Capstone: What do Urban Residential Schools Afford Us?

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*Abstract:* Children in urban neighborhoods all over the country struggle with challenges in their communities. For some time, the solution has been wrap-around services and increased support for communities who need it most. In contrast, a new trend arising is that which focuses not on community revitalization but instead on removing children with the highest need and placing them in urban boarding schools. In theory, these schools replicate successful traditional boarding models and help students not only prepare for life in college but also to develop the skills they need in leadership and career readiness. This capstone looks first at the traditional boarding school model and examines the four principles of successful elite boarding schools in student preparation: global academic curriculum, connection to higher learning, perpetuation of a status-culture model with an emphasis on tradition and soft skill development. It then considers specific challenges that urban learners face and barriers often encountered by students. Continuing from there, I examine how urban boarding schools such as the SEED schools merge high-needs urban learners with traditional boarding school methods and conclude with recommendations for further implementation.

*Keywords:* boarding school, urban boarding school, SEED schools, poverty

Urban neighborhoods can be steeped with challenging circumstances for children. In some communities, crime, uncertainty and upheaval can be a way of life. In communities where resources are limited, many schools feel the constraints of these challenges within the walls of school buildings and many educators are left wondering just how much can come from efforts within schools when much of the need is outside of schools. My capstone will look at the urban boarding school movement and its potential for urban learners.

The **learners** in this capstone are African American urban students in grades 6-12. Given the contrasting nature of this research, I will juxtapose the experience and needs of African American urban learners against those of their predominantly white, upper-middle class counterparts. In regards to **learning context**, I will focus on how academic skills provide students with educational resources across both elite boarding schools and urban boarding schools. I will also focus on soft skills learned by students to succeed in the real world, such as opportunities to develop inter- and intrapersonal skills, collaborative skills, problem solving measures and others. The **curriculum** in this capstone focuses on meta-curricular considerations: global academic curriculum, connection to higher education, a status-culture model which perpetuates tradition, and soft skill development. I will examine how this implicit curriculum plays out in traditional boarding schools compared to SEED schools. Lastly, I’ll focus on the implications and recommendations for SEED schools in developing equitable education compared to America’s elite.

**Traditional Boarding Experiences**

For centuries, elite families have sent their students to boarding schools across the world. The reasons for this trend may be vast and various. Some areas do not provide families with educational opportunities and options they feel will prepare their students for the rigors of college and life beyond. Other families opt for the boarding option because of family structure or parental inability to provide a stable place for children to attend school, such as parents who are forced to travel for work or who may be going through a divorce. Still others opt for boarding options to respond to certain needs for children, such as schools which focus on arts or sports or which provide for attention to specific learning disabilities or developmental disabilities. And then there are those families for whom boarding school is more of perpetuation of power and responsibility, perhaps a family legacy that becomes instilled in the next generation—linking children to the same tradition as their parents. Just as different families seek boarding schools for different reasons, boarding schools have different focuses. I will examine the last category: elite boarding schools, schools which Persell and Cookson (1985) refer to as the Select 16.

The Select 16 boarding schools “serve the sociological function of differentiating the upper classes from the rest of the population…and set the pace and [bear] the brunt of criticism received by private schools” (Persell and Cookson, 1985, p.42). These schools are seen as the most elite and top producing schools in the United States and entry into and graduation from one of these institutions practically ensures future success in college and the working world. According to Gaztambide-Fernández (2009), “To call these schools ‘elite’ is to indicate that they are deemed to have a high status among social groups that have power to make such judgments and with whom, presumably, these schools ‘correspond’ as educational institutions,” (p. 1092). Therefore, schools are elite simply because people with power have deemed them so. Whether this classification is just or deserved is perhaps a topic for another study, however most scholars would agree that elite boarding schools share certain practices that make them very successful. What is it about these schools that makes them so successful? And how can we bring these characteristics to the broader population, especially kids who need it most?

Persell and Cookson have issued numerous contributions to the field of elite boarding school education. Their first book, *Preparing for Power* (1985),outlines how boarding schools work and the unique traits that make them excel at producing elite members of society. In a follow up article written in 2010, they revisit their initial work by reexamining and classifying these traits into three key areas: (1) global academic curriculum, (2) connection to higher education and (3) a status-culture model which perpetuates tradition. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) further reinforces these categories, breaking them down into various forms of different types of ‘elitness’, mapping to Cookson and Persell as (1 & 2) scholastically elite, and (3) historically elite. For the purposes of this paper, I will use Persell and Cookson’s categories to further examine the composition of these categories. In addition, I address a fourth category which I call Soft Skill Development, drawing from the work of Arieli, Beker and Kashti (2001).

**Global Academic Curriculum**

The first characteristic that separates elite boarding schools from typical schools is their focus on a global curriculum. There is little debate that our world becomes more globalized each day with the rise of internet communication and ease of travel, as well as international business. Boarding schools, in an attempt to create the powerful work force of tomorrow, understand the crucial demand for educating students to innovate, partake in, and contribute to a global society. In practice, preparing students for this work is a three pronged approach according to Persell and Cookson (2010). It includes: *subject matter* which helps students surmount geographical location, such as technology, sociology, politics, world language, new media; an understanding of *status culture* which educates children to appreciate art and liberal studies to help them appreciate other cultures and maintain an elite status; and *autonomy* through learning, such as by increased independent study. These traits form a curriculum meant to prepare tomorrow’s leaders to be competent, self-sufficient and appreciative of culture.

Additionally, there must also be a shift or a nuance in delivery of instruction. Persell and Cookson (1985) mention there is a greater focus on the Socratic Method where students are pressed to think for themselves through direct dialogue with teachers and other students, a trait not commonly used in larger, more urban schools. In this way, students are pushed to work to understand the thinking of themselves, their peers and adults and to respond through logical discourse. Kane (1992) explains that this type of teaching is possible given small class sizes. She points out, “independent school students spend an exceptional amount of time in the company of adults,” (p.214), a trait she goes on to describe as crucial in the development of dialogue where students are pushed in their thinking to a greater degree. For these reasons, the curriculum students encounter on a daily basis prepare them for a global world.

**Connection to Higher Education**

As was discussed in the prior section, elite boarding schools develop curricula that are second to none. The teaching methods and content prepare students to become global citizens but also provide for ample opportunity for students to gain a competitive edge in the college admissions process. Knowing exactly what colleges are looking for, many elite schools require students to become well-rounded in rigorous academics, sports, arts, leadership and community service. In doing so, young scholars are prepared to apply and expect to gain entry to top notch universities (Percell and Cookson, 1985; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009; Kane, 1992). Not surprisingly, students are connected to higher education through alumni connections and the good reputation of the school, and many elite boarding schools boast impressive matriculation to Ivy League schools and other top universities across the United States and abroad.

When we think about the connection to Higher Education, it doesn’t mean simply providing kids with college guidebooks and setting up interviews. In the elite boarding school world, the connection to higher education is encapsulated in students’ mindsets: both the mindsets developed at school or by the school and those more implicit mindsets stemming from upper class culture. An interesting representation of this facet is found in Gaztambide-Fernandez’ (2009) account of talking with a young boarder at an elite school about college. The girl tells him how much she’d like to attend Harvard because she feels she’s been groomed for schooling there. When Gaztambide-Fernandez asks her what the opposite of Harvard would be, she tells him working at McDonalds. He goes on to analyze this mentality writing, “students have two distinct views of a career as a low-wage service worker: it has one value for them, and another value for individuals outside of the bubble boarder. They may envision an ideal world of fairness and equity, where the ‘common man’ is valued, but they do not see themselves as ‘common’, (p. 196). Therefore, students at elite schools not only want to attend college to further their education and prepare for careers, they want to avoid the fear of failing their social class and preparation.

**Status-Culture Model and Perpetuating Tradition**

People of different cultures value different things. For instance, members of the middle class tend to value meritocracy in relation to getting ahead in the world (Lareau, 2011). For the upper class, status is highly valued. People who see themselves as elite want to perpetuate this standard (Cookson and Persell, 2010). The status-culture at boarding schools is tied largely to affluence. Students (and families) have a greater perceived social status congruent with the amount of money they have. Amongst boarding students, status-culture also prevails, particularly in regards to perceived academic achievement and the ability to traverse cliques (Gaztambie-Fernandez, 2009). Students may gain a higher status if they have more money or academic skill, or if they are able to mesh well with a number of different groups of students such as the athletes and the band members. In this way, the culture of elite schools serves to push its members internally to greater accomplishments, an interesting dynamic where students challenge each other to be more academically minded and more accepting of all students.

Kane (1992) notes that another facet which plays into the status-culture model (but also which stands alone) is the role of tradition in elite boarding schools. Many students attend these schools because a parent or other family member attended the same institution. Traditions are present in school architecture, photographs, names of buildings and activities available to students. Persell and Cookson (1985) note that tradition is iconic in the sociologist Max Weber’s view of authority, and that subjecting members of a group to tradition inducts them into a tradition of power and perpetuating authority. Therefore, elite boarding schools promote status-culture explicitly through tradition but also implicitly through ornate campuses.

**Soft Skill Development**

Another key facet of residential settings is the development of soft skills, such as self-advocacy, increased responsibility, conflict resolution and independence. Arieli, Beker, and Kashti (2001) found that belongingness—both the ability to find a sense of place with peers and the ability to create feelings of belonging for others—was a crucial trait developed in successful residential communities, as well as self-governance and the emergence of increased leadership skills not developed at home. In addition, residential settings provide efficacy opportunities for students who may not find success in one area given the more holistic approach to education (Persell and Cookson, 1985) since they offer a variety of arenas for children to be successful (i.e. academics, sports, leadership, social development, artistic ability, etc.)

**Urban Learners: The Case for Residential Education Opportunities**

There is little doubt that boarding schools are factories of success for many students. But how does this map onto the lives of children who rarely set foot inside their doors? To understand the case for urban boarding schools we must first consider the challenges that students in urban communities face. It should be stated that every urban community is different with distinct strengths and challenges according to demographics, race, ethnicity, access to services and many other factors. For the scope of this investigation, I am choosing to focus on urban Black communities that are dealing with generational poverty and scarce opportunity.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for students living in poverty is inadequate provision for housing and food. Bashir (2002) brings to light a troubling look at what families in poverty must face on a day to day basis, such as the disrepair of homes leading to medical issues like asthma and respiratory disease and infestation from rodents. She also points out that because communities such as these can be unsafe, often children must spend even more time in their homes than same-age counterparts which justifiably exacerbates the issues stemming from poor construction and living conditions. She also brings to light that children living in poverty may suffer from mental health conditions stemming from issues such as overcrowding in home environments. Cook and Frank (2008) did a broad study on youth 18 years and under and found that and added risk of inadequate housing is the correlation of food insecurity and poverty. Their study correlates medical issues and health trends in poor children. They write, “Food insecurity, even at the least severe household levels, has emerged as a highly prevalent risk to the growth, health, cognitive, and behavioral potential of America's poor and near-poor children,” (p. 202). It is no wonder that children who have inadequate housing and food insecurity may perform at lower academic levels than their same age counterparts given their increased susceptibility to poor living conditions which may lead to healthcare issues.

Another related issue is children in poverty’s access to adequate health care. As I’ve described, children living in poverty may be at an elevated risk for healthcare issues given their living environments. Both Eidelman (2007) and Newacheck et al (2003) found that children living in poverty were less likely to receive medical care due to failure to be enrolled in free and reduced cost medical programs. Eidelman also notes that children living in poverty are more susceptible to be born to teen mothers and may be at risk for low birth rate. In addition, poor children are less likely to receive medical and learning disability diagnoses which may impact learning. She writes,

“Few public schools in economically depressed neighborhoods have the resources to recognize health issues such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder and then to provide counseling and therapy for children with these disorders Instead, their behavior is more often perceived as insubordinate or disruptive than it is recognized as symptomatic of a disorder or of the environment in which these children live,” (p. 1).

They may be at further risk if preventative healthcare is not easily accessible, such as when families must travel for a great deal of time to get to medical appointments. Additionally, as Lareau (2011) notes, parents may be unaware of what emergent healthcare problems are when doctors explain them, such as in an example from Lareau’s own work with a family who was told that their child had tooth decay but failed to link this information to the possibility of the child developing cavities. If children are sick and not receiving medical diagnoses or care, it stands to reason that they will not do as well academically.

Another key challenge confronting children in poverty is instability. Given the constraints of urban housing, many students face a large amount of transiency. The reasons for these shifts are vast. DeLuca, Rosenblatt and Wood (2011) found that mobility in poor communities fell into two main categories: reactive mobility and decisions to move. Reactive mobility happens when families move because they have no other choice. This may be due to living conditions being unsafe or unstable. It may also be because of changes in family situation, such as romantic breakups. Reactive mobility also happens due to eviction or a change in housing subsidy. In their study, DeLuca, Rosenblatt and Wood found that about 68% of mobility fell into the category of reactive mobility with the largest percentage identified as Unit Failure—or unlivable conditions such as mold, vermin or failing appliances. The second category, decision to move, has to do with intent and desire to move to a new place, largely for more space or due to dislike of the neighborhood. In both cases, children are forced to move to a new place which means making new friends and often attending a new school, disruptions which can be problematic in social and academic settings.

In examining what families might look for in new places to live, DeLuca, Rosenblatt and Wood (2011) found that many families focused not on safer communities or better schools, but examined the key features that weren’t working in the house before. Unfortunately, this may lead families to be faced with a new set of challenges which will further perpetuate them looking for another new place to live in a short time. DeLuca, Rosenblatt and Wood write, “A lifetime of ‘pinball effect,’ jumping from bad neighborhood to bad neighborhood over the course of one’s life leads families adopt safety strategies which largely accept the inevitability and universality of danger, substandard housing, and even poor schooling,” (p. 20). When kids aren’t given a chance to bond to place and are worried about where they will be living in a few months or even a few weeks, it makes focusing on schooling difficult.

The last factor I want to present—but certainly not the last challenge present for children in poor urban communities—is parental involvement and engagement with schooling. Annette Lareau (2011) is one of the paramount researchers investigating parental experiences and rationale in academic participation amongst parents in poor communities. Her book *Unequal Childhoods* brought to light the idea that parents in poverty do not love their children any less but may parent in different ways than the dominant class. Some of these distinctions have the potential to be problematic when it comes to education since teachers often do not cater their teaching styles to the needs of poor families. Lareau presents the idea that parents in poverty take the view of Accomplishment of Natural Growth—or wanting their children to grow up with more of an emphasis on the child carrying out their own lives rather than being an instrumental part of each component of child rearing. In this regard, parents are more likely to give boundaries and restrictions but take less of an active role in children’s free time and participating in children’s schooling.

The idea of Accomplishment of Natural Growth as seen through lack of involvement in schooling has the potential to be problematic when it’s time for teens to navigate the path towards college and career readiness. Lareau mentions things like students trying to understand and manage advanced placement classes, gaining acceptance to magnet programs, talking with teachers about the best options for children and gaining access to college as being problematic for children in poverty. In addition, because adults are often busy with other responsibilities such as raising other children or working several jobs, they may not have the time to focus on the academic needs of their teens. Williams and Sanchez (2012) cite the top reasons for parents being uninvolved in children’s education as being unconcerned or busy. Because of this, parents rely on the school to prepare children for college—a trend that can be problematic if the school either does not see this as their responsibility or is not enacting programs to prepare students.

**The SEED Schools: A Hybridity of Academic Excellence and Solution Based Living**

Thus far I have examined traditional boarding schools and why they tend to be successful. I have also examined problematic conditions in the lives of urban youth. I’ll now focus on an organization that is attempting to provide academic excellence while addressing the challenges that urban youth face. The Schools for Educational Evolution and Development (SEED) schools provide a different concept for schooling where students board at the school five days a week in an attempt to counteract some of the problems described above. How are SEED schools accommodating children’s needs in response to their poverty status? And how do they compare with the elite Select 16 schools?

The SEED Foundation—a network of urban boarding schools in DC, Maryland and Florida—was started in 1997 by Eric Adler and Rajiv Vinnakota. First opened in DC, the concept of a charter school meshed with a boarding option was unheard of in the charter community. Adler and Vinnakota wanted to provide an option for at-risk youth who struggled in their home communities but showed a strong desire for quality education. In 1998 the SEED schools opened a college preparatory model focusing on bringing the advantageous nature of boarding schools to children in poverty. Ten years later the Baltimore branch opened, followed by the Miami branch in 2014. Currently SEED serves 780 sixth through twelfth graders across the three locations, all of whom live within their respective school districts. SEED also saves seats for children who are living in the foster care system.

**Addressing the challenges and Mapping the Traits of Success**

SEED schools work to address the challenges their students face in many ways. Perhaps the largest need is access to safe and equitable housing. SEED provides not only free housing for students that is clean and free from crime, but also provides students with nutritious meals and healthcare. In addition, the school provides a structured space outside of the classroom where children can think critically and build competency in many areas, such as athletics and arts (Curto and Freyer, 2014). It facilitates environments where children must collaborate and work together to solve problems that arise in living together; important building blocks for college and career readiness. In addition, students are able to take pride in their living spaces and do not have to worry about the same issues of transience they may be facing at home. This type of stability proves to be advantageous to students and allows them to concentrate on developing in academics and developing as young adults. Bass (2014) notes, “The structure of the boarding school is designed to provide students with capital benefits that they would not otherwise benefit from unless there is some form of intervention. These capital benefits may not only serve as an equalizer, but also protect urban students from becoming part of negative statistics,” (p. 31). These skills tie directly into the elite boarding schools’ promotion of soft skill development; a trait which may be lacking from traditional public school and other charter options.

Similar to traditional boarding schools, SEED schools empower students by providing them with a connection to higher education. Since the SEED schools are responsible for students 24 hours a day, they are able to better monitor large scale projects and homework assignments. Like traditional boarding schools, students must maintain specific academic requirements and are provided with extra support should their scholastic progress decrease. As discussed above, one of the challenges urban learners face is lack of parental support in school. The SEED schools remedy this by intervening on the child’s behalf and providing resources to students and families for college. They also provide dorm parents and teachers who are accessible to students 24/7 whose purpose is to act as mentors and role models for students. (Curto and Freyer, 2014). In addition to taking students on college tours and helping them complete admissions paperwork, they provide an example of what dorm life is like and teach students to navigate living independently.

In addition to housing and structure, urban boarding schools provide quality curriculum. The SEED school in DC requires students to take four years of math and three years of Spanish and science (Bacon 2004). In addition, students are able to take impressive learning trips, such as a trip to Greece to study history (Bacon 2004). However, there seems to still be some disparity between SEED students and their elite boarding school counterparts in terms of access to global curriculum. While students at the Select 16 schools receive classes in advanced physics, Latin and Shakespearian tragedies, SEED students are often required to take classes that will enable them to close the reading gap they have coming in as sixth graders. It might be argued that SEED students have better classes than their mainstream school counterparts, however, when paired against elite schools there’s little comparison

The last category of successful elite boarding schools is the status-culture mentality and perpetuating tradition; something to which the SEED schools do not draw strict ties. Elite boarding schools, as was discussed earlier, are elite because those with power say they are elite due to cost and results. Although the SEED schools may be prestigious amongst options for urban learners, they are not yet considered elite, largely because they have not produced the same results as the Select 16 and have not been tied to the same level of civic performance or affluence. An interesting part of the SEED legacy versus that of a Select 16 school is the tradition: if a student graduates from a SEED school, will he or she want his or her children to attend the same school? Presumably, considering SEED schools are for the most disadvantaged members of urban communities, there will not be a strong likeliness for generations of families to attend the school. Unfortunately, SEED has not been around long enough to determine the long term effects of performance and trends over generations.

**Concerns**

As there are many scholars who see the benefits of urban boarding schools, there are those who provide caveats to this reformative approach. Perhaps the largest concern is removing children from their families. Traditional boarding schools use the conception of *Concerted Cultivation* (Lareau, 2011) to promote the dismissal of children from the family unit: families are more inclined to send their preteens and teenagers away to get a quality education if it means giving them a better shot at life down the road, such as connection to higher education. On the other hand, African American families value relational components of family as paramount. Bass (2014) fears that children who are sent away from the community in order to pursue educational options might be seen as trading their family for education; a troubling dichotomy. She also warns of the risk of devaluing children’s cultures when they are taken away from their neighborhoods.

Another large concern is the rate of success of SEED students compared to non-boarding school counterparts. Unfortunately, although they reap many benefits not available to children attending typical or day-school charter models, SEED students are not outperforming their peers on standardized state tests. In fact, most are operating on par with the district average and slightly below their charter day school counterparts (Bacon 2004; Curto and Freyer, 2011). Curto and Freyer (2014) note that the benefits of boarding education may be far deeper reaching than simply examining test scores, but admit difficulty with examining the non-test-score benefits and state that more long term research will need to be completed to know the impact. This harkens back to the idea of soft skill development: how do we quantifiably measure outcomes such as intrapersonal awareness, compassion, table etiquette or study skills? Anecdotal notes have shown that students are exhibiting these traits but little can be done to provide measurable gains in these areas.

**Implications and Recommendations**

Curto and Freyer (2011) state that urban boarding schools are successful because they ‘[place] students in safer and less volatile environments, [minimize] negative parental and community interactions, and [ensure] that students have positive adult role models, are provided with nutritious foods, spend less time being idle,’ (p. 7). SEED schools are innovative places where children can find safety and a place to focus on their education. They are a place of stability and care, and have enormous potential to be a great option for urban learners. However, urban boarding schools have some work to do to increase their effectiveness and responsiveness.

The double edged sword of urban boarding schools like SEED is that they remove children from potentially troubled communities and situations. While this fact can be exorbitantly beneficial for students, it can also rob them of cultural development and opportunities and view their parents as unwelcome contributors to their educational journey. Asbury and Woodson (2012) revealed that SEED schools do attempt to engage family at times and promote the acquisition of positive relationships. They write, “Though boarding its students is essential to the SEED model, the Foundation stresses the importance of cultivating positive relationships with families and community leaders, in part as a means of strengthening students’ support structures and out-of-school communities” (p. 144). More work needs to be done, however, in bridging the gap between students’ lives at home and their lives at school as the current model focuses on school workers acting *in loco parentis* instead of working side by side families. The work being done at SEED is beneficial only to the extent that meaningful change is made for children. SEED should work to bring home culture and family experience into the school setting where possible. Doing so will better replicate—and perhaps elevate—the elite boarding schools’ principle of status-based culture and tradition as students come to understand school as part of a family endeavor. Little research has been done in this area.

Another gap between elite boarding schools and urban boarding schools is the view of assessment and what it means to be successful. As discussed previously, SEED schools are expected to produce above-average results on state tests which elite boarding schools are not subject to. For urban boarding schools to be considered a success, it may be beneficial to develop separate measures on which to assess students in order to determine true gains. Currently, the only norm-referenced tests at our disposal are college entry exams, such as the SATs and ACTs. Unfortunately, these may not serve as a fair indicator due to test bias and other factors which tend to favor upper class white students. More work needs to be done to truly identify the benefits coming from SEED schools. Understanding the type of thinking, learning, collaboration and critical skill development afforded to urban boarding school students is paramount in determining the benefits this unique setting provides.

There is an emerging literature base supporting findings that residential education is especially beneficial for foster children or children who are otherwise without parental figures. Lee and Barth (2009) reported that the demand for boarding options for foster children was double the rate of available placements and further confirmed positive outcomes for such students with 86% achieving college placement or vocational training after graduation. It may well be that we need to better identify which of our students truly benefit the most from urban boarding schools. Considering that there is research stating the concerns with abandoning relational family structure in African American families (Bass, 2014), care should be taken to ensure families are given choices for their student. There are many schools in urban communities which are producing excellent results without removing kids from their neighborhoods. Urban boarding schools are a good option for some children, but in the end they must continue to remain just one of many options for urban learners.

Lastly, perhaps the most troubling finding of this research is that elite boarding schools and urban boarding schools do not seek to serve the same end in society. The purpose of the Select 16 boarding school is to produce students who are primed for power because they have been enculturated into a mindset of affluence and entitlement. Although more work is being done to bring community service programs to these schools, it is more for the sake of college admissions competition than true altruism. Contrastingly, urban boarding schools such as SEED do not try to perpetuate or create an elite class but rather exist simply to elevate children from the atrocities of poverty which keep them from reaching their full potential. Of course SEED would like to see all of its students go on to graduate from Ivy League schools and obtain high paying jobs but even those who attend state schools and receive entry level jobs are lauded as being success stories. If SEED truly wants to look at boarding school equity with schools such as the Select 16 more work needs to be done to elevate the program based on the four principles of global curriculum, connection to higher learning, status-cultural model and soft skill development.

**Conclusion**

So just what do urban boarding schools afford us? They certainly strive to address the needs of children living in poverty. They provide a safe space where children can settle into the academic world, free from the daily stresses of poor housing, inadequate healthcare, food insecurity, transience and lack of parent involvement. They also have been proven to raise test scores. As of now, while urban boarding schools emulate some of the key principals of elite boarding schools, more purposeful work needs to be done surrounding replicating the characteristics which make elite schools elite and a direct pipeline to future success. While they are not a silver bullet in the field of education, urban boarding schools should continue to be one type of school for certain types of urban learners. As we continue to problem solve the multifaceted world of educating students in poverty, we must let the realities of student need be the paramount driver of educational equity and opportunity in our nation.

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