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Graham Windham Summer Project

Summer 2024

CONTEXT

COMMUNITY: Youth in New York City who have experienced or are currently experiencing foster care and children who attend the only public middle school in one of the poorest neighborhoods in New York City.

ORGANIZATION: Since its founding in 1806 by a group of dedicated women, notably including Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, Graham Windham has been meeting the needs of New York City's poorest, most vulnerable children. Graham has served the community for over two hundred continuous years and currently serves over 5,000 kids and their families each year.

ISSUE: Youth within the foster care system have been shown to have poorer developmental outcomes, complex needs, and difficulties transitioning out of the system into adulthood.

SCOPE: Over 600,000 children were served by the United States youth foster care system in FY2021, and over 100,000 children were waiting to be adopted. Roughly .8% of children in the United States interact with the system in a given year.

PLAN: The project was split into three key components: data analysis infrastructure to enable better cross-organization reporting; a college video library designed to demystify and build excitement around college; and a pilot of Photovoice—a technique for equitable evaluation and participatory research.

PROJECT

- 1. Photovoice.** We developed a pilot of photovoice, which helped develop youth and allowed for a better understanding of their strengths and barriers. Through the pilot, we gave rise to students' voices to better understand their needs and how they are currently being met. **8 students submitted photos with captions to tell their stories. Students often highlighted themes of violence and drugs in their community.**
- 2. SLAM College Video Library.** We filmed and produced a collection of short videos for Graham's SLAM (support, lead, achieve, model) program, which supports students from youth into adulthood. The videos featured SLAM alumni discussing the path to college and the college experience. Videos make college seem less enigmatic and more achievable to current SLAM youth, who often do not have older people from similar backgrounds to talk to about college. This near-age mentor model will generate buzz around college. **In total, we produced over 75 minutes worth of content.**
- 3. Data Dashboard.** We developed robust data pipelines and dashboards with visualizations using data from the New York State Department of Education and the Administration for Children's Services. One dashboard focused on identifying the percentage of Graham youth attending high-quality high schools and the other dashboard helped to analyze the attendance status of foster care youth in Graham's care. Dashboards were designed in Power BI to be scalable, requiring minimal maintenance in the future. **Together, these dashboards enabled new metrics and easier reporting capabilities for over 700 youth associated with Graham Windham.**