

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BREAKTHROUGH COLLABORATIVE'S EDUCATIONAL MODEL  
THROUGH THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE FOUNDER LOIS LOOFBOURROW

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**Chapter One: Introduction**

### **San Francisco 1978**

I know of San Francisco in the 60s and 70s as peace, love and Dirty Harry. Little did I know that a small private school in the city, its Headmaster, Admissions Counselor and select teachers would come together to create a program that would impact me almost eighteen years later. What started out as a way to make this private school more “of the city than in it” (L. Loofbourrow, Personal Communication, March 1, 2008), spawned to impact over 36 cities, thousands of students (students of the program, and the high school and college age students it used to teach in the program), countless school districts, and many more families. The program’s model and message spread quickly among those who had been impacted by it or were looking for a way to make an impact in their communities, and it eventually found its way to Fort Worth, TX, where a small town boy would come face to face with his true calling and passion.

### **Spring 1996**

My educational journey began much in the way most of my journeys begin, with a sign for free food. The sign was simple enough: “Come learn about a summer opportunity: Free Pizza.” What began as a quick stop in the student center for lunch became an opportunity for free pizza. A veteran of taking advantage of free food as a lure to listen to a presentation or attend a meeting, I knew the sign would draw a crowd. The crowd was integral to my plan: which was to get lost in the crowd, grab a few slices, a couple of sodas (the ones who really wanted to pitch something always had sodas), and sneak away to the lounge where I could enjoy my free pizza in piece.

The room was filled with pizza, sodas, and only two people. Master plan foiled! The two people in the room were Jessica Slade, the Director of the Summerbridge at Fort Worth Country Day School program and Stacey L. Henderson. The two instantly lit up when I entered the room. I saw the pizza,

the small crowd and realized I was in for much more than I bargained for. Stacey actually looked a little perturbed, which I found strange as I thought she had the same plan for snagging free pizza that I had created. I soon found out why.

Jessica Slade gave a passionate presentation about the program, what it allowed us to do and how little it paid. I was going to work with academically gifted and highly motivated middle school students. It was no different than the myriad of opportunities, but Jessica had me in her hold. While Jessica was speaking to me, Stacey wanted to learn more and had questions about the application. She was visibly excited, and eager to complete this monster of an application. Jessica apologized for being on campus to recruit so late, but said that was all she could do because the application to teach for the summer of 1996 at any of the Summerbridge sites (at the time, there were 36 sites in 36 cities across the country and in Hong Kong) was due in only four days: no exceptions.

At the end of Jessica's presentation, and after all my questions had expired, I took her card and started plotting what I needed to do to complete my application. Step one was to find out where I could find a typewriter. The program has now evolved to where teachers from all over the country fill out an online application, which means no more typewriters for the hundreds of applicants for the summer of 2008. I walked out the room and had to be reminded to make sure I grabbed what I had actually gone in there for: pizza and soda.

It was this Saturday in the spring of 1996 where my journey into the world of education began for myself and for countless other high school and college age persons who had never considered education as a career.

### Summer 1996 to Summer 1999

“Students teaching students” is the motto of the Breakthrough Program (from 1978 to 2001 it was known as Summerbridge)<sup>1</sup>, and I was most definitely a student teaching students. My exceptional typewriting skills allowed me to apply for and gain acceptance to be a teacher in the Fort Worth program. My stipend was a modest \$750 for 2 months of work, but this did not include the free room and board provided me via a friend of the program who agreed to house and feed me for my time as a teacher.

It was this summer that I was introduced to the model that had its origins in a start up private school in 1978 San Francisco. It is a simple model, high school and college age students teach academically rigorous core subject classes to academically gifted, disadvantaged middle school students for six weeks during the summer following their 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade years. Academic rigor is a component and one I was to have as an integral part of my classroom. The key phrase is “my classroom”, as it was mine indeed. We had a week long teaching boot camp prior to the summer in which I was given introductory lessons on course planning, lesson planning, classroom management and teaching styles. During that time I was given the opportunity to shape my course’s subjects in a manner that fit my interests. It was truly my classroom, and I had the support of a strong team of master teachers to assist me.

The campus was far from being a library. One could not hear oneself think outside of the classroom, the students were not rowdy; they were alive! We were all alive. Spirit, along with academic

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<sup>1</sup> A push to have the name changed to Breakthrough began as a process of incorporation. Summerbridge was not a term that could be copyrighted as many other programs, with dissimilar goals, had used this as a name for their program.



rigor, was as much a part of our training as lesson planning. The kids would arrive at 7:30 and we would cheer as they came off the bus. The look of the new students on that first day was the most priceless of all. It was a cross between its-too-darn-early and what-did-I-get-myself-into. Academic rigor was the backbone of our work, but not taking ourselves too seriously and celebrating our work was as much a part of that backbone as anything else. The students and teachers were part of an experience that made us better people as much as it made us better educators and better students.

From the moment I stepped on the campus of Fort Worth Country Day School to the day in which I received my stipend check, I worked 12 plus hour days for two months, constantly challenged intellectually, mentally and spiritually. The hardest part of that summer, and subsequent summers as a teacher and administrator, was the day the kids loaded up the bus for the last time and headed home. At the time, it was the hardest I had worked in my entire life...all for a measly \$750! I had dug ditches in the south Texas summer heat, flipped burgers for double shifts at McDonalds, but this by far was the most I had worked for the least amount of pay. Minimum wage was a dream as much as winning the lottery is for real teachers.

The thought of not teaching for a Breakthrough program for as long as I was eligible never entered my mind (the program sticks to its high school and college age students requirement). I came back, in the summers of 1996, 1998 and 1999 to teach at the Fort Worth site, and in 1997 for the Lehigh Valley site. Were it not for Breakthrough's College age policy, I would have been a teacher for many more years. 1999 was the end of my run as a teacher and time for me to pursue other options for a young educator. After four summers of teaching, and years of volunteering in the after school program, I was wanting nothing more than to be an educator, a far cry from my intentions in the spring of 1996. Being a first generation college student, my family was happy I was in college at all, and I was happy

with their happiness. I stumbled through five majors in two years, with no notion or thought to a career.

### **Summer 2002**

As much as the rules tried, they could not keep me away from Breakthrough. I found that I could not be a teacher in the program, but I could be an administrator. The summer of 2002 found me working part time as a Dean of Faculty. Tasked with managing the very teachers I once was. I supported them through guidance, lesson plan development and observation. I took to this new role quite smoothly. I missed working with the students as my primary focus, but found that supporting the teachers to serve the students well was as impactful on me as working with the kids every day.

After teaching in numerous locations, and coming back to Breakthrough as an administrator, I wanted to return, and this part time summer position made me realize I could be an administrator in the program. I never thought I could be like Jessica Slade one day, teaching is where I thought I wanted to be, however I found that my calling in education lay outside traditional avenues.

Fortunately for me, the end of the summer saw the current Dean of Students leave for a different position, and I was seen to be the obvious choice for replacement. I jumped when presented the opportunity and found myself to be in a whole new world. The program was more than just a summer program and it took a lot of work to implement and sustain the model that was founded at San Francisco's University High school in 1978 and developed through trial and error for 12 years before it found itself in a neat little binder on my desk.

## **Methodology**

The Breakthrough model was put together for replication in the early 1990's and it had been an unofficial testing ground from the time it first opened its doors to students in the summer of 1978 to the summer prior to the replication. My only link to the source during this unofficial testing time was Lois Loofbourrow, the founder of Summerbridge National and long time director of the founding program at San Francisco's University High School.

I chose to focus my efforts on how the model was developed as it would offer valuable insight into why the program was developed, how the model came to be and what components in it were essential to its success. I sought then to identify core components of the model, before my conversations with any participants during this early part of the program's existence. My experience in the program, as a teacher for four summers, an administrator at one of the sites for three years, and my current employment in the national office of the program as a Research and Evaluation Specialist for the past year gave me insight and access.

Formal research on the Breakthrough Program is limited to one major source, a Stanford Longitudinal Study presented by Bitter, Feldman, and Laird in October of 2003. A search for publication of this study yielded nothing, but a copy of the study lies within the archives of Breakthrough National. The study was broken into three parts: achievement testing results, the effects of teaching, and the impact of the program on students in high school. This study, while valuable, did not assist me in understanding the development of Breakthrough's educational model.

Only one document from the Breakthrough archives focused on the development of the model, and it did so briefly through an explanation of the history of the program. The document was in the

Breakthrough archives, but also in the Department of Education archives as it was also found via an EBSCO search.

I searched Breakthrough Collaborative's archives, but found that most of what they had were binders and documents I had received as a staff person. A review of literature on the Breakthrough program returned much of what was already in the archives of the national office and newspaper articles. A study was done on the program by researchers at Stanford, however, a search yielded no published record of this study.

I developed a list of core components from my experiences in the program and used this list of core components as the basis for my questions of the program. I developed a series of questions to ask Lois Loofbourrow. The core components I initially devised were: 1) academic rigor 2) The basic framework of the program 3) Students teaching students and 4) The students served.

I began a search for other interviews with Lois, finding two hard copy interviews in the Breakthrough pamphlets and binders, but none of them proved very useful as their focus were general questions meant to understand the basic model of Breakthrough. I needed to focus questions on the development of the model and the importance of my core components, so indeed; much of my work was to be new questions and a new focus.

I set up two interviews with Lois, one interview focused primarily on the origins of the program, the other to break down the development of the core components. Each of these interviews were structured for two hours in length. I traveled to Healdsburg, California for a weekend and interview Lois over the course of one weekend. Lois and I spoke of the model and of our work for much of the weekend, and while there is so much left to be discussed, my focus was on the development of the very work we were interested in. The four formal interview hours I spent did not seem like enough.

Interviewing someone with so many years of experiences and immense passion for this work was difficult indeed. As a lover of history, it was difficult to not ask questions that did not pertain to my thesis and to focus the questions back to the investigation at hand. Lois took over the interview at times, in telling her story, answering questions I wanted to ask, and answering many more I did not know to ask.

My first interview led me to realize that the core components I had devised were lacking one vital component, which I added to my list of questions for the second interview. This new component was experience to go along with academic rigor, the framework of the program, students teaching students and the students served. I then changed the format of my second interview as some of the questions were answered in interview one, especially in regards to Students Teaching Students.

Upon completion of the interviews I transcribed them and broke the content into the following categories: origins of the program, and into each of the core components of the program I identified prior to and during the interviews. The primary focus of the interviews was to discover the true origins of the program which would lead to a greater understanding of the development of the core components of the educational model. I found that most of my answers were indeed in the origins of the program, as one whole interview was scheduled for just this information, but the information also split very neatly into three components as the basis for the success of the model: academic rigor, students teaching students, and experience. The framework of the model and the students served were not found to be core components, as it was how the program chose to operate, while it set up opportunities, the interviews with Lois made it clear that these three were much more vital to the success of the program. The students served were also a part of the mission. It was stated often and clearly who was to be served, the components I wanted to focus on were pieces that helped accomplish the mission set forth for these students.

*"I like to use 'breakthrough' as a noun to reflect the breakthroughs that take place when students teach students, or when a child becomes the first in her family to go to college or when a fabulous college student realizes that he wants to teach as a career. Breakthrough captures the joy of learning - those a-ha moments when the light switches on and things that seemed too difficult or out of reach are suddenly possible."*

- Jessica Slade, Founding Director, Breakthrough Austin

**Chapter Two: The Breakthrough Educational Model**

## **Overview**

Founded as Summerbridge at San Francisco's University High School in 1978, the Breakthrough Collaborative has become a national non-profit that increases educational opportunity for high-potential, low-income middle school students and inspires outstanding college and high school students to pursue careers in education. What started out as 30 kids in the summer of 1978, Breakthrough now serves more than 2,500 middle school students and trains 700 college and high school students as teachers in 34 Breakthrough sites across the U.S. and in Hong Kong each summer.

Breakthrough's innovative Students Teaching Students model partners middle-school students with college and high school students who serve as teachers, role models and mentors pushing the student's academic potential to put them on the path to success at top college preparatory schools and ready to attend and thrive in the nation's top universities.

Breakthrough boasts a proven ripple effect of positive results: 82% of Breakthrough student alumni are accepted to college preparatory programs and 72% of Breakthrough teachers, some of whom were Breakthrough students, go on to pursue professional careers in education.

## **Sites**

The thirty four sites are based in twenty eight cities across the US and Hong Kong. The current list of sites includes: Atlanta, Austin, Boca Raton, Cambridge, Cincinnati, Denver, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Worth, Houston, Long Island, Manchester, Miami, Minneapolis, New Haven, New Orleans, New York City, Norfolk, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Providence, Sacramento, Saint Paul, San Jose, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Fe, San Francisco, and Washington DC. The program grew to over 36 cities in the 1990's, but for a variety of reasons, has fallen to 28. Many of the sites that are not included in this list



did not fail, but rather chose not to affiliate with the National organization. The program has a revised expansion model which is currently being implemented at the Miami site and is looking for new or current communities to expand. While the model is set, not all sites currently employ all aspects of the model, with a few not even working with middle school students. Regardless, academic rigor is a thread that binds all the sites together.

An interesting aspect of all of our sites is that none of them have their own physical space that they can call their own. Most sites are hosted by independent schools across the country and are housed within their space. A handful of sites are 501c3's, but none of them own their own buildings. For example, the Austin program is working in partnership with the University of Texas at Austin and uses facilities provided them by the university.

### **Site Staff**

The number of staff at each site varies, but the program relies heavily on volunteer teachers during the school year and the upwards of twenty four intern teachers during the summer as well as various part time professional educators to serve as Master Teachers for the high school and college age students who teach in the program and to fill other roles such as Dean of Students and Dean of Faculty. The full time site staff work 12 months out of the year to coordinate all of these people and to ensure the program flows smoothly from the summer aspect of its programming to the school year aspect. A majority of sites employ a total of two full time staff. These sites have a Program Director and an Assistant Program Director.

## **Students Served**

The majority of students are low-income students who are drawn from the public school system, 89% of Breakthrough's students are students of color and 65% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. English is a second language for 27% of the students, and most will be the first in their family to attend college (Breakthrough research, 2008).

The students are academically gifted and not in much need of remedial assistance. The program is designed to take top learners and push them in ways that challenge their capabilities so they will be prepared for the top high schools in their areas.

## **Teachers**

An often overlooked aspect of the program is the teachers themselves. The supplemental education is not provided by veteran teachers nor experts in any field of study, but by high school and college students. The teachers commit to eight weeks in the summer, they teach only six, but spend a week and a half of very intense training to prepare them to provide the necessary rigor to push the students to achieve the goals set forth by the program. Named one of the top 10 internships by The Princeton Review, Breakthrough finds itself with over 2,000 applicants for its 700 teaching positions each summer.

The teachers of the school year program are not as intensely trained or tasked with as much as summer teachers, but they play a vital role in the program. The school year program (SYP) teachers are mostly high school aged and are strictly volunteers. Not all sites have the same type of methods during the school year, but they focus mainly on after school and Saturday academic enrichment and field trips.

Exact numbers for how many teachers volunteer for the SYP do not exist, but it is much more than the 700 who teach during the summer program.

### **Summer Program**

The program currently consists of a commitment of at least two years during the student's 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years<sup>2</sup>. The two years during middle school are academically rigorous and filled with spirit and cheer. The most surprising aspect of the program for any visitor is the amount of life that fills the hallways, and classrooms of any Breakthrough site. Middle school students sing songs, laugh, and cheer just as much as they study, read, and write.

During those middle school years, the students spend two summers (six weeks each) waking as early as 5 am to catch a bus to get to the program by 7 or 8 am to attend school until 4 pm when they jump on another bus that gets some students home as late as 6 pm. (Most students who fit our profile find school to come so easily to them, and conversely not challenged by their home schools, would call come home at 6 pm and their day would conclude.) The Breakthrough student's day continues past this 6 pm time as they are responsible for two to three hours of homework (a mandatory element for each Breakthrough teacher to assign and grade). The students are not alone in this task as they are given the personal numbers of their teachers to call for assistance with their homework.

The program does not relent when it says it will prepare the students for college. The atmosphere is campy, and it looks like a fun-filled, enthusiastic atmosphere, and any visitor would witness this. The spirit is what fills the visitors with joy and a feeling that they are witnessing something

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<sup>2</sup> Breakthrough is working to return to its six year model roots where the students committed to a two year middle school component followed by a less rigorous four year high school commitment that saw the students through to college

great. Outwardly, the signs do not indicate what all those students (teachers and students) are there to do. Breakthrough has never kept quantifiable numbers about the educational and emotional impact on these kids<sup>3</sup>, their main point of impact was whether the students entered and graduated from top high school programs. The program is now in the midst of finding the relevant data to back up their claims as they try to become a major voice in the field of education.

### **School Year Program**

The school year program is not consistent at all the sites. Some sites employ strictly after school tutorials, others “Super Saturdays” and some a mixture of both. Logistics such as transportation and physical space are the main cause for the discrepancies across the Collaborative.

Regardless, while not as intense as the summer program, the SYP focuses on providing students with academic assistance and continuing to develop skills deemed necessary for successful transition to college preparatory high schools in the area. It is also within the SYP that one on one high school counseling is performed to assist the students find and apply/request entrance to the high school that fits their needs.

### **High School Program**

The high school portion of the program is not as time consuming a commitment for the sites or the students. The sites provide academic assistance when needed, and stay in touch with the students. The sites do not provide college counseling as intently as high school counseling was provided during

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<sup>3</sup> Breakthrough is currently working to quantify much of these impacts as a reaction to increased competition for non-profit educational funds and to better evaluate the individual site’s performance.

middle school. Breakthrough is currently looking to revamp the high school component to ensure that the students do indeed enter a four year college or university at a rate of eighty percent.

*“The Breakthrough formula is simple. Take a community that believes in children, add young people who will give their time to change the world, and throw in a delightful combination of kids at the most vulnerable time of their lives - middle school. And then, set deliriously high expectations for everyone involved - for the community to give more than seemed possible, for the teachers to work harder than was dreamed necessary, and for the kids to learn more than seemed available. It works. It’s wonderful. It’s Breakthrough.”*

- Laura Noyes, Former Director, Breakthrough Sacramento

### **Chapter Three: The Origins of Breakthrough**

## **San Francisco 1975**

The campus of University High School in San Francisco during the summer of 1978 saw three professional teachers, twelve high school age teacher assistants, and two directors working to prepare 35 middle school students from the San Francisco public schools for the rigors of the top high schools in the city. The very campus they tread upon was barely opening its doors two years earlier. Founded in 1975, San Francisco's University High School (UHS) Board of Trustees wanted to be, according to L. Loofbourrow "a part of the city, and not just in it." (personal interview, March 1, 2008), They tasked the new Head of School, Dennis Collins, with not only with the business of running the school, but of making this statement a reality. Dennis gathered an ad-hoc committee of people to discover what it is they could do. Among these committee members was the founder of Breakthrough National and sole director of the Summerbridge San Francisco program for over 12 years, Lois Loofbourrow.

She was the "public school" expert as she had previously worked for the San Francisco Unified School District and her children were attending public school as well. Most of the other committee members had some background in public schools, but they were also committed to making a difference. The problem was, how and what would they do. The committee met once a month starting in late 1975/early 1976. Lois laughs when she recalls how the joke early on was UHS could offer Drivers Education on Saturday mornings to the community. The committee felt from early on that this was not to be a simple, understated project, but something that was of significant outreach and made UHS relevant in the San Francisco community.

Lois stumbled onto an idea by observing a graduation at San Francisco's Lowell High School. According to Lois, Lowell was the top public school in the city. Lois was "stunned at this graduation to find out that it was only Asian and white kids who went to Lowell." She found out by speaking with a



friend of hers who worked at Lowell that it wasn't just Asian and white kids who went there, they just happened to be the ones who were graduating.

San Francisco is a very diverse city and its schools reflected this diversity, and Lowell was no different, except for the class that graduated. Lois found from her friend that the ninth grade class was indeed as diverse as the population of the city, but the students who came from the under resourced, diverse schools, "were just not prepared" to succeed at Lowell. Lois was taken aback by the casual disregard for these students which seemed to coat her friend's statement for these students.

Lois took this story back to the committee and they agreed that it wasn't just a problem at Lowell, but at UHS and at St. Ignatius, a catholic school with a reputation for academic rigor. The kids from the schools that made their classes diverse were "bright kids, just not prepared to do well" at the most rigorous programs in the city. This was a problem for a two reasons, 1) these kids would get into these schools, and 2) these kids would not live up to their potential and possibly never end the cycle of poverty that put them in these under resourced schools in the first place.

The committee decided that their mission was to create a program that would take gifted, highly motivated middle school students and prepare them not only to enter, because these were the kinds of kids who entered these schools anyway, but to thrive in the top academic programs in San Francisco.

### **Spring 1978**

On January 1, 1978, Dennis Collins, the original headmaster for University High School, released Lois, who worked in the admissions office and Mel Singer, ninth grade math teacher from their duties to focus full time on the start up of the program for the summer of 1978. Lois recounts that they had to "figure out all the processes" some of which were not quite as simple as coming up with a name, they

decided on two names actually, Summerbridge for the summer program and School After School for the school year program, or designing the brochures. They had to speak with the public schools to find out if it was okay for them to recruit students from their school, and even how to recruit.

One thing they knew was that they would have to go directly to the kids. Parents, according to Lois, love a program such as Summerbridge: “we knew very early on that we wanted to go directly to the kids and not to their parents, because really this is a program that parents like. The cost is free. It is in a great setting, in a very great neighborhood and their kids are going to be studying all summer. Plus, you could go to work and your kids could come as early as they wanted to in the morning and they could be in a very safe place until 5:30 or 6 at night. We wanted the kids to do the walking.”

Many decisions were made on many levels, but one decision that was quite easy for Lois and Mel was who their teachers were to be for the summer. Mel was to teach the math courses and two other members who served on the committee to create this project, who were also ninth grade teachers at Lowell would serve as well. Pam Grossman from the English department and Samuel Horton from the science department would be the first four professional educators to run the very first Summerbridge summer.

Pedagogically, the program changed from that first summer, partly due to a suggestion from the Head of School of Saint Ignatius, who told Lois “if you are going to run a program for middle school students, you better get some high school students to help. Middle school students love high schoolers.” Summerbridge, in addition to the staff they had already hired, was looking to hire three teaching assistants for each of the three professional teachers they had lined up for the summer. The move would come in handy not only for the summer of 1978, but force a change in their pedagogy that would actually strengthen their ability to accomplish their mission and allow their program to be what

the founding board of trustees of San Francisco's University High School envisioned when they wanted a culturally relevant program.

### **Summer 1978**

Thirty five students walked through the doors of the first ever Summerbridge program in the summer of 1978. They experienced a morning of hard academic work, and an afternoon of experiences. Lois described that there were themes for each week of the summer and each theme had a curriculum and events that were weaved into each classroom and activity. She recalls only one theme from that first summer, citing 30 years of memories had escaped her, but this one theme would become a theme and event that is found in every Breakthrough site's summer plans.

The theme for the fourth week of the summer program was "Work". The students worked on resumes, a physicist was brought in to talk to the math classes, the students were tasked with conducting interviews of people they knew who worked, and even of their parents. The week ended with the Occupational Field Trip day, which is when the students were paired up with CEO's of companies, and other people who were recruited to volunteer to show up.

The component that Breakthrough is most known for is a component that was not a part of the original summer, students teaching students was not even a thought in the staff's heads, except for the School After School program where they were going to be used out of necessity. Lois describes the event that started the shift in the pedagogy of the program:

Pam and I were taking the kids out running from UHS across the Golden Gate Bridge, which was really dramatic, and something I thought was interesting that many of our kids had never seen the Golden Gate Bridge. They had seen pictures, but it is a fallacy to think that because you live in your city that you know your city. It goes back to what the board members said that just

because you are in your city doesn't mean you know your city. Which I think goes back to the vision at the time. If you know San Francisco is very hilly, and we were up on a high hill, which was very gravelly and we were on this hill and Pam fell and had this gravel embedded in her leg. She called me later in the day and said "I can't even walk, I have to go to the Doctor's to get the gravel out, but I am a mess. I can't come in tomorrow." I was supposed to be the substitute, but frankly I haven't even taught that much and I had lots of things to do. She said, "Let's turn the class over to the high school kids and they can do this or this." I remember Wendy Abrams was one and here is what I said, "Pam is going to be sick". They took over, and I remember them reading Dahl or *The Outsiders*, I can't think of the name. I observed their classes and they were in three little groups. I don't really remember what they were doing. I remember calling Pam and saying "They were fabulous. They were great with the kids." It worked great because the high school kids were bored hanging around the class. One girl had actually complained, she had come from Visitation Valley, and she said, "you just hired me to be a babysitter." I was confused about these high school kids being there and they were a little edgy, like why were we here. It was clear that there was magic happening.

Lois called it magic, and indeed, the three days the TAs took over the course for Pam started something grand. Fortunately for the program, Pam and Lois were two people open to discuss what exactly was happening. Pam discussed with Lois how the TAs accomplished exactly what she was hoping to accomplish with the kids but they were "so much more positive and had so much more fun." Pam gave the TAs more work over the last two weeks of the summer, and after watching them with the kids and handle the work, Lois and Pam decided TAs could do more the following summer.

### **School After School**

“We knew going into the fall, what our kids needed,” Lois said, and this was because of what the program set up to evaluate the student’s skills at the end of the summer. “Our main goal was to catch any skill gaps, between where they were and where they needed to be that ninth grade.” Due to the small class size, the staff sat in a room and discussed each individual student about the skills they needed and mandated what they would have to take during the school year to get them ready for ninth grade.

Ninth grade was always the goal, and the School After School was a greater chance for the program to get the students prepared for that goal. They did this by making sure the kids were taking academic classes that were designed to shore up the skills they were lacking. The classes, in turn, were created based on the needs of the students.

### **Funding**

“Smoke and mirrors” is what Lois described it as. The program was as much a department of University High School as the admissions office. Dennis Collins would “overfund and underfund” our programs on multiple occasions, but it was the school who committed to believing in the program, and making sure it was funded enough to accomplish its goals. Dennis would often approach a fellow funder with Summerbridge in his hip-pocket. If the funder would not fund the stuffy private school that would only work with rich white kids, he would offer Summerbridge as an alternative. A program run at the school for the sake of the community. For many years, the program counted on the funding savvy of the Head of School to get the program the financial resources needed to run an effective program. The overall funding needs of the program were not great in the beginning as the program relied heavily on

volunteers to assist with office tasks, and on high school students as volunteers to take on the bulk of the School After School work. Aside from that, the program was housed at University High School during the summer, so there was no need to rent or pay for use of facilities. This setup would become a hallmark of the Breakthrough program as it expanded to many sites.

### **Parent Reaction**

The students were the ones who initiated the program, because they had been wanting a program like this. When Lois and Mel went to the schools to recruit, they could see the hunger in the children's eyes. "Getting into the program was a very big deal that first year." The parents could feel how important this was to their students, and despite having no track record, the families celebrated by throwing parties. One family went so far as to have a barbecue with a cake that said "Congratulations on Summerbridge." The parents were happy for their children and the children were expecting all of what Summerbridge had promised them. "I was pleased they took us seriously, but I was humbled by our responsibility" said Lois, and this responsibility is one that Lois would not take lightly for the next thirteen years and into the replication of the model to thirty six cities across the United States in 1990.

*"Teaching at Breakthrough was the most significant defining moment for me as a man, for me as an individual and for me as an educator. I gave every single ounce of energy and love and passion to those children that summer. I was there to show people what my teachers had shown me."*

- Jabali Sawicki, Breakthrough student and teacher, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Louisville

**Chapter Four : The Development of the Core Components**



## **The Core Components**

The core components of the program are what make the program unique and allow it to thrive in its stated mission. Academic rigor, students teaching students, and experience are the core components of the program's model.

### **Academic Rigor**

Academic rigor was essential to the program completing the mission of having their students enter and thrive in the top schools in San Francisco. The program could not stray from this belief as it was the reason for Summerbridge's existence. Over 12 years at the helm, Lois was able to make the site stick to this core component, because she knew why the program was founded and had a vested interest in seeing it accomplish its mission. Lois found that she was not alone in this interest. The same students who sat in the rigorous classes during the early years were coming back as teachers and pushing the envelope for Lois, and the other teachers. These student teachers knew first hand what kind of rigor the program needed and constantly reminded Lois and the staff what they needed to be doing.

Lois recalls how one of the first year students, who made it into Lowell, came into her office with a book, tears in his eyes and slammed a book on her desk saying "you never told me about this, it is too hard!" Lois looked at the book and saw it was Julius Caesar. She had not really thought what it was like to get a Shakespeare book and assumed that it was going to be new to everyone at ninth grade. After the boys said this, she thought about it, we should be doing something about this in the program and it became a part of the summer reading curriculum.

As simple as the preceding statement may sound, it was not a simple decision. Lois did investigating into the Shakespeare question as it was a subject she did not realize she had to confront as her thought was that "every ninth grader experienced Shakespeare for the first time or had never seen a

Shakespeare book.” After calling the middle schools that fed into the top high schools in San Francisco, she discovered that they were reading Shakespeare and her kids were behind the curve and something needed to change. Lois did not want any of the program’s students to experience what she envisioned, “what happened in the classes was the Shakespeare books the teachers say they were going to start with Julius Caesar and the kids would say ‘We read that in seventh grade, oh well.’ Or ‘I really liked Midsummer Night’s Dream’ The three summer bridge kids who happened to be in the same section looked at each other like they were idiots.”

The mission drove the need for rigor, because the goal of the program was to prepare these students for the top ninth grade high schools and Lois listened to her students when they had issues and investigated the source of those issues. The program changed, curriculum wise, but never the overarching goal.

Many more students came back to Lois and made many other suggestions based on their own struggles. The students helped define what the program needed because they were more aware of their own schools had not prepared them for the demands their new school placed on them. These students understood the burdens of these schools even more so than the professional teachers who taught at the school. Students did this because Lois asked them to be especially critical of what they needed.

The ownership of the program did not stop with the former students of the program, but also included the high school students who taught in the program as well. It was based upon students and teachers suggestions that the curriculum was made rigorous so the program could reach its goals. These teachers would push the boundaries of the math department in the early years by informing the staff of

the kinds of tests they took and how the program was not on track to prepare the students for these math tests.

The feeling of ownership was due in large part to the collegial atmosphere created by the Master Teachers. In order to permeate the rigor, the program hired teachers who would guide and push the teachers to be what they needed to be so the program would offer what it needed for the students. These professional educators were very much like the teachers from the first summer, top high school teachers who knew what needed to be taught. These teachers were as magical as the students who would teach the classrooms. They treated the high school teachers with respect and gave them ample opportunities to not only learn how to be teachers, but to make a difference in the lives of their students. The staff treated them like teachers, the students treated them like teachers and as a result, not only were the kids having fun, but the classrooms were filled with meaningful instruction.

Lois, Mel and the rest of the program staff did not sit back though and wait for feedback, they knew what the top programs in the city were teaching, what the students were learning and did their best to keep up. The program's curriculum was not stagnant, it evolved because the site refused to let the curriculum be inappropriate for the student's needs. Lois credits a lot of this to the UHS Head of School, Dennis Collins, who pushed the program to where "it had a chance to do, with a very entrepreneurial head of school, was to fix all the parts that weren't running right." Dennis Collins acted as a guide, Lois did not outright say this, but inferred on many occasions that she did not want to let him down. He pushed Lois, and Lois pushed the program.

Working with students can be quite easy when one does not have to push them beyond their own perceived limits. A young person spending their summer doing academically rigorous work sounds like a good idea at first, but when confronted with the work, it seems less like fun. Multiple parties are

needed to ensure rigor in a Breakthrough program, without which the program's students would find themselves at a loss and unable to thrive in top high school programs. The rigor was made all too easy to swallow because of the qualities of the teachers, who happened to be young and closer to the student's own ages.

### **Students Teaching Students**

The third summer of the program (1979) was the summer when the teaching staff was all high school age students. College students did not come until later (1984). During the summer of 1980, the program put the educational fate of eighty students in the hands of other students. A shift in pedagogy had arrived. Despite their increased responsibilities, the teachers that summer were still called TAs, a few years later they were finally called teachers by Lois and the staff. The student teachers were seen as real teachers with a tough mission. The people the program hired to guide these young teachers had to exhibit many qualities, but key among them, according to Lois, was the need for them "to be open."

The roots for all students becoming teachers came in the summer of 1978 with the partially unfortunate, part fortuitous fall on a gravel road by Pam Grossman, that summer's English teacher. Her accident thrust three students to lead a classroom for three days. Her open mindedness allowed her to communicate with Lois just what exactly was going on in this classroom beyond the "magic" Lois had witnessed. Pam found the high school students as teachers could accomplish the same lesson goals but also injected an element into the classroom that she could not - fun.

When Lois realized they were going to shift to this all students teaching students model she needed to go out and find two different types of staff for the summer. First she needed the high school students, and the professional educators to support them. In order to recruit the right kinds of high school students, Lois went out to the top schools in the city because she wanted the students with the

experience of these schools. Lois did not post flyers and wait for them to come to her, she went out to the schools to find the right students to become her teachers. She spoke to the academic deans/principals and told them who she wanted. She wanted open minded students who were also bright and enthusiastic. Having bright student teachers was essential, but not bright to the point that they would lock themselves in a library and know one subject very well, but “able to think on their toes” bright.

She found students from the first class, who were now at the very schools she was recruiting for student teachers, wanting to teach in the program as well. They were in a unique place because they understood what the current class of students needed, and what they were capable of doing. The former students, now teachers, as mere rising 10<sup>th</sup> graders at times, were in the same place their instructors were long ago. Summerbridge was their program, they contributed to it becoming more rigorous and they were giving back by being teachers.

Young students as teachers were not without challenges, but Lois believes that “high school kids are colloquially misunderstood and I think a lot of their rebellion comes from boredom.” Lois believes we have “dumbed down 16 year olds” to the point that we get what we expect out of them. Given a clear mission and support, they can accomplish anything, even teaching in a rigorous program.

The high school teachers were in a unique position as they were often from the same academically rigorous schools the program wants the kids to enter and thrive. They “were immersed at these top schools, they were so much fun, they wanted these kids to be in their schools.” The interactions lead many a high school student to say “you are Lowell material, I really think you could do well and you would just love it,” as Lois recalls several conversations between the two. The high school

students not only prepared the students for the top schools, even more so than the program, they made the kids believe they could attend these schools, and served as motivation for wanting to attend.

The college teachers did some of the same things for middle school students but in getting them to think about college. The major benefit came to high school teachers who were also former students. Former Summerbridge students, now serving as teachers were often times unaware of their college choices, due to lack of family experience, and other factors such as being the first in their family to go to college and lack of exposure to the multitude of colleges which exist in this country. The program was not pushing their kids to college through college counseling; it relied on the schools they sent their kids to as the main source of accomplishing that task. These college age teachers motivated the students to believe they could attend all sorts of top universities: Yale, Harvard, MIT, etc...The college age teachers motivated and educated students in the program and the student alums who they taught side by side with.

The young teachers were fun. They brought an energy to the program that older, more professional teachers could not bring. This energy gives the program its life. It creates a sense of giving and accomplishment that is unparalleled. They accomplish so much in such a short period of time, but do so with the help of excellent master teachers. The program needed these master teachers to provide the direction, training and support needed so that it was not just fun in the classroom.

The program could run well without the master teachers, but it could not accomplish its mission of having the kids enter and thrive in top high schools. The master teachers are a crucial piece of the students teaching students model. Without their guidance the student teachers would undoubtedly create a great atmosphere. The program would be fun, it would be an experience worth enjoying and touting, but it would be nothing more than a glorified summer camp. The master teachers are often

overlooked though. Lois spoke of a video done by NBC, entitled “On Our Own.” The title suggests how overlooked the master teachers really are. As much as they feel empowered and as much as they are on their own in the classroom, physically, the master teachers, and the supportive administration are the backbone of their academic work. No discussion of the program and students teaching students can be discussed without these master teachers.

Lois commented that they needed three qualities to be successful master teachers. The first is they needed to “understand rigorous high schools.” If they don’t, the curriculum won’t be tough enough.” An elementary school teacher could bring “bubbiness” to the program and even help the teachers create good lesson plans, full of exciting learning activities, but without the knowledge of skills and the curriculum of the top schools, the student teachers would never be able to prepare the students for the top schools.

The second is they “have to love teaching.” As much as the student teachers energy allows the students to feel enthused and excited about learning, the master teacher’s love for teaching would give the teachers the motivation they needed to be in the classroom.

The third is they “have to love talking about teaching.” The conversations the master teachers have with student teachers should come from their passion for teaching. If they loved to talk about teaching, then there would be no end to the advice, feedback and counsel the master teachers could provide. A great master teacher would find sources in textbooks or newspaper articles and not wait to discuss this with their student teachers.

No quantifiable evidence exists to prove the academic gains the high school and college age students as teachers provide. The evidence exists mostly in narratives, and the thoughts and statements of the teachers. The power of this interaction can be felt and described readily by all involved.

**Experience**

In order to thrive in the top schools, the students need experiences. They need experiences that rival those of the upper middle class students who will be their classmates. Lois does not feel any ill will towards these kids “its not that these kids are bratty or spoiled, it’s their way of life, and they can talk about things that most kids never dream about doing or most adults never dream about doing.” She was well aware that “you can go to a school that is a very good school but if you don’t feel like you belong there, you are not going to want to stay.”

The program built in components like City Day, an opportunity for the kids to explore their city and to fall in love with it. Occupational Field Trip Day really gave the kids a great opportunity to see occupations they never knew existed, and to have conversations with well educated, powerful people. Trips such as this are experiences the kids could use to fit in with the students at their new high schools. They could talk the talk as much as they could walk the walk with their classmates. Compared to the experiences of their upper middle class peers, the few trips and experiences wasn’t much, in the long run, but it was meaningful and thoughtful at the same time. Lois did not want these kids to get a scholarship to a great school, and not make any friends or make key connections for opportunities later in life.

The afternoon of the program was the experience part of the program. The morning was reserved for academics, for getting the students ready for the classroom experience. The afternoon was the portion preparing them for the out of classroom experience at private and parochial schools. They took electives that allowed them to explore sports like cross country, soccer, and academic activities like debate. The classes pushed to prepare them for the life the students would most likely be living. Lois,



talked about how for three years, the UHS class president were Summerbridge alums. The students were given the confidence and the skills to excel socially in these environments.

One key experience, that could have been highlighted in the academic rigor realm, but falls more under experience, is the two hours of homework a night policy for all students in the summer. Lois believed firmly and stated to the kids in the program “you had to feel like you could do the academics, but you had to feel like you can belong and join things.” Part of being able to join things was getting used to the lifestyle of a student at a top high school. The kids needed to get into the habit of doing homework because these “types of schools gave a lot of homework, and you couldn’t, even if you went home and you had five hours of chores, you still had work to do at these schools.”

If the kids formed the right habits prior to their ninth grade year, Lois believed that they could overcome the challenges of their new, academically rigorous school and be able to thrive. The mission of the program is exactly this, and a core component that is overlooked is the experience part. Under resourced students need a lot to thrive at these top schools, for the upper middle class students who are destined for these schools, it is a challenge as well, but a greater challenge awaits the students Breakthrough serves. Lois realized this from the very beginning, instituting the two hours of homework policy during the first summer of the program.

### **The Core Components Effect On The Model**

The core components of the Breakthrough model: academic rigor, students teaching students, and experience are defining aspects of the program. Academic rigor allows Breakthrough to prepare its students to thrive in top schools where their home schools would not. The rigor allows them to find themselves in the educational settings they were destined to enter and feel as if they belonged. The teachers who guided them to the program’s goals for the students made the learning fun, and gave the

students much more than academics, but guidance and dreams of a future they never knew possible. The experience the program gave these students allowed them to become class presidents, top athletes, and debaters. The experiences the program involved the students in served to give them the ability to fit in these strange, new environments.

Other factors play a key role in the program's success, but these three core components are the pillars that make the program unique and allow it to achieve its mission of preparing top middle school students to enter and thrive in top high school settings.

### **Conclusion**

This program is more than just a program, and much more than one person. As much as the founding board of trustees of San Francisco's University High School wanted a program "of the city", the Breakthrough program is clearly a program of its constituents. Ownership of the program belongs to all of the students, teachers, staff, and volunteers. Their opinions matter and their voices were heard. The mission was not subject to change, as it had to be relentless, but the model was sturdy in a few core components and a general outline. The rest was open to the opinions and experience of those at the helm.

The power of this openness has caused many sites to stray from the model, and even the mission itself. Without the voices of the past, the voices that built the program, this is not too easy to envision. The power of the interactions of the program make it easy for one to get caught up in the narrow feeling of satisfaction that comes from having high school age students working with middle school students. More power exists in the overall satisfaction of accomplishing the simple mission of preparing middle school students to enter and thrive in top college preparatory programs, but without voices to guide and refocus, this mission can, and has, been lost.

My research has led me to find that this program is more than one voice. As powerful a voice as Lois Loofbourrow has, her voice is one of thousands of voices that have shaped this program. She is one of a collection of people who had the wisdom to create a meaningful program and the resolve to follow through on its purpose. Knowing this now, I wish I would have had more time to seek out the voices of Pam Horton, the first summer teacher whose spill on a gravel road forced high school students to take over her class, Dennis Collins, the headmaster of University High School, who cared about the success of the program and Mel Singer, who co-directed with Lois during the first summer of 1978. I would have reached out to find former students and teachers to capture their voices for the sake of reinforcing those young people who are now on their path: waking up early on a summer morning to attend school.

Many more educational non-profits are present now than in the days when Breakthrough was at its peak and many more will rise as our educational system is perceived to be failing. Educational needs must be met and as long as passionate people and educators exist, they will reach to meet those needs, in or out of the current educational model. Regardless of who they are, they all will begin with a particular mission, and like Breakthrough they will go through ups and downs, they will expand to serve more areas and more students, and one day it may be that they will have lost their way. Reflecting on the past helps one find their way again.

As I dug deep into the past of the program that has shaped me as an educator, and given me purpose, my own understanding of the work I need to be doing is changed. The success wasn't just Lois, but all of those involved, who developed, manipulated and improved the model. Breakthrough is of the constituents, and what I learned from Lois is that everyone is being taught. A fancy title does not shield one from the fact that the "students teaching students" motto does not apply solely to the high school and college age teachers in the classrooms with middle school students, but to the administrative

staff being students to the ways education is constantly changing and they sit in the classroom of the experts, the students being affected by this on a daily basis.

The lesson to be learned from Breakthrough is that a mission can remain constant, the end result for the student served can be solid, and however, the processes must change from the original incarnation if the program is to thrive. Without fortuitous accidents, an openness to listen to its constituents, and outside voices, the program known as Breakthrough may have still reached its mission, but it would not have found its strengths. The framework of the program looks no different today than it did 30 years ago, its mission has not changed; how it achieves that mission though has gone through some drastic changes, and even allowed them to bring another mission under its banner: the development of future educators.

VITA

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BREAKTHROUGH COLLABORATIVE'S EDUCATIONAL MODEL  
THROUGH THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE FOUNDER LOIS LOOFBOURROW

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The Breakthrough Collaborative has its roots in a program started in 1978 at San Francisco's University High School. The program functioned on its own until 1990 when its educational model was replicated and was transported to multiple sites across the country. The program has a dual mission, point academically gifted, disadvantaged middle school students to enroll and thrive in top high school programs and ultimately to college as well as encouraging young people to pursue careers in education. The development of the model as well as an investigation into the core components of the model (academic rigor, students teaching students, and experience) are investigated to understand how they came to be and why they are important to the model.

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Loofbourrow, L. (Personal Communication, March 1, 2008)

Loofbourrow, L. (Personal Communication, March 2, 2008)

## Appendix A

### Lois Loofbourrow Interview One Transcript

Alvarado: what can you tell me about the original program, the ones the adults were supposed to lead?

Lois Loofbourrow: The method changed after the first summer. Once we went through the founding of Summerbridge San Francisco, which is, it took us about a year and a half to get to that point, and about a year to get to that point. So about two years to get to this dream, so to speak. We are going to now jump forward and it is now three months before the summer and we are now selecting the teachers who are going to teach in the summer. We thought long and hard about who these people were. We knew our mission from the very first that all middle school students who entered our program would be accepted to and thrive in the most rigorous schools in the city. The pedagogy has changed dramatically; at that point what we decided to do was find the top ninth grade teachers at University High School which was a new high school in the core subjects, and to offer the students a core curriculum in English, science and math that was coordinated. Everything was relevant back in the 70's. We selected three teachers and the Head of School really went out of his way to talk to the teachers that he wanted to see work in the program, at that point I was not the founder of Summerbridge, and I was one of the original directors. I was one of the co-directors; there were two of us that first year. By the second year I was the sole director and then I went on to be the founder of Summerbridge National or the Breakthrough Collaborative. I think of myself as the founder of the national program, but as the founding directors, one of the founding directors of the program so I wanted to clarify that.

Alvarado: would it be safe to say that you are the developer of the model?



Lois Loofbourrow: I am definitely the developer of the model, and I have a lot of to say about the mission. I probably played a stronger role in developing the mission of the work that middle school students needed to be prepared to enter schools that were the top schools in the city. What we did before we hired the master teachers, no, scrap that, before we hired the actual teachers that were going to teach was that they came from these schools where parents were 99% sure that your child was going to graduate and most likely go off to a top university. They were not going to kind of, maybe go off to college. They were the kids that would end up at the UC Berkeley, UCLA, University of San Francisco, 66% of these kids would find themselves back at the Ivy's or small elite schools like Wesleyan, Tufts, or Oberlin. These high schools were the type of schools that middle or upper class parents sent their kids to. Lowell, which was a magnet public school and St. Ignatius which was a private catholic school, not a part of the independent school community, but at that time it was an all male. To that end, we talked a lot with the ninth grade counselors at those schools. San Francisco at that time, and even now, was a very diverse city, where no ethnicity rules that city. The city is made up of so many that no one ethnicity ruled. It was an immigration city where a lot of Guatemala and El Salvador, you would come to an entry point like San Francisco. If you didn't like diversity you would choose not to live in San Francisco. The interesting thing about these three really strong high schools is that they were predominantly white in the case of University and St. Ignatius. In the case of Lowell, predominantly white and Asian, but very few black and Latino students were in the graduating classes. We talked to the ninth grade teachers and academic deans, talking to them about the lack of graduates of color from these institutions. We asked where the Filipino kids, the Latino kids, because we were interested in who was not graduating from these schools. What we found was that, especially at Lowell, it is true, and to a lesser degree St. Ignatius and Lowell, though it certainly was happening there as well, was that the freshman classes were much more diverse than the graduating classes. What we found is that kids were getting in from the schools that were predominantly black or Latino, but often those schools did not

prepare them for the rigor of their ninth grade year. That being said, this informed our curriculum, or we thought it was. Dennis Collins, in the meantime, while we were doing the research, he was talking to the teachers in the ninth grade at UHS who were very engaged in these kinds of discussions of equity, and enrichment and eventually hired Pam Grossman from the English department, Samuel Horton from the science department and Mel Singer from the math department. In addition, he released Mel from his job in the math department in January and released me from my duties in the Admissions office to direct the program with Mel. So Mel, Pam and Sam were the core teachers and we started to have discussions about what the program was going to look like. Some of the things we talked about were very 70's. We wanted the kids to eat nutritiously, recycle, and give back to their community, all the things we talked about in the 60's and 70's certainly found their way into the program. More importantly we wanted the kids to think science to think math, to think literature and not to go into a classroom and be spoon-fed this sort of stuff. So we also wanted different themes every week. I wish I could remember all the themes, but I remember the fourth week of the program the theme was work and in English we read "Working". The kids interviewed people who had jobs that they liked. They were also asked to interview their parents about work. How they felt about it and how they felt about the work as it related to their life. In science, they talked about the careers in science and the kinds of specializations they would need to have careers in science. In math, we had a physicist and I remember him coming in and being off the wall, and he talked about what it was like being a theoretical physicist. I wanted the kids to be exposed to other things. On Thursdays, the kids went on their very first occupational field trip day, where the kids spent a day with a professional business environment. We wanted the kids to experience what the upper middle class kids experienced when they went with daddy to his office. At UHS, a lot of Presidents and CEO's were parents and it wasn't normal for our kids to see the world of business and the world of success, so we had the kids go to KRON TV and talk with reporters, but with the people who were secretaries and those who ran the advertising department to

see the kind of education they needed to do their jobs, to get a feel for work, and what they needed to do, oh and to be taken out for lunch. From their under resourced families, these kids never got to go to a fabulous restaurant and experience a business lunch. So we asked the volunteers to take them to a business lunch. The kids came back and had a business symposium to talk about the day. It was a serious part of the curriculum because the kids, the field trips didn't happen, as it was a part of their classes of that week. One of the things we had about working with these three seasoned teachers is that it was very coordinated, and it was planned months in advance. It wasn't if as if we would bring people together and say "plan something" as it takes a really long time to make something mesh, to make something memorable.

We also knew they were not going to remember the content, but to remember the experience. We wanted them to remember their education, the high school, the college they went to. We wanted to get the kids to see this continuum of education so they can take charge of their lives.

Alvarado: The first summer, what actual year was that first summer?

Lois Loofbourrow: 1978

Alvarado: when were you released to work on this program?

Lois Loofbourrow: January of 1978, Mel and I were to, starting on February 1, went out to the schools to find out where we were going to recruit our kids from. We went out to the district offices to talk to the superintendent to make sure he was on board, and that it was okay to go into the schools and recruit the kids. We had to design the brochures and information and design the process. We had to figure out all the processes. We had to do major, major, major work. Middle school kids make life long decisions. They make decisions that impact the rest of their lives, they just don't know that. They are the ones who decide to take algebra or maybe they would take general math or maybe they would take

whatever. They made the decision to be in an academically rigorous track in high school and also they didn't know that they were supposed to making an informed decision. We knew very early on that we wanted to go directly to the kids and not to their parents, because really this is a program that parents like. The cost is free. It is in a great setting, in a very great neighborhood and their kids are going to be studying all summer. Plus, you could go to work and your kids could come as early as they wanted to in the morning and they could be in a very safe place til 530 or 6 at night. We wanted the kids to do the walking. There were tons and tons of decisions on every single level.

Alvarado: Prior to February 1, did this have a sense of a project or something you would be committed to for a while.

Lois Loofbourrow: It always had a sense of mission. If somebody asked me who really founded the program, the way we could say about the United States, where did this all come from, this came from the founding fathers and their vision. I think the founding boards of trustees of University High School were visionaries. They opened their doors to kids in 1975 and Summerbridge came very early as part of the school. They were adamant that not only the school be a top notch independent school that their graduates would go off and do amazing things, all of their graduates would go off to college, hence the name University High School. They would prepare their kids for kind of something; they were preparing their kids for university work. The founding board of trustees said that if we are going to spend all of this time in a new school, and charge a lot of money and charge a huge tuition, that we wanted the school to be a part of the city and not just in the city, and Dennis, used to use this word a lot, we need to create a project to make us a part of the city not just in it I know that I was selected to be on the committee because I worked for the public school and my children went to public school and I was known as the "public school" the voice of the public school, but I know I definitely came to the school with a particular knowledge of the district. I know that other people who came to the committee were some of the,

almost all of the initial teachers from that year. He handpicked a group of people who were very excited about making a program of the city. People who were very smart, with a public school background, and did not want to have a stuffy independent school and did not want to work for one. And we met; we met maybe once a month, this ad-hoc committee. We started meeting in late 75, early 76, not too long after the founding of the schools because the founders told Dennis Collins that they wanted a program that would make them relevant and wanted some really good outreach projects. I used to say you know we could give driver's ed on Saturdays to anyone who wants it, because you know, getting driver's ed in San Francisco is a really big hassle. There was always the joke; we could do Driver's Ed. As we started talking, we started realizing what was happening out in the city and I happened to be at a graduation at Lowell High School, which I had always known as Lowell to be a top school. It was clear to our public school parents that you knew you wanted your kids to go to Lowell. I was stunned at this graduation to find out that it was only Asian and White kids who went to Lowell. I went to Lowell and talked to a friend of mine and she said, "Well, they just aren't prepared" and she didn't seem too particularly concerned, but she definitely said this is a problem.

To the committee I would say the same thing, and I noticed at UHS too and other places that they would bring these kids in from these random schools and the kids did not do well at UHS. They were coming from the under resourced schools and they were bright kids, just not prepared to do well. So, slowly after talking and said what we should be doing is preparing a motivated group of students from middle school, to prepare, cuz we knew these kids could get in, but to thrive. It is that thriving. How do you get kids to thrive at the most rigorous programs in the city? How long would it take? There was lots of talk about a one year program, a two year program. We also knew that we would get A students from the district and they would become B students overnight. Because of this we knew this wasn't going to be a summer program, we had a school year program. We had two names, Summerbridge, our summer

program and School After School, our school year program. We wanted the program to be a bridge from the community to University High school, a bridge from the community to Lowell, to other great high schools. There are a lot of great high schools in San Francisco and not great high schools. We wanted to build great bridges so they would have lots of opportunities to thrive in these great programs. I think in some way we saw the school year program as being much more important. I think if you talk to some of the early graduates, they will talk about the impact of the school year program. If you take Joel Vargas, a graduate who went on to do great things, you will find him more apt to talk about School After School because that is where he got down and really learned to be a writer, which is where he realized he was a smart kid in math. There is this myth that we were sort of summer program, we made this a program about access.

Alvarado: the initial contact with the students was still in the summer correct?

Lois Loofbourrow: We were very entrepreneurial. We accepted individuals, because we knew we were not going to magically erase every skill gap these students had. There were times in the earlier years, we could sense when a student was going to get in, because we were doing the accepting. If you applied early, we might have you start School After School right away. In the early years, School After School was open to all, even the friends. In the first couple of years, we had 350 kids in the program. We would do anything for an individual child that would build that child's skills up. We were very concerned with kids that would do anything you ask, but were not taught. Parents were especially perplexed when they could not understand why their kids struggled. You need all the cores in math to be ready for math. Say for example your fourth grade teacher got ill and you had three substitutes who didn't teach you math. This happens in public school. When that core is missing on basic skills, you must shore that up. We tried to take it off the there is something wrong with you the kid. We are here to make sure you start getting ready for ninth grade.

Alvarado: where were the resources coming from?

Lois Loofbourrow: It's a little smoke and mirrors, I really don't know where the funding was coming from in the beginning. I remember meeting Tom Layton, a Stanford buddy of his, on a funding call and asking him to fund us and he said he couldn't because we didn't have a track record. I said I would be back. I always took a no as a challenge. I remember going back and saying we do have a track record and it is even better than we could have imagined.

Dennis' view was constantly fundraising for UHS, he had this great theory, look, people turn you down, and when they do, I have Summerbridge in my hip pocket, so they turned me down for a big give, but you may not like independent schools because it serves only rich kids but here is a program that you will love because it will really speak to you. That is how he funded us, I think that some years he over funded us, and some year he might of underfunded us. We were a part of UHS. I used to say we were a department of UHS. Now when Dennis left 10 years later, that came back to haunt me, because Head of School impacts how you were seen.

At that time it came down from the board to Dennis for us to manage. We were there to develop it, he was there to be a sounding board of our ideas, but he never micromanaged the program.

Alvarado: When did the change that it wasn't the UHS teachers doing the instruction shift to the High School and College age students? How did that actually come to be?

Lois Loofbourrow: We had 12 teaching assistants that first summer, we were at St. Ignatius, and the head of school told us that if we really wanted to run a great middle school program we had to bring in high schoolers because middle school students love high school students. They can serve as TAS So we called them TA. For years after we called them TA' instead of staff because it took us a really long time to break away from the term TA. The TAs were, at that time, from University and maybe a girl from

Lowell and a guy from SI. We tried to get some kids with a public school background. We had afternoon activities; it wasn't formalized courses until the second year.

Well, anyway, Pam and I were taking the kids out running from UHS across the Golden Gate Bridge, which was really dramatic, and something I thought was interesting that many of our kids had never seen the Golden Gate Bridge. They had seen pictures, but it is a fallacy to think that because you live in your city that you know your city. It goes back to what the board members said that just because you are in your city doesn't mean you know your city. Which I think goes back to the vision at the. if you know san fran is very hilly, and we were up on a high hill, which was very gravelly and we were on this hill and Pam fell and had this gravel embedded in her leg. She called me later in the day and said "I can't even walk, I have to go to the Doctor's to get the gravel out, but I am a mess. I can't come in tomorrow." I was supposed to be the substitute, but frankly I haven't even taught that much and I had lots of things to do. She said "lets turn the class over to the high school kids and they can do this or this." I remember Wendy Abrams was one and here is what I said, Pam is going to be sick. They took over, and I remember them reading Dahl or the Outsiders, I can't think of the name. I observed their classes and they were in three little groups. I don't really remember what they were doing. I remember calling Pam and saying "they were fabulous, they were great with the kids." It worked great because the high school kids were bored hanging around the class. One girl had actually complained, she had come from Visitation Valley, and she said "you just hired me to be a babysitter." I was confused about these high school kids being there and they were a little edgy, like why were we here. It was clear that there was magic happening. I don't think I was as articulate. Pam got back and we talked, and Pam and I loved to talk about the program, and of all the people who worked there that summer, she and I would spend hours just wondering what we thought this means or what we thought that means. We would spend time with kids, because we had some really challenging kids that summer. I think your first class



will always be because you discover your level of expertise, and you figure out who you can help go.

What we talked about is, when she got back she talked to her kids. She said her kids were so much more positive and had so much more fun. She said they accomplished the same thing I would have accomplished but they were using this word “fun”, which I think is used a lot in the program, which has become a trite word. Back then we saw it as hard academics as being fun. It had a real meaning to it.

What we decided to do is, we basically made a pact at the beginning. We don’t know what we are doing here, and I had said what we are doing, if we are not successful, I don’t want to be a part of it. We made a pact with Dennis that we would not talk about the program for 10 years. We would not go out on the circuit, because if you did something for 10 minutes in the 1970’s, you became an expert. And I said what frightens me the most is that we go out to these public schools and promise all this stuff and don’t deliver. We should work and work and work, until we develop a model where our kids are truly thriving in these top high schools.

Alvarado: How long did they take over, the younger teachers?

Lois Loofbourrow: They took over, the first summer, for three days and then she came back the following week. When she came back she started giving them more work in her classroom over the last two weeks of the program. Pam and I were saying that “next year, we also knew by then that some of the kids, who were taking English, had skills that could be helped by a stronger literature class. We also knew that the next year we would be giving writing tutorials and that the math class, the kids needed about twelve levels of math, but we wanted to build our kids to have skills to take Algebra in 8<sup>th</sup> grade if it was offered so they would be ready to take Geometry Honors, or at worst, Algebra honors in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We knew that experimental math just wasn’t enough and we knew the following summer, we would have writing for the kids who needed it, and math for all the students and we knew that our high school students would be teaching the math. This all gave us much more confidence for our School

After School program because we knew the high school students would be teaching it. It made much more sense if we were putting a lot more energy in SAS and that SAS would also be a place where we would be recruiting our summer teachers.

Alvarado: What about those three days did you notice that affirmed that the high school kids could do it.

Lois Loofbourrow: They were much savvier about the kids and more likely to speak their mind. If you ever listen to the way teacher's talk they don't say anything real because they are afraid of saying anything too personal or we can't quite figure out. You would get a high school kid saying "Judy can't write, she writes like a third grader, she is not going to be ready for UHS." Blunt. You know, so, why don't you start giving her writing tutorials. It was as if you were talking to someone as if you know what they were talking about. They were so much more in tune with what the kids needed in ninth grade. They were much more invested in the individual kids because they wanted them to succeed. For me as a director, I had someone I could talk to about the kids. They were much more willing to change. If the book was not strong enough they would say we needed a stronger book, or that the math curriculum was silly. UHS, those tests at so hard, how are you going to prepare the kids for the types of test they are going to take. Their feedback was so much more in line with the mission. They knew the mission. "You are not going to get to the mission with this kid."

Alvarado: Did you notice this change in the TA's after the three days?

Lois Loofbourrow: We were a small group that first summer, and it was only three TAs who were affected, but it was because of Pam, she was so collegial with the TAs because she really respected. She was the one that permeated this idea and helped us to refine this idea. Later on, she went back to get her masters and her thesis was on Summerbridge and then she went on to a doctorate at Stanford

where she is a tenured professor. You could see she was the type of person where all of this would resonate.

Alvarado: did the other TA's have a reaction to not being able to do what these other TA's getting the opportunity.

Lois Loofbourrow: It was the first summer and we were all feeling our way. The mini courses were not mini courses but mini-experiences of stuff they were going to do. The TA's planned the afternoon events. I don't know though, my memory thirty years ago, I don't know if they ever complained. I don't know.

Alvarado: The first summer, you learned a significant deal, how did you structure that School After School program based on what you learned during the first summer?

Lois Loofbourrow: Well, the first summer we had a full day meeting, so it must have been the first day after the program ended, we would sit and discuss every single student in the program. We would discuss where were they in relation to building the skills that would be needed before the ninth grade, and if you were in the program, Carlos, and we thought "he is really strong in math, but maybe we could have him come for an advanced math class, what could we teach him" as we were talking about them, we were thinking about what kinds of classes we would be offering. What we wanted by the 7<sup>th</sup> grade is for the kids to write really good essays. We wrote the evaluation that went home, was a one page with their comments, and the advisor would write something, then it was the mandate for the school year. We would say you needed to come for however many days a week we decided.

## Appendix B

### Lois Loofbourrow Interview Two Transcript

Alvarado: the first core component I wanted to talk about, despite the campy nature of the program, which we will talk about later with the spirit aspect, that academic rigor lies at the heart of the program. Why do you feel this is necessary, academic rigor?

Lois Loofbourrow: Well, I mean it goes back to everything I talked about before. We started this program because the students we wanted to work with were not represented at Lowell. Our kids were more apt to reflect the ethnicity that was found in the public school system. A third of our kids were black, a third of our kids were Latino. We took kids that were in the top public schools and prepared them for the top schools in the city. This is not to say they were not there, they just did not have the skills to stay there once they got there, so they were asked to leave or chose to leave. It was an academic preparation program, to not only enter the top schools, but to thrive in them. We didn't just want the kids to get in the door; we wanted them to stay there.

Alvarado: What early on, what did you use to define rigor during the first years of the program?

Lois Loofbourrow: Two things, we drastically changed

How much of an influence on rigor did the high school teachers have and, also your students who came back to teach?

As we turned different courses into high school kids, we drastically changed. We wanted bright kids who loved the real world, and kids who were generally. As they began to teach they became very critical. They were from Lowell, they were from University High School. Equally, the kids from the first two years, we really followed their ninth grade year closely and we said we want your criticism, we want

you to tell us where you feel the ninth grade is a normal school year and a normal class and where you feel you could have been better prepared. We invited their criticism. Where do you feel this was a tough task, I wish I had been prepared for that. We learned that from the kids in the first few years.

I never forget we had three boys who hung out in ninth grade. They were at University High School, which was great for me, I think we had seven kids from that first summer in University High School and we really wanted the kids there not be because we thought they should be at University High School. We really needed to watch these kids grow through high school and they needed to help us grow a program. Listening to the students was very much a part of the culture.

And the three boys came in, I think it was the second day of ninth grade, and one boy threw a book down on the floor and he looked at me, and he had tears in his eyes “you never told me about something like this, this is too hard, and I looked down at the floor and saw it was Julius Caesar. I don’t know where I was; I hadn’t really been at the school all that long and hadn’t really thought about what it was like to get Shakespeare in the ninth grade having never seen Shakespeare. My thought was that every ninth grader experienced Shakespeare for the first time or had never seen a Shakespeare book. This way, everyone was on the same page with learning a new way to look at literature of discovery of growth, that is a little bit difficult then you realize the themes are very accessible to the themes in the modern world and I thought the whole class would be going through that. What I actually did after the boys said this, “wow, we should do something about this, if this is as harsh as we think it is we should be doing something about this with our kids in the program. So I called some of the middle schools, the independent middle schools and I was amazed to find out to find out that all the seventh and eighth graders read Shakespeare books. What happened in the classes was the Shakespeare books the teachers say they were going to start with Julius Caesar and the kids would say “We read that in seventh grade, oh well.” Or “I really liked *Midsummer Night’s Dream*” The three summer bridge kids who

happened to be in the same section looked at each other like they were idiots. Then they opened the book and the first scene is difficult, two guards are doing something I don't know, I even had trouble. My son came home that night and he happened to be in that class and he was trying to read that first scene and he said "I don't get it and I said "I don't get it either. " Really I didn't get it either, but we would find out more about this.

It was experiences like that made us, realize that we wanted from them. We went to the high schools then and it was about math, math, math and writing, writing writing. The kids need to write at a faster rate because they need to have a voice. It is about knowing the vocabulary. We stressed reading, writing and math. We not only went to all the independent middle schools in the city because their students performed well

Alvarado: they transitioned well?

Lois Loofbourrow: Not only did they transition well they were very aggressive students, even as ninth graders.

ALVARADO: What other benefits did you see of the academically rigorous nature of the program?

LOIS LOOFBOURROW: Anthony Mickens said to me, he was in our second class, and he said to me, maybe the second week of class "the thing I hate most about English is that I am overlooked in the class." I said "Why would you say that?" and he said "we were talking about a short story in class and one kid raises his hand and says something. The teacher smiles and says what a great point can anyone add to that? People add something and the teacher changes the question and I add something, and she says that's nice and looks over. I felt really bad as I just don't know how to discuss literature." I think that again, that I was not reading challenging books like Shakespeare, but being able to have intelligent talks about Shakespeare and being able to think thematically. We then separated literature out from

writing. Everyone needed to be able to take literature and talk literature, to having the challenge of reading very good literature. We had writing expectations in Literature class, but if you needed writing help by the third summer we had a separate writing class so that the kids could find that voice that kids felt they weren't having.

ALVARADO: What were the origins of the two hours of homework? What was the purpose of homework in preparing them for that ninth grade year?

I think, you know, the mornings were far more academic. The afternoons the program turned into more of a summer camp. The afternoon programming included the field trip and other programs. We wanted to expose the kids to, you know, to give them different kinds of skills that would also prepare them to not only go to a strong high school to be involved in a strong high school. It was our contention that you needed to have two things in high school to make it work for you, because high school can be a painful time. You had to feel like you could do the academics, but you had to feel like you can belong and join things. We wanted the kids to be able to go and join the newspaper to try out for a play, to run on that cross country running team. To feel that if they go to that high school they can make a commitment of before and after school activities too. What was your question again?

ALVARADO: did they have two hours of homework that first summer? How did that get started? Why two hours? Why homework? Why not have them do that work in the afternoon? Why have them take it home? What was the purpose of the homework?

LOIS LOOFBOURROW: The kids needed to learn to be independent. To be able to think outside the classroom when they are thinking of what to do and when. The purpose of homework is to learn to think by yourself and be intrigued with your own mind. Two, the types of schools gave a lot of homework, and you couldn't, even if you went home and you had five hours of chores, you still had

work to do at these schools. None of these schools are going to say “oh gosh, sorry you have an afterschool job” You are still going to have a lot of expectations of long term projects, short term projects, and again, the memory. You have got to learn that vocabulary for science. It doesn’t happen by just reading a chapter. I think we were lucky in our program that the kids who come early and could stay late, and for some kids, especially kids who have a lot of responsibility at home, or a lot of chaos at home, they can actually stay at our program until 6:30 at night and even have homework coaches if they needed it, but by and large, you cant get into the habit of doing homework if you are not in that habit. Habits take a long time to develop and we really wanted the kids to develop some good methodology. There are two things that we felt very strongly. There is a cost to everything, we didn’t charge money for the program, but we gave homework and we expected it done and we expected them to participate 100% in everything, but that was part of the cost of everything.

ALVARADO: You mention the morning was the academic part, the afternoon was the fun part, what else happened in the afternoon that were essential parts of the program? What kind of things did you do that became yearly things in the afternoon?

LOIS LOOFBOURROW: Well, it took us two to three years to develop a great afternoon program. One is we put a lot of thought into the pedagogy of the morning, realizing and a lot of laser eyes on whether or not it worked and we were really tinkering a lot with the afternoon. The morning, it had a lot to do with our mission. All that is done in our program should be mission related we wanted them to enter and thrive, and we often knew with high school that thriving meant feeling like you belonged. You can go to a school that is a very good school but if you don’t feel like you belong there, you are not going to want to stay. So, I think the key to belonging is you can have great conversation, be involved in conversation beyond the classroom. Even from the very beginning, we wanted the kids to feel like they could build skills in the program that might help them in high school. With Dennis coming and building a new



school, he had some of these great things he would say, I don't even know if he remembers them or not, but he was like "Lois whatever you do, hire your athletic director first." Because the kids had access to whatever the University High School kids had access to, there would be this great guy or gal, who knew athletics and was a part of their lives and knew the protocol of gym and team training. And that person was there before school and after school to run additional program, and in addition run clinics in basketball, soccer and some of the key sports. And he said to hire an art director. Art and PE were the initial focuses and it always stayed in our programs. They branched out in later years, but they were probably our most important first hires.

ALVARADO: were they also teachers during the morning part? Was the focus we need to find a good PE Director regardless of the academic portion?

Usually what happened, I would say by the third or fourth summer, they each taught one academic course. Sometimes the art director didn't because the art director was going to be putting on a huge art retrospective of the show and to run a good art lab; you have to be so organized. You can walk in and do an after school art collage with out the, it's like running a good science lab. They have to do a lot purchasing, at that time not so much with digital cameras, but they had to do their own dark room work on photography. Sometimes, often the art director felt if they taught an academic class they had more of a fit, so if it was what they wanted it was what we let them do. The pe with the Coach, they did a lot of informal advising, a lot of Dean of students attitudinal thing, and it was the precursor to the, by the fifth or sixth program we had a Dean of Students, but I would say that the earlier athletic directors functioned as a dean of students, but they only had to teach one course. They had the Olympics to run, and running the Olympics was tough work of course, it's a lot of work to put together and have it done right. They sat on the administrative council where five staff sit on what we called the ad con or the ex con, and we met before we locked up the school to say this is how the day went, this is what we need to

take care of tomorrow and this is what tomorrow is going to look like. In the morning it was a checklist that we were totally on board with what we needed to accomplish that day. They were fabulous

ALVARADO: The basic framework of the program, is each of these days, is a morning of academics an afternoon of enrichment designed to get them more involved when they get to these academically intense school to be student athletes, student leaders, that sort of stuff was a part of a six week summer session at the end of their 6<sup>th</sup> grade year and the end of their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. Between their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year and their 8<sup>th</sup> grade summers, there was a school after component. Then for some of them, you mentioned there was a pre ninth grade summer camp for those who needed it the most.

Lois Loofbourrow: not a summer camp we added a third year to the program that we mandated for the program that we mandated for anyone that remotely, remotely needed some skill building from ninth grade. Their curriculum then mirrored ninth grade curriculum. They took a biology class. They took what beginning language. A typical program. The third year, the kids named the program, Newbridge. We charged money for the program and opened it up to kids in the city and charged a fairly hefty tuition and for all of our kids it was a way that we gave mostly full rides, but some of the middle class families could afford to pay a portion. It was great for us because it paid for all of our staff stipends. The program did.

Alvarado: when was this initiated?

Lois Loofbourrow: I think we started that, I could be wrong, it was the fourth, in sure it was the fourth year, maybe the fifth year, very early on, that was because the think Carlos that I think we were always most concerned about, is do these kids have the skills that these high schools expect them to have. We did not want them to have any surprises. Some of the kids you know, you could be two or three or four years behind and some of the kids just needed more practice. They needed more writing. Their math

skills, we worried they were gonna be struggling with in math. We felt that maybe they weren't committed enough to academics and they needed the motivation. What was great about it was that they all knew the high schools they were going to and it was open to other kids. We had a lot of kids who were from independent schools and who were from catholic schools. Definitely more middle class kids, but it was just a great equalizer. A lot of the friends they made in Newbridge were that they followed all the way through high school and college. Sometimes now I will see alumni of the program who are in their 30s and 40's and they will often talk about the friends they made in Newbridge along with their Summerbridge friends. I was surprised at how smooth the program was and how easy it was to run. They knew why they were there. I don't think we ever had any, maybe a couple, of sort of issues, but by and large kids wanted to be there.

Alvarado: How did you know, what tools did you have in place that at the end of their 8th grade year that they were ready for that ninth grade year? Was it tests? IEPs?

Lois Loofbourrow: remember that the summer before eight grade, we wrote an IEP, which is now called a student Success Plan, which is what I think you are calling it. The mentor Teachers and the senior people and some of the staff would take a day and we would discuss every single child and we would discuss them in the relationship of what it is they would need next year during the school year program. We were very prescriptive in the school year program. I don't know if we discussed this yesterday, but if we felt that they had skill gaps of any sort, they had to come to school after school. SAS ran four days a week. So our weaker kids came to SAS 3 times a week. If you were strong you could come and take an enrichment class, but you weren't mandated. The focus of the program was not to make them to come to school after school day after day but to give them the time to build the skills they were academically weak in. I think coming for example, right out of ESL classes, we had kids that we took that had not been mainstreamed yet. It was hard to learn to write English with ease, so I think our School After

School gave our kids practice in writing. SO, we at that eighth grade summer, after that 7<sup>th</sup> grade summer, we knew the kids were going into the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We followed their progress through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, with 8<sup>th</sup> graders you follow them so intensely your working with the families on what schools the kids are going to apply to, you have a lot of one on one conversations with families, lots of one on one meetings on financial aid forms if they are applying to an independent school or to a boarding school, you are getting their grades from the schools, so you are worried that they are not getting A's in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. IF they are going to jump up to a school like Lowell they might need some more work. Or in the tutorials, a lot of kids just would not have benefited to that, the kids who needed it the most were in schools where their 8<sup>th</sup> grade wasn't strong enough. A lot of times we transferred kids from a school that was weak to a school that was strong. That was very helpful. If we had a kid transfer from xyz school transfer to Roosevelt Middle School and get into the gifted programs, and Roosevelt was very good to us, we didn't worry too much about what the kids needed that 3<sup>rd</sup> summer. IF they stayed in a weak school and basically had some 8<sup>th</sup> grades that could best be described as mediocre, certainly the kids would need a 3<sup>rd</sup> summer.

Alvarado: it just wasn't looking at their grades and saying we need to get them a tutor, it was what is the best academic situation this year for the student? It was about finding the right school or finding within that school, the right teachers for that student?

Lois Loofbourrow: every student had a different profile. Some families were very different, they would say "I am very unhappy with my kids skills, my kids school, then we would talk about transferring. We didn't go to the parents and say "oh, you should take your kid out of that school and have them get on a bus for an hour and a half because we can get them in some gifted program." It wasn't that way. We were much more colleagues with the parents. A lot of the parents became very savvy about what their schools weren't offering. We told the parent to read the school reports, a lot of this stuff is public

knowledge how your school is doing. If your kids are in an extraordinarily weak school, you can't expect that this school can somehow miraculously prepare these kids. The parents who tuned in wanted to transfer. We could really afford this. Some kids wanted, I think I told you yesterday about a young boy who wanted to go to Exeter. It was a dream. Exeter is a very rigorous. We told the parents that we thought he might be a good candidate for Exeter, but they might want to consider having him go to a prep school for a year and prep for Exeter. We thought we knew a couple of schools that might be interested in having him there.

Alvarado: he went there for his eight grade year?

Lois Loofbourrow: Yes, for his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year he transferred to a really tough independent school and it was great for him. He was a nice kid. He was a soccer player, besides. He was one of those kids who was going to get involved with the school. It was the best thing that we did for him. When he went off to Exeter, he was very prepared for Exeter, but he started wanting this at a very early age, and so we did, did I think that most of our kids should transfer into a n 8<sup>th</sup> grade school like Town or Burks, absolutely not, but if there was a need for a particular child academically, we would sit around and discuss, what are some possibilities here.

Alvarado: that was part of the needs responsive that you became more flexible. In the beginning it was this is what we need this is what we do, you then realized you needed to talk about these kids.

Lois Loofbourrow: we learned after the 1<sup>st</sup> year that this was not a program that we would plunk kids into, that we were going to be working with kids that all had special needs and we were going to meet these needs and the goal was that every single kid who came into the program, no matter what their skills were like at the beginning, they would have a chance to thrive in these tough schools. A lot of kids needed so much training in basic skills. Other kids didn't need that much from us. We didn't work too

closely with other kids because as anyone will tell you, we met kids that were flat out geniuses. Some were undiscovered geniuses. Some were kind of lagging in non gifted courses. We could get them into gifted courses in the public school. They were just relieved and a truly gifted child that is sitting in a regular classroom can be dying and I think that what we could do is to get to know the kids and how could I best help you, and for some kids it was just accelerating kids within the system. San Francisco had some really great opportunities for kids within the public school system and their parents don't have the time to ferret all of those out. We did.

Alvarado: it never seems very formalized, is the high school tracking, initially, during the first summer, what was the thought of these kids when they got to ninth grade. What was the thought of that?

Lois Loofbourrow: there was lot of conversation, especially between me and Dennis, my primary concern was that what if we promise all of this and don't deliver anything. I am assuming we don't know a lot about what we are doing. We made a pact that we would not talk about what we were doing. We would study what we were doing and what we were doing wrong and we would be intrigued intensely. We wouldn't be afraid to go "you know, I don't think we are doing this the right way" therefore all of the changes we made in the program. That was our strength. Our strength was we didn't want to do it wrong. We wanted to do it right. In the beginning, we naively thought that if ran them through some summer program with intense school year tutorials. The school year program, we thought in the beginning was a little more important than the summer program. The summer program is the hook. I don't know if that is really true or not, but we were sort of thinking that way. I think what we learned from our first class of kids is that you really want to watch the kids very closely in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. What we found with our 9<sup>th</sup> graders is that many of them did exactly what we had hoped. They thrived. They knew how to get involved. Many of them ran for class office. A lot of kids became cross country runners because we did a lot of running in the program. A lot of the kids did ultimate Frisbee in the

program. We found that our co curricular curriculum paid off big time. The exposure to dark room photography, the exposure to ceramics, the exposure to great sports and being on stage a lot, find a voice, joining the debate team all of that paid off for involvement in high school with our kids.

We found that some kids struggled. More boys than girls and the thing that we seemed to happen a lot Sophomore year is that we started checking in with the kids s in sophomore year and found that some of them were falling off of the cliff. We realized in high school that some of the kids needed really quick tutors, some of them were not doing well, Luis was not doing well in geometry and he needed a geometry tutor for three or four sessions, so we tried to hook the kids up to tutors right away, not waiting till they check in, but actually to talk to the kids enough that you could find out what they were doing. I think we were fairly successful in getting the kids to college. A lot of them would go oh, I just bombed a test, I don't get this. We would get quick tutoring, not long term tutoring. N

It became also clear that a lot of the kids did not feel like, they came up against kids in these schools, Lowell as much as UHS and SI, that kids who do so much, kids who do all these amazing things in the summer. We learned that if we could find amazing things for them, for our kids to do in the summer, for two reasons, some of the kids and especially the boys, especially the boys who live in the projects or in distressed neighborhoods. That is how we got to know some of the great eastern boarding schools, they have great summer programs and they were very generous with scholarships, so we sent a ton of our kids, mostly boys out of the city after their sophomore year, and sometimes their freshman year, sometimes to boarding school. We really encouraged our kids to come back and teach, so by the fourth summer of the teacher, at least half of our staff was made up of graduates.

Alvarado: you mentioned quick tutors, who were these tutors. Who were these people?

Lois Loofbourrow: two things, every kid at UHS had to give 20 hours of community service, so I tried to grab as many kids as possible. Don't worry about your community service hours, I will see that you give 20 hours to the program. I had a tremendous number of kids who owed me hours that I could call up. I would call up jama and say could you tutor Luis in Geometry for four hours, he just flunked a test, and that was a done deal. That was very easy. I think you have to have these things up front. You have to know how you can do things quickly. It is a think upper middle class parents know so well. Their kid comes home they know how to get a tutor quickly. They know how to get an appointment with an academic dean quickly, they know the art of quick intervention. Because of that I wanted our office to have a quick response.

Alvarado: they were not often paid tutors? Tutors beyond high school age?

Lois Loofbourrow: there were a few times when we felt we had kids with, there was a newbridge student who came in and was a great writer. UHS had accepted her but she really connected with the office, and when math skills were passed out, she was behind the door. She had 0 math skills, a brilliant girl. I recommended to the school that they get a professional tutor for her and the tutor stayed with her all through her freshman year. Fortunately she went to a school that they paid the tutor. There were times that we paid a professional tutor when somehow, things weren't clicking. I think sometimes you can do really well in geometry and algebra can't click. Sometimes a professional teacher, all the professional tutors I knew had taught math and gone back to graduate school and had been teacher, and they were highly qualified people. It was sometimes worth it to pay for an hour or two. The school itself would sometimes just pick up the tab.

Alvarado: what did you, how important was it then that you stay in contact with these kids in high school?



Lois Loofbourrow: I think after the replication started, I got a sense for how a lot of programs were going to go off base. That is when we took kids into the program, at that time the classes were very large. A middle school teacher would have 5 classes of 35 kids, every single day. The fact that we bough in 35 kids a YEAR, seemed like a piece of cake, but they weren't my staff's kids. They were my kids. I was, they were my kids. The staff came in and relieved me each summer, by doing summer program. They relieved me by teaching writing and math and computer programming and French and Spanish during the school year program for an hour or two. I spent most of my time in the classroom. I was always surprised how other directors were running around with their heads cutoff going "oh my god", and I am thinking gosh, by the time the summer starts everything should be so organized that you have nothing to do but talk to kids, see kids, talk to parents, it was them I needed to have a relationship with. Likewise in school After School, the kids would come; I didn't ever nothing to do but talk, talk talk with kids, being in the classroom, writing notes. They had diary they kept on every school after school session, so Carlos if you were taking Joel and Joel was your teacher you would write this is what I thought of this session, this is what I felt, this is what I needed, you would write a paragraph. Joel would write, this is what I did, this is how I prepared and this is what happened and he might say something like Carlos seemed really distracted and he didn't pay attention and I felt this hour was a waste of time. Then I would get this journal and I would, I had a parent volunteer who corrected every single grammar mistake and I would write a note for Carlos about how I felt he needed to improve. Nothing ever happened that didn't come back to me. I talked with Joel the other day and as you know he has a doctorate from Harvard, and he said, you know Lois, I remember how you wrote these letters to me every week in my after school tutorial. He knew me; he knew everything he did was important to me. He was my student and I only had 35 of them. Really if you have those classes you have 35 at 7<sup>th</sup> 35 at 8<sup>th</sup> your 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 35, sophomores 35, and you have the same load as a middle school teacher. Those

kids were expected to talk to me all the time. They called me up because I was always there and that was a part of the culture of coming back and sharing and that is how the program had to operate.

Alvarado: the high school program was nothing more than an extension of it. They were in the habit of tracking you down and communicating with you.

Lois Loofbourrow: if I had to track them down, there was really something wrong. By this time, we knew people in the schools, they would say what's up with Joe, he hasn't shown up, or we would get parents call and crying at the end of their line, they were at their wit's end. We would say come on in and talk. It was just sort of I was the go to person for anything academic. It comes with developing, why do the schools talk to you, cuz you like them. Why do the high school counselors call you, because they know you. Why do the parents think that you are the person to go to, because you talk to them so many times. This is a program about relationships. I was a single director thinking this was an easy job. If you don't think this job is easy, if you don't get it, like if you have ask "geez Lois, what is an academic high school", I know I get cranky, Carlos, but what? It's like get off your butt and go and find out. Is this school really good? If they don't have a strong AP program or IEB program, than chances are it is not an academic school. They may call it that, but if 100% of their graduates are not going on to college it is probably not an academic program. I think it is somehow the culture of these are your kids and this is an easy job, you have to see it that way to make this thing work.

Alvarado: core component number three that we are most recognized for, the catchphrase "Students teaching students" , was there ever a time that after you made the move to students, the students couldn't provide enough rigor, where you thought this might not work?

Lois Loofbourrow: you have to understand that for years and years and years, the same mentor/master teachers were there, the civility of the adults around the staff, their competence level was so high. The

way we set it up was great, there were two staff to a desk, because there were club leaders, shared their desk. We had this amazing resource room, because all teachers as they are building their lesson plans an Algebra teacher might be teaching graphing, but you want to have four or five algebra books for them to look through because one method may really speak to that teacher versus another method. They were just there talking, talking, talking, if they observed at teacher who was having trouble the first week, they would do some intervention to help the teacher, but if in the second week, nothing really good was happening in that classroom he mentor teachers could do a number of things, they could take over the class for a week, so the teacher could observe her students learning with the teacher. I was a study skills, because, I thought study skills at UHS, I was the study skills mentor teacher, and there was a classroom of five boys with a young teacher named Felicia Park Rodgers, she was a fine teacher just really young and the boys just gave her a hard time and she said they are unmanageable, just watch me teach, and of course, the kids were perfect, I mean they couldn't act out in front of the director. It was a great relief to have Felicia sees her boys as real students. Then I could remember telling her class that I know you have acted out for Felicia. If you do it ever again, even for a second, you are out of this program, because you have as much responsibility for making a class work as she does. She is learning how to teach, your learning the skills she has to teach you. The responsibility is not all on Felicia it is 50% on you. If Felicia doesn't get better, we will let her go, if you don't get better, we will let you go. The thing of students as teachers of the staff was a part of the culture too. We talked, one of the things we talked to parents about, at informational evening and enrollment evening was that this is a workshop in education. If you expect your child to come here and get xyz, then have it done in a perfect way, then this probably is not the program for you. You will have a lot of young teachers; some will be brilliant right from the start. Others would struggle for a week or two as they learn the methodology and the ABC's of what every young teacher needs to learn how to do well. When we do this we expect your children to be intrigued in the way they can help their teachers become better teachers. If your

child comes home and complains that they don't like their math teacher, then you need to tell your child "what can you do to help your math teacher be a teacher?" This is a hard job and if you don't buy into this being a workshop in education then you shouldn't enroll your child here because your child will have a responsibility to bring up their own skills, but their teachers as well.

Alvarado: We assume students teaching students is the high school and college age teaching the middle school students, but is it reversible?

Lois Loofbourrow: it is absolutely reversible. First of all in the same way that the students taught me so much. How would I have learned that our program wasn't as good as we thought it was if our students hadn't said we're struggling? Had they not been honest with me. I didn't even think about putting in a foreign language until our kids got to Spanish 1 at University high school and they came in as a group and they said "do you know who is in our Spanish 1 class" and I was thinking that this was probably a trick question and it was, I mean they were all freshman. They said "Do you know a number of kids in our Spanish 1 class have had three four or five years of Spanish? They just haven't tested into Spanish 2, and they are board, so the teacher can go really fast because they understand what the teacher is saying. We don't understand a word and the other kids are rolling their eyes at us" I said "yes, they have taken three years of Spanish and they have not tested into Spanish two, so they are not probably not great Spanish scholars in the long run, so what I think is going to happen is that you are going to have a tough first semester, then second semester you will overtake these kids. You are not understanding it. Chances are you will get a C this semester, but I bet you will get an A second semester. "

Now that was actually true, I didn't learn nor did I get that so many kids came in from independent school into University High School having had so many years of Spanish. A lot of my learning curve was about the kids telling me and me going and learning about these independent school middle schools

because they were the key that I needed to better understand what life was like for our kids at University High School.

Alvarado: back to the college and high school age teachers themselves, you did realize they could provide the academic rigor the students needed

Lois Loofbourrow: but look, I want to say something very important here, let's look at the history of teaching. If you were crossing the plains in the 1850's and going to school, chances are your teacher might be 16 years of age. A 16 year old in a different era, in a different life is not a teeny bopper, we ask our kids to have a pass to walk down a hall. We have dumbed down 16 year olds and 17 year olds. Historically, these young adults have had major responsibilities in life. If they grow up on a dairy farm, they are up at 5 o'clock, you know milking all the cows before they get to school and walk two miles to get to school, and then at school they are treated like infants. That's ridiculous. I mean, I remember one day, walking down my high school and asking me if I had a pass. I remember I got home at 3 o'clock in the morning from babysitting 5 kids the night before, total responsibility of a bunch of kids, and now I am just walking down the hall and I am asked if I would make it down there safely and I would need a pass to do it. It just seemed absurd to me, even at that age. I think that high school kids are collosically misunderstood and I think a lot of their rebellion comes from boredom.

I think the bigger risk for us was bringing college kids into the program, and I still think it's the risk. I think they are the riskiest group. I think that is something that is just not talked about. And why are they risky? I think that with a high school student that is not doing well in the program, you still have authority, um, because it is the way our culture is set up. You bring in college students and they have now lived away from home, partied too much, stayed up too late, done things at the last minute and not only that, there is a certain arrogance that comes with whatever it is they are learning. You will get a

college student coming in from Dartmouth or whatever and they have just taken a course on McCarthyism the first three months of it. Now they want to regurgitate exactly that to their 7th graders and to politicize these 7<sup>th</sup> graders into some sort of action against watching that something like this may never happen again. There is that sort of strange arrogance that overtakes you in college. We saw it a lot, I think I am laughing as I say this, we saw it a lot with Berkeley kids, who can be very political. If something is going to happen politically in this world, I feel like you see the nubs of it first at Berkeley. I think that with the Berkeley students you had to talk to them a lot about not making it a political issue and the mission was to prepare them academically for the top high schools and the mission was much more important than their political vision. I think that with, the idea that a college student could walk in hung-over was appalling to me. I think they were much more risky about drugs and alcohol, which was shocking. So, the risk was not in the high school kids, it was in the college students, even the older college students, the 22 and the 23 year olds who knew they wanted to go into teaching. It was this sort of boring mindset that I am now an adult and I want to learn how to teach, but they didn't have that sense of fun.

I think that the strength of these high school kids was that they were immersed at these top schools, they were so much fun, they wanted these kids to be in their schools. They would say things like "oh you would be great at Lowell, you would be so great at Lowell. You would just love it, and they meant it. There was a more genuineness of spirit, my feeling, my stresses with staff, I think there were times, we met some spoiled kids, spoiled kids who never worked before can be a pain, but I think that you can let a weak staff member go. Of all the years I have ever worked, I have only let one staff member go. I let him go, he fell asleep at orientation when kids were talking about their lives. I am thinking if you can fall asleep at something like that, you are just not for us. And he was very relieved. But I have been very

confrontive and I think that I have been much more confrontive with college students because I think there much riskier.

Alvarado: what was the first year you remember allowing a college student to teach with you?

Lois Loofbourrow: we had college students from the beginning in art and pe, because we wanted to bring in to the art and the athletic department a sense of awe in the kids. We liked the fact, later on not so, but most of our athletic directors were high school students. In the first couple of years we bought in college students because we wanted the kids to go “wow, they play soccer at Berkeley” or “wow they play basketball at Stanford” We wanted that wow factor. With the college students, we stayed with the art director, because it was more professional, we were a professional gallery at the school and we wanted a professional art show. We felt that what we could do for an art major in college was give them a professional show and that we always wanted this to be a two way street and we wanted to be able to give to whatever staff members we had.

When we first bought in a college student as an academic teacher it was because a parent called me up and said she had heard about our program and had a wonderful son who went to Yale who wanted to be a teacher but he couldn't find any opportunity to test this out, and would we consider him. “Oh, I don't know, it seems a little risky to me” it was very funny. I remember his name, Peter Platt, a wonderful guy and he came in and he was great. The mentor teachers, he really related with the mentor teachers, maybe less so with the college students, but later on here is the strength of the college students, many, many many summerbridge kids taught in our program. That is good because they lived in the neighborhoods our kids were from, they rode the bus the kids rode, they understood the challenges. They knew what was a weak school and what was a strong school within middle schools. They knew every trick in the world as far as ways you would lie to get out of homework. The little kids

could get nothing past these summerbridge kids. These Summerbridge kids were the holder of the culture. But, they were still in high school and had not made the break to college and then we bring in these amazing kids from Yale and Harvard and Brown and all of a sudden that's where our kids wanted to go. I mean why did all these kids want to go off to Columbia. We had these amazing college kids from Columbia and "it's like yeah, you should come to Columbia"

I can remember Cindy Brown coming to me when she was maybe 14 or 15, she was teaching her first summer and she said "I decided I am going to go to Wesleyan." And I said "why Wesleyan" and she said "cuz Debbie said I was Wesleyan material." It was cool. I think the college students, and there were many nice ones, so I don't want to talk about risky behavior, but I do think that you have to check that a little bit more often with college students, but I do think the college students became friends with the high school kids and mentored them into some of the best colleges in the united States. Very naturally, what do I really know as a Californian, having not traveled a lot, I mean I can read the books and thinks like that, but it was the college kids who bought in the culture of "you belong here".

Alvarado: it was a lot like then the high school students helped the middle school students see where they needed to go or wanted to go, help them form a vision of what their life would be like and the college students would help your high school students who were helped when they were middle school students so it was like this chain

Lois Loofbourrow: it is probably why so many of our kids went off to Eastern schools. Secondly, we started bringing in one boarding school person. They did a lot, just bringing in this idea that boarding school is an option. I never would have sent my kids to boarding school, um, but I think that for some kids, it really resonates with kids, for some families, it really is a way to go, because it provides a top notch education with a lot of safety, and it provides the family, especially families that for one reason or



the other that are sort of intrigued with that, often families from Africa were very intrigued with boarding schools because a boarding school in a place like Nigeria for example, their best students might very well go off to England to boarding school. Yeah we really like boarding schools, my cousin went, my aunt went. So again, depending on the culture. A lot of the Central American families liked the idea of boarding school for their kids. It was apart of, maybe their culture down there, but I think that boarding school, if the parents are for it, is a really good option.

Alvarado: what quality does a good master teacher possess, what do they need to have in order to help these high school and college age teachers?

Lois Loofbourrow: I think that there are three things that are really critical. One is they must understand rigorous high schools. Otherwise, the curriculum won't be tough enough. What they'll do is they will go "oh, let's read this book because it's so much fun and the kids will really like it. They will see Shakespeare and go no. They will dumb down the course because they don't know that tough ninth grade, why its so different than just a normal high school class, because they are extraordinarily rigorous.

Two is they have to love teaching, so you don't want someone that's taught for two years. You really want someone that has taught 9<sup>th</sup> grade or an 8<sup>th</sup> grade feeder program into a tough high school. You definitely need to have someone at that level who understands the writing skills and the math skills needed. They really need to know the 5 courses the kids are going to take in 9<sup>th</sup> grade so the kids are prepared to take them. While we might offer physics and chemistry, at some point before the kids get out of our program, they should have a sound grounding in biology because biology is the tough class where a lot of kids will get c's and d's in 9<sup>th</sup> grade in a tough high school.

They need to know that 9<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, they need to love teaching and three they have to love talking about teaching. The mentor teachers need to talk. The best mentor teachers, you see them everywhere, they are walking around the block with somebody whose class they just observed. I was thinking of you last night and here is a book on writing that I think you might particularly want. I think you might get some lesson out of it or ideas from here. They are willing to go, you know that was not a good class. Lets just talk about that. You wanted someone who has the time, who is not going, “oh excuse me I am only giving 2.2 hours and my time is up” they have to really, believe in this mission and this work. Frankly, the great master teachers, they like that, they like their classes, they like talking about it. Some need to be real organized. I am probably going a little too deep, but the math master teacher, mentor teacher, needs to be highly organized the kids have a number of skills they have to pick up in algebra, a couple of skills to give an overview of geometry. In order to meet your kid’s needs you are probably going to need to have 7 to 8 different levels. You want someone who can take the algebra textbook and the pre-algebra textbook and break it down into units. You are going to be teaching pre-algebra 2 and these are the units you need to cover and why. So you don’t want somebody to be sort of like “how are you feeling about math today?” You need somebody who is very organized and very detailed and very linear. Fortunately most math teachers are, you need somebody who is going to um, own the curriculum of math, absolutely, irrevocably, otherwise your math curriculum wont be a smooth building block, into geometry, geometry honors. They should really know the testing in honors classes in top high schools. They just don’t understand what a rigorous math test so they need go be very good in that area.

Alvarado: without the master teachers, the program could run, but it could never accomplish your academic goal with the students, how is it then that it has sort of fallen to the wayside. It seems very

easy to forget that the teacher in that classroom is there because of strong support and good honest direction. How is it do you think that it got lost somehow along the way.

Lois Loofbourrow: I think not because anyone is not well intentioned. I worked in the high school, I saw ninth grade and I taught ninth grade. I was on freshman council which I helped start at the school. I started a study skills program and a writing skills workshop for the ninth grade. I was very interested in why kids don't do well in ninth grade. My whole being was about the ninth grade. I made it that because that is what our program was all about.

I think it has to do with too young a director coming in and thinking they know more than they know, not being humbled. Not having the skills on how to hire well. It is easier for them to call up a friend they knew in college that might be teaching kindergarten or 3<sup>rd</sup> grad and saying "oh come in and be my mentor teacher in math" you get this bubbly person, and they are great teachers, then they are talking about classroom control and writing good lesson plans, and I have seen programs that are really weak academically where these teachers are writing these lesson plans thinking "oh god I'd hate this" very beaurocratic, lots of goals and objectives but nothing about the skills the kids need, and what your building in them. The conversation gets strange. Or you get people who come in and have the kids read something. Or they come in and go our kids don't need to take algebra because one teacher said it. So I think that it gets dumbed down, easily in the mentor teacher ranks because the mission of the program isn't clear enough. Entering a tough high school and thriving in it, the directors really don't know what that means. Maybe themselves, they have never been in a really tough high school or two, they have come from a tough high school, maybe a really good independent school, but after all they are working with poor kids now, so maybe that is not quite as important. I don't mean to sound harsh here, but the educators are not well trained, the directors are not well trained about what they don't know. They are

not real curious about what they don't know, they don't understand the mission of the work clearly enough, so class and race issues have not been discussed openly enough.

Alvarado: so you could say that it is easy to dismiss the role of a master teacher because of the energy of a master teacher?

Lois Loofbourrow: look, I am enthusiastic person. I think every program hires the right staff, I think the only way you go wrong with staff is if you bring in someone who has never experienced rigor themselves. If you bring people in from a very weak college, lets face it a lot of our colleges in this country are not very strong. The kids have come from a really weak high school and they have never confronted their own lack of skills. I mean they should all go sit in these classrooms in these tough schools. It's very humbling. They need to know what AP curriculum looks like and get their kids, in a very short time, able to do them. It's not a matter of if a school has an AP program but if the kids are passing the exam with 4's or 5's. So, I do think that you need to be well trained in this thing called academic rigor that leads to schools like, in every state there are schools like this. There is University of Michigan and UC Berkeley and University of Wisconsin and you know there is the Ivy's and the smaller more elite colleges out east and in the west, and there is MIT and Caltech. Rigor isn't a mystery, but you have to be curious about it.

Alvarado: you could say that two things a teacher needs to be successful, one they need to know rigor, and two they need a good master teacher to give them the right direction and feedback, what other things does a high school and college age teacher need to be a successful teacher in the program?

Lois Loofbourrow: I think, my feeling is, that what a good teachers need, it's the one thing we look for, a really warm personality, that cares about other people. A good teacher has to reach out and know their kids. They have to want to know them. They want to have to like them. Kids know whether they are

liked. There is nothing worst than having a teacher who you know doesn't like you. There is somewhat of a warmth and generosity of spirit. A kindness so to speak. I think that kids in middle school really needs a sense of humor. That is how the fun came into the program, we really went after kids that were fun. Who loved to laugh. Who would tell the truth. Kids who would talk about classes that were hard and why they were hard. One of the things we did for all of our kids before they were hired is that they had to do a mock teaching presentation before three teachers, usually most of the mentor teachers were the ones they had taught before. We didn't care about them. We didn't really care that they were brilliant with their mentor teachers as their mock students, but more a sit down and talk with these teachers about how they put the lesson plan together. What were they thinking? What we were looking for were high school kids in the very beginning and college kids later, that could have a conversation and be interested in a conversation about education. About the pedagogy of education. About lesson plans. About intent. About where you wanted to take your kids, why you wanted to go there. About what were going to be some of the challenges of bringing the kids up to speed to be on par with the Lowells. We wanted to see that they were intrigued, and that so, the purpose of the mock lesson plan was to see if they could have those kind of conversations. That was really important.

Alvarado: the next core component is experience. You talked early on that the program needs to offer these kids an experience, not only academic rigor, but you talked a bout a lot of things that are part of the program that are still things that are done every year. I wanted to take the time to understand why those things are done and why experience is helpful? What purpose does experience serve, what does this do for a student?

Lois Loofbourrow: I think you have to know what life is like for an upper middle class kids who find their way to an elite school, you have to spend some time in the suburb like Belvedere or piedmont or cherry hills in Denver to find out how much energy is put into raising the most privileged kids. These kids have

a great resumes often by the time they hit kindergarten. I mean they have been to tee ball, they have been to experimental dance, scarf throwing, they have been to nursing school for three years, then they had probably prenatal tapes in Japanese playing when they were in utero, I mean the amount of experiences that is often given to our most privileged kids is just mind-blowing. When you get to these elite schools you realize these kids have traveled extensively. They sort of know everything. "oh when I was in Kenya last summer" its not that these kids are bratty or spoiled, its their way of life, and they can talk about things that most kids never dream about doing or most adults never dream about doing as an aside.

So one of the things we wanted to build into the program was some experiences that kids could draw on "oh like when we were hiking at Yosemite," "When we were riding our bikes across the Golden Gate Bridge" "when I went to lunch with the president of the law firm" "when I met the neurosurgeon at his office" "when we went to the ballet to watch a dress rehearsal" those are asides that can be used to dwell on when discussing a piece of literature or when you are throwing your credentials around, and we wanted our kids to be able to, everyone should be able to throw credentials around. Everybody needs to feel like they have been some place and they know something. We wanted to make our kids feel at home. One of the reasons on the city day, we do this great field trip, it's a full day field trip, we have done it since year one, and it is really an experience of san Francisco of really knowing your city. Seeing how exciting your own city is. What we did was bring in staff from out of town we always sent the out of town staff on this field trip because almost immediately we could reverse who was the leader of this field trip and who wasn't. It was a very challenging field trip, and the kids do these wild things and some of them are just plain funny and some of them serious, but one of the things the kids had to do was to visit and they always had to be in groups. They could never be or see another group; they had to be totally separated, because if they see another group or another group sees them that's really a

bad thing. One of the things the group had to do was go to the fur department at Neiman Marcus. Now Neiman Marcus does not necessarily like to have kids there, but it is a right of anybody of their store to go in. They often but what we found was often kids of color are excluded from places automatically. We wanted to tell our kids “you belong anywhere, if you want to price an expensive blouse at Neiman Marcus, you have a right to do that. You have a right to be seen. You have a right to go to a lunch with the president of a fancy company” that is something that can be seen as quite empowering for little kids.

That experience and experiential bit are often the things they remember. Years later, maybe, I started the national office, and this kid came in and he said you know I went to Dedmon years ago. I went on to Lowell, and I knew that. I was really successful at Lowell, and I knew that. But he said” I went to Berkeley and went to med school and now I am a doctor. And you know every time I went to a new city think of City Day and how I learned about the city of San Francisco, city that I lived in all my life, and I was a tourist for the first time in my city and I fell in love with San Francisco. Now I give myself a City Day and my mother finally told me, why don’t you go tell Lois that. She probably has no idea that City Day changed your view of the world and yourself in this world.” He said “I will always be an explorer in this world.” I think that this is what we wanted our kids to be. We wanted our kids to be brave and adventurous and explorers and the experiential piece was essential.

Alvarado: it seems to build the curiosity of the love of wanted to learn things and not take things as they are.

Lois Loofbourrow: we wanted the kids to learn things and learn anywhere. One of the places we took them too was the library. Most kids don’t go to the main library in San Francisco, there are a lot of homeless people around and once you sort of get through that your in this building that is just amazing.

It's amazing. We want you to be experienced about your place in time. We had the kids do this great newspaper article about what was actually in a local newspaper on the day of their birth. What was happening in the world on the day they were born? They made these amazing posters and they wrote these stories of the day they were born. It was a very great way to decorate the school. Everything we did, we tried to turn it into an experience. Out of that day we got great posters that decorated their school, they know their place in history and the kids would go out to city hall, this was another field trip, where they would ask strangers, very tough questions.

That experiential piece was very intentional and very important to what it is we were all about.

Alvarado: it seems every component or thing that you, had a reason?

Lois Loofbourrow: Every single thing had a reason. One thing we kept asking ourselves was is this good enough, is this good enough. Or course we threw out some things. We do have some things from the very first summer. Occupational field trip day, and City Day, things we put in from that very first summer, I don't know if it is still in the program, it's been 30 years. I would still want it in the program. The 10 years we tested that remained. S

Spirit day, which became a really big experience, came in the fourth year of the program with a Summerbridge student named Jeff Galvan, who went to Lowell, he was one of those brilliant kids, and I want to say something about kids like Jeff. There were a lot of kids like Jeff in the program. Highly motivated, highly skilled. I think he wrote like a high school senior in the sixth grade. What were we going to give him? He was going to be successful right? I think we gave him a truly gifted experience. He could get together with high school and college kids who were as smart as he was, and talk with them. He could come back after his freshman year at Lowell and teach. We gave him something, maybe self esteem, maybe self confidence, but he came back and gave to us a lot. One of the things he bought



to us was the idea of spirit day. He said, "Lowell is a big place, look they have this spirit week that is really cool, maybe we could do something like that for Summerbridge." So we tinkered around with it and came with this day, where each club, the kids were divided into clubs, they showed up on the first Friday of the program, in the costume of their club, they had to be impeccable students because if they weren't impeccable students in the classroom, they got points off, so the judges were always around being impeccable. When they were changing classes they could be whoever it was that they were, sometimes they were the flight attendants or team x, I don't really know what they were, but they were these strange people and we had spirit day where the secret club days were announced with a very clever skit, which was judged, and a very clever cheer, which was probably 5 seconds, which was judged. The most spirited club, I don't know, they got this club of disparate kids together and they had to have fun and Jeff was absolutely right. They had gone through city day, the 7<sup>th</sup> graders, the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the 9<sup>th</sup> graders participated in the scavenger hunt, and everybody participated, and they had a dance afterwards, which was always like the best because they could teach the college and high school kids how to dance. All of that made that a very tight program.

Alvarado: still speaking about core component 5, the experience part, the standardized things the sites have is all school meeting and celebration, can you talk a little bit about those and the reasoning and the impact those had?

Lois Loofbourrow: all school meeting started because we felt our kids were passive, they didn't have a voice, they weren't great public speakers and we also noticed that every time we went to an independent school it was drop dead perfect. I was a public school parent and I sat through a lot of school events where you couldn't hear the kids speak, you couldn't hear the teacher speak, it was horribly painful. So it was about bringing in the community, there were a lot of guests coming in: mayors, principals, great authors, lots of trainings about field trips, occupational field trip day, we had a

lot of trainings for that, how to write a formal business letter, and but we also had a lot of opportunities for kids to read things they were doing in classes, maybe reading poetry, having an opinion on something. I have gone out to programs recently and I don't recognize them. I mean I find that they are sometimes student run and you can't hear the students speak. Lots of cheering where my ears are hurting. I feel it is really silly. I felt our all school meetings were very funny but often than not very serious. We had an afterschool program meeting for 10 minutes. The morning one very serious, very intent on the academics, sometimes they were wildly funny. We had a lot of Shakespearean raps. When rapping came in, it was always about Shakespeare. Very funny, very clever. In the afternoon all school meeting it was about administrivia. Homework is due, meet here, meet there, meet everywhere. Those were often run by students with ADcom helping the students be leaders. SO we had a lot of student leadership, so I think the seriousness of All School Meeting somewhat got up and flew out the window. I don't understand it. I saw a program present a college last year and it was a 3<sup>rd</sup> rate college presented in a 5<sup>th</sup> rate way. It almost made me cry. I feel like you should be celebrating fabulous high school kids and start catching that vision of going to a fabulous high school. I don't know why the culture has changed.

Celebration was a celebration of excellence. It was so clever so beautiful and so well choreographed. We started with club songs, some all school meetings, instead of coming to all school meetings early on, the classes would meet early on and start practicing their songs. It was incredible. The speeches were always these fabulous group speeches where, which were mesmerizing, especially once you see kids stand up and go "Summberbridge has saved my life, I love it very much" more than once. You can't stand those speeches, they are trite, and they don't really say anything. I think kids can say more things and so we had these great topics that kids talked about that actually shared something at Celebration. It

was to be about excellence. It should be something where the parents sit and they cannot believe their kids were so professional.

Alvarado: so the audience for asm and Celebration it was completely different. For celebration it was the parents the family and supporters of the program.

Lois Loofbourrow: you have to know your audience. I had some Celebrations that were awful, they broke my heart. I had a group of staff do a slideshow that went on for 30 minutes. It was ridiculously stupid. I had a drama teacher once, I didn't check the presentation of the drama class and it was just ridiculous, ridiculous presentation. So you had to be really good to get into the celebration program. It was about excellence. It was about showing the parents your kids belong on stage they have amazing voices. We have something to say, and it is about excellence. Your child is excellent. This program is excellent. Anything less than that shouldn't be in Celebration. Also, you didn't spend more than 18 hours doing it.

Lois Loofbourrow: I went to a Celebration that it was so long that 3 parents who went fell asleep and the words at the end were "thank god this is over" I got this a lot when I was growing up with my kids in public school. "Thank god this is over." I never wanted to give our parents. Parents need to be shown excellence too. They need to know their kids belong in places that are brilliant, so our audience was to wow the parents, to make their parents cry because their kids are so brilliant. And to make the parents grateful that their kids had a chance to work with these college and high school kids who were so nice. That was the point of celebration. I wouldn't say that every year we had it right, it was amazing.

Alvarado: it's always a learning experience with the young teachers.

Lois Loofbourrow: no, it isn't, with the young directors you get a young staff member to come in and say "oh, by the way you are running celebration." You can be my assistant at celebration, make no

bounds about it, these are the director's kids, this is the director's program. This is the director's evening. I know I sound really cranky about this, but I think that our kids deserve better than mediocre. I don't think that a young staff member that is coming in and learning how to teach and learning how to be an advisor, can in their spare time without key components being built into the system. I don't.

Alvarado: you mention the director taking ownership of the program, one of the things that goes into rigor or experience, is the ownership of the kids, that they directors need to take the time or find the time to do their jobs outside of the time the kids are there and really get to know the students. How important is that experience for a young person in the program that there is someone who cares and someone who follows and listens and knows what's going on in their lives?

Lois Loofbourrow: I think that is the critical thing, that I really learned when I left the program and went on to work with kids who came out of prison, what I learned with working with the young offenders that if you don't really attach yourself to strong mentors, you really are lost. This program is about being a conductor of an orchestra and your high school students are one part of an orchestra and your high school students another part your mentor teachers are another part. Your students are a major part. You have to conduct when one has a solo, but as a whole you're the conductor, they all have to belong to you, they all have to look to you for direction. With all that being said, you cannot be a good director or program director or executive director, need to be a tight team. The executive director cannot come from on high and somehow thinking that raising a little bit of money is what you do for this program. You really need to be involved with your kids if you have the program director/executive director model, you have to figure out, but I think that the key to success in this program is that you have to be very detailed oriented.

A lot of people talk a good game, but you have to be able to do scheduling in an expedient way, hiring in an expedient way, setting up advanced recruitment process in an expedient way. They come in without the skills and they don't know how to ask for the help they need. The advantage of being in an independent school for me was the admissions director was exemplary, the academic dean was exemplary. I knew the admissions. I had all of these people that helped me. I had to know how to manage my time. When was I an admissions director, when was I an academic dean, when was I a counselor, and I had to wear all those hats. You can only wear multiple hats if you are highly organized. So organizational ability, I think that if you hire somebody in and they are constantly turning in term papers at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour and kind of running around and couldn't keep their apartment clean and oil in their car. If they couldn't multi-task as a person, I don't know how they are going to multi-task as a director. For some it is their first real job, I was older when I started it. That is not to say that young people that can't do it. I don't think they probably interview right. I think that I would really give them some deep tests I think there needs to be a deeper training program for young directors. I feel like it's helped.

Alvarado: They are not good administrators or educators, but they have the skills to be, it seems they use this as the experience as the stepping stone to where they are better?

Lois Loofbourrow: I always felt this was a career job, I never felt the need to leave it. I am stunned that people come in, mess around in people's lives to fulfill some promises and break others and move on in good conscious. I don't understand it. My son says I am too naïve, too driven by the mission of this work, but I feel that is what's wrong with education today. "Oh well we are a bad school, we feel bad. Oh well" and they turn around and do the same thing next year. If you turn around one year and do the same thing the next year and your hiring the same crummy teachers, and you haven't painted the bathroom that smells to high heaven and everybody being depressed by it, but everybody being

paralyzed by not being able to fix it. I think that this program had a chance to do with a very entrepreneurial head of school was to fix all the parts that weren't running right. It took 10 long years before I know I would say I know what I am talking about.

When I talk about the program now I really want people to listen. Listen, I am 67 and people don't like to listen to 67 year old ladies, and there is this arrogance about feeling like you know more about the person sitting next to you, and it makes me sad. These kids went on to doing more than I ever dreamed of them going. They went to Harvard, and Yale. They were so successful. They were amazing, amazing young people and they drove me to run a really good program, but I stayed around long enough. I loved the middle school kids. I thought it was the best age. They were so serious. I think it was the perfect age to make an impact in their lives. Without it the kids that would make decisions that affect their whole lives anyway. Middle school is such a strange place because people would say "My friend is teaching in middle school, poor person." I felt that when we did something bad, the kids acted out they were sort of edgy, you could almost sense when things weren't right. If you are in tune to that age group.

Alvarado: What I think is interesting about our program is that you get a lot of feedback from the kids, and one of the few places where they give feedback that is listened to. In a well run program, it seems like they know if they say something, someone actually listens

Lois Loofbourrow: I think so, I think that again, I want to say, I didn't think this was a very big job, and I had been in the public school and I saw these teachers who stayed in love with their kids and their classes, against all odds. To me they were the real heroes. I feel like I had an easy job. I never worked really late I was a single parent. I had to be organized and I had to multi-task. One thing I had, and its something we didn't get to talk about Carlos, I relied very heavily on volunteers. I had worked for the

volunteer bureau for the school district for a number of years, and I really understood the power of volunteers, and I had the ability to meet someone and feel they could help this program in some profound way. I think that was the real joke in the office: "Don't talk to Lois you'll be volunteering." Kids would laugh. One day I was crying and I had this really big problem and Lois said sit down and we'll talk about it. Lois is talking to me and we are talking intently in the meantime we are both stuffing envelopes because there was this mailing that had to go out. We did both. I think that was sort of the rap on me. Here is Lois, she is going to tell me the truth, and or she is gonna ask me to help her out. You gotta hear this. There was a rule that I had when I eventually got a co-director, it was sort of like stop everything and meet as a kid, so a parent would never walk in and we would say "oh yes, I can fit you in Tuesday at four o'clock." If they are in front of your face stop everything and meet. It never took that long. It was a moment that if you didn't take it then, you would have to get a calendar out, get their phone number out, by the time you made all these arrangements to get a meeting down the line, you could have talked to them in that minute. There is always 10 minutes you can spare. You can always say I only have 10 minutes, but lets just figure out what we can do right now. I think that, plus high school kids don't like to talk to you for more than 10 minutes. Middle school kids wanna play after five minutes. High school kids are bored fast, it's the college kids who can talk to you forever.

They are sort of like, you become sort of professorial to them. So I think that if you, there was a book called the one minute manager, but keep it simple. It's an academic boot camp, these are your kids and it's about excellence. It's nothing else. The mission says it all, the mission that the every single one of you kids is smart enough, bright enough, great enough to be in a top high school program and actually do well says it all. Those schools are all excellent. Their bands are excellent. Their orchestras are excellent. Their plays are excellent. Their debate clubs are excellent. I mean this thing about these top notch schools is that they are stunningly good. You have to prepare your kids to be stunningly good

there. Anything less, if you're confused as a director after 6 months, say "bye bye this isn't for me I am too confused."