In 2012, Prince George’s County, Maryland, launched the Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI) to achieve the vision of County Executive Rushern L. Baker III for a thriving economy, great schools, safe neighborhoods, and high-quality health care by targeting cross-governmental resources to neighborhoods that have significant needs. Prince George’s County is the nation’s most affluent jurisdiction with an African American majority. With 908,049 residents (2016 Census), Prince George’s is the second-most populous county in Maryland. It is also among Maryland’s most diverse counties; African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians made up 65 percent, 18 percent, and 13 percent of the population in 2016, respectively. Prince George’s County is home to the University of Maryland, College Park; NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center; Joint Base Andrews (previously Andrews Air Force Base); and the US Department of Agriculture’s Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. It is bordered by Washington, DC, and Montgomery, Howard, Anne Arundel, Calvert, and Charles counties in Maryland. Prince George’s County Public Schools serves 132,000 students in prekindergarten through grade 12 with diversity of its student population reflecting that of the County. To support the County Executive’s vision for public education, TNI@School: Prince George’s Community Schools Network emerged in 2013 as a collaboration between the County government and Prince George’s County Public Schools. Led by the Office of the County Executive and implemented by the Department of Social Services, TNI@School was designed to support students in identified neighborhoods by offering wraparound supports to improve learning. Since then, TNI@School has worked to reach more students and is currently providing services in 40 schools across all grade levels.

The goal of TNI@School is to ensure that all students are resilient, successful, and ready to learn. Its long-term success will be measured by improved attendance, student behavior, family stability, and graduation rates across all schools in the initiative. Using the community schools framework, TNI@School established a network of both school-based partners and community-based organizations to help achieve its goals. This brief focuses on the activities of TNI@School’s core partners for grades K–
12 from 2015 to 2017 and examines interim measures of progress in connecting students to four
categories of services. As detailed in figure 1, these services are designed to provide evidence-based
interventions to help remove barriers to success and improve student and family outcomes. The core
partners provide resources, including but not limited to behavioral health services, case management,
college and career readiness, and resource coordination and referral.

Before 2015, the initiative and its current data collection and reporting processes were still in
development. Though the same level of analysis cannot be done on the first two years of the initiative,
TNi@School reports that around 3,400 service connections were made during 2013–15. Current
programs and processes evolved out of the challenges experienced, lessons learned, and improvements
made during those initial years. During 2015–17, TNi@School made great strides in setting up a robust
initiative and serving over 2,180 students. The program was also able to expand full-day
prekindergarten in elementary schools. The initiative has established a solid foundation for connecting
students and families to resources designed to remove barriers to academic success, improve academic
outcomes, and stabilize families.

Serving TNi@School Students

Although each of the schools in the TNi@School network has unique strengths and assets, all were
strategically identified based on the needs of the schools, students, and families as presenting barriers
to academic success. All but 11 of the 40 schools are Title I schools, which attests to the high share of
students from low-income families. In all but 4 schools, over 70 percent of students are eligible to
receive free and reduced-price school meals, another indicator that their families likely struggle to
make ends meet. The majority of students in the TNi@School network are black or Hispanic. Schools
within Langley Park and East Riverdale/Bladensburg, two neighborhoods with large Hispanic
populations, serve a large share of Hispanic students.

TNi@School works to connect students to resources and address barriers to academic performance
through the five basic steps outlined here and shown in figure 2. Students are referred to TNi@School
by school staff, TNi@School partners, or by themselves or their families. The referrer indicates one or
several reasons for the referral, such as academic concerns, behavioral challenges, or basic needs. After
a student is referred to the initiative, the TNi@School community resource advocates (CRAs)
embedded in each target school complete a needs assessment to further identify that student’s specific
needs. Based on identified needs, CRAs then refer the student to TNi@School partners working in each
target school and other community-based organizations. TNi@School partners are charged with
engaging referred students in services and regularly reporting to TNi@School on service provision and
some student outcomes. These data, which are reported in the TNi@School Efforts to Outcomes
database, were used to generate this brief. At the end of the 2016–17 school year, CRAs began working
to complete follow-up needs assessments with students to understand whether student needs
improved or changed after services. Because this process is relatively new, follow-up needs assessment
information is not included here.
FIGURE 1
TNI@School Framework

TNI@School students are resilient, successful, and ready to learn

Improved Attendance
Improved Student Behavior
Improved Family Stability
Improved Graduation Rates

Interim Measures of Success Linked to Longer-Term Outcomes
- Completion and timeliness of student needs assessments
- Referrals to community services
- Connection to supplemental insurance
- Number and appropriateness of student service referrals
- Parent engagement in services
- Referral follow-up rates
- Frequency and types of services

Prince George’s County Department of Social Services, Public Schools, and network of community services under the direction of the TNI@School Dream Team
Progress So Far

Referrals

TNI@School strives to connect students and families to resources, and resource connection begins with the referral process. From August 2015 to January 2017, school staff, partners, and families referred 3,026 individual students to TNI@School. Referrals were spread across all school levels, including 32 percent in elementary schools, 27 percent in middle schools, 32 percent in high schools, and 9 percent in the three kindergarten–grade 8 academies. Primary referrers to TNI@School included teachers (20 percent), counselors (20 percent), principals or vice principals (14 percent), and self or family members (10 percent).

Although most students were referred for multiple reasons, the most common referral reasons (either alone or in various combinations) among all students included behavioral concerns (29 percent), academic concerns (21 percent), and anger or aggression (19 percent) (figure 3). These referral reasons align with TNI@School’s long-term goals of improving student behavior and academic performance, and they suggest the initiative is reaching students who can benefit from its resources.
Needs Assessments

Of those students referred by January 2017, CRAs embedded in each school completed in-depth needs assessments for 2,157 students by June 2017. During the 2015–16 school year, CRAs used the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Comprehensive Assessment; in the following school year (2016–17), CRAs used a different general needs assessment informed by the comprehensive assessment. Based on data from the general needs assessment, TNI@School is engaging students with various needs, including students who self-report as new to the country, who are in unstable housing situations, and whose families worry about food security.

Resource Connections

Based on identified student needs, CRAs worked to make resource connections to six TNI@School partners and over 60 community-based resources that work to address a variety of challenges, from housing to adult mental health to financial stability. Of those students referred by January 2017, CRAs made resource connections for 91 percent (2,751 students) by June 2017. CRAs worked to ensure resource connections were made in a timely manner. Data on students who were assessed by January 2017 (n = 1,327) show that most students began TNI@School program participation about 19 days after completing the needs assessment. Many students began program participation much sooner, with about
36 percent of students beginning program participation the same day as their needs assessment. CRAs seek to make appropriate resource connections based on referral reasons and needs assessment findings. Of the 1,248 students for whom CRAs made referrals to at least one TNI@School partner by January 2017, 89 percent (1,110 students) were connected to appropriate partners. Table 1 shows the total number of schools and students served by each of the core TNI@School partners through January 2017. Most students (1,491, or 68 percent of all TNI@School students during this time period) were served by both the CRA program and another core partner.

### TABLE 1
Schools and Students Served by TNI@School Partners through January 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Schools served (n)</th>
<th>Students served (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community resource advocates program</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Children’s Guild</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Behavioral Health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland Multicultural Youth Center</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Clinica del Pueblo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE Consulting LLC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TNI@School outbound file (community resource advocates program) and partner data, 2015–17.

### Next Steps

Early in its implementation, TNI@School established a rigorous performance measurement process designed to track service delivery and assess student, family, and school outcomes. In the last school year (2016–17), TNI@School made many intentional changes to its processes and procedures designed to better connect students to resources. Implementation is an iterative process, and the tasks ahead for TNI@School will focus on continuing to improve processes and services based on the data collected in the first year and a half of implementation. TNI@School also has an exciting opportunity to look at the longer-term student and family outcomes the initiative aims to improve, including attendance, behavior, family stability, and graduation rates. Going forward, outcome data from TNI@School partners and the schools themselves will provide important insights on how the initiative is supporting Prince George’s County students to be resilient, successful, and ready to learn.
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