Learning Objectives

* Provide an overview of the barriers and challenges that impact effective collaboration between school, partner agencies and families.

* Provide an overview of strategies and techniques to support relationship building/enhancement between schools, partner agencies and families.

* Provide a forum for participants to share their experiences and best practices in relation to collaboration between schools, partner agencies and families.
Wediko Children’s Services is a non-profit organization committed to improving children’s lives.

Using a strength-based approach, Wediko responds to the needs of children who face repeated obstacles to development due to emotional, behavioral, learning, and environmental issues.

Through a continuum of flexible services and multi-disciplinary training programs, Wediko develops enduring partnerships with children, families, and schools.

Wediko strives to capture success and restore a sense of competence and hope.
Wediko (cont.)

* Wediko Children’s Services provides a continuum of flexible services in NH, MA, and NYC:
  * NH Summer Program founded in 1934
  * School-Based Program established in 1980 (MA) and 2011 (NYC)
  * NH Wediko School established in 1990
  * Home Based Solutions in MA, 2012
  * Community Based Programs Department, July 2015
Established in 2007 out of Columbia University

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s (DPH) Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS)

Aims to reduce substance use and violence and to promote academic achievement

A school-based, community-centered program

Provides 2 years of intensive case management services to 60 Boston area students between the ages of 8-13 years old and their families

Is free and Voluntary
* 57,000 students in 128 schools
* 77% Black and Latino
* 78% low income
* Nearly 1 in every 2 students speaks another language at home
* Students come from over 100 different countries
* FY15 proposed budget $974.93 mill

(Boston Public Schools Communications Office, 2014)
MassSTART Schools

Dorchester

* 583 Students
* 87.8% Low income families
* 24.9% African American
* 62.3% Latino
* 3.3% White
* 7.55% Asian
* 14.1% Special Education
* Located across the street from a mixed income housing development

South Boston

* 248 Students
* 88.7% Low income families
* 44% African American
* 35.1% Latino
* 11.7% White
* 4.4% Asian
* 12.9% Special Education
* Located in a public housing development

(Boston Public Schools, n.d.)
MassSTART Services

* Staffing – Reflective of client population
  * Cultural Capacity – Employ people of color and those from the communities served
  * Language Capacities – Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole

* Focus – Family, School, Community
  * Student Engagement – In school and at home
  * Family Engagement – Guided by Family Support Plan
  * School Collaboration – Consultation and information sharing
  * Community Collaboration and Integration – Link family to relevant services and promote the connection with natural resources
We agree - Collaboration between families, schools and partner agencies is valuable

* Parental involvement is especially important for the economically disadvantaged and ethnic minorities

* All parties are invested in positive outcomes

* Collaboration is connected to higher academic performance and school improvement

(Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006; NEA Ed Policy & Pract Dept, 2008)
What Makes Collaboration Hard (The Barriers)

They are common for us all – Family, School and Partner Agencies

* Misunderstanding and lack of trust
* Expectations – You’re the expert/professional/family, you should...
* Perceptions – You’re hostile, uncaring, only call when something is wrong
* Resources are limited - Time, energy, juggling multiple demands
* Unsure of how to effectively engage– Language, culture, comfort, expertise

(Brandt et al., 2044; NEA Ed Policy & Pract Dept, 2008)
Examining Our Mindset (The Value)

Activity

Checkbox

Attitude

Fabric
Strategies for Collaboration

* Weaving into the fabric – Indicates collaboration is integral and valuable
* The foundation - All parties are EQUAL partners
  * How would you treat a partner?
    * Listen
    * Share information
    * Respect expertise, perspective, ideas and opinions
    * Share planning and decision-making
    * Willing to address conflict
    * Don’t find fault
    * Commit to sharing successes

(Christenson, 2003)
Rules of Engagement

* Strengths based approach
* Inform and include, don’t control
* Variety is the spice of life... and family engagement
  * Opportunities for engagement
  * Day and evening
  * Potluck, Parent Council, box of tissues
  * Communication options – In school, out of school, phone, text, notes
  * Communicate – Balance, don’t wait for a crisis
  * Rapport build, i.e. invest time
Create a welcoming environment

* How are people greeted?
  * Create warmth - Smiles, pictures, mints, etc.
* Humanity - Room for individual consideration
Make family engagement a priority

* Provide professional development for staff on family engagement
* Support and encourage staff to engage families
* Acknowledge staff efforts, flexibility and creativity around family engagement strategies
* Incorporate family engagement into staff meetings and planning
* Celebrate successes and examine failures
* Persevere
* Dollars...

(NEA Ed Policy & Pract Dept, 2008)
MassSTART Engagement

* “Do For, Do With, Cheer On” National Wraparound Model
* School initiates student referral – Includes strengths and needs of student/family AND makes first contact with family concerning the referral
* For Families
  * Structured family work guided by a family driven plan
  * Advocacy and support with systems navigation and service acquisition
  * Family events/workshops – Activities, childcare, food and transportation
* For Students
  * Social skills lunch groups
  * Individual check-ins and classroom support for students
Take Aways

* Weave collaboration into the fabric of what you do
* Collaboration must be valued
  * On all levels
* You have what it takes to begin
* Look for small opportunities and build from there
References

What are you doing? Can and will you start doing tomorrow?

Ideas and best practice sharing