

YOUTH SUCCESS MOVEMENT

The Village Model

What a village is, who holds it, and how it works

Village Series · Document 1 of 10

The master reference. Every other document in this series inherits its vocabulary, roles, and structure from this one.

Who this document is for

Anyone considering starting a village, anyone leading one, and anyone being asked to serve in it. Read this first. Documents 2 through 10 assume you have.

1. Why a village

There is a parable, often attributed to the Maasai, that they greet one another not with a remark about the weather but with a question: how are the children? Even those with no children of their own are expected to answer, and the answer they hope to give is, all the children are well.

It is not small talk. It is a society taking its own moral temperature, out loud, in its ordinary hellos — a way of never letting itself forget the one measure that matters most, which is whether the youngest and most defenseless among them are being kept whole. The answer belongs to every adult, not only to parents. That is the whole idea, and it is the reason this Movement carries that question as its name.

A village is what a community looks like when it can answer honestly. Right now, in most places, it cannot. Building the thing that can is the work.

The half of the problem nobody is working on

Academic success is not the sum of two things. It is the product of two things:

Academic Success = Instructional Effectiveness × Learning Effectiveness

Because the relationship is multiplicative, a child who arrives at school unable to learn well cannot be rescued by good teaching. A zero on one side produces a zero overall, no matter how strong the other side is. Schools work almost entirely on the left side of that equation.

The right side is not unattended. Head Start, home visiting programs, early literacy efforts, libraries, pediatric practices, and county services all work somewhere in that space, and many do it well. But no entity owns it. Each holds one piece, works to its own mandate, and coordinates with the others rarely or not at all. Parents — the people actually building the child — receive no formal training in child development at any point, from any institution, ever.

So a great deal of effort is spent on the right side of the equation and no one is responsible for the whole of it. That is why children keep arriving at kindergarten under-prepared in a country that is not indifferent to them. It is not neglect. It is an unowned space.

Owning it is the work of a village.

Two tiers, one missing thing

What a community already has for its families falls into two tiers, and it is worth being precise about them, because the usual complaint — that everything comes and goes — is only half right.

Tier	What it is	What is missing
The institutions	Schools, Head Start, health systems, libraries, county services. These endure. They have been there for decades and will be there in decades more.	Management turns over constantly, so priorities reset. Each works its own mandate in its own silo. And the families being served have little or no say in how any of it is run.
The programs	Initiatives, grants, pilots, and campaigns layered on top. Many genuinely help while they last.	They end when the funding or the leadership changes. And here too, the families being served have no voice in what is offered, how it works, or whether it continues.

The tiers fail differently. Institutions persist but reset and stay siloed; programs coordinate no better and then disappear. But both share the same absence, and it is the one that matters: the people being served do not hold it. They receive it.

When something is done for you, or to you, you wait on it. You do not build it, tend it, or feel responsible for whether it lives. A thing no one owns is a thing no one saves when the money runs out — and a thing no one owns is also a thing no one integrates, because integration is work that belongs to whoever holds the whole.

Nobody holds the whole. Not the school, which sees the child for six hours. Not the clinic, which sees a visit. Not the program, which sees a semester. Each of them hands the child back knowing nothing of where she came from or where she goes next. There is no continuity, no coordination, and no memory.

The village inverts this.

It is not run from above and delivered to families. It is owned and run by the families and neighbors themselves. Everything else — the school, the agencies, the programs, this Movement — are collaborators the village works with, uses when useful, and outlasts when they fade.

That single shift does two things at once. It gives the people being served a voice in what happens to their children, which neither tier has ever offered them. And it puts somebody in the position of holding the whole child, which means the coordination nobody was responsible for now has an owner.

Everything that follows in this document is downstream of that one distinction. Roles are structured so that ownership spreads. Councils exist so that families and young people make decisions rather than receive them. Ambassadors are recruited from among the families already served. The founder's job is to become unnecessary.

2. What a village is

A village is a structured community of neighbors organized around a defined local boundary, built to help every child in that boundary succeed — beginning with reading, and continuing through graduation and into a career.

It is not a building or an office. It lives in living rooms and phones and the ordinary traffic of a neighborhood that has decided to look after its own.

The boundary

Most villages are defined by an elementary school attendance boundary. That choice is deliberate and it holds up for three reasons: the boundary system is well developed nationwide and already defined for every community, so no village has to invent its own map; it is large enough to reach a critical mass of interactions, so the village is not four families talking to each other; and it is small enough to stay manageable and genuinely local.

It also comes with something no drawn line can give you — a few hundred families who already share a school, a bus route, and a set of concerns.

The boundary is flexible. Where an existing community organization already holds a natural group of families, use theirs instead. Workable alternatives include:

- A community center service area
- A large apartment complex or housing development
- A congregation or faith community
- A rural township or a cluster of small schools

The boundary is a starting point, not a wall. No family who wants help is turned away for living on the wrong side of a line. The boundary exists so the village stays small enough to be real, not so it can exclude.

Who a village serves

A village serves every resident inside its boundary. Not only parents, and not only households with school-age children — the retired couple with time to give, the young adult who needs a path, the neighbor who knows where the help is. A village that serves only families with struggling students is a program with a waiting list. A village that serves the neighborhood is a village.

The focus, though, is youth success. That is the organizing purpose, the reason the village exists, and the thing it is measured on. Everything else a village does — the gatherings, the resource sharing, the neighbor-to-neighbor help — strengthens the conditions that let children succeed.

For that reason a village starts narrow and widens. The first ten families all have students, because the model has to be demonstrated on real children with real results before anyone will believe it. Once that is proven, the village expands: more families, then families with children not yet in school, then residents with no children at all who simply want the neighborhood to be better than it is.

Among children, the earliest years matter most — the foundation for reading is built before school begins — so a village works hard to reach families with children under five. But it is never too late. Families with older struggling students find real answers here too.

A village also serves adults who struggle to read. Many parents do, and almost none will say so unprompted. Some have grown children who left school without it. A village that only ever addresses children is missing people standing directly in front of it — often the very parents being asked to read aloud every night.

There is no eligibility screen, no diagnosis required, and no cost to the family.

3. How a family is served

Three questions describe any family in the Movement: how much human support they have, where that support comes from, and which track they are on. They are independent of each other, and a family can move between them.

Two levels of support

Family Ambassadors are the strongest thing the Movement has and the scarcest. One Ambassador carries up to ten families and takes months to recruit and train. Every village will be able to reach more families than it can assign.

So there are two levels, and neither is a consolation prize.

Level	What it means
Self-guided	The family works through the system themselves — the courses, the tools, the community, and the guide. No assigned Ambassador. They set their own pace and ask for help when they want it. This is how most families will be served, and the system has to be built so that a motivated parent can navigate it alone and get real results.
Ambassador-supported	An assigned Family Ambassador, weekly contact, for a year or more. The intensive option, for families who need more than materials can give or who ask for it.

This is a design requirement, not an admission of shortage.

If the system only works when a trained volunteer walks beside the family, then the Movement can never serve more families than it has volunteers — and the reading problem is far larger than any volunteer corps will ever be.

So the self-guided path must be genuinely navigable. Every course, tool, and screen has to be understandable by a parent with no one to explain it. A village that can only help families it has an Ambassador for has built something that cannot scale past its own recruiting.

How a family ends up on one path or the other is mostly practical: whether an Ambassador is available, and whether the family wants one. Some parents prefer to work alone. Some families in crisis need a person and should be prioritized for one. And a self-guided family who stalls should be offered an Ambassador when one comes free.

Four tracks

Which path a family follows depends on the age of the child. The underlying ideas are the same for everyone — what builds a learner, why the system has not solved this, what a parent can actually do — but the framing and the sequence differ.

Track	Who	The framing
Birth to 5	Expecting parents and families with young children	Prevention and hope. Nothing has gone wrong. You are building the foundation, and you have more power over it than anyone has told you. The Movement's priority group.
K–3	Families with children in the early grades	The window. This is when reading is meant to be built, and when a gap is still comparatively cheap to close.
4–12	Families with older struggling students	It is not too late, and the point is to find the cause rather than repeat the effort. These families arrive tired and often carrying years of being told things that did not help.
Adult	Adults who struggle to read — parents, and young people past school age	Dignity and normalization. Many parents in a village struggle themselves and will never say so. Some have grown children who left school unable to read. This track exists so that a village serves the adult in front of it, not only the child.

A family with children of different ages runs more than one track at once. A parent who quietly recognizes themselves in the adult track while working on their child's is common, and should be met without comment or fuss.

4. The virtual village

Villages take time to build. A community has to produce a Founder, a Leader, Ambassadors, councils, and a room to meet in, and that is months of work in the best case. Families do not have months. A child in second grade this year is in third grade next year, and the window does not reopen.

So the Movement serves families remotely from the beginning, and does not wait for a village to exist first.

What a virtual village is

A virtual village is a group of families served at a distance rather than by a neighborhood. There is no boundary, no meeting space, and no local council. What there is: a Family Ambassador assigned to each family, the same diagnostic sequence, the same training tools, the same weekly contact, and the same expectation that the family does the work at home.

It runs on the same model and produces real results for the family it serves. It reaches a parent in a town where nobody has ever heard of this Movement, and it can start the week they ask.

What it takes

A virtual village needs volunteers the same way a local one does, but at the national level rather than the neighborhood level:

- Remote Family Ambassadors — the same role, the same 2–5 hours a week, the same ten families, without the geography
- Volunteers who answer questions in the national community space
- Volunteers who help with materials, translation, and content
- Coordinators who assign families to Ambassadors and keep the caseloads honest

Recruiting for the national system is therefore continuous, and it is a stated priority alongside standing up local villages — not a fallback.

Virtual is the on-ramp, not the destination

The goal is never to keep a family virtual. The goal is to reach as many families as possible, as fast as possible, and empower each of them to start building their children's foundational skills at home — and then to convert that reach into rooted local villages.

The path runs like this. Families in a community are served virtually. As their number grows, that cluster becomes the seed of a village: a Founder is recruited from among them, a boundary is drawn, local Ambassadors are trained, and the families are handed from remote support to neighbors who live down the street. The virtual village does not disappear — it keeps taking new families from places where no village exists yet — but that community now holds its own.

What virtual cannot do

Remote support can teach a parent what to do and hold them to it. It cannot make a neighborhood. It cannot put another adult in the room at a hard moment, produce the ride to the appointment, or build the ownership that comes from a community deciding its children are its own responsibility. Those things only come from a local village — and they matter most exactly where need is greatest, in inner-city neighborhoods and public housing where families are carrying the most and have the least around them. Virtual reach is how the Movement grows quickly. Local villages are how communities get stronger.

5. The four levels

The Movement is organized in four levels. Each has a distinct job. A village can be started before the level above it exists.

Level	Scope	What it does
Family	One household	Raises the child. Holds the decisions. Everything else exists to strengthen the family's hand, never to replace its judgment.
Village	One boundary — typically an elementary school attendance area	Recruits and supports families. Trains and holds Family Ambassadors. Runs councils, gatherings, and local communication. This is where the actual work with children happens.
Chapter	One community — a city, a county, or a school district	Coordinates all villages in the community. Recruits and supports Village Leaders. Raises funds locally. Convenes villages for shared training and community-wide celebration. Represents the Movement to schools, funders, and local government.
National	The Movement	Holds the model, the curriculum, the training materials, the platform, and the guide. Certifies and supports chapters. Aggregates results. Makes it possible for a new community to stand up a village in weeks rather than months.

On chapters.

A chapter is the community level. Imagine a community with a hundred villages: someone has to coordinate them, recruit the Leaders, hold the shared training, run the community-wide celebration, and raise the money that funds the Leader positions. That is the Chapter Coordinator's job. A single village does not need a chapter to begin — but a community that intends to reach all of its children eventually will.

6. The people of a village

A village has a handful of human roles, supported by a guide, a record, and a platform. In a new village one person may hold three of the roles at once. That is expected. The structure below describes where the village is going, not where it must start.

Village Founder

The person who decides a village should exist and begins it. The founder completes orientation first, then gathers the first families or recruits the first Family Ambassador to do so.

The founder is a temporary role, not a permanent one. A founder may go on to become the Village Leader, may become a Family Ambassador and hand leadership to someone else, or may simply start the thing and step back once someone is holding it. All three are legitimate. The one thing a founder must not do is stay in the middle of everything permanently — that would make the village a program with a single point of failure.

Village Leader

The person who runs the village day to day and long term. This is the most demanding role in the model, and the one the Movement is working hardest to fund.

	Village Leader
Time	5–10 hours per week while the village is being built. 10–20 hours per week once it is running and growing. This is not a light volunteer commitment, and it should never be presented as one.
Compensation	Volunteer at the start in most villages, moving to a paid position as the chapter raises funds. In some communities the Leader is already employed by a partner organization and takes on the role in collaboration, with their existing employer covering the time. Funding this position is a stated priority, not an afterthought.
Term	Open-ended. Continuity matters more here than in any other role.
Responsibilities	Recruit, train, and support the Family Ambassadors Stand up and convene the Parent Council and the Youth Council Recruit families into the village Run the village's communication — the village page, the group, the calendar Plan and host gatherings, trainings, and celebrations Report village progress to the chapter Recruit volunteers so that no one, including the Leader, carries the village alone
The right person	Well connected in the boundary and knows who can help Able to give the hours — genuinely, not aspirationally Comfortable with local social media, or has someone who is Wants to build something owned by the neighborhood, not run a program

Family Ambassador

The person who walks beside a family. This is the role that touches children's lives most directly, and it is designed from the ground up to be holdable by an ordinary volunteer with a job and a family of their own.

	Family Ambassador
Time	2–5 hours per week, plus 2–5 hours of orientation before starting. A true volunteer commitment.
Caseload	Up to ten families. An Ambassador may take fewer, and a new Ambassador should. Most families in a village are self-guided and have no Ambassador at all — that is the design, not a shortfall in recruiting.
Term	A year or more. Families do not benefit from being handed to a new Ambassador every few months.
Responsibilities	Onboard each assigned family and walk them through the diagnostic sequence Set up the family's access to the training tools Review each student's progress weekly through the online system Contact each family weekly to encourage, congratulate, and troubleshoot Spend extra time with families still building a routine Bring questions the Ambassador cannot answer to the Village Leader Participate in village gatherings
Requirements	Every Family Ambassador, local or remote, passes a basic background check and signs a confidentiality agreement before being assigned a single family.
Boundaries	Contact is by phone, text, email, or the village platform. An Ambassador does not meet one-on-one with a student. The exception is an Ambassador who already had a close relationship with that family, or a meeting held in a supervised group setting. Family and student information is confidential. These rules are not negotiable and are set out in the Ambassador Memorandum of Understanding.
Where they come from	The strongest Ambassadors are parents the village already helped. A family that found its way through becomes the neighbor who guides the next one. This is what makes a village self-sustaining rather than founder-dependent.

The role works the same way remotely. A Family Ambassador serving a virtual village carries the same ten families, the same weekly contact, the same check and confidentiality agreement, and the same boundaries — the only difference is that the families live somewhere else, and all contact is at a distance.

Parent Council

A small group of parents from the village who help build it and speak for the parent perspective. A council can begin with one or two people.

- Helps recruit families into the village
- Helps recruit Family Ambassadors, and council members often become Ambassadors themselves
- Gives the Village Leader honest input from a parent's point of view
- Helps plan and run gatherings and orientation events
- Meets monthly while the village is being built, then as needed

Council members serve as volunteers. Stipends and incentives may be provided as resources permit.

Youth Council

A small group of students from the village, with the same structure and the same standing as the Parent Council. This is not a decorative role.

- Helps recruit other students — peer influence moves young people in a way adult persuasion does not
- Gives the Village Leader honest input from a young person's point of view, especially on what would actually motivate a student to train
- Helps build the spirit of the village
- Takes on village projects as the village grows

A village that has a working Youth Council is a village that has stopped doing things to young people and started doing things with them. If the children in a village have no say in it, it is a program.

Mother Mentors

An experienced mother from the village, paired with a new one. Not a professional, not a home visitor, and not a program — a neighbor a few years further along who has been through the sleepless months and the second-guessing.

Every mother of a new baby in the village is offered one. What the mentor does is ordinary: check in, answer the questions nobody wants to ask a doctor, and be reachable at two in the morning without embarrassment.

She also does something the village cannot achieve any other way. She is the person who passes on that the talking, the singing, the reading aloud, and the back-and-forth of ordinary days are building the machinery this child will read and think with. A parent hears that from a trusted neighbor and acts on it. The same sentence in a pamphlet does nothing.

Mentors are recruited from among the village's own mothers, complete a short orientation, and pass the same background check as any other volunteer working directly with a family.

Training Ambassadors

A specialist role that a village adds once it has enough students in cognitive training. Supporting that program well is close to a job of its own — the sessions are demanding by design, the schedule has to be protected, and students hit resistance there faster than anywhere else. Stacking it onto an Ambassador already carrying ten families will overwhelm them.

A Training Ambassador focuses on those students specifically while each family's regular Ambassador continues everything else. The ideal person has been through the program — a graduate, or the parent of one — because they know the hard weeks are survivable and a student will believe them in a way they will not believe anyone else.

Volunteers

Not everyone can give the hours an Ambassador gives. A village needs a ladder of contribution so that anyone willing to help has somewhere to stand.

Role	Time	What it is
Answer questions	10 min / week	Share what you know from your own experience in the village's community space.

Role	Time	What it is
Answer in the Q&A	30 min / week	Watch the Ask the Village questions and answer the ones you have lived through.
Mother Mentor	1–2 hours / month	Walk beside one new mother. Short orientation and a background check.
Event volunteer	A few hours / month	Help run gatherings, celebrations, and trainings.
Council member	2–4 hours / month	Serve on the Parent Council or Youth Council.
Family Ambassador	2–5 hours / week	Guide up to ten families. Requires orientation and a signed MOU.
Training Ambassador	3–6 hours / week	Support the students in cognitive training. Best filled by a graduate of the program.
Village Leader	10–20 hours / week	Run the village. Requires full orientation.

Chapter Coordinator

At the community level, the Chapter Coordinator recruits and supports Village Leaders, raises funds to move Leader positions from volunteer to paid, holds training that individual villages are too small to run alone, convenes the community-wide celebration, and carries the Movement's relationship with schools, funders, and local government. A chapter may cover a city, a county, or a district, and may hold anywhere from two villages to a hundred.

Maya — the guide

Maya is the Movement's AI guide, available to a family around the clock by text message. No app, no login, no office hours. She is not a chatbot and not a search engine — she is a guide who knows a particular family and walks them through the process one step at a time.

What Maya does	How
Knows the family	Remembers the children's names, where the family is in the journey, what they have already tried, and what they are working on now. Every conversation picks up where the last one ended.
Starts with wellbeing	Before any academic discussion, she checks the family's stability — housing, food, sleep, financial stress. A child under chronic stress cannot learn well, so the foundation comes first.
Finds the gap, not a label	She asks the questions that identify what is actually holding a child back. She does not diagnose and does not attach labels.
Gives one next step	Not a list of twelve things. One specific, free, short daily habit, then a follow-up to see how it went, then an adjustment.
Escalates	If a family is in crisis, she stops the academic work, points to real help, and alerts a human.

What Maya does	How
Is honest about her limits	For current local resource lookups she says so plainly and points the family elsewhere rather than guessing.
Connects to people	Once a family has built some momentum, she introduces the Family Ambassador and the village around them.

Maya matters most in the virtual village, where she may be a family's most constant contact, and she carries the families who never attend an orientation gathering. In a local village she works alongside the Ambassador rather than replacing them: she handles the daily guidance, and the Ambassador handles the human relationship and everything Maya cannot answer.

Maya is in development.

She is not live. Every description of Maya in this series describes what she is being built to do, not what she does today. Until she is running, the Village Leader and the Family Ambassadors carry this work by hand — and the model is designed so that it works, more slowly, without her. Nothing in a village should be built on the assumption that Maya will arrive on a particular date.

The Youth Success Record — the memory

The reason nobody has ever held the whole child is that there has never been anywhere to put her. Every organization that touches a struggling child sees one fragment: the new teacher each September starting from zero, the specialist who never reads the pediatrician's notes, the tutoring program that knows nothing of what is happening at home. The family is left to reconstruct the whole painful story from scratch for every new person who enters the child's life.

Medicine solved a version of this. Not long ago every doctor kept a paper file and a patient's history sat scattered across a dozen offices that never spoke. Today a medical record can follow a person, whole, so nobody has to start blind.

The Youth Success Record is the same idea for a child's learning: one living record of the whole child — what has been assessed, what was found, what was tried, what worked, and where the child stands now. Each new helper begins where the last one left off. And for the first time there is one place where the whole child is visible, which means one place where someone can be held accountable for whether she is actually getting better.

The parent owns it. Not the school, not any agency, not the Movement.

A lifelong record of a child is exactly the kind of thing that can be misused, so the design has to earn trust the hard way. The family controls who sees it. Nothing is shared without their say. They can take it, move it, or close it at will. A record built to serve the child only works if the family, not an institution, holds the key.

The Record begins at birth

The Record is not something a family opens when a child is already struggling. In a working village it starts the week the baby is born, handed over at the Welcome Celebration by the Mother Mentor, and it begins as a development journal.

What goes in it early is simple: the milestones, when they were reached, and what the family did. Milestone information is well documented by professionals and almost unknown to parents. When a milestone is missed, the Record surfaces age-appropriate things to try. When something continues to look off, it points the family to Child Find — the free evaluation every school district in the country is required by federal law to provide, at no cost, for children from birth, and which most parents have never heard of.

A family that starts there arrives at school with years of history already in hand. If reading trouble does show up in second grade, nobody is reconstructing anything.

The Record is in development and will be built out in phases. Where it is not yet in place, the Family Ambassador or the Mother Mentor keeps the family’s record by hand — the same job, done slower.

The Village Support Hub — the platform

The Movement’s communications platform, and the thing everything else in this series assumes exists. Access is by a link sent to a phone. No app, no password.

What is on it	
Community, by topic	Discussion organized around the areas of family life rather than by whoever posted most recently. Useful information does not scroll away.
Blog	Movement and chapter writing.
Forum	Ongoing conversation by topic.
Ask the Village	Anyone posts a question; anyone who has lived it answers. Good answers accumulate and stay searchable, so a question answered once serves everybody who asks it afterward.
Calendar	Gatherings, celebrations, trainings.
Courses	Parent courses, Ambassador training modules, tool walkthroughs.
Records	Family progress visible to their Ambassador; caseloads visible to the Village Leader.

How the Hub is organized

There are two layers, not three. A national layer carries the blog, Ask the Village, the course library, and Maya. Each chapter has its own space for local discussion and its own calendar.

Villages do not get separate platform instances. A village lives inside its chapter’s space, and a village with no chapter yet lives in the national one. Running ten thousand separate spaces would be unmanageable, and it would also break the thing that makes the Q&A work — a new village of eleven people asking questions into an empty room is useless, while the same eleven people asking into a national pool get answers on day one.

Two deliberate absences.

There is no curated directory of local resources. Phone numbers change, programs close, and a directory that is quietly out of date is worse than none at all. Instead the village teaches families how to find things themselves and points them to 211 — and the Q&A carries the local knowledge that actually matters, from people who used it last month.

There is no private member-to-member messaging. It is the most requested feature and the largest safeguarding exposure, and enabling it would put adults into unsupervised private contact with other people's children. Ambassadors and mentors reach their families directly by phone, text, or email.

The Hub is not finished. Completing it is the Movement's largest open funding need, and villages should be built on the assumption that parts of it arrive later than hoped.

7. The three stages

Every village passes through the same three stages. Each has a defined finish line, so a village always knows whether it has actually arrived. Document 3 sets out the full checklist for each stage; what follows is the shape of it.

Stage	What happens	Finished when
Development	Founder completes orientation Village Leader recruited and trained First Family Ambassadors recruited and trained — one is enough to start, two or three is better Parent Council and Youth Council begun Village page and community space stood up First ten families recruited — often families in that community already being served virtually	Ten families are enrolled, each assigned to a trained Ambassador, and the village has a Leader, both councils begun, and a working communication channel.
Launch	A public launch celebration The team is filled out — if the Leader has been serving as the first Ambassador, recruit the Ambassadors who will carry the caseload Councils grown beyond their first members Growth to 25–30 students Local funders informed Fundraising begun in coordination with the chapter	25–30 students are actively training, no single person is holding more than one role out of necessity, and the village has been publicly launched in its community.
Steady state	Weekly team rhythm and weekly communication Continuous family recruiting toward serving the whole boundary Regular gatherings, trainings, and celebrations Ambassadors recruited from among families already served Annual celebration of student success Village progress reported to the chapter	This stage does not finish. It is measured instead — see Document 10, the Village Scorecard.

8. What a family commits to

A village asks something of the families it serves. This is deliberate. Free help that asks nothing is taken lightly and produces nothing; and a family that has committed something is a family that follows through. The full text is in Document 7, the Family Participation Pledge. In summary, a participating family agrees to:

- Make sure the student can get online in a way that allows consistent training
- See that the student trains 15–20 minutes a day, 4–5 days a week, until the program is complete — typically one to two years
- Read aloud with the student at least 15 minutes a day
- Review the materials on mindset and social-emotional skills and put them to use

- Stay in touch with their Family Ambassador
- Take part in village gatherings as best they can
- Share the student's before-and-after school reading results, handled confidentially and reported only in group form

The commitment is longer than the pledge.

Reaching grade level takes one to two years of consistent work. The village reviews progress at 90 days to confirm a family is on track and to adjust when it is not — but 90 days is a checkpoint, not a finish line. And when a student reaches grade level, the relationship does not end. The village stays with that family through graduation, into projects, training, and whatever the young person is building next.

9. Orientation

Nobody can build something they do not understand. Before anyone takes a role in a village, they complete orientation — the Movement's reasoning, the model, the tools, and the role itself.

Who	Required?	What it covers
Village Founder / Village Leader	Required	Full orientation. The purpose of the Movement, the reading picture and what it means, why the Movement can succeed where the system has not, movement spirit versus program thinking, the skill gap model, the training tools, mindset and social-emotional skills and adverse childhood experiences, and the Family Ambassador model — including how to recruit, train, and support Ambassadors. See Document 2.
Family Ambassador	Required	The Ambassador track: the diagnostic sequence, the tools, how to set a family up, how to keep a student on track, boundaries and confidentiality. 2–5 hours. See Document 4.
Parent / Youth Council member	Required	A short orientation to the Movement and the council's role. See Document 6.
Participating family	Strongly encouraged, not required	A welcome video, the Movement's vision, and what the family's own part looks like. Delivered at an orientation gathering where possible, and by Maya for every family that cannot attend. No family is turned away for missing it.

10. What the village is, and is not

A village is	A village is not
Owned by the families and neighbors in it	A service delivered to a community from outside it

A village is	A village is not
A structure for support and encouragement	A clinic, and never a source of diagnoses
A place where a parent's judgment is strengthened	A place where a parent's judgment is replaced
Open to every child in the boundary	Selective, means-tested, or label-gated
A collaborator with the local school	A critic of teachers or a substitute for school
Free to the family	Free of expectation — families commit real effort
Durable past its founder and past its funding	Dependent on any single person or grant

11. How a village begins

For all its structure, a village does not require a grant, an institution, or permission from anyone. It can begin with a single person who decides their community's children are worth looking after — a parent, a teacher, a retired educator, a faith leader, anyone willing to care out loud.

That person starts by understanding the Movement, then gathering a few families, then pointing them toward the tools and walking beside them. From there it grows the way living things grow. A family that finds help becomes a neighbor who offers it. A handful of families becomes a network. The first volunteers become the first Family Ambassadors. The councils form. And the village begins to generate its own momentum, no longer dependent on the person who started it.

Ownership spreads, and the thing takes root.

Ten families. That is the whole beginning.

Not a hundred, not a school district, not a national rollout. One person who understands the model, one Ambassador — who may be the same person — and ten families who agree to try. Everything in this series is built to get that far, and then to get from there to a village that no longer needs the person who started it.

12. Canonical vocabulary

These are the terms used throughout the series. Documents 2 through 10 use no others, and materials produced for a village should match.

Term	Means
Movement	The Youth Success Movement as a whole.
Chapter	The community level — a city, county, or district — coordinating the villages within it.
Chapter Coordinator	The person who runs a chapter.
Village	One local boundary, typically an elementary school attendance area.
Virtual village	Families served remotely, without a boundary, until a local village can take them on.
Village Founder	The person who starts a village. A temporary role.
Village Leader	The person who runs a village. 10–20 hours per week at steady state.
Family Ambassador	The volunteer who walks beside up to ten families. 2–5 hours per week.
Self-guided	A family working through the system without an assigned Ambassador. The default.
Ambassador-supported	A family with an assigned Ambassador and weekly contact.
The four tracks	Birth to 5, K–3, 4–12, and Adult.
Parent Council	Parents from the village who help build and steer it.
Youth Council	Students from the village who help build and steer it.
Mother Mentor	An experienced mother paired with a new one.
Training Ambassador	The volunteer who supports students in cognitive training.
Welcome Celebration	The quarterly gathering at which the village celebrates its new babies.
Maya	The Movement's AI guide, available to families by text, in development.
Youth Success Record	The parent-owned living record of the whole child, begun at birth. In development.
Village Support Hub	The Movement's communications platform. National and chapter layers; no village-level spaces.
Ask the Village	The Hub's question-and-answer space, open to anyone.
Family Participation Pledge	The commitment a participating family signs.
Memorandum of Understanding	The agreement a Family Ambassador signs.

Terms retired from earlier drafts: Village Manager (replaced by Village Leader), Village Guide (replaced by Maya).

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Next: Document 2 — Village Founder Orientation