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HOME WORKS! Goes Virtual: Lessons Learned from the Covid-19 Pandemic

Introduction

At the close of 2020, Karen Kalish, the founder and CEO of HOME WORKS! (HW!), a St. Louis-based not-for-profit focused on helping families and teachers partner for student success, reflected on the work done at City Elementary[1] over the past nine months helping the school cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and what lessons the organization could learn about how to support the students, families, teachers, and schools it worked with. For almost 15 years HW! had trained and paid teachers at schools in Missouri to visit the families of their struggling students to help them support their children's learning. Those in person visits had all come to a halt in March 2020 when local health authorities in St. Louis City and County moved to "flatten the curve" of the Covid-19 pandemic's spread by restricting in-person activity. HW! had quickly done its best to pivot its operations from in-person teacher visits with families to virtual visits.

Family and school resources and circumstances varied widely across the schools in the greater St. Louis area with which HW! was working in 2020. For the better resourced schools and communities, in which the majority of families had both the technology and broadband service for distance learning, the rapid shift to virtual instruction still imposed a steep learning curve on both teachers and students. For schools like City Elementary, situated in a neighborhood characterized as a broadband desert by an education reporter for a local newspaper,[i] teachers, families, and students had to overcome a daunting number of known and as yet unknown digital access challenges to even begin climbing this steep learning curve.

Seeing the challenges at City Elementary in the spring of 2020, Kalish had used her formidable mobilizing skills and fund-raising network to launch an ambitious project to "do what it takes" to help City Elementary succeed in the new world of virtual instruction. The initiative, *Getting Connected!* mobilized a group of community-minded not-for-profits, business leaders, public utilities, school district leaders, social workers, and academics with a shared aim to ensure that:

[1] The names of people, places, and projects in this manuscript are pseudonyms

- Every student at City Elementary has the technology he or she needs, knows how to use it, can get tech support, and shows up online virtually every day
- Every City Elementary teacher knows how to teach virtually effectively and is able to troubleshoot for parents and families
- Parents and families know enough to support their child's distance learning and are engaged in their children's education.

Now, after nine months of constant strategizing, experimenting, and responding to the school's needs, Kalish wanted to reflect on what *Getting Connected!* had accomplished and what lessons the initiative might offer for how best HOME WORKS! can achieve its stated mission: Partnering families and teachers for children's success.

The Covid-19 Global Pandemic and Educational Response

In late February, the US Center for Disease Control reported evidence of community spread in California of the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2[ii]. The virus, which was first detected in Wuhan China in November 2019, had an estimated mortality rate 10 times that of the seasonal flu, making it a formidable public health threat. With community spread already detected, the number of people in the US at risk of infection by the virus was poised to increase dramatically unless the public health officials moved quickly to contain the emerging pandemic. By mid-March, the local, state, and national health authorities across most of the country concluded that the most effective way to avert a public health crisis was to curtail all but the most essential activities that involved in-person interaction. In turn, government agencies, employers, community organizations, and individual households went into "lockdown," staying at home and minimizing contact with other people.

The K-12 school districts in St. Louis City and the surrounding counties responded to the lockdown orders by suspending all in-person teaching beginning March 18, 2020 and continuing through at least April 3. Educators across the region scrambled to figure out how to move instruction fully online, which required a radical shift for teachers and significant technological challenges for students and families. The pivot to online instruction played out in strikingly different ways across the across the region and even within individual districts. Within the St. Louis Public School (SLPS) District, for example, efforts to equip schools and families quickly collided with the highly heterogenous circumstances among the 74 schools in the district, which ranged in academic performance from the 1st percentile among Missouri public schools to the bottom 5% in overall test scores.

Like other urban districts in the region, SLPS, which had lost its accreditation by the Missouri State Board of Education in 2007 and had been overseen by an appointed Special Administrative Board rather than a locally elected school board until 2019, was already severely stressed, with high poverty rates, a limited local tax base, and a state funding formula that led to low overall funding in districts with some of the highest needs in the state.[iii] Against this backdrop, the pandemic brought to the foreground the significantly limited Internet access in high poverty neighborhoods. According to the US Census Bureau's 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 44% of the households in some parts of the region had *no* access to the Internet and an

additional 10% only had access through cellular data. For schools in these "Internet deserts," the shift to online instruction required equipping households with Internet-enabled devices, arranging for Internet access, and instructing students and caregivers in how to use the equipment, a huge undertaking for the schools.

Equally challenging was replacing the usual communication channels with students and families. With in-person instruction, teachers could count on seeing and working with the majority of their students daily in the classroom, allowing them to give lessons, assign work, provide feedback, and generally build relationships with the students. The regular in-person contact with students also provided an important connection point between the teachers/school and the families of their students; pre-pandemic, it was possible to communicate with the student's caregivers and other household members by sending materials home with the student. Finally, the school itself provided a venue for the face-to-face meetings that most families preferred for communication about their children's education. Very few preferred to use email or the telephone for these discussions.

Although attendance levels for some students in the district fell below statewide standards, teachers could count on interacting with at least 70% of their students on a near-daily basis. For the much smaller fraction of students who routinely missed class, the school administration could backfill the teacher's effort to engage the students through outreach to their families and recruiting other social service providers to assist families in need.

The suddenness of the shutdown shattered these regular communication channels and greatly complicated the school's efforts to replace them with virtual channels. By April 9, when districts in and around St. Louis announced that in-person instruction would not resume before the end of the spring, teachers across the region were reporting that their students still lacked the needed equipment and that no students were attending their online sessions.[iv] Although districts like SLPS had issued each K-6 student an Apple iPad®, many had not received clear instructions for how to use such devices, and few families had received a hotspot, which they needed to access the Internet.

City Elementary

The experience at City Elementary during these early days of the shift to virtual instruction illustrates the challenges faced by many schools in the region. Over the course of the spring, the school managed to contact only 50% of its students. In the case of one first-grade teacher, it took three weeks to reach all of her 23 students, and she found that none of them were connecting with the school through Microsoft Teams where she was posting teaching materials. Nearly all (22 out of 23) of the students lived in households without Internet access, and frequently, these households used pre-paid cellular telephone plans and did not have stable telephone numbers. Few families used email to communicate, and the school's principal estimated that mass outreach by the district and the school through email and robocalls effectively communicated with less than 1 in 6 of the families.

City Elementary served approximately 300 African American pre-school to fifth-grade students, 100% of whom received free or reduced cost meals. The majority of these students lived in the

neighborhood in subsidized housing and walked to school, with an estimated 30% without a secure home. Notwithstanding the neighborhood orientation of the student body, there were several factors that contributed to a long-standing lack of trust between the school and the families of its students, which made it difficult to build reliable communication channels, especially once the pandemic shut down in-person teaching. First, the school experienced considerable turnover in its student population, with a significant fraction of families moving in and out of the public housing in its neighborhood each year. Similarly, the school's administration experience relatively high levels of turnover—in the spring of 2020 City Elementary's principal was in her first year at the school as were most members of her leadership team. Finally, safety and security also presented unique problems for connecting with the school's families. During one outreach effort, a group of teachers and volunteers trying to connect with students through home visits was forced to take shelter when a group of armed men appeared near the housing they were visiting.

Although the school survived its shock transition to virtual instruction, the resulting ad hoc systems and processes that resulted were incompletely formed and only partly effective. As a result, the school faced a daunting challenge of standing up a true online learning environment when the district announced on July 29, 2020 that it would begin the 2020-2021 school year virtually. After the announcement, the school had less than two months to prepare teachers, students, and families for the start of the new school year in a virtual format. As the only year-round employee, the school principal would need to do all planning, coordination, and communication with the help of the school's Family-Community Specialist, an 11-month position charged with "…coordinating efforts to facilitate parental and community involvement, assist schools in efforts to improve attendance and student achievement."

HOME WORKS!

HOME WORKS! is a not-for-profit community service organization founded in the 2007 "to train, support, and pay teachers to partner with, and educate, their struggling students and their families through home visits and Parent Teacher Learning Meetings."[v] While HW! began in a handful of elementary schools, by 2019 it served 30 different schools, working with teachers at the early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school levels in nine urban, suburban, and rural districts across Missouri. Since its beginning, HW!-trained teachers had made almost 30,000 home visits, primarily to families from low-income backgrounds. Over the years, it had experimented with several different models for helping build connections between teachers and families, but its core program trained teachers at its schools in how to engage families through visits to their homes and compensated the teachers for their efforts visiting families (See **Exhibit 1** for a summary of HW!'s Goals, Objectives and Outcomes developed during the pandemic).

In the summer of 2020, HW! had a staff of approximately 10 people serving in a variety of program management, marketing, and program evaluation roles. In the 2019-20 academic year it raised approximately $942 thousand, 97% through donations (see **Exhibit 2** for a summary of HW!'s finances and services since 2015). In addition to the staff, the HW! CEO had the support of a 14-member board of directors drawn from business, K-12 education, and academia.

Getting Connected!

In the 2019-20 school year when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, HW! had shifted from in-person home visits by teachers to virtual visits via Zoom. In doing so, they recognized not only their own challenges, but also those of their schools. Spurred to action by the challenges her HW! teachers were facing, Kalish reached out to leaders from business, education, and community service organizations to develop a plan for helping one school, City Elementary, through an initiative that would later be named *Getting Connected* (See **Exhibit 3** for an example email explaining the initiative). By June 2020, she had a working group of about 20 local business leaders, educators, technology experts, and community organizers who were dubbed the BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) steering committee. A former CEO of an international company based in the area became the BHAG's chair. She prepared a draft action plan for the BHAG (See **Exhibit 4**) and convened a meeting of the group on July 25th.

During the initial meeting, the BHAG captured the initial status of each of the action items and also set the scope of the *Getting Connected* initiative by setting aside Software/Platform Choices and Hardware Procurement and Management (these would be the district's focus). Then, in conversation with the principal of City Elementary, the BHAG settled on three main concerns -- Internet Connectivity, Training, and Data Tracking/Documenting. The BHAG's boundary setting at this stage of the project represented just one step in a somewhat delicate dance that emerged among HW!, City Elementary and its district to put in place all the things necessary for City Elementary's students to succeed without stepping on each other's toes.

For Internet Connectivity, two BHAG members, one a senior leader working for AT&T and another an executive at Worldwide Technologies, took responsibility for investigating the broadband needs and options for the program. For Training, the VP of Launchcode, a local not-for-profit focused on training St. Louis residents for technology jobs, took the lead in addressing the training needs of the teachers and parents. For the Data Tracking/Documenting, the team reached out to their networks at local universities, eventually gathering three lead researchers (the authors of this case study) and engaging HW!'s annual program evaluator as well. Finally, HW! developed a list of over 50 additional volunteers by reaching out to a diverse assortment of colleagues and friends with a simple email (**Exhibit 5**).

Coordinating the Project

By late summer, the BHAG knew more support was needed to coordinate such a large effort of volunteers and needs. In mid-August, HW! hired a project manager for *Getting Connected*. The project manager was a fairly recent college graduate dedicated to community empowerment and racial equity. After obtaining his bachelor's degree, he had joined Teach for America and gained a master's degree in education over two years, while working as an early childhood educator not far from City Elementary. More recently, he had spent the last two years recruiting teachers to work in urban schools and was part of an esteemed leadership fellowship in St. Louis.

Throughout August, the project manager became an essential team member of *Getting Connected*, working approximately 20 hours/week as a part-time employee of HW! (See **Exhibit 6** for the position's job description here). Among other activities, he coordinated the

many volunteers; met at least weekly with the principal to assess needs and devise plans; and developed surveys, tracking tools, and other documents.

Summer 2020

As the pandemic in the US moved into its second wave, the district used its established communication channels (email and robocalls) to survey families in June, and again, in July, asking whether they wanted: (1) in-person schooling; (2) virtual schooling with district teachers; or (3) self-paced virtual schooling facilitated by an outside provider. By July 30, families had to make a commitment for their chosen model of learning.

None of City Elementary's families responded to the district's emails nor robo-calls requesting their choice for schooling. So, the principal at City Elementary had to contact the families of every single one of her approximately 290 students to get definite answers. She hired additional staff, with some support from HW!, to make phone calls and visit households (over 100), eventually making contact with all but 25 families. Since the school's teachers were not on the district's payroll during the summer break, HW! paid three teachers, $30/hour to do this work. Using a prepared script (**Exhibit 7**), they set out with two objectives: (1) to determine families' choice for schooling; and (2) to get working phone numbers and emails for each family. The district's decision in early August to move all instruction online would render the first objective moot. But, the contact information gained meeting the second objective would prove to be invaluable as the school prepared for 100% virtual instruction three weeks away.

Getting Connected Startup

At the suggestion of one member of the BHAG steering committee, the dean of a local college of education, City Elementary's principal convened a virtual "roadblock meeting" with the HW! *Getting Connected* project manager and the HW! Home Visit Program manager as well as the school's instruction coordinator, Family and Community Coordinator, and a 1st grade teacher. To structure the meeting, she outlined a six-phase plan (**Exhibit 8**), with the first four phases covering the period up to the start of instruction, the fifth phase addressing the start of school on August 31, and the sixth phase starting the second week of school.

The group spent the majority of the time discussing the key constraints during Phase 1 to 4, which focused on mobilizing the school's leadership, preparing teachers, establishing contact between the teachers and the families, getting school materials (including technology) ready for distribution, and holding an orientation for families to prepare them for virtual instruction. During this meeting, the principal identified the several challenges:

- No one at the school had any real expertise in the use of Microsoft teams, the district's chosen online learning platform.
- The school needed to have everything ready by August 24 when the teachers would arrive for training and were expected to be in their classrooms and logged onto the system.

- The classrooms were not in a state of readiness for the teachers' arrival because they were never properly closed up when the shutdown occurred in the spring, and they hadn't been cleaned since.
- Teachers were highly anxious and needed help getting ready for the start of the new year.
- Teachers weren't on the payroll yet, so the school could not require them to work.
- The district was having difficulty relocating the iPads it had issued in the spring, and it was unclear whether the devices would be available in time for family orientation.
- The school neighborhood had experienced issues with safety and security, so delivering technology safely was an important question.

Coming out of the roadblock meeting, City Elementary focused on working with the district to get the technology it needed and getting its teachers ready to teach virtually. Meanwhile, HW! mobilized to recruit volunteers to augment the school's workforce and develop training materials to help families use Microsoft Teams and the iPads that the district was distributing. With only a week to get ready, there was simply no way that City Elementary's staff and teachers alone could ensure that families knew when to come to school for orientation, could prepare materials for distribution, and organize the meeting space to meet new Covid-19 public safety requirements. HW! would an essential partner in the start of the school this year.

The surge in human resources and other support provided by HW! proved invaluable for the school. In the week before the orientation, HW! volunteers used the telephone numbers that had been gathered during their earlier outreach during the summer to call all the students and schedule them for orientation. HW! volunteers also helped teachers assemble packages with books, technology, and learning materials for all 290 students. During the orientation itself, HW! provided food and financial compensation for family members and went so far as to offer to compensate them for lost wages if they had to take time off work to attend. In addition, HW! volunteers also provided administrative support tracking attendance and sanitizing the meeting space over a series of orientation sessions for each year's students and their families during the week-long orientation.

Equally important, the work done by HW! supporting the preparation and logistics of the event freed up the school's principal, leadership, and teachers to concentrate on working with students and families in the only face-to-face interaction they could expect for the foreseeable future. By the end of the orientation, they had connected with nearly every student's family; only 60 of the 290 boxes prepared for students remained to distribute, a remarkable success rate giving the extremely low initial response rate to the districts efforts to prepare families for distance learning. By the following Monday, after a make-up day on Friday for families who could not attend the previous day, the school had managed to reach all but five of its students.

Instruction Begins

Notwithstanding City Elementary's and HW!'s success with orientation, the start of instruction brought to the surface a number of obstacles that had escaped detection in the planning phase. For the first two days of instructions, over 25% of the school's students failed to log-on. HW! again helped with outreach on the phone to troubleshoot the problem, helping lift attendance to 88% by Friday of the first week, a level significantly higher than typical for the first week of

instruction in previous years. The issues keeping students from logging on included technical problems such as a shortage of iPad charging cables, inadequate Internet access or difficulties using the district-issued Internet hotspots, as well as the more quotidian—families had to develop new morning rituals for starting school without the hard deadline of being physically present at the school for the start of instruction. Their responsibilities had changed from simply dropping off and picking up their children to helping them log on to Teams, monitoring their work, interacting with teachers, troubleshooting technology problems, providing breakfast and lunch, and maintaining a focused environment.

One unexpected issue actually turned into an opportunity for both the school and the families. During the first week of instruction many teachers at City Elementary reported that they could hear the chirping of a low battery signal for a smoke detector in the background for at least one of their students. HW! responded by reaching out to the area's Fire Department, which had a program for replacing smoke detector batteries free of charge. Using the students as virtual inspectors, the fire department identified those homes needing batteries. Building on the success of the battery replacement initiative, the fire department subsequently worked with the students and teachers to identify five family homes that did not have *any* smoke detectors, so that the fire department could install them under another program it ran. For both initiatives, HW! played an instrumental role in helping the school, the families, and the Fire Department forge a new relationship.

As instruction progressed, it became clear that "doing what it takes" would also entail providing some students with resources for in-home learning. Many did not have a sufficiently quiet space for online study so HW! arranged to provide a headset for all students at City Elementary to reduce distraction. Other students did not have a desk or workspace suitable for study or lacked simple school supplies like pencil sharpeners. Again, HW! stepped in to fill the need, with volunteers assembling study packs for families to provide these essential items.

During the startup phase, the *Getting Connected* project manager observed that the teachers at the school varied widely in their comfort level with virtual instruction. At the top was a single teacher who HW! had supported with one-on-one technical support in Microsoft Teams. By the fourth day, this instructor had moved from the typical startup activities for a class to delivering content. At the other end of the spectrum were a small number of instructors who were simply overwhelmed by the challenge of teaching virtually. In between were the majority of the teachers, who had HW! support helping students connect but were still on the steep part of the learning curve for virtual instruction and not yet delivering a significant amount of content.

The New Normal

By mid-September, City Elementary had returned to some semblance of a routine operationally, but attendance had fallen below 80%, a worrisome situation for both student learning and funding and staffing for the school, which receive resources from the district based on the number of students in class. Like other schools in the district, City Elementary had routinely called the homes of students who failed to attend class. Because these calls came from the school administrators, families tended to perceive them as punitive rather than supporting the learning of their children. Indeed, frequent calls to the family could lead to the school "hotlining"

a student, a process for reporting students living in potentially unsafe circumstances. By contrast when HW!'s volunteers reached out to families during the early weeks of the school year, they positioned themselves as problem solvers available to eliminate roadblocks that made it difficult for students to log on to their classes. The success of this approach in the early weeks of the school year led HW! and City Elementary to explore continuing it into the school year to help increase attendance.

To test the usefulness of this approach, the City Elementary and HW! agreed to try a new attendance incentive program on a pilot basis focusing on students who had been attending only 60% to 80% of the time. For the program HW! recruited a group of volunteers who they tasked with calling the homes of students who failed to show up for class. After training with HW!, each volunteer worked with four to five students, giving them a friendly reminder call to log on if they failed to do so on their own. Since each volunteer worked with the same students, the program built on the relationship model that had emerged in the early weeks of the year, with HW! standing ready to provide support when obstacles to attendance emerged.

HW! also explored a variety of other initiatives aimed at increasing attendance. From the beginning it systematically tracked attendance on behalf of the school to give the teachers and administrators accurate information on the success or failure of their efforts. It also looked at ways to benchmark the school's performance relative to previous years and relative to other schools with similar demographics in the district. Finally, it also arranged for families to pick up gift cards to local grocers when their children had a perfect attendance record for the week.

The Move to Hybrid

Notwithstanding the efforts of City Elementary teachers and HW! volunteers, many families at the school and across the district continued to struggle with 100% online instruction. By the end of September, the district began planning for at least some students to move to in-person instruction. Once again, the school surveyed all of its families to determine which would prefer to return to in person instruction and which preferred to remain virtual. Of the families reached in the survey, approximately 60% preferred in person instruction. Within days, the district announced that it would reopen schools on October 19, the first day of the second quarter, leaving the school with less than three week to reconfigure its operations, this time for some form of hybrid teaching.

Since in-person instruction needed to conform with COVID-19 public health protocols, the school needed to reconfigure its space and outfit its classrooms for the new hybrid instructional format. HW! again mobilized its volunteer network to help set up the classrooms and prepare for the return of students. In a gesture aimed at helping staff morale, which flagged badly in the face of yet another change in work circumstances, Kalish arranged for free manicures and pedicures for all teachers and administrators and encouraged them to spoil themselves with a bit of self-care. Kalish also tried to arrange a donation of refurbished networking and computing equipment generously offered by a contact in her network. Unfortunately, the school wasn't able to take advantage of the gift because of district-level policies about equipment connecting to the school's network. A similar issue had stymied a donation of iPads for Pre-K students back in August during the runup to the start of school.

Technology issues had been a constant concern for HW! from the beginning of the *Getting Connected* initiative. There were chronic shortages of the district-provided hotspots, so HW! explored a number of alternatives for giving students better and more reliable access to the Internet. For example, HW! reached out to a local property developer and manager in City Elementary's neighborhood. Working with the developer and a local not-for-profit with a grant to provide social services in the area around the properties, HW! explored solutions for providing broadband service and communal study space for the students living in those properties.

Although HW! identified technical solutions to the Internet access challenges and had internet service providers willing to provide the service, arranging for this service would have required running a gauntlet of administrative and security issues with the district. The organization chose instead to concentrate on making sure that the families of City Elementary students had access to the social services they needed. Through an MOU, it arranged for the local not-for-profit to serve as case workers to help it ensure that City Elementary families were referred to the various social service programs available to them.

Winter Break

With cases of Covid-19 rising rapidly in the St. Louis region and across the US, the district closed out its fall semester virtually after the Thanksgiving Break. The natural pause in the school year gave HW! and Kalish a break from the immediate needs of the students and a chance to reflect on all that they had done since the summer to help City Elementary. Clearly, a lot had been done and by most accounts, to good effect. All indications were that City Elementary had actually fared better than many other urban schools. But for HW!, the heavy investment in the *Getting Connected* initiative had required mobilizing a large number of volunteers, significant financial investment, and engagement in a range of activities that were beyond its core of home visits by teachers. At this juncture, Kalish wondered which of the fall's activities had been worth the effort and which HW! should consider offering in the spring. Equally, if not more importantly, Kalish wondered about how all this work should fit into the broader mission of HW! Should their organization consider rolling out activities, like the attendance initiative, at other schools? Or, were their important lessons that could be extracted from the experience that would bolster its core work connecting teachers with families and engaging families in their children's learning?

With highly effective COVID-19 vaccines receiving approval from the US FDA in late November 2020, public health authorities were cautiously optimistic that the pandemic could be controlled, and that life would begin to return to normal, possibly as soon as the summer of 2021. As that future normal arrived, what would happen to the new programs that HW! had established with City Elementary?

Exhibit 1

2020-21 HOME WORKS! Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

HOME WORKS! partners with teachers and families to more effectively engage parents in the learning process and to foster students' school success, including improving school attendance and increasing reading and math proficiency.

Goals		Objectives	Outcomes
Goal 1 Build capacity of school personnel to promote positive parent engagement and cultivate meaningful, trusting relationships with families.	**Objective 1.1**	Provide training to school staff on best practices in teacher home visiting, cultural competence and understanding trauma.	More than 75% of staff trained rate the quality of instruction as "excellent" and report feeling "very confident" in their ability to conduct visits with families.
	Objective 1.2	Recruit and retain committed schools and school personnel who actively participate in parent engagement strategies.	At least 50% of eligible lead teachers in each school building complete home visits with families and attend all program-sponsored events.
	Objective 1.3	Engage in positive outreach (positive touches) to students and families who are most likely to benefit from teacher home visits.	At least 15% of students whose families received home visits are either chronically absent or performing below grade level academically as measured by school records from the previous year.
	Objective 1.4	Sponsor one family dinner or school-wide event at each school to welcome families to the school environment (OPTIONAL).	More than 30% of families who received home visits also attend at least one family event. At least 75% of parents who attend family dinners "strongly agree" the event made them feel welcomed and more connected to school.
	Objective 1.5	Schedule and conduct in-person and/or virtual first visits with families to establish positive parent-teacher relationships.	More than 90% of teacher logs completed after first visits show teachers "strongly agreed" that visits improved their relationship with families.
Goal 2 Remove technological barriers that may impede student access to distance learning materials and instruction in one targeted, high need school.	**Objective 2.1**	Partner with providers in the community to offer no-cost Internet access to underserved students and families.	At least 60% of students and families who could not previously access school-based technology report the ability to actively participate in online learning activities.
Goal 3	**Objective 3.1**	Conduct in-person or virtual second visits with families to build on student progress.	More than 90% of teachers observe improvements in student need areas (e.g., test scores).

Build capacity of parents and family members to promote positive parenting practices in the home and to more effectively engage in their children's education.	**Objective 3.2**	Schedule and conduct virtual, classroom-based Parent Teacher Learning Team meetings to support goal setting and to provide parents resources and instruction.	More than 30% of families who participated in home visits also attend at least one PTLT meeting.
	Objective 3.3	Implement the HOME WORKS! program model with fidelity to impact student's school engagement and academic performance.	As a result of home visit program participation, students show greater gains in school attendance and academic proficiency (reading and math proficiency) when compared to students in a matched school that did not participate in HOME WORKS!.

Exhibit 2
Selected Performance Metrics for HOME WORKS! (2014-2019)

Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Schools	27	22	14	27	23	30
ECC	3	2	7	2	3	3
Elementary	16	16	1	17	12	20
Middle	6	3	8	3	4	3
High School	2	1	3	5	4	4
Districts	8	10	2	9	9	9
Students	2,459	1,462	1,240	1,886	1,714	2,185
Visits	3,643	2,062	1,721	2,576	2,263	2,407
Teachers	340	277	184	595	507	
Total Revenues	$ 487,618	$ 558,052	$ 565,335	$ 755,132	$ 742,977	$ 941,093
Donations	$ 485,396	$ 556,900	$ 562,092	$ 750,132	$ 740,682	$ 921,959
Total Expenses	$ 414,680	$ 446,256	$ 478,264	$ 747,481	$ 815,188	$ 874,487
Admin Expense	$ 67,928	$ 115,606	$ 149,394	$ 127,703	$ 156,382	$ 191,402
Program Expense	$ 330,650	$ 334,127	$ 295,590	$ 487,713	$ 533,858	$ 564,376

Exhibit 3

Email to Engage Steering Committee for *Getting Connected*

June 2020

Hi All,

I've talked to all of you to share my idea of getting all the students at City Elementary connected to the internet somehow, some way. After all, being connected and knowing how to use iPads, Chromebooks, computers, and so on, is like having paper and pencil when many of us were in school. Absolutely essential!

You are the committee so far. I'm calling this the BHAG group - Big Hairy Audacious Goal - because that's what this is. It's estimated that up to 1/3 of the students in this country are "missing in action" - not connected, not doing distance learning and not using their brain muscles the way they must to be successful in school and in life.

The chair of this group will be a brilliant, retired businesswoman who is so darn good at leading and facilitating. She will send you a doodle to find the earlier time you can get together probably by Zoom.

What else is happening? Our local tech firm has agreed to write and pilot a course for the parents at City Elementary on how to use the district's devices with their children. They'll write two manuals - one for iPads, one for Chromebooks - that will be very parent-friendly.

Our local telecommunications company is working on hot spots and setting up the area for broadband. We'll have to find a source for devices as I want every student and every parent to have one, not one per household. The district is providing devices for students, but what about the adults helping them? Did we share paper and pencils when we grew up? Absolutely not. I want City Elementary kids to have what the kids in other districts have. Nothing less.

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time! So one school, one classroom at a time. Thank you, BHAG chair, for taking this on. Take it away!

- Karen Kalish
CEO & Founder

Exhibit 4

Action Plan for *Getting Connected*
Draft July 2020

Team Action Plan: Big Hairy Audacious Goal	**Date**: July 25, 2020
Description: To ensure that: all students at City Elementary have what they need to learn remotely; City Elementary teachers have what they need to lead distance learning; and City Elementary parents and families have what they need to support their child's education. **Population**: 100% free & reduced meals; 290 students enrolled as of last year; 30% mobile; neighborhood school; majority within walking distance, living in nearby subsidized housing	

Team Members
Global Business - Retired CEO (Chair of BHAG) Technology Firm - VP of Education Technology Firm - Teaching Fellow Digital Consulting Firm - Director of Operations Local Telecommunications Company - Regional Director HW! - Founder and CEO HW! - Board Chair HW! - Operations Manager HW! - Director of Program Operations City Elementary - Reading Specialist City Elementary - Principal District - Chief Technology Officer Philanthropic Foundation - Director of Strategic Initiatives Philanthropic Foundation - Executive Director Non-profit Consulting Group - Vice President of Operations Local Bank - Vice President Local University - Dean of College of Education Local Faith Network - Community Organizer
SMART Goals **(Smart, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Based)**
• Internet Connectivity (for families and the school) • Software/Platform Choices • Hardware Procurement and Management • Training (for families and teachers) • Data Tracking/Documenting

Deliverables

Action Item	Person responsible	Begin date	End date	Complete y/n	Notes
Phase 1					
Connectivity					
Software - Hardware					
Training					
Data Tracking - Documenting					

Exhibit 5

Email to Engage Volunteers for *Getting Connected*

To be adapted

Hi All!

I am looking for a special group of people who will volunteer to help the teachers, students, and families at [*school name*] for the weeks and months ahead.

[*Describe situation of the school and their needs, taking care not to stereotype families or students, e.g.*]

Sadly, the school epitomizes the digital divide. Try as the principal might, she can only find 50% of her students and families at this time. It took a first grade teacher, for example, three weeks to find all 23 of her students and, once she did, she learned that NONE were connecting to their Microsoft Teams classroom online.

Having devices and the internet is like having books, paper and pencil when I was growing up. That they don't have them is a disgrace.

All students at [*school name*] must have whatever they need to fully participate in virtual distance learning. **ALL students.** Whatever they need!

That means everyone will require, at the very least, a device (notebook, laptop, ipad), internet connection, headphones, tech support, teachers who know how to implement distance learning, and parents who understand computers and how to support their children in distance learning. That means that every parent and teacher will need instruction in technology and these devices, and that every teacher must be equipped to assist the parents.

We plan to go classroom by classroom, block by block, family by family, door to door to see what each student and parent needs and supply them with whatever that is. Some are wired and don't know it, and some will need hot spots until they get wired.

To date, the district has purchased 20,000 tablets for students along with 4,000 hotspots for student access. A local tech company is generously providing the training for parents and teachers.

Where do you come in and what will you be doing? Things like: calling families, making home visits with school staff when they can't find a student, providing tech support, helping with academics… and more we don't even know at this time. I do know that the principal **needs a support team right now**.

Interested? Let me know. Questions? Give me a call. [phone number here] We want to get started ASAP.

Thanks for considering this.

[Name, affiliation]

Exhibit 6

Position: PROJECT DIRECTOR for *Getting Connected*
Organization:
Location:

Overview of [Your Organization Here]
…..

Role Summary
City Elementary serves PreK-5th grade students in [district/city]. 100% of the students receive free or reduced-priced meals. All students at City Elementary must have whatever they need to fully participate in virtual distance learning, including, at the very least, a device (notebook, laptop, iPad), internet connection, headphones, tech support, teachers who know how to implement distance learning, and parents who understand computers and how to support their children in distance learning. Every step of *Getting Connected* will be documented resulting in a playbook and case study to be used by educators nationwide.

Our organization is hiring a self-motivated Project Builder with experience delegating to 10 or more volunteers and staff. The successful candidate will work with teachers and administrators, staff, volunteers, and a research team. The Project Builder will also coordinate with other organizations to ensure all aspects of the project are progressing according to the established timeline. We are looking for a creative and dedicated individual who will fit with our collaborative culture. If you enjoy working with other professionals who believe in creating innovative solutions to problems, we encourage you to apply.

Essential Duties

- Meet with team to understand critical activities and clarify specific requirements of each project
- Develop comprehensive project plans to be shared with CEO, project team, and other staff members
- Delegate project tasks based on team members' individual strengths, skill sets and experience levels
- Support and partner with the CEO on all activities associated with implementation of key deliverables
- Track project performance, specifically to analyze the successful completion of short- and long- term goals
- Track and report on progress
- Collaborate with researchers to capture the development and successful execution of the plan
- Meet budgetary objectives and adjust project constraints based on data analysis
- Administrative - other duties as assigned

Required Qualifications and Experience
The successful candidate will be a great writer, collaborative, curious, and flexible and enjoy a sense of humor. In addition, the successful candidate will have the following or the equivalent:

- Strong problem solving skills and an entrepreneurial mindset
- Bachelor’s degree

- At least two years of project management experience
- Advanced time management and analytical skills
- Excellent client-facing communication skills
- Excellent editing, written, and verbal communication skills
- Strong organizational skills with attention to detail
- Strong computer/technological skills including Microsoft Office and GSuite applications
- The ability to prioritize tasks and meet deadlines with minimal direct supervision
- The ability to work both independently and as part of a team
- The ability to handle sensitive information with a high degree of integrity and confidentiality
- Excellent emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, inclusivity, and acceptance of diversity of all dimensions
- A passion for the mission and vision of our organization!

Work Environment
[add details here]

Position Specifications

Status: Part-time
Hours: ~20 hours per week
Salary: Commensurate with experience

Application
To apply, please send thoughtful cover letter, resume and salary requirements to [email here]

Exhibit 7

Home Visit Protocol

1. Commitment Form

Main goal: find 100% of our families, determine each family's selection for the 2020-2021 first quarter, and record a confirmed, working phone number and email address.

Things to emphasize with our families:

- We are here in person because we could not communicate with you by phone
- We cannot communicate in person throughout the school year – we **must** have a working phone number and an email address for the guardian of **every** child in our school
- There will be many changes that take place throughout this school year, and we will communicate all of those through our website, Robocalls, Robotexts, and emails
- Right now, there are three options for the first quarter of the fall semester and parents must make a choice by today:
    - Option 1: Virtual instruction with a teacher from our school
        - Students will be at home 5 days a week
        - Students will be assigned to a teacher who will run an online classroom through Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and various apps
        - Every student will receive an iPad and, if needed, a hotspot
    - Option 2: Virtual instruction with Online Provider
        - Students will be at home 5 days a week
        - Students will follow the online instructional program at their own pace (this is entirely self-directed and self-paced)
        - Every student will receive an iPad and, if needed, a hotspot
    - Option 3: In-Person
        - Students will come to a building 5 days a week
        - **Please note:** This building might not be City Elementary. Our district has proposed the creation of Instruction Centers to provide students a place to go to if they are not able to stay home for virtual learning. There, staff members will support students while they are learning virtually.
        - Students will be assigned to a teacher who will run an online classroom through Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and various apps
        - Every student will receive an iPad and, if needed, a hotspot

Parents must choose one option by today at 5:00pm, otherwise they will be **automatically** enrolled in Option 1, Virtual

- No matter the option the parents choose, that will be their choice for the entire first quarter of the school year.

2. Questions to Ask Families

1. How are you doing? How are the kids doing?
2. Do you have everything you need right now?
3. Do you have an internet connection in your house/building/apartment?
4. Do you have a hotspot?
5. What is your new working phone number?
6. What is your email address?
7. Can we have the names and numbers of people who would know how/where to find you if we need you?
8. What did you struggle with the most from mid-March to the end of May when school officially ended?
9. What ideas do you have for our teachers and principal to improve online learning?

[i] As reported in “In St. Louis' Digital Divide, North City Suffers from Poor Internet Access,” by Ryan Krull, *Riverfront Times*, Feb. 11, 2019

[ii] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6922e1.htm

[iii] "Funding Gaps: An Analysis of School Funding Equity Across the U.S. And Within Each State," 2018 Report by the Education Trust

[iv] “St. Louis Students' Classes Go Online, Highlighting City's Problems,” by Ryan Krull, *Riverfront Times*, April 10, 2020

[v] https://www.teacherhomevisit.org/program/