



Kids' Council Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2013

5:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

City-Wide Senior Center

Summary

Summary of Conversation Topics

- Presentation on ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
- Conversation on how to develop a trauma informed lens when working with children, youth and their families and ways to support resiliency

Next Steps

The group identified the following next steps (or commitments) during the meeting:

What	Who	By When
Next Kids' Council meeting on January 16 th , 5:15-7:15 at 344 Boradway		



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Detailed Notes

Present:

Lara Adekeye, Nancy Alach, Tina Alu, Charlotte Avant, Cathy Ayoub, Jennifer Baily, Sally Benbasset, Nazmin Bhuiya, Debbie Bonilla, Melody Brazo, Jayne Cantor, Alice Cohen, Andrea Collymore, Brian Corr, Jessica Daniels, Nadia Davila, Henrietta Davis, Kim DeAndrade, Michael Delia, Louis DePasquale, Emily Dexter, Catharine Downs, Jane Ellis, Christine Elow, Susan Flannery, Mary Gashaw, Visceria Givans, Michelle Godfrey, Avra Goldman, Justeen Hyde, Claude Jacob, Lena James, Kathleen Kelly, Stacey King, John Lindamood, Neal Michaels, Linda Mindaye, Madeleine Otani Oldman, Richard Power, Nancy Rappaport, Joe Ristuccia, Leah Rugen, Maria Sanchez, Olivia Scott, Ellen Semonoff, Joyce Shortt, Zachary Spitz, Greta Spottswood, Amy Stein, Merline Sylvain-Williams, Nancy Tauber, Katherine Todd, Carolyn Turk, Alice Turkel, Daniel Weinstock, Steven Williams, Jeffrey Young, Mohammed Sayed

Chair: Mayor Davis

Executive Director: Nancy Tauber

Note taker: Nadia Davila

Desired Outcomes:

- Inform and motivate members of the Kids' Council to look at their systems with a trauma informed lens when working with children, youth and their families.
- Figure out what each system can do to support resiliency, as well as explore ways systems can coordinate and partner with each other.
- Increase our understanding of ACEs so that we can better respond to and support children who have experienced trauma.
- Make connections between what we have learned about ACEs and our work around family engagement.

Socialize, Network and Eat

5:15 – 5:35

Welcome and Introductions:

Mayor Davis

5:35 – 5:41

- Adoption of Minutes (October 17 meeting)
 - Adopted

Video:

“How Adults can Lessen ‘Toxic Stress’ in Kids” (Jack Shonkoff)

5:41 – 5:50pm

Panel Introduction:

Neal Michaels and Alice Cohen

5:50pm – 6:05pm

Biographies below

Panel:

6:05pm – 7:05pm

Panel biographies below

- Catherine Ayoub – Impact: brain development
 - Please email ntauber@cambridgema.gov for full PowerPoint presentation
- Joel Ristuccia – Impact: behavior and learning development
 - Please email ntauber@cambridgema.gov for full PowerPoint presentation
- Justeen Hyde – There are individual level services that can be put into play for a young person who has had an adverse experience. Usually these services are reactive – provided after a young person begins to act or feel differently. Throughout the last year, the HCTF has talked about the importance of these services – but our focus has been broader. In public health speak – what would it take to make our default environments – our community - focused on building resilient kids and families? What does this even mean?

IDEAS

“Change the Question” Campaign

Shift the ways in which people engage with one another on a day to day basis, improving people’s connections, shared responsibility, and skills and efficacy. When the people around us act out, especially kids, we can we shift our thinking about why this kid is such a pain to what might have happened to prompt this kid from acting out.

Improve Connections

Effectively build connections and supports within the community so that people – all people – feel a sense of connection and support.

Share Responsibility

Schools are an obvious place to target or focus attention on youth. But shared responsibility is that we begin to think differently and act differently in all service sectors of the community.

Skills and Efficacy

Do we, as a community, have a shared understanding of adverse childhood events and their impact on physical, emotional, and behavioral health outcomes in kids and adults? Do we walk by someone who is high or drunk on the sidewalk and think – what is wrong with this person? Or do we think, I wondered what happened to this person that led them to this place?

• **Key Ingredients**

- Education and awareness about ACEs
- Training on how to make environments, practices, activities supportive and asset based

- Support from leadership is critical – leaders set the tone and expectations, help create engaging environments, space for dialogue and reflection/learning
- Focus on forming connections, skills to cope and thrive, and opportunities to be good at something... to be competent and confident adults

Examples of what other communities have done with specific populations or service sectors:

- State of Washington invested money through the Family Policy Council for more than 10 years to support the development of strategies to reduce and mitigate the impact of adverse childhood events. The focus was not on a single program or service, but building community capacity to produce healthy and productive kids and adults, regardless of the circumstances into which they are born or raised.
 - Walla Walla, WA focused on changing approach to disciplinary action in school – shift from blame and shame to social connection and positive support.
 - North Carolina’s Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention formed partnerships with a broad range of service sectors – parks and rec, clergy, substance abuse professionals, counselors, businesses, etc. Focused on changing local environments through community policing, development of sports leagues and community recreation activities, etc.
 - Monroe County, NY focused on 4 service sectors (diversion for women with co-occurring disorders, psychiatric hospital units serving children and youth, elementary school, and family court)
 - Trained personnel on trauma and trauma sensitive service provision
 - Intentional examination of practices to make them more trauma sensitive
 - Shift in culture
 - Coordination across multiple sectors
- Nancy Rappaport – What is working in Cambridge and how can we improve

Question and Answer:

7:05pm – 7:20pm

- What choice do students have if they do not want to learn about violence and war? Why can’t we learn about peace-makers? From a student who has lived through war and is tired of learning about war in each grade.
 - Your perspective gives classrooms the gift of understanding things more deeply
 - There can be a lot of bureaucracy pushing against this. In trauma-sensitive schools, your statements could be heard and a coalition to change the curriculum could be formed
 - Speaks to the importance of looking at the “whole child”. Common Core curriculum can speak to only a particular demand.
 - It’s important that when youth feel or experience things that are painful or difficult, to talk about them to an adult no matter what. Important for each child to have an adult who supports them and who they can go to.
- What are some of the ways we can have an impact on adults and young children to help before pattern sets in?
 - Important to look at “whole child” and that the community is acting as a support

- We need to be flexible, resilient, aware behavioral detectives
- Have more forums like “ACEs Too High! so that stakeholders can share ideas, provide feedback and collaborate cross systems so that these core ideas get into “the drinking water”
- Make sure everyone understands that they have a role – those who work for the schools, human services, library, health department, police and community partners. Also, include churches, college students, teacher’s union, etc...
- Continue to build on the partnerships that already exist (0-8 Council, Community Engagement Team, Healthy Children Task Force, Middle School Network, Reaching All Youth, Safetynet, etc...)
- Provide opportunities to hear from youth – especially the unengaged and those who have already rejected adults
- Include parents in the discussion
- Implement the following:
 - “Change the Question” Campaign
 - “Red Envelope” system
 - Incorporate mindful practices for children, youth and those who work with them
 - Take a public health approach to teaching everyone about the importance of mindfulness
- Continue to emphasize and support young children
 - Expand Baby U
- Ensure there are enough supports for children, youth, and their caretakers
 - Resources and services
 - Mentors
- Develop recommendations to make it easier for providers and families to access and use the supports they need
- Figure out how the information regarding ACEs and trauma reaches those who work directly with our children and youth
 - Use language everyone can understand
 - Look at behavior differently
 - Become “behavioral detectives”
 - Understand where children, youth, and families are coming from
 - Know where to find the resources and services families need
 - Avoid creating traumatic situations unintentionally
 - Teach resiliency and advocacy skills
 - Keep in mind there are all types of trauma – including everyday and catastrophic trauma
- Assess what we do well/not well
- There are a variety of models and approaches to consider
 - Whole child approach
 - 2 generational support
 - Reflective Practice – approach this work in terms of reflective practice rather than a trauma lens
 - Navigator Care Model – a system of care that thinks about the whole family system rather than a child with “problems” or “issues”

- Popular Education Model – people with similar issues come together and talk through experiences so that with support they are empowered to identify strategies and solutions that can be used to inform how best to work with families

Some of the many challenges

- Poverty
- Time to address all these issues
- Providers need more information about families
- There is so much grief, loss, fear, stress, etc...

Transcription of Notes from Group Work

What is your reaction to this information?

Not new, but astonishing

Tear jerker

There is a disconnect between what we are doing and this information

Make sure whole child is addressed

Cambridge is good – but crisis oriented

What can we do to be more proactive?

How do we work with our teachers who don't think of this

In Know Your Body class teachers will indicate kids at risk – how can we support these kids better

At library – we could ask is something upsetting you today?

We will meet with parents of children who are causing problems, and it is hard to know what is going on because we don't have much information.

We like the idea of reacting to misbehavior by changing the questions – start the conversation differently

As a parent, kids experienced school as supportive, but over the years there are less and less things like parent breakfasts

Working conditions in some early childhood centers is horrendous

Some teachers are well connected to parents, but not so connected to kids.

It is difficult to handle adults who come in with inappropriate behavior

Need 2 generational approach

Early childhood staff needs support to look at behaviors differently

So much pressure to do academics

How do we emphasize early years and kids really need

Adults' trauma history effects their reactions

We need support to take care of ourselves

Baby U is not sufficient – It is a lovely program that needs to expand. There are probably many others who need it

Parent, staff and child yoga brings a systems approach and mindfulness together (children in preschool)

How does ACEs lead us to high quality practices that offset the impact?

Looking at our own children, looking at how to support children within the school structures

Transitions are especially difficult

There are many children in Cambridge coming from war-torn situations

Teachers may create situations that are traumatic without intending to

Need to help people understand how differently people affected by trauma think

People's resilience may depend on avoiding certain things (ex. violence), and we need to recognize that and respect it

Our education system needs flexibility

ACEs students have real fear

We need to understand the behavior

Sometimes it is not easy to understand what is needed

Articulate advocates are incredibly powerful

Trauma sensitive school is good for any child – very important

It is not about doing something different

We should be using the whole child approach

“How Children Succeed” – DHSP book group highlighted different perspectives in Cambridge.

CPS – all teachers have a 2-hour PD session for trauma information

Importance of the community is really central

The 45-day period when kids are sent away is really scary!

Cambridge Health Department has a role

We need balance

We need a system to capture kids

It takes a village to raise a child

There is a role we can ALL play

One third of CPH staff sit in schools

Need safe places

There is a lack of awareness

There needs to be more time for recess and opportunities to reduce stress

More outside time and self directed play

Parent Education

In Korea, many schools participate in mindfulness practice daily – Adults at the side and child leading

Family engagement is needed

Immigrant experiences across generations

The new environment has impact on kids and adults

Kids more pliable and thrive

Kids are more grounded and need more credit

Kids can be very resilient and have coping mechanisms

Department of Children and Families received a major grant to transform into trauma –informed practices

We need to assess what we do well/not well

Form trauma informed leadership teams
How to make decisions – when to remove kids from trauma situations
Time limited services – need longer term community support for parents
Kids' going to principal's office does not work
Some kids are just trying to survive
Some kids can't respond to a community conversation
Change the culture and give extra help to some kids

It was not as surprising as I thought it would be
Within the schools there are guidance counselors, but they are over booked so we need to figure out who else can help kids and families

Surprised
How does this information about trauma get to the people who are working with our children?
A lot of work can be done
What if there is a lot of stress at home, and we send kids back into the same situation – How do we treat the whole family?
Families may be embarrassed
Can this be part of professional development?
Students end up labeled

Parents are missing from discussion. What is the plan for parents to help them understand what trauma and toxic stress means for their children? Parents need more education about brain development.

Parents need to know the role they play in reducing the impact of trauma

There is a policy on family engagement put forth by the Kids Council

We are educating ourselves on how to proceed

How do we address this as a whole community?

Can the health department do something around mindfulness? Take a public health approach to teaching everyone about the importance of mindfulness?

We also want to keep in mind the “everyday traumas” – not just the extremes. Daily substance use, chaotic or unpredictable home environments, separations from loved ones, etc.

Hearing a lot about substance abuse.. Thinking about the impact of substance use on children should be incorporated in to our work

There was a lot of excitement at the table about Reflective Practice. If we were going to pursue a community-wide approach, we may approach it in terms of reflective practice rather than trauma informed (which may have some connotations that are not of broad appeal).

Resilience is a very broad term. We talked about the need for all of us to be resilient. But we may need to have some common definition and roadmap or indicators of resilience that are broadly applicable.

What do you see that is working now and how can we improve?

Universal childcare for 4 year olds

Make sure to use an early childhood model and kids get a chance to play

Need to support babies and toddlers
Make sure there is support for day care providers
Not easy since not all are licensed
Incorporate this ACEs training into staff development of all our agencies and departments
First step is reframing – Kid is not doing “it” to make you miserable

Some kids had trauma in this history, but some kids are just “wired” reactively
How do you differentiate between the 2?
You need a school/program culture that can respond to both types
What is going on at school?
How can we give young people strategies?
The difference comes in how we might help them develop strategies
We often want kids to be perfect
Once key to healing kids
Transform
Their response to trauma is to empower them to build their own alternatives
School used to talk about the “whole child” all the time about 30 years ago
We still need to talk about the whole child and include the family.
There needs to be more of the community looking out for all the kids and help parents to open up.
In early child care center, we always knew all of what the surrounding conditions of a kid’s life – who drops off, who picks up, etc...
Middle school discussed in the presentation had such a big, positive change in their behavioral data by using the “red envelope” system
Change the game from discipline/punishment to proactive, education approach

OST Network – building partnerships between schools and OST is exciting and promising
Contract with mental health support for early education- we have some (observations and trainings), but we need more
Parent Education and 2 Generation approach is doing well
Positive experiences can balance out some of the trauma
Lots of people in the room right now is a good thing

Families are dealing with grief and loss
We over look what parents are going through
There is multi-generational trauma
We need to be better “behavioral detectives”
Have more forums like this where it is a multidisciplinary approach
Need more support for immigrant kids who take on parenting role
We need to talk to youth- they need to have a place at the table
Are there groups of kids who could be brought together to be heard
Need to engage those kids who are introverted and want to be engaged
One of the challenges is how do we engage new people
How do we improve the allocations of resources (Baby U?)
Suspensions are teachers’ reaction to child – increases chance of going to prison

Parents/teachers/adults need more support
Focus on community -kids and adults
Bullying – Stop it at the first incident
Bring kids into the conversation, but hold the adults responsible for the change
Take violence out of the curriculum
Some kids need just a few teachers
Changing teachers every hour can be difficult
Strong relationships with adults is very important
We need to emphasize more on emotional development

It is important to have more events like this one so that people can get together and address it together

It is helpful that youth are brought to the table – it should happen more
Youth feel like they are involved in their community, have a voice and can make a difference
There are many people in our community who understand youth
Health curriculum helps youth cope and learn skills needed to deal with all sorts of issues
We need to reach out to youth more and get them involved
Find opportunities for youth in and out of school to be supported by someone – mentors
Mentors could be teachers, college students, OST teachers, etc...
Increase capacity of adults in the community to be mentors to youth

Involve the churches

Provide workshops for parents, grandparents, caregivers – include incentives
Professional development for those working with children and youth
Send letters home to parents asking if they are stressed out or yelling out kids
Need to provide more support for families
Educators don't know enough
Kids can behave in "normal ways"
Supporting one child can keep everyone safe
Living in poverty has so many stressors
Implement breathing, yoga practices
Keep whole child in mind throughout the years
Find programs that are available for families (BU has one)
Figure out ways to support the parents

Wonderful collaborations within the city

There are lots of resources for children and families
We want to get some core ideas, such as reflective practice, mindfulness, resiliency into "the drinking water"

May focus work at three levels

- Family
- Staff working with families
- Broader community

There is not one agency that can work at all three levels. But there could be some common ideas, principles, trainings that different service sectors can take on and help get into the drinking water

Some discussion about the need to think carefully about the language we use. We talk in our language about trauma and resiliency. This may need to be messaged or framed differently. When talking about toxic stress to families it is often a conversation that freaks people out or does not seem applicable to them. This is an example of the need to think about our language. We may need to work more as a community on making connections for/with families. Create a system of care that is more formal and not just based on relationships. The navigated care model was presented as a possible model - a system of care that thinks about the whole parent or children as part of a whole family system rather than a child with developmental delays or behavioral problems, etc. Another idea was to take inspiration from the Popular Education Model, where people with similar issues come together and talk through experiences. With some support they are empowered to identify strategies and solutions that can be used to inform how best to work with families.

What are possible next steps for the Kids' Council?

Follow up on this presentation with concrete next steps
Get kids talking about these issues – especially those who are hard to reach
Find out what they are thinking
Continue bringing people together like this forum
It is important that a kid has a relationship with at least one adult – how can the Kids' Council make this happen?
Figure out how to support the adults so that they can support their kids
How do we connect with kids who already reject adults?
Set reasonable goals/measurable goals to address this issue of trauma
We should be working with the unions to figure out how teachers can get this information
Have more events like this one – share ideas, provide feedback and collaborate across systems
The Kids' Council can help facilitate concrete next steps
Set reasonable and measurable goals
If it takes a village to raise a child, what roles and responsibilities do village members play?
What role can they play?
We need more youth involved in thinking about this issue
Lots of discussion about thinking about the whole community
Change needs to be enacted on a community level, in the way we interact with each other at every level of the system