

## WHATEVER IT TAKES

Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America

By Paul Tough

310 pp. Mariner Books / Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2009 edition.

Journalist Paul Tough is the Howard Zinn of early childhood education. In *Whatever It Takes*, Tough situates locally The Moynihan Report (1965), T. Berry Brazelton's zero-to-three movement (1977), *The Bell Curve* (1994), and more, in the Harlem classroom envisioned by Geoffrey Canada. A South Bronx native, educator, and activist, Canada determines 1) the skills children need to succeed (the experience of language is key), 2) the broad-based resources to develop those skills (from cognitive to cultural), and 3) how early to intervene (in utero). Then he builds that school, including a Baby College for expectant parents and afterschool enrichment programs for teens, in a poor, struggling, and underserved urban community. Harlem Children's Zone's Promise Academy Charter Schools are open to all, and students are chosen by lottery (current enrollment is about thirteen thousand). Canada proves that yes, ability matters, and it's teachable (190). In 2009, on statewide tests, HCZ third graders had increased their scores to 97 percent at or above grade-level in reading and 100 percent in math (279). President Obama sought to take the program national, and the first education grants for Promise Neighborhoods were made in 2010. HCZ students continue to excel, with 97 percent accepted to college in 2017 and 861 currently in college. Scaling up the biblical precept "whoever saves one life, it is as if he saves the entire world," Canada aspires to save all children. —Lisa Thaler, author of *Look Up: The Life and Art of Sacha Kolin*, 5 November 2019