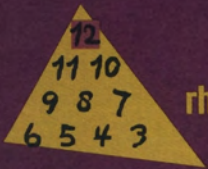
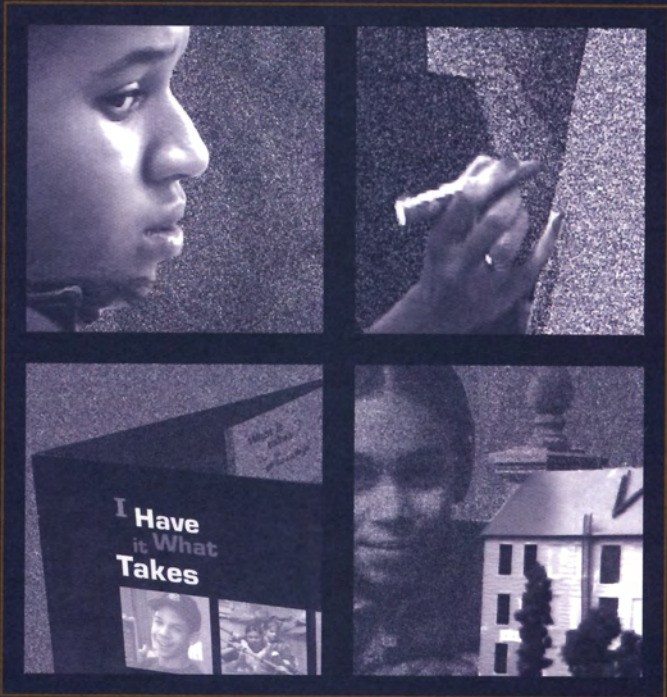


Answering the Question



rhode island children's crusade

2002



A Tale of Two Crusades

This annual report is different from others the Rhode Island Children's Crusade has produced. Instead of reviewing issues and events of a single year, this report provides a summary of the Crusade, seen through the eyes of professional evaluators at the Heller School of Brandeis University. Their study, generously funded by the Nellie Mae Foundation and the Rhode Island Foundation, chronicles the development of the Crusade — and measures its progress. With this report, we share the findings of the evaluation — both in a reprint of the Executive Summary and in various excerpted passages from the study (printed in bronze type).

Executive Director Mary Harrison has often remarked that the Children's Crusade is a very difficult organization to describe. No one is better qualified to make that observation. Struggling to define RICC as it has evolved, Mary Harrison has had to "build the airplane while flying it." The Heller School study underscores both the difficulties and successes of such an effort.

Since evaluation is about dialogue, we have called on Mary to provide her personal remarks and commentary (printed in blue type). We feel certain that her insights will help you better understand the importance of the evaluation and its significance as a tool to guide the Crusade as it enters a new era in its history. We begin the dialogue with a quote from the Brandeis report:

This is the story of two very different Rhode Island Children's Crusades. The first began in 1989 with an inspiring vision to make college a reality for thousands more children in Rhode Island, important support from the governor and legislature, and an ambitious plan to raise money from the private sector and attract thousands of volunteer mentors. The second Crusade began in 1995 when a new leadership team refined the framework to concentrate on fewer children, but with more services. That is the Crusade that Rhode Island residents know today.

... this evaluation concentrates on describing and distinguishing the course of these two very different Crusades, with particular attention to how the 7th grade class of the evaluation year 2001 (the first cohort of the refocused Crusade) is responding to the Crusade's efforts. We report on the experiences of the first and fourth cohorts (the 12th and 9th graders in this study) and describe ways in which they have been affected by the Crusade. But it is the 7th grade that shows us whether the Crusade holds promise in the long run as a college-access strategy for Rhode Island; whether the new strategy — with its myriad adaptations to individual lives and needs — appears to be developing in a positive way.

{Brandeis — pages 1, 4}



In 2000 the Crusade updated its identity to better reflect its mission and the diversity of the children the organization serves.

Dialogue with the President



Mary Sylvia Harrison

The mission of the Children's Crusade is to improve the education and career prospects for children in Rhode Island's low-income communities. The Crusade is a college pathway program providing early academic and social support, sustained over a ten-year period. It also provides scholarship funds as incentive for student success.

What distinguishes the Crusade from all other college pathway programs is its combination of both early and sustained intervention. It is common among college pathway programs to intervene with high school students. It is increasingly common to intervene with the students while they are in middle school. But it is rare for a college pathways program to intervene with elementary school children — let alone commit to stay in their lives for ten years.

When the Crusade was formed, some markers for successful pre-college intervention at the high school level already existed. For example, we knew that students needed to take algebra and a foreign language by ninth grade. But very few markers existed then — and few exist even now — telling us what constitutes successful college preparation in grades three through eight.

Doing the evaluation was an opportunity for experts in fields that are related to our work to reflect on the model the Crusade has developed to carry out its unprecedented charge. Does the model make sense? Does it have promise? Have the program refinements of the past several years taken us in the right direction?

In planning for the evaluation, I thought it would be a good idea to bring together a group of experts in fields of youth development, college access, educational enrichment and school-to-work programs. I wanted them to study the Crusade and determine the scope of the evaluation and what questions should be asked. Organizations are often accused of limiting the scope of evaluation so the report will tell the story they want people to hear. We entered into this process with a commitment to learn the truth — however difficult this might prove to be.

Members of the Board and staff at the Nellie Mae Foundation were enthusiastic about the idea of convening a national panel. They saw this approach as an excellent way to support the Crusade's efforts to continuously improve its programs while, at the same time, ensuring that the study would inform the college pathways field as a whole. The evaluation team at Brandeis University also liked the approach and retained members of the panel to advise them at key points in the study.

READY



Providence is READY (Raising Expectations and Discovering our Youth) to recreate high schools and to become accountable for students' learning. As the core partner of the Providence School Department in the READY project, the Children's Crusade is responsible for engaging and involving the community in large-scale reform of Providence high schools.

In Context



I knew that simply looking at questions related to the impact we have on students would tell only part of the Crusade story.

... complex, multi-sector education initiatives of this kind, embedded as they are in historical, social, economic, and political environments, must be understood in those contexts and as a product of those contexts before being investigated quantitatively. In short, the context is a necessary dataset from which to derive other questions about outcomes.

... because of the internal complexities and politics of school systems, the most difficult academic enhancement programs to make work are those sponsored from outside the schools, yet administered in and with the schools.

... Despite such daunting challenges, the Crusade has begun to make itself known and respected in the schools context. Two accomplishments, in particular, are worth noting. First... Commissioner Peter McWalters credits the Crusade with making important connections to the school reform process. "Each of us would be weaker without the other," he told evaluators. Second, the Crusade recently agreed to serve as the community partner in an ambitious new initiative to reform Providence high schools. This puts the Crusade directly in the mix of school reform and strongly suggests that its approach has been recognized as a key component of system change. {Brandeis — pages 4, 23}

Mary Sylvia Harrison:

I did play a role that impacted the content of the evaluation in this respect — I was a very strong advocate for studying the context in which a complex Crusade like ours had taken shape. I knew that looking at questions related to the impact we have on students would tell only part of the Crusade story. The context or backdrop against which we operated had to be considered in an evaluation as well.

The schools, for example, are a critical contextual factor. In my seven years as Executive Director, I have been very mindful that the state of Rhode Island has been slowly but fiercely addressing matters of school reform. The Crusade has had the luxury of being on the outside of this process while trying to influence it in a positive way. Still, we work in schools that are feeling a great deal of legitimate pressure to act, think, and perform in new ways — and to publicly disclose the extent to which their efforts are helping students succeed. Developing solid working relationships with school leaders under these conditions was one of the most difficult obstacles we needed to overcome in our first decade of operation.

A Solid Foundation

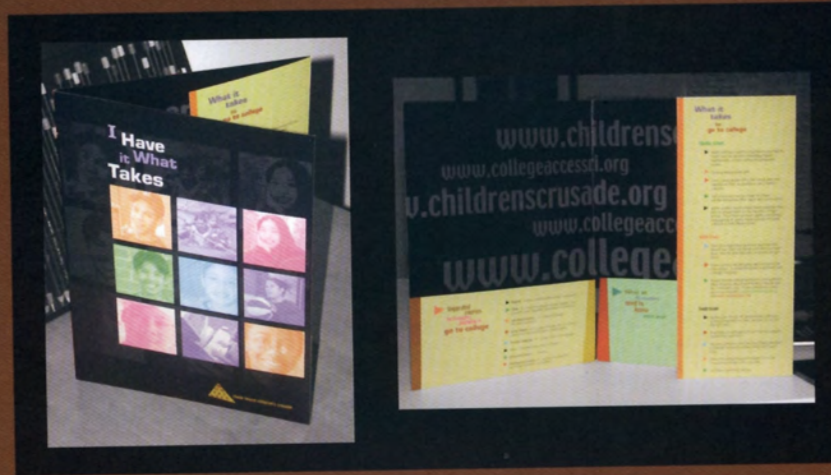
"Getting it right" has meant developing and amending the content and the administration of programs in response to the ageing of the first cohort, lessons, advice, resource opportunities, and evaluation. It has meant developing crucial collaborative relationships with other service agencies and with schools. It has meant meeting challenges from the state about its independence and lines of accountability. And it has undertaken a nearly continuous self-assessment process to ensure that each component — from program to staffing to information systems — added value to the whole.

...the revitalized Crusade of the last 6 years also drew upon modern understandings of child and youth development, in particular the idea that youth competencies, or assets, can be nurtured over the elementary and high school years.

...Not necessarily linked specifically with raising college attendance, these developmental assets have been linked with other forms of youth "success" such as having stable relationships, being an active member of a community, avoiding high risk activities such as drug use and unprotected sex, and finishing high school. Thus they clearly support children in adhering to the Crusader pledge, and they broaden the potential impact of the Crusade. The social and emotional competencies reinforced by the Crusade approach should help Crusaders be active and contributing members of any community, whether it be a college, a family, a workplace, or a neighborhood. {Brandeis — page 34}

Mary Sylvia Harrison:

Over the Crusade's first decade, we spent a great deal of time testing the practicalities of conducting a Crusade for increased higher education enrollment in Rhode Island. We were staring at a blank chalkboard. Our charge was to develop and implement a model. We said that we had a model when we were created, and a lot of people believed that. The truth of the matter is, that it has taken ten years to explore, discover, create, experiment and refine our model to establish the right program mix. I think the underpinnings of the model are solidly in place now (see chart on page 24). The evaluation is filled with references to how well we aligned ourselves with existing research — and how committed we are to reflection and continuous improvement. I think we have set the gold standard for our peers in these regards. I think we have earned a very, very high score for both of these efforts.



The Crusade has developed new ways to provide students with important information on a timely basis. It now uses cable television commercials, web sites, post cards, folders, book covers and posters to get the message out to students about the steps they need to take to stay on the pathway to higher education.

High Marks at School



In the elementary schools, the praise for every aspect of the Crusade was overwhelming: reactions spanned a very small range from mildly to wildly enthusiastic. The Crusade was credited with helping the schools expand their after-school programming, coordinate after-school with regular programming, enhance classroom curricula, and improving school-home connections.

In the middle schools, although most schools reported having a number of non-Crusade programs available to (and popular with) their students, respondents stated that they believed Crusaders were likely to achieve more than other students because "they have more advocates working on their behalf." Many also noted that Crusaders are more likely to seek help if they need it. Middle schools also credited the Crusade with helping them develop new after-school programming....

... school heads embrace the presence of the Crusade, even in high schools where principals are assumed to be overwhelmed by the challenges of reform and new standards, and therefore less aware of programs like the Crusade or less willing to invest energy in making them work. Survey respondents said that, although they can't predict how effective the program will be, they believe Crusaders are more likely to achieve because of the Crusade's consistent, long-term commitment to the students enrolled. {Brandeis — page 25}

Mary Sylvia Harrison:

I think that most people in the schools would say that we are valuable because we advocate for and support children over a long period of time. The Crusaders know it, and the schools that receive them know it. Principals and teachers have a more positive attitude toward a student when they know that student has a serious advocate — whether it's his parents or somebody else.

In this respect, the Crusade provides a brand name for a student. *Our reputation precedes the Crusader into his or her school.* It raises the expectations of both the student and the teacher, because they know someone is watching over their shoulders. Our presence encourages educators to invest extra energy in a Crusader, because they know that the extra time with the student is likely to be well spent. They know that someone else — the Crusade — stands behind that student.



As part of the curriculum, elementary school Crusaders at Fortes School in Providence learn about the history and culture of their school and community. Housed in a former mill, the school building has inspired the students to construct a model railroad, like the one that serviced the site when it was a working factory.



During the summer of 2001, middle school Crusaders took part in Adventure Education sessions. One of our most popular offerings, the program combines team building, conflict resolution and leadership training, helping Crusaders to set realistic goals and make healthy life choices.

A Captive Audience



The evaluation tells us, essentially, that we have a captive audience in the younger Crusaders.

From the surveys fielded for this evaluation, along with the analysis of the random sample of Crusaders from the MIS, we know a number of important things about the kinds of improvements the Crusade reforms of the mid-90s wrought. The evidence suggests that the lead cohort of the “new” Crusade is strong, and that it is more emphatic than earlier cohorts about the positive influence of the Crusade. We also know that capping enrollment in order to be able to dramatically increase participation hours appears to have worked, and that those increased hours result in a more profound sense of the Crusade’s contribution among Crusaders.

... these findings indicate that the reforms are beginning to affect students in positive ways, that the students acknowledge the Crusade’s benefits, and that schools both see and anticipate positive interim and eventual outcomes for Crusaders. Therefore, we can conclude that the reforms of the mid-90s were well-considered, and have moved the Crusade in a positive direction. {Brandeis — page 47-48}

Mary Sylvia Harrison:

In the early days, our resources allowed us to serve only 18% of the 3,000 Crusaders we enrolled each year. We knew that we could never be successful with the program if this pattern continued. In 1996, we began limiting new classes to 500 students a year. The change had a dramatic effect. We are now serving 70% of Crusaders in the smaller cohorts (including 91% of those for whom we have a current address).

The Brandeis report shows that the 7th grade cohort (the first limited-enrollment class) received 3 1/2 times as many hours of service each year as their counterparts in the larger cohorts. Furthermore, 7th graders reported overwhelmingly that these programs had a positive influence on their likelihood of going to college and on the development of life skills such as teamwork, time management and decision-making. For each survey question, the responses of 7th graders were significantly more positive than those of Crusaders surveyed in grades 9 and 12.

The evaluation tells us, essentially, that we have a captive audience in the younger Crusaders. This is very encouraging and gives us a strong base to work with as we develop program and evaluation strategies for the future.

Data Driven



...management information systems that support program feedback or evaluation are usually an underfunded mandate in non-profit service institutions. The predictable result is a non-profit world not well equipped to collect the kind of data that would be of most use to evaluators and program personnel.

The Crusade has not been immune to these sorts of problems, but it has distinguished itself through regularly seeking assessments of both its programs and its data collection capabilities.

...Indeed, the Crusade recently embarked on a substantive redesign of their management information system to make it more useful for both Crusader tracking and assessment and for program and outcome accountability. In a world beset by bad data and program inertia, the Crusade meets the gold standard of organizations embracing data and evaluation so that they may know themselves and do their jobs better.

{Brandeis — page 19}

Mary Sylvia Harrison:

The Crusade MIS system was initially designed to maintain records on a relatively simple mentoring program. Much has changed since those days. Our program design has grown increasingly complex while the number of student files in the system has increased to over 20,000. Also, many Crusaders change schools and/or residences frequently — something we had not anticipated.

Keeping up with these changes was a very challenging task. We were not able to provide our MIS department with the level of staffing and technology it truly needed to do its job.

I was aware of deficiencies in our MIS systems early on — and this evaluation has heightened my awareness of the problems. For much of my tenure at the Crusade, however, providing adequate MIS funding would have required sacrifices at the program level that I could not support. As our funding has increased over the past two years, we have begun to put significant resources into MIS. The evaluation shows that we are on the right track, but there is still more to be done to improve our tracking system and enhance our capacity for ongoing self-evaluation.

EVERY CHILD HOLDS THE ANSWER

Evaluation Report Executive Summary

Rhode Island Children's Crusade
January 2002

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Brandeis University
Waltham, MA

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We have printed the executive summary of the evaluation as part of this report. To view the entire document go to the Crusade's website (www.childrenscrusade.org) or contact us at 401.854.5506 ext.102

This is the story of two very different Rhode Island Children's Crusades. The first began in 1989 with an inspiring vision to make college a reality for thousands more children in Rhode Island, important support from the governor and legislature, and an ambitious plan to raise money from the private sector and attract thousands of volunteer mentors. The second Crusade began in 1995 when a new leadership team refined the framework to concentrate on fewer children, but with more services. That is the Crusade that Rhode Island residents know today. This evaluation covers the life of both Crusades, but it is the second Crusade whose future and legacy are of ongoing programmatic interest and concern.

The Crusade was founded on two sound ideas: first, that access to higher education (and subsequent employment) is a problem for most poor children, and second, that only a dramatic public commitment to those children's educational future can help change their trajectory.

In 1989, on the strength of that foundation, the Governor of Rhode Island supported a request from the Commissioner of Higher Education to make a public commitment to the goal of making college a realistic option for Rhode Island's academically vulnerable children. The Governor announced a promise to all participating third graders in Rhode Island: In return for working hard, staying in school, and avoiding the typical pitfalls of urban disadvantage (e.g., drugs, early parenthood, and delinquency), income-eligible students who were accepted to college, trade school, or other professional training post high-school would receive a scholarship, up to the cost of tuition at the University of Rhode Island. And, during these students' school careers, they would know that someone was paying attention and cared about how they did, through regular newsletters, after-school clubs for participating students, and a huge effort to provide each student at least one caring adult who could serve as mentor, tutor, and friend.

The literature on college access strongly supports the idea that key adults in a student's life can help ensure that a student achieves academically. It also supports the notion that orientation toward college needs to start early so that students can plan an academic path that prepares them for college. Indeed, even though there is still a dearth of rigorous evaluation of college access programs, leading research suggests a number of very promising program components for initiatives working with the same sorts of populations as the Crusade, among them:

- Intervene early (at or before 7th grade);
- Provide a connection (mentoring) with a caring adult;
- Steer students into college prep courses such as geometry and foreign language;
- Help with test preparation (e.g., SAT) and understanding of college options and settings; and
- Provide tuition assistance in the form of help finding out about and applying for scholarships, or providing scholarships directly.

Early intervention, to the extent that it is linked more with prevention than it is with "fixing" existing problems, is also positively associated with other desirable youth outcomes such as high school completion and grade-level academic competencies that make post-secondary school success more likely. A scan of well-regarded interventions with socially and economically vulnerable youth suggests that helping these children progress safely to a healthy, productive, socially engaged, and independent adulthood requires some basic elements, including:

- The presence of a caring adult;
- Clear expectations and responsibilities for youth;
- Opportunities for success;

- Engagement with others in the community (particularly adults); and
- Meaningful participation in developmentally appropriate activities.

The Crusade had most of those ideas in hand when it began, but a crucial contribution of the reforms leading to the second Crusade was the idea that current research in youth development should guide the programmatic component of the Crusade. Thus, as the Crusade evolved mid-decade, it shifted from the "mentoring" model to a more progressive program model founded on an understanding of the different needs and abilities of youth at different ages and stages of development.

The Rhode Island General Assembly allocated \$1.5 million beginning in 1990 to start the effort and establish a scholarship fund. In 1991, approximately 2,800 third graders and their parents signed up for the Crusade's first year. After that, annual enrollment numbered over 3,300 until the 1995-96 school year.

The notion that this sort of effort would be state-supported, in particular by the Board of Governors for Higher Education, challenged the *status quo* in several ways. First, the elementary and secondary school careers of students had not at that point been the typical purview of state higher education authorities¹. Second, most states focus on school reform and system accountability for large-scale changes in student performance. The Crusade challenged the state to make a commitment to the students themselves, independent of anything changing in their schools. Third, college access programs have mostly focused on improving guidance, coursework selection, and some combination of mentoring and tutoring to inspire, prepare, and move students to college. The decision to top that off with a promised scholarship took the state's investment and expectation to a different, and largely untested, level.

The private sector was a critical holdout in the early days. Private contributions, needed to seed the scholarship fund, didn't materialize. And the economics of providing these scholarships proved to be the Achilles heel of the initial Crusade design. In the mid-1990s, the Auditor General of Rhode Island declared that the Crusade had insufficient funds to guarantee coverage of the scholarship promise. The same report also stated that the size of the Crusade's programmatic commitment was impossibly large. There simply weren't enough mentors to provide the kind of attention and support each Crusader needed.

The Board of Directors faced these judgments squarely. With a new Executive Director, Mary Harrison, the Board moved to refocus the Crusade on the most disadvantaged students, limiting enrollment to approximately 500 children each year in Rhode Island's most economically distressed school districts, and providing a new set of developmentally oriented programs for those students as they moved through school. With these changes, the Crusade was able to project sufficient funds to cover all scholarship commitments, including those of the early years during unlimited enrollment. And by reorganizing their programmatic supports to focus on a set of "target districts," they took giant steps toward being able to honor their commitment to stay with, support, and encourage each individual student throughout his or her elementary and secondary school years.

The differences between the two Crusades are considerable. Crusaders in the first class received only a fraction of the concentrated attention and support received by Crusaders after 1995-96 (when the Crusade reorganized). Indeed, the majority of the June 2001 graduating cohort of Crusaders received little more than a regular newsletter from the Crusade in their early elementary years. Some got early mentoring and attended tutoring clubs. Those approaching high school when the "second" Crusade began experienced a small increase in available programs, but express regret that they didn't get more of the services and attention now routinely available to Crusaders.

¹Since 1989, considerably more attention and effort has been focused on the idea of university-community partnerships and the potential for higher ed involvement in solving the problems of urban public schools systems in particular. The Crusade model was on the leading edge of this now more widespread phenomenon.

The new Crusade, by contrast, is program rich. Beginning with the 3rd grades in school year 1996-97 the Crusade sought to enroll every member of a third grade at qualifying elementary schools in the target districts, with schools competing for the designation of "Crusade enrollment school" each year. In the elementary school years, the Crusade funds schools to implement Crusader programming and works directly with principals and teachers to do so. When Crusaders enter middle school, the Crusade finds those still located in one of the five target districts and offers services after school, on weekends or during the summer. These may include summer enrichment camps, scholarship counseling, tutoring, and attention from Crusade Advisors or AmeriCorps members. In high school, there is additional individual attention, college visits, free Kaplan test preparation classes, and regular information disseminated in the schools or through the mail. Seasoned youth service organizations provide the programming, often located in the schools, specifically to Crusaders.

Two things remain the same in the "new" Crusade. Becoming a Crusader in third grade involves signing a pledge committing the student to hold himself or herself to certain standards of conduct and achievement. And, at the end of high school, income-eligible Crusaders may still apply for a scholarship to help them attend college or other post-secondary training.

Important federal grants gave an additional boost to the Crusade's more ambitious programmatic plan and helped propel it into a leadership position among college access organizations in Rhode Island. In particular, the Crusade founded the College Access Alliance of Rhode Island (CAARI) in order to broaden the reach of what they and other organizations were learning and doing.

This rich and individualized new programmatic environment, however, is difficult to capture for evaluative purposes. How to define a "Crusader experience" presented a stubborn problem for this evaluation. No Crusade cohort has received consistent treatment every year, and even within cohorts there are significant differences in Crusaders' experiences. Programs offered one year by community service providers might or might not have been repeated the next year. Sites have changed. Some Crusader programs report difficulty meeting their recruitment goals and acknowledge that Crusaders may participate in other, non-targeted programs. The nature of the individual supports has also changed year to year. Good advisors, like mentors before them, are still hard to find. And, due to resource constraints, the Crusade has had to assign advisors to schools with critical concentrations of Crusaders, leaving some Crusaders with no on-site advisor at all.

With these challenges in mind, this evaluation concentrates on describing and distinguishing the course of these two very different Crusades, with particular attention to how the 7th grade class of the evaluation year 2001 (the first cohort of the refocused Crusade) is responding to the Crusade's efforts. We report on the experiences of the first and fourth cohorts (the 12th and 9th graders in this study) and describe ways in which they have been affected by the Crusade. But it is the 7th grade that shows us whether the Crusade holds promise in the long run as a college-access strategy for Rhode Island; whether the *new* strategy — with its myriad adaptations to individual lives and needs — appears to be developing in a positive way.

Methodology

Intended at the outset to be a 10-year intervention, the Rhode Island Children's Crusade approached the graduation of its first enrolled cohort in typical learning fashion. With funding from the Nellie Mae Foundation and the Rhode Island Foundation, they issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) calling for a context and outcomes study² and hired a team of researchers at Brandeis University's Center for Youth and Communities to conduct the evaluation.

²The Crusade and its funders deserve credit for investing in such an evaluation, but as is commonly the case, the investment in evaluation and the data management systems to support it would have yielded far more had they been put in place when the Crusade was first formed. Only when evaluation is anticipated in this way can assessment hope to provide satisfying answers to the outcome-oriented questions posed in this (and most) RFPs.

The evaluation was guided by three critical questions:

- In what way have conditions in the external environment (political, social, economic, academic, educational) enhanced or hindered program capacity and affected the program's design, operations, and impact?
- How has the Crusade made a difference for individual Crusaders?
- How has the Crusade affected the school systems, schools, agencies, and other organizations with which it has worked over the course of its implementation?

The Crusade's ten-year service design ("early sustained intervention" incorporating scholarship incentives), its variable service model, and the variations in both philosophy and structure that have characterized its first decade make it a difficult organization to describe, much less analyze and assess in terms of promise or impact. The methodology we employed was designed to respond creatively to this challenge, and — importantly — to engage the Crusade itself in the attempt to define and analyze its key components and contributions to children's academic and other successes.

The evaluation design rests on two core assumptions. The first is that the organization under scrutiny must actively participate in its assessment so that the evaluation feeds back into the organization's work in equal measure to answering the questions of outsiders and supporters about its progress toward key goals. The second is that complex, multi-sector education initiatives of this kind, embedded as they are in historical, social, economic, and political environments, must be understood in those contexts and as a product of those contexts before being investigated quantitatively. In short, the context is a necessary data set from which to derive other questions about outcomes.

Thus, this participatory evaluation plan included three major overlapping phases:

- An intensive contextual analysis of the Rhode Island Children's Crusade, including its history, the evolution of its leadership and programmatic structure, its reputation among its principal constituencies and partners (i.e., institutions of higher education, the public school system, and other youth service institutions), and the communities in which it works.
- An outcomes assessment comparing the oldest Crusader cohort (in 12th grade) with the 9th and 7th grade cohorts, drawing where possible upon existing data (such as the Crusade's management information system (MIS)) as well as upon newly fielded surveys and interviews with small groups of Crusaders.
- An ongoing system of feedback including informal discussions and briefings, culminating in a preliminary report and final report.

The evaluation was conducted with the full participation and involvement of Crusade leadership and staff between November 2000 and December 2001. For both the context and outcomes analysis, data from a variety of sources have been used, including:

- Reviews of Crusade documents, previous evaluations or assessments, press and promotional materials, and other historical records.
- Key informant interviews with Crusade staff and Board members, political leaders and advisors, parents, Rhode Island school system representatives, other experts on school reform, and individuals who played important roles at critical developmental points of the Crusade.
- Surveys sent to school personnel in 17 Crusader "enrollment" elementary schools, 36 middle and high schools with significant Crusader populations, and 11 community-based organizations providing program services to Crusaders.

- A survey sent to 2,000 Crusaders (with nearly 500 responses)
- The Crusade's MIS
- Rhode Island schools data (SALT) available online through InfoWorks (these data are limited in terms of their usefulness to the current evaluation).
- Reviews of relevant literature on college access programs and youth development.

Results

This evaluation found that 7th grade survey respondents were much more likely to say that the Crusade had a big positive effect on many aspects of their school life and plans than 9th and 12th grade respondents. In particular, a far greater proportion of 7th grade than 9th or 12th grade respondents (84%, 65%, and 46%, respectively) credit the Crusade with improving the likelihood that they will attend college. Other college-related areas where 7th grade respondents indicated a relatively bigger positive effect of the Crusade were:

- The likelihood of applying for college scholarships;
- Knowledge about how people pay for college;
- Knowledge about the benefits of going to college; and
- Knowledge about what one has to do in high school in order to go to college.

In addition, the same difference between 7th graders and 9th or 12th graders appeared around the question of life skills. A significantly higher proportion of 7th grade survey respondents indicated a big positive effect of the Crusade on seven life skills or competencies:

- Self-confidence;
- Ability to be a leader;
- Ability to make mature decisions;
- Ability to learn things, use information, and solve problems;
- Ability to be a good team member;
- Understanding of career options; and
- Ability to plan time well.

Hours of program participation (hereafter "hours of participation") per Crusader have also increased dramatically in the smaller cohorts (as represented by the 7th grade). Increasing the level of services was a key goal of limiting enrollment in the Crusade, and clearly the Crusade has achieved that goal. Because of unforeseen problems with Crusade tracking data, however, this evaluation was not able to assess the extent to which that increase in Crusader's overall hours of participation in Crusade activities also represents substantial and sustained levels of participation for a critical mass of students. The Crusade's current investment in a substantial revision of its tracking system should result in their ability to assess that in the future, and — crucially — to link both types of services and level of service immersion with eventual college-going outcomes.

If one had to project the likelihood of success from institutional flexibility and growth, and the reported enthusiasm of its "new" lead cohort, it is hard not to bet on this organization. In addition to what is noted above, the new Crusade is characterized by a number of promising characteristics:

- The Crusade is dedicated to intervening very early, limiting its work to the children who need help the most (defined as public school students in Rhode Island's most economically distressed school districts), providing attention and programmatic supports throughout the elementary and secondary school years, and providing financial assistance to those who qualify for it at graduation.
- The Crusade began as a set of strategic partnerships with the state legislature and governor, the Board of Governors for Higher Education, and the leaders of Rhode Island's public institutions of higher education that enabled the Crusade to come into being and responded generously when the Crusade was threatened. It has developed essential programmatic partnerships with local youth service organizations and the schools themselves in order to ensure progressive implementation of an increasingly ambitious program of supports.
- The Crusade is a learning organization. It has examined its management systems and sought evaluations of different program pieces over the last five years, and it has changed its practices in response to those findings.

What's next for the Crusade?

At its 10-year mark, the Crusade is poised to make a number of critical decisions about the wisdom and need to continue enrolling new 3rd graders, about when and how it might evolve to work more directly on the school system, about refining its program structure to require certain elements for all Crusaders, and about the contribution of a youth development approach to educational enrichment interventions with economically distressed populations.

This evaluation provides feedback on the critical elements of the Crusade to help inform the staff and Board as they make these decisions. The need for the Crusade's services is not just still there, it is growing. The Crusade's target communities comprised the highest numbers of children qualifying for subsidized school lunch when it started in 1991. Today, the number of students qualifying for reduced-rate lunches has grown in all those communities, along with the number of children requiring Limited English Proficiency (LEP) assistance and special education classes.³ These factors, along with consistently high rates of student mobility and difficult family or community dynamics, have always been obstacles to post-secondary academic achievement.

To meet these challenges, the Crusade has developed a strong and professional staff, a powerful and involved Board of Directors, close partnerships with key public institutions, and good relations with its diverse set of school partners. And the results of this evaluation indicate that the Crusade has made a positive contribution beyond the Crusaders themselves:

- Parents of third graders want their children to be in a Crusade-enrollment elementary school.
- Schools in which the Crusade works want more programs, more time from Crusade advisors, and more visibility for the Crusade.
- Principals routinely credit the Crusade with improving students' chances by ensuring that they have "more advocates working on their behalf."

Though measuring the impact of the Crusade is a long-term process, this evaluation suggests that the Crusade has evolved in a focused and sound way, that it is continuing to ask good questions and to learn and adjust to changes in its environment, and that it is making a strong contribution to the success of Rhode Island's most academically vulnerable students.

³See RESULTS: Education in Rhode Island 1999. Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council.

Summary of Key Findings

- There are significant, positive differences between the self-reported influences of the “first” Crusade on 12th and 9th grade survey respondents and the influences of the “second” Crusade on 7th grade survey respondents. The second Crusade has successfully and significantly increased hours of participation (measured by time spent in programming), and appears to be capturing the attention of Crusaders to a much greater degree than did the first.
- Survey respondents in the earlier, larger, cohorts suggest that the “first” Crusade had some positive influence on their achievement orientation. Eighty-nine percent of 12th grade Crusaders responding to the survey reported having taken the SATs, and the same proportion reported having applied to one or more 2 or 4 year colleges.
- Elementary schools that qualify as Crusade “enrollment” schools benefit in many ways from the association, from attracting the positive attention of parents who want their child to be a Crusader, to expanding the regular curriculum and after-school options of the schools themselves. Principals and staff are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the Crusade.
- Middle Schools and High Schools, despite their relatively limited experience with “second Crusade” students, already distinguish the Crusade as providing “more advocates” for their students and predict greater success for Crusaders than non-Crusaders in their schools because of the Crusade’s long-term strategy.
- Leadership has been extremely important for the Crusade throughout its history. Although presiding over a troubled design and financial position, the Crusade’s second director, Sylvia Robinson, set in place a number of the relationships that allowed the Crusade to respond effectively to mid-decade challenges. Mary Harrison is similarly credited for much of the growth and positive direction of the Crusade since 1994. The Crusade needs to be planning now for its next leadership transition. Organizations that are prepared for these transitions diversify vertically and horizontally early on so that transition itself does not become a crisis when a charismatic leader leaves.
- The Advisors group is critical to the Crusade’s image and impact in middle and high schools. According to school administrators, the relationship of the Crusade to the schools relies heavily on the strength of the advisor in each school. This is an area where both quantity and quality are of critical importance. The Crusade needs to continue focusing on the preparation, role definition, staffing, and support of its front line workers (i.e., AmeriCorps members and Advisors).



Center for Youth and Communities
Heller Graduate School
Brandeis University
Waltham, MA



Crusade Advisors are a daily presence in middle and high schools in the target districts. Advisors track student progress, assist in after-school tutorial projects and provide Crusaders with inspiration, information and guidance that will help them reach their goals.

A Message from our Chair



O. Rogeriee Thompson

Dear Friends,

As a member of the Board since the Crusade's founding, I take pride in how we have grown, in just over a decade, from a startup organization to a leader in the College Access movement in Rhode Island.

Our Board of Directors is grateful to all of those who have supported the Crusade along the way — and we are committed to being accountable to our investors. In this spirit, we are using this year's report to broadly distribute the results of a major program evaluation just completed by Brandeis University. We are very thankful to the Nellie Mae Foundation and the Rhode Island Foundation for making this study possible.

The Brandeis evaluation examines how the Crusade has developed through its history and how we have progressed towards fulfilling our mission to improve the education and career prospects for youth in Rhode Island's low-income communities. The report highlights some of the key lessons learned in our short history. It identifies many of the strengths of our program and highlights some weaknesses in need of improvement.

I can assure you that this report will not just sit on a shelf. The Board is currently using it as a core document for a strategic planning process that is shaping the Crusade's future. When we started out, we intended to enroll only ten classes of Crusaders. But the prospects for poor children in Rhode Island have not improved significantly over the last decade. In fact, the number of poor families in the communities we serve has increased by 50%.

The Board is taking a very thoughtful look at what should come next for the Crusade. Do we continue to enroll Crusaders? If so, how many students a year and for how many years? How do we provide scholarships for new Crusaders? Our scholarship fund was originally capitalized with ten classes in mind. Enrolling additional Crusaders brings with it a responsibility to re-capitalize the fund, a significant undertaking.

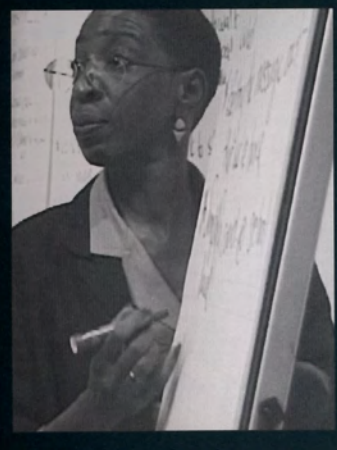
Clearly there is much to think about and much work to be done. Be assured that we are working passionately and strategically to do the right thing by our children — and that we are involving parents, Crusaders, *educators, funders and others to inform our decision-making process.* I encourage you to read the executive summary and excerpts from the report carefully. (You can download the complete report from our web site if you like — www.childrenscrusade.org.)

Again, we deeply appreciate your interest in and support of this Crusade for Rhode Island's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "O. Rogeriee Thompson".

O. Rogeriee Thompson
Chair



“Clearly there is much to think about and much work to be done. Be assured that we are working passionately and strategically to do the right thing by our children — and that we are involving parents, Crusaders, educators, funders and others to inform our decision-making process.”

Statement of Financial Position

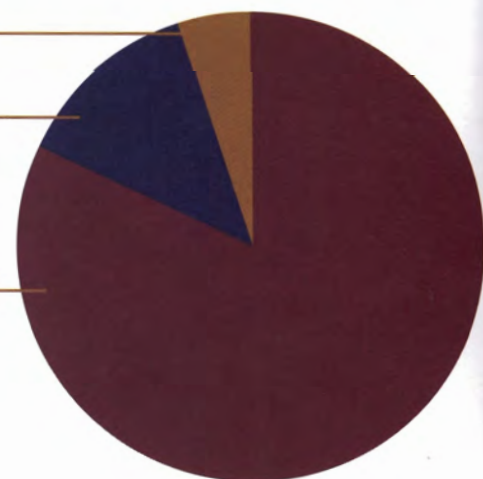
	Operations Federal Grants & Crusader Support Programs		Scholarship Program		Totals	
					2001	2000
ASSETS:						
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$	382,013	\$		\$ 382,013	\$ 395,125
Interest Receivable				34,002	34,002	35,658
Grants Receivable		504,016			504,016	340,120
Pledges Receivable		8,090			8,090	23,632
Miscellaneous Receivable		38,798			38,798	7,967
Net Property & Equipment		105,023			105,023	109,485
Investments				10,352,227	10,352,227	10,569,652
Scholarships Pledged				47,608,480	47,608,480	46,413,640
Total Assets	\$	1,037,940	\$	57,994,709	\$ 59,032,649	\$ 57,895,279
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS:						
LIABILITIES						
Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$	167,458	\$		\$ 167,458	\$ 142,203
Grants Payable		289,802			289,802	213,210
Capital Lease Obligation		0			0	3,666
Estimated Cost of Scholarships for Currently Enrolled Children Funded from:						
Investments				13,900,000	13,900,000	13,600,000
Pledged Scholarships				12,400,000	12,400,000	11,600,000
Estimated Value of Pledged Scholarships in Excess of Needs				29,450,000	29,450,000	29,000,000
Total Liabilities		457,260		55,750,000	56,207,260	54,559,079
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted:						
Operating & Programs		580,680			580,680	517,250
Board Designated for Scholarships				(3,513,771)	(3,513,771)	(2,994,690)
Total Unrestricted		580,680		(3,513,771)	(2,933,091)	(2,477,440)
Temporarily Restricted:						
Pledged Scholarships				5,758,480	5,758,480	5,813,640
Total Temporarily Restricted Net Assets				5,758,480	5,758,480	5,813,640
Total Net Assets		580,680		2,244,709	2,825,389	3,336,200
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$	1,037,940	\$	57,994,709	\$ 59,032,649	\$ 57,895,279

Allocation of Operating Expenses – \$5,204,670

Fundraising 5%

Administration 13%

Program Services 82%



Statement of Activities	Federal Grants & Crusader Support Programs	Scholarship Program	Totals	
			2001	2000
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets:				
Support & Revenue:				
Support:				
Contributions	\$ 1,908,749	\$	\$ 1,908,749	\$ 1,776,500
In-Kind Support	1,292,779		1,292,779	313,568
Grants	1,820,404		1,820,404	1,292,839
Prior Years' Lapsed Grants	15,617		15,617	16,445
Total Support	5,037,549	0	5,037,549	3,399,352
Revenue:				
Interest & Dividends	58,131	267,083	325,214	280,022
Net Realized Gain (Loss) on Investments		467,671	467,671	393,911
Trustee Fees	(2,300)	(53,885)	(56,185)	(55,547)
Net Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	0	(850,740)	(850,740)	(233,756)
Miscellaneous Income	220		220	5,707
Total revenue	56,051	(169,871)	(113,820)	390,337
Total Support & Revenue	5,093,600	(169,871)	4,923,729	3,789,689
Expenses:				
Personnel Costs	2,029,516		2,029,516	1,787,493
Crusader Clubs & Programs	1,992,440		1,992,440	833,923
Summer Programs	32,927		32,927	2,279
Provision for Cost of Scholarships		1,100,000	1,100,000	2,400,000
Training	39,564		39,564	54,142
Consultants	267,839		267,839	149,236
Printing	75,714		75,714	52,847
Advertising	105,197		105,197	75,398
Special Events	12,736		12,736	22,134
Occupancy Costs	113,068		113,068	96,340
Postage	33,101		33,101	32,187
Office Expenses	67,749		67,749	61,836
Travel & Education	23,011		23,011	23,966
Professional Fees	51,677		51,677	26,569
Telephone	13,246		13,246	8,855
Insurance	18,599		18,599	13,369
Dues & Subscriptions	8,002		8,002	6,971
Curriculum Expense	75		75	
Depreciation	69,751		69,751	33,251
Scholarships	11,776		11,776	
Other	58,682		58,682	20,622
Total Expenses	5,024,670	1,100,000	6,124,670	5,701,418
Transfers:				
Operating Transfers to Scholarship Program	(5,500)	5,500		
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets Released from Restriction		745,290	745,290	235,862
Increase (Decrease) in Unrestricted Net Assets	63,430	(519,081)	(455,651)	(1,675,867)
Changes in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets:				
Contributions		4,500	4,500	5,610
Pledged Scholarships		1,194,840	1,194,840	(1,485,100)
Interest & Dividends		16,793	16,793	12,311
Realized Gain (Loss) on Investments		56,483	56,483	47,143
Trustee Fees		(4,327)	(4,327)	(4,129)
Unrealized Loss on Investments		(128,159)	(128,159)	(25,073)
Released from Restriction for Estimated Cost of Student Scholarships to be Provided by Scholarships Pledged		(745,290)	(745,290)	(235,862)
Pledged Scholarships in Excess of Usage		(450,000)	(450,000)	(1,000,000)
Decrease in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets		(55,160)	(55,160)	(2,685,100)
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	63,430	(574,241)	(510,811)	(4,360,967)
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	517,250	2,818,950	3,336,200	7,697,167
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 580,680	\$ 2,244,709	\$ 2,825,389	\$ 3,336,200
Year Ended June 30, 2001 with Comparative 2000 Totals				

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Federal Hill House
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New England Institute of Technology
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Converse College

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RI Youth Guidance (Spirit)
Sullivan Family Center/Sullivan School
Veterans Memorial Elementary School
Webster Street School

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\$1,659,613

GEAR UP

\$404,345

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National Service Program

\$100,000

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\$56,400

Rhode Island Board of Governors
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\$50,000

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Rhode Island Children's Crusade List of Services

Elementary: grades 3-5

AmeriCorps Members in classrooms/ after school programs

- Tutoring
- Service Learning/Community Works

After-School Programs

- Literacy
- Numeracy/Science
- Study Skills/Homework Help
- Social Skills Development
- Crusader Identity

Big Brothers

- One to One Mentoring

Big Sisters

- One to One Mentoring

Summer Programs:

- \$250 Camperships

Family Engagement:

- Family Advisory Board
- Workshops
- Information Newsletter

Crusader Advocates:

- Vacation Camps for Mobile Crusaders
- Resource/Referral
- Tracking

Middle School: grades 6-8

AmeriCorps Middle School Advocate — Grade 6

- Needs Assessment, IAP's; Resource/Referral, and follow-up for Attendance, Academics, College Awareness, and Social Skills
- Service Learning
- Asset Inventory

Advisory Program — Grades 7 & 8

- Middle School Needs Assessment, Resource/Referral, and follow-up for Attendance, Academics, College Awareness, and Social Skills
- Home Visits
- High School Conference
- College access program recruitment
- Transition activities (grade 8)
- College Visits
- Life Skills Workshops
- Career Awareness
- Career Day

Academic Enrichment

- Tutoring
- Study Skills

Adventure Education

- Career Day

Crusader Advisory Board

Big Brothers

- One to One Mentoring

Big Sisters

- One to One Mentoring

Crusader Advocates

- Vacation Camps for Mobile Crusaders
- Resource/Referral
- Tracking

Mentoring

- Articulated after-school group mentoring

Summer Programs — Grades 6, 7, 8

- \$250 Camperships
- Summer school tuition
- Adventure Education (granted out)
- Computer Camp

Summer Programs — Grade 8

- SPIRIT
- Adventure Education
- Brown Summer High School
- Providence Summer Transition Program
- URI Discovery Day

Family Engagement

- Family Advisory Board
- Workshops
- College Awareness Information
- Transition Support
- Newsletters/Parent Update

High School: grades 9-12

Advisory Program

- Needs Assessment, Resource Referral, and follow-up for Attendance, Academics, College Awareness, and Social Skills Development
- Study skills, test taking, time management and decision making workshops
- Tutoring in major academic subjects
- College information and tours
- Career counseling and exploration
- Financial aid information
- Peer mentoring
- Crusader Advisory Board

Other Programs

- Spirit Program
- Jobs for Ocean State Graduates
- One-to-one mentoring with Big Brothers and Big Sisters

Family Engagement

- Family Advisory Board
- Workshops
- Information on "Getting Through High School"
- College access information
- Newsletters

Pathways to College Program

Grades 10-12

- PSAT/SAT Prep Classes

Grades 11 & 12

- PSAT/SAT information, fee waivers and registration
- Assistance with college admissions essays

Grade 12

- Assistance with college applications, fee waivers
- Assistance with financial aid forms
- Processing of scholarships for eligible Crusaders

What's Next?

At its 10-year mark, the Crusade is poised to make a number of critical decisions about the wisdom and need to continue enrolling new 3rd graders, about when and how it might evolve to work more directly on the school system, about refining its program structure to require certain elements for all Crusaders, and about the contribution of a youth development approach to educational enrichment interventions with economically distressed populations.

This evaluation provides feedback on the critical elements of the Crusade to help inform the staff and Board as they make these decisions. The need for the Crusade's services is not just still there, it is growing...

To meet these challenges, the Crusade has developed a strong and professional staff, a powerful and involved Board of Directors, close partnerships with key public institutions, and good relations with its diverse set of school partners. And the results of this evaluation indicate that the Crusade has made a positive contribution beyond the Crusaders themselves.

{Brandeis — pages 6, 7}

Mary Sylvia Harrison:

When I first came to the Crusade, I did not consider it a community organization — nor did I think it should be one. I was adamant that our ultimate goal should be to build community capacity to provide college pathway services at the neighborhood level. I thought the Crusade as an organization should eventually disappear.

To create our model, however, we needed to develop, build, and maintain relationships with school personnel, community representatives, elected officials, department heads, and policy makers of K-12 and higher education. It took a lot of time and effort. In the process, we emerged as an institution of the community as well as one that builds community capacity.

In short, we need the community and the community needs us. In the next phase of our development, we will be able to assert ourselves as a formidable community organization that serves students from low-income communities and continues to partner with many organizations while leading the college pathway cause in Rhode Island.



rhode island children's crusade

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