A Good Thing Growing

2000–2010 > Citizen Schools / Harlem Children's Zone / Roca

written by Andy Goodman

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

PREFACE

I'm very pleased to share this report describing the experiences of the first three grantees—Citizen Schools, Harlem Children's Zone, and Roca—to test the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's youth development strategy. How these organizations have grown and what they have accomplished over the past decade show all of us the promise and potential of nonprofits and their funders to change the life trajectories of our nation's most vulnerable youth.

The Foundation had lofty aspirations when we launched our strategy in 2000. Our aim was to invest substantial financial resources in a few carefully chosen nonprofits, helping them strengthen their organizational core and build their evidence base so that eventually they could expand to far greater scale and serve thousands, potentially millions, more young people. We coupled our investments with additional, nonfinancial support, such as executive coaching, leadership development, evaluation expertise, and strategic consulting.

Somewhat naively, we expected to find the landscape filled with nonprofits that were ready and immediately able to grow to scale. We discovered the opposite: Expanding a program while preserving its quality is arduous work, and preparing for such growth requires planning, thoughtfulness, adaptability, and, of course, the right talent. The challenge is even more difficult when you're a nonprofit working under financial constraints even in the best of times.

So we asked Andy Goodman to write this report, not simply to record what these three organizations achieved, with our help, over the past ten years, but to share their experiences, both positive and negative, so that our colleagues—practitioners, funders, policymakers—can learn from these efforts as they strive to expand other promising programs to scale. The topics covered in this report and the lessons it offers are by no means exhaustive, nor is it meant to be a checklist of what each and every nonprofit should address. But we hope it will inspire conversation and reflection among individuals and organizations that are pursuing growth in the social sector.

Looking back, I am amazed by all that our grantees have accomplished. Looking forward, I am eager to meet the challenges ahead of us.

Sincerely,

Nancy Roob

TIME TO REFLECT: AN OVERVIEW

TEN YEARS AGO, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation began to shift its grantmaking strategy and focus its investments on ensuring that greater numbers of economically disadvantaged young Americans benefit from proven services that help them make a successful transition to adulthood. Once the Foundation identified an organization that showed evidence of success and was also poised to grow and serve more youth, it made a multi-year, multimillion-dollar investment to help the grantee develop its organizational capacity, improve program quality, and better evaluate the outcomes its program achieved for the young people it served. Grantees developed strategic plans, implemented internal programs for staff and board development, and made improvements in infrastructure — all with an eye toward growth and sustainability over the long term.

Citizen Schools, Harlem Children's Zone, and Roca were the first three nonprofits selected for this infusion of capital and placed on the fast track for growth. Since 2000, the Foundation has invested $44 million in these organizations and led efforts to aggregate an additional $18 million in growth capital for Citizen Schools. The Foundation also provides additional support and resources to leverage its investments, assisting grantees in areas such as business planning, strategic consulting, leadership and board development, communications, and advocacy.

By 2010, all three organizations had grown dramatically, expanding the geographic scope of their work, serving more people, and making a broader impact on youth development and education.

	2000	2010
CITIZEN SCHOOLS	434 students in 6 sites	4,400 students in 37 sites; evaluation showed participants made significant gains in school engagement, proficiency and graduation rates
HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE	6,100 children and 2,200 adults in 24 square blocks	10,541 children and 13,015 adults in 97 square blocks; a Harvard University study found its charter schools reversed the black–white learning gap
ROCA	448 youth receiving in-depth services, broader outreach to 15,000	755 youth receiving in-depth services, broader outreach to 20,000; implemented organization-wide

As this decade closes, the Foundation has taken the opportunity to ask the leadership of each nonprofit to reflect on the growth it experienced. Specifically, we asked them to consider to what extent, if any, their organizations had changed across six dimensions:

- **Theory of Change:** Was it a constant, or constantly evolving?
- **Organizational Culture:** How do you maintain a healthy and cohesive culture when so many new people are joining your team?
- **Evaluation:** To what extent have you quantified your impact, and did this change as your organization grew?
- **Development:** With growth comes an increased demand on fundraising. How did your staff and board evolve to handle these demands?
- **Infrastructure:** What other changes occur internally when you serve more people, and how did you respond to those?
- **Impact on the Sector:** How have you leveraged lessons learned in the last ten years to create change beyond your proscribed geographic area?

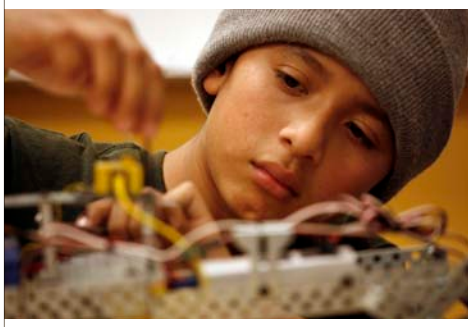
Our objective in doing this research was to learn if there were common experiences that might serve as lessons for other nonprofits hoping to grow and broaden their impact. Naturally, each organization had its own take on these questions, but despite their differences in size, geographic scope, and programmatic focus, the interviewees frequently echoed each other, sometimes strikingly.

Of course, given such a small sample, we would not present the common themes that emerged as definitive lessons in "how to scale programs that work." Nevertheless, if you lead a nonprofit that is poised for growth, or if you make grants with the intent of helping nonprofits grow, the lessons these nonprofits have learned over the last ten years are worth considering as you ponder the next ten.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

For those unfamiliar with Citizen Schools, Harlem Children's Zone, and Roca, pages 4–13 of this report provide a brief background on each organization along with emblematic success stories. The final section, "Reflections on Ten Years of Growing" on page 14, captures the lessons the three organizations learned, as told by their CEOs and senior staff

It is our hope that the grantees' stories — snapshots taken at ground level — will give you a feel for each organization's work beyond what numbers alone can tell. This background can then provide context for the reflections on growth captured in the final section of the report.



CITIZEN SCHOOLS

IN 1994, ERIC SCHWARZ AND NED RIMER taught afterschool apprenticeships in journalism and first aid to 20 fifth graders at a middle school in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Schwarz and Rimer believed that a more productive use of afterschool time could lead to better academic performance overall. Encouraged by positive results from these first classes, the two self-titled "Citizen Teachers" co-founded the nonprofit Citizen Schools in 1995 to serve more students across the state.

Schwarz and Rimer recruited dozens of Citizen Teachers from businesses, civic institutions, and community organizations, and trained them to teach in afterschool programs at middle schools in Massachusetts. For the students, the apprenticeships offered a chance to acquire skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing economy — skills such as leadership, teamwork, and communication. For the Citizen Teachers, the apprenticeships offered a way to give back to local schools and build community.

In 2000, when the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation made its first grant to Citizen Schools, the nonprofit was operating comprehensive afterschool programs in six sites in Boston, serving 434 students. Since then, the Foundation has invested $20.6 million in Citizen Schools, has helped aggregate an additional $18 million in growth capital from other funders, and continues to invest in Citizen Schools today. Citizen Schools now operates 37 program sites in seven states, serving 4,400 middle school students.

A critical juncture in Citizen Schools' history came in 2006 when the Massachusetts state legislature passed the "School Redesign: Expanded Learning Time to Support Student Success" initiative, better known as ELT. For Citizen Schools, ELT presented an opportunity to partner with middle schools in a deeper way and play a greater role in the battle to improve student performance.

Citizen Schools' first experience with ELT came at Edwards Middle School, one of the lowest-performing schools in the state. For an organization that liked to set "stretch" goals and challenge itself, Citizen Schools would be tested by this project in ways that nobody could predict.

The Eddy Gets Ready

IN 2006, TIME WAS RUNNING OUT for "the Eddy." Edwards Middle School of Charlestown, Massachusetts—the Eddy, to those who knew it well—was a study in decline. Enrollment had dropped by 20 percent since 2003, and now fewer than 400 students were attending classes in a building that could accommodate nearly 600. Only 17 families had made Edwards their first choice in the most recent school lottery. Test scores were the lowest of any middle school in Boston. If the Eddy was getting ready for anything, it was probably to close.

But 2006 was also the year the Massachusetts state legislature passed the ELT initiative and allocated $6.5 million to test the premise that more time spent in school would yield higher-performing students. Edwards' principal, Mike Sabin, saw ELT as a last, best chance to turn his school around, and he garnered a spot for the Eddy in the first group of ten schools selected for this initiative.

Eric Schwarz was already convinced that a longer school day would prove beneficial—in fact, he had built an organization around that idea. Citizen Schools, a nonprofit headquartered in Boston, had been operating afterschool programs in middle schools since 1995. By 2006, it was serving students throughout Massachusetts and in several other states as well, and academic performance was improving at every site.

Citizen Schools was already offering an optional afterschool program at the Eddy, but fewer than 50 students had elected to participate. Despite the best efforts of the Edwards teaching staff and the Citizen Schools team, academic performance in every grade was still disappointing. Only 40 percent of the eighth-grade students were proficient in English and language arts, and only 15 percent or fewer of the students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were proficient in math. All of the schools picked for the ELT pilot faced uphill battles, but Edwards was staring at the steepest incline.

When the opportunity arose to partner with Edwards and develop one of the first ELT programs in Massachusetts, Schwarz was reluctant. "We had a board meeting and I had to be sold on it," Schwarz says now, reflecting on discussions four years ago. "I was nervous that ELT would entangle us too deeply in school system bureaucracy. There were also program challenges: Our program ran for 30 weeks and this would require 38. And while we were still very committed to serving the most at-risk kids, they had always been able to opt into the afterschool activities. With ELT, they would be *required* to participate."

Nevertheless, Schwarz and his colleagues were intrigued by the challenge. "ELT was a big idea," says Schwarz. "It could be done badly, or it could become a great platform for our work and an extension of what we've been working on." Citizen Schools decided to take the plunge, and given the timing, it would have to be headfirst. As Schwarz recalls, the decision to partner with Edwards was made in May 2006, which meant that the ELT program—including new staff and expanded curriculum—would all have to be in place just four months later.

In July, Schwarz hired Moriska Selby to serve as Campus Director at Edwards. Just 24, Selby had graduated from Tufts University in 2004 and had recently completed two years as a teaching fellow at Citizen Schools, also earning a master's degree in education through a program run by Citizen Schools in partnership with Lesley University. Selby had no management experience, but Schwarz saw in her the combination of mental toughness and emotional strength that was essential for this assignment. Once on board, Selby had to go on a hiring spree of her own, bringing in five full-time teaching fellows, five part-time teaching assistants, and 30 volunteers who would teach apprenticeships in everything from robotics to Tai Chi.

Over the rest of the summer, Selby worked closely with Principal Sabin, Director of Instruction Amrita Sahni, and other school staff to build out the curriculum for the extended day. Students who were used to attending school from 7:20 a.m. until 1:35 p.m. would now be expected to stay until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. (School would close each Friday at 11:40 a.m. to allow time for staff development.) Since proficiency in math was the biggest challenge in every grade at Edwards, all students would be required to participate in "Math League" from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. After 2:30, students would either choose an apprenticeship or work on study skills, depending on their particular needs.

As Selby recalls, the summer was a blur of activity and planning, and before she could catch her breath, she found herself in the Edwards cafeteria on the opening day of school leading orientation for 110 rambunctious sixth graders. Her first order of business was to teach these incoming students a call-and-response ritual that would set the tone for the coming school year. With full-throated fervor, she called out, "My name is Miss Selby and I'm from the Eddy!" As instructed, the kids screamed back in unison, "Get ready!"

Selby, Sahni, and Sabin had been getting ready all summer, but no amount of planning could prepare them for what that first year of ELT would bring. Right from the start, some of the kids openly resisted the new schedule. "We had kids trying to skip out early," recalls Sahni, "and some tried to transfer to other schools." Selby's memories of those first few weeks are a bit more raw. "There were kids who would straight up curse you out," she says. 'I'm not [expletive] staying,' she continues, repeating verbatim the expletive-laden reply she heard from a student. 'I'm not following your directions 'cause you're not a *real* teacher.' "

Charlestown itself brought additional challenges. Close to 90 percent of the students at Edwards were African American, Latino, or Asian, but the neighborhood around the school was mostly white. Students and residents generally kept to themselves, but there was a prominent exception: Eden Street Park. Selby describes the park as a "half-block patch of grass" near the school where the locals played street hockey and Edwards students occasionally had phys-ed classes.

"I remember this one time," Selby says, "when the kids in the park started yelling racial slurs at our kids, and our kids started yelling back." One of the locals started waving his hockey stick in a menacing fashion, and it looked to Selby like the yelling was about to escalate into something far worse. A police officer who happened to be passing by saw the same thing, but it wasn't the kids in the park whom he told to back off. It was Selby.

Selby is West Indian by birth and, as she later recalled, probably appeared to the officer as just another black face. "You should get your kids out of here," Selby says he told her, implying it was the Edwards students who were stirring up problems. Selby led the kids back into the school and the rest of the day passed without incident, but the moment stayed with her. "I cried that whole afternoon," she recalls, still stung by the memory four years later.

The low point in that first year came during the winter, and it came like two punches to the gut for every student, parent, teacher, and administrator associated with the school. An Edwards eighth grader was shot and killed the day before Christmas, and then, in January, a sixth-grade student was murdered during the weekend before Martin Luther King Day. Although both murders occurred in neighborhoods where the students lived and not in Charlestown, that didn't lessen their impact on the school.

It was also a first for Citizen Schools. In all the schools in all the rough neighborhoods in which the organization had been operating for 12 years, this had never happened before. It was an unspeakable tragedy, but, looking back today, Schwarz still speaks with deep respect for what came out of it. "It galvanized the community in an amazing way," he says. The Edwards teachers and the Citizen Schools team came together to help the students deal with the shock and grief. And in that process, a subtle shift began to occur in how the educators saw themselves. "They became the first shift and the second shift in the job of turning around a school," says Schwarz.

Selby recalls another moment that foreshadowed where the school was heading. Caroline Beasley, one of the new teachers brought in by Citizen Schools, was having problems handling a student named Isaac. "Caroline was tiny, five feet at most," Selby says, "and Isaac was *huge*. He couldn't handle the extended day, and at one point he got really angry and was punching lockers, and he pushed her."

The staff decided that Isaac would start going home at 1:30 p.m. If a student simply could not adjust to ELT, the staff concluded, he or she could leave early. "For the other students," says Selby, "the message was that this was a safe place to be in, and this was a turning point for the kids who wanted to be there and were trying to make it work." (It's worth noting in retrospect that overall school attendance increased from 90 to 93 percent after ELT began, and that exceptions like the one for Isaac were extremely rare.)

Amrita Sahni saw the turnaround at Edwards in the behavior of a student named Shawn. Before ELT, Shawn was a regular visitor to her office, sent there for disrupting class, getting into fights, or—as Sahni likes to put it—"acting like a knucklehead." By the end of his seventh-grade year, however, Shawn was voted most improved student by the teachers and administrators at Edwards, and Sahni says she regularly asked him to lead tours for school visitors. "The beauty of ELT," Sahni says, "is that the teachers have extra time at both the instructional level *and* the relationship level."

While the anecdotal evidence was encouraging, it would ultimately fall to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System scores to render the initial verdict on the first full year of ELT. In the spring of 2007, the numbers were in, and the Edwards students showed significant improvement in every category. Of the seven middle schools in the ELT pilot across the state, Edwards registered the greatest gains.

Clearly, there was still a long way to go. But Citizen Schools was now a fully integrated part of the Edwards School team, and if year one of ELT had proven anything, it was that the Eddy was ready.

To learn more about Citizen Schools, visit www.citizenschools.org.

In the interest of protecting privacy, student names in this story have been changed.

HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE

IF A CHILD ATTENDS a school where uninterested teachers, shoddy textbooks, and facilities in disrepair conspire to send the message that nobody cares about his or her future, that child will probably struggle in the classroom.

If you invest resources to improve the school but the child still returns home each day only to be neglected or abused, that child will still have difficulties at school.

And if you invest resources to improve the school as well as the home environment but don't attend to the child's health, asthma or a wide variety of other health problems may keep that child out of class. Once again, academic failure is the likely outcome.

To all these "ifs," Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) has replied with one of its own: If we surround our children from their earliest days with a critical mass of caring adults and best-practice programs at every level, we can safely convey them from infancy to college graduation. And, in the process, we can also break the cycle of poverty.

In 2000, when the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation made its first investment, HCZ was providing this kind of holistic service to roughly 6,100 children and 2,200 adults in a 24-block area in central Harlem. Since then, the Foundation has invested nearly $19 million and continues to invest in HCZ today. By 2010, the Zone had grown to encompass 97 blocks and served 10,541 children and 13,015 adults.

When Geoffrey Canada, HCZ's president and CEO, describes his organization's approach, he will use terms such as "a seamless system of support," a "best-practice conveyor belt," or, simply, a "pipeline" that stretches from pregnancy through college. But if you truly want to understand how HCZ is bringing hope and changing destinies for thousands of families in the poorest neighborhoods of New York City, just talk to Altheo Serrao.

Altheo's Story

BORN IN GUYANA, Altheo Serrao emigrated to the United States 22 years ago. She landed in New York City and struggled to find steady employment, but managed to get by. She had three children who brought her great joy—Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Sarah—but they came with a heavy price: a father who couldn't control his brutal impulses. In 2004, fearing for her life, Serrao grabbed her children and a few essential belongings, and fled to the safety of a domestic violence shelter.

In the shelter, a clinician told her about a place just a few blocks away where Serrao could find some help. On Saturday mornings, there were classes in parenting, anger management, and other life skills, and there was free day care available for her children while she was in class. Even though she was depressed and felt overwhelmed by three kids pulling at her all day, Serrao did not exactly leap at the opportunity.

"Initially, I got offended," she says today, looking back to that conversation six years ago. "I didn't need anyone to tell me how to be a mom." But as the days in the shelter stretched into weeks, the prospect of spending time somewhere else, *anywhere* else, grew more and more appealing. "I didn't have much to do," she recalls, "and I'm adventurous. I'll try anything, and I had nothing to lose."

Serrao took her children to Harlem Children Zone's headquarters, enrolled in the Baby College, and began a nine-week program that would substantially change her approach to parenting. Serrao learned about early brain development and began to understand why reading to children in their first three years of life can be so valuable. She sat with other parents and talked about techniques for disciplining children that did not include hitting or anything physical.

Serrao may not have recognized the name T. Berry Brazelton, but she was experiencing a full immersion in a curriculum designed with assistance from the noted expert in child development. She was also working with instructors whom Dr. Brazelton had personally trained in his Touchpoints program. Despite her initial wariness, she liked the Baby College. "They taught me to be with Isaiah at *his* level," she says, recalling one lesson in particular. "I learned to sit on my bottom and look him in the eye and try to understand why he was getting so upset." Serrao says this technique helped her calm down, "instead of just screaming at him," and it was one of several new parenting skills she took home with her after graduation.

Although Baby College was behind her, Serrao's relationship with HCZ was just beginning. Within a year, both Isaiah and Sarah would be enrolled in Harlem Gems, an all-day pre-school program that helps prepare children for kindergarten. (Ezekiel, who was too old for pre-school, was already enrolled at P.S. 139.) Harlem Gems classes had an impressive four-to-one child-to-adult ratio and included English, Spanish, and French in the curriculum. For Serrao, though, the value of Harlem Gems went beyond the classroom benefits. "We were still living in the shelter at that time, and I wanted to take them out of that environment," she says. "I wanted them to see there was a bigger world."

At first, both Isaiah and Sarah had trouble separating from their mother. The school day ran from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., and neither child was used to that much time away from Mom. In the early going, Serrao volunteered at the pre-school a few days a week so that she could be around her children more and ease the transition, but she was also juggling court appearances (for child custody hearings), and there was the constant search for work. Fortunately, the children were able to make the necessary adjustment within a matter of weeks, and Serrao was relieved to have more time to herself.

Isaiah and Sarah had already won spots in Promise Academy II, one of two elementary charter schools operated by HCZ, through the lottery. (Ezekiel, as a sibling, was also admitted.) Like HCZ's pre-school, the Promise Academies offer enriched curriculum, extended school days, and other services to keep students healthy, focused, and on a track to academic success.

Today, Serrao and her children live in Staten Island in an apartment that the staff at HCZ helped her find. Each morning, the family must leave Staten Island at 5:30 and travel by bus, ferry, and subway to arrive at school in time for the 7:30 bell. Like any parent with children in elementary school, Serrao reports the usual ups and downs, but she cannot imagine bringing her kids anywhere else.

Ezekiel, who is currently in sixth grade, still talks excitedly about the trip the entire family took last summer to Disney World as a reward for his classroom success. Isaiah, the fourth grader, is having a tougher time in school, and there are still too many trips to the principal's office for Serrao's liking. Sarah, who is in third grade, "wants to be a surgeon," says Serrao. "She works hard, she studies, and she reads every day," her mom reports. And she's not reluctant to jump into the spotlight. "She likes to steal the show," Serrao says with a laugh, "like she's on *Oprah*."

There is no doubt in Serrao's mind that HCZ has changed her family in a profound way and reset all their sights for the future. "I wouldn't have the experience and knowledge that I have without Harlem Children's Zone," says Serrao today. "It's given me a view that there's more to life. In Harlem, you do not have to settle and accept." Serrao recently received her certification to work as a nurse's assistant and is optimistic about getting a job. She now sees similar optimism in her children.

"About a month ago, Ezekiel and I got off the elevator in our apartment building," Serrao recalls, "and he said, 'Do you know in eight years I'm going to Howard University?' And I said, 'Yes, I *know*, because you've been saying that for the last four years!' "

To learn more about Harlem Children's Zone, visit www.hcz.org

ROCA

ROCA BEGAN MODESTLY in 1988 with a grant of $134,000 and a full-time staff of four dedicated to addressing the growing problems of teen pregnancy and violence in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Its beginning may be the only modest aspect of an organization that has grown steadily since then, doggedly digging deeper and deeper into the toughest neighborhoods to do its essential work.

Roca focuses on youth in crisis — young people who have dropped out of school, have joined gangs, and abuse drugs and alcohol, and who may also have extensive criminal records. Many of these kids are already parents themselves or come from dysfunctional homes at or below the poverty line. These are the kinds of kids whom the social safety net fails to protect. These are the kids with whom Roca establishes "transformational relationships," changing the trajectory of lives that others have given up on.

Roca was one of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's first Youth Development Fund grantees. When the Foundation began working with Roca in 2000, the organization was engaging 448 young people in in-depth mentoring and reaching another 15,000 through a broad array of services at its community center in Chelsea and on the streets where the kids spend most of their time.

Since 2000, the Foundation has made grants totaling $4.75 million, completing its investment in 2010. Today, Roca is a $10 million youth development organization serving Chelsea, Revere, East Boston, and Charlestown. More than 750 young people are now receiving in-depth services, with another 20,000 engaged in broader outreach programs.

On its website, Roca declares that it is "committed to serving the most disenfranchised and disengaged young people ages 14–24." Were you to see these kids in the street, you would probably assume that they are beyond help. But these are precisely the kids Roca goes after. Just like they went after Angie Rodriguez.

Angie's Story

WHEN ANGIE WAS 12, her family moved from the warm and boisterous streets of Puerto Rico to a cold and unfamiliar neighborhood in Boston—a corner of the city so beset by gang violence that it wasn't safe for kids like Angie to go outside and play. But Angie was a naturally curious child and, despite the risks, she was drawn to a group of kids who hung out across the street from her apartment. The group quickly adopted Angie because a young and innocent face like hers had particular value to a street gang. She was the ideal runner for drugs and guns since neither the cops nor rival gangs would suspect her of carrying them.

Angie began stealing—from friends, family, neighbors, even old women walking down the street—whatever it took to keep her fellow gang members happy. No matter how much her mother cried or how scary it was to be chased by men with guns and knives, she would not break from her gang, the only people in this strange new world who seemed to care about and understand her.

One day during that first year in Boston, Angie's mother had had enough. She dispatched Angie's older brother, Jorge, into the streets to find his rebellious sister and bring her home. Jorge had run with a gang, too, but he had found the inner strength to leave that world behind, and he had been encouraging Angie to do the same. When he eventually found her, the reunion would turn into a moment Angie would remember for the rest of her life, but for all the wrong reasons.

As Jorge walked toward her on the sidewalk, Angie watched in horror as several men ran up behind him and surrounded him. Before she could cry for help, she heard several shots and saw her brother crumple to the pavement. She held him tightly as he died in the street, screaming for help that would come too late. Determined not to lose another child, Angie's mother moved her family to Chelsea, but changing addresses did not make Angie abandon her old ways. No one would talk about what happened to Jorge, and those who did ended up blaming Angie. Rather than seeing her brother's death as a warning, Angie retreated deeper into the darkness.

Skipping school one day, she tagged along with a friend who was on her way to a job interview. The destination was Roca, a community center in Chelsea. Angie knew what the words "community center" meant, and she expected to see adults behind desks looking at her with pitying eyes. Beyond the desks would be stuffy classrooms with kids seated in neat rows, hands folded. The place would be just another version of school, and it certainly would *not* be a place for her.

Walking into Roca, Angie was fully prepared to turn right around and walk out, but the look of the place caught her by surprise. There were people behind desks answering phones, but they were young, almost as young as she was, it seemed. Instead of stuffy classrooms, she saw kids hanging out all over the large, colorful lobby, talking and doing school work. There was energy and laughter and a dance class in full swing. She saw a woman, lean and intense, coming down a staircase, and the woman saw her.

"Hey!" said Molly Baldwin, Roca's executive director, as she spotted a face she hadn't seen before. "You're new. How're you?" When Angie muttered a barely intelligible reply, Baldwin continued undeterred. "What do you want to do?"

"Nothing," Angie replied. Since it's not in Molly Baldwin's nature to take no for an answer (or words that start with "no," for that matter), she kept the conversation going until Angie reluctantly admitted that she was somewhat interested in the dance class. That was enough of an opening for Baldwin, so she asked for Angie's phone number and promised to call soon to follow up.

Baldwin called Angie's cell phone but got no reply. So she called her school, her parents, her friends, leaving messages with anyone who could tell Angie that Roca was there, waiting for her. Angie got *all* the messages, and she returned to Roca for the sole purpose of telling off the crazy white lady who was getting all up in her business. But before she could launch into the angry speech she had been preparing, Baldwin offered her a job.

"You have a lot of potential," Baldwin told her, slicing past the anger to reach—she hoped—the heart of this fiery 13-year-old. "If you can show up *consistently* for three months, we'll talk about having you teach that dance class by yourself." Part of Angie still wanted to tell off Baldwin, but a job was a job. So Angie slowly began coming to Roca on a regular basis. At first, showing up three times in one week was hard, but Angie did it. Then she did it again the following week. And before she knew it, three months had passed.

By the time four years had gone by, Angie would hardly have recognized the troubled teen who first came strolling through the doors of Roca. She had run dance classes, organized teen pregnancy workshops, passed out condoms in the street, and received high honors in school. Angie had grown from someone no one ever talked about—except to criticize—into a 17-year-old woman who was on the verge of graduating high school and doing what no one in her family had ever done: go to college. "Roca's relentless work helped me find forgiveness and also freedom to choose another road, to be okay with what I did in the past so long as I recognized that what I did was *not* okay," says Angie today.

After attending college, Angie returned to Roca and found herself once again in Molly Baldwin's office. She had come to apologize for being such a snotty teen. "Whatever," Baldwin said with a wave, letting the past be the past. "Knew you'd be back. Let's get to work." And that is precisely what Angie did. She started working with girls who were like she used to be, answering late-night phone calls, showing up at their doors, their schools, their corners, until the girls finally realized that this crazy Latina was not going to leave them alone.

Roca is a youth development organization with a vibrant community center as its hub and programs that have been proven to change the trajectory of young lives in and around Boston. But when you get past the technical language and the theory of change and meet Molly Baldwin, Angie Rodriguez, and the people who work there, you realize that what makes this organization so effective comes down to one word.

Roca is *relentless*.

To learn more about Roca, visit www.rocainc.org.
Special thanks to Barbara Regan for her contributions to this story.

REFLECTIONS ON TEN YEARS OF GROWING

by Andy Goodman

MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN about Citizen Schools, Harlem Children's Zone, and Roca — about their respective theories of change, programmatic approaches, and the measurements that are bearing out those models or forcing them to evolve. So, given the opportunity to talk with the leadership of each organization, I did not want to cover ground that has been so thoroughly explored by others.

Instead, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation asked me to focus our conversations on one issue: growth. Each organization had expanded significantly in the past ten years, and while numbers can capture some of the milestones (people served, staff size, annual revenue, and so on), not every aspect can be so easily quantified.

From August through November 2010, I conducted a series of on-site and telephone interviews with the leaders of each nonprofit. We talked about organizational growth across six dimensions: theory of change, internal culture, evaluation, development, infrastructure, and impact on the sector. At the same time, I asked open-ended questions such as, "If you could go back ten years, what advice would you have given to help your younger self prepare for what was to come?" ("Hold on tight" was the most common response.)

The "time travel" question wasn't the only one to evoke similar responses, and it was striking how often the interviewees echoed each other. As the interviews proceeded, I began grouping like-minded comments together. Those groups became the organizing principle for the reflections that follow, and we hope they will provide insights and guidance the next time anyone in your circle raises the question, "What will happen when we grow?"

YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE WILL CHANGE.

Even if they felt that their model was fairly well established by the year 2000, all interviewees commented on how a theory of change will continue to develop and require refinement as an organization serves more people and learns more in the process.

"Any great organization is *always* in the process of refining its model," said Eric Schwarz. Perhaps the most important change for Citizen Schools over the last decade has regarded what Schwarz and his colleagues like to call "dosage." And when it comes to altering dosage—i.e., the amount of time Citizen Schools is engaged with middle school students—the key word has been *more*.

In the early iterations of Citizen Schools' afterschool programs, the typical student was engaged for six hours a week over 25 weeks—a total of 150 hours per school year. In 2005, Schwarz returned from a three-month sabbatical during which he came to the conclusion that this model would *not* yield the academic success that Citizen Schools was seeking. So, in its tenth year of operation, the organization embarked on a five-month internal review of its model. "Today, the typical student is in the school 450 hours," says Schwarz. "That's one huge change."

For Roca, the impetus to revisit the organization's theory of change was driven by one of its regular activities: peacemaking circles. In circles, participants are given a safe place to talk honestly, knowing that what they say will be heard and respected by others in the circle. "We were saying to young people: You can change your life. You can put down guns. You can get a job," recalled Molly Baldwin. "So when we came out, we asked ourselves: Are we doing things that *really* do help these kids change their lives?"

"The circles pushed our drive to measure outcomes as much as anything else," Baldwin added. Roca worked with an external consultant, David Hunter,* in 2005 to revisit its theory of change, and engaged Hunter again in 2009 to consider further refinements. "The commitment to young people has always been there," Baldwin said, "but we're much clearer on what we're doing, and we're on our way to demonstrating an evidence-based model.

George Khaldun, chief administrative officer of Harlem Children's Zone, points to current programs that were never in the business plan as evidence of HCZ's evolving theory of change. "College Success Office was not in the business plan," he said. "Our asthma initiative was not in the original plan, either." In both cases, new programs were created because the organization always had its antennae up.

"Our initial goal was to help our young people receive a high school diploma," Khaldun recalled. "However, we reviewed internal and external research showing that our kids and other young people from similar communities were not graduating from college at high rates, and that today's economy required a college degree. One of our programs, TRUCE, had begun to design an initiative to help our students prepare for and graduate from college. Eventually we decided to expand this successful work into an agency-wide program called College Success Office."

Kate Shoemaker, Director of policy and special projects for the president at HCZ, said that research also led to creating the asthma initiative. "Asthma was the number one reason kids were missing school, and it was the number one reason for emergency room visits," Shoemaker said. "We learned from the department of health that disease management wasn't too complicated to teach," she adds, and in relatively short order another part of the pipeline fell into place.

FAIL FORWARD. FREQUENTLY.

Innovators make mistakes—it comes with the territory—and social innovators are no different. Sometimes you have to retreat today if you are to advance tomorrow. Citizen Schools abandoned a partnership strategy with the YMCA. Roca closed down remote sites. Harlem Children's Zone temporarily halted growth at one of its charter schools and sent students back into the public school system.

*David Hunter served as director of evaluation for the Foundation from 1998 to 2006.

"You have to face the hard and brutal truth that some of the things you work really, really hard on simply do not work," said Geoffrey Canada. "So you have to say Okay, it didn't work, but you can't give up. Even if you're doing this right, you're going to do some things that fail. But people will stick with you if they understand you're not going to use that failure as an excuse."

"We had a whole growth strategy from 2002 to 2005 that we ripped up and started over again," said Eric Schwarz. In this "affiliate model," Citizen Schools partnered with existing nonprofits (such as the YMCA) to bring its afterschool programs to new communities. "We would run the program, and they would raise the funds and bring the local credibility," said Schwarz. In just 18 months, Citizen Schools expanded its service from one city to nine.

Though Schwarz said that program quality remained high despite the rapid growth, another problem arose that his organization had not anticipated. When Citizen Schools wanted to expand within a new city and grow from one school to three, its local partners were not always as enthusiastic. They looked at Citizen Schools as just one of several programs they were running, and sometimes other programs took priority. "We realized this was not the model for the next five years," said Schwarz, and in 2005 the affiliate strategy was dropped.

Of course, it helps to keep a sense of humor when things go wrong. George Khaldun still laughs at himself when he recalls one of the first meetings Harlem Children's Zone held to introduce its Baby College program—an introductory gathering that Geoff Canada was counting on Khaldun to make a success. "We expected to have at least a hundred people there," said Khaldun.

"So I lined up a school, got the classroom and staff, and put together a flyer. It said, 'Come to this class where you can learn more about immunizations, brain development and the importance of reading,' and at the bottom, on one line, it said 'Free Pampers and Enfamil.' Only 20 people showed up, and Geoff was *furious*. He said, 'Let me look at the flyer.' He saw this small line at the bottom about the Pampers and Enfamil and said, '*Flip that stuff*! Put *that* in big letters!' "

Khaldun got the message, and the flyer for the next meeting prominently displayed the offer of free diapers and formula. "Of course, we had 150 people show up at the next meeting," said Khaldun, still shaking his head at a marketing mistake he would never make again.

"TALENT IS YOUR LEAD HORSE."

As a result of rapid growth, all three nonprofits made an unusually large number of hires over the past ten years. The Harlem Children's Zone, for example, nearly tripled its staff between 2000 and 2010, growing from 175 to 500 full-time employees. This put intense pressure on the interviewing process to produce the right kind of people for all the new positions. No organization claimed to have perfected this process, and everyone had stories of choices that didn't turn out as hoped, but all three had clearly given a good deal of thought to the kinds of questions that could tease out the best candidates.

"Recognize that talent is your lead horse," said Emily McCann, president of Citizen Schools, expressing a common sentiment. "You can grow very quickly, but if you don't have the right talent, you will not be able to grow with quality." Citizen Schools has had to hire dozens of teaching fellows over the past ten years, so this category drew particular attention from management.

"We've always had theories about who makes a great teaching fellow," said Eric Schwarz, "but now we have data that says the fellows who score highest on two clusters of questions in our interviews get the best results with kids." The first set of questions measures the candidate's belief that all kids have the ability to learn at high levels. And the second set of questions measures candidates' belief that no matter what obstacles life has placed before their students, they can help them overcome these challenges and achieve academic success.

At Roca, the ability to have frank, one-on-one conversations about sensitive subjects is viewed as a core skill. Consequently, Roca staff will ask questions that reveal evidence of this skill (or lack of it) during interviews. Athena Garrett, Roca's director for Chelsea, recalled one interview with a male candidate in his forties who had a 15-year-old daughter. "I asked if he'd had the sex talk yet," said Garrett.

Clearly embarrassed by the question, the man started to hem and haw. "Well, my brother has been telling me I should," he replied, and when Garrett pursued the matter, he pushed back: "I'm a single father, and that's usually a talk a woman should have with her daughter." The interview continued for several minutes after this, but Garrett already knew this man would not be a good fit for Roca. "We have to have hard conversations with young people, and he hadn't done this," she said.

At Harlem Children's Zone, Kate Shoemaker said that interviewees are often confronted with a scenario and asked how they would react. She outlined one of her favorites that a colleague uses: "You walk into work on Monday and you discover that over the weekend mice have invaded your office. A very upset parent who doesn't have an appointment is waiting to speak with you, your receptionist has called in sick, you have a meeting with your boss in an hour, and you still need to compile information for that meeting. What do you do first?"

"There's no absolute right or wrong answer," said Shoemaker, but she added that hearing how a candidate thinks through the options—and where they put the aggrieved parent on their list of priorities—can be very revealing.

AS YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CHART GROWS AND THE TEAM SPREADS OUT, FIND NEW WAYS TO STAY CLOSE.

As young organizations mature, there inevitably comes a time when not everyone can report directly to their leaders anymore. A new tier of management is needed to supervise a growing staff and to give the CEO more time to see and deal with the bigger picture. Citizen Schools, Harlem Children's Zone, and Roca have all survived this organizational rite of passage, and their reaction was unanimous: It's not easy.

"Once we decided to make George Khaldun the COO," said Geoffrey Canada, "people really felt disappointed." Kate Shoemaker, who had just begun working at Harlem Children's Zone when Canada created this new management structure, witnessed the effect on her colleagues. "People were naturally upset that they had less direct contact with the president," she said.

Canada and Khaldun took several steps to address these feelings directly without undercutting new reporting lines. They created the Program Council, which met every other month, to provide the organization's program directors with a forum in which they could talk directly to Canada. Agency-wide retreats were held, "and these were really important," Shoemaker noted, "because staff had chances to connect with the boss over the lunch table." Even with these changes, Canada acknowledged that it would often fall on his shoulders to remind people how the new system worked. "If someone still came directly to me," Canada said, "I would bring George into the meeting, and it became pretty clear to the person that I wasn't going to play that game."

This organizational transition was particularly challenging at Citizen Schools, where co-founders Eric Schwarz and Ned Rimer had built a tight team and made major decisions by consensus. By 2003, however, the organization needed senior managers who could free Schwarz and Rimer from the day-to-day concerns. Emily McCann was the first hire on this new tier. As she described that experience, McCann sounded like a batter who had come to home plate with three strikes already against her.

First, she had to deal with the staff's feeling of loss now that they were no longer dealing directly with Schwarz and Rimer. "They had been in the mix on *everything*," said McCann. "The whole organization would participate in deciding the next school we work on in Boston. Now, people began to feel disconnected from the decisions we were making, and that was a challenge." A challenge personified by the organization's new chief financial officer, McCann.

Second, McCann was young and she looked it. "She was just a few years out of Harvard Business School and not yet 30 years old," said Eric Schwarz, "but within 20 minutes of talking to her, I knew she was the right person." Others on the staff were skeptical, but Schwarz put it more bluntly: "Everyone thought I was nuts—she looked like she was 22." By accident, McCann saw a written evaluation of her that was recorded during one of her many interviews with Citizen Schools staff. "It said, 'I can't even imagine if I had to report to her—she's so young!' " recalled McCann.

Third, McCann was coming to Citizen Schools from (gasp!) the corporate world. Before attending Harvard Business School, she worked in mergers and acquisitions at J.P. Morgan & Company, followed by a stint in planning and development at the Walt Disney Company. For many potential employers, these would be two glittering résumé items, but for some of McCann's interviewers, this was the moral equivalent of sleeping with the enemy.

Like Canada and Khaldun at HCZ, McCann acknowledged the problem and went straight at it. "I showed people I was interested in learning, and I did a lot of listening," she recalled. "And I talked a lot with Ned and Eric about morale—who was doing well, who was struggling." Along the way, McCann came to an important realization about managing change at a nonprofit as opposed to doing so at a corporate enterprise.

"Change management is much more difficult at a nonprofit," she said. "Many people work at nonprofits because they want to work at a place that feels more like a family, that is more consensus-driven. You have to give people the practical argument *and* the emotional argument." The strategy has apparently served McCann well: After 18 months as CFO, she was promoted to chief operating officer, and in 2008 she was named president of Citizen Schools.

Finally, it's worth noting that a sense of loss is not exclusive to people on the "org chart" below the CEO. At HCZ, Geoffrey Canada is also nostalgic for the organization's younger days. "In the old days, I could simply leave my office, walk around, and see for myself," he said. "Now, I have to talk to the chief operating officer, who calls a senior manager, who calls the director, who calls their assistant, who calls the coordinator, and by the time I get it, the message is 'Everything's fine!' The ability to know what's *really* happening diminishes as you scale."

PREPARE TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE BOARD. (NOT AT THE SAME TIME, OF COURSE.)

"You need different boards for different stages in your growth," said Eric Schwarz of Citizen Schools, and this was echoed by his colleagues at HCZ and Roca. "We have had three different boards, each led by a different chair," Schwarz added. "There was a 'start-up board' where the trustees were very involved in the programs and all the details of fundraising and event planning. Then there was a 'maturation board' where we really became an institution with decision-making rights, clear lines of accountability, and better long-range planning. Now we have a 'growth board' helping us build systems to scale and overseeing development of regional boards."

Roca has experienced a similar evolution, and as with many smaller nonprofits, the process has not been entirely pain-free. Founding board members invariably have a more personal relationship with the organization and do not make way readily for the next generation, even when rapid growth compels change. "Roca's intensely grassroots culture made board building a challenge," said Molly Baldwin, "but board members who participated in our first theory of change session knew that the board needed to change, and the board leader at that time stepped down to allow that to happen."

As Harlem Children's Zone has grown, so has its board. In 2000, HCZ had to raise $6 million for its operating budget, and ten board members participated in that effort. By 2010, the organization's budget had ballooned to $85 million, and the board

had expanded to 19 members. The profile of people joining the board has shifted as well. "The last eight or nine people who have joined our board are really significant supporters," said Geoffrey Canada, adding that each had given gifts in the six- or seven-figure range and had networks of colleagues and friends who could contribute at similar levels. The arrival of these new board members has been timely. Canada is currently working on a capital campaign to build an endowment of $400 million, the largest such campaign in the organization's history.

YOU'LL NEVER GET THE DOLLARS WITHOUT THE NUMBERS (BUT BE PREPARED FOR PUSHBACK FROM YOUR TEAM).

Evaluating programs to ensure effectiveness is now an article of faith at all three nonprofits, and the interviewees agreed that the major investments they attracted from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and other funders would not have occurred without this commitment. Betina Jean-Louis, who joined Harlem Children's Zone as Director of Evaluation in 2002, could have been speaking for all three nonprofits when she said, "If you're growing, evaluation becomes even more important due to the fundraising demands. As you need to raise millions of dollars, people want hard data showing that you merit those millions of dollars."

Though each nonprofit claims to have a healthy "culture of evaluation" today, they followed different paths to this common ground. Eric Schwarz said that Citizen Schools has been a "data-hungry" organization from the beginning, and recalled a conversation with Jim Klocke, Deputy Director of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, when his organization was just starting out. "Klocke said, 'Promise me that you won't settle for a front-page story in *The Boston Globe* showing a bunch of kids with smiling faces. You *have* to move the numbers.' That's always stuck with me," said Schwarz.

Anisha Chablani, deputy director of Roca, admitted that it took a while for a culture of evaluation to take hold in her organization. When it came to gathering data about Roca's programs prior to 2000, Chablani said, "We took what was required from various grants, but it wasn't geared in a way that we could effectively coordinate the data." When the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation began funding Roca, however, the Foundation engaged Bridgespan to help Roca refine its theory of change, set more definitive goals, and become more systematic in tracking progress toward those goals.

"After working on the theory of change," said Molly Baldwin, "we were clear that we *had* to set up a way to track what we were doing." Roca installed performance management software to consolidate all its data in December 2005, initiating a two-year process of training staff, implementing measurements, and eventually redefining measurements to ensure even closer tracking of progress.

For HCZ, building internal support for evaluation was a gradual process as well. "When we decided we were going to focus on evaluation," said Geoffrey Canada, "there was a lot of pushback from my team. They thought we were going to push test scores and lose our sense of caring for the whole child." Betina Jean-Louis noted that this kind of resistance is not uncommon in the sector. "A lot of people in the nonprofit field go into it for reasons other than numbers and data," she said. "They think that the work should be about the kids, and they don't always necessarily see how a focus on evaluation ends up serving kids."

What ultimately turned staff around, Canada said, was a gradually growing awareness that evaluation was helping HCZ improve the quality of its programs. A noteworthy example came from Harlem Gems, HCZ's pre-school program, which runs from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. each day. Some children were allowed to leave at 4:00 p.m. if they had a parent who wasn't working and could pick them up early. This policy appeared to be a win–win, giving parents greater flexibility in pick-up times while also allowing staff to work with smaller groups as the day progressed.

But when HCZ started evaluating Harlem Gems with the Bracken Basic Concept Scale, which measures children's acquisition of concepts and language skills, evaluators discovered that the children who departed at 4:00 were also performing at the lowest levels in their class—in fact, if anybody needed the benefits of extended-day programming, it was this group! As a result of this evaluation, extended day became a requirement for all Harlem Gem students, and performance on the Bracken tests has steadily improved since that decision.

Even when staff accepts evaluation as a necessary part of daily life, there can still be an issue around *who* conducts the evaluation. External evaluators may be viewed as more objective observers, and they can bring deep experience to the task, but a lack of understanding about the nitty-gritty details of an organization's programs can undermine their work.

At HCZ, for example, an external evaluator noted unusually low attendance on Fridays for a particular afterschool program. Did this suggest that Friday afternoons were a bad time for this program? Were there other reasons attendance was dropping off so markedly? In fact, the answer was simpler, and an evaluator more familiar with HCZ wouldn't have wasted time speculating about the data. The program did not operate on Fridays, and the people who were showing up then were kids who shouldn't have been there in the first place.

"People underestimate how important it is to have in-house evaluation," said Kate Shoemaker. "There's always a trust issue. What's this person going to find, and what are they going to tell people about how my program is working?" HCZ has worked with outside evaluators and will continue to, but having Betina Jean-Louis onboard as the "face" of evaluation has clearly made a difference. "Program directors are now coming to me asking how to measure things happening in their program, rather than waiting for Geoff to come to them," she said.

A STRATEGIC PLAN WITHOUT A MANAGEMENT PLAN IS LIKE A CAR WITHOUT A STEERING WHEEL.

"Intense thought and practice go into drawing up the plans, and most people think once the plans are done, then you just go and do it," said Geoffrey Canada, "but that's a mistake. That's actually when the hardest work begins." When Canada elevated George Khaldun to the position of COO, he made Khaldun directly responsible for ensuring that HCZ's carefully drawn plans delivered the promised outcomes.

"You have the business plan," said Khaldun, "but what are the management structure and theory that make that work? How are you going to execute on that plan to get the outcomes you want?" The answer for Khaldun has been "congruency management," which he defined by describing an attendance problem he had to tackle at an afterschool program in one of HCZ's charter schools.

"A director was having a problem with kids not attending all of their four components—math, social studies, gym, and computer classes—in a typical afterschool session." Activities were being skipped, but it wasn't entirely clear which activities were being avoided or, more important, how this behavior could be stopped. So Khaldun instructed the program directors to collect data and define the problem more clearly.

Once they had an accurate count of which students were missing what activities, Khaldun began his analysis. He quickly learned that students were going to math, skipping social studies, but then returning to attend gym (which they liked). The gym teacher, however, wasn't aware that kids arriving at his activity had just skipped the previous one. So Khaldun instituted a new system of passes that students had to present as they entered each activity to prove they had attended the previous one.

Khaldun also scheduled regular meetings among teachers to assess how this system was working and to suggest refinements if some kids were still slipping through the cracks. "When all these pieces are working together and kids are attending *all* classes—which is directly related to their ability to earn better grades—that's a congruent system," said Khaldun.

GOAL SETTING

To Stretch or Not to Stretch?

When it comes to setting goals for employees, managers generally fall into two camps. Eric Schwarz is a believer in "stretch" goals that force an organization to reach for the sky. "Our tendency is to set big, hairy, audacious goals," said Schwarz, borrowing language from *Good to Great* author Jim Collins. "When you have stretch goals, that's what you're managing against as well as out selling," he added. "If you try to do a little, that's what you're going to do."

George Khaldun is in the other camp with the more pragmatic goal-setters, the ones who believe that obtainable goals allow an organization to record wins that help build momentum. "Don't overreach," Khaldun warned. "Be systematic and realistic in terms of the outcomes you want to achieve." At the same time, Khaldun's boss, Geoffrey Canada, will declare in no uncertain times that if families will place their kids with Harlem Children's Zone, his team will stay with them until their college graduation—as audacious a goal as one is likely to hear.

Whatever their goal-setting philosophy, the leaders of all three nonprofits agreed that rapid growth requires revisiting the goals, often ahead of schedule. "We had a business plan in 2000 that included five-year goals," said Molly Baldwin of Roca, "but you blow out of the plan in the third year, so you revisit."

At Roca, there is a clearly defined five-step plan to engage young people and move them from a troubled life in the streets to a more productive place in the community. As with HCZ, however, the plan Roca put on paper and the process that actually played out didn't match up. As Molly Baldwin explained, the order of the five steps was right, but the timing between steps was not, and her agency had to adapt.

FEED YOUR CULTURE TO FUEL YOUR MISSION.

In a mission-driven sector, people will be attracted to your organization by the very nature of your work. But once those people are on board, their continuing dedicated pursuit of your mission will rely on a healthy internal culture. Even the most brilliantly conceived strategic plan will not succeed if the people responsible for its execution have lost their appetite for the task. (Management guru Peter Drucker summed this up eloquently when he said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast.")

All three nonprofits have consciously thought about their cultures and, more important, have translated that thought into actions that make the culture a living, tangible presence in their day-to-day operations. Harlem Children's Zone exudes a culture of ownership. From Geoffrey Canada down, every staff member operates under the philosophy that he or she is directly responsible for the success of the children. Running through this commitment is a strain of perpetual dissatisfaction. "Until I have 100 percent of my kids performing well," said Geoffrey Canada, "I'm not going to be happy. So if you come here, you're going to have a boss that's almost by definition not happy, and that's not a place for everybody."

Roca is defined by its relentlessness. The story of Angie Rodriguez is typical. If calls aren't returned, a youth worker will visit the school to find the young person in question. If they can't find the young person in school, they'll go to the home. If the child isn't at home, Roca will scour the streets, call friends, and keep reaching out until he or she is found.

Nobody at Roca embodies this quality more than its founder, Molly Baldwin. If Roca has been slower than Citizen Schools or Harlem Children's Zone in creating new management tiers and removing Baldwin from most day-to-day concerns, it is not only because Roca is a smaller operation but also because Baldwin's attachment to the kids she works with runs so deep. Roca uses the terms "truth, trust and transformation" to describe the relationship it forges with youth, but the same is expected among staff members. As a result, the staff is unusually close. "As we've gotten bigger," said Anisha Chablani,

"I feel like the relationships have actually gotten stronger. The level of accountability to each other is higher."

Citizen Schools places a high value on emotional intelligence and—as corny as it may sound—kindness. "On the whole, we have good, kind, smart people at Citizen Schools," said Vice President Kate Mehr, who has been with the organization since 2005. "It's a reflection of Eric and the leadership." Even when the economic downturn that began in 2008 necessitated layoffs, Schwarz and the other managers sought the kinder, gentler path. "We had to lay off about a half-dozen people," Schwarz recalled, "so we gave everyone in that group a minimum of three months' severance and two to three months' notice before they had to leave." Schwarz was also personally involved in every conversation, no matter the level or tenure of the laid-off employee.

THERE IS NO ONE ROAD TO BROADER IMPACT.

In their paper "Pathways to Social Impact: Strategies for Scaling Out Successful Social Innovations," co-authors J. Gregory Dees, Beth Battle Anderson, and Jane Wei-Skillern argue that social entrepreneurs intent on broadening their impact have three options. They can create new, self-sustaining organizations in multiple locations; they can replicate programs that can function within existing entities elsewhere; or they can espouse certain principles that allow others the flexibility to innovate while still operating within clearly defined guidelines.

HCZ has traditionally leaned toward the principles-only approach. In a white paper, "Whatever It Takes," that the organization authored, it says, "Communities interested in following the HCZ model do not need to replicate the specific programs we developed for Central Harlem. But they do need to incorporate all the principles outlined above into the programs that work best in their own neighborhoods."

Since that paper was written, Congress has authorized planning funds for Promise Neighborhoods, making it more likely that several U.S. cities will try to replicate the successes achieved in Harlem. When I asked Geoffrey Canada if he still believed that principles alone would be enough, he nodded his head and insisted that his opinion had not changed. "Look at what Apple has done," Canada said, seeing an analogy in the technology company's success. "They say *we've* got the platform, *you* do the apps, and look at all the genius that's unleashed. I think that's where we are right now."

At Citizen Schools, Eric Schwarz believes that scaling his organization's impact will require more of a mix. "From the beginning, we tried to do both programs and principles," said Schwarz. "A key mental model for us has been the 'action tank,' as opposed to a 'think tank.' We're trying to build an organization that combines evaluation and continuous improvement with driving change in the broader sector." Schwarz firmly believes Citizen Schools has helped change how Americans think about afterschool programs. "For most people, 'afterschool' was still an afterthought in 2000," he said. "It was child care with maybe a little bit of enrichment. And it's still hard to think of out-of-school time as a driver of in-school outcomes. But in the last ten years, we've made a lot of headway."

Finally, at Roca, Molly Baldwin is content for now to continue refining Roca's model and speaking at conferences (such as the Youth Policy Forum) when her busy schedule allows. "We have been an advocate, regionally and nationally, of working with a group that's hard to work with," said Baldwin. Baldwin and her colleagues believe that if more people consider working with these disengaged kids, that in itself will be a major step forward.

AND FINALLY, A FEW WELL-CHOSEN WORDS OF ADVICE ...

Each interview concluded with the same question: **"Imagine you're speaking to a room filled with leaders of high-performing nonprofits, along with their funders. They are all interested in growing their organizations. If you had time to give them only one piece of advice, what would you say?"** Here are their answers:

"BRING ON AN EVALUATOR, AN IT PERSON, AN ACCOUNTANT, A DEVELOPMENT PERSON — THEY BECOME YOUR BRAIN TRUST, AND YOU NEED TO HAVE THEM IN PLACE IN ORDER TO GROW."

GEORGE KHALDUN, HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE

"YOU BETTER HOLD ON, BECAUSE ONCE YOU START GROWING, YOU'RE GOING TO FACE NEW CHALLENGES EVERY YEAR. AND YOU'RE STILL GOING TO BE DEALING WITH THE OLD CHALLENGES — THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GO AWAY."

GEOFFREY CANADA, HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE

"BE REALLY CLEAR ON WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE AS AN ORGANIZATION. THAT WILL BE THE TRUE NORTH FOR ANY DECISION YOU HAVE TO MAKE."

KATE MEHR, CITIZEN SCHOOLS

"ONCE YOU THINK YOU'VE LEARNED ENOUGH, YOU'RE NOT GROWING ANYMORE, AND YOU'RE GOING TO GET IN YOUR OWN WAY."

ANGIE RODRIGUEZ, ROCA

"SOCIAL CHANGE IS A TEAM SPORT, AND YOU HAVE TO BUILD A TEAM."

ERIC SCHWARZ, CITIZEN SCHOOLS

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Expanded Learning Time: How the Edwards Middle School in Boston partnered with Citizen Schools to Transform the Learning Day (Kate Carpenter Bernier, April 2008)

Going to Scale: The Challenge of Replicating Social Programs (Jeffrey Bradach, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Spring 2003)

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