The New Song Academy (NSA) is a charter school in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of Baltimore City, launched in 1994 as an extension of non-profit educational program New Song Community Learning Center (NSCLC). Over the past 28 years, the NSCLC has served and connected thousands of families, with the pre-K through 8 NSA and numerous afterschool programs. During the 2019–2020 school year, NSA transitioned to a charter school model to best uphold its central mission of transformative justice via primary school education. 166 students currently attend the school.

Many students at NSA carry histories of early childhood and ongoing trauma. One particular manifestation of this trauma is risky sexual behavior in early adolescence, at times exacerbated by a breakdown in parent-child communication. Our project aims to:

1. Identify NSA parents’ unique needs in learning about adolescent health and communication with their children
2. Develop a trauma-informed curriculum based on those identified needs
3. Train a cohort of approximately 20 interested parents/community leaders to teach this content to their peers
4. Ultimately, foster a healthier environment for communication around sexual health

### Project Context & Aims
Among Teens!

The Lay Health Educators Program (LHEP), developed by Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos, is a course of six modules to train peer educators on various health topics. The LHEP has been previously offered at a Baltimore church, where Dr. Galiatsatos and his team recruited a small cohort of community leaders to take the course.

The LHEP’s next site is NSCLC, my curriculum will be included as a module. This significantly streamlines the implementation process and ensures sustainability, as the LHEP is already an established, reproducible program.

### Background
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### Lay Health Educators Program

#### Needs assessment

#### Curriculum development

#### Seminar x 6

#### Community dissemination

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### Future Plans

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we were unable to host the first needs assessment meeting scheduled for late March. Here is a projected timeline:

- **Early Sep. 2020**: Casual meet-and-greet with parents during school pick-up hours; become familiar faces
- **Mid. Sep. 2020**: Dinner meeting with interested parents to conduct needs assessment
- **Late Sep. 2020**: First LHEP module
- **Mid. Nov. 2020**: Last LHEP module (adolescent health)

I also intend for my lesson plan to be adaptable for future iterations of the LHEP, so that anyone can teach it if they wish.

### Lessons Learned Thus Far

- A relatively simple project plan can translate into months and months of real-world time. Plan accordingly and do not rush.
- Becoming familiar to a community is critical to the reception of a new project.
- Consistency and humility help a lot in building trust, especially when trying to avoid repeating mistakes from the past (particularly those where the institution comes in as a “savior”)
- The community knows what it wants!

### Scholar Activities & Accomplishments

- Met with Center for Adolescent Health faculty at JHSPH to discuss potential sources of material for the curriculum, with focus on book *The Teen Years Explained*
- Met with NSCLC’s social worker and a passionate parent advocate to discuss sensitive points of the project and best practices for working with the NSA community
- Recruited seven JHUSOM and one JHU undergraduate volunteer for curriculum development and presentation
- Began distilling material from *The Teen Years Explained* and the *Promoting Health Among Teens!* program, both focusing on adolescent sexual health

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### Acknowledgements

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