

## POINT OF PROOF:

# NORTHSIDE ACHIEVEMENT ZONE

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

**T**he Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) Promise Neighborhood operates as one integrated program that works across many partner organizations and schools, with NAZ scholars at the center. Families and children move through a “cradle to career” pipeline, allowing NAZ staff and their partners to provide comprehensive support services through three pillars of impact: Family Engagement and Opportunity Alignment, Education Pipeline, and Whole Family Wrap Around Support. The purpose of Northside Achievement Zone is to end multigenerational poverty in North Minneapolis.

### WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT A “POINT OF PROOF?”

The NAZ Promise Neighborhood is a collaboration of organizations and schools partnering with families in a geographic “Zone” of North Minneapolis to prepare children to graduate from high school ready for college. Our resources are dedicated toward measurable outcomes for children and families. Success is gauged by results for children and families, not programs and organizations. NAZ partners work together to build evidence-based solutions that drive measurable improvements with NAZ families. Each child’s progress toward kindergarten-readiness, grade-level achievement, and college readiness is tracked. If the data shows ineffectiveness, we will revise our plan until we get it right.

### WHO PARTICIPATES IN THIS PROJECT?

Our geographic “Zone” is a contiguous 13 x 18 block, predominately Black area in North Minneapolis. Families living in the Zone are confronted with challenging factors: physical and behavioral health issues; instability in housing and safety; and severe economic disparities. Already at an economic disadvantage, children and families must endure persistent educational disparities.

Currently, NAZ has partnered with 320 families and 850 scholars, 58% of whom are African American (30% did not report their race), and nearly one-third of whom are children under the age of 8. Additionally, 100% of NAZ-enrolled families are economically disadvantaged, with only 25% reporting full-or part-time employment.

Highly aware of the deepening education and employment crises among Black men and boys, NAZ’s Family Academy works explicitly with fathers and sons to build a sense of empowerment and to improve parenting skills. Currently, NAZ has engaged 47 African American fathers and 248 African American boys.

### HOW DOES THIS PROJECT DEFINE SUCCESS?

Northside Achievement Zone will know success when community members see high-achieving African-American students from North Minneapolis attending and graduating from colleges and universities across the nation. We’ll recognize success when “Crimestopper” signs are a rarity and economic vitality, thriving business districts and strong neighborhoods are the norm. Success will be seen in the elimination of educational disparities in our neighborhood schools and the continuance of a committed network of schools, nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies. Finally, we define success as the reversal of premature death, insufficient education, joblessness and high incarceration rates among Black men and boys in particular.

### Statistically, our desired outcomes are:

- **1,000 families and 2,500 children are engaged in NAZ-networked programs and services;**
- **our youngest scholars are kindergarten ready at school-age;**
- **our elementary school scholars are performing at grade level in reading at the third grade benchmark;**
- **our older scholars are graduating from high school ready for college.**

With the achievement of these outcomes, our community will be empowered and led to future success by healthy parents and strong families.



**THE POVERTY THRESHOLD FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR IN 2011 WAS \$22,350**

---

**42%**

OF BLACK CHILDREN AGES 0-8 WERE LIVING IN POVERTY, COMPARED TO 24% OF ALL CHILDREN AGES 0-8<sup>35</sup>

### HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN THIS PROJECT IS SUCCESSFUL?

Evaluation and measurement are infused into all aspects of our work as a source of continuous quality improvement and a mechanism to direct future work. We are truly a “learning collaborative,” with all partners and stakeholders driven by family data and progress toward our outcomes.

NAZ has designed and implemented a rigorous internal evaluation and program performance management system, designed and managed by University of Minnesota colleagues, in close coordination with Wilder Research. Our internal, formative quality evaluation proceeds in three stages: 1) selection and documentation of known, effective practices; 2) ongoing evaluation of implementation; and 3) short-term effects and systematic practice improvement to build on lessons learned. This system helps us monitor our work and measure our impact across all aspects of our continuum of solutions.

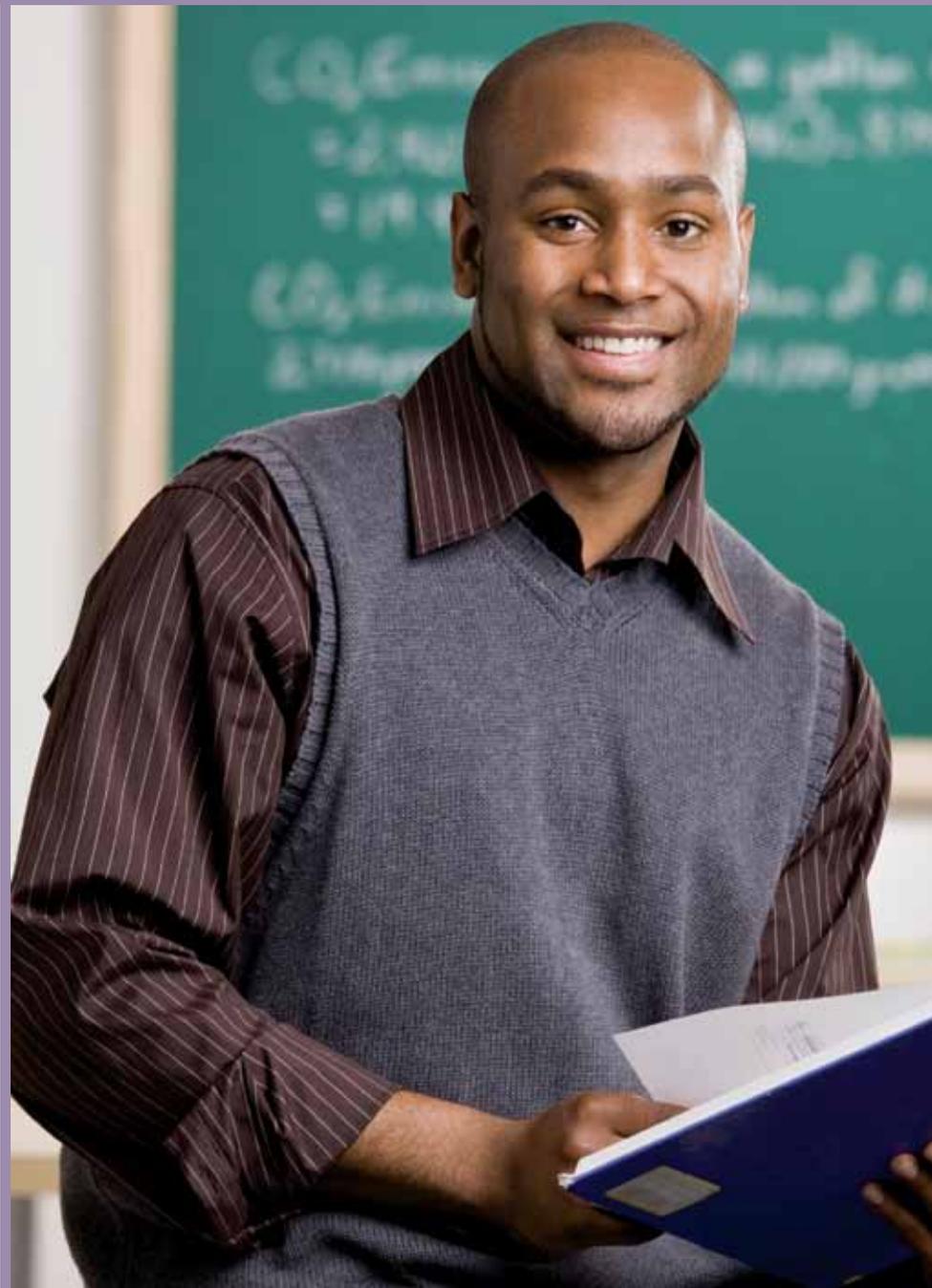
In only one example, we know that our Family Academy Program has shown graduating fathers to be more persistent in working through daily problems; motivated to work on their goals with their families; and better communicators with their significant other. Our fathers now talk about family from a team perspective and are very intentional in their support of their wives, partners and children.

### WHAT MAKES IT SUCCESSFUL?

NAZ is effective and will continue to be successful because families receive one-on-one support from the NAZ engagement team, made up of skilled “family coaches” from the North Minneapolis community. The team includes a Connector to support whole-family stability and an Academic Navigator to facilitate academic achievement.

---

**67%** OF BLACK CHILDREN AGES 0-8 WERE LIVING IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES (INCOME OF \$44,700 OR LESS FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR) IN 2011, COMPARED TO 46% NATIONALLY FOR ALL CHILDREN AGES 0-8<sup>36</sup>



# 27%

**OF BLACK CHILDREN OVERALL AND 45% OF BLACK CHILDREN IN FAMILIES LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY THRESHOLD LIVE IN AREAS WHERE AT LEAST 30% OF RESIDENTS HAVE INCOMES BELOW THE POVERTY THRESHOLD<sup>37</sup>**

### WHAT CHALLENGES HAS IT FACED?

Initially, one of the challenges NAZ faced was building trust with community members. Our families live in a Zone with underperforming schools and extremely high concentrations of poverty, crime and violence. Neighbors continue to see businesses and Black middle-class families leave and are often on the receiving end of policies and procedures that widened the achievement gap. Further to our detriment, a tornado touched down in the Zone in 2011; some 3,700 residences were damaged by the storm to some degree. Two years later, many homes are still in need of repairs. Lastly, there are those who see North Minneapolis as an area unworthy of investment. Often, our families are solely blamed for the social inequities that trap them in poverty and are not provided with the resources to rise above these crippling conditions.

NAZ's efforts started with a door-to-door enrollment campaign. Because members of the Engagement Team come from the North Minneapolis community, they approach families with a shared familiarity and commitment to progress. Through trusted relationships with trained individuals, the Engagement Team inspires a new commitment from parents and community members. Team members solidify the belief that children will graduate from college and work with parents to identify barriers, set family goals, and encourage behaviors that support positive outcome. The Engagement Team connects families with the right resources from partner organizations, based on their needs and goals. NAZ then coordinates these resources to stabilize housing, establish and support career paths for parents, and address physical and behavioral health challenges.

### HOW IS THIS PROJECT REPLICABLE?

NAZ would advise communities, funders and government agencies to invest in the principles that produce exemplary community engagement and development partnerships:

- ✓ **Clear and concise mission that speaks to the true needs of the community and illuminates the path to long-term, sustainable solutions.**
- ✓ **Strong leaders unified around a clear mission and goals and with a connection to the community they serve.**
- ✓ **Community relations efforts that reflect and involve the community served.**
- ✓ **Collaboration with schools, nonprofits, government agencies and field experts that centers on the well-being and empowerment of families and scholars.**
- ✓ **Strategic and sustainability planning that helps identify and accomplish goals and empowers the community served—academically, economically and socially.**
- ✓ **Data-driven operations that produce measurable outcomes for children and families and are gauged by results for children and families, not programs and organizations.**

### WHAT IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

With access to educational resources, encouraging schools and healthy community networks, the most vulnerable Black families can be lifted to extraordinary heights. The energy society uses to perpetuate the misperception that Black families are waiting for an all-powerful savior can be redirected toward true economic and social empowerment; in our Zone we are showing the nation the positive effects of self-reliance and community engagement. When our first high school graduating class of scholars receives their diplomas in 2034, NAZ parents and staff will be on hand to hear their plans to attend Morehouse, Spelman, University of Minnesota, Harvard and other prominent institutions of higher education. NAZ wants North Minneapolis' Black families to be the model for everything beautiful that comes from having respect and love for oneself and from healthy community collaboration.