

Priorities *for* New Hampshire's Children 2012

Schools as Community Hub for Kids and Families

Issue Overview

With more NH children slipping into poverty, and families facing increased emotional and financial stressors; the academic and social competencies that children need to succeed in school and life are being threatened. Many of the social service, mental health and prevention agencies that serve as supports to children and families have faced funding, service and capacity issues, and can no longer meet all of the needs of the individuals seeking their help. Nor can the state or local government.

In the past ten years, child poverty in this state has increased by more than 80%. Families who were once able, even if only barely, to survive financially are falling victim to the recession and budget cuts at both the Federal and State level. More than 34,000 NH children receive free or reduced price lunches at school, 15,000 have no health insurance and more than 2,500 students are homeless. All of these factors affect a child's ability to learn, and our schools are not equipped to handle these needs.

Additionally, many more children fall into the "working poor" family category, where they are above the poverty bracket yet still unable to afford daily necessities or have access to specific services. Responsive Community schools have 3 distinct advantages over a traditional school;

- Garner additional resources to reduce the demand on school staff for addressing all the challenges that students bring to school. Teachers are able to focus solely on improving child's learning, since other specific entities are handling all the other facets incorporated in a

community school.

- Provide learning opportunities that develop academic and non-academic competencies.
- Community schools encourage maturation and development in all areas, not just academics.
- Build social capital -- the networks and relationships that support learning and create opportunities for young people while strengthening their communities.
- Community schools encourage children and young adults to network within their community, supporting friendships and further working relationships.

(Coalition for Community Schools, 2011).

In this period of stripped down budgets, educators, community leaders and policymakers are more aware than ever of the need to use scarce resources to maximize results. Most schools, health and social service providers, youth development organizations, higher education institutions, public and private agencies and government officials work in isolated "silos" concentrating on single issues. Experience teaches that these single issues overlap and that diverse stakeholders are all, in effect, responsible for the same children, the same families and the same communities.

Proposed Solution

Using public schools as hubs, community schools are designed to address both academic and non-academic issues by integrating and leveraging funds, working across silos, and partnering with local organizations to maximize resources. They bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth,



The New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network (NH CAN), a program of the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire, is a statewide nonpartisan coalition of Partners and Advisors working to improve the well-being of New Hampshire's children. NH CAN partners annually develop a consensus set of *Priorities for New Hampshire's Children* focused on safety and well-being, health and wellness, economic security and education. This agenda for the state's children informs government policy and budget priorities and inspires community action.

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families and communities. Partners work to achieve the results they believe are in the best interest of their community which could include ensuring:

- Children are ready to learn when they enter school and every day thereafter. All students learn and achieve to high standards.
- Young people are well prepared for adult roles in the workplace, as parents and as citizens.
- Families and neighborhoods are safe, supportive and engaged.
- Parents and community members are involved with the school and their own life-long learning.

There are various models being used across the country, and Every Child Matters, CAN and UNH Cooperative Extension will assist legislators in designing and implementing a Family Impact Seminar that will illuminate the primary Academic and Practitioner Leaders in School-Based family resource programs from across the nation and give legislators direct access to evidence from 15 states who implemented these programs

1. Provide legislators with evidence of the program's effectiveness, costs, and potential savings, from academic studies and other policy makers' perspectives.
2. Suggest model sites for experimentation and development and assist legislators in considering legislation.

Family Impact Seminars (familyimpactseminars.org) is a program model developed by the University of Wisconsin that has been effective in bringing evidence based approaches to legislators in the area of family policy. Dr. Malcolm Smith at UNH Cooperative Extension has been fully trained in the program and is able to utilize its global network of resources, expertise, and methodology.

Call to Action

Every Child Matters and UNH Cooperative Extension, The YWCA of NH and partners from DHHS and the NH DOE will serve as equal partners in designing and implementing the Family Impact Seminar. We will also look to NH CAN Partners to lend their support and expertise.

Find out More

Every Child Matters (ECM) is the NH CAN partner for this Priority. Established in 2001, the Every Child Matters Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan organization working to make public investments in children, youth, and families a national political priority. For more information, contact Mary Lou Beaver at mlbeaver@everychildmatters.org.

UNH Cooperative Extension provides New Hampshire citizens with research-based education and information, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities, sustain natural resources, and improve the economy. For more information contact Dr. Malcolm Smith at malcolmsmith1@gmail.com.

The international mission of the YWCA is to eliminate racism and to empower women in order to attain the common vision of: peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people. This mission is met locally through the delivery of social service programs as well as programs that enrich the general community. For more information, contact Monica Zulauf at 603-625-5785.



Children's Alliance
of New Hampshire
Raising our Voices for Children



NH CAN is a program of the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire

Two Delta Drive, Concord, NH 03301
www.ChildrenNH.org (603) 225-2284