

# NAZ Internal Evaluation Report: Family Engagement

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October, 2014

## Executive Summary

### Background & Purpose

- Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) has launched a results-based accountability initiative called *Results NAZ* to examine processes and outcomes of its efforts in each of its action areas. The objective is to ensure that NAZ's organizational and collaborative work is making a difference in the lives of families living in the Zone.
- This report was developed by the NAZ Internal Evaluation Team at the University of Minnesota, in collaboration with NAZ and its Partners. It contributes to the *Results NAZ* process for the Family Engagement action area.
- The purpose of this report is to evaluate and document the implementation of the Family Engagement Solution Plan as NAZ and its Partners work toward the Result:
  - Parents will increase their belief, intention, skills, and commitment to support their child(ren)'s academic development and successful path to college.
- The information presented here addresses three key questions:
  - How much of the intended intervention was provided?
  - How well was this intervention implemented?
  - Was anyone better off, or what were the short-term effects of this intervention?

### Methods

- Evaluation questions were drawn from the Family Engagement Solution Plan, questions identified by action team leads, and NAZ's Solutions for Performance Targets document
- To address these questions, data were gathered from:
  - NAZ Connect and hiring data
  - Connector training materials and process tools

- One focus group with six connectors and the Engagement Director and interviews with three Connectors
- Results are summarized and organized in this report according to whether they relate to processes (how much and how well?) or to short-term effects (is anyone better off?).

## Key Findings

### Organizational Capacity and Characteristics

- **Neighbors Provide Ground-Level Leadership:** 83 percent of Connectors lives in the Northside now or at hire date and 90 percent identify as a “Northsider”
- **Cradle-to-College Pipeline:** NAZ scholars represent all age groups from Birth-18+, with the largest proportion of scholars between ages 6 and 9
- **Protective and Promotive Factors:** Connectors’ work is highly aligned with the Protective Factors Framework, a model aimed at building family strengths and a family environment that promotes optimal child development
- **Embodying NAZ values:** Connectors addressed the ways they enact each of the specified NAZ values in their everyday work with families
- **All Families Arm-in-Arm with a Connector:**
  - Of 795 families who had expressed interest in NAZ, 74 percent are enrolled and have a Connector, 17 percent are in the process of enrollment, and 9 percent are on a wait list
  - 80 percent of Connectors have fewer than 40 families on their roster

### Training and Essential Work Functions

- **Training:**
  - Trainings incorporated key interactional strategies which Connectors were able to incorporate into their day-to-day work with families
  - Shadowing was described as especially essential to gaining skills
  - Skills learned through Motivational Interviewing (MI) and Foundations were used most often
  - More in depth or refresher training was desired in relation to MI, risk assessment, and crisis management
- **Checklists and Goals:**
  - 83 percent of early childhood scholars had set goals via their early childhood checklist (compared to 66 percent at end of 2013)
  - 69 percent of K-12 scholars had set goals via their K-12 education checklist (compared to 45 percent at end of 2013)
  - 50 percent of families had been meeting with Connectors at least once per month

### Family Crisis Prevention and Response

- **Prevention:** Connectors work to prevent crises from occurring by providing time to brainstorm solutions, providing reminders to take action, and candidly sharing with the parents about the situation and providing suggestions
- **Response:** Connectors felt prepared to respond to crisis situations, including those related to mandated reporting, and felt they could find the support to do so through their supervisor and/or other Connectors
- **Follow-up:** After a crisis is resolved, Connectors felt confident in their ability to check in with families to help them reflect on and learn from what happened

## Communication and Infrastructure

- **Process Maps:** Connectors reported they followed NAZ process map guidelines and found process maps very useful
- **Connecting to Early Childhood Resources:** Connectors' efforts to connect families with EC Navigators has supported enrollment of 183 scholars in high quality early learning centers

## Short-Term Effects

- **Enrollment & Retention:** 87 percent of enrolled families were actively working with Connectors
- **Levels of Engagement:** Connectors described factors leading to families being engaged at each of the following levels:
  - **Newly Engaged/Not Fully Enrolled:** families were described as having less familiarity with NAZ, a low level of need for support/resources, a lack of opportunities available to support their most pressing needs, scheduling or language barriers, a lack of interest in making NAZ values a priority at this time, and/or a new or challenging relationship with their connector
  - **Engaged Partner:** families demonstrate a high level of parent involvement in their scholar's life, have their basic needs met, feel fully supported by and have a trusting relationship with their Connector, and/or have a good network of support
  - **Engaged Partner - Achievement Reached:** families seem to be rare, as these families tend to be engaged in their scholar's education and do not typically have pressing needs for NAZ to support
  - **Leader:** families have interacted with the NAZ ecosystem in multiple action areas (e.g. Family Academy, housing, Expanded Learning), spend time telling others about how NAZ has impacted their family, and are optimistic and resilient in their commitment to supporting their scholar's success
- **Family engagement increases when:**
  - Opportunities match the family's most pressing needs
  - The family realizes the importance of providing extra supports for their scholar
  - Connectors support a family in overcoming a barrier
  - Misunderstandings are resolved through group problem solving
  - NAZ staff support families in taking the lead
  - Connectors and families build strong relationships
- **Family engagement is more difficult when:**
  - Differing expectations or disagreement about the ways in which a Connector is supporting a family
  - When opportunities that match a family's need are not accessible, either because the resource does not exist or the family is on a wait list
  - Transferring to a different Connector
  - When academic achievement is not a top priority due to more pressing needs
  - Logistical issues that lead to discontinuation (lack of communication, moving out of the Zone, scholars age out)

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## Introduction and Methods

### Purpose

This report is a product of the NAZ IE Team at the University of Minnesota. The team works collaboratively with NAZ and its Partners to (1) gather information about the level and fidelity of implementation of NAZ Solution Plans, and (2) report on the short-term effects of NAZ's interventions to support its key outcomes (checkpoints). As part of this internal evaluation work, the IE team gathers focused information for each Solution Plan at several points each year. Then, this information (along with gathering additional data) is included in an evaluation report that directly contributes to NAZ's results-based accountability initiative, *Results NAZ*. The purpose of this report is to evaluate and document the implementation of the NAZ Family Engagement Solution Plan as NAZ and its Partners work toward the NAZ Family Engagement Result:

- Parents will increase their belief, intention, skills, and commitment to support their child(ren)'s academic development and successful path to college

Results of the evaluation will be incorporated into the *Results NAZ* process. Consistent with the overall design of *Results NAZ*, information presented here addresses three key questions: *How much* of the intended intervention was provided, *how well* was this intervention implemented, and *was anyone better off, or what were the short-term effects, of this intervention effort?*

### Organization of the Report

This report includes four main sections:

- Process Results (How much did we do and how well did we do it?)
  - This section is organized according to the buckets in the solution plan, with each question addressing specific essential active ingredients in that bucket. Each question relates to how much and how well the solution plan was implemented.
- Short-Term Effects (Is anyone better off?)
  - This section was assessed by further examining the "levels of engagement" framework developed by NAZ. While we were not able to include data that indicate the *amount* of NAZ families at each level, this section includes descriptions of what families tend to be experiencing at each level. These were derived from information gathered in the Connector focus group.
- Evaluator Impressions and Recommendations for Future Internal Evaluations
  - This brief section provides commentary from the IE team about the internal evaluation process and ongoing maturation of NAZ intervention, data collection, and continuous improvement.
- Supplemental Family Engagement Report
  - This section includes information about solution plan elements that were not formally assessed, either because they related to a process built into NAZ's infrastructure that is best represented by a brief description OR a process that has changed since the adoption of the solution plan, indicating a need for revision.

## Process

The evaluation involved the following process in September and October of 2014:

- *Results NAZ* Planning meeting(s)
  - The IE Team met with the Family Engagement Action Team Leads, Michelle Martin (NAZ Chief Operating Office) and David Peeples (NAZ Engagement Director), and the NAZ Results Systems Strategist (RSS), Dr. Tracy Roloff, to decide which questions to evaluate for the 2014-2015 year and to identify who would conduct the investigation of each question (IE Team or RSS).
  - Evaluation questions were developed based on the Family Engagement Solution Plan, key questions identified by action team leads, and the “solutions for performance targets” document (see Appendix A).
- Data were identified and gathered from:
  - NAZ Connect, NAZ’s internal case management and tracking tool
  - Hiring data from the NAZ Human Resources Director
  - Focus group with six Connectors and the Engagement Director (conducted September 24, 2014)
  - Interviews with three Connectors (conducted October 1-3, 2014)
  - Review of Connector training materials and process tools
- The NAZ IE team analyzed these data and compiled the results into sections consistent with the overall design of *Results NAZ* to address the three key questions described above.

Not all Essential Active Ingredients (EAIs) in the Family Engagement Solution Plan are formally assessed in this report, either because the questions relate to a process built into NAZ’s infrastructure or because they addressed a process that has changed since the adoption of the solution plan and are in the revision process. These questions are identified and described in the **Supplemental Information** section at the end of this document.

## Process Results (How much did we do and how well did we do it?)

The following section is organized according to the buckets in the solution plan, with each question addressing specific essential active ingredients in that bucket. Each of these questions relates to how much and how well the solution plan was implemented.

### Organizational Capacity & Characteristics

This section addresses:

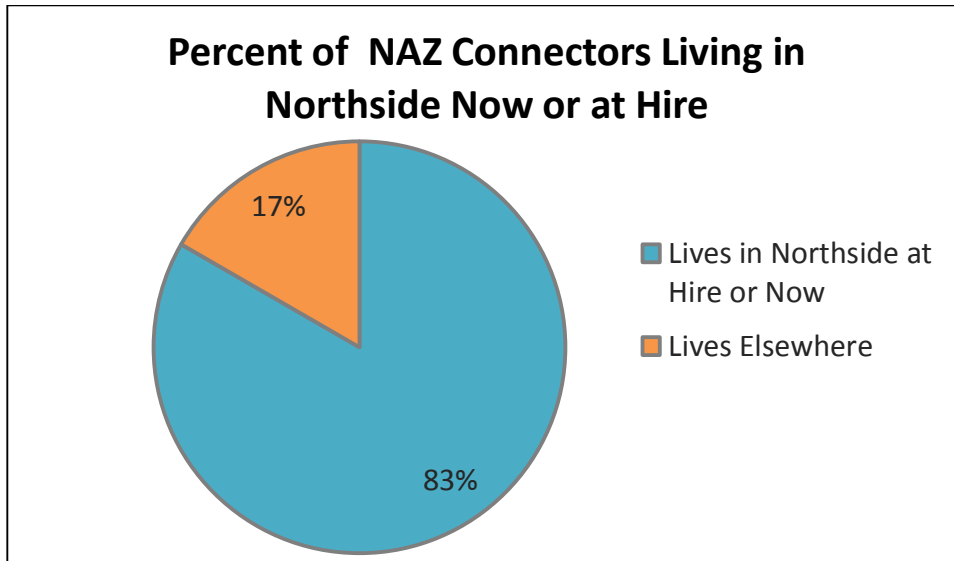
- How NAZ is building an infrastructure around the values identified in the solution plan:
  - Neighbors providing ground-level leadership (specifically, how Connectors represent the community and serve as “neighbor leaders”)
  - Supporting NAZ families as they progress through the cradle-to-college pipeline
  - Strengthening families through protective and promotive factors
- How Connectors embody NAZ values in partnering with families by:
  - Communicating high expectations with high supports
  - Emphasizing the importance of building a culture of achievement in the home
  - Demonstrating a high level of cultural responsiveness in all interactions with families and partner organizations
  - Using data to drive results
- The extent to which Connectors are able to reach families in the Zone

#### Is NAZ hiring Connectors who represent the community and serve as neighbor leaders?

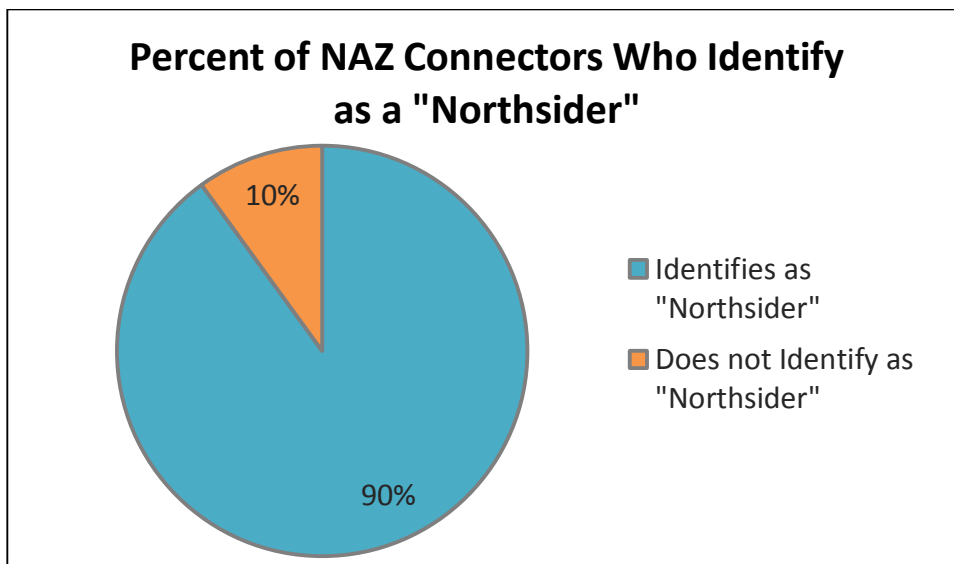
In EAI 1.1 and 1.2 of the Family Engagement Solution Plan, NAZ set a priority within the NAZ value infrastructure to hire Connectors who can serve as “family coaches and neighborhood leaders.” Thus, hiring practices emphasize hiring Connectors who represent the community (i.e., currently live in or identify with the Northside of Minneapolis) and represent similar demographic backgrounds (e.g., linguistic, cultural and ethnic origins) as families on the Northside.

The following data provide information about the percent of Connectors residing on the Northside now or at hiring date and Connectors who identify as a “Northsider” (e.g., Connectors who previously lived on the Northside or have family on the Northside). These data come from human resources records in NAZ and include the total number of Connectors hired over time. Data regarding which staff consider themselves Northside residents were reported by the staff members directly. Thirty Connectors were included in these data.





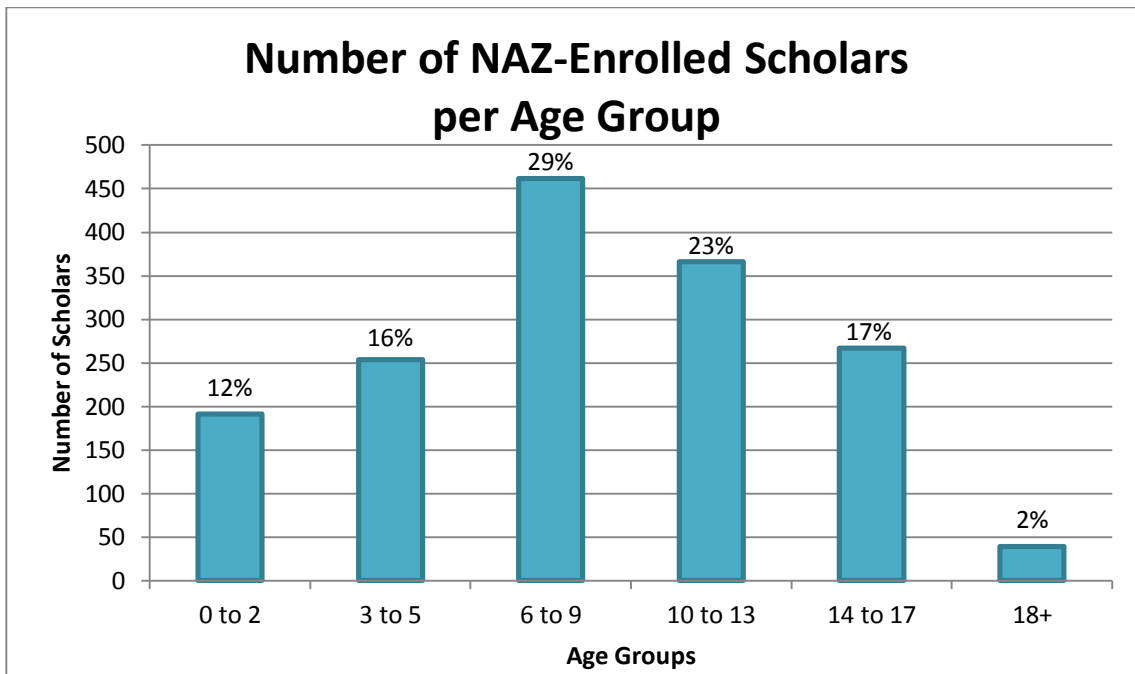
As this graph indicates, 83% of NAZ Connectors (25) live in Northside now or lived in Northside at hire date. Specifically, 21 Connectors currently reside in Northside and four Connectors lived in Northside at hire date but now live outside of the Northside area.



Additionally, most NAZ Connectors—even those not living in Northside—consider themselves “Northsiders.” These results suggest that 90% of the Connectors (27) personally identify with the Northside area. Of all the Connectors hired, nine were hired out of NAZ’s pool of enrolled families.

**Is NAZ building an infrastructure around the values of supporting NAZ families as they progress through the cradle-to-college pipeline?**

One of the values described in EAI 1.1 of the Family Engagement Solution Plan is that NAZ’s mission includes coordinating supports for NAZ families as they progress through the “cradle to college pipeline.” The following data relate to the extent to which NAZ is connecting families with supports at different age ranges by reviewing the number of scholars being served within specified age ranges. These data were obtained from enrollment records in NAZ Connect.



As the graph indicates, the largest portion of scholars enrolled in NAZ are between the ages of six and nine. Other groups between birth and the age of high school graduation are fairly evenly distributed, with each age group constituting over 10 percent of the total enrollment. Few scholars over age 18 are currently enrolled in NAZ.

### Is NAZ building an infrastructure around the values of strengthening families through protective and promotive factors?

The Protective Factors Framework (see Appendix B) was identified by the Family Engagement leadership team as an approach that was highly aligned with NAZ's mission and was referenced as a key NAZ value (EAI 1.1). To address how NAZ is building an infrastructure around this value:

- The Family Engagement Solution Plan and Connector training materials (i.e., NAZ Connector Guide and Training Schedules) were reviewed to identify the extent to which they each aligned with and incorporated all five elements of the Protective Factors Framework.
- Other solution plans were linked to this Framework when they related to the Framework in connection to Family Engagement efforts.
- Three Connectors responded to interview questions about parenting or child development that relate directly to the Protective Factors Framework.

Table 1 provides a definition for each protective factor and a summary of the findings. As is clear in the table, this Framework shows up in the solution plan in various EAIs and is clearly aligned with the intended focus of Connectors' work. It may be useful to more explicitly articulate this Framework in the Connector Guide and/or other resources Connectors use to guide their work.

*Table 1. Protective factors, definitions, and descriptions of alignment to the Family Engagement Solution Plan, other NAZ solution plans, Connector training materials, and Connector interviews.*

Factor	Definition	Alignment with Solution Plan
<b>Parental Resilience</b>	Resilience is an individual's ability to cope with stress, challenges, and adversity. Resilience in parenting means managing challenges, solving problems, building secure relationships, and handling stress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This factor links directly to key aspects within the Family Engagement Solution Plan. Connectors act as the support network for families. They help them cope with stress, manage challenges, solve problems, and build secure relationships to enhance resiliency, or they connect families to services that enhance resiliency (See Appendix B; EAI 3.6. 3.7).</li> </ul>
<b>Social Connections</b>	Includes network of supports: family members, friends, neighbors, and communities that offer advice, support, and guidance in problem-solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This factor links to engagement through relationships with Connectors (see Appendix B; EAI 1.2, 3.1).</li> <li>NAZ is also creating cohorts and support networks among NAZ parents.</li> <li>The 2014 Connector Guide provides training and strategies for building relationships with families. The primary role of Connector is to be a partner who links families to partner organizations and resources to move their scholars on a path of achievement (pgs. 5-7, 32-41).</li> </ul>
<b>Concrete Support in Times of Need</b>	Supports must be available and easily accessible in times of crises including economic, housing, and health care hardships, as well as when dealing with substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This factor links to matching families with service organizations to meet their needs and goals (See Appendix B; EAI 3.6).</li> <li>The 2014 Connector Guide provides training in crisis situations and procedures for risk assessment (p. 28).</li> <li>This factor can inform the housing, career/finance, and behavioral health solution plans.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development</b>	Families must receive accurate information and parent education about appropriate and typical child development in order to support their children's development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connectors support families with their mid-week goals in Family Academy; and in general, they play a role in referring parents to Partner organizations that provide this information and support (see Appendix B; EAI 3.5, 4.2).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the interviews, Connectors shared they felt comfortable responding to questions or concerns about parenting and child development by sharing personal experience or knowledge from NAZ trainings if applicable and/or referring parents to Partners, early childhood navigators, or additional resources when they did not have the expertise or answers to their questions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Family Academy provides information directly linked to supporting children's healthy development (see Family Academy Solution Plan).</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional Competence of Children</b>	A child's ability to self-regulate behavior, communicate effectively, and have positive interactions with others are all essential for building positive relationships with families and peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This factor links to Connectors' role in noting and flagging concerns with social and emotional functioning (e.g., lack of ability to self-regulate behavior, inability to effectively communicate).</li> <li>Also, this component informs some aspects of Connector training (see Appendix B; EAI 3.7, 4.2).</li> </ul>

## Do Connectors embody the stated NAZ values in their interactions with families?

In EAI 3.1, NAZ identified that Connectors embody NAZ values in their interactions with families by (1) communicating high expectations with high supports to meet these expectations, (2) emphasizing the importance of building a culture of achievement in the home, (3) demonstrating a high level of cultural responsiveness in all interactions with families and partner organizations, and (4) using data to drive results.

As part of this evaluation, three Connectors were interviewed and asked to describe how they embodied each of these values in their interactions with families. We then summarized the interview reports from each Connector (by each NAZ value). Results are provided below. Additionally, the question related to EAI 1.4 (i.e., How are Connectors using NAZ Connect on a day-to-day basis at NAZ?) is addressed in the section about using data to drive results.

### *High Expectations with High Supports*

- Connectors told us they define and describe NAZ values to families during orientation.
- Connectors reported that it often is easier to communicate high supports to families first to build trust and then slowly communicate high expectations with them as they become more engaged with NAZ.
  - Connectors must find balance in supporting families by allowing autonomy and room for families to take lead in achieving goals.
- Connectors reported that building trusting relationships with families over time supports communication of this value. Connectors also noted that:
  - Families are willing to reach out to Connectors for support and are receptive to Connectors reaching out to them.
  - Highly engaged families were most likely to reach out for support.
  - Families were more likely to reach out for support for housing and employment, sometimes for scholar education, but not as often for behavioral health concerns.
  - Transferring families to another Connector has led to negative consequences (e.g., decreased engagement, decreased trust in NAZ, frustration) for some families.

### *Culture of Achievement in the Home*

- Connectors reported utilizing multiple strategies to emphasize a cultural of achievement:
  - Providing a clear description of NAZ and expectations of families as partners
  - Using data and achievement planning to show families where they are at, which in turn, often helps them make an achievement plan with appropriate goal steps
  - Asking families questions and brainstorming ideas to achieve goals
    - e.g., provide clear steps to follow when a family does not understand how to achieve what they want
  - Using metaphors and personal life experiences

### *Cultural Responsiveness in all Interactions*

- All Connectors reported they felt comfortable working with families from diverse

backgrounds.

- Connectors discussed the need to remain mindful and respectful in use of language and interactions with families. Two examples reported include:
  - A Male Connector working with Hmong mothers had to recognize gender barriers that may limit level of comfort in sharing information.
  - In working with a family from a different cultural background, it is useful to ask for support from a Connector who is more familiar and knowledgeable with that cultural background.
- Connectors identified the need to provide open communication and demonstrate willingness to learn in their interactions with families.
  - Connectors were willing to ask and learn from families when the Connectors did not fully know needs or how best to support a family.
  - Connectors knew the limits of their own knowledge and were comfortable sharing they “didn’t know the answer” but would work to find an answer through NAZ staff and partner resources.

#### **Using Data to Drive Results**

- Connectors shared that NAZ Connect is an effective and efficient communication tool across staff and partners, and it plays an important role in achievement planning and keeping track of progress toward goals.
- Connectors reported they use NAZ Connect on a day-to-day basis for:
  - Achievement planning (goal and steps)
  - Keeping track of goal progress
  - Completing referrals with partners through logging notes (i.e., very helpful to see notes from partners and know they are viewing it and supporting the families)
  - Showing parents the scholar’s progress monitoring data (i.e., helps support families in understanding what is needed to move scholar forward to college readiness)
  - Providing families with visual depictions of their goals and progress.

Connectors appear to receive robust professional development across each of the NAZ values articulated in the solution plan. One next step could be to review any differences between what training information is stated in the solution plan and what was noted within the Connector training materials and identify if the differences are intentional. Then, revising the solution plan or existing training may be considered.

#### **Do all families have a Connector?**

EAI 1.3 of the *Family Engagement Solution Plan* specified that all families are placed “arm-in-arm” with a Connector. Placing each family with a Connector was identified as an evidence based and conceptually sound practice through the peer review process of Family Engagement Solution Plan. Connectors are an essential element of the NAZ intervention model; these individuals recruit families, assist them in developing family achievement plans, and stay in touch with families to help them access the resources that will help them achieve their goals regarding their children’s well-being and educational success. As such, for NAZ to “work,” each family must be affiliated with a Connector.

The following data in Table 2 describe the number of enrolled and recruited families assigned to Connectors and the number of families on the waitlist and not yet assigned a Connector. These data come from NAZ Connect and reflect enrollment as of October 3, 2014.

Table 2

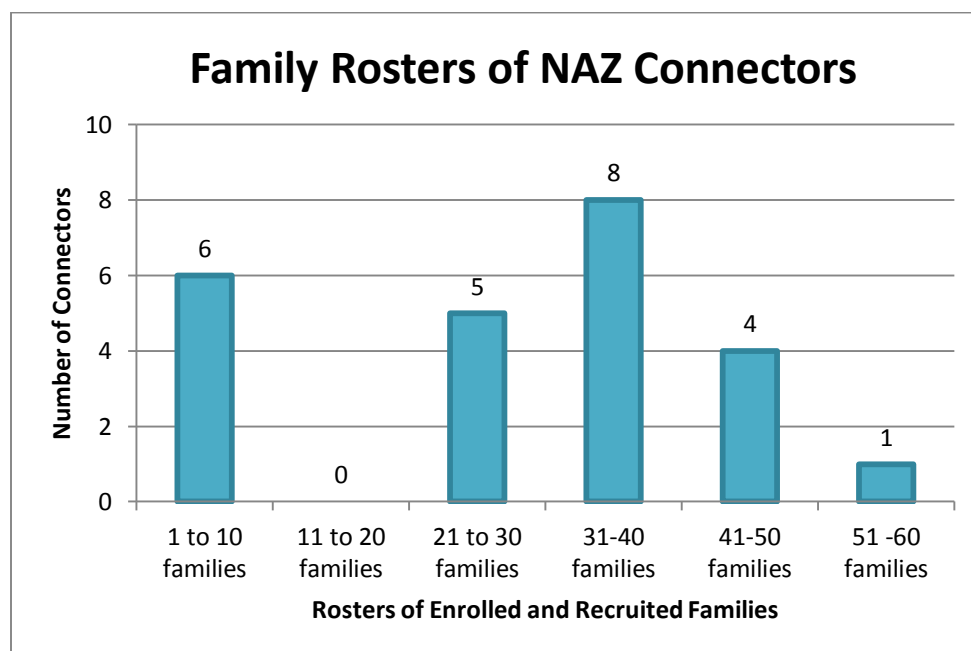
Total Enrolled Families <i>Families who have completed the enrollment process and been assigned a Connector</i>	586
Total Recruited <i>Families who have been assigned a Connector who has made contact with them, but they have not yet completed the enrollment process</i>	139
Total Families on Waitlist <i>Families who have submitted an interest form but have not been assigned a Connector</i>	70

Of all the 795 families expressing interest in NAZ, 74 percent are enrolled and have a connector, 17 percent are in the process of enrollment, and 9 percent are on the waitlist.

### How many families are on each Connector’s roster?

Additionally, EAI 1.3 of the Family Engagement Solution Plan specified necessary conditions to best support families in achieving their goals. One of the conditions is that Connectors are “assigned no more than 40 families” to their roster. In similar service models (e.g., nurse-family partnership model), best practice suggests a maximum of 25 families per Connector and 40 families may be considered a high number to support.

The following data describe rosters for Connectors and were taken from NAZ Connect records. Total enrolled families and total recruited were included in a Connector’s roster.



As the graph indicates, of 24 Connectors total, 80 percent of Connectors have fewer than 40 families on their roster. One-third of Connectors (8) have a roster between 31 and 40 families. Five Connectors have a roster of over 40 families.

## Training and Essential Work Functions

This section incorporates evaluation questions from bucket two (i.e., Training, Supervision, and Professional Development) and bucket three (i.e., Essential work Functions). This section is focused on:

- The *training* Connectors receive regarding key interactional strategies and data use
- Essential work functions linked to *using* these key interactional strategies and data in their work with families
- Connectors' work with families on achievement plans and goal setting

Note that while Connectors are trained on and regularly do work related to family crises, this topic has been included in a separate section titled "Family Crisis Prevention and Response." This topic is called out in its own section because it spans several of the solution plan buckets and was highlighted across all of the protective factors referenced in EAI 1.1.

### **Did all Connectors receive 6 to 8 weeks of training that included how to work with families, key interactional strategies and using data to drive achievement?**

EAI 2.1 of the Family Engagement Solution Plan outlines the training Connectors receive to work with families, including key interactional strategies and using data to drive achievement. Key interactional strategies listed in the EAI included:

- Empowerment Training/Foundations
- Academic support strategies
- Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Crisis intervention
- Culturally-Informed Practices
- Trauma-Informed Practices
- Solution-Focused Brief Intervention
- Protective Factors Strengthening Families Framework
- Family Academy

To answer this evaluation question, we consulted training materials (i.e., The 2014 Connector Guide and the 2014 Connector Training Schedule), conducted a focus group with six Connectors, and conducted interviews with three Connectors. For the focus group and interviews, Connectors were asked to share how the training they received upon being hired supports the work they do and if they needed any additional professional development or support for the trainings they received. Answers from these questions were summarized and the results are provided below.

#### **Training Elements**

- Connectors in the focus group and interviews all confirmed they received training on how to work with families, key interactional strategies, and how to use data to drive achievement.
  - Connectors specifically mentioned receiving training in how to work with families, empowerment skills, motivational interviewing, home visiting, cultural



responsiveness, and use of self.

- Key interactional strategies described in the 2014 Connector Guide (pp. 32-41) included empowerment skills, interviewing and coaching skills, building relationships and partnerships with families, partnering with families, home visiting, cultural responsiveness, and use of self.
  - Academic support strategies, motivational interviewing, crisis intervention, trauma-informed practices, solution-focused brief intervention, protective factors strengthening families framework, and Family Academy were not described in the 2014 Connector Guide.
- The Fall 2014 Connector Training Schedule took place over five weeks and incorporated various types of training that were identified into six categories: administrative, Connector informational sharing, general/logistical, NAZ Connect, Mission/NAZ system training, and training led by a program manager.
  - Key interactional strategies described in the Training Schedule included use of self, home visiting, motivational interviewing, and Foundations training, and NAZ Connect training
  - The schedule also included training related to recruiting and enrolling families in NAZ with use of recruitment talking points, shadowing, process map training, and mandated reporting and risk assessment.

### **Are Connectors using key interactional strategies during their interactions with families?**

EAI 3.7 of the Family Engagement Solution Plan specified that Connectors use the key interactional strategies (listed above for EAI 2.1) and NAZ protocols and procedures in their work with families.

To answer this evaluation question, we conducted interviews with three Connectors and asked them to provide examples of how and when they used any of these strategies with families. The information gathered from this item was then summarized, and the results are provided below.

#### ***Use of Key Interactional Strategies***

- In general, Connectors found their training was useful and that it supports day-to-day work with families.
- Connectors shared it also takes “real world” experience in working with families over time to gain the skill set to support families.
- Connectors felt they had adequate training to carry out their expected role in partnering with families. Some interactional strategies were used more than others:
  - Connectors used MI and empowerment trainings/foundations most often.
    - Exception: MI does not translate as well with Hmong families because of a lack of similar words in the language and because of gender roles. (Hmong mothers do not always feel they can make active choices without first talking with the child’s father.)
- Connectors found cultural responsiveness trainings are useful in supporting their self-awareness and mindfulness of language and style of support.
  - Specific cultural trainings were useful (e.g., Somali training). Connectors noted that trainings about other specific cultural groups could be additionally beneficial.

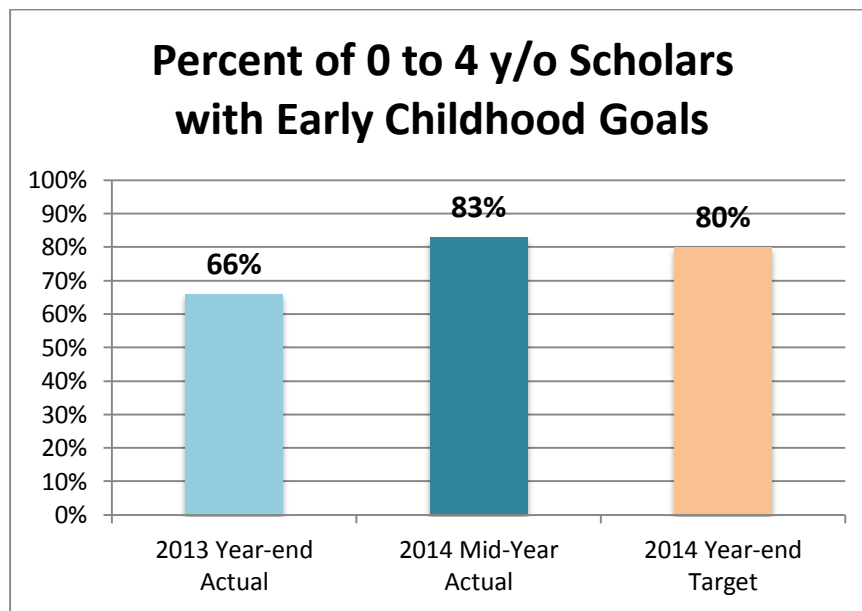


- Shadowing other Connectors during home visits was very helpful in gaining “hands-on” learning experiences and helped prepare Connectors in their role.
  - Providing more shadowing time at the beginning of the training may be beneficial.
- Connectors shared that they would like more in-depth or refresher training of MI and risk assessment.
- They would also like to know more about how to handle and support families during crises or unexpected situations.

**What percent of families enrolled in NAZ with age-eligible children have early childhood checklists completed for all age-eligible children?**

Included in EAI 3.5 of the Family Engagement Solution Plan is that Connectors work with families to complete an Early Childhood Checklist for each zero- to four-year-old scholar. The Early Childhood Checklist includes a brief list of resources and activities that NAZ considers essential for developing kindergarten readiness.

As one measure of Family Engagement, this evaluation question provides information on the proportion of families with preschool Scholars who have completed checklists. These data were taken from the NAZ Dashboard.

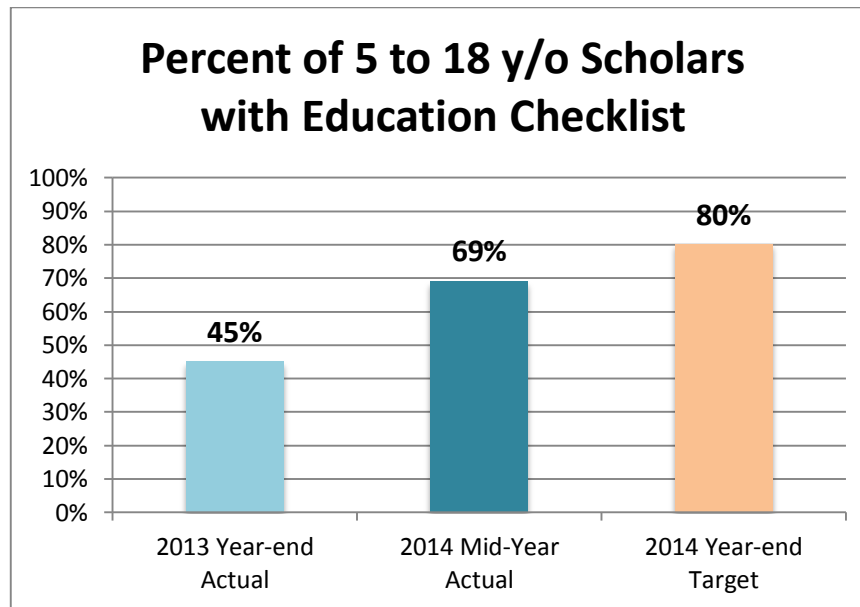


As the graph indicates, the percent of zero to four-year-old scholars enrolled in NAZ and with early childhood goals identified increased from 66 percent at the end of 2013 to 83 percent in the middle of 2014. This increase in the *proportion* of such scholars with early childhood goals occurred despite an increase in the total *number* of scholars in the age range from 231 to 333. By the middle of 2014, NAZ had exceeded its goal of 80 percent of zero to four-year-old scholars having active early childhood goals by the end of 2014.

**What percent of NAZ enrolled scholars have a completed K-12 Education Checklist?**

EAI 3.5 additionally specifies that Connectors work with families to complete an Education Goals Checklist for each five- to eighteen-year-old scholar. As one measure of family engagement, this

evaluation question provides information on the proportion of families with five- to eighteen-year-old scholars who have completed checklists. These data were taken from the NAZ Dashboard.

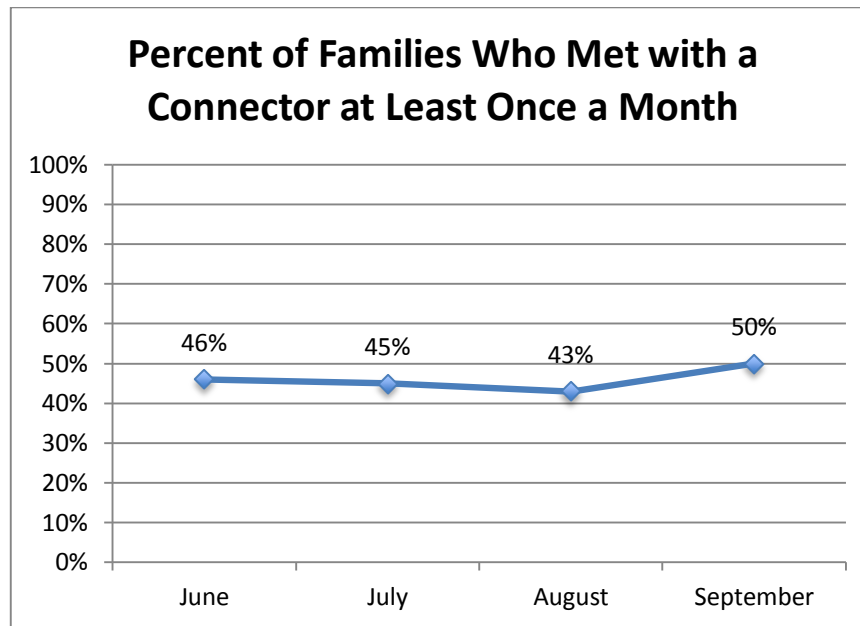


As this graph indicates, the percentage of NAZ scholars age five to eighteen with active scholar achievement plans increased from 45 percent at the end of 2013 to 69 percent by the middle of 2014. This increase in the *proportion* of scholars with achievement plans occurred despite an increase in the *number* of such scholars from 468 at the end of 2013 to 855 in 2014. To meet its goal of 80 percent of scholars with achievement plans by the end of 2014, an additional 136 scholars would need to have achievement plans, if no additional scholars enroll.

### **What percent of families meet with Connectors to work on goal plans at least once a month?**

In connection to working with families to build an Achievement plan (i.e., Early Childhood Checklist or Education Goals Checklist) for each scholar, Connectors will support families to continually update these plans and assist them in meeting the identified goals and developing additional goals as they are reached (EAI 3.5 and 3.6). Connectors will ask families to pledge commitment to action in this goal-setting process. In general, Connectors should meet with families at least once a month to support them in their goal plans.

This evaluation question provides information on the percent of families who met with a Connector at least once a month. These data were taken from the NAZ Dashboard.



As the graph indicates, an average of 46 percent of families met with a Connector at least once a month between June and September 2014, with a slight increase to 50 percent in September.

## Family Crisis Prevention and Response

This section includes crisis prevention and response, which is linked to the Protective Factors Framework identified in EAI 1.1 in that Connectors help families build parental resilience and provide concrete support in times of need. This section also relates to crisis response and training regarding mandated reporting and risk assessment safety, which is addressed in EAI 3.8.

As part of the evaluation, focus group and interview participants were asked questions about crisis prevention and response (see focus group and interview protocols in Appendix C). Participants were asked to describe:

- A time when they prevented a crisis from occurring
- The extent to which they felt prepared to respond to a crisis situation and support families in accessing resources
- Their process for conducting follow-up with a family after a crisis situation
- Their experience with, and response to, mandated reporting situations

The evaluation questions are provided below with the results.

### Is NAZ building an infrastructure around the values of strengthening families through protective and promotive factors in relation to crisis prevention and response?

#### *Crisis Prevention*

- All the Connectors who were interviewed were able to articulate a time when they prevented a crisis situation from occurring or from becoming a more severe crisis.
  - Preventing crises often included supporting families by:
    - Providing time to brainstorm solutions

- Providing reminders to take action
- Candidly sharing with the parents about the situation and providing suggestions
- Situations included housing eviction, child neglect, and scholar academic achievement problems
- Previously handling crisis situations with one family also provided guidance in how to prevent crisis situations for families experiencing similar concerns.

### ***Responding to Crisis Situations and Follow-up with Families***

- All Connectors felt prepared to respond to crisis situations or could find the support through their supervisor or other Connectors to respond to crisis situations and access resources for families.
- One Connector shared that there is not always a good way to prepare for crisis situations but that preparation comes with knowing the families well and having trusting and strong relationships with them so they are able to recognize possible problems and even avoid crises.
- Connectors shared they follow up to check in and reflect with families about the situation to:
  - Help families consider what to do differently or prevent the situation from occurring in the future.
  - Support the family in communicating needs to the Connector earlier to prevent the situation and so the Connector can link them to possible resources.
  - In general, Connectors felt they were able to support the families afterward. Connectors did not provide detail on whether staff follow up with each other to ensure families have support.
- Connectors also communicate with program managers if they have concerns or need information on resources to support the families.

### **Are Connectors following NAZ policy and procedure in relation to mandated reporting and risk assessment?**

- Connectors demonstrated knowledge about policies and procedures regarding mandated reporting and risk assessment. For example:
  - Connectors make sure to describe their role as a mandated reporter to families when they enroll and sign their release of information form.
  - Connectors contact their Engagement Director if they suspect potential abuse or neglect and meet with manager/supervisor to discuss the situation.
  - Connectors shared they would process the situation with their manager/supervisor (as well as other Connectors or the behavioral health navigator) and figure out if the situation was reportable. If it was reportable, then they would share this with the family and then report it themselves.
- Connectors felt comfortable responding to mandated reporting situations if one arose with a family and felt supported by their managers/supervisors.
- Additional training in risk assessment would be beneficial to Connectors.

## Communication and Infrastructure

The following section addresses evaluation questions from bucket five of the Family Engagement Solution Plan. A part of NAZ's overall infrastructure is that Connectors will communicate with other NAZ staff and Partner organization staff to support families and meet their needs. Connectors primarily provide indirect services to families by following NAZ-specified process maps to connect families to service organizations. The following evaluation questions relate to Connectors and their work in linking families to services (such as an Anchor Partner Early Learning Center) by following the appropriate process map.

### Are Connectors following NAZ process map guidelines for communication with NAZ and Partner staff?

EAI 5.2 specifies that Connectors will demonstrate a high degree of communication with NAZ staff and Partner organization staff to support their families. An important aspect of communication is following process maps.

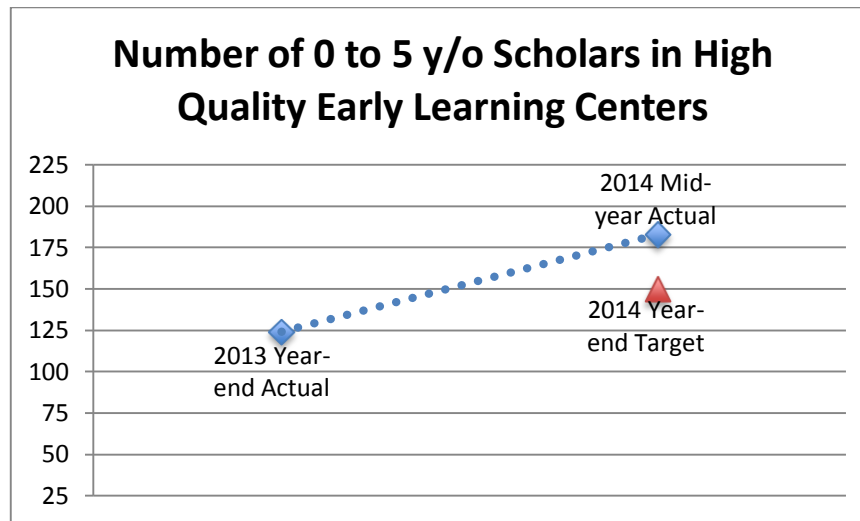
To better understand if and how Connectors were using process maps, we interviewed three Connectors (see interview protocols in Appendix C). The interview participants were asked to describe how they used process maps to guide their work. Their responses were summarized and results are provided below.

- Connectors reported they followed NAZ process map guidelines and found process maps very useful.
  - After a process is learned, Connectors are able to follow a process from memory but still reference the appropriate process map when needed to clarify the process or when the process map is updated.
  - Process maps provide guidance and accountability.
    - Process maps play an important role in making sure that both Connectors and Partners know what to do and what they are accountable for.
- Connectors reported they utilized the process maps to help them work with families and connect the family to the appropriate Partners and resources

### What percent of NAZ enrolled 0 to 5 year olds are actively enrolled in a high quality Early Learning Center?

One specific process map that Connectors utilize within their work is for Early Childhood Connection and Navigation. Within their role as Connector, they use the process map procedure to link families to the Early Childhood (EC) Navigator if a family has a child under the age of five. After the Connector initiates contact between the EC Navigator and the family, the Navigator then assists the family in enrolling their scholar in an early learning center.

A result of Connectors following the process map and connecting families to the EC Navigator is increased enrollment of early childhood scholars in early learning centers. As one measure of Family Engagement, this evaluation question provides information on the proportion of families with preschool scholars who have enrolled in high quality early learning centers. NAZ set a goal of enrolling 150 scholars in early learning centers by the end of 2014. This evaluation question measured if this goal was attained and assessed how many scholars were enrolled in high quality early learning centers at the end of 2013 and mid-year 2014. These data were taken from the NAZ Dashboard.



As this graph indicates, the number of scholars age zero to five in high quality early learning centers increased from 125 at the end of 2013 to 183 by the middle of 2014, exceeding NAZ's goal of 150 such scholars enrolled in early learning centers by the end of 2014.

## Short-Term Effects (Is anyone better off?)

The following section includes information about family enrollment and key questions identified by action team leads regarding what engagement looks like for families at the varying levels of engagement. Questions addressed in this section relate to an ongoing effort to create a strong outcome measure that tracks outcomes for families in relation to their level of engagement in the NAZ ecosystem.

Currently, NAZ is finalizing internal processes to track outcomes for family engagement in NAZ. Thus, the outcome measure is not yet ready. However, NAZ has identified and defined four levels of engagement that may be appropriate to measure family engagement outcomes. The following questions addressed here may provide additional information and guidance for the development of this measure, particularly related to defining the levels of engagement.

### Enrollment and Retention of Families

**How many families are enrolled in NAZ? And, what percent of families are retained in NAZ each year (what percent of families discontinue each year)?**

- As of June 2014, there were 630 families active in NAZ and 93 families marked as inactive. These results indicate that 87 percent of the families who have enrolled in NAZ remained active.

## Levels of Engagement

NAZ has identified four levels of engagement with the goal of supporting families as they become increasingly engaged in NAZ opportunities and work up the levels toward a position where they are not only engaged, but act as leaders in the NAZ community. The levels are outlined below:

- **Newly Enrolled/Not Fully Engaged:** Families at this level are not participating in any high priority NAZ opportunities. In some cases this is because they are new to NAZ (enrolled for under three months) and are still getting oriented, but families who have been enrolled for a longer can also fall into this category.
- **Engaged Partner:** Families at this level are actively engaging in the achievement planning process and have participated in at least one high priority NAZ opportunity.
- **Engaged Partner – Achievement Reached:** Families at this level are Engaged Partners whose scholars are meeting grade-level benchmarks.
- **Leader:** Families at this level are Engaged Partners who have also taken extra steps to demonstrate leadership within the NAZ community (e.g. on the Parent Advisory Board, acts as a recruitment resource for NAZ or high priority opportunities, has become employed by NAZ).

While these measures are forthcoming and will be incorporated into future family engagement Internal Evaluation reports, for the current report we gathered related information. As part of this evaluation, Connectors who were focus group participants were asked to describe their experiences with families at each level. The goal of this exercise was to illuminate what engagement looks like for NAZ families and add greater depth to the levels NAZ has defined.

### What does engagement look like for NAZ families?

#### *Newly Enrolled/Not Fully Engaged*

Families are at this level due to a variety of factors, including:

- Familiarity with NAZ
  - Some families come in with misconceptions about what NAZ does.
    - Families often enroll because they heard about a friend who obtained a specific resource (e.g. housing) so they think of NAZ as just a path to that resource rather than a system of wraparound services.
    - They may come in thinking of NAZ as a resource rather than a place that helps connect them to resources.
    - Some do not know that the ultimate goal of NAZ is to support scholars' academic success.
  - Even without any misconceptions, it can take some time for newly enrolled families to understand the full range of supports offered by NAZ.
- Level of Need
  - Connectors noted that families that do not have pressing needs often fall into this level of engagement.
- Whether there are opportunities available that match their needs
  - Families sometimes have priorities or needs in areas of NAZ's ecosystem that are not fully developed yet (e.g. summer opportunities for high school scholars).

- Families might not qualify for certain supports (e.g. housing assistance, early childhood scholarships).
- They might be on a waitlist for a NAZ or Partner resource (e.g. Family Academy, early childhood scholarships, CCAP).
- Scheduling barriers
  - Some families have busy work schedules (e.g. working second shift, timing of childcare) that conflict with NAZ opportunities (e.g. Family Academy, progress monitoring events).
- Language Barriers
  - A family's English language skills can be a barrier to becoming engaged. As English skills develop, families feel they can participate more in their scholar's education.
- Willingness to Engage
  - Some families enroll in NAZ and have pressing needs, but do not make NAZ opportunities a priority in their lives. This may be due to the parent focusing on other priorities and/or due to an attitude of not wanting or feeling ready to change.
    - "As great as our programs are, if it doesn't support a direct immediate need it will be important to us but it won't be important to the family."
  - Some families were referred to NAZ through a Partner who thought they might benefit from NAZ services, but the family is not yet interested in utilizing NAZ supports.
- Relationship with Connector
  - If a family either has not yet established a strong relationship with their Connector or has been transferred to a new Connector, they tend to be at this level of engagement.
    - "I have one family who said, 'I do not open up to people and I opened up to you and shared things with you. I'm not about to do that with another person. It took me a long time to get to this point with you. I don't want to go through that again.'"
    - "That transition can be difficult for families, more difficult than we anticipate."

### ***Engaged Partner***

Families at this level tend to:

- Demonstrate a high level of parent involvement in their scholar's life.
  - "Not leaving his or her child's education solely to the school"
  - Involved at the scholar's school
  - Spend extra time with the scholar, either on academic work or extracurricular activities
  - Take time off work to attend event at scholar's school
  - Are generally on top of what is going on in their scholar's life
- Have their basic needs met, even if this is a challenge.



- Have stable housing and access to enough food
- Feel fully supported by and have a trusting relationship with Connector.
  - Understand that Connectors have some shared experiences with them, so they know they are not being judged
- Have a good network of support.
  - When there is a family member, significant other or close friend of family involved, engagement increases

### ***Engaged Partner – Achievement Reached***

- Connectors noted that they do not have many families in this category because families that have children who are scoring “in the green” tend to be less engaged. The most engaged families tend to have scholars who are scoring in the yellow or the red.
- Families who have scholars scoring in the green have sometimes asked managers or Connectors questions like, “Why do I need you?”

### ***Leader***

Families at this level tend to:

- Have completed NAZ programs like Family Academy
- Have their scholars enrolled in expanded learning programs
- Have interacted with the NAZ ecosystem in multiple action areas (e.g. received housing and early childhood supports)
- Tell other people how NAZ has impacted their family
- Stand up for their Connector and let other people know how much their Connector has done for them
- Be optimistic and resilient
  - They do not let daily challenges (e.g. car breaking down) stop them from working hard to do what they need to do for their scholar.
  - “She doesn’t have a car, but she’ll figure it out...She’ll find a way to get whatever she needs just so she can stay involved and active.”

### **What increases family engagement to higher levels?**

Families increase their engagement when:

- There is an opportunity for the family to get involved in a NAZ or Partner event or program
- They realize the importance of or the need for providing extra supports to their scholar (e.g. when a scholar is held back a grade or receives many red scores)
- They have an opportunity to reconnect with a NAZ staff member after not being engaged for a while (e.g. at a NAZ event)
- NAZ staff support them in overcoming a barrier
  - “The level of support she’ll get from me and my manager will bring her in and make her feel more engaged.”
- If misunderstandings occur and the family has a chance to see the NAZ team that supports them come together and effectively problem solve

- These meetings also result in both the family and NAZ staff leaving with a sense of what they are accountable for, which also increases engagement
- NAZ staff act as partners and support families in taking the lead
  - “We can chase all day and still not get the results...You can chase after them and it could actually be a turnoff. Sometimes taking a step back works.”
- They build on their relationship with their Connector
  - When they are able to stick with a Connector and build up their relationship (rather than being transferred), engagement can increase.

### **What impedes family engagement or leads to discontinuation?**

- Transferring to a different Connector
- When the Connector is not doing what the family thinks they should be doing in terms of accessing resources (e.g. “I thought you were going to get me a job”)
  - May be due to a misinterpretation of NAZ’s mission, or frustration due to being on a waitlist for a long time
- When their scholar’s academic achievement is not at the top of their priority list due to more pressing needs
- Lack of communication despite many attempts to reengage over several months
- Moving outside of the Zone is the main reason for discontinuation
- Scholars age out (18 or older, unless they go to college)

## Evaluator Impressions and Recommendations for Future Internal Evaluations

### Internal Evaluation Process

This is the first formal evaluation of NAZ's Family Engagement work, and the first example of gathering data to support the Results NAZ process. From both, we have learned that the broad intention supporting initial design and implementation were well considered and strong, that there are challenges in bringing these intentions to reality, and that both the information and processes described here are useful – and can become more useful, robust and detailed over time.

### Ongoing Maturation of NAZ Intervention, Data Collection, and Continuous Improvement

Our team identified two areas that will influence this ongoing development. First, intervention services provided by NAZ and its partners are still under some degree of development, and are “settling” or maturing to a stable, constant, and rigorous state. As this rapid-cycle development work is completed, careful evaluation of activities over an extended period will be even more useful. Second, we expect NAZ's ongoing data collection efforts to continue to refine and improve in coverage. As more data (and more reliable data) become available, this information will contribute to ongoing program review and reflection.

### Ideas to Facilitate Future Evaluations

- It was sometimes difficult to discern definitions of some terms within the NAZ ecosystem (e.g. achievement plan vs. checklist, discontinued vs. inactive). In the future, our team will *begin* our process by obtaining operational definitions of key terms from NAZ, which could also be included in the report to add clarity.
- This report includes only a few data points gathered directly from families. As NAZ Connect and its use develops, it will become easier to obtain and report on family data. Our team could also develop a plan for collecting survey, interview, or focus group data from families so as to provide a richer summary of families' experiences. This could be a process in which families are asked questions that span across several of the action areas.
- This report also includes just a few questions about how Connectors interact with other action areas. This could be a topic of greater focus in future family engagement evaluations if deemed useful.
- Many detailed suggestions for solution plan edits came out of this process. As the Results NAZ process develops, our team and NAZ will be better able to come up with a good system for documenting and reviewing this detailed information and incorporating changes into the solution plan.
- This report responds to a large amount of questions. In the future it will be useful to find a more efficient and effective process for determining which items deserve the greatest amount of focus so as to provide greater depth on these key questions.

## Supplemental Information

Each of the following questions relates to a specific essential active ingredient in the Family Engagement Solution Plan (the EAI is identified in superscript text after the question). These questions were not formally assessed because:

- The question relates to a process built into NAZ's infrastructure that is best represented by a brief description and related documents, OR
- The question addresses a process that has changed since the adoption of the solution plan, indicating a need for review of intent or revision.

### Organizational Capacity and Characteristics

*Is NAZ building an infrastructure around the values of results-based accountability? <sup>(1.1a)</sup>*

- NAZ demonstrates its commitment to results-based accountability (RBA) values in many ways, across all levels of the organization. The most salient example of RBA in relation to this action area is through the use of the Weekly Supervision Form that Connectors review in a one-to-one meeting with their supervisor each week (see Appendix D).

### Training, Supervision and Professional Development

*Have Connectors been receiving training on NAZ Connect on an ongoing basis? Training should include clear descriptions of the expectations for use and the support they will receive. <sup>(2.2)</sup>*

- All Connectors receive initial training upon hire at NAZ, followed by an ongoing system of support led primarily by their Manager and Engagement Results Specialists. One tool that is used by ERSs is the NAZ Connect Troubleshooting Issue Log in Appendix E.

*Do Connectors have an active, supportive partnership with their Program Manager, meeting with them weekly at both the Connector Huddle and at a one-to-one meeting for an hour? <sup>(2.3a)</sup>*

- Connectors receive support on a regular basis, but the process for this has changed since the solution plan was adopted. The solution plan and process need to be reviewed to identify if the difference between the solution plan and process was intentional, and then consider if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Are Program Managers assigned no more than six to eight Connectors, with supervision accounting for at least 80 percent of their role? <sup>(2.3b)</sup>*

- The role and duties of a "Program Manager" (now called a "Manager") have been changed. The solution plan and changes in roles and duties of the manager need to be reviewed to identify if the changes were intentional and then decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Do all Connectors have goals for professional growth that have been documented and tracked in a performance management goal plan? <sup>(2.4)</sup>*

- Yes, but the system of tracking and supporting professional growth was recently changed. The solution plan and changes in this EAI need to be reviewed to identify if the changes were intentional and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Have all Connectors been receiving ongoing professional development following their initial training period? <sup>(2.5)</sup>*

- Yes, but the system of tracking and supporting professional growth was recently changed. The solution plan and changes in this EAI need to be reviewed to identify if the changes

were intentional and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

## Essential Work Functions

*Are Connectors recruiting new families? (3.2a) What is the mechanism by which families are recruited? (3.2b)*

- Connectors are not actively recruiting families for two reasons. First, there is currently a wait list of 70 families, so there is no need to recruit. Second, NAZ has shifted to a system in which families are recruited through Partner organizations and schools. The solution plan and changes in this EAI need to be reviewed to identify if the changes were intentional and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Are NAZ Connectors following the stepped enrollment process? (3.3)*

- Connectors use the process outlined in the *Recruitment to Enrollment process map* (Appendix F) and are supported in implementing this process by Engagement Results Specialists and Managers.

*Are Connectors engaging all families in the College Bound Commitment process? (3.4)*

- Connectors use the process outlined in the *College Bound Commitment process map* (Appendix F) and are supported in implementing this process by Engagement Results Specialists and Managers.

*Are NAZ Connectors completing the Achievement Plan with families within two weeks of joining NAZ? (3.5/6a)*

- A new process for completing Achievement Plans with families was launched recently. This process specifies that completion must happen within three months rather than two weeks. The solution plan and changes in this process need to be reviewed to identify if the changes were intentional and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Do families with age-eligible children have a relevant Family Academy goal set? (3.5/6c)*

- NAZ is in the process of setting up a structured system in which Engagement Results Specialists keep track of Family Academy goal setting and enrollment. The solution plan and potential changes in this EAI need to be reviewed to identify if the changes are necessary and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Are Program Managers using data from NAZ Connect to identify and support areas of engagement focus? (3.5/6d)*

- The role and duties of a "Program Manager" (now called a "Manager") have been changed. The solution plan and changes in roles and duties of the manager need to be reviewed to identify if the changes were intentional and then decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

*Are Connectors following NAZ operating procedures? (3.7b)*

- NAZ's system of results-based accountability has built-in processes that ensure that Connectors are using and being supported in their use of NAZ operating procedures. In particular, this occurs through the use of a *Weekly Supervision Form* that Connectors review in a one-to-one meeting with their supervisor each week (Appendix D).

## Informal Observations with Families

*Have Connectors been following protocol for noticing and flagging developmental concerns? (4.1)*

*Have Connectors been following protocol for referring families and/or providing them with further*

*information when concerns are identified? (4.2) Have referrals and outcomes of referrals been entered in NAZ Connect? (4.2)*

- The Connector's role in implementing the Developmental Concern Protocol is still being defined. As this protocol evolves, these EAIs and the solution plan will need to be reviewed to identify if the changes are necessary and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision be revised.

## Communication and Infrastructure

*Are Connectors using NAZ Connect to document all interactions with families? (5.1)*

- This was not evaluated because it is a performance expectation (an essential function of a Connector's position that is covered as a part of weekly one-to-one supervision).

*Are Connectors following site team meeting processes and protocols, demonstrating a high degree of communication with site team members? (5.3)*

- The structure and processes related to Connector supervision are being reorganized. The new structure necessitates communication due to co-management of Connectors. The solution plan and changes in the structure and processes related to Connector supervision need to be reviewed to identify if the changes were intentional and decide if the solution plan and/or current practice need revision.

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