

The Nuts and Bolts of Recruiting Students, Parents, and Volunteers



National Center
for Mental Health
Promotion and
Youth Violence
Prevention

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Acknowledgement and Commitment that

“We are all in this together”

Session Objectives

- Understand strategies used by SS/HS initiatives to engage families, students and volunteers
- Discuss potential strategies that are sustainable and culturally responsive that can be used to engage families, students or volunteers



What are the issues for engaging families, students, volunteers?

Our families, youth, communities face...

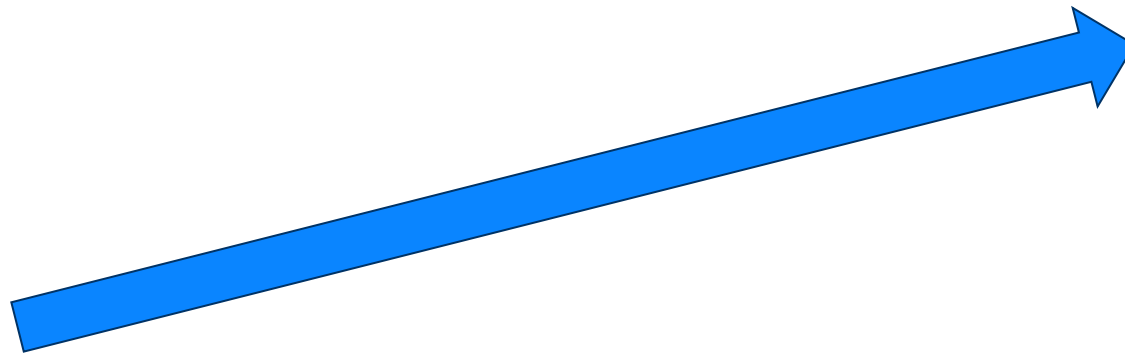
- ❖ *differing expectations?*
- ❖ *language/cultural barriers?*
- ❖ *mistrust or lack understanding of how to work with school system?*
- ❖ *economic survival?*
- ❖ *time constraints?*
- ❖ *other?*



Approaches to Families

Family Involvement

Family Engagement



Leading with institutional
interests or wants

Leading with parents' self
interests or wants and
dreams

Family Engagement Framework

Traditional Engagement (Epstein)	Non-Traditional Engagement
•Parenting skills building	•Reciprocal understanding of schools and families
•Communication on school information	•Family/Community cultural strengths incorporated into school curriculum
•Families are recruited as volunteers	•Educate parents on literacy & schools
•Families trained on supporting homework & learning at home	•Promote and train parents on school advocacy
•Parent groups serve in school governance & decision making	•Empowers parents to initiate school & community efforts
•School collaborates with community organizations to strengthen school programs	•Implements culturally competent communication practices

West Chicago, Illinois

A suburb 30 miles west of the city of Chicago, located in DuPage County

Student enrollment - Preschool- grade 8 – 4,159

Student demographics:

71% Hispanic

64% low income

One special education preschool, six elementary buildings, one 7-8 grade middle school

District 33 is the 2nd largest employer in the city with over 600 employees.

2005 SS/HS award - *WeGo Together for Kids*

West Chicago – Family & Volunteer Outreach Strategies

Each of these strategies contributed to our success:

1. Designed an effective planning process
2. Work with partners to enhance engagement
3. Stay aware of cultural considerations

We quickly learned that in our community “stand alone” events done by a single provider do not work.



West Chicago – Developing Meaningful Programs

Planning process

1. Acknowledgement and commitment to a value system that believes parent and family involvement is vital – ***what does this mean really mean?***
2. Identify the characteristics of successful parent/family programs in your community
3. Join with parents who are natural leaders for entry to the parent community and for guidance (Promotoras model)
4. Does the planning group adequately represent the community?



West Chicago – Developing Meaningful Programs

5. Identify need for prevention and promotion based on family risk factors and strengths
6. What resources are currently in place?
7. Does the community feel a need for the service/program?
8. What is the goal of the provider who wants to provide the program?
9. Consider barriers, consider advantages
10. Set goals/design program or event

West Chicago – Latino Family Engagement

- **As a result of good Latino family outreach, we increased Latino family attendance rates and unconsciously simultaneously decreased non-Latino family attendance.**
- **Lesson learned-**
Stay aware of cultural differences
 - **What may be welcoming to one may not be to another**
 - **Develop family events that actively welcome & connect with everyone**
 - **Are we engaging one group at the exclusion of another group**



West Chicago – Examples of Meaningful Opportunities

- District wide Family Nights
- Mobile Food Pantry Events
- Building based Family Events
- Navigating the American Education System
<http://www.dupage.k12.il.us/NAES/index.html>
- Parents As Educational Partners (PEP)

West Chicago – Sustaining Family Engagement

- *What strategies have we sustained to engage families?*
 - **Our planning model maintains partner and family engagement through helping all of us to remember one another when planning**
- *What strategies have been most helpful in keeping families engaged over several years?*
 - **Providing the services and programs that are asked for**
 - **Engaging different groups in offering the programs so that many people can feel a sense of ownership**

West Chicago – Next Steps

Loss of funding, new ways of considering how to provide services

- New uses of volunteers, parent mentors, building community by the residents
- For example: Play groups run by parents to offer some service due to loss of preschool funding



West Chicago – Lessons Learned

- Utilize your partnerships
 - Engage partners, volunteers and families, and engage them all together
 - Coordinate efforts
- Families and volunteers are willing – ASK them to be involved in ways that builds on their interests or talents
- Stand alone events are ***less successful*** for involving or ***engaging families***, but ***more successful*** for ***engaging volunteers***

Donna, Texas

- 2007 SS/HS Grantee; 16,000 students
- Geography: 7 miles north of US/Mexican border; poverty and rapid growth along the border has led to proliferation of drugs and gang activity
- Over 26,000 residents of which 98% are Hispanic
- Only 46.4% of population has a high school diploma or equivalent
- Parent Centers at each campus (20) assist teachers, coordinate parent volunteers, decorate schools for events

Donna – Student & Family Outreach Strategies

1. Donna Coalition Committee

- Made up of parents from the district (No. & So.)
- In Year 3, began attending CMT meetings

2. Annual District Parent Conferences

3. Parenting Skills Sessions/Trainings

- Parent Conferences on early childhood education and setting a strong educational foundation
- Parents trained as Second Step trainers

4. Mental Health - Truancy

Donna – Student & Family Outreach Strategies

5. **Parents with Project ARISE (*A Resource In Serving Equality*)**
6. **Providing sessions in homes**
7. **Skills Trainings for students & parents:**
 - Positive social skills
 - Assertive skills
 - Social and general problem-solving
 - Anger management
 - Coping skills (especially with parents due to nature of family related problems)

(All strategies were successful. After the needs assessment was completed, strategies were tailored to meet parents'/students' needs.)

Donna – Partner Family & Volunteer Outreach

- **Partner pre-SS/HS Experience with Engaging Families & Volunteers**
 - Parents were reluctant to get involved (e.g., transportation, fear of deportation & other legal constraints)
 - Parents did not know how to access available resources
- **Successful Strategies of our Partners since SS/HS**
 - Utilizing parent educators to build rapport with parents
 - Project ARISE as a community resource
 - Parent conferences & trainings

Donna – Successful Strategies

SS/HS and Partner Successes:

- Mental health expanded to Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT)
- GREAT Program
- Technology shared with city, county, state
- Project ARISE (Training the Trainers)
- Second Step expanding to middle schools and parents
- Developing district website which will contain a multitude of resources to supplement the Second Step program & character development (e.g., videos, PowerPoints)



Donna – Integrating Multiple Cultures

- Same origin, Different cultures
Some families from Mexico may:
 - Lack an educational background
 - Lack an understanding of the legal system in the U.S.
 - Experience more domestic violence & child abuse
 - Have different values (i.e., believe it's okay to have elementary aged children on the streets late in the evening selling plates, apples, etc.)

Presentations were tailored to meet cultural/family needs; Used presenter with a background in mental health; Truancy officer made presentations on truancy and other legal issues



Donna – Sustaining Engagement

- As enter no-cost extension year, engagement strategies to sustain:
 1. Parents as Second Step trainers
 2. Mini Parent Conferences on early childhood
 3. Parent referrals to community partners for resources and support
 4. Annual District-wide Parent Conferences with community partners
 5. Second Step is being expanded to middle schools and parents



Donna – Sustaining Engagement

7. GREAT Program parent component
 8. MCOT (Mobile Crisis Outreach Team)
 9. Truancy officer conducting more home visits & holding more parent conferences
 10. Volunteers from local University
- Parents from Project ARISE have developed a thirst for more knowledge:
 - ARISE North became more involved
 - They are attending more meetings with CMT/DCC

Donna – Sustaining Engagement

- Year 1: needs assessment (students, parents, staff)
- Year 2: GREAT Program, Second Step, moved from ADVANCE to STARS
- Year 3: Project ARISE, students presentations, parent conferences, teacher trainings
- Year 4: Training the Trainers, volunteers from local University, district website (which will have tools/resources to supplement Second Step & character education)

Donna – Lessons Learned

- Families are willing to participate when barriers are reduced (e.g., transportation, time, literacy)
- Work to build trust at the onset and ongoing!
- Families and Volunteers represent different cultures – use strategies to be responsive to this
- Rapport building process has been slow but worthwhile

Donna – Future Planning

- Rio Grande Valley of South Texas lacks community resources:
 - Mental health
 - Law enforcement
 - Juvenile court
 - Transportation
 - Organizations that can provide families with additional support (such as parenting skills)
 - Parents unable to access community resources outside of Valley due to lack/perceived lack of U.S. citizenship



Group Discussion

- What strategies have you successfully used to recruit students, families, or volunteers to services or supporting your SS/HS initiative?
- How do you plan to/have you sustained the engagement of students, families, or volunteers?
- How have you customized strategies to be culturally responsive to families and the community?
- What have been your lessons learned?
- What challenges or questions would you like to raise for the group to discuss?



Unity

*I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.*

*One was a teacher; the tools he used
Were books and music and art;
One was a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle, loving heart.*

*Day after day, the teacher toiled
with a touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.*

*And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought;
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.*

*And each agreed he would have failed
If he had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the school
And behind the teacher, the home.*

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