Systemic School-Community Partnerships: Working with Race and Culture

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Introduction and Overview

- Who we are
- Overview of a community intervention
- Reflections on working across race and culture
Community Intervention:

“Boston Connects”
Boston Connects’ Mission

To build a comprehensive, coordinated, and systemic web of services in active collaboration with community agencies and schools in order to provide school children with the supports, services, and resources they need to be academically successful.
School-Community-University Partnership

- Nine Boston Public Elementary Schools
- Community Agencies led by YMCA of Greater Boston
- Boston College
Boston Connects’ Goals

- Increase academic achievement
- Increase family involvement in education
- Reduce barriers to learning
- Expand enrichment opportunities
Beginning
the
Community Intervention
University Beginnings

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high hard ground overlooking a “crowded urban neighborhood.” On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the “neighborhood”, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the “neighborhood” lie the problems of the greatest human concern (Schon, 1987, p.3).
School Beginnings

“Many of my children have difficulty learning because they confront so many challenges outside of school. The university has so many resources – you have to help us.”

- Catalina Montes, Principal (1990)
Full Service Schools

- Operates in a public building that is open to families, students, & community before, during, & after school, 7 days a week, all year
- Jointly operated through partnership between school system & one or more community agencies
- Family support unit helps families with child rearing, employment, housing, immigration, & other services
- Medical, dental, & mental health services available
Differs from Typical School Reform Programs

- Focus on child development (Comer)
- Considers school achievement in terms of social ecology of neighborhood (Keita)
Growth of Boston Connects

- Gardner Extended Services School
  - 1995 to Present

- Going to Scale – Cluster 5
  - 1998 to Present
  - 9 elementary schools
Planning Process

- Inclusive
- Community members and leaders specified their needs
- Co-constructed the goals of Boston Connects
Developmental Assumptions

- Context
- Bio-Psycho-Social
- Risk and Resilience
- Lifespan
Comprehensive Student Support (CDC Model)

- Comprehensive Health Education
- Physical Education
- Health Services
- Nutrition Services
- Counseling, Psychological, & Social Services
- Healthy Environment
- Health Promotion for Staff
- Family/Community Involvement
Theory of Change

Prevention & Intervention

Academic & Behavioral Outcomes
- Tutoring (Out-of-School Time)
- Behavioral Plans
- Literacy Intervention
- Family Literacy
- Summer School

Youth Development Opportunities
- Career (School-to-Work)
- Recreation
- Mentoring
- Service Learning
- After-School Program

Child & Family-Services & Supports
- Health Services
- Mental Health Services
- Social Services
- Adult-ESL GED
- Parent Outreach Services

Health & Education Program Curriculum
- Personal Safety
- Nutrition
- Physical Activity & Fitness
- Social Competency
- Substance Abuse
- Disease Prevention

Child & Family Characteristics
- Family & Child Health Habits
- Number of Services & Supports for Child & Family
- Child & Family Health History
- Child Academic Performance
- Children & Family Background Characteristics
- Family/Student Neighborhood
- Participation in Enrichment Activities
- Participation in Services

School Characteristics
- Location
- Size
- Demographics
- Comprehensive Programming

Dosage
- Attendance in Program
- Participation/Involvement in Program
- Number of Years in Program

Intermediate Outcomes

Child Outcomes
- Homework Completion
- Academic Benchmarks
- School Attendance
- School Engagement
- Behavioral Incidents
- Self-Concept: Academic, Social, Physical
- Health Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviors

Family Outcomes
- Family Involvement
- Relationships with Peers & Adults

System Outcomes
- School Climate
- SPED Testing

Long Term Outcomes

Career Opportunities
- Academic Success

Healthy Development
- Emotional Well-Being

Academic Success
- Emotional Well-Being

Healthy Development
- Emotional Well-Being

Career Opportunities
- Academic Success

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Infrastructure

- Cluster-Wide Student and Family Instructional Support Center
- School-Community Resource Advisory Council
- School-Site Coordinators & Support Teams
The Work

- Student Support Process in School
- School-Community Agency Partnerships
- Extended Day Programs
- Family Supports
- Curriculum
  - Comprehensive Health
  - Social Competence & Violence Prevention
Working with Multiple Cultures, Ethnicities & Languages
Cultural Diversity

- School-University-Community Cultures
- Racial & Ethnic Cultures
Partner 1: Schools
Boston Public Schools

- **Goals**
  - Provide public education K-12

- **Accountability Systems**
  - Achievement test scores

- **Financial Structures**
  - Substantial financial resources

- **Indicators of success**
  - Closing achievement gap
Partner 2: University
Boston College

- Goals
  - To provide undergrad/grad education & to engage in research

- Accountability Systems
  - Student course evaluations, publications, research productivity

- Financial Structures
  - Strong

- Indicators of success
  - Publications, grants, selectivity of applicants
Partner 3: Community Agencies/Institutions/Organizations

- **Goals**
  - To provide services or resources to community members

- **Accountability Systems**
  - Number of services or programs delivered

- **Financial Structures**
  - Limited financial resources

- **Indicators of success**
  - Number of people served
Each Partner has a distinct racial and cultural history and context that needs to be recognized.
Partner 1: Boston Public School Context

- 30 year history of racial tension
- Court mandated busing
- Substantial achievement gap
- State mandate to end bilingual education
## School Demographics: Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Latino/a</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>ESL</th>
<th>Limited English Proficient</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farragut</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<td>Gardner</td>
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<td>Garfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tobin</td>
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<td>65.4</td>
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<td>48.3</td>
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<td>Winship</td>
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<td>21.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MEAN</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
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</table>
## Average Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MEAN</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>80</td>
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</table>
## BPS Demographics: Teachers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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“The Achievement Gap”

The diagram shows the percentage of students passing the English MCAS test by race from 2002 to 2003. The percentage passing for Black, Latino/a, White, and Asian students is compared. The data indicates a gap in achievement between different racial groups, with White and Asian students consistently having higher passing rates compared to Black and Latino/a students.
“The Achievement Gap”

![Bar chart showing percent passing in Math MCAS by race and year (2002 and 2003).](chart.png)

- **Race**
  - Black
  - Latino/a
  - White
  - Asian

- **Percent Passing**
  - 2002
  - 2003
Partner 2:
University Context

- Founded in 1861 to educate sons of Irish Catholic Immigrants
- Moved from a local commuter school to a national & international residential school
- 21% of undergrads are Students of Color
  - African American: 5%; Asian American 9%; Latino/a: 6%
- 9.8% of undergrads are international students
- Approx. 15% of School of Education faculty are Persons of Color
Partner 3: Community Agencies/Institutions/Organizations

- YMCA of Greater Boston
- Agency Types (Health, Youth Development, Social Services, Mental Health, Ethnic/Cultural Organizations)
- Approx. 20% of professional staff in Allston/Brighton agencies are Persons of Color
- Approx. 60% of professional staff in Mission Hill agencies are Persons of Color
Allston/Brighton & Mission Hill Communities

- Geography
- Brief History
  - Changing Populations
- Demographics
Working with Diverse Races & Ethnicities:

Strategies and Reflections
A. Recognize and acknowledge cultural differences
B. Know your own and others’ values, biases, and knowledge gaps

- Seek help from others (teachers, staff) with knowledge of or relationships with the child
- Leadership
C. Understand the impact of race on interventions

Examples:
- Special Education
- Mental Health Counseling
Past Practice

Barriers to Learning
Identified as …

Special Education Problems
Special Education Process

What used to happen to students referred to the Student Support Team?

Student is Referred

- SPED Evaluation
- Non-SPED Service Recommendation
- No Service Recommendation
Decline in Special Education Referrals

Number of SST Students Recommended for SPED Evaluation in Cluster 5, 1996-2003
Student Support Recommendations 02-03

Student Support Team Recommendations: Special Education vs. Alternative Supports, 2002-2003

- Special Education Recommendations: 35%
- Alternative Recommendations: 65%
Student Support Team Recommendations:
Special Education vs. Alternative Supports, 2003-2004

- Special Education Recommendations: 85%
- Alternative Recommendations: 15%
Past Practice

Barriers to Learning
Identified as ...

Mental Health Problems
Alternative Supports 02-03

Student Support Team Recommendations for Students Not Referred for Special Education Interventions, 2002-2003

- Afterschool: 7%
- Tutoring: 3%
- Counseling: 5%
- Mentoring: 1%
- Health: 8%
- Summer School: 4%
- Classroom Level Intervention: 3%
- Social Skills: 7%
- Family Services: 1%
- Other: 3%
- Total: 59%
Student Support Team Recommendations for Students Not Referred for Special Education Interventions, 2003-2004

- Afterschool: 24%
- Tutoring: 20%
- Mentoring: 10%
- Counseling: 6%
- Case Conf: 4%
- Medical: 5%
- Groups: 2%
- CLI: 2%
- Behavior Plan: 5%
- Other: 2%
D. Provide interventions that address structural disparities

- Achievement gap = opportunity gap
- Insurance
- Legal issues
- Transportation
- Regulations
4th Grade SRI Achievement by Service Enrollment, 2002-2003

- SRI Score

- SRI Fall 02
- SRI Spring 03

- zero
- one
- two
- three
Supports & Achievement

5th Grade Achievement by Counseling Support Status

- SRI Score
- No Counseling
- Licensed Counselor

SRIEF02 vs SRIES03
E. Focus on Changing the Context

“Urban school reform must be grounded in a real understanding of the complexities of urban life that have led to poor academic achievement by urban students” (Keita)

- Housing
- Jobs
- Healthcare
- Legal
F. Consider the Meaning of “Schooling”

- Developmental concepts of school success/failure
- Parents’ experiences
G. Consider Interpretation of Family Information
H. Recognize the Challenges

- Building “Community Schools” with children who come in buses
- Staffing
- Language barriers
- Issues of power
- Acknowledge structural impetus not to change (Fine, 2004)
I. Value the Diversity

- Research: African Americans have higher achievement in diverse environment (c.f., Keita, 2004)

- Exposure to diverse interactions positively impacts education & social development (Lopez, 2004)
Systemic School-Community Partnerships: Working with Race and Culture

“Roughly Forward”