

Prevention Brief

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Building Long-Term, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships with Schools

By Belinda Basca

Introduction

Each of the 43 grantees awarded the California Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grant is working with schools to some extent during the implementation of their programs. For some grantees, this has been an effortless process. For most however, navigating the school terrain and building sustainable partnerships with schools has been a challenge. This prevention brief was developed in collaboration with grantees and experts in the field in order to facilitate building and maintaining school partnerships. The goal of this prevention brief is multifold:

- ✓ Identify typical stages of collaboration between grantees and schools through a continuum of collaboration strategies;
- ✓ Review common challenges grantees expressed in building partnerships with schools;
- ✓ Share the most recent research findings on school partnerships that programs can implement; and
- ✓ Provide strategies for building mutually beneficial, long term partnerships with schools.

Why is it so challenging to work with schools? What does the research say about building and maintaining successful school partnerships? What have some SDFCS grantees done to meet and overcome these challenges? This brief will answer those questions and provide programs with practical insights into working successfully with schools.

Why are successful school partnerships essential to the California Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) programs?

A title can speak volumes about a grant. The California Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grant is no exception. When grantees first submitted their requests for proposals with the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP), most understood the magnitude of the role that schools would play in the implementation of their programs. This is emphasized in detail within the *Principles of Effectiveness (POE)*, which serve as a framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating all SDFSC programs. In particular, the *POEs* note the following regarding a grantee's program and schools:

Partnerships are mutually supportive arrangements between schools or school districts and individual volunteers, businesses, government agencies, or community organizations. Partnerships often include written contracts in which partners commit themselves to specific objectives and activities to benefit students.
- PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

- ✓ Be based on an assessment of objective data regarding the incidence of violence and illegal drug use in the elementary schools and secondary schools and communities to be served, including an objective analysis of the current conditions and consequences regarding violence and illegal drug use, including delinquency and serious discipline problems, among students who attend such schools (including private school students who participate in the drug and violence prevention program) that is based on ongoing local assessment or evaluation activities.
- ✓ Be based on an established set of performance measures aimed at ensuring that the elementary schools and secondary schools and communities to be served by the program have a safe, orderly, and drug-free learning environment. (NCLB, Title IV, Sec.4115)

In addition, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* emphasizes the importance of school partnerships. The pillars of NCLB place a large responsibility on schools to be accountable for their results. It also focuses on the implementation of programs or strategies that have already been proven to be effective through scientific research. Since the SDFSC grant also calls on grantees to adopt science-based program models, partnering with a school is mutually beneficial for both the school and grantee.

How are successful school partnerships created? First off, grantees should understand partnerships are not built overnight. It takes time, a long time for many, before schools and community-based organizations form the bonds that sustain their partnerships indefinitely. The graphic on page 3 details the stages of collaboration that prevention staff may encounter as they initiate, nurture, and sustain their partnerships with schools.

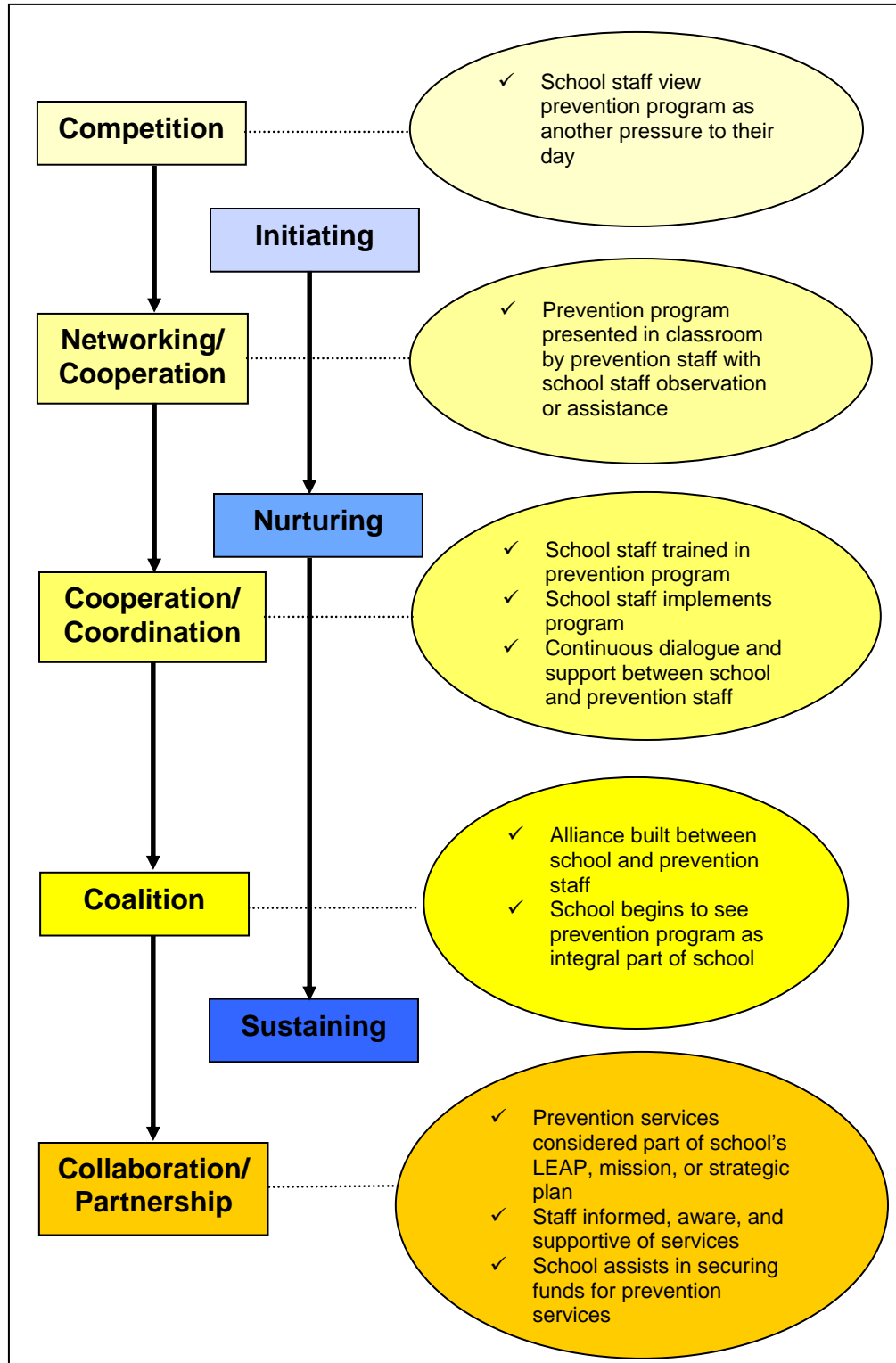
When grantees first enter the school landscape, overworked school administrators and staff may see a grantee's program as another pressure placed onto their already overloaded day. This can lead to a sense of competitiveness between school and prevention staff if teachers try to fulfill their teaching duties while inviting prevention staff into their classrooms or if teachers are expected to teach the grantee's curriculum in addition to their other subject areas. This can also occur if school staff allow prevention staff to remove youth from their classes to attend prevention service activities.

"I'm so stressed. Today a student who speaks limited English was added to my class, and tonight I have to mark report cards. On top of that I have an early breakfast meeting with parents."
- Fifth grade teacher

At the cooperation or coordination level, a nurturing supportive relationship is established between grantees and school staff. Rather than prevention staff just presenting their program in the classroom, the school staff is trained in the prevention program and then implements it themselves. During the entire process, there is continuous dialogue and support between the school and grantee. The competitiveness is gone because the school staff realizes the importance of the prevention program in helping the youth; they work collaboratively to see that this is accomplished.

As the relationship between school and grantee is sustained, the school begins to view the prevention program as an integral part of the school. As a true partnership is formed, the grantee's program is considered part of the school's mission, the school staff is supportive of the services, and the school assists the grantee in securing funds for sustainable services.

The Stages of Collaboration



How can grantees reach this level of collaboration and partnership with schools? It is not an easy task. Before we delve into the research, let us first step back and highlight what grantees noted as common challenges in working with schools.

Why is it so challenging to build successful school partnerships for prevention programs?

The 2004 Annual Reports submitted by each grantee to ADP as part of their grant requirements¹ confirmed what the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) suspected and research has shown for some time—working collaboratively with schools is complicated and grantees need strategies and tips to help them build successful school partnerships. Six common themes emerged from the annual reports that relate to the challenges grantees encountered in 2004 as they worked with schools.

Challenges to Successful School Partnerships

- Access
- Attitude
- Funding Cuts
- Turnover
- Recruitment
- Follow Through

Access—several grantees noted an outright refusal from principals to let prevention programs in their schools.

“Club Live coordinator was unable to reach the principal to set up the system of recruitment and all the necessary steps to start a new year in site. After several failed attempts Club Live staff decided to replace site for ----- Middle School.”

Attitude—teachers saw the prevention program as another pressure rather than an asset.

“Being in a school, the teachers see this as another pressure when they are feeling the academic standards pressure so intently. Also, the time commitment to overseeing a cultural change in a school- which involves the actions and mindset of all staff, is much greater than we anticipated. So many factors affect things- school personnel, budgets, etc.”

Funding Cuts—the availability of prevention programs was impacted by funding cuts at the school level.

“Ongoing funding cuts at the school level will impact efforts toward sustainability.”

Turnover—staff turnover at the school level impacted the implementation of several prevention programs.

“Staffing for this project has been an issue. Due to a series of unanticipated staff vacancies, staff members of the primary prevention unit have taken the initiative to fill-in while school hiring is underway.”

“When there was a change in school administrators, we had to start from square one in terms of reestablishing buy-in from the school.”

Recruitment—grantees found that recruiting school personnel was not an easy task.

“School staff members are less available to be active in leadership team activities, program implementation, and training opportunities.”

Follow Through—poor follow through of school personnel impacted the success of prevention programs, at both the administrative and school staff level.

“Frequently, the school district and administrators expressed buy-in to the project, but either did not follow through with grant activities, or did not follow through in a timely manner.”

¹ Round 1 grantees were not required to submit an annual report for the first year of their grant because of delays in grant start-up.

Several of the challenges noted above may seem one-sided and target schools and school staff unfairly. It is not that school staff have a poor “attitude” and lack “follow through” with prevention programs. It is the responsibility of prevention providers to send the appropriate message to schools about the benefits of prevention programs and the long-term connections with academic outcomes. The marketing and approach grantees take must establish value for schools. It is not that schools and school staff do not care—of course they do. Prevention providers need to demonstrate the value of their programs and how they support academic goals.

What Does Research Say About Building Mutually Beneficial Partnerships With Schools?

Ferguson (2001) noted that in 1990, *PARTNERS IN EDUCATION*² conducted the first nationwide study of partnerships in school districts. This provided important baseline data from which to compare growth, trends, and changes in partnerships between school districts and their communities between 1990 and 2000. The surveys were divided into three parts: the current status of partnerships; the sponsors involved in the partnerships; and the focus of partnerships in terms of their objectives and activities.

They found that partnerships expanded significantly in the ten years of the study. Data collected from 1,641 school districts indicated that school districts in 2000 were involving community partners to address key issues such as school safety, professional development, technology, standards, and literacy. The survey showed that 69% of districts nationwide engaged in partnership activities compared with 51% in 1990. Schools districts were also partnering to improve graduation rates, school-to-work transition, and citizenship. Some of their key findings included the following:

Necessity is the mother of invention

America’s schools are being asked to do much more, and the resources are coming up short. Parents, local businesses, community groups, and others are coming together to form local partnerships designed to meet local needs.

School partnerships support the nation’s education goals

Partnerships continue to focus on the major areas of education reform. In the last decade, school partnerships have fully supported student achievement, technology, school-to-work, school readiness, family literacy, community involvement, school safety, and systemic change.

School partnerships have grown beyond parent groups

In 1990, parent partnerships were the most prevalent. In 2000, small business partnerships became as widespread and those with community organizations increased considerably. The large growth in business and community partnerships supports the growing sentiment that all sectors of a community have a stake in education.

Rural communities are uniquely challenged when organizing school partnerships

Rural communities, in addition to complex education issues, have fewer school partnerships than their urban and suburban counterparts. Distance, poverty, small populations, and a lack of concentrated businesses, all contribute to this deficit.

² The National Association of PARTNERS IN EDUCATION is a national membership organization devoted solely to providing leadership in the field of education partnership development.

School partnerships support parents and families, a child's first and most important teachers

In the last decade, demands on American family life have changed dramatically. School partnerships have responded to those changes, especially in urban communities. In 2000, schools in partnering districts collaborated to help parents enhance their parenting skills (72%), increase family literacy (59%), and offer social services support (58%).

*"The prevention program is an alternative for learning; not an alternative to learning. Actual school work is completed."
- Maine State Dept. of Education (1992)*

School partnerships promote a circle of giving among communities

School partnerships do more than bring much-needed goods and services into schools and communities; they teach students about citizenship and the value of "giving back" to their communities. In 2000, 78% of partnering districts collaborated on increasing citizenship skills, 70% on volunteerism and service learning.

Drugs and safety are every district's problem

In the past decade, the proportion of school districts working with others on substance abuse prevention more than doubled. In 2000, 72% of partnering districts collaborated on substance abuse prevention; in 1990 30% did. Increases are shown for all districts, suburban, urban, and rural. School violence, a new area measured in 2000, is also a focus of school partnerships, with 66% of partnering districts collaborating on violence prevention.

Partnerships help schools and communities make the most of after school hours

In the last ten years, an overwhelming body of research has shown the value of quality after-school programs. Unfortunately for most families and communities, keeping children engaged in safe, educational activities after school has become a major challenge. In 2000, more than half of school districts collaborated with partners to help ease this burden and provide after-school care for students.

In addition, Epstein (2005) identified eight "essential elements" for effective leadership and programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Districts and schools that organized programs with these components had higher-quality programs, greater outreach to parents, and more parents involved from one year to the next.

8 Essential Elements for Effective Leadership and Programs of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Action plans
- ✓ Implementation of plans
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Collegial support
- ✓ Evaluation
- ✓ Networking

- Epstein (2005)

At the school level, Epstein (2005) found that on-going technical assistance on partnerships helped schools improve the number and quality of actions taken to organize their programs of family and community involvement from one year to the next. When schools established action teams for partnerships and used helpful tools and materials, the teams were more likely to form committees, write plans, adjust for changes in principals, reach out to more families, evaluate their efforts, and sustain their programs over time. In addition, schools had greater success reaching "hard-to-reach families."

What are Some Strategies for Building Mutually Beneficial, Long Term Partnerships with Schools?

Begin on Common Ground

Both schools and prevention providers have the same ultimate goal: helping youth. However, the vision of this common objective often becomes lost amongst other competing intermediate goals. While there are differences and those differences need to be respected and accommodated for, at the foundation there is a common purpose from which to build upon. The following are some ways for schools and prevention providers to find that common ground from which to build their relationship:

- ✓ The commonalities between people are what connect them; it usually answers the question, “Why?” But the best way to find those commonalities is to ask a “what” question: “What makes this important to you, to us? What results do you hope for?”
- ✓ Be patient. If you are impatient, it will show. Sometimes this hurts the process; other times it will help the process. Early patience pays off; later impatience can pay off by acting as a catalyst for change and facilitate responsiveness.
- ✓ Step back and put yourself into the shoes of the people who receive the services, not the way the money comes in. This vision of service may inspire you and your program.
- ✓ Caucusing helps groups to find common ground separately when it is hard to find it together. Introduce “caucus” as part of the way you do business and it won’t seem unusual when someone calls for a caucus to help move people to consensus.

Establish a Common Language

There is often a disconnect in the language that schools use versus that of prevention. This may lead to miscommunication as prevention providers attempt to implement program services in a school setting. Sometimes it is beneficial to take a step back and establish a common language with school partners before attempting to work collaboratively. Terms such as *at-risk students*, *intervention*, and *treatment*, may have differing definitions for prevention providers and school staff members.

At-risk students: Students who have a higher than average probability of dropping out or failing school. Broad categories usually include inner-city, low-income, and homeless children; those not fluent in English; and special-needs students with emotional or behavioral difficulties.

- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

If a successful, sustainable partnership is to be established between a school and a SDFSC grantee, all staff need to be in agreement as to what these terms mean.

Build Linkages between Prevention Outcomes and Academic Outcomes

A growing body of research supports what many educators have always understood intuitively: academic performance is strongly linked to whether students’ basic developmental needs are met — needs such as health, security, respect, and love (WestEd). These basic developmental needs are embodied in the prevention outcomes, such as greater school bonding or higher self-esteem that prevention providers strive to meet with their programs. Yet many schools remain transfixed on their academic outcomes due to the mounting pressures of statewide academic testing with *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. Linkages need to be built between the prevention outcomes of the SDFSC grantees and the academic outcomes of the schools. This is not a straightforward and transparent undertaking.

Yet even after controlling for socioeconomic conditions, WestEd researchers found a significant relationship between the annual standardized achievement test scores of secondary schools and a variety of non-academic factors, including students' physical exercise, nutrition, substance use, and safety at school. Moreover, longitudinal analyses revealed that health risks and low levels of resilience assets impede the progress of schools in raising test scores.

Overall, the data suggest that schools have higher levels of academic achievement when students have fewer health-risk factors (e.g., drug use) and more protective factors (e.g., caring relationships with teachers). The following are some tips and strategies to build these linkages between prevention outcomes and academic outcomes:

"Youth development and learning are complementary processes. If our goal is turning around low-performing schools, part of the solution must be addressing young people's well-being and reducing health risks that are barriers to learning."

- Greg Austin, WestEd

- ✓ Use a strength-based approach, make the connection between building resiliency and protective factors and the ability to reduce suspensions, behavioral difficulties, and improve school bonding—which will eventually result in improved academic performance.
- ✓ Work with counselors or others to focus on outreaching to the students that are struggling the most academically—don't be afraid to work with students on the "D and F List" which exists in every school.
- ✓ Work with school counselors or others to identify the youth who are having family or personal crisis and who as a result are beginning to act-out or struggle academically. Reach out to students in the most need and assist them in proving they can make it despite all odds.

Become a Valuable Commodity Rather than a Burden

Many overworked and underpaid school staff may see your prevention program as a burden added to their already full day. The first step to overcoming this roadblock is to establish the common ground mentioned previously; that the ultimate goal of both you and school staff is to help youth. In doing so, strive to have your prevention program become part of the school's Local Educational Agency Plan (LEAP). Volunteer to assist in drafting certain sections of the LEAP for the school, in particular those sections in which your services are a good fit. This is an excellent strategy for helping schools with a difficult task, while building sustainability for your prevention services at the same time. The following are some other tips to become a valued asset in the schools:

- ✓ Never underestimate the fear caused by the language "duplication of services" which sends a message that what you do can be eliminated, but what I do will be preserved at your expense. There is an abundance of people to be supported and ways to do this; think in terms of strengths rather than competition.
- ✓ Role definition can be difficult at this stage; start with being clear with yourself about your role, then communicate it often, especially to the people who seem to expect more or less of you.
- ✓ Join other's advisory groups; they need you to be at their table more than you may think you need to be there; consider it a way to "bank" good will and ask for specific assistance in the future.
- ✓ Become aware of the dynamics of a school environment, in particular the school calendar so that prevention services do not conflict with other school services.

Share Data

Data collection is common to both schools and SDFSC grantees. For many SDFSC grantees, this grant is the first time they have been required to have an evaluation component integrated into their programs. The learning curve in terms of data collection and evaluation has been steep for many grantees! Sharing data between grantees and schools is among the most challenging tasks of collaboration, but can be immensely beneficial towards sustainability of a program.

Many grantees have met with significant challenges in terms of accessing California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data at the school level. Offering to pay the cost of school-level CHKS data is one way to ensure you will receive a copy. The cost is only \$50 and worth it if there are enough students surveyed. You might also consider going in and assisting the schools during implementation of the CHKS. This will reinforce your vested interest in the data and schools might be more willing to share the data with you once the results come back. The following are some additional tips to consider when trying to access school level data:

- ✓ Safe School Plans often overlook CHKS data as a source; if a prevention program is active in the group that designs this plan, it is a good way to be part of the data gathered.
- ✓ California Safe Schools (CSS) data is often overlooked as a second, more accessible source of data to CHKS. It is a random sample, and a valid and publicly available risk indicator.
- ✓ Countywide reports are also possible if districts agree; this data can help every district but it is very political if it is disaggregated and comparisons are made.
- ✓ Identify and establish a working relationship with your county Healthy Kids Coordinator and/or participate on your county CHKS Advisory Committee if applicable.
- ✓ Bottom line is that this data is public data; if you need it, ask for it in writing and send copies of your request to your county SDFSC Coordinator, maybe even to ADP and/or CDE state representatives. Sometimes you have to ask yourself or your collaborative the question, “If parents are asked their permission for their children to take the survey, then whose data is this and how can parents and community benefit from open data sharing?”

Manage Infrastructure Changes

Education as well as the prevention field are very volatile areas in terms of employment. Unfortunately, staff turnover is a commonality in both areas. Even if you identify a person or group within the school to support your program, you still need an overall plan that is broader than the group to ensure sustainability if school staff turns over. Managing these infrastructure changes can be challenging, but having a plan laid out in advance will help as challenges arise. Below are some additional tips to help in management:

- ✓ Remember that timing in schools is critical so do not show up when it is a bad time; do show up when it is a good time. If you are not sure, get the calendar, mark it carefully, negotiate times at the beginning of the year, and then be available for unexpected needs that arise.
- ✓ Joining carefully, that is selecting which groups to join, is a task better done with help from another in the field to guide you, yet not bias you. Joining and then leaving can cost you. Go and visit more than once if necessary and use the excuse your agency is trying to figure out how best to use your time, to give you more time to select carefully.
- ✓ Roles change in collaboration; talking about the changes is one sign that the system is functional. Yet many do not want to talk about the roles. Still, try to keep clarity of roles part of your speech when you describe your limits or your interest in something new, i.e. “As an organization based in the community, I look at the situation this way...”

SDFSC Interview with the Experts

We asked two of our prevention experts about strategies for building sustainable partnerships between prevention providers and school systems. Alison Adler, Chief of Safety and Learning Environment for the School District of Palm Beach County, FL, provided us with advice on creating a “Single School Culture[®]” and Jan Ryan, Prevention Consultant, Riverside County, Department of Mental Health provided us with helpful hints for lessening the divide and building bridges with school systems.

Alison Adler, Ed.D. – Chief of Safety and Learning Environment, Palm Beach, FL

Forging Relationships with Schools

Why has prevention lost its place at the dining table?

It is called No Child Left Behind (NCLB) or as I like to refer to it as, “Turning the Titanic.” If schools could have had every child meet proficiency or higher, they would have. As schools become savvier on how to organize themselves to meet the accountability requirements of the legislation, one thing will become clearer and clearer. You can only go so far with good instruction, because as all preventionists have known for years, there are many students whose learning is severely impacted by other non-academic barriers.

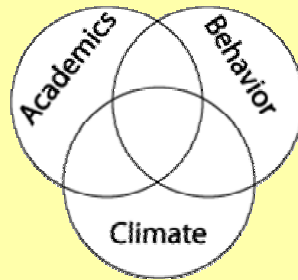
There are also barriers for preventionists in beginning their work in schools. These barriers can easily be addressed, and if addressed, make working together get off on the right foot.

1. Many preventionists don't understand the NCLB legislation completely; hence do not know what schools are up against. Schools are afraid that they won't be able to move all children academically and will suffer the consequences, which are costly.
2. Preventionists need to ensure that the programs they are bringing in, even the scientifically research-based proven programs are talked about in school “talk”. For example, when talking about Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders, one could say, “All chapters use the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy in questioning. There are many opportunities for extended answer responses.” When preventionists don't take the time to make their programs “fit” then school administrators often view them, no matter how wrongly, as “one more thing to do.”
3. We, and I consider myself a preventionist, need to show data that what you can provide, works. For many years, we had no standards and benchmarks. We had no real data streams. Now there are social and emotional benchmarks from Casel (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) in Chicago and the amount of tracking tools continues to grow and provide potency to demonstrate program results. We must match our work to these long awaited standards. Before, it wasn't that you couldn't make the intellectual argument that prevention and educating “the whole child” was important. Schools just wanted you to do it after school or on weekends or with parents. They couldn't or wouldn't spare you the time to do your work.

Now with proven programs, different surveys, and tracking systems, prevention can show schools that prevention reduces/prevents, among other things: fights, bullying, drug use, absenteeism, negative peer pressure, underage drinking, and a myriad of unhealthy behaviors. Why would schools be interested in this? Because most schools are familiar with the work of Robert Marzano (2000) who says that “opportunity to learn,” and “time spent” are two high correlates of good academic outcomes. So if prevention can save days lost to suspension, or time engaged in non-productive behaviors that detract from a teacher's opportunity to teach, they're happy. And if you can show that prevention work is, and it is, made up of higher order questioning, critical thinking, and application skills such as role plays, schools will see this work as related and helpful. It isn't that schools have no sensitivity to adolescent needs, they just feel all this pressure to move academic achievement and haven't quite figured out how to “Turn the Titanic” and meet behavioral, social and emotional needs at the same time.

What is Single School Culture[®] and why would you create it where you work?

Palm Beach County Florida is the nation's 11th largest school district. Over 141 languages and dialects are spoken. Over the last three years, we have moved from being rated a C district by the state of Florida to the only A rated district of the seven large urban districts in Florida. We did this in great part by developing and promoting a Single School Culture[®]. Single School Culture[®] is a way of organizing and running a school. It is the "way we do things around here." It results in consistency of both adult and student practices related to academics, behavior and climate:



Besides being a set of organizing practices, it is the collective beliefs we hold about our students and ourselves. They must be modeled and talked about across a whole campus. These components influence each other so much that they cannot be separate. It would be like only caring about a child's grades and not worrying about his immunizations. Why create a Single School Culture[®]? Because it does address the needs of the whole child. It is the organizing construct for a school. Its parts are scheduled for, reported on, and certification points are awarded for its parts. So how can you help create this synergy? Let's first look at the hardest piece. Carving out some academic time for prevention to meet behavior or climate needs.

- Build a compelling case for the need to address behavior and climate (where we tend to put social and emotional aspects as we tend to make them elements of the environment that we create). Use state safe schools data, use discipline data, use ATOD data, use climate surveys, data, data, data.
- Use their data like they do. They use it to target weaknesses/concerns. They: make a plan to address an area like measurement in math; determine an assessment/test that will detect change; pick a protocol/program/strategy to use that is aligned with the need; do requisite training; begin; assess and tweak. We have to work like that. When starting an initiative we, in prevention, sometimes start with the program talk. "We have a proven program to reduce your underage drinking..." Let's stop doing that. Schools are worn out and leery of "program du jour," both in the prevention and academic arenas. Let's start with, "Do some of your students have barriers to their learning that might not be academic?" "What if we worked together using materials/ activities that align to how you want teachers to teach, that use higher order questioning and rigorous assessment, that enhance vocabulary development AND will reduce your high incidents (in whatever areas you have used data to identify), if done together and done well?"
- Now, knowing what you know about their accountability worries, what can you do to see that you will do this **with** them not **to** them.
- Do not be afraid to articulate what you need in return and negotiate it after the previous steps have been taken. Tell the school that neither of you wants to waste precious time and energy unless you both have data to prove that what you do matters.
- After you get started, start looking at other enhancements that will give real potency to your initiative like campaigns, recognitions, parent and community events that you can bring to the table that do not take time away from academics but will really solidify your collaboration.

Making partnerships that don't take academic or teacher time are easier to do just not as sustainable as something that happens over a long period of time, is scheduled for, meets a need, and is reported on as part of the whole academic improvement plan. **We need both. We can do both and do them together.**

SDFSC Interview with the Experts

Jan Ryan – Riverside County, Department of Mental Health

Countdown to Sustainability

Sustainability is an outcome. It is what happens when the service is great! I learned this from my mentor, Elgie Bellizio, who was a prevention pioneer and Monterey Peninsula Baseball Commissioner in Salinas, California. He taught me that no matter what obstacles in funding I encountered, I would be okay if I made service to people the priority. Later, another mentor, Counselor Jim Rothblatt, put it into words that are not easy to forget, "If it has eyes, do it first." Good service starts with listening carefully to what people want, need, and ask for even when you think you know what they are going to say. Before leaving to do the work, it is important to state your own limits and come to an agreement of what will be done, when it is expected and every detail is nailed down. The best service happens when the provider "seeks to understand before being understood." For me, making service central to a vision meant the Student Assistance Program I worked with sustained for 23 years.

Here is a practical way to keep SERVICE central so sustainability can be part of your future.

3 PEOPLE YOU SHOULD KNOW

- **District Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinator**: this is the administrator or staff member assigned to facilitate the SDFSC federal entitlement, Title IV. They could be located in the district or central office or at a school site. It is their job to write and implement the plan for how this funding is spent. This includes implementing the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) which is public data SDFSC Grantees need.
- **District Child Welfare and Attendance Director/Coordinator**: this person is responsible for responding to suspensions when a Vice Principal or other school staff suspend or want to expel a student. This is the person who will have the suspension and expulsion data for every school which is very important data. Also they are mandated to ensure every student receives early intervention before entering the expulsion process.
- **District Health Curriculum Administrator or, if the district is very small, the Principal or even Superintendent**: the smaller the district, the higher you need to go to receive the attention you need to achieve your grant's goals. This person needs to be able to tell you what prevention programs students receive at each grade level. With this information, you can find out who to talk to about curriculum, what they need to be successful, and how your plan fits with their plan.

2 DOCUMENTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Local Educational Agency Plan (LEAP)**: this is the name of the document that describes the plan for how entitlement funding will be spent. It is part of the Consolidated Application submitted by the federal projects staff. Title IV, SDFSC and TUPE and the School Safety Funding (Carl Washington funding) are included here. This "master plan" so being part of it or contributing your plan as part of it ensures you has a place in the plan.
- **Safe and Drug Free School Annual Report**: this is an annual report of how the district's SDFSC plan performed. Past reports can be found at www.cde.ca.gov.

1 STRATEGY TO MAKE SERVICE CENTRAL: RELATIONSHIPS!

Service is important because it is the right thing to do. This is the message the prevention field brings into every setting. But if you still need convincing, remember that *relationships last longer than the money*. This will help all of us to remember that we are in a people business.

Riverside County

School Partnership Component:

Riverside County has 23 school districts and the County Office of Education. Riverside County District Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) Coordinators with the support of Riverside County Office of Education has held a monthly Roundtable meeting for the past 18 years. We have been an active member in this roundtable with members from Public Health, the Cancer Society, the Sheriff's Department and a few other agencies who have entered and exited over the years. This meeting allows for networking, sharing success stories, what is new and what is working in ATOD prevention, discussions on legislation, compliance issues, funding opportunities, etc.

Through our collaboration with this group we have built a strong and lasting relationship with 20 of the 23 school districts and have had working MOU's with these 20 districts and the County Office of Education for more than 10 years. We have collaborated on grants that have brought in over 10 million dollars in prevention services to students and families since 2000. We have been able to direct approximately \$450,000 in local prevention funds annually to ATOD prevention services to students and families of the 23 school districts in our County. We maintain over 100 FNL ATOD Prevention chapters on school campuses across Riverside County every year. Over the past 20 years our partnership has allowed Riverside County to host two statewide California Prevention Summits and over 20 teacher training institutes to build the capacity of our educators engaged in Positive Youth Development activities with our youth. We have provided local camps, conferences, as well as regional and statewide training opportunities for well over 5,000 county youth and their allies over the past 20 years.

Friday Night Live has provided over three million prevention service contacts to county youth and families over the past 20 years. We host or support six county youth councils and operate a county theater company that trains youth to create and present ATOD related prevention performances to our schools and communities. We have also developed and maintain a youth dance troupe who perform throughout California—promoting the message of a positive teen lifestyle free from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. And we've established three regional youth philanthropy programs that train young people to be philanthropists. Each region distributes \$20,000 per year to positive community teen developed projects.

Project Connect is an indicated prevention collaborative project between Alvord Unified School District and the Department of Mental Health funded out of California Department of Alcohol and Drug Program SDFSC funded grant. We work closely with schools in providing services for students and their families who are going through the expulsion process for ATOD or violence related offences.

Challenges:

- ✓ Language—each field has their own language and the same words have different meaning to education than health.
- ✓ System business practice differences; also priorities, ethics and skill sets.

Lessons Learned:

- ✓ Systems' administration must be committed to project success—there will be need to compromise and administration will have to navigate the project through intragency impediments.
- ✓ Partners must have strong personal/professional relationship and commit to frequent communication and remain flexible—this is difficult and challenging work!

Santa Clara County

School Partnership Component:

School partnerships are extremely challenging. Our program works closely with two high schools, and sometimes a third high school in a large, urban school district. The school district committed to implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in two high schools for three years, and comparing the results to a third high school (a control group). The control school data has been gathered without incident. One of the two schools with the Olweus intervention has been successful for three years; finding a motivated second Olweus school took about two years and attempts at three schools (the third school is succeeding). We have struggled with the politics of the district but had great success with the teachers who are involved in the day-to-day grant activities. Our efforts producing successes include:

- ✓ Work with a school that has staff whose members are interconnected to the school and to each other. The more isolated the teachers are, the harder it is to implement a program school-wide and keep the momentum going.
- ✓ Regular contact with school point people, at least every other week, sometimes daily.
- ✓ Come to them. Adapt to their school schedules as much as possible, as their time constraints are intense.
- ✓ Find out from the school point people what type of activities, people, or groups have been successful and utilize them! Add existing school elements into new projects as much as possible; this builds a better foundation for your project and increases sustainability in the long term.
- ✓ Make sure your budget allows the school folks to have financial resources for occasional staff training (with paid substitutes), art/activities with the kids, food, etc. Even if infrequent, these activities are greatly appreciated by staff and they notice when a program rewards/supports their efforts.
- ✓ Keep staff informed of the project's successes and struggles. This builds trust.
- ✓ Come to their meetings once in a while and bring a pizza; if possible attend some school functions occasionally to show your support.
- ✓ Ask for input from school personnel and integrate it into your plans.
- ✓ Thank them for their participation—no matter how small the efforts.
- ✓ Continually increase your school contacts by getting names from your point people at the school.

Challenges:

- ✓ Despite having a written contract with the District, the District's administration did not cooperate and sometimes fought me on decisions that had to be made to continue the grant (e.g., switching from one high school to another when the first school was not actively participating in the program).
- ✓ Having to be ready to pull funding if the administration didn't accommodate basic requests to benefit the grant.
- ✓ Contractors (an agency that was to provide a parent education curriculum) who did not finish their work and never gave us a finished product (they were eventually defunded).
- ✓ Teachers that are "too busy" or have "too many State requirements" to participate.
- ✓ Coordinating school schedules with those with traditional work schedules (i.e., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday—Friday, working summers, etc.).
- ✓ Starting the project without an evaluator and having one enter at year-two and create an evaluation plan.
- ✓ Having to again alter the evaluation plan in year-four due to the type of school data we were and were not able to obtain.
- ✓ Having another full-time set of duties instead of being able to devote all of my time to the school projects.
- ✓ Adapting the Olweus program for high school kids and staff: a) changing terminology to make the program more palatable to high school students; b) implementation fidelity, especially since the Olweus program hasn't been implemented in high schools before; c) finding creative ways to engage youth and staff in participating in the program.

Lessons Learned:

- ✓ Don't try to work with a school without a commitment from them to do what you need them to do. Tell staff up front specifically what will be required of them before you start implementing.
- ✓ Work with schools whose staff get along, or at least have mutual respect and will work well together for the sake of the students.
- ✓ Integrate new program components into existing activities in the school to insure sustainability.
- ✓ Help the staff be creative as they implement your program.
- ✓ Provide money for substitutes so staff can get training or have meetings when needed.
- ✓ Include all types of school personnel in the project, but you MUST have the backing of the Principal (not just in words....).
- ✓ Get the students involved in as many ways as possible. If some staff is resistant, it's unlikely they will reject a project that the students are sold on.
- ✓ Be flexible—ensure that required program elements are implemented but let the staff take care of the details.
- ✓ Let your program evaluation plan evolve with the grant activities. Deal with reality and use existing resources to make things work. Be willing to change or adapt an element if it is not working.
- ✓ Consult with your colleagues and your ADP County Analyst for ideas and support.

Conclusion

Building long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with schools is not an easy process. This brief highlighted the challenges grantees have encountered while working with schools, what the research says about building and maintaining successful school partnerships, as well as practical insights into working successfully with schools around six topic areas:

- Begin on common ground
- Establish a common language
- Build linkages between prevention outcomes and academic outcomes
- Become a valuable commodity rather than a burden
- Share data
- Manage infrastructure changes

While doing so, this brief also shared the advice of experts in the field as well as grantees who've had success in building school partnerships. The knowledge and insights shared by these resources should provide you with a multitude of tips and strategies to keep in mind as you continue your work in schools.

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Notes on *Prevention Brief*, Vol. 2 No. 1:

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As a former researcher at Harvard Project Zero on The Understandings of Consequence Project, Ms. Basca's work focused on complex causal science concepts and their application in the classroom. In particular, she studied how children reason about challenging topics in science at the elementary and middle school level. She developed science curriculum and conducted frequent classroom observations of teachers and interviews with children.

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The SDFSC TA Prevention Brief Series provides information on topics relevant to grantees grounded in your experiences and explained through research. A copy of this publication can also be found on our website at www.ca-sdfsc.org. If you would like to suggest a topic, contact Kerrilyn Scott, Project Director, at kerrilyn@emt.org.

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