

AN INTRODUCTION TO NEW YORK CITY'S iZONE

REDESIGNING THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM TOGETHER¹

Introduction

New York City has iconic significance across the world for all sorts of reasons – architecture, business, finance, the arts, fashion.....and also urban reform. NYC's educational reform endeavours have resonance for schooling systems across urban landscapes internationally. Joel Klein's tenure as NYC Chancellor was characterised by three phases of educational reform. This case study focuses on the third phase – the innovation phase which spawned the NYC iZone.

To understand this account of the third phase of NYC's journey since 2010, one has first to appreciate that during the previous decade, from unacceptably poor (and flat-lined) levels of achievement, high school drop-out rates, low graduation rates and relatively chaotic system dynamics, New York experienced probably the most rapid and consistent improvement in test scores and graduation rates of any urban jurisdiction in the world. In fact, almost the most remarkable feature of the NYC story is that this consistent upward trajectory led not to complacency or quiet satisfaction, but to moral outrage and the desire for a more radical approach.

What the data through to 2009 showed was this: if traditional approaches to system-wide school reform in NYC were sustained as successfully for the next decade as for the last, then its schools would still be failing an unacceptably large proportion of its total student body. Worse than that, sub-analysis of data displayed many more alarming features. Although test scores and graduation rates were rising, there was very considerable variation between ethnic and socio-economic groups. Moreover, a disproportionately large number of NYC's College entrants required remediation in College or were amongst the unacceptably high drop-out rates there. It seemed that the success was only partial. Some of it was about schools responding to the reforms by gaming the system.

What was apparent to Joel Klein – who as a New Yorker from a poor background himself was passionate about the role of education in transforming lives – was that a step-change was required; that the traditional model of learning and schooling was inadequate to the challenge of realising the potential of all New York's youngsters; and that whilst the top-down reform strategies prevalent across the developed world had proved they could drag up a chaotic and underachieving system, they were failing to harness the energy and creativity of the system actors that could take it to the next level.

¹ This background piece was written by David Jackson for the purposes of the GELP NYC study visit. It is an abbreviated version of a chapter published in *Sustainable School Transformation: An Inside-Out School Led Approach*, Bloomsbury (2013), which in turn drew on an earlier piece co-written with David Albury.

This is the story of this third phase of NYC's reform – its innovation phase, embodied in the establishment of the New York Innovation Zone. At the outset, let's be clear. This is a story of one of the most ambitious, intentional, strategic, conceptually robust and enlightened system transformation interventions anywhere in the world (outside, perhaps, those prompted by natural disasters such as in New Orleans or Christchurch). It is not only a story of success, but also of the complexities and challenges of changing systems.

The Background Story²

For most of the second half of the 20th century, fewer than 50% of New York City public school students graduated in four years, with rates significantly lower for African American and Hispanic students. Corruption and mismanagement were rife and there was no coherent city-wide co-ordination, with responsibility for schools split across 40 district offices.

In November 2001 Michael Bloomberg, the founder and majority owner of the financial news and information services media company Bloomberg, was elected Mayor of New York City and, in 2002, after a protracted campaign by Bloomberg and his predecessor Mayors, the New York State Legislature finally approved mayoral takeover of the NYC public school system. Michael Bloomberg moved quickly to appoint Joel Klein, a lawyer who had been Deputy Counsel to President Clinton and lead prosecutor in the antitrust case against Microsoft, as Chancellor of Education. Together Bloomberg and Klein implemented what turned out to be three phases of reform under the banner of 'Children First'.

Phase 1 has been characterised as “depoliticizing and fostering coherence and capacity-building”. It included the restructuring of the NYC public schools in order to stabilize and coordinate a disorganized system of schools and involved the consolidation of the 40 citywide district offices into 10 Instructional Divisions. It also included a robust programme of central intervention strategies to address unacceptable levels of teacher, principal and school performance – including school closures, the creation of new schools (both 'charter' and regular schools) and the breaking up of large schools into 'small schools', though generally still within the one building (a programme heavily supported by the Gates Foundation's commitment to the 'small school movement'). More than a quarter of the over 1,500 schools in New York City opened in that ten year phase.

Summarised, the key actions in Phase One were:

- **A new management structure.** Streamlined bureaucracy, bringing stability and coherence to an unruly system. The 10 regions, each headed by a regional superintendent
- **Focus on school leadership.** Created the New York Leadership Academy to train and support new and existing principals
- **Enhanced curriculum:** implemented uniform math and English curricula and introduced new curricula in the arts, social studies, and science
- **End of social promotion:** implemented a policy to ensure that promotion is always based on academic preparation and ability
- **Families engaged:** created new parent supports, placing a parent coordinator in every school
- **Schools made safer:** major crimes down more than 13%, other incidents down more than 45%
- **Bureaucracy cut:** between 2002 and 2007 more than \$190 million was passported from the

² This section draws from NYC's own materials and from '*Children First in New York: Urban Education Reform in New York City: Challenges, Policies and Implementation*', Jason Wong, Jonathan Sproul and Sarah Kosak, 2008, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

bureaucracy to schools and classrooms.

Phase Two of the reform attempted to reduce the level of centralisation and operated within three core principles of leadership, empowerment and accountability.

- **The principle of leadership** recognized that the success of empowering schools hinged upon the capacity and capability of school leaders. It built on the introduction of the New York City Leadership Academy – in particular using radical, intensive new leadership development designs for preparation and placement into some of the most challenging NYC schools, often sourcing its candidates from under-represented groups. A fifth of the NYCLA graduated school leaders have opened new small schools and many more are carrying their learning and experience into leadership across the system – many also sustaining alumni network membership.
- **The principle of empowerment** was founded on the belief that the people closest to the students should be empowered to make school-level educational decisions, such as budget, staffing, curriculum and professional development.. The empowerment principle also involved the elimination of an entire layer of district middle-tier management, with the devolution of central functions to quasi-independent learning support organisations and the establishment of networks of schools around these learning support providers. School principals (headteachers) were free to make their own choice of provider and network. An additional \$174 million was devolved to schools and classrooms, bringing the total money taken from the bureaucracy and given to schools to more than \$350 million.
- **The principle of accountability** recognized that schools and school leaders needed to be held accountable for their performance (against performance review standards) and that the NYC Department of Education was reciprocally accountable for providing schools with the tools and resources and capabilities to achieve success. Reciprocal accountability is a key feature of this and the subsequent reform phase.

These elements are represented in the diagram below:

Accountability

Holding schools accountable for results:

- > Progress Reports (Grades A-F)
- > Learning Environment Surveys
- > Quality Reviews
- > Rewards and consequences based on results

Tools for schools:

- > ARIS provides student performance data to guide school improvement efforts.
- > Periodic Assessments help schools identify each student's strengths and weaknesses to target instruction.
- > Children First Intensive professional development builds school-wide capacity to diagnose student needs and to develop evidence-based individualized instruction, self-evaluation, and continuous improvement in student learning.
- > Leadership development informed in the components of the reform build capacity

Empowerment

Decisions made close to students:

- > Decisions can be *best for students* when they're happening *close to students* at the school level.

Individualized support options:

- > Principals used to get "support" from regions. Now, they choose what's best for them from more than a dozen DOE and non-profit options.
- > Networks of schools built around providers creates communities of challenge and support

Schools also have:

- > More money and more power over budgets, staffing, and programs, letting schools tailor instruction and programs to the specific perceived needs of their schools.
- > New funding and more equitable distribution of resources to schools.

Taking Stock - dramatic improvement but dissatisfaction

As has been described, having flat-lined for the previous 50 years, between 2002 and 2009 the performance of NYC public schools dramatically improved. More students were capable of reading and doing math, and more students were meeting the requirements for high school graduation than ever before. The system was becoming more equitable and professionals more empowered as a result of the two phases of reform.

However, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, and many within the New York City public school system, were not content either with the overall level of attainment or with this rate of increase. Still, almost a third of high school students were not graduating within four years, and of those who were, only 16% had a college ready diploma. For African American and Hispanic students the graduation rate was even lower (around 45%) than for their white and Asian counterparts. And there was huge variation between schools across the city: an issue that the Chancellor highlighted by asking DOE staff whether they would be prepared to have their own children randomly assigned to schools.

So, while taking pride in the improvements and past successes, these system leaders consistently articulated challenge to the present system and re-articulated their aspiration of every student being “college and career ready”.

Phase 3 Reform - the innovation insight

They also noticed that while many schools in the city had improved, there were some schools that had strikingly better results, often not through strict compliance with central frameworks – not doing what was asked of them or in the ways that were expected of them. Their success appeared to stem from the passions, creativity, entrepreneurship and commitment of the principals and the teachers – people who seemed to function in some ways as ‘creative deviants’. Sandra Stein, then CEO of the New York Leadership Academy, characterised such school leaders as ‘renegade principals’ who, through the development of practices and methods that often ‘broke the rules’, were achieving outlier results.

Against all the odds, these schools were innovating on behalf of their students to significant effect, but they were doing so below the radar and in a way that was publicly invisible and therefore didn’t yield wider system learning.

In 2009, to nurture, further support and expand such locations of potential innovation, NYC set up its ‘Innovation Zone’ (mark 1), designed to support a pioneering community of schools in implementing personalized learning environments as a means to accelerate student progress towards college and career readiness. It was, and is, driven by the emphatic belief that both schools and the wider supporting system must change, and that the driver for such change lay in a shift from standardization of learning to more personalised approaches and environments.

This first incarnation of the iZone established two strands of work in 2009. The first strand was focused on innovation around some key ‘components’ of schooling suggestive of promise – parental involvement, scheduling, student leadership – by inviting (and supporting, incubating and legitimising) groups of schools to innovate in a loose alliance around these components. The second strand involved innovation around new technological platforms and blended learning approaches.

As the work evolved, and to some extent influenced by insights from other jurisdictions thinking through similar problems via participation in the inter-jurisdictional Global Education Leaders' Program (GELP), they came to two realisations.

One was that the skills, behaviours, and knowledge schools were teaching were too often not those students needed to succeed in the adult world of the 21st century (for college and career readiness). The great proportion of their instructional energies was focused on managing groups of students through an industrial-era model of one-size-fits-all courses of study, with standardization as its core tenet: a standard school day, with standard teachers, in standard-size rooms and standard-sized classes: an experience that bears little resemblance to the most positive learning experiences young people (or adults) have outside the classroom, whether through team experiences, artistic creation, entrepreneurship, or online networking and journaling.

The other realisation was that to effect change across the entire public school system it would be patently insufficient just to develop a set of exemplary 'components' of innovative practice, or to introduce new blended learning approaches into the conventional school model, without setting this firmly within a diffusion and scaling strategy which held at least the potential to impact a significant proportion, and ultimately all, New York schools. This recognition of the need to house its innovation approaches within an ambitious and enlightened strategy for diffusion and scaling has been one of the consistent strengths of NYC's Phase 3 work.

Whole school and whole system

In Spring 2010, the New York City Department of Education launched their ambitious and intentional innovation strategy with this simple rationale:

“New York's schooling system perceives a need for its young people to be enabled to achieve higher-order standards that prepare them for post-secondary success by emphasizing higher-order critical thinking, real-world application, and collaboration that will necessitate developing instructional capacity that our schools currently do not have.”

The overall aim of the strategy was to transform the learning for the 1 million students in NYC public schools through replacing the 'industrial model', by **designing schools round the needs, interests and motivations of individual students, by personalising rather than standardising the model of schooling and learning**. Students enter schools as individuals, often now tech-savvy, with a diverse set of needs and capabilities. Therefore, the new logic went, schools needed to reorient themselves to treat students as individual learners, where every child has a unique education plan with his or her own path to personal and academic success. The plan was to make personalisation the central approach to educating students – where learning would be about each student mastering skills and capabilities in her own way, at her own pace.

Personalised approaches and mastery based assessment became new foundation stones. In iZone schools, schooling would no longer be about advancing students through grade levels based on age and time spent in class, but about supporting students in building the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful. During the 2010-11 school year the high-level vision for 'personalised mastery learning' was articulated one level further, identifying four pillars or principles:

1. Personalised learning plans and progress
2. Flexible and real world learning environments (multiple learning modalities, learning anytime, anywhere, on- and off-line, project-based)
3. Next generation curriculum and assessment
4. New student and staff roles (advisor, tutor, mentor, designer, facilitator, peer-tutor etc).

The initial version of the innovation zone (iZone) contained two components; these are loosely described above but under their official names were known as:

iLearn – focuses on developing technology enabled and enhanced learning and resources that personalize, extend, and deepen the learning experience of students in participating schools

InnovateNYC – through its schools ecosystem (US Department of Education grant funded) it identifies and stimulates technology solutions to high-value problems. Working on school component innovations, it evaluates impact on practice and outcomes. It tests and provides feedback on new innovation products. Promising innovations are scaled system-wide.

Whilst retaining the two components of iZone mark 1, in 2010-11 the ambition was expanded to include a third component, iZone360, with the following brief:

iZone 360 – a community of practice of schools committed to whole school redesign through the integration of components and practices into whole new schooling models of highly successful 21st Century personalised learning – *on behalf of the whole system*.

By early 2013 (when the initial draft of this piece was written) the iZone as a whole included more than 250 schools from across the city with over 190,000 students. These schools served a higher percentage of students who received free or reduced price lunch, a higher percentage of students who required special education services, and a higher percentage of English language learners than comparable non-iZone schools. The iZone was also unique to many district initiatives in that schools had to opt-in for participation through a rigorous application process.

The programs piloted in the iZone empowered teachers, administrators, students and parents with cutting edge resources and strategies for personalization such as online content, real-time data, and a suite of robust educational practices like flexible scheduling and staffing to expand opportunities on how, where and when a student can learn. Some of the tools and strategies piloted included:

- Online and blended learning tools with related training, where real-time data and online content help teachers to differentiate instruction, expand learning time, and increase access to courses not offered within a student's home school.
- Mastery-based learning with the support of tools, such as iLearnNYC and Jumprope, and training to change the way students evidence their mastery of content knowledge and skills.
- Adaptive learning software including Time To Know, Pearson SuccessMaker and CompassLearning Odyssey in elementary schools. The software assisted teachers in personalizing learning in English language arts and math in the third, fourth and fifth grades.
- School of One, which uses daily skill assessments to monitor student progress, and algorithm-assisted assignments that adapt a personalized learning plan to best meet students' needs in middle school math. The further innovation is the redesign of the classroom to integrate multiple

"modes" of instruction - live teacher-led lessons, software-based lessons, collaborative activities, virtual tutors, and individual practice - into the same learning space.

- New school schedules, and staff and student roles that are student-centered and designed to facilitate greater personalization.
- Real-world learning, where a significant portion of coursework is completed through internships or other opportunities outside the school building.

Since its launch, the iZone has made significant progress in schools and the broader ecosystem. Key achievements from the iZone incubation period include:

- **Identified early indicators of increased student achievement.** iZone students demonstrated increases in intrinsic motivation, problem formulation, research, interpretation, and communication. These characteristics are linked to college and career readiness and are predictive of eventual increases in traditional student achievement metrics.
- **Fostered demand for innovation.** The iZone has grown from 81 to 250 schools in two years. Schools were chosen through an extensive application process, and each year more schools want to join the iZone than are accepted.
- **Deployed new tools to schools.** The iZone, working in close partnership with key DOE offices, launched the iLearnNYC platform, an unprecedented, customized learning management system to support online and blended learning. This investment prepared the NYCDOE to quickly and effectively utilize online learning to support students displaced by Hurricane Sandy.
- **Made significant progress towards sustainability.** The iLearnNYC program was transitioned from a free resource to a fee-for-service program, and is on its way to becoming a self-sustaining model. Despite the new cost structure, nearly 200 schools chose to participate in iLearnNYC, up from 140 schools in the prior year.
- **Launched Innovate NYC Ecosystem.** In January 2013, the iZone launched the Gap App Challenge for middle school math – the first of many challenges in its Ecosystem, a project funded by the US DOE's Investing in Innovation award. The Ecosystem drives smarter investments in education technology on the part of the district, schools, funders and vendors, in order to maximize the potential of the edtech market.
- **Successfully advocated for key policy changes.** In close collaboration with the Office of Academic Policy, the New York State Department of Education, and key local partners, iZone has championed policy reforms that facilitate innovation and personalization, including greater flexibility in NYSTL funding, the ability to grant credit for learning that happens outside of the school building and traditional school day, and the related authorization to determine attendance based on learning anywhere and at any time.

Lessons on System Transformation

While the NYC Department of Education was encouraged by the early success of the iZone, they also learned important lessons that have since been used to sharpen the focus and refine the execution, particularly as it relates to redesigning existing schools and diffusing promising ideas throughout the system.

From its outset two things created energy for this bold work. The first was an utterly irrefutable case for change supported by a strong mandate, an impatience for innovation, from the Chancellor. The second was a compelling vision of an alternative pedagogical paradigm and the re-design principles around which new school models should emerge – well-defined in theory but intentionally open to multiple interpretations in practice. (New York has never set out to create a definitive new model. Pluralism,

multiple models, choice possibilities and diversity of approach is a more accurate characterization. The cross-system consistency lies in fidelity to the design principles.)

The theory of change for the whole school redesign aspirations of iZone360 was straightforward enough:

- identify principals of ambitious and potentially 'renegade' schools willing to engage in radical school re-design within a strong community of practice, working on behalf of the entire system
- build the design around a clear diffusion strategy – animate that wider system around the work and connect it such that foundations of a diffusion strategy are present from the outset
- create new forums wherein the emergent strategy and implementation challenges can be problem-solved
- incubate the schools by utilising resources flexibly, including service design expertise, multiple professional learning approaches, support from 'model design partners', use of innovation disciplines, provision of innovation coaches and a range of other supports
- learn from the work, codifying practices such that they can diffuse and scale across the system.

In addition, the ambition was always to co-design the evolution of this strategy with participant principals, such that the DOE personnel and principals would learn their way forward together – very much in the spirit of a 'systemic action learning strategy'. The significance of this (in theory) is obvious: on the one hand, in the short-term creating radically new school models requires de-regulation and safe space – systemically enabling conditions; new policy and practice enablers. Longer-term, scaling of these models would involve all system actors learning alongside one another how to adapt expectations, supports and accountabilities to new schooling and learning approaches.

This co-design intent and its underpinning trust-based commitment, the community of practice approach, the 'on behalf of the system' moral purpose of the work – and the total belief that professionals have it within their power to be the school and system redesigners, given appropriate license and supports – made the more mature phase of iZone's work an archetypically progressive strategy.

iZone 360, 2011-12³

It was always going to be a stretch to get iZone360 up and running to plan for Fall 2011 implementation. Its first year was characterised by some of the 'design in flight' and capacity challenges faced by many significant innovation and system transformation initiatives – identifying and hiring key personnel; securing resource strands in a timely manner; developing effective communication mechanisms; building out the design and implementation model....and negotiating reasonable indicators or evidence of success.

In terms of success, 26 schools were recruited in the first year across five NYC networks, along with four supporting Model Design Partners (Kunskapsskolan, New Visions, RISC and Eskolta). Each school identified a core change team, whose members engaged in the design process. This was informed by six workshops (March to June 2011) which culminated in a major 'future state design' sharing workshop attended and publicly endorsed by the Chancellor. The Model Design Partners brought new capacity to the work, attending the workshops and supporting the schools between and beyond them. The NYC DOE iTeam matured and gelled quickly and learnt well how to support the work in a manner very different from the traditional DOE-to-school relationship.

³ For a full account of the early years of iZone360 see the published chapter.

iZone 360 generated considerable energy in the system. It broadened and deepened the dialogue about innovation and alternative school designs. There evolved a growing sense of possibility and mission, of peer support, the emergence of an embryonic community of practice and a belief in the legitimacy, feasibility and potential of radically new approaches to schooling. In the first year, about a quarter of the schools were beginning to implement radically different schooling models, but many more were perhaps doing work of systemic interest.

Overall, the first year of 360 resulted in significant learning that may have more generic relevance across systems and cultures:

Design and implementation challenges:

The initial commitment to build into the work a wider community of practice and diffusion strategy around NYC's networks ran into unanticipated challenges. The degree of lateral connectivity, collaborative capacity and collegiality varied by network. Therefore the foundations of the diffusion strategy were unreliable, and alternative options needed to be explored to create a more porous boundary between iZone schools and more than 1300 other schools in the district.

Wider system engagement (students and parents; the wider community of NYC schools) was only partially achieved. Everyone was at full stretch getting the show on the road and at times there was insufficient capacity to be devoted to wider engagement activity. This meant that the 'on behalf of' aspirations, a key element in raising demand for diffusion, was weakened.

The Model Design Partners were a uniquely interesting potential capacity, but they began with significant role ambiguity and subsequently adapted to the challenge differentially. (Some were able to abandon their own proprietary 'model' to support schools' ambitions; others found that much more difficult.)

For all the challenges, the show was on the road; there was huge learning to be drawn from the experience; the commitment of many of the principals to the systemic ambition of the work was palpable; the case for innovation, for dramatic change in learning and schooling towards a more personalised model, had been well received and internalised. Beyond this, there were early signs that the system was becoming animated around the work. iZone360 had some high potential practices to share, and the most promising were being taken beyond pilot stages and were on the way to scaling.

Wider system challenges

It was clear from the outset that the Department of Education would need to learn, adapt and become more flexible and enabling of schools' radical intentions for 360 to succeed. It would be either a part of the solution or a part of the problem. Year one was a steep learning curve. This manifested itself in a number of ways. There was an ongoing effort to ensure the iZone would be owned by the wider DOE. Further, through both the work of 360 and particularly the efforts of the InnovateNYC Ecosystem, many of the DOE's systems (procurement, commissioning, legal, personnel, budget allocation) began to flex and adapt to the ambitions of 360 schools and other iZone initiatives. The difficult work of system-level and systems-level change can take time, and this sometimes led to delays of budget approval and appointment regulations. Nevertheless, there were a number of policy and practice wins, such as allowing students to earn credit for meaningful learning experiences outside the classroom, and the ability for the NYCDOE to use a Challenge model in place of traditional procurement methods.

Along with systemic challenges, sustainability was potentially jeopardised by changes in leadership. Within 12 months of the start of the work the Chancellor (Joel Klein, its sponsor and key advocate) left, as did the Deputy Chancellor responsible for iZone⁴. However, turnover is not uncommon in the field, particularly in large urban districts. While the iZone may have lost some traction during leadership transitions, the initiative had by then a strong team in place and commitment to the work from across the NYCDOE.

Summarising

It may be helpful here to get a handle on the timeline of events up to and around this time:

- iZone was launched in 2009
- The design and preparation for iZone360 began in earnest in Summer 2010. The Chancellor's approval to launch and provide the resource package coming in July 2010
- By March 2011 the programme had been designed, support organisations were being commissioned, some iZone360 appointments made, and schools selected
- The intensive innovation design phase took place between March and July 2011
- September 2011 saw the implementation launch of cohort one – 26 schools
- February to June 2012 saw a further cycle of school recruitment, contracts with new support organisations (Apple, Big Picture and CSSR) and the creation of an innovation and school redesign workshop process – a design partnership between iTeam, Design Partners and Innovation Unit.
- In September 2012 phase two of iZone 360 was launched, making 50 schools committed to collaborative school redesign built around a vision of personalised mastery learning able to meet the needs, strengths and motivations of individual students.
- July 2012 – a new Head of iZone, Andrea Coleman, takes up post (the third in two years) and institutes a radical (and necessary) review of the entire iZone, including 360.

For year two of iZone 360 the three new Model Design Partners were recruited to a known process and adapted quickly, contributing capacity and expertise in more informed ways than was possible for the first round. The second round schools had some practice models from year one to build from. iCoaches were in place to act as pollinators and connectors, and they had the collaborative conceptualisation of their roles from the first year to strengthen their work.

Additionally, the design component was smarter, tighter and more collaboratively planned and facilitated than in year one. It involved six workshops (most whole day, some half day) as an Innovation Conference – or InnoCon⁵ – series moving from Innocon Inspire through Model, Explore, Experiment, Refine & Plan and finally Innocon Share. These events were hosted by notable organisational partners in New York, such as Google, TimeWarner or the NYC Fire Museum, and their expertise was incorporated into the mix as well as that of the Design Partners and Innovation Unit.

Most of the schools had a core innovation team that attended each workshop and an extended group with whom they worked in-between. Model Design Partners were very active participants in year two: they knew their role; they contributed to design; they were the key supports in the main work (the school redesign and wider stakeholder engagement activity that schools were to undertake between workshops); they were also connectors of people and ideas between schools.

⁴ In December 2010, Joel Klein, prime advocate for and sponsor of the Phase 3 reform innovation emphasis, resigned as Chancellor, and shortly after John White, the Deputy Chancellor who had been the driving force behind the innovation strategy, left to become Superintendent of the Recovery School District in Louisiana.

⁵ <http://www.izoneshare.org/www/izone/site/Hosting/InTheZone/FebInTheZone.pdf>

An iZone Leadership Council was established, intended to facilitate dialogue between principals and the DOE, as were 'affinity groups', or working groups, drawn from across the cohort of schools to problem-solve the 'wicked issues' of implementation and practice.

iZone also started to address seriously some the challenges associated with diffusion and scale to maximise its impact across the district.

- The diffusion and scaling strategy currently draws on methods such as challenges and accelerators, open to any DOE school, to create more opportunities for 360 schools to diffuse promising practices and spread demand for innovation
- Wider stakeholder and system engagement within the DOE was strengthened by these methods, while the Innovate NYC Ecosystem has made significant inroads into the ed tech market and its investors
- A mutual support relationship between the wider Department and the work of schools in iZone is stronger
- New systems to tackle knowledge management and communication challenges are in place, and were a key focus for 2013.

In many ways, as will be obvious, there has been rapid learning in NYC. iZone was itself a prototype – a prototype for a different type of system transformation strategy. Like all prototypes, it is entitled to have its difficulties, because failing fast and failing forward is a key innovation strategy. This applies to the system's role as designer and custodian of the approach as much as to the work at school level.

Radical system transformation work is just so hard – challenging, complex, draining, unstable, demanding of courage....We know many of the component parts, but those few systems internationally traveling this journey with intent are learning as they go how to fit these moving parts together; how the new system dynamics function; how we can unlearn decades old habitual behaviours; how we unite multiple constituencies around the endeavour. Who ever suggested that it would be easy? It is a work in progress.

What has been presented so far, beyond the narrative sections, is an attempt at a 'balanced scorecard' approach to analysis of the iZone strategy, and 360 in particular. For all its challenges, it offers one of the most promising and optimistic scenarios for the transformation of urban jurisdictions.

Post-script

There is no narrative bridge into 2013-14 here, because that is territory the study visit will explore. However, it might be helpful to conclude by sharing some of the features from Andrea Coleman's initial review work up to January 2013. It indicates three things:

1. A sustained commitment in NYC to a bold educational innovation strategy as a component in a balanced approach to system transformation
2. Clarity that NYC does not yet have everything right, combined with a firm determination to learn forward fast
3. The sense that NYC has every intention of capitalising on the foundations they have built to achieve just that.

The review process began by creating a set of high-level expectations for new school models – so-called non-negotiables. There were ten of these, but four will indicate the flow of thinking:

- New school models should look radically different from past models

- The innovation process should give more exposure to the non-education sector
- The system should design into its role a customized (personalised), demand-led support model
- Schools should achieve both radically better and also different outcomes.

Similarly, amongst the many 'big questions' the team set out to answer are the following:

- i. How do we strengthen our diffusion strategy? How do we scale to effect systemic change?
- ii. What does a 'demand-led support model' look like in practice and how do we broker it?
- iii. How do we maintain the spirit of the iZone as being co-designed?
- iv. What permissions or deregulation might be necessary for very different models?
- v. Where in the world are the potential paradigm shifting experiences for people to see?

The work stemming from these big questions might be seen to evolve around three 'levels': innovating with schools; impacting the market (suppliers and supports of schools); and system dynamics for scaling and diffusion.

Other preoccupations include: developing early or proxy metrics of success; abandoning normative supports for iZone schools – learning how to personalize supports and expectations; maximising resource deployment to schools, and flexibility around resource use; tackling the 'wicked issues' by connecting 'bright spark' innovators; building a system-wide innovation mindset; finding ways to connect across the Department; addressing the scaling challenge in an authentic way.

So this is the last word: NYC's iZone remains one of the most robustly designed, high potential, strategic, intentional and ambitious system innovation strategies with which the Innovation Unit and GELP have connected. It almost certainly has implications for public service innovation far more broadly than education. Not only does NYC have an urgent need for the iZone to succeed, but also the rest of the world needs New York to get this as right as is feasible, and to make its work available for wider learning.