



Theory of Action Workshop

Facilitated by Teneh Weller, High Expectations

Participants at the *Beyond Random Acts . . . Family Engagement in Community Schools* enthusiastically began to craft the below theories of action within a very short breakout session. Participants chose among groups focused on elementary school suspension, elementary school English/Language Arts, elementary school chronic absence, middle school math, middle school suspension, middle school chronic absence, A-G requirements, high school chronic absence, high school suspension, and high school AP participation. Because most groups were unable to finish we included a few examples of completed theories of action. Please use them for reflection and discussion, as you begin to create and implement your family engagement strategies using the Dual Capacity Framework.

Elementary School Suspension



- Perception and expectation of African American students
- Criteria for suspension
- Reflective staffing
- Transition anxiety



If we (students, parents, and teachers) have an engagement team that reflects the diversity of the student body, then we begin the process of raising the community's cultural awareness and biases, which will address the disproportionate biases in our community, and decrease suspensions among all minority groups.

Sample from High Expectations

If we authentically collaborate with our African-American families and students to develop tools, resources and strategies that support positive behavior and relationships, then our families and school staff will be better equipped to support positive behavior, which will lead to a decrease in suspensions.

Elementary School English – Language



- Data show students not starting strong in lower grades.
- Missing data for Asian students 2011-2012. All other ethnicities have data.
- 2013-2014, 85% of ELLs are “below” or “did not take”
- Asian population growing from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014
- 2012 Asian students = 0% “at” or “above”
- 40% of 3rd graders were below grade level 2013-2014. Why?
 - No data 2012-2013 2nd graders: cannot ID trend
 - No data 2011-2012 1st graders either
- 2013-2014 25% jump for 5th graders “above”



If we orient parents in home language of importance of test dates, benefits to child’s progress, tracking progress from kindergarten, then we will have more students taking the exam. It will lead to increased percentage of participation and better data.

If we work with parents, supporting early literacy in transitional kindergarten through first grade, child development centers, and preschool, then we will have better prepared children and families entering elementary school. It will lead to higher reading level or at grade level.

Sample from High Expectations

If we build strong partnerships with each family (beginning in Kindergarten) and provide the tools and resources for supporting literacy at home, then we will have more families engaged in their child’s reading success, which will lead increased reading scores.

Elementary School Chronic Absence



- Health issues (e.g. asthma, etc.) and partnering around health issues
- Socio-economic issues e.g. jobs, transportation cost and timing, etc. Lack of informing families on how to navigate system.
- Teachers and administrative leaders need to education parents on the importance of attendance. ADA funding for example is based on attendance.
- Cultural lens, how families view school and education. Relationship with school will affect whether or not it's a priority to get there.
- Focus on value of instructional seat time.
- Student wanting to attend
- Safety and anti-bullying
- Importance of teacher attendance

Trend/Data

- Kindergartener highest level of chronic absenteeism
- Females higher than males
- English language learners, students with disabilities, low income students
- More than 1/2 African American students (of total #)



If we build a team (representative of African American and Latino parents of kindergartners and first graders and teacher) and use all opportunities to engage families of value of being in school, the impact of not being there/loss of resources, then we can engage them and improve outcome of attendance which would lead to a reduced number of chronic absenteeism of African American kindergarteners and improved success.

If we build a team that included impacted stakeholders and set targeted interventions / resources / opportunities then we can engage families in the reduction of chronic absenteeism and improve academic outcomes and social-emotional learning.

Middle School Math



- Population size increased—possibly student to adult ratio decreased
- Decrease in parent/family feedback
 - +No parent activities



If we offer families an opportunity to collaborate with teachers on math resources and strategies, then we will have more parent allies that understand how to help their child, which will lead to more equitable achievement in math.

Middle School Suspension



- Community and family conditions contribute to behaviors that lead to suspension
- Academic failure as 1 cause of suspension
- Disconnect between school and home
- Absences lead to failure which leads to suspension
- Lack of effective relationships to de-escalate behaviors
- Staff with little or lack of skills with trauma
- Community and cultural competency



If the school community invests in staff's cultural competency and relationship building, then we'll have true, trusting relationships which will lead to lower suspension rates.

Sample from High Expectations

If our school works with families to identify effective strategies for engaging in their child's academic achievement, then we will have more students experiencing school success and less engaged in negative behaviors, which will lead to a decrease in suspensions.

Middle School Chronic Absence



- Siblings caring for each other
- Language barriers (and capacity of staff)
- Homelessness
- Transportation (on own)
- Peer pressure
- Role of parent shifts
- Increased anonymity
- Adolescent testing/experimenting
- Cultural differences



1. Identify families
2. Case by case inquiry of root causes

Preventative measures

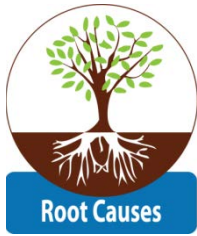
- Information campaign
- Communications

If we effectively engage 100% of parents about our expectations for attendance and provide supports, then we will have improved attendance which will lead to improved academic achievement.

Sample from High Expectations

If we collaborate with families to identify barriers to school attendance, then we will have increased opportunities to develop strategies for overcoming those barriers, which will lead to fewer absences.

A – G Requirements



- Relationships between students and teachers
- Engagement in class e.g. not connecting
- School climate and culture - injustice in discipline
- Internal and external bias
- Opportunities (or lack thereof) for credit recovery



- (If) YPAR – students on discipline and hiring committees (then)
- (If) External/internal bias
 - Cultural competency PD
- (If) Opportunities and interventions targeted to populations not being served will, i.e. Cyberhigh – earlier vs. makeup
- (If) Information about options shared (then)
- (If) Restorative justice (then suspensions reduced)

If parents are specifically informed and involved in their students' educational options and plans, then student completion of AG requirements will be equitable. Students, parents and teachers will together monitor completion of AG courses.

Sample from High Expectations

If we ensure that all 9th graders complete a 4-year A-G plan with their families, then we will have more families who understand the A-G requirements and how to support their child's success, which will lead to an increased number of students who successfully complete all A-G requirements.

High School Chronic Absence



- How do start times at elementary, middle, and high school affect student attendance?
- Has the importance of regular attendance been communicated?
- What is the reason for absence and what time of the day?



If we provide education to parents and students about the importance of regular attendance to academic success, then we will see increased attendance, which will lead to increased academic success.

High School Suspension



- Foster youth
- Students are coming to school hungry
- Students don't have positive role models
- Students come to school with anxiety, rage, anger fear
- Students don't have an advocate or champion
- Students don't know their rights
- Students don't know about services



If we provide nutritional break and snacks then students will be able to better focus and engage which will lead to fewer suspensions.

If we assign a key staff person to each foster youth, then we will have someone to let them know about services and rights which will lead to students having more self-efficacy and fewer suspensions.

High School AP Participation



- Lack of parent and student information on realities of advanced placement (AP) coursework (amount of homework, and the amount of reading)
 - Additionally, fear of entering or not entering AP classes
 - Engagement of parents (families) in course selection process
- AP support for program retention



If we inform parents about AP course options, supports and “AP life,” then there will be reduced student fear around enrolling in AP courses, as well as increased retention in AP courses leading to an overall increase in AP participation