



metis matters

FALL 2009

METIS ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER



Economic Empowerment Emerges As the New Anti-Poverty Approach

In 2008, the U.S. poverty rate reached an alarming 13.2 percent, an 11-year high that does not even take into account the huge job losses of the past year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. For children, the rate is even higher, at 19 percent. Throughout its history, Metis Associates has worked with public-education systems, community-based organizations, social-welfare agencies, and foundations whose programs largely target populations in poverty.

In recent years, the themes of directly improving family economic success and of preventing poverty have crystallized as important components of the programs that Metis is designing and evaluating.

Many of these efforts to alleviate poverty look substantially different from their counterparts of decades past, moving away from merely providing direct benefits and toward equipping low-income people with the tools they need to save money, gain financial literacy, and prepare for jobs that will be relevant in the coming years. Metis is measuring the impact of a broad range of programs designed to increase individual and family economic security. While some of them also provide direct benefits, their ultimate goal is economic empowerment, so that beneficiaries can continue to be successful on their own.

Building Assets for a Secure Future

Helping low-income people build assets and gain financial literacy is central to many of the projects that Metis is evaluating, with its

partner Westat, for the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). According to CEO, the proportion of the working poor in New York City has increased dramatically in recent years – from 38 percent of all families living in poverty in 1999 to 47 percent in 2007. The center was developed to address the growing impact of poverty on New York City’s families, young people, and working poor. While the projects that Metis is evaluating are pilot programs, each holds tremendous potential for learning and replication.

Among these projects is the innovative Office of Financial Empowerment, which helps New Yorkers manage their finances, links them to financial education classes and counselors, and provides them with information about how to get out of debt, open a bank account, and avoid being the victims of fraud. CEO notes that some 800,000 New Yorkers do not have bank accounts and rely on check-cashing services that charge high fees. In addition, many people are not aware that they are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit

Forty newly licensed practical nurses (LPNs) graduate from a joint program of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation and New York City Department of Education. Their training was funded by the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity Nurse Career Ladder Program.

2

Letter from the President

5

Client Spotlights

6

Arts in Education

8

New Metis Website

CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE

letter from the president



Dear Friends,
While many reports suggest that the current economic recession could be over by the end of the year, its impact on our most vulnerable citizens will surely continue for some time to come. For those living in poverty—including approximately 20 percent of our nation's children—the lasting impact of the recession promises to be especially profound.

As indices of child wellbeing continue their rapid decline to levels not seen in this country for more than 30 years, the imperative to respond with evidence-based practices designed to strengthen families has never been more essential. Metis, together with many of its clients, is proud to be working on the frontlines of the battle for the economic empowerment of our most impoverished or at-risk children and families. Our staff are evaluating programs to see what works (and what does not work); obtaining and using data to inform practice and policy; and supporting the development of innovative programs to bring people out of poverty or keep them from losing their financial stability.

Beyond providing tangible resources, many Metis clients have developed novel approaches, helping families to lift themselves through financial literacy, creating opportunities to save, and providing innovative gateways to employment. In this

issue of *Metis Matters* we feature a number of projects in our current portfolio that focus on family economic success, asset accumulation and economic empowerment. These include a number of evaluations for the Center for Economic Opportunity—New York City Mayor Bloomberg's sweeping anti-poverty agenda—and our work with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Earned Income Tax Credit campaign. They also include our evaluation of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative whose signature approach to savings is helping youth transitioning from foster care, of an apprenticeship program cosponsored by the New York City Economic Development Corporation and Small Business Services, and of the New York City Administration for Children's Services' Youth Financial Empowerment program. Together, these projects constitute a far-reaching body of work that should yield many significant lessons for the field.

As in previous issues of *Metis Matters*, we pay special tribute to a number of our clients and describe the role that Metis plays in helping them to succeed in their missions. Among those clients are five organizations that are demonstrating the complex and often under-appreciated value of arts in education. We also spotlight an additional four clients that are doing remarkable work around the country: the Bronx Institute, Newark Public Schools, Georgia's Juvenile Justice Fund, and the Arkansas Department of Education. While the work of these clients is not specifically dedicated to eradicating poverty, in most instances the children and families served by these clients are disproportionately poor.

As Metis enters its thirty-third year of service, we are motivated to work even harder by the added challenges brought on by the economic recession, and we remain convinced that our efforts can and will continue to make meaningful differences in the lives of the children and families served by our dedicated clients. I can think of no finer work, and no better moment to be doing this work—together with my colleagues and our partners.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stan Schneider". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "S".

Stan Schneider, President

Our mission is to support public and private organizations in achieving results for the children, adults, families, and communities they serve. All of our interactions with clients, as well as all of our products and services, are driven by this goal of empowering clients. We help clients to identify and build on their strengths and expand their capacity with our knowledge, skills, and technical expertise.

(EITC), and those who are aware of it often lose most of its value by paying tax-preparation services. Reaching out to the public through ads on the subway, the Web, and through 311 (New York City's information hotline), CEO helps New Yorkers attain and save financial resources.

Metis has brought all of its skills and technological abilities to bear on its work with CEO: information technology, research, evaluation, and technical assistance. To help CEO understand the impact of the initiative on the sponsoring agencies, Metis held a series of interviews with agency staff and other key stakeholders in the city. Initial findings showed that agencies had benefited in a variety of ways from their participation.

"In the discussion of how to fight poverty, CEO has engaged a broad audience and expanded the kinds of strategies that can be used, bringing together employment, community development, and tax policy to provide resources that can help people move out of poverty and improve their outcomes down the road," says Stan Schneider, Metis president.

Helping families emerge from poverty by building income and assets is also the goal of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which launched the Family Economic Success Initiative in 2002. A centerpiece of this Initiative, the National Tax Assistance for Working Families Campaign (described in the 2007 edition of *Metis Matters*), has helped more than 280,000 people all over the country to apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit through a network of tax assistance centers.

"During the 1970s and '80s, much anti-poverty work was focused on job training, and it was somewhat narrowly focused," says Robert Harrington, Metis managing senior associate. "People need more than just a job; they need financial literacy. The EITC programs not only help people receive money to which they are entitled. They also provide training on how to save and manage that money, provide free

tax preparation, and help with loans and other financial needs."

To help the Annie E. Casey Foundation measure not only how much money people were saving on taxes, but the program's reach and impact on communities, Metis developed an automated system that enables all of the local sites to send their data to Metis for aggregation and analysis. Metis also customizes software applications for the individual sites so that they can develop reports for themselves.

In 2008, 41 campaigns – including a dozen Casey-run campaigns and others operated by affiliates – worked with numerous tax-preparation sites around the country to prepare hundreds of thousands of tax returns. So far, they have yielded \$142 million in EITC payments and more than \$350 million in total refunds, with an average refund of \$2,500.

Ensuring Financial Success After Foster Care

Another Metis client, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, has begun to make a national impact on the economic prospects for young people exiting foster care. These young people have historically had poor rates of high school graduation, difficulty achieving financial stability, and higher rates of homelessness. The Initiative (also discussed in the 2007 edition of *Metis Matters*) is partnering with 10 demonstration sites nationwide to help young people transitioning from foster care to become successful adults by helping reform the systems that support them. It has aided some 3,000 youth directly and many more through policy change.

The Jim Casey initiative spearheaded the idea of helping young people exiting foster care to build assets as one way to help secure their wellbeing. One of its most focused strategies involves training participants in financial literacy and providing them with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) – savings accounts that are matched by funds from the participating communities.



The Youth Financial Empowerment Program matches young people who are transitioning from foster care with mentors from the business world. Participants stand with Matilda Cuomo, founder and chair of YFE's partner Mentoring USA.

Young people may use their matched savings to purchase education, housing, or a car, or to launch a small business.

According to Fran Schorr, Metis managing senior associate, "The movement toward IDAs is relatively new and contrasts with anti-poverty programs of the past that may have been more welfare-oriented. To some extent, it is about empowering people to lift themselves up out of poverty, rather than lifting them."

From the Initiative's beginning, Metis has provided strategic planning, evaluation of implementation and outcomes, and development of data-collection systems that support both evaluation and self-evaluation. Among the many findings of the evaluation, Metis reports show that young people have saved millions of dollars across the 10 sites.

Moreover, in part using Metis's documentation of the Initiative, Jim Casey

has successfully advocated for a number of policy improvements that impact the overall financial health of young people exiting foster care, including an increase in the age of Medicaid eligibility for those formerly in foster care to 21 in six states, tuition waivers and expanded supports for 18 to 21 year olds in several states, and permanency efforts imbedded in legislation and policy in five states.

The New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Office of Youth Development, which also assists youth aging out of foster care, looked to the Jim Casey initiative for guidance to develop

and refine YFE's data-collection tools, developed the YFE Participant Survey to capture longitudinal information on youth outcomes, and developed an evaluation plan for the next phase of work. About 60 YFE participants, ages 16 to 21, started opening IDA accounts in October 2008.

Training Workers for Jobs of the Future

Job training has long been a focus of efforts to improve financial prospects for low-income people. In today's tight job market, it is especially important for workers to have skills that can be utilized in years to come. Several of the New York City CEO programs that Metis has reviewed, in collaboration with Westat, are job-related. They include the Million TreesNYC Training Program, which has hired many disadvantaged youth to learn aspects of horticulture; the Young Adult Internship Program, which has engaged community-based organizations around the city in giving young people opportunities to gain work experience; and the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program.

The LPN program is oriented toward helping low-income New Yorkers enter a career that commands a \$40,000 starting salary and is an excellent stepping stone toward financial security and further career success. The one-year program prepares workers to take a certification exam and then provides graduates with guaranteed jobs with the city. Now in its second year, it serves 40 students each year, including 10 participants who are recruited from lower-level jobs with the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. Metis and Westat's program review found a high degree of satisfaction and a high rate of retention among participants.

"Metis has been a great asset to New York City's anti-poverty efforts," says Kristin Morse, director of evaluation for New York City CEO. "A hallmark of our work is measuring performance and assessing what works. Metis staff have been thoughtful

and professional partners in this effort."

Like nursing, construction is an area that has provided an entry point to the middle class for generations of New Yorkers. However, historically, minority workers have had difficulty breaking into the building trades. Several years ago, anticipating a construction boom, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and New York City Small Business Services – brought together by the Mayor's Commission on Construction Opportunity – contracted with Metis to conduct a longitudinal survey of the apprentices in the building trades in NYC.

One major goal of the Mayoral Commission on Construction Opportunity is to increase the representation of minorities and women in the construction industry, where they can attain well-paying, permanent jobs. The longitudinal study, involving five cohorts of union apprentices in New York City, measures the rate of apprenticeship participation of women and minorities from 2006 forward.

Metis's survey of 911 of the 2,100 apprentices who enrolled in 2006 found that the financial status of the group appeared to have become slightly stronger and more stable. Respondents reported increases in earnings and health care coverage and also a slight increase in their ability to pay their mortgages and other debt. Efforts to attract diverse apprentices were also successful: 24 percent of the participants were black, and 22 percent were Hispanic. Moreover, almost one-third of the apprentices had come into the program from several city-run preparation programs that target veterans returning from war, women, and disadvantaged youth.

Evaluating a sizable portfolio of projects that address economic self-sufficiency and success has allowed Metis Associates a broad view of the issues and needs in the community and substantial exposure to some of the best and most promising strategies being used to address them. ■



Participants in the 2008-2009 Million TreesNYC Training Program planted trees in Father Macris Park in Staten Island.

the IDA component of its Youth Financial Empowerment (YFE) program. YFE and the Jim Casey initiative are seeking many of the same long-term outcomes for their participants, such as increased graduation rates, education or training beyond high school, increased employment, and permanency. YFE also provides these young people with financial literacy training and helps them open IDAs, which they may use to purchase assets that will help to ensure their future stability.

Since 2008, Metis has helped review

Arkansas Department of Education

In 2004, Metis Associates helped the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) to secure a highly competitive \$3.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. As was reported in *Metis Matters* in 2007, the state used that grant to develop a state-wide longitudinal data system (SLDS), which has brought together nearly all of the state's K-12 educational data in a common environment to help educators improve educational outcomes for students. In 2008, Metis again collaborated with the ADE on its successful application for an additional three-year federal grant to enhance the data system.

"A teacher in rural Arkansas can now compare her students' interim assessments with state test scores; a principal can look at aggregate records very easily; and the state commissioner and senior staff members have access to all of the state's data," says Alan Simon, Metis senior vice president and senior advisor to the ADE SLDS. "Teachers are using these data to understand students' progress and to customize instruction."

The latest grant, in the amount of \$4,967,991, will enable Arkansas to extend its data collection for students from kindergarten through college graduation and into the workforce years. By revealing how well prepared high school graduates are for college, this expansion will help guide improvements in K-12 education. Metis is

Arkansas educators review data from participating schools, using the state's longitudinal data system.



continuing to assist with system implementation, IT support, data-quality assurance, and evaluation services.

"Besides helping us write the grants that provided the bulk of funding for our initiatives, Metis was instrumental in helping us bring the system online in a very short time," says Neal Gibson, director of academic research for the SLDS. "Now, we don't just have to stick with perceptions. The SLDS has had a positive impact on student achievement in schools that used it more heavily, compared to achievement in schools that used the system less."

The Bronx Institute

Led by Professor Herminio Martinez, The Bronx Institute offers a variety of high-quality programs that enhance the educational opportunities of Bronx students from kindergarten through age 20. It also provides a forum for finding solutions to social, political, cultural, and economic challenges facing The Bronx and other urban areas. In 2005, The Bronx Institute, based at Lehman College, reached out to Metis Associates to evaluate some of its programs, including teacher professional development and the Engaging Latino Communities in Education (ENLACE) – a program that helps prepare high-performing Latino students for college. Most recently, Metis has been evaluating three GEAR UP projects (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) for The Bronx Institute, all funded through competitive grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

The GEAR UP projects serve more than 8,000 middle- and high-school students in 36 Bronx schools. Each project follows a cohort of Latino and African-American students from sixth to twelfth grade, providing students and their parents with resources and enrichment activities to prepare for success in college.

GEAR UP activities take place during and outside of the school day, in settings ranging from schools and college campuses to



Through a collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx Institute GEAR UP students are introduced to environmental and wildlife sciences.

the Bronx Zoo and The New York Botanical Garden. Through GEAR UP, The Bronx Institute has provided more than 6,500 laptop computers to students to help them with their schoolwork. GEAR UP also provides resources to schools that are short-staffed in areas such as science enrichment and college counseling.

The evaluations have revealed significant success for GEAR UP students; for example, their passing rates on the English and U.S. History Regents exams at the end of ninth grade exceeded those of students who attended other schools in the Bronx. In addition, the more students participate in GEAR UP programs, the greater their gains.

Bruce Irushalmi, associate director of The Bronx Institute, says, "The Web-enabled databases that Metis created have been indispensable. They allow us to record program participation and get reports in real time so that we can monitor program implementation, improve our programs, and develop additional programming for Bronx students in need."

Juvenile Justice Fund

According to Georgia's Juvenile Justice Fund (JJF), more than 250 adolescent girls are sexually exploited in Georgia each month on the streets, through escort services and online solicitation. The JJF created the campaign "A Future... Not a Past" (AFNAP) with a grant from the Atlanta Women's Foundation to protect girls and make it much more difficult for child exploiters to coerce them into prostitution.

The campaign learned of Metis Associates' work through another Metis client, the Atlanta Fulton Family Connection, which is also concerned about exploited teenagers. In February 2008, the campaign asked Metis to help design and carry out a community-needs-assessment telephone survey assessing Georgia residents' knowledge,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7





DreamYard is working with a community of 15 Bronx schools to ensure high-quality arts education for each child.

THE ARTS have long vied for attention in public schools, amid budget concerns and pressure to boost achievement in “the three R’s.” Now, research has begun to show that the arts – and their integration into traditional subjects – can have a very positive effect on students’ achievement in core academic areas as well as on their critical thinking skills. Through its involvement with five arts-in-education programs, Metis is contributing to a national knowledge base on the impact of arts education – a body of research that is critical to sustaining funding and support for the arts.

Making the Case for Arts in Education

The organization **Studio in a School** (STUDIO), together with the New York City Department of Education, approached Metis for help in developing a federal grant proposal to support a rigorous evaluation of its model of integrating the arts into elementary English language arts (ELA) and math curricula. STUDIO fosters students’ creative and intellectual development through visual arts programs in schools.

With a four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) program, STUDIO has developed units of study that feature built-in rubrics to assess students’ skills in visual art, math, and ELA. STUDIO is now working with school administrators and classroom

teachers to use them most effectively.

Metis created a study in which six New York City public schools were randomly assigned to receive the STUDIO intervention or to serve as control schools. Beginning in fall 2009, all third-grade STUDIO students will participate in two arts-integrated ELA units and two arts-integrated math units during the school year. Students will continue to be exposed to an integrated curriculum through grades four and five.

Metis will conduct surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations, and analyze test data and teacher-completed rubrics, to assess the project’s impact on students’ arts skills, achievement in math and ELA, and development of a set of “studio habits of mind,” such as reflecting on one’s work and being observant.

Metis was also instrumental in enabling the New York City-based arts organization **Global Writes** to secure an AEMDD grant and is conducting a rigorous evaluation of the organization’s program **Honoring Student Voices**. Launched in 2006, **Honoring Student Voices** draws on the popularity of poetry slam competitions and on students’ interest in hip-hop culture and video technology to hone students’ writing skills and academic work in general.

Metis had evaluated the program’s precursor – **Poetry Express** – and found it to have had a statistically significant impact on students’ attendance, intention to go to college, and ELA state test scores. “The data that Metis collected helped us prove our worth to the U.S. DOE, which paved the way for us to receive nearly \$1 million over four years to conduct **Honoring Student Voices**,” says John Ellrodt, who founded **Global Writes** with Maria Fico, a former New York City school district technology director.

Teaching poets and language arts teachers are infusing poetry writing and performance into the curriculum for students in three Bronx and three Chicago middle schools in grades six through eight. Poetry competitions are shared among schools through videoconferencing.

Metis’s first-year evaluation of **Honoring Student Voices** identified success in state ELA test scores for the New York City schools in the program versus control schools. Participating students in both cities saw significant gains in writing skills. Eden Nagler, Metis research associate, saw the program’s impact firsthand at a poetry slam at the Bronx’s P.S. 315. “Students cheered wildly for each other, and those who were nervous at first exploded on the stage,” she says.

Building the Capacity of Arts Programming

Two of Metis’s clients are working toward building the arts capacity of large public school systems. **DreamYard**, an arts-in-education provider serving Bronx schools, came to Metis for help in evaluating its Bronx Arts Learning Community (BALC) initiative and building the self-evaluation capacity of participating schools. The organization partnered with Metis to craft a proposal to the Ford Foundation, which resulted in a multiyear grant. BALC’s 15 schools are working collectively to provide high-quality arts education for every student in grades K-12.

Metis has worked with **DreamYard** and BALC schools to measure the impact of arts programming – and changes in that programming – on school culture, teacher practice, and student success. Maps that Metis created are helping school administrators see how much arts programming each class and each child are receiving, and where gaps exist. Considerable progress has been made at reducing these gaps, and most participating BALC schools have established arts leadership teams, which are working with school staff to more fully integrate art into the classroom and to institute more school-wide programming.

“Working with Metis has been very valuable for **DreamYard**,” says Tim Lord, co-director. “The rigor and structure they bring to the process has been crucial to us and to our schools, teachers, and students.”

Like **DreamYard**, the **Little Rock School District** is seeking to fill system-wide gaps in arts education. Metis has served as the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

client spotlights

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

awareness, and perceptions of under-age prostitution. The study aimed to establish baseline measures of the community's awareness of such exploitation to develop the content of the statewide campaign, to target the audience, and later to assess the campaign's success.

Metis drafted a questionnaire, which, it was agreed, would focus on seven metropolitan areas across Georgia. Then, Metis helped identify the sample population, oversaw the telephone polling company, and analyzed and reported the data.

The answers to the survey painted a detailed picture of knowledge and awareness of under-age prostitution according to various demographic groupings, such as age, income, race, and education. One notable finding, for example, was that respondents tended to misperceive the extent of under-age prostitution in their own areas, thinking that it was a larger problem in jurisdictions other than their own. In addition to using survey results to help shape the campaign, AFNAP is also using them to advocate for legislation and funding to prevent commercial and sexual exploitation of children.

Newark Public Schools

Newark, New Jersey, is in the midst of a renaissance; yet, it still bears the scars of poverty and urban blight. The population is highly transient, multigenerational family mobility and poverty are common, and low literacy levels are the norm. These realities manifest themselves in a sense of hopelessness, which leads many public school students to engage in antisocial behavior, including truancy, violence, substance abuse, gang membership, and criminal activity.

The Newark Public Schools Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative was developed to promote emotional well being and to keep Newark youth engaged in school. This federally funded, \$7.7 million initiative incorporates numerous violence- and substance-abuse prevention strategies, serving 15,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade in 21 high-need schools and six alternative-education programs. It is led by a community-wide coalition representing the school system, mental health providers, faith-based organizations, and law-enforcement agencies.

Metis assisted Newark Public Schools in preparing the federal grant application and served as evaluator for this initiative during the 2005 to 2009 grant cycle. To conduct the evaluation, Metis used tools including student, staff, and coalition-partner surveys; school attendance and incident records; and mental-health service records. The evaluation found that the initiative had contributed to a 35 percent reduction in violence, vandalism, and weapons-related incidents in the participating schools; a substantial reduction in the waiting time for mental health appointments; and an increase in the percentage of students who followed up on mental health referrals by attending appointments (from 45 percent to 80 percent).

Metis also worked with school-based staff for several months to design a Web-based application to replace the manual reporting process for documentation undertaken in the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. The new application is being used to document and assess violence and substance-abuse prevention and intervention activities being implemented in the schools. ■

arts in education

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

district's outside evaluator for two U.S. Department of Education grants, from the Professional Development for Arts Educators and Professional Development for Music Educators programs. Through these grants, Little Rock has provided extra training and resources for music and art teachers and increased opportunities for teachers to learn from one another.

Counting on the Arts: Keeping the Arts on Track

Through its work with DreamYard and other arts providers, Metis was contacted by the New York City Office of Arts and

Special Projects within the Department of Education for assistance with its Annual Arts Education Survey. The survey assesses schools' compliance and need for support with respect to the New York State Instructional Requirements for the Arts—an outline of the arts educational experiences that public schools are expected to provide for students in each grade. Metis provided assistance with data analysis and helped create an aggregate report, which the Office of Arts and Special Projects will release in fall 2009.

"Taken together, the five programs described here constitute a diverse set of



Federal grants have enabled the Little Rock School District to provide extra training and resources for music and visual arts teachers.

initiatives that, with support from Metis, are contributing mightily to the growing knowledge base that attests to the importance of the arts in education," says Stan Schneider, Metis president. ■



metis matters

METIS ASSOCIATES

90 Broad Street
Suite 1200
New York, NY 10004

**New York City
Headquarters**
90 Broad Street
Suite 1200
New York, NY 10004
212-425-8833

**Atlanta
Satellite Office**
235 Peachtree Street
Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-739-0048

**Philadelphia
Satellite Office**
1528 Walnut Street
Suite 1506
Philadelphia, PA 19102
267-514-2994

www.metisassociates.com



metisassociates.com has a new look!

Please visit our newly redesigned Web site to read about our program areas and services, our client portfolio, profiles of current projects, and news and publications from the firm.