in two types of curricula: college and career readiness (10 schools) and culturally relevant education (10 schools). Both of these are strongly aligned with the core tenets of ESI and fall squarely into the other ESI program areas, school culture and CRE. Thus, we will explore these changes in more depth in those sections.

Table 2: Most Common Academic Supports in Year 2 of ESI

Program Type	Number of Schools
Advanced Placement Courses	15
Summer Bridge	17
Tutoring	15

Educators also reported that ESI had pushed them to make changes to their pedagogy or modes of teaching, including incorporating alternative instructional practices (9 schools) and

pedagogy related to CRE (13 schools; again, CRE will be discussed in more detail below). Perhaps because of ESI-related trainings, we found that many ESI schools were rethinking instructional techniques to include such strategies as modeling, co-teaching, cooperative learning, and exploratory projects—in the hopes of better serving their students, especially males of color. For instance, one teacher explained, "We're trying to implement [student discussion] circles more into all of our classes. Students are able to make personal connections to the content, which helps the kids come together and to feel connected to the work."

The academic supports implemented through ESI in Year 2 were largely focused on changing curriculum and providing additional academic time for students through tutoring and summer bridge. While 15 ESI schools reported adding AP courses (and college-level courses, discussed below), we found limited evidence of schools increasing academic rigor in other ways, such as sequencing courses so that students can take higher level math or science or modifying course expectations to include higher level work. Effectively measuring rigor might require different types of data collection, including conducting classroom observation, examining course descriptions and classroom assessments, and collecting information on course taking patterns. Finally, we did not find that one particular program type dominated in the academic domain (as we did for the other domains, discussed below). That is, there was no single type of academic support seen across a majority of ESI schools. The more diffuse nature of ESI's academic programming is noteworthy—and will be revisited in later sections of the report.

Youth Development

The youth development domain, as conceptualized by ESI, is primarily focused on supporting students' socio-emotional development and improving school discipline policies. Most schools provided several types of youth development programs, both in and outside the classroom (see Table 3).

Table 3: Most Common Youth Development Supports in Year 2 of ESI

Program type	Number of schools
Advisory	12
Alternatives to Suspension	14
Mentoring	29
Adult-Student	13
Peer-to-Peer	16

Mentoring programs, which were implemented at 29 ESI schools, emerged as the most common youth development strategy. Approaches to mentoring varied,

with differences in terms of the program's content focus, the age and gender of mentors, the frequency of mentor-mentee meetings, and the use of group versus on-on-one mentoring models. The schools that implemented traditional one-on-one mentoring between students and school staff members seemed to provide an especially powerful way to bring teachers and students closer together. One teacher said,

> *This mentor program, I think, is fantastic. It gives us a chance to really get really personal with [students] and kind of break that wall down, but I really believe the toughest challenge they face is the fact that, in their minds, there's a huge gap between staff and them. Once they get a chance to really interact with us, they realize we've gone through many of the same things they've gone through.*

Other schools implemented peer mentoring by pairing older male students (11th and 12th graders or recent alumni) with younger students (9th and 10th grade). These peer mentors provided a support system within the building to help address issues ranging from problems at home to academic struggles. School staff explained that peer mentoring helped build bonds between students that hadn't existed before. One principal said:

> *I think that the connections and the bond…have been really great for these guys. They spend a lot of time together even outside of school. They've established bonds where they do things with each other without staff members…It's been great. They walk around the school. They're really proud of this collective that they're part of. I think it's been a really good experience for all of them.*

Somewhat related to mentoring were advisory programs, which were also popular across ESI schools. Advisory classes were typically single-sex and consisted of 10-15 students and one or two adults. Some advisories focused primarily on college and career readiness and included a structured curriculum. With or without this kind of substantive focus, advisories provided a safe space for students to speak openly about personal and academic challenges. Staff in ESI schools were confident that mentoring and advisory programs helped them better serve the social and emotional needs of their students, which, in turn, improved students' ability to engage in the classroom.

In light of the overrepresentation of Black and Latino males among suspensions in New York City and nationally (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014), ESI's youth development domain was aimed, in part, at reducing the

number of suspensions among males of color. To that end, many schools implemented alternative to suspension programs or other new approaches to discipline. These include restorative justice programs, peer mediation, and conflict resolution training. Restorative approaches to discipline included a variety of practices designed to build and repair relationships within school communities. Examples include impromptu one-on-one conversations that teachers held with students in class to address problematic behaviors or formal "circles" in which facilitators trained in restorative approaches mediated conflicts between individuals. Perhaps as a result of these programs, staff in 13 schools reported a decrease in suspensions or discipline problems. As one teacher described:

> *Since we've had the ESI program, violence has gone down probably about 85, 90 percent in this school…We've had one fight this year. The year before, we only had a couple. The year before that we had about a dozen. Violence has gone down a great deal. People are staying after school a lot more. They're feeling comfortable in this school.*

According to staff, the sense of safety that this teacher described is an important prerequisite for serving students effectively. They reported that when students feel safe at school, they are more likely to participate in school activities, both in and outside the classroom.

Overall, ESI schools offered an array of youth development programming, which created structures to build relationships and address students' social emotional needs. Mentoring emerged as particularly popular and was, in fact, one of the most prevalent supports offered under any of the ESI domains.

School Culture

In the context of ESI, school culture refers to an environment in which college and career readiness is considered the norm, and is infused throughout all aspects of a school's programming. ESI schools reported providing robust college-related supports starting in the 9th and 10th grades (see Table 4). This programming appears to have been more widespread than their academic and youth development offerings. In fact, all but

Table 4: Most Common School Culture Supports in Year 2 of ESI

Program Type	Number of Schools
College classes	19
College trips	34
College workshops	27
PSAT/SAT/ACT prep courses	17

two ESI schools reported offering at least two college supports in the early grades, and many schools offered three or more.

A majority of ESI schools provided college trips, which included not only visiting City University of New York (CUNY) and other local NYC schools, but also trips to colleges outside of the City, and in a few cases, outside of the state, including historically Black colleges. Nearly half of ESI schools also allowed students to take college-level classes (mostly through College Now, an organization that offers classes at community college campuses and in high schools). Many schools provided workshops about colleges, sometimes during advisory periods. Finally, a large number of ESI schools offered preparation courses for the PSAT, SAT, and/or ACT—such courses can be prohibitively expensive for students to take on their own.

Ten ESI schools reported incorporating college readiness resources and discussions into their broader curriculum, either by focusing on skills that students might need for college (e.g., writing research reports) or on college-related topics (e.g., obtaining scholarships). Many of these college-focused options were created by (and sometimes implemented by) external partners, such as College Now and College Access: Research and Action (CARA).

In some cases, staff reported that these supports increased students' awareness about college and made it more likely that students would have concrete higher education goals. One principal explained:

> *It just changes…it makes it very real. Most of our kids have never had that kind of exposure. Being able to offer that then changes the conversation about college. They can picture it better. They have an idea of what they're working for. It's not this nebulous concept that you're supposed to go to college…It has already started to change things, but I think it's going to continue to change things.*

Some ESI schools also described career supports, though with less emphasis and frequency than college supports. The most commonly reported career support was the coordination of internship opportunities (in nine schools). Seven schools reported holding career days and career workshops. Less frequently reported career supports included career and technical education, visits to workplaces/job shadowing, and the presence of a career office.

Culturally Relevant Education

During the development of ESI, CRE was not envisioned as one of the three core domains but was intended to be integrated across academics, youth development, and school culture. In our study of ESI's implementation in Year 1, we found that CRE began to play an even more important role, as the ESI central team focused many of its professional development (PD) opportunities on CRE and schools were explicitly urged to incorporate CRE into programming. Therefore, in Year 2, in addition to examining the way CRE undergirds much of ESI, we also analyzed CRE as a separate program area.

Staff in 36 ESI schools reported some type of training related to CRE or serving boys of color in general. Schools received CRE training from a dozen different partners, including Professor Michelle Knight from Teachers College, the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University, and The Brotherhood-SisterSol. Trainings focused on topics such as confronting teacher biases, incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, making instruction more relevant for students, and instilling critical consciousness among students so that they are able to challenge institutional racism as young people and as adults.

School staff discussed the influence of CRE training in two distinct ways: changing curriculum and/or pedagogy (14 schools) and changing teacher mindsets and beliefs (12 schools).[14] Staff who described curricular shifts spoke primarily about selecting texts or other materials that would be relevant to students' lives and/or better reflect their experiences. In some cases, especially in English and history classes, this meant using more material written by Black and Latino authors. As one history teacher noted, "When we have department meetings, we try to think of culturally relevant examples or connections that we can make with the students to things that happen through history." A principal in another school talked about how her teachers were focusing on real-world questions of interest to students in order to create math problems and science projects that were relevant to students (e.g., relating a science lesson to Hurricane Sandy or having a civics lesson on stop-and-frisk):

> *When I go into a number of classes, I do see the effort that staff puts in in regards to making the coursework relevant to their students. I have seen staff take on a number of roles and projects to involve students and just to allow students to gain some perspectives on what's going on in their community, things that are definitely relevant for them.*

As conceptualized by ESI, CRE is not just about curriculum and pedagogy, but also about addressing how teachers view their students and in turn, their own practice. Staff in 12 schools described CRE in terms of increased cultural awareness, including more sensitivity to issues facing Black and Latino young men, higher expectations for their success, and different ways of communicating with male students. Several educators described CRE as an opportunity for staff to openly confront stereotypes about young men of color and, in some cases, their beliefs about their own students. One teacher said that CRE training forced staff members to notice and eventually remove their "blinders." A principal in another school explained:

> *[CRE training] just exposed a great deal of the staff to those issues, and also some preconceived notions that they have with Black and Latino males that they might not be quite aware of. That was brought out a lot in the CRE training, because the discussions revolved around people sharing personal beliefs they had. People were very open, and it was teachers that were not Black and Latino.*

In addition, these interviewees reported that CRE forced teachers to think about their own backgrounds and identity, as well as how their experiences impacted the ways they related to students.

For some educators, CRE also shifted the onus of learning onto *teachers*, as opposed to blaming students for being unmotivated or unengaged. One teacher said, "We're starting to change the mindset where it's not the student's job to engage. It's our job to plan activities and lessons that engage students." This teacher captured how far-reaching a strong CRE orientation can be for educators:

> *[CRE] changed the way I interact with my students. It changed my instruction, my relationship with my students. It changed how my classroom looked on a daily basis. Both on a personal level and a school-wide level, I think the CRE is the most meaningful, and I think it's something every school—every school that has teachers that are different from their students, and teachers that are the same as their students in terms of their background, and every school in New York—should probably [implement].*

The changes reported by ESI staff show the potential of CRE training to influence teacher mindsets and, in turn, their relationships with students and their ability to serve students effectively.

Comparing ESI and Non-ESI Schools

We found ample evidence that schools are implementing ESI as intended, with a variety of programming across academics, youth development, school culture, and culturally relevant education. However, it is important to understand whether the development of these programs is unique to ESI schools, or part of a larger trend. Given the citywide emphasis on improving college readiness, are ESI schools really doing something collectively different than schools serving similar students? What, if anything, is happening in ESI schools that is not happening in other, similar schools?

Based on our visits to 12 comparison schools, we found that ESI schools were indeed distinct in three ways. First, they were more likely to implement programs whose audiences were limited to Black and Latino male students (which was not surprising, as these students are ESI's target population).

Second, ESI schools were more likely than comparison schools to provide college supports to 9th and 10th grade students. While principals and teachers in nearly all ESI schools reported that they provided two or more college supports to 9th and 10th graders, staff in only 3 of the 12 comparison schools reported that they did so.

Finally, the greatest difference between ESI and comparison schools was the presence of CRE or similar training related to Black and Latino males. As noted above, staff in 36 ESI schools reported this type of professional development, while the same was true in only 1 of the 12 comparison schools.

While we only have data from 12 comparison schools as opposed to 40 ESI schools and only asked questions about some aspects of ESI, the data we collected helped confirm what we heard from staff in ESI schools about changes they have made since participating in the initiative, particularly with regards to CRE and early college supports. In future years, we will conduct similar interviews in more comparison schools and learn whether our findings from this limited sample remain true across a larger group.

Schools Changed in Ways that Went Beyond Programming.

ESI is providing schools with funding for three years, but the hope is that the initiative can foster improvements that are sustainable past the funding period. For this to happen, schools must develop their culture and capacity in ways that extend beyond distinct programs. Indeed, we found evidence that ESI has influenced not only schools' programming, but also teacher mindsets and practices. Staff reported

that their schools had changed in three fundamental ways as a result of ESI: 1) improved relationships in the school building, 2) greater emphasis on college, and 3) more reflective educational practice.

Improved Relationships

As in our Year 1 field work, the most commonly discussed outcome of ESI programming in Year 2 was improved relationships within schools, both between teachers and students and between students themselves. As described above, educators cited mentoring as an important strategy for improving relationships, but it certainly wasn't the only one they referenced. Staff reported providing multiple opportunities for school members to come together outside the classroom. These included summer bridge programs, advisory classes, enrichment trips, CRE training, visits to students' homes, and restorative justice circles, to name a few. More importantly, it was the combination of these efforts that seemed to promote stronger relationships between individuals, and this, in turn, created a more cohesive school community. One principal described:

> *I think part of [strong relationships] is being at a small school, but another part of that is having so many programs and so much energy put into creating communities and creating supportive environments to mediate things. I feel like comparatively we have really good community here. It seems like a lot of that's related to ESI-funded activities.*

Teachers, in particular, told us that they appreciated new opportunities to connect with students one-on-one. Rather than being limited to conversations about coursework in a particular class, new structures such as small group advisories or men's groups allowed teachers to "switch hats" and get to know students more holistically. Similarly, many of these structures allowed male students to grow closer to one another, even students who many not have interacted much, prior to ESI. One teacher recalled comments from a student who had left to go to another (non-ESI) school.

> *I was like, "Well, what's different about your new school?" And she was like, "I don't know, it just feels so big. People they don't know each other, and they don't even know their teachers. It's just so weird." We talked a lot about this feeling of community or this feeling of knowing people.*

Other staff reported daily signs of "community"—groups of teachers and students spending time together during lunch, sharing lively conversations in the hallways,

and staying hours after school. The warm environment created when school members know and care about each other seemed an important byproduct of ESI.

Greater Emphasis on College

As part of its design, ESI schools all have relatively high graduation rates for Black and Latino males. ESI has helped raise the bar by setting college readiness as the goal. In previous sections, we described the robust set of college programs offered in nearly every ESI school. But beyond specific programs, staff reported that ESI had produced larger changes to their school's culture and mission. Principals and teachers have shifted their expectations, coursework, and practice to more explicitly focus on what students need to enroll and succeed in college—and this is happening earlier in students' high school careers.

Many of the teachers we interviewed reported having frequent and frank conversations with students about what it takes to get to college. For example, staff described that they were now more likely to talk to students about college entrance requirements (and in a few cases, even requirements for specific schools) rather than focusing only on high school graduation requirements. One teacher, who also serves a guidance counselor, said:

> *We no longer just speak to what [graduation] requirements are. We continually now address college readiness: "Yes, you can graduate from high school with a 65 in math. Oh, but if you really want to be prepared for college, 65's not going to cut it. You need to get that 80." That discussion is now constant with the 9th and the 10th grades.*

The teacher's description speaks to not only the shift in focus, but also the fact that these conversations are starting earlier. In fact, educators in ESI schools frequently discussed communicating the importance of college readiness during students' 9th- and 10th-grade years, as opposed to waiting until 11th and 12th grade, which staff reported was the norm prior to ESI. One teacher said:

> *[Previously, when a 9th grade student came in for a one-one-one conference], I wasn't thinking…"What do you want to be?" I wasn't necessarily doing that goal planning with them, the goal setting. Now, we're more conscious of it. I meet with a 9th grader… [and] in addition to going over credit accumulation, I'll start that dialogue and get that child thinking, "What do you want to be?" Then it forces them to do some goal setting and see what's happening now, how that's going to relate to what they want to do, and where they want to go.*

These comments show an evolution from thinking about performance in a particular grade to helping students set long-term goals and plan for life after high school. Perhaps because of this early focus on college, staff in about a quarter of the schools reported that their students were developing an awareness of college and college readiness in earlier grades.

More Reflective Practice

ESI was built on the idea of providing schools an opportunity to try new ideas, learn from failures, and modify plans as needed. Staff in many schools described how ESI not only allowed them to develop programming, but also drove them to critically examine their own practice. Staff felt that participating in ESI promoted continuous learning in an effort to better serve Black and Latino male students.

For many ESI schools, the implementation of new programs provided a chance to reflect on how they could serve their students differently or better. For example, one educator described how new summer bridge and mentoring programs challenged staff to use new instructional techniques they believe will be more effective with males of color. He said:

> *Watching the success of the bridge program and the strategies used in the after-school ESI mentoring has definitely made us as a school community refocus on how we are teaching and using that tactile [learning][15]….I really think that the ESI is giving it a tremendous push…It's concrete, trial-and-error evidence that this type of teaching is successful with this population, and especially after so many years of struggling.*

His comment reveals a process of "trial and error," as educators learned how to improve upon existing practice. Other educators similarly described a process of trying different approaches and consciously learning how to improve upon existing practices.

Staff in ESI schools also spoke about changes in their beliefs about and approaches to their students. Implementing an initiative focused on Black and Latino males raised awareness among staff, particularly those who were most closely involved. Training on CRE and related issues challenged teachers to think about improving their practice with this population. One teacher described:

> *I didn't realize that all the literature I was teaching in my class was so much focused on the female's perspective and experience. I didn't realize how tuned out my boys were…I was able to see that I was singling out the boys. That was causing them to withdraw from the curriculum. They weren't as motivated. They weren't being as*

> *successful as they could. With that, I was able to reflect and recreate my curriculum to make it more balanced. I started looking at more books, and novels, and short stories, and articles that will not only be successful and interesting for my girls, but also include the boys.*

Her statements speak to the way ESI (and in this case, CRE) can push educators to critically examine their own practice and adjust their content to better serve their Black and Latino male students.

Outside of pedagogy and curriculum, many staff talked about how ESI has challenged them to re-examine their approaches to discipline and their beliefs about why students act out. Staff in a quarter of ESI schools reported that they had now found new ways of handling student behavioral challenges. One teacher said:

> *It really gave me a different way of looking at how I can approach them, kind of using problems as an opportunity versus problems as a crisis, kind of demanding greatness versus demanding obedience…It really gave me that key to say, "Okay, maybe you need to step back and not get so caught up in the behavior. What is causing the behavior, and what are some positive reinforcements that you can use to kind of get this kid on board?"*

Overall, many of the staff we interviewed reported that ESI has pushed them—even those who had always been committed, passionate educators—to further question their assumptions, shift their mindsets, and modify their practices.

Summary

By and large, ESI schools are implementing the initiative the way it was intended. A majority of ESI schools implemented ESI with high fidelity, and nearly all schools implemented ESI with high intensity. Additionally, ESI schools provided students with a robust set of programs and supports across the three core domains, especially in the area of college preparation. The vast majority of the 40 ESI schools participated in CRE training and implemented CRE practices. And on both these fronts—college-related programming and CRE—ESI schools appeared to be doing something different than a small set of matched comparison schools.

ESI schools also seem to have made deeper, more comprehensive changes, beyond specific programming. In particular, staff reported that, as a result of ESI, relationships within their school communities have improved, that they place a greater emphasis on college, and that staff are more reflective about their practice in

general. These findings suggest that ESI is fostering institutional changes that have potential to last beyond the funding period.

The fact that so many schools are implementing ESI as envisioned by its designers is important, considering the heavy lift of implementing a school-wide set of programs, working with new external partners, and focusing heavily on a subset of students while trying to meet district expectations related to the Common Core State Standards[16] and new teacher evaluations. We should note, however, that while our implementation study documents the types of programs that schools are implementing, it does not capture as much information about the relative quality of that programming. There could be variations in how schools are implementing the same types of programs that make a difference for student outcomes. Future reports will document some of these variations in implementation.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT WAS ESI'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS AFTER TWO YEARS?

In addition to examining the implementation of ESI, our evaluation is designed to assess the initiative's impact on students, with a particular focus on college and career readiness at the end of their high school careers. While it is too soon to assess ESI students' postsecondary readiness, this chapter presents a preliminary analysis examining the initiative's effect on a range of outcomes related to ESI's goals, including several early indicators of college and career readiness.[17]

To measure ESI's impact, we used two sources of data: 1) surveys that we administered to all 40 ESI schools and 23 comparison schools,[18] and 2) academic data and disciplinary records from before and after the introduction of ESI. See Chapter 2 for details about our methods.

For the purpose of this report, we focus on ESI's impacts on students who received programming in both years of the initiative so far—that is, students who were scheduled to be in 10th grade in 2013-2014. We look specifically at impacts for Black and Latino male students, since ESI is designed for this group of students. The results presented in this chapter represent our understanding of ESI's effect on students after the first two years of implementation; Appendices N and O provide greater detail, including our estimates of ESI's impact on students who were in 9th grade in 2013-2014.

ESI improved access to and participation in programs and supports related to college culture and youth development, but not academics.

As part of the ESI survey, we asked students about programs at school related to ESI's three core domains: academics, youth development, and school culture (i.e., college- and career-going culture). We found that students in ESI schools were significantly more likely to be *aware of* a number of programs and supports related to youth development and school culture, compared with their peers in non-ESI schools (see Table 5 on the next page).

Students in ESI schools were also more likely to report *participating* in several programs related to youth development and school culture, compared with their peers in non-ESI schools. These included college trips, college advising, mentoring, counseling and young men's/women's groups.

ESI students were generally *not* more likely than students in non-ESI schools to report being aware of or participating in academic supports. There were two exceptions. First, ESI students were more likely, at a statistically significant level, to be aware of (but not to report taking) AP, International Baccalaureate (IB),[19] or honors courses, and they were more likely to say they had experienced "Instruction on How to Learn" (based on a set of questions that assessed students' exposure to a curriculum focused on developing learning skills).

Table 5: Percent of Black and Latino Male 10th Grade Students Who Were Aware of and Reported Participating in Various Programs at ESI vs. Comparison Schools, 2013-2014

	Awareness		Participation	
	ESI	**Comparison**	**ESI**	**Comparison**
School Culture				
College Now programs	48.6*	35.5	25.6	18.1
College trips/visits	83.8*	74.4	59.2*	38.6
College workshops	52.9	46.5	29.6*	16.6
One-on-one college advising	50.3*	38.6	26.3*	18.1
SAT preparation	75.2	75.3	41.3	33.5
Youth Development				
Mentoring	65.2*	48.4	36.2*	19.1
Counseling	82.4	81.1	39.9*	29.9
Community service	57.8	50.2	27.6	22.4
Alternatives to suspension	36.1	28.6	15.3	9.4
Young men's/women's groups	62.3*	38.9	37.9*	17.7
Student advisories	58.3	56.6	42.8	35.4
Academics				
AP/IB/honors courses	73.5*	57.9	28.6	20
Instruction on how to learn	71.2	64.2	62.2*	51.8
Tutoring	83.3	79.1	54.3	46.6
Credit recovery/ make-up	85.3	84.8	58.7	54.8
Regents preparation	87.9	90.6	68.7	71.6
Relevant reading material	56	53.4	46.2	40.6
Orientation/summer bridge	59.7	56.2	30.9	29

Source: Research Alliance calculations based on surveys administered to ESI and comparison schools. Controlled for student characteristics using data obtained from the NYC Department of Education.

Notes: Sample includes students who were first-time 9th graders in 2012-2013. Sample only includes students from the 22 comparison schools who took the 10th grade Year 2 survey and their 22 matched ESI schools. * Denotes that difference between ESI and Comparison school awareness/participation was statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Together, these results corroborate findings from our implementation study, where educators in ESI schools reported offering a range of distinct youth development and school culture-related programs, while academic programs tended to involve AP and IB courses—which 10th grade students might be less inclined to take—or relatively diffuse efforts to provide culturally relevant education.

By and large, ESI has not yet improved attitudes, skills, or behaviors measured on our survey.

The ESI survey asked students about numerous non-cognitive outcomes related to academics, youth development, and school culture (see Chapter 2 for definitions of these outcomes). There were no statistically significant differences between ESI students and students in comparison schools for most of the survey outcomes we examined, including academic self-concept, critical thinking, and students' perceptions of fair treatment and the climate related to gender and culture at their school (see Table 6 below). The one exception was that ESI students were more likely than comparison students to report having conversations about their future careers with adults in their school.

Table 6: ESI's Effect on Key Attitudes, Skills and Behaviors for Black and Latino Male 10th Grade Students, 2013-2014

Construct	ESI Effect
Academic Self-Concept	0.10
Critical Thinking	0.10
Gender and Culture Climate	-0.14
Sense of Fair Treatment	0.10
Conversations About College	0.16
Conversations About Career	0.17*

Source: Research Alliance calculations based on survey data. Controlled for student characteristics using data obtained from the NYC Department of Education.

Notes: "ESI effect" is the effect size (difference divided by pooled standard deviation of each survey construct). It is the difference between ESI and Comparison students, controlling for attendance, 8th grade math/ELA Scores, and self-reported parent education level. Effect sizes smaller than 0.2 are considered small (Hill, et al, 2007). Sample only includes 22 comparison schools who took the 10th grade survey and the 22 ESI schools matched to those comparison schools. Sample includes students who were first-time 9th graders in 2012-2013. Students who answered 50 percent or fewer of the questions within a construct were included from analyses of that construct. This means that the number of students included in analyses of each construct varies. The smallest number of students included were 829 ESI students and 547 comparison students for Conversations about Career. * Denotes difference between ESI and Comparison students is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Similarly, ESI has not yet improved students' academic outcomes.

We analyzed academic data for students in ESI and comparison schools to determine ESI's impact on several academic outcomes, including GPA, credit accumulation, and passing rates on Regent tests. We found that ESI did not have a positive impact on these outcomes for 10th grade students (see Table 7 below). This is in part due to the absence of academic growth in ESI schools, but also due to the fact that students in comparison schools exceeded their expected achievement in the 2013-2014 school year.

The only statistically significant academic impact for 10th graders was, in fact, negative: students in comparison schools attained higher academic GPAs (weighted by credits) than students in ESI schools. It is difficult to know what to make of this isolated finding. For example, it is possible that ESI programming has had the unintended effect of taking instructional time away from academic subjects (ESI students report engaging in a range of enrichment activities like college tours more often than their counterparts in comparison schools). Alternately, although ESI students are not more likely to report taking AP or honors courses, it is possible that ESI schools are directing students toward taking more challenging courses that will better prepare them for college—which could lower their average GPAs. In future reports, we will examine these possibilities, and continue tracking ESI's impact on GPA and other academic outcomes, as the initiative develops.

Table 7: ESI's Impact on Black and Latino Male 10th Grade Students' Academic Outcomes, 2013-2014

	Outcome in ESI Schools	Impact[1]
On-track for Regents diploma (%)[2]	49.44	-0.27
Academic GPA (weighted by credits)	63.24	-1.82*
Academic credits earned	7.78	-0.08
Attendance (%)	86.12	-0.72
Passed at least two Regents by end of 10th Grade (%)	58.16	-0.28
Number of students		2,678
Number of schools		40
Students per school		67

Source: Research Alliance calculations based on data obtained from the NYC DOE.

Notes: See Appendix N for details on analytical methods. Sample includes only students who were first-time 9th graders in 2012-2013. [1] Impact is the effect of ESI on ESI students, which compares their achievement to the achievement of students in Comparison schools. [2] On-Track is defined as passing 2 Regents exams and attaining 20 credits by the end of 10th Grade.

ESI schools appear to be handling student disciplinary matters differently than comparison schools.

During our interviews, many educators in ESI schools referenced a conscious effort to modify disciplinary procedures, with a specific focus on reducing suspensions. To assess the impact of these efforts, we analyzed disciplinary data provided by the DOE, including suspension records from 2007-2008 to 2013-2014. Every time a student is suspended, an infraction code is recorded that describes the reason for the suspension. A single suspension is often associated with multiple infractions. Infractions are grouped into five levels: "uncooperative/noncompliant," "disorderly," "disruptive," "aggressive," and "violent."

We found that, despite educators' reports of decreased violence in ESI schools, suspension rates for "aggressive" and "violent" behavior remained constant in both ESI and comparison schools. There is evidence, though, that ESI schools are reducing the number of suspensions related to "disruptive" infractions (examples of "disruptive" infractions include "minor altercations," vandalism, and academic dishonesty; they are more severe than what one might think of as simple classroom disruption).[20] We observed a small (not statistically significant) decrease in the rate of this type of suspension for ESI 10th graders and a larger, statistically significant decrease for ESI 9th graders, relative to comparison schools.[21] Quantitatively, the rate for 9th graders decreased by .07 infractions per student. Given the average of 64 9th-grade students per school (across ESI and comparison schools), this translates to a projected difference of 4.5 incidents per school per year. In future reports, we will look more closely at ESI schools' disciplinary practices and possible impacts in this area. Appendix O includes further details from this analysis.

Summary

In the previous chapter, we reported that schools are generally implementing ESI according to design. Our impact analysis confirmed that there are several areas where students' school experience appears to be different as a result of ESI. Compared to students in non-ESI schools, for instance, ESI students were more aware of and more likely to participate in a variety of programs within the youth development and school culture domains. ESI students were also more likely to report having conversations at school about careers. Finally, ESI schools seem to be changing their disciplinary culture by reducing the number of suspensions related to "disruptive" infractions.

However, these changes have yet to translate into increased academic achievement. We saw no positive effects on students' academic outcomes as a result of ESI. This is not entirely surprising, given that we are only halfway into a four-year intervention; it is too soon to assess ESI's effects on students' college and career readiness. Past research indicates that whole-school models and programs often do not result in significant shifts in student achievement (Dynarski, et al., 2004; Gottfredson, et al., 2010; Zief, Lauver, & Maynard, 2006), or at least require four to five years to have an impact (Borman, et al., 2003).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of ESI will be measured through the relative success of students in achieving college and career goals. However, this initial study of ESI's impact on students raises important questions about whether the initiative's programming will ultimately be able to produce academic gains—and also whether our intermediate outcome measures are well-suited to predict students' success. For instance, our interest in suspensions as an outcome for ESI students emerged from teachers reporting changes in their schools' disciplinary climate. In the future, we hope to examine more outcomes that are directly related to the kinds of changes taking place in ESI schools. This will not only provide a more complete picture of ESI's effects, but will also shed important light on potential leading indicators for students' college and career readiness.

CHAPTER 5: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Across the country, policymakers are implementing new programs and supports designed to improve opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latino males. Gathering rigorous evidence is crucial if we want to know whether these efforts are making a difference for the communities they are intended to serve. Our evaluation of ESI is not only examining its impact on students, but also highlighting promising practices geared toward young men of color, which may inform the work of other districts, schools, and educators. To that end, we will continue to study the implementation and impact of ESI until 2016, when the initiative's first cohort of students will be graduating from high school and possibly enrolling in college.

This report focuses on ESI at its midpoint, after the end of Year 2. As in Year 1, we found that ESI is generally being implemented as intended. Most schools are implementing ESI with high fidelity to the initiative's core tenets—with one notable exception: almost a quarter of the schools have opted not to provide programming to only boys, but rather to include girls as well. We found even less variation with regard to intensity; nearly all ESI schools implemented programs with high intensity, serving many students weekly or even more frequently through a variety of programs throughout the school year. It is important to note, however, that we have less information about the relative quality of these programs, an area we hope to explore in more depth in future reports.

We documented a number of common program strategies within each of ESI's focus areas. Within the academic domain, 15 schools reported providing more rigorous courses; some offered extra academic support through tutoring during the school day or summer bridge programs before students entered the first year of high school. Programming was more widespread and varied in the areas of youth development and school culture. Common youth development programs included mentoring, advisory programs, and alternative-to-suspension programs. School culture programming was the most robust of the program areas—all ESI schools offered some type of college support to 9th and 10th graders (while a much smaller proportion of comparison schools did the same). Finally, staff in all but a handful of schools ESI schools reported having participated in CRE training or other professional development related to educating boys of color. Not surprisingly, staff in ESI schools were much more likely to receive this training than teachers in comparison schools.

Staff reported that the combination of specific programs and being part of ESI has led to several school-wide changes. First, they reported that relationships among students and between teachers and students have improved as a result of increased opportunities to get to know each other outside the classroom. Second, staff described an explicit focus on college versus high school graduation and reported that students had greater college awareness earlier in their high school careers. Third, implementing ESI has driven many schools to think more reflectively about their practice and to modify their approaches to serving Black and Latino males. These changes indicate that ESI has begun to achieve the kind of institutional transformation that the initiative's designers envisioned. While individual programs may or may not be sustained, these deeper changes have the potential to outlive ESI funding. In future years, it will be important for us to explore whether and how these cross-cutting changes impact student outcomes.

Evidence from student surveys further demonstrated that students in ESI schools are having different experiences than their peers in a set of matched comparison schools. In particular, we found that students in ESI schools were more likely to participate in programming focused on youth development and school culture, but not programming focused on academics. We also found some evidence that ESI schools are changing their culture of discipline, as seen in a decrease in some types of suspensions.

To date, ESI has not improved students' academic achievement. This is not particularly surprising, since a strong body of evidence suggests that it is rare for a diffuse, school-wide intervention to have measureable impacts on relatively narrow outcomes, especially only after two years of implementation. In addition, ESI was designed to be iterative, with the expectation that programming would improve as schools figure out what strategies work best for their students. This suggests that later years of the initiative might be more likely to produce measurable impacts on student outcomes.

Furthermore, it's likely that outcomes in 11th and 12th grade are better predictors of college readiness. While 9th and 10th grade credit accumulation and Regents taking are important predictors of high school graduation (Kemple, Segeritz, & Stephenson, 2013), it is not clear that these are also strong predictors of college readiness. After all, many students who graduate are not well prepared for college at the end of their high school career. College-related behavior in the 11th and 12th grade may turn out to be better predictors of college readiness and college enrollment.

Finally, it is important to recognize that our implementation analysis may point to benefits that we are unable to quantify in our formal impact analysis. For example, many staff have reported substantial changes to teacher and student relationships, but the current version of our student survey does not measure relationships. In addition, some elements of school practice that ESI seems to be affecting (e.g., a staff's capacity for self-reflection) are difficult to capture on a survey. While we cannot currently assess ESI's impact in these areas, our qualitative data suggest notable changes in these areas.

What's Next?

We are now at ESI's mid-way point. It is far too soon to draw conclusions about the initiative's overall effectiveness, especially since the most important measures of success—college readiness and enrollment—will not be determined until students' 12th grade year or later. However, this is an opportune time to take stock of various aspects of the initiative and our evaluation that might be improved.

What could schools, and ESI leadership, focus on in the next two years in order to have the strongest possible impact on students? For example, much of ESI's programming only indirectly affects academics, yet this is a place where schools and ESI central staff ultimately hope to see impacts. Perhaps, schools could provide supports that more directly impact academic achievement, especially those directly tied to college-related skills (e.g., research-based projects). Schools may also want to address competencies within specific subjects—writing longer reports, strong number sense—so that students are not only more likely to enroll in college, but adequately prepared to succeed there. As ESI students become juniors and seniors, schools will have more opportunities to build knowledge about post-secondary options and encourage college-going behavior (e.g., filling out applications, seeking financial aid). Schools should also consider expanding supports around career skills (e.g., time management, public speaking, computer skills) through work-based learning opportunities, which are not a prevalent feature of current ESI programming. Past research suggests these skills can be important for students' success in postsecondary settings (Kemple, 2008). Our reports on Years 3 and 4 of ESI will aim to capture more information about college- and career-oriented supports.

We will also measure additional outcomes in Years 3 and 4, to better capture the impacts of ESI. For example, we have added questions about students' sense of belonging in schools to the ESI survey. We will also use questions from the NYC

School Survey to assess ESI's impact on student relationships. And, we are considering adding a teacher survey to our evaluation, so that we can better understand ESI's impact on school staff. We may also look at other academic data, including course taking and PSAT scores, to understand ESI's impact on a wider range of outcomes that may be important for college readiness. Finally, we hope to deepen our evaluation by obtaining more information on program quality and cohesion in implementation. Given the variation in how ESI is being implemented, it is likely that some schools are implementing higher-quality programming than others.

While our evaluation is only its second year, we hope that this report and our ongoing research on ESI contributes to the larger conversation about how to best support the educational achievement of Black and Latino young men. By documenting promising strategies and assessing their impact on students, this work can help policymakers and educators make informed decisions about where to invest time, energy, and resources.

Notes

[1] See www.mbkalliance.org/press/mbk-alliance-launches-new-program

[2] Each school received $250,000 over three years. In the context of the schools we studied, this amount represented between 3-10 percent of their annual budget. In the fourth year of the initiative, schools do not receive any funding, but are still expected to implement programs initiated under ESI.

[3] ESI schools were required to meet three criteria: (1) student enrollment of at least 35 percent Black and Latino males, with at least 60 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch, (2) a four-year graduation rate above 65 percent, and (3) an "A" or "B" on the 2011 high school Progress Report.

[4] Unless otherwise noted, the college readiness measure used in the report is based on the New York State Education Department's Aspirational Performance Measure, which is defined as earning a New York State Regents diploma and receiving a score of 80 or higher on a math Regents examination and a score of 75 or higher on the English Regents examination. The Research Alliance is engaged in ongoing work to develop better indicators of college readiness.

[5] Research Alliance calculations based on data obtained from the NYC Department of Education. Note that these calculations do not include students in NYC's specialized high schools; the rate for Black and Latino males also excludes schools without significant numbers of Black and Latino students.

[6] Ladson-Billings, 1994.

[7] Schools are required to submit annual plans that clearly describe how ESI resources are being used to increase college and career readiness for young men of color. They are encouraged to use strategies with some evidence of effectiveness, but also to take informed risks, try new things, and refine their programs over time.

[8] In each year of implementation, ESI adds a grade to its target population. In Year 1, programming was primarily provided to 9th graders. In Year 2, ESI programming was provided to 9th *and* 10th graders. In Year 3, ESI will add juniors to its target population. For this reason, we interviewed 9th grade teachers in Year 1 and 10th grade teachers in Year 2.

[9] We recruited 40 of the matched comparison schools to take part in our interviews, but only 16 comparison schools agreed to participate. In future years, we will begin school recruitment earlier in hopes of expanding our data collection in comparison schools.

[10] See Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001; Le et al., 2005; and Schwartz & Washington, 2002, among many others.

[11] In Year 1, 15 comparison schools participated in the survey, 13 of which participated again in Year 2.

[12] This response rate is slightly lower than the traditional target of 70 percent (Baruch, 1999).

[13] We were only able to analyze data from 12 of the 16 schools we visited. Two of the comparison school principals declined to be audiotaped. We excluded data from two comparison schools because some protocol questions were omitted from the interviews.

[14] Not all of 36 schools reported changes in response to CRE training, and some reported changes that we did not discuss here (e.g., hiring practices).

[15] Learning related to or involving the sense of touch, often referred to as hands-on learning.

[16] 2013-2014 was the first year that New York State fully implemented the Common Core State Standards, a set of college- and career-ready K-12 standards

that has now been adopted by 44 states. The development of the Common Core was led by the National Governors Association for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. (See www.corestandards.org)

[17] While these indicators are the best measures we have at this time, the Research Alliance continues to work on developing reliable indicators of college readiness.

[18] Survey results presented in this chapter are from the 23 surveyed comparison schools and the 23 ESI schools that had a matched comparison school where the survey was administered.

[19] Both AP and IB courses are considered more rigorous than traditional high school level classes. Students may receive college credit based on scores on AP and IB exams.

[20] The NYC DOE discipline code can be found at http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/DisciplineCode/default.htm

[21] Some of the difference in suspension rates may be explained by district changes in discipline policy. A more detailed discussion of suspension data and these results are in Appendix O.

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The Research Alliance for New York City Schools

285 Mercer Street, 3rd Floor | New York, New York 10003-9502
212 992 7697 | 212 995 4910 fax
research.alliance@nyu.edu | www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance

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