



United Way of Rhode Island
Afterschool Leadership Circle

BRIDGES

Survey for Wallace Foundation

[The Wallace Foundation](#), a valued partner of United Way of Rhode Island, is conducting market research to better understand the opinions of Policymakers, K-12 Public School Leaders and Afterschool Leaders in regard to trends that relate to desired outcomes of K-12 education and afterschool programs.

We are working with them to distribute this survey and gather as much feedback as possible. Your thoughts and perspective would be valuable to the research. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be strictly confidential and will not be attributed to you or your organization.

To begin the survey, please click [here](#) or copy and paste the address below into your Internet browser.

Direct Link: <https://surveyresearchfeedback.com/e.asp?p=WAL1501&S=C&ps1=18&id=r>

Should you receive more than one invitation to participate in this survey, please complete it only once.

We appreciate your willingness to contribute to this research. It's important that The Wallace Foundation hear from leaders across the country and in a variety of roles, so I hope you will share your opinions today.

SAVE THE DATE: Girls in STEM Evening Mini-Conference

Date: Thursday, April 14, 2016

Time: 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Location: United Way of Rhode Island, 50 Valley Street, Providence

On April 14, United Way of Rhode Island will host a *Girls in STEM Evening Mini-Conference*. The goal of the event is to convene those across the Rhode Island afterschool field to acknowledge and discuss the challenges faced by girls interested in STEM areas of study, and to offer tangible solutions for educators on how they can help girls overcome these barriers. Please continue to check back; more information will be available shortly.

FEATURE: PASSIONATE PROFESSIONALS

Raul Cervantes, College Access Program Director, College Visions



Throughout the year, *Bridges* will feature interviews with the eight Passionate Professionals honored for their work in the out-of-school-time field at the 13th annual Lights On Afterschool! Breakfast of Champions. This month the spotlight is on **Raul Cervantes**, who is the College Access Program Director for College Visions.

The interview was conducted by Elana Rosenberg and Joseph Morra, and asks questions related to this year's LOA theme of "Passion. Potential. Possibility."

Elana: What propels your passion in the field?

Raul: Honestly, I feel like I've been so passionate and dedicated to this work because it comes from a very personal place. I work in college access, so within our organization we support first generation low-income students to not only get into college but to get through college. I was very much in their shoes a couple years ago. I grew up in a household that was working-class, and out of four siblings I was the third and the first in my family to begin the college process. Not having parents with the knowledge or the opportunities to guide me through that process I was really at a loss. Thankfully, by my senior year, the college advisor at my school took me under his wing and really guided me through that process. Honestly, I do not think I would have reached where I was and been as successful without his support. I don't think I realized the impact of that until much later. Throughout my undergraduate career, even though I was on a very different trajectory—I majored in architecture and loved it at the time—it was interesting because a lot of my work experience at the time was in service of others. I worked as an orientation counselor and a peer advisor, and I really found passion in that. I enjoyed working with other youth or my peers, and by the end of my undergraduate degree, I did not want to do architecture anymore. I therefore made the transition to pursue a career in education.

Elana: During your career, what has been an inspiring occasion with a young person?

Raul: You know, there have been many [laughs]. A lot of what we do results in tangible benchmarks and accomplishments. You know, getting an acceptance letter, a great financial aid package; going off to college, studying abroad for the first time—seeing students take on these new opportunities, expanding their world, graduating from college, and getting their first job out of college. But what sticks out in my mind is sort of gray. It started negatively but turned into the biggest positive in the working relationships with youth. So, my second year as an advisor, we brought on a student who came from another youth organization. He had a really bigger-than-life personality and I was excited to work with him. But once we started out one-on-one advising we just butted heads a lot. He wasn't receptive to what I was suggesting and my guidance, and he also talked back and was combative. It made for a really tense environment and it went on for a while; sort of not understanding how to maneuver the situation. I tried different things, and I remember at some point one afternoon when he came in to meet with me I said, "You know what, I have to make a coffee run, come with me." So I took him to the local Starbucks. We went in and I just sat him down and I wanted to have a heart-to-heart with him. It ended up being a three-hour conversation, but we both took down the barriers and opened up and really understood where each other was coming from and sort of the things that allowed us to clash a lot. Honestly, from that moment onward we had a really great relationship. He's a fourth year in college and he doesn't come home often, but when he does we actually meet at that Starbucks. We meet Saturday afternoons and talk for like three to five hours. It's been great to see how that relationship has flourished.

Elana: Excellent. How does your work create possibilities for young people?

Raul: Everything that we do is about opening up possibilities. I see my role not just as an advisor and as a mentor, but as a connector, right? I think we support youth to connect with knowledge. They come to us not really knowing about the college process and what makes a good school, and things to look for in a good school. So we connect them to institutions and certain people at those institutions. We connect them to opportunities. Whether it be getting them the scholarship money that they need to attend that college. I think then, that leads them to being successful. We don't help students get into college and call that success at the end of the day. We try to be very mindful that it's not just about getting them in but getting them through college, and that's the ultimate challenge. So we want to make sure that we enable students and we set them up for success, not just for this one year but for five years down the line. We know that at the end of the day, if they're able to come out of their educational experience with a degree that is going to open up a world for them. We know that graduates have better health, have more career options, make higher incomes. It opens up that world to them.

Elana: How do you recognize potential in others?

Raul: In students? In staff?

Elana: In both. Is it different for you when you see it in a staff member and when you see it in students?

Raul: I guess not. I think automatically everybody has potential, but I think if the excitement and willingness is there it makes it easier to tap into it. Especially when working with youth; they come with a range of personalities, backgrounds, and so one meeting to the next is not going to be the same. The type of conversation that I have is not going to be the same. So you've got to be really skillful in being able to maneuver your approach and the way you speak to somebody so you're able to build a rapport and if they have some walls or reservations about jumping into this that you're able to bring those down. They'll allow you to enter their world to support them. I think what's really great about our organization is that we recruit students who already want to be there. That willingness is already there, it's just a matter of really guiding them and supporting them through the process.

Elana: Who do you think recognized your potential?

Raul: In life or just recently through this award [laughs]? I strongly believe that one's success is not solely as result of their personal qualities and strengths, but that it really takes other people enabling you and supporting you through that. I don't want to sound cliché, but my family; my parents, who maybe didn't have the knowledge or resources to connect me, but were morally very encouraging. At school I had really supportive teachers and, in particular, that guidance counselor who I always reference as being able to lead me to the path of higher education. I think more recently, the mentors that I have in my life. The College Visions director, he's my boss, but I also strongly consider him to be a mentor. I feel like mentors are adults in your life who support you. I think they're considered mentors because they have a vision of who you are or should be, and when they express that it motivates and excites you to want to achieve that. I just actually had my end-of-the-year evaluation with Simon yesterday, and him seeing things that I didn't necessarily see in myself caught me a little off-guard, but also gave me the encouragement and passion to really embrace what he had to say and display it moving forward.

Elana: Great, thank you!

AROUND THE STATE NEWS

Have something to share? Email Elana.Rosenberg@uwri.org to have your news included in BRIDGES!

ELO Summit for Credit: *Creating Opportunities for Personalized Learning*

Friday, April 1, 2016: 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Providence Public Library, 150 Empire Street, Providence

Catch up on the state of Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) for credit in Rhode Island when you join educators, community organizations, and industry mentors for a summit on building partnerships that support ELO development. This summit will feature remarks by Dr. Ken Wagner, Rhode Island Education Commissioner. Registration is free and the full agenda will be available soon. Click [here](#) to register.

RESOURCES

How Would High School be Different if Students Could Design It?

Check out this thought-provoking article from The Hechinger Report on what schools would look like if they were designed by students. And, here's a teaser: At a kid-designed high school, there'd be more technology and dancing in the halls, and less testing. Read the full piece [here](#).

3 Challenges for Schools in Preparing Students for Good Jobs

What skills will students need to be competitive in a complex, ever-evolving workforce? That's the question posed by Betsy Brand, Executive Director of the [American Youth Policy Forum](#), in one of her recent posts. In addition to academic accomplishment, schools will be faced with the challenge of equipping students with broad employability skills that go beyond traditional curriculums. [Click here to read more.](#)

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

The Rhode Island Foundation Accepting Applications for Sergeant Cornel Young, Jr. Scholarship Fund

Proposals must be received by Friday, April 8, 2016

The Rhode Island Foundation is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for the [Sergeant Cornel Young, Jr. Scholarship Fund](#).

The Sergeant Cornel Young, Jr. Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to juniors at a Providence public high school planning to attend a post-secondary, degree-conferring institution. Students must be nominated by a high school guidance counselor and have overcome a serious obstacle in their academic path. Awards are given upon graduation the following year, with proof of college acceptance. Awards are generally in the \$1,000 range. The deadline to apply is Friday, April 8, 2016. An online application may be [found here](#).

If you have any questions, please contact Ricky Bogert, Donor Services Administrator, at (401) 427-4011 or rbogert@rifoundation.org.

RESEARCH/NEWS

The Wallace Foundation and Teachers College, Columbia University Releases New Report

[Collective Impact and the New Generation of Cross-Sector Collaborations for Education: A Nationwide Scan](#)

This recently released report features a first-ever scan of 182 local cross-sector collaborations working to improve educational outcomes for youth. The majority of these collaborations actually originated prior to the introduction of the popular “collective impact” approach introduced in 2011. The scan reports on where these collaborations are located, what data they report on, how they’re governed and more. It’s an extremely interesting read, so check it out at the link above or [right here](#).

STEM Resources and Reading

[National Science Foundation Launches Million-Dollar Initiative to Improve Diversity in STEM \(ThinkProgress\)](#)

The National Science Foundation has launched a new initiative dubbed NSF INCLUDES, a mouthful of an acronym that stands for “Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science.” The organization has officially called for proposals for projects aiming to increase the participation of women, members of racial and ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, and persons of low socio-economic status in STEM.

[Down With Algebra II! \(Slate\)](#)

In his new book *The Math Myth: And Other STEM Delusions*, political scientist Andrew Hacker proposes replacing algebra II and calculus in the high school and college curriculum with a practical course in statistics for citizenship. Only mathematicians and some engineers actually use advanced math in their day-to-day work, Hacker argues—even the doctors, accountants, and coders of the future shouldn’t have to master abstract math that they’ll never need.



The SACERS-U Demystified: Emphasizing Choice and Play to Improve School-Age Outcomes

Friday, March 11: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

United Way of RI: 50 Valley Street, Providence

Presenters: Shannon Heneghan Jutras and Ashley Reyes

This session will support school professionals seeking to make holistic improvements to their School-Age program using the updated *School-Age Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-U)* as a guide. The presenters will focus on ways to incorporate choice and play into before and after school programming and will demystify the assessment process so programs can feel confident during a high-stakes assessment. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions of SACERS-U author reliable assessors and to learn what a high-quality program looks like through the lens of this scale. The cost to attend is \$15 for non-ALC members, and registration is open [online](#). **Registration will close at 9:00 p.m. on March 9.**

The Following are Also Upcoming at United Way of Rhode Island!

More information and registration links for these events will be up on our [webpage](#) shortly!

Methods #1: Introduction to the Active-Participatory Approach

Friday, March 18: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

United Way of RI: 50 Valley Street, Providence

Methods #2: Youth Voice

Friday, March 25: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

United Way of RI: 50 Valley Street, Providence

Afterschool Leadership Circle (ALC) members receive a 20% discount on professional development offerings. [Click here](#) to find out more about the ALC and how to join, or past the following link into your browser: <http://afterschoolri.org/for-professionals/join-the-afterschool-leadership-circle>

Community of Practice in SEL

Wednesday, March 23: 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Rhode Island College Student Union Ballroom: 600 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Providence

In an effort to share information and improve practice, Rhode Island College is excited to establish a Community of Practice for Social and Emotional Learning. The goal is to bring educators and practitioners into a working relationship around common interests in Social and Emotional Learning. It is expected that these meetings will take place several times during the school year. This will provide a forum to share examples of what various schools are doing in SEL and how they make it happen, and the impact on their school.

The first meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 23 at Rhode Island College in the Student Union Ballroom. During this meeting, the group will be highlighting 2 elementary schools that are currently incorporating SEL practices into the everyday life of their schools, Stony Lane Elementary School and International Charter School, with an introduction from Tracy LaFreniere, Rhode Island's 2016 State Teacher of the Year.

If you are having trouble with any links, please contact Elana Rosenberg at elana.rosenberg@uwri.org or (401) 444-0658.