



NYC's Children First Networks: Turning accountability on its head

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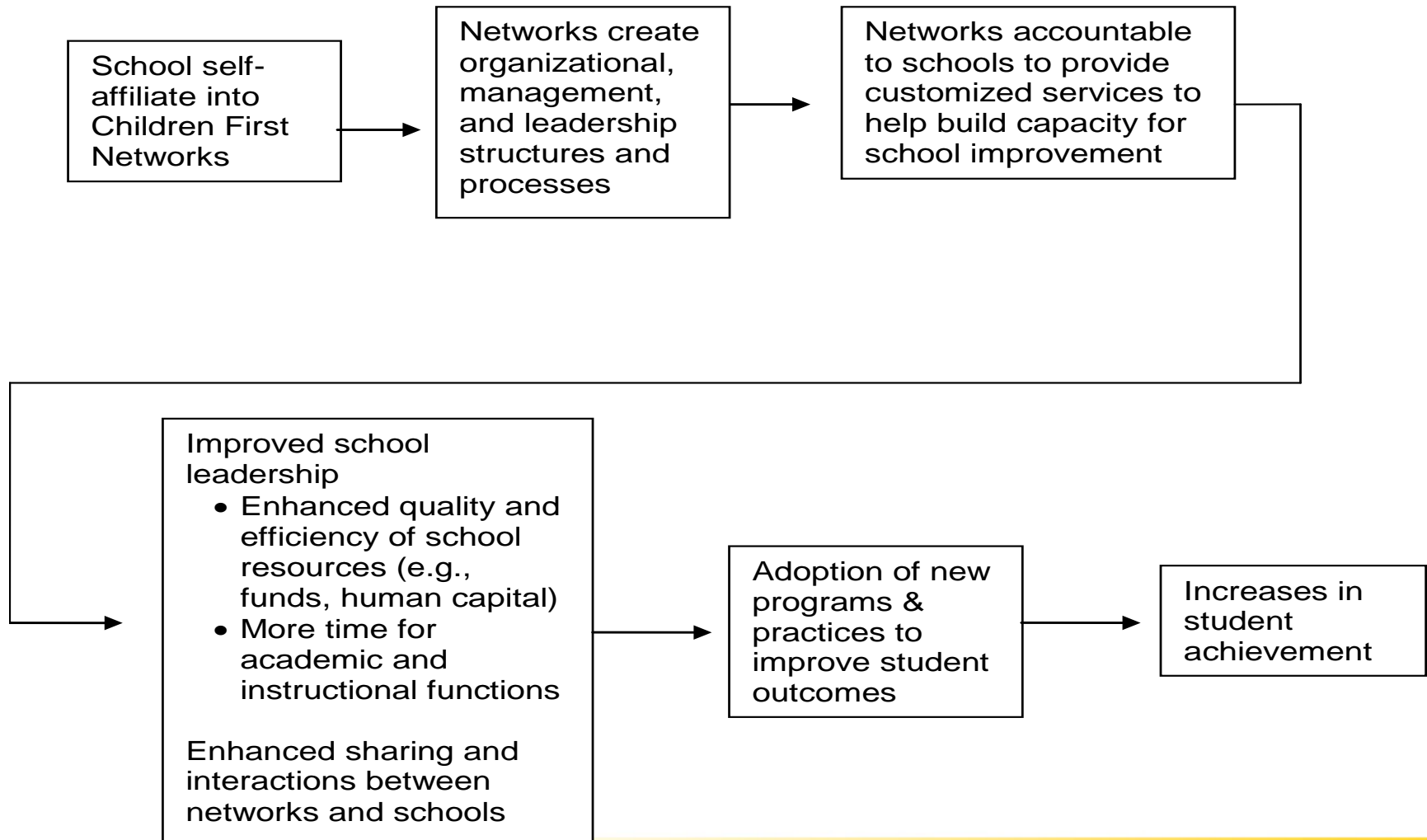
A trip down memory lane...

- School-based management: Local autonomy/empowerment
- Annenberg Challenge: School networks
- Charter schools: Performance contracts and accountability

The Three Pillars of NYC's Children First Networks

- Empowerment
- Leadership
- Accountability

CFN Theory of Action

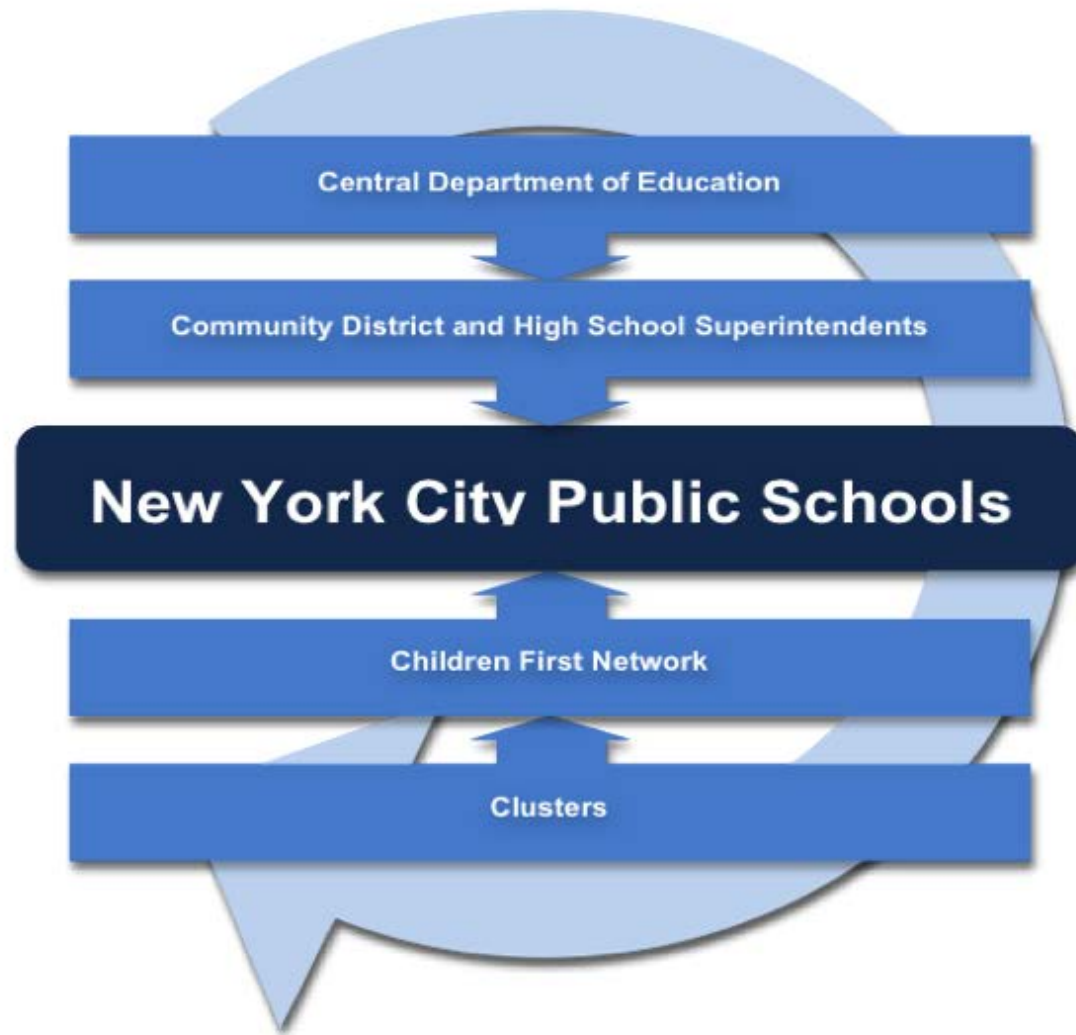


Research Questions



- How are the network organizations structured and what is the information flow?
- Is there evidence of a collective or shared intelligence within the networks?
- What has been the education system's response to experience?
- What are the benefits and challenges to the CFN model?

New Lines of Authority and Support



How are the network organizations structured and what is the information flow?

“We don’t have a prescriptive one size fits all model; we would have to create 60 unique organizational charts for each network.”

Operational Services



- Human resources
- Payroll, budget and procurement
- Health
- Facilities
- Grant management
- Application support
- Technology
- Safety and suspensions
- Food services
- Transportation
- Legal services

Instructional Services



- Core curriculum
- Inquiry, teacher and data teams
- Quality review preparation
- Common Core Learning Standards
- Professional development
- Instructional technology
- Content area support
- Post-secondary readiness
- Student leadership

Findings

- No “standard” network in terms of structure or operations
- CFNs provide services (earned authority)
- Community district superintendents engage in compliance-monitoring (positional authority)

Is there evidence of a collective/ shared intelligence within the networks?

“Some networks meet monthly; they have principals go on walk-throughs of each others schools. Others join a network to be left alone. Both of these strategies are fine as far as I’m concerned, as long as they produce results. I wasn’t going to dictate what being a network meant.”

Findings



- Multiple meetings across the system help develop shared intelligence
- Lack of movement among networks increases shared intelligence
- CFN structure provides opportunity for collective intelligence through school-to-school collaboration among principals

What has been the education system's response to experience?

“It’s an ever-evolving model. Each year of its existence, it’s changed ... because we continue to assess and figure out what are the right functions [for a network] versus what are not.”

Findings



- Role of networks has expanded, while community district offices have shrunk
- Fluid implementation process, with multiple alterations along the way

What are the benefits and challenges to the CFN model?

“Right before Eric Nadelstern left, he voiced the opinion that he thought we’d done a very good job of empowering principals. What he didn’t think we had done yet was empower teachers.”

Findings



- Increased efficiency reported by central office, cluster and network levels
- Range of challenges to meeting CFN goals:
 - Ingrained bureaucratic mindset
 - Challenge of operating under earned rather than conferred authority
 - Some principals seek networks with hands-off approach – resulting in “pockets” of high-performance
 - Empowerment has not “trickled down” to teachers

Early Results



- Some evidence of improvements in student performance (Kemple)
- Morphed from a school system to “a system of schools”
- Replacement of supervisory leadership with leadership that facilitates local reform
- Multi-pronged approach to network accountability

Looking Toward 2.0



- What exchanges occur between schools in a network? Who is involved?
- Where lateral learning exists, what factors contribute to it? Why isn't it more wide-spread?
- What differentiates high-performing from lower-performing networks?
- Is the NYC DOE using the data to inform its decisions to tweak the network structure – if so, what are they responding to?

Implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards: Place(s)

- New York City Public Schools
- Charter Management Organizations



Background on NYC DOE Reform

Phase 1: Experimentation with Networks Begins

- Children First Initiative launched
- Autonomy Zone created – 1st year 29 schools participate (4 networks)
- Schools in Zone required to sign 5-year performance contract
- Network support teams created for instruction
- Single city-wide Integrated Service Center created for network operational support

Phase 2: The Era of School Support Begins

- DOE creates Division of School Support and Instruction
- Schools choose School Support Organizations (SSOs)
- Autonomy Zone renamed Empowerment Schools (1 of 3 types of SSOs)
- Empowerment Support Organization – 521 schools participate
- Five Integrated Service Centers created to support SSOs

Phase 3: The Emergence of Children First Networks

- SSOs dissolved and replaced by Children First Networks (CFNs)
- CFNs scale-up system-wide
- DOE replaces ISCs with 6 clusters
- School accountability provisions incorporated into principals' collective bargaining agreement