An Innovative School Network

Partnership Schools (PNYC) is a trailblazing private school management organization shaping the next generation of urban Catholic education. At Partnership Schools, we believe that great schools are guided by faith and values, grounded in rigorous content, supported by quality professional development, and animated by a clear vision. Our mission is to develop outstanding Catholic elementary schools that provide students from disadvantaged communities with the academic preparation and skills they need to break the cycle of poverty and lead fulfilling, productive lives.

Serving the Underserved

In the 2017–18 school year, the Partnership served 2,080 students across our network of six Pre-K through 8th grade schools, three in Harlem: Mt. Carmel-Holy Rosary, Our Lady Queen of Angels, and St. Mark the Evangelist; and three in the South Bronx: Immaculate Conception, Sacred Heart, and St. Athanasius.

Living in some of the most underserved New York City neighborhoods—and in two of the nation’s poorest Congressional districts—approximately 70% of Partnership students are eligible for free- and reduced-priced lunch and 84% receive need-based scholarships. Demographically, 68% are Hispanic, 28% are African-American, 64% are Catholic, and 11% are English language learners.

The school network is guided by nearly 300 talented teachers, staff, and school leaders and supported by a network team of 23 individuals, including nationally recognized education, finance, and operational leaders. The Partnership is steered by a Board of Trustees that includes 28 accomplished (and acclaimed) professionals and visionary leaders from both the business and nonprofit fields.

Serving some of New York’s most vulnerable families—Our 2,080 students live in two of the country’s poorest congressional districts.
Partnership Schools offers a comprehensive school turn-around model for small networks of urban Catholic schools. Our model of school support focuses on unlocking the potential of our teachers and leaders by providing the strategic direction, professional development, and management support they need to thrive and to compete with top public, private, and charter schools.

In our milestone 5th year as a network, and in an era of increased competition and academic rigor, we continued to make great strides. We increased our fundraising efforts and exceeded our goal for the fiscal year, streamlined operational processes and procedures for school and network teams, helped our students grow in warm, safe, and inspiring learning environments, and continued to invest in teacher and school leader growth through curriculum support and professional development.

As we reflect on year five, we are buoyed by our results and feel confident that the investments we have made so far are having a substantive impact on the lives of the students we serve. The following report outlines the progress of our key initiatives in the 2017–18 school year, including academics, enrollment, and high school placement, as well as a summary of our financial results.

4th year of academic gains—Our schools provide the educational foundation to drive academic achievement.

Continued Gains in Year Five

When we assumed independent management of our six schools in 2013, the academic achievement of our students was unacceptably low. At the time, barely 17% of Partnership students passed the New York State (NYS) math test and less than one quarter (22%) passed the ELA test—achievement results that were as low as the most struggling local public schools.

While it was true that our students were safe and well loved, we understood that, to help break the cycle of poverty, we also needed to arm our graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. We believed then—and have now demonstrated—that the historic success of Catholic schools provides a strong foundation to drive real academic improvement.

In fact, it was the strength of that foundation that allowed us to drive four consecutive years of achievement increases in ELA and math with a few targeted, cost-effective, and strategic interventions.

As we take our schools from good to great, our focus on content-rich curriculum and academic excellence has led to game-changing results. On the 2018 NYS test, fully 55% of Partnership Schools students passed the ELA test and nearly half (49%) passed the math test. Our schools now boast achievement levels that beat city, state, and charter school averages while also meeting or exceeding the achievement levels of many of the top-performing charter school networks in the state.
Further, thanks to our academic turnaround and our high school placement program, our graduates are leaving our schools better prepared for rigorous, college-prep high schools. In 2018, more than three-quarters (77%) of the Partnership’s graduating class passed the NYS ELA test and more than half (52%) passed the math test.

And finally, our results continue to show that the longer a student is enrolled at one of our schools, the more s/he benefits. Students who have stayed with the Partnership four or more years consistently outperform their newer peers—and achieve at levels typically seen in some of the most affluent schools and districts. In both ELA and math, students attending our schools for four or more years perform—on average—ten percentage points better in ELA and 14 points better in math than students who have been with us for less than four years. These results reinforce the core of our academic model: that students benefit greatly from sustained, long-term exposure to high-quality, content-rich curriculum and instruction. These results also drive us to focus our enrollment efforts on retaining as many students as possible from year-to-year.

Stabilizing Enrollment

In the five years since we launched as a school management organization, charter school enrollment in our neighborhoods has exponentially increased. Between 2012–13 and 2017–18, charter school enrollment in Harlem and the Bronx has increased by 78%—representing the addition of more than 15,000 students. At the same time, national Catholic school enrollment trends make it clear that charter expansion has a far greater impact on the enrollment of neighboring Catholic schools than on overall public-school enrollment. There are no doubt many reasons for this trend, including the fact that urban Catholic schools have faced serious financial struggles just at the moment that charter expansion hit its peak. Since 2008 alone, when charter school expansion began to take off in earnest, Catholic school enrollment in the nation’s 12 largest urban dioceses has declined by nearly a third.

And those numbers are mirrored here in New York. Between 2012 and 2018, public school enrollment in our neighborhoods dipped by 7%, whereas Catholic school enrollment declined by 21%.

At Partnership Schools, by contrast, we have stabilized enrollment during this period of rapid charter expansion. We continue to serve more than 2,000 of the City’s most disadvantaged students. Equally heartening is the fact that demand for our schools remains strong. Each year, we receive more than 1,500 inquiries from new families—for only 600 open seats. And, in what is perhaps the greatest vote of confidence in our model, 85% of families re-enrolled between 2017–18 and 2018–19, demonstrating not just that there is strong demand for an academically rigorous, values-driven education, but that there is strong satisfaction from families who choose to send their children to one of our six schools.
Putting Our Students on the Path to Success

At Partnership Schools, our focus on rigorous content and character development prepares our students for life-long success. But we understand that, in order to ensure that students can take advantage of the opportunities they have earned while at the Partnership, we need to help ensure our graduates earn admission to—and scholarship support for—rigorous high schools that will continue to help them grow in knowledge and virtue.

Given the competitive landscape of New York City high school admissions, we offer high school placement assistance to all students. Our goal is to place each student in the best fit high school where he or she will learn, grow, and thrive.

As a direct result of this program, more than three-fourths of the Partnership’s 2018 eighth grade cohort matriculated to top-tier high schools across New York City—including Bronx Science, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Xavier, Fordham Prep, Marymount, and Notre Dame, among others—while the amount of financial or merit-based awards offered to our students increased for the third straight year from $970K in 2016, to $1.85MM in 2017, to $2.53MM in 2018.

Since 2015, scholarship and aid has more than doubled—In 2018, $2.53 million helped launch PNYC students to more top-tier high schools.

“...with unconditional love from our teachers. Even though we have our ups and downs, our triumphs and our struggles, our teachers stand with us because they stay positive and believe we can be better versions of ourselves. With our core values of integrity, humility, hard-work, and service guiding the way, we become better friends, students, family members, and people today, tomorrow, and forever.” —Christian A., 2018 OLQA Valedictorian
Securing Our Future

Doing More with Less

At the Partnership, we are committed to serving students from two of the poorest congressional districts in the nation. Given that New York Catholic schools do not (yet) have access to substantial public funding, we stretch every dollar we receive to keep our schools accessible to the communities we serve.

To that end, we have made smart, strategic choices that focus on maximizing economies of scale where they exist, on making the most of every dollar we spend, and on minimizing administrative costs so that the lion’s share of our funding—more than 80% of our overall budget in 2017–18—goes directly to our schools and students.

This combination of increased efficiencies and smart spending allows us to provide a life-changing, values-driven education for our students at a fraction of what New York’s charter and public schools spend.

While New York State and national data is not yet available for the 2017–18 school year, in the 2016–17 school year, the national cost to educate was $11,642, while New York charter schools spent $21,281 per student and New York public schools had the highest per-pupil cost in the country at $26,289. With a 2016–17 per-pupil cost of $9,700 and a 2017–18 per-pupil cost of $9,950 and academic results out-pacing those of nearby public schools, Partnership Schools excels with one of the most affordable, cost–effective per-pupil costs not just in the city, but in the country.

We maximize every dollar—PNYC spends a fraction of NYC public and charter schools, garnering better results.

NYC Public Schools: $26,289

NYC Charter Schools: $21,281

Partnership Schools: $9,950


Our cost to educate is $9,950 per student—
Every year we raise the gap between what our parents can afford and our cost to educate. In 2017–18, that was $6,450 per student.

Philanthropic Support is Crucial

Keeping costs down is critical, in part because the students we serve are some of the neediest in the City. Across the network last year, at least three quarters of our families had a median household income of only $24,000. Correspondingly, over 84% of our families qualified for scholarships and of those, more than half received funding that covered 50% or 75% of tuition. That means that, on average, we collect about $2,800 per student in tuition—just a fraction of the $9,950 it costs to educate each child in our schools.

While our schools do get some very modest government support—approximately $700 per student—we must raise the remaining $6,450 per student to cover the cost of the life-changing education we provide.

Simply stated, we rely on philanthropic support to fill the spending gap and provide students with the rigorous education they deserve. Our total expenses in 2017–18 were $22.1MM (including capital) and, to fund this, philanthropic support of $14.7MM was required (including scholarships). We raised $9.7MM from donors—surpassing our annual goal—with the remaining $5MM coming from the Partnership’s endowment earnings and reserves.

A Strong Foundation

Thanks to our year-over-year gains in academic results and our overall story of success, we have built a stronger, more diverse base of support in the years since we began our work, nearly doubling our annual fundraising from $5.3MM in 2014 to $9.7MM in 2018. Further, a focus on multi-year gifts has resulted in over $14MM secured in future gifts through 2026. With the support of all those who believe in our work, we can secure the future of the students and schools we serve for generations to come.

Required philanthropic support $14.7 million

$5.0 million Provided from Partnership investment earnings and reserves

$9.7 million Annual funds raised by Partnership in 2017–18
Looking Ahead

Since 2013, Partnership Schools has developed a proven turn-around model that has not only driven strong academic gains in once-struggling urban Catholic schools but has built effective and efficient operational and financial systems that are putting our schools on the path to sustainability and propelling our model into the national conversation.

As we continue our work in year six, our hope is to not just run outstanding schools in the New York Archdiocese, but to also be the spark that ignites a nation-wide transformation in Catholic school management. In doing so, we hope to be a catalyst for change across the sector and to provide a scalable way to increase parent choice in underserved communities across the country.

Our commitment to providing an academically rigorous, faith-filled, and values-driven education to those who most need it is unwavering. Without your support and generosity, our work would not be possible, but most essentially, our families would not benefit from the life-changing Catholic education that we provide.

“Students know they are loved and cared for the second they walk in the door, and there is an underlying feeling of respect and support between teachers, students, and families. And because of this, I have found students who are self-motivated, want to learn, want to achieve, and want to live up to their full potential as Christians and as students.”

—Mrs. Singh, 5th grade teacher, Partnership Schools
Partnership Supporters in 2017–18

Thank you for your support and we look forward to your continued partnership this year and in all the years to come.

Trustees
Russell L. Carson
Patricia W. Chadwick
Samuel Di Piazza, Jr.
Most Reverend Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Charles P. Durkin
Norman Eig
Barbara Evans
Elizabeth Cogan Fascitelli
Jose W. Fernandez
William Finneran
William E. Flaherty
William Goodloe
Peter T. Grauer
Donald J. Herdrich
Janine Hill
Bonnie B. Himmelman
Patrick W. Kelly
Helen T. Lowe
Pete Maulik
Dr. Timothy McNiff
Msgr. Mustaciuolo
Jane B. O’Connell
Rev. Joseph P. Parkes, S.J.
Frank Porcelli
Thomas C. Quick
Richard J. Schmeelk
Amy Stevens
Nancy Wall

Foundations
Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation
Altman Foundation
Anonymous Foundation (2)
Charles Hayden Foundation
Edward & Joan B. Steiniger Charitable Foundation

Francesco & Mary Giambelli Foundation, Inc.
Gerstner Family Foundation
Hyde & Watson Foundation
Norma Pace Foundation
Robert Mize and Isa White Trimble Family Foundation
Robin Hood Foundation
The Achelis and Bodman Foundation
The Louis Calder Foundation
The Seth Sprague Educational Charitable Foundation
The Shubert Organization
Walton Family Foundation
William E. Simon Foundation
Wilson Sheehan Foundation

Individual Donors & Organizations (≥$10,000)
Altman/Kazickas Foundation
Paul Ammirato
Rose-Marie & Jack R. Anderson Foundation
Judy Hart Angelo
Anonymous (3)
Selim Batibay
John Birkelund
The Alexander Bodini Foundation
James Buckman
Edward Burdick
Michael Castillo
Robert Castrignano
Children’s Scholarship Fund
Kee Colen & Laura Picard
Daughters of Charity
Anthony & Christie de Nicola
Daniel Denihan
Jennifer Eddy
Brigid Flanagan
Robert Foran

Stephen & Amandine Freidheim
Mark Gallogly & Lise Strickler
Fr. Louis Gigante
Enrique Gittes & Lois Severini
Rosemarie Goodnough
Grano Family Foundation
Richard Grasso
Philip & Alicia Hammarskjold
Gregory & Sarita Hanley
Thomas Healey
Roger Hertog
Paul Hilal
J. Tomilson Hill
David & Laurie Hodgson
Inner-City Scholarship Fund
Nitin & Sheila Karnani
Kenneth Langone
John Lindenthal
Carrol Muccia
Frank Nickell & Carol Hertling
James O’Donnell
Timothy O’Neill
Willard Overlock
Thomas Piper
Pumpkin Trust
Philip Purcell
Lawrence & Illana Raia
William Sales
Danielle Schaeffer
Stanley Shopkorn
Peter A. Smith & Linda Mahoney
Soros Fund Charitable Foundation (corporate match)
Frank Stanley
St. Mark Scholarship Fund
Dominic & Sally Tagliatellata
Katherine M. Tagliatellata Foundation
Third Point, LLC
John van Rens & Sarah Lutz
Michael Vitulli
We appreciate your support!

Jill Kafka
Partnership Schools
1011 First Avenue, Suite 1800
New York, NY 10022

Tel.: 646 794 3355
Fax: 212 688 2956
www.partnershipnyc.org