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Building capacity within Ohio's communities to identify and prioritize critical community issues and manage the investment of resources to achieve positive outcomes for children, youth and families.



FIRST LADY STRICKLAND SPEAKS

Guest Author: Deborah S. Delisle, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

First Lady Strickland Speaks is First Lady Frances Strickland's column. When she does not author the column herself, she will invite a guest columnist to contribute and this issue's columnist is Superintendent Delisle.

When Governor Strickland presented his plan for *Reforming Ohio's Education System for the 21st Century* during his 2009 State of the State Address, he said, "It is absolutely clear to me that simply tinkering with centuries-old educational practices will not prepare Ohio's children for success in college, for success in the workplace, or for success in life. Therefore, today, I present my plan to build our education system anew." As Superintendent of Public Instruction, I had the opportunity to be in the audience when the Governor shared his commitment to education. Immediately I began thinking about what it would mean to the Ohio Department of Education, what it would mean to educators in Ohio, and what it would mean for all of Ohio's children and youth and their families. What keeps returning to my mind is the opportunity we have at this moment in history to redesign and modernize education in order to better prepare our students for the increasingly complex global society that they will face.

During the past few weeks, First Lady Frances Strickland has traveled around the state gathering feedback from constituents on the Governor's plan for reforming Ohio's education system. One of the recurring themes at all of the meetings was related to the Governor's emphasis on incorporating effective family and community engagement in his education reform and funding plan. The First Lady shared with me questions from the field as to how the Ohio Department of Education will ensure that school districts collaborate with local Family and Children First Councils and also if it was a wise use of resources to allocate funds to schools for this purpose. Too often educational entities and community organizations work in isolation of each other and not toward a common vision. Andrew Carnegie said it best, "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision -- the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." The time is ripe for community agencies and school districts to combine forces to better meet the challenges faced by students and their families.

We know that a range of supports and interventions are needed if all children and youth are to reach their full potential – some of these are best provided before problems develop, some must be provided soon after a problem is identified, and some are needed to address more persistent and chronic problems. What we all know is that general and isolated understandings of student needs and appropriate responses are not enough to yield the broad effects that we seek in our schools and in our communities. The educational development of a child or a youth requires a shared commitment for the well-being of children, youth, and families from all of us.

Governor Strickland's education reform plan calls for the establishment of a family and community engagement team comprised of educators, support staff, parents, business representatives, and community members in every school district. The team's mission will be to align its work with the county's Family and Children First Council to ensure the full development and lifelong success of every student. The team will be charged with the responsibility to create a five-year family and community engagement strategic plan, a work plan, and an annual progress report. The State Board of Education will adopt standards for the family and community engagement teams in each district. These standards, to be developed and written by a community of stakeholders, may include a standard that ensures the compatibility and alignment of school improvement strategic plans and required FCFC HB 289 plans.

One concern expressed in the regional meetings was about the funding for family and community engagement as the Governor's plan directs the funds to school districts and not to another community entity. The Governor's intent is to establish a school-funding approach that meets the constitutionality test of an adequate and equitable school funding system. He decided that family and community engagement was a critical component of strengthening our education system and, most importantly, of educating the whole child. A number of school districts already effectively collaborate with their local Family and Children First Councils; however, it will be a significant challenge for other districts to accomplish. A priority of the Ohio Department of Education will be to create a process that ensures schools and districts enhance and strengthen this critical relationship between educators, students, families and communities. It will be important for ODE to identify where districts and communities are in the process, to assist them in understanding where they need to be, and to provide them time to organize and mobilize to achieve our common vision.

Challenging, tough economic times demand that we think critically about how best to harness our collective energies to create an enhanced system of serving Ohio's children and youth educationally, socially, and emotionally. Our common vision must be to ensure our children and youth learn the skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century. Together we can develop a shared plan to better coordinate and maximize the use of existing infrastructures, programs, services, and resources within our schools and communities -- one that is aligned to the plans, strategies, and resources of schools and communities and focuses on family engagement opportunities that have broad and sustainable effects. A strong working relationship among key stakeholders who have a shared interest in the success of children and youth within their schools and communities will better meet the many needs of our students and their families.

The Ohio Department of Education stands ready to work with First Lady Frances Strickland and the Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council to strengthen comprehensive partnerships between communities and their respective school districts. In the near future, dialogue sessions will be provided throughout the state to begin the discussions of how we can better work together to merge our efforts across systems for the future of Ohio's children and youth.

CARE TEAM COLLABORATIVE- STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES ONE CHILD AT A TIME



One of the primary tenets of Governor Strickland's education reform plan is the "establishment of a systemic structure at the school building and district level to enhance and strengthen (the) ability of educators to build and enhance (the) important relationship between educators, students, families and communities". This structure requires each school district to develop family and community engagement teams (educators, support staff, parents, business representatives and community members) and for those teams to align their work with the work of the county Family and Children First Council. Ultimately, this should create a seamless community system of care addressing children's non academic barriers to learning so all children can achieve their fullest potential.

Partnerships for Success (PfS) and Care Team Collaborative (CTC) are two great examples of support available to communities looking to improve their local systems of care. PfS provides Family and Children First Councils with the tools to identify critical community issues and create collaborative plans improving services to the children and families they serve. Once communities identify critical issues, they choose strategies to address their local needs. Care Team Collaborative offers one strategy proving to be highly successful in helping communities achieve their goals. The CTC framework is a 3 Tier whole child, multi-system approach blending prevention, early and intensive intervention and treatment through asset development. Youth experience a caring community wrapping around them to provide supports whenever/wherever needs. CTC supports school and communities in re-designing infrastructure, making non academic barrier prevention as important as instruction and management. Training, tools, data and evaluation services ensure fidelity and assist communities in planning for long term sustainability.

The Care Team Collaborative framework is a replicable and sustainable framework for increasing student access to comprehensive community resources. The framework has been successfully replicated in 10 Muskingum County schools and three Coshocton County schools. It is currently being piloted in one Morgan County school, one Franklin County school and two schools in Seneca County. Muskingum and Coshocton Counties began their Care Team work as a result of PfS planning and have demonstrated the greatest results.

- In FY2008, 4000+ students received universal prevention services as a result of asset building initiatives in their schools. Two hundred fifty youth received Tier 3 Care Team wrap around services from multiple community agencies. Sixty-seven percent of those youth utilized school based mental health services.
- Of the 10 schools in Muskingum and Coshocton counties served in FY2008, only two were rated effective or above five years ago- now nine out of ten have effective or higher ratings.
- Schools using the framework for over three years have seen 50% reductions in out of school suspensions.
- Muskingum County has seen amazing decreases in Department of Youth Services Commitments resulting in significant increases in RECLAIM dollars (FY2006- \$0 to FY2009- \$325,000).

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD



The Butler County Success Program has developed and implemented programs and service strategies that reflect a multi-faceted, collaborative model to help children and families in poverty. This model supports the development of specific skills critical to the formation and maintenance of self-sufficiency and intact families, parent/family engagement, and involvement in meeting the needs of children in ways that do not compromise parents' employment. All of this is accomplished through partnerships with the school and community.

Through these partnerships, it is estimated that services leveraged because of the Success Program are a one to one ratio. These services include after-school enrichment and mentoring opportunities for children provided by churches, backpack food for children to eat on the weekends, and mental health services for children at school.

The employment of 14 Community School Liaisons to work with schools, families and communities is the cornerstone of the Success Program. The Liaisons are each assigned to specific elementary buildings within a district. They develop relationships with school staff, parents, guardians, and community partners to make great things happen for kids. There were 1,416 children served in FY2008.

The evaluation of the Success Program is conducted by Miami University. Results have been significant and consistent over three years.

Results:

Children get better medical care:

- 27% increase in children seeing a doctor when sick
- 41% increase in children seeing a dentist
- 396 children accessed medical coverage

Children do better in school:

- 74% of teachers report increased reading ability
- 78% of teachers report increased academic skills
- 60% of children increased reading skills on the Mini Battery of Achievement (MBA)
- 61% of children increased math skills on the MBA

Parents are better able to work:

- 37% of parents report having increased reliable child care
- 44% of parents report increased access to transportation to get to work

Parents are more involved in their child's education:

- 49% of parents report an increase in knowing and contacting their child's teacher

Children have enough healthy food to eat:

- 50% of parents report increased access to healthy food for their children

Parents are more successful with their children:

- 44% of parents report an increase in their positive parenting skills
- 35% of parents report an increase in family togetherness

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Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) Recognizes Holmes County



More than 2,700 substance abuse advocates from across the country joined CADCA for its 19th annual National Leadership Forum. The event provided participants an opportunity to learn the latest strategies to fight substance abuse and to hear from nationally-known experts and policymakers.

The Forum ended with an awards luncheon honoring national and state leaders and community coalitions. Holmes County was selected to receive the Chairman's Award for Outstanding National Coalition Academy Graduate. The Holmes County Prevention Coalition graduated from CADCA Cohort 8, an intense three-week long training that enabled the county to apply for and receive a Drug Free Communities grant. Holmes County was also invited to participate in the poster session at the CADCA Forum. The poster was titled "Help I'm Lost - A Beginner's Map to Coalition Development".

The Holmes County Prevention Coalition began in July 2007 through the county's Partnerships for Success process. The strategic planning process used through PfS enabled the county to successfully identify a priority and determine how to best address it at the community level. Reducing substance abuse was identified as the highest priority. In order to reduce family and community norms tolerant of substance abuse the entire community needed to be engaged; therefore the Holmes County Prevention Coalition was formed. This is a diverse coalition whose mission is to create the conditions that help youth and adults make healthy choices regarding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Holmes County's schools have been active partners in Coalition-led endeavors, sending home PfS community surveys to parents and distributing the surveys to high school students. In May 2008, the PRIDE Survey was administered in the schools, initiating a new partnership in reducing substance abuse across the county and assisting the Coalition in collecting data to measure youths' use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana and their perception of risk. "Parents Who Host Lose The Most-Don't Be a Party to Teenage Drinking" information was also sent to parents of high school students to inform them about Ohio laws regarding serving alcohol to minors in an effort to reduce underage drinking. Students participated in the community's Alcohol Free Holiday Happy Hour in December 2009. At that event, the student winners of the Holmes County Prevention Coalition Logo Contest were announced. All entries to the logo contest were from students in middle and high school. The Coalition has engaged students through Youth to Youth activities, with students attending a Youth to Youth conference in March 2009 that focused on environmental strategies and developing a SADD Chapter. A SADD Chapter has already been formed in one high school and the students are involved in addressing compliance with school tobacco policies and smokeless tobacco.

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PFS NEWS

Some Preliminary Findings about School and Community Partnerships

Center for Learning Excellence staff recently completed a series of key informant interviews with individuals involved in formal school and community partnerships. Respondents included school personnel, representatives of community agencies, members of Family and Children First Councils and parents. Respondents identified more than 50 projects in eight Ohio counties that represented partnerships between schools and communities. Family and Children First Councils in all eight counties identified school success as a high priority community goal. In most cases, these projects were judged to be quite successful.

The observations of key informants may provide some valuable “lessons learned” for others interested in creating school and community partnerships in their own communities. Projects identified by key informants tended to be either collaborative efforts to complete a process such as a needs assessment or implementation of a formal program such as “Care Teams.” Only a few programs qualified as evidence based at least as has been historically thought of such programs. However, many of the projects were at a stage where activities should be producing outcomes for program participants. Of course, such outcomes can be measured which should yield data on which community members might base future investment decisions.

Some challenges identified by respondents that had to be overcome included limited funding, lack of time and issues influencing collaborative problem solving. Almost half of the challenges identified included some reference to difficulties in creating and sustaining collaborative relationships. Surprisingly, the major strength that had the most impact on school and community partnerships was also the ability to collaborate. Many respondents identified collaboration as a challenge and strength often when commenting about the same project. Other data indicated that this group of key informants considered collaboration to be “very important” to the success of school and community partnerships and felt that school and community representatives were successful collaborators.

A key theme that emerged from these interviews focused on challenges in figuring out how community plans were interconnected and knowing partners’ contributions to the desired outcomes of collaborative projects. Respondents also suggested that evaluating programs was a significant challenge. Finally, utilizing tools and implementing processes and procedures were judged to be important and presented some challenges. As is often the case, these data suggest as many questions as answers. Plans are being developed to convene representatives of local schools and communities to discuss these results in more detail.

In the meantime, some implications and/or recommendations to consider include:

- Successful school and community projects tend to be based on a highly collaborative process. Managing collaboration is time consuming and a highly technical skill. Continued focus on how best to facilitate local collaboration seems to be particularly worthwhile.
- There is clearly some value in using evidence based programming. However, among respondents there appeared to be a strong bias toward implementing locally designed programs. More emphasis on incorporating principles of effective interventions into existing programming may be appropriate.
- Evaluation may take on extra significance in light of the emphasis on developing and implementing programs at the local level. However, evaluation methods must be manageable and must yield useful information at a reasonable cost.
- Understanding how various local organizations might work together while at the same time being true to their own missions suggests the need for a method of aligning plans. Such alignment might function to clarify roles and provide a basis for community planning designed to fill in gaps in needed services.
- Community investment of resources goes hand in hand with the thoughts noted above. Some opportunity to invest resources to support collaborative community projects would appear to be in order. Such funding might be reserved for the most important projects that would not be otherwise undertaken.

FREE RESOURCES

OJJDP Announces Recovery Act Funding Opportunities

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/recoveryact.html>

After-school.gov- a one-stop website with information about federal resources to support children and youth during out-of-school time. The site includes information on how to: get money for a program, collaborate and create partnerships, start a program, find research and reports on after-school programs, and provide academic and enrichment activities for those enrolled.

<http://www.afterschool.gov/>

FREE NEWSLETTERS

Child Trends: The Child Indicator- a newsletter about the major developments within the child and youth social indicators field.

<http://www.childtrends.org/portalcatchildind.cfm?LID=44DD5860-64F3-49F7-946021F56994AFE5>

US Department of Education: The Achiever- a community newsletter highlighting model schools and resources for improving learning.

<http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/achiever/index.html>

US Department of Education: PreventED- updates on substance abuse and violence prevention education issues, legislation, and funding opportunities.

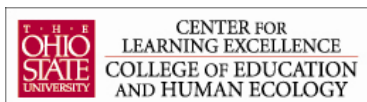
<http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/listserv/preventioned.html>

Prevention Action- online news publication reporting internationally on innovation and effectiveness among programs for improving children's health and development.

<http://www.preventionaction-mail.org/tinc?key=8I2MQdSg&RegistrationFormID=64109>

Harvard Family Research Project- information regarding out-of-school time news and resources, latest complementary learning news and resources, evaluation news and resources, and family involvement news and resources.

<http://www.hfrp.org/subscribe/email.php>



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