



Quality and Professional Development Meeting #4

Friday, July 15th, 12-1:30 pm

Attendance: Mia Orr, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children; Michael Smithers, New Schools for New Orleans; Teresa Falgoust, Agenda for Children; Kellie Chavez Greene, Greater New Orleans Foundation; Jamie Schmill, Laureus Foundation; Tom Zolot, Center for Restorative Approaches; Deirdre Burel, Orleans Public Education Network; Jon Cospers, Young Audiences; Kirsten Breckinridge, YouthShift; Nahliah Webber, community member; Jen Roberts, Baptist Community Ministries; Luella Williams, Up2Us Sports; Alan Brickman, Brickman Nonprofit Solutions; Antonio Travis, Black Men Rising/FFLIC; Derek Brumfield, Black Men Rising/FFLIC; Jonathon, Black Men Rising/FFLIC; Tom Trouve, community member.

Our Action Team's Objective: By August 31, 2016, prepare an action plan for how to coordinate, expand and sustain efforts to define, measure and support quality in programs and services for New Orleans children and youth.

Meeting #4 Objectives:

1. To continue to establish a sense of team among Action Team members
2. To deepen our collective understanding of what efforts to define, measure and support quality in programs and services for New Orleans children and youth have existed and are being developed across three primary settings: Early care and education, K-12 schools, and out-of-school-time/youth development settings

1. **Welcome, Lunch and Introductions:** How are you feeling after the events of the past week and a half (Alton Sterling shooting, Black Lives Matter protests, etc.)? Responses included: fear, rage, all about action – this is how I feel every time I walk out the door, horrified, watch Alicia Garza for inspiration, Black Lives Matter, disappointed, frightening, it's time for action, sad, frustrated, how do we make immediate change?, "I am black and I am tired," scared, frustrated, "I feel on the clock – next time it's going to be me or a friend," reflective, resistant, "I will not be a victim", reflective and pissed off, inspired by the drive for change, convicted.
2. **Fish Bowl Activity:** The purpose of this activity is to learn more about what has happened and what is currently happening to define, measure and support quality in New Orleans across the three settings we have been looking at: (1) early care and education, (2) K-12 education, and (3) out-of-school time/youth development. We will spend approximately 15 minutes on each of those three settings. This means you can ask or answer questions inside the fish bowl and both roles are really important. Some sample questions that were developed based on our prior Action Team conversations are attached. We designed this as a fish bowl rather than a panel for a few reasons. First, it is a more interactive format. Second is that there is wisdom within our group, and third, our guests are not the be all and end all experts on the topic, but do have insights to contribute to our conversation and understanding since many of them have spent significant time working on these issues.

Early Care and Education

How effective have past efforts been?

- The Quality Rating System put in place in 2007. It gave a framework to identify “quality” and we have seen a lot of improvement in centers who serve lower income children.
- There are still some big systemic barriers to improving quality like money and staffing. Workers aren’t paid that much and there is lots of turnover. There is a low barrier in terms of who is hired, some staff have no education background, no training, and no money for professional development. Centers have a hard time competing for qualified workers – competing with Burger King in terms of minimum wage employees. Most do not offer benefits to staff.
- Inequity in terms of who is accessing the quality care centers and cost has a lot to do with it – lowest income parents really struggle to cover cost of any childcare. It costs a minimum of \$175-\$215 per week for “quality” childcare. Even a low quality center is still going to cost \$400-500 a month – that’s rent, a car payment, etc.
- Quality costs, the Quality Rating System worked because it gave a definition. It has moved us ahead but how far can we go when we don’t have resources? This is an industry that is very strapped for funding. It doesn’t have substantive funding source like exists with K-12. The Louisiana Department of Education is starting to play in this space but not like it invests K-12. Soft money like the Kellogg Foundation isn’t going to support early childhood forever. In Jefferson Parish, it’s drying up and pre-k options are closing. Data shows that P-K is so important but there is no movement from the state to cover these costs. In Louisiana, no general fund dollars go into the care of children, ages 0-3 and minimal general funding supports children, ages 3-4. This funding then jumps up in kindergarten. But experts argue that by that point, it may be too late. There is neurological research that shows 0-3 is so important for developing neurological connections/cognitive development needed for success beyond age three. What assumptions is the state making about what kids are getting in that age frame if they aren’t investing? What do they assume parents or family are providing to kids 0 to 3?
- Clarification – the funding we are talking about is childcare assistance, which was a Department of Child and Family Services program (and is now funded through the Louisiana Department of Education) but if you look at Arkansas where money for early childhood is in the per pupil formula or Georgia where there is a state set-aside from the lottery for early childhood, we don’t have any of this. Our assistance is really more tied to federal funds. The funds that we have are from primarily from the federal Child Care Development Fund Block Grant.

What are lawmakers thinking is happening with the kids?

- Legislators don’t care. In fact some would say that mom should be at home. But single mom working families make that impossible.
- We do have family child care homes but these are unlicensed in LA. You are allowed to have up to 6 kids in your home without having to register or have any safety requirements, etc. There just isn’t a lot of thought about this
- There have been some reforms – the LA Department of Education has been tasking parishes to think about what is available and increasing the number of kids under age 3 who have access to pre-school programs. These are unfunded mandates, but hoping that cities will step up and fund this.
- The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Early Care and Education Advisory Council has made some recommendations recently about eligibility for these funding programs (i.e. lowering the number of hours from 30 to 20 a week for a mother to be working in order to be eligible) as things shift from the state Department of Child and Family Services to the Department of Education.

- The state has been having trouble getting parents who are eligible into the Childcare Assistance Program due to administrative and technical glitches, so many families who are eligible have to wait months to actually access child care assistance.
- And the child care assistance program may run out of funding. We are trying to figure out more sustainable funding stream. They increased reimbursement rates (a positive) but we can't sustain it.

How has the definition of quality changed since responsible for early care and education shifted from the Department of Child and Family Services to the Department of Education?

- Switching into education has led to a shift in language. It is more about curriculum vs. child welfare. Now there is a huge emphasis on learning and being kindergarten ready. When they first started it, there was huge emphasis on social/emotional readiness. Incentives to centers to promote these outcomes. Now looking at revamping the School Readiness Tax Credits to also target cognitive supports.
- There has been a shift from process outcomes (i.e. credentialing, ratios) towards higher quality teacher/student interaction. Ratings can be challenging – could walk into a facility that was 4 stars and wouldn't know. Working to make sure that in the future you could definitely tell when you walk in: "this is an excellent center"

Youth Development and Out of School Time

Where does cultural competency fit into the future of our quality system? How does the top-down effect of an imposed quality system play into this?

- Cultural competency piece is critical. How do you get outside of thinking that organizations are defined entities so that you can reach "youth workers" at parks (local elders), in faith communities and all of the places where young people interact with adults that are outside of formal organizations? How do you bridge the divide between formal and informal youth workers and networks? Is there anywhere in our system that is doing this well?
- Cultural competency is a value set and these values are defined by the community. There is a large spread within the system between different types of organizations so cultural competency might be different based on the setting. One thing is constant is that in each setting is there is an instructor-young person interaction – you can isolate this and if that's not grounded in positive youth development – then it's not quality. If interaction between the youth and the adult is poor then quality is going to be poor.
- Kids vote with their feet – so it's really important that they are a part of the building process. Kids can help identify quality
- There is no credentialing for "youth workers" so we have to work with the staff to identify what are the outcomes community wants to see and lifting these up – incorporating these into the program itself
- There is only one federal funding stream for after school (21st Century Community Learning Center grants) – but this is broadly defined and can be used by schools for enrichment activities throughout the school day, not just in the afterschool hours.
- Remember, the youth development/out-of-school-time space is only about 40 years old. It was established when moms went back to work, so only now is the quality conversation really evolving.

From the parent perspective, is there anything mandated or regulated for someone to offer youth programs?

- The out-of-school-time field in NOLA looks very different from other place because of extended school days or enrichment programs at charters. If its school based, it falls under the same

things a school would be regulated by. If it's a partner coming in to the school to provide service, then usually the school is still liable

Is there a rating system? Is there someone coming in to look at quality – some sort of assessment?

- My experience is that there is no accountability
- E.g. Some sports programming is an entirely volunteer coaching program but there is no guidance or training for coaches. The coaching quality can be very poor.
- There is work to create a quality system where there isn't one. The Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI) is being piloted by BCM with 15 programs this past year. Up2Us sports is trying to build the capacity of coaches through their model.

Is there an attempt to build cultural competency into the broader quality framework?

- It's not about good vs. bad. Implicit bias is a real thing and our institutions tend to take on the norm of the implicit bias. If we don't have awareness of this, or address it intentionally, we aren't going to break the biases
- It is important to do context mapping...before youth workers go in to program, you need to ask, "What is your reality versus the reality of the youth you are serving?"
- We (Up2Us) also teach folks to separate the child from the behavior. Something is going on with the kid to inspire the behavior. It is up to the coach or mentor to investigate and figure out what's going on and set them on a better path. We have to have this conversation because often we don't - typically it comes down to discipline when things go awry

K-12

What is happening with quality in K-12?

- There is a gap in quality. We aren't valuing cultural competencies over other things.
- We are in an age of transition between the federal No Child Left Behind act and the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We are thinking through "diverse by design" schools and the state accountability system under ESSA.
- Context mapping is so important. Who are we serving? In NOLA, we are serving 85% black students, 85% are considered economically disadvantaged, and the rest are Latina/o and Vietnamese with a very small percentage of white students. How do you make space for poor communities of color?

What is Diverse by Design?

- It is part of the Stronger Together initiative in ESSA, which focuses on the fact that in socioeconomically diverse schools, everyone has their learning maximized when together in one setting. Typically, public school enrollment breaks along racial lines. Studies have shown creating diverse racial and socioeconomic schools is effective, but only when respectful and done right – resources, intentionality, building community, etc.

Does Diverse by Design have an intentional element of cultural competence?

- Yes it should, but in this system, some schools have been intentional about creating a diverse school. They acknowledge what they don't know and try to be as upfront as possible. Bricolage is an example of a charter school that is doing this. Community is needed to build these schools. There is not a top-down solution.

Research supports this but there are new questions. Who gets to define quality? How are biases getting addressed?

- In NOLA our quality framework doesn't allow any space for cultural competency. If a teacher thinks "my only job is to teach you math" with no framework for making it relevant to the students in your classroom, it doesn't matter how well teacher knows math. It isn't going to be

effective. If we are just saying how many kids pass or score well on a test but not measuring how many kids you are kicking out to get your numbers...we are not getting it.

- It is not going to be doing quality if you aren't including cultural competency. If you are thinking that my only job is to teach the kids who want to learn – you are missing the point.
- Our current system has failed to appreciate that certain kids have different triggers. Some kids come from violent communities. In our school, some teachers had no concept of this. When I'm not willing to learn that day because of everything going on at home, the school would just send me home on suspension for five days. Often, teachers and schools just didn't realize that students have to go home at the end of the day and don't know what goes on there.
- Now we are trying to work from misaligned incentives that are being drilled from top down. Middle school parents choose schools based on their letter grades, in high school, the rankings become based 50% on graduation rates and 50% on test scores. The graduation rate incentive can make schools just want to get the students to graduate regardless of if they are college or workforce ready.
- We need to make sure that all kids are getting a quality education and ready for anything but we also need the studies to be relevant.
- The graduation rate incentive is unethical. In my school, they passed me along and I got into college because of a school/university contract. But 50% of us dropped out of college and are now working in fast food. I hear it because I lived it. I had to self-educate.
- A lot of the time with cultural competency, we bring it down to the individual when it really needs to be the institution that reflects the cultural competency: e.g. build in mental health, physical education, adequate time for lunch (and digestion), build in time for these other pieces. Needs to be less about just the race of the teacher than about the school itself. Does the school honor where my child comes from?

3. Debrief: Participants were first asked to take a moment and write down on an index card what outstanding questions they had from the activity. These cards were collected at the end of the session. People's responses are included below:

- It feels like K-12 has a huge misalignment between what we want for our children (i.e. development of both non-cognitive and cognitive skills) and how we measure quality (test scores, attendance, grad rates). What would a "People's School Rating" look like? Who would be able to develop and implement it?
- How do we balance an ecosystem approach to quality (emphasizing in its definition cultural competency, equity, etc.) with the reality of the point of service interaction between adults and youth being the most accessible in reality in some contexts (e.g. out of school time)?
- How do we scale quality in youth development without a state/funding accountability mechanism, especially given the number of providers and sources of support?
- What funding (federal) is available to create and adopt quality standards for youth development programs?
- How do we have the cultural competency conversation with school CMO leaders? It is a necessary conversation because the structure of school and the school day is hindering youth development work.
- Why aren't school representatives present with us? Or CMOs? I think it's super important that communities are having this conversation without schools present but schools are the major organizational structure connecting with kids.

- How can we include cultural competency and relationship (between youth and the adult teacher or youth worker) into a quality framework? What would be the indicators of excellence?
- How does quality get monitored, resourced, and create space for learning and change in practices?
- As a person who is new to this area or field of work, how would one be able to find data and statistics to have a grasp of the climate of the situation regarding education, specifically K-12 and OST programs?
- The issue of cultural competence is at a system and structural level. Literally it is woven into the fabric of an institution. So our frameworks for quality and accountability must have an intentional vehicle for giving consideration to how staff are trained and metrics of outcomes that reflect these values. Invariably this is an asset-based approach.
- What are all the current quality-related requirements that impact providers' funding? How consistent are they?
- I am still struggling with this process as I don't have a full understanding of the current structures in place to define, assess, and fund quality within the different buckets we are looking at. Early childhood, out-of-school time, and K-12. It seems to me we should be focused on how to build upon what is in place or already being discussed in New Orleans.
- How can we maintain a student achievement focus in K-12's accountability system, while also continuing to address and incorporate relevant cultural competencies into the formula? What does an excellent open-enrollment school look like in New Orleans?
- Louisiana is often ranked at the bottom of so many scales like education, child welfare, median income, etc. To what extent are we really interested/prepared to improve? Especially with the understanding that we might have to shift our own values/mindsets in order to achieve improvement? In other words, we didn't get to the bottom by accident – we got ourselves here and if we want to improve, we have to be prepared to do something different.

The group was then asked to share in pairs and as a large group, "What were some of the big takeaways for you from that activity and how do we incorporate today's learnings into our action plan?"

- 1) Cultural competency needs to be in the framework and it needs to be clearly defined
- 2) Relationships between adults and youth are really critical to quality programming across settings
- 3) Misaligned incentives and accountability goes across all age levels and settings
- 4) Who leads in the effort to improve quality?
- 5) There should be some kind of licensing for standards or permission to operate for youth development – but needs to be considerate of type of org, capacity, etc. and cautious about effects of high-stakes approaches.
- 6) We always need to be considerate of the uniqueness of NOLA in terms of schools
- 7) Workforce issues – standards, pay, turnover, compensation, etc. for teachers, child care workers and youth works – are an important aspect of quality
- 8) Integration of the three things we talked about – ECE to Out of School to K-12
- 9) Quality work needs to be inclusive of both formal and informal settings in which children and youth are served – informal providers are often the most culturally competent and can make the biggest impact as they are closest to the community

- 10) We need to learn from early care and education and the focus on adult-child interactions in that space, which has focused on what adults are providing versus how kids are performing. Focusing on the relationship and practices in this way shows better outcomes in terms of racial equity in discipline referrals
- 11) We need to incorporate a growth measure into any accountability system.

4. Next Steps (1:25 – 1:30 pm)

- a. **Answering Questions:** Hamilton will e-mail some additional materials to help fill in some of the gaps of local context people felt they were still missing at the end of the session (see italicized questions from debrief). Most likely, this will be in the form of a few memos or brief articles.
- b. **Next Meeting:** Friday, August 5th, 12 – 1:30 pm at Broadmoor Arts and Wellness Center. We will hear from young people and begin to develop an action plan based on the work we have done so far.



Fish Bowl Questions

Quality in programming and services for children and youth in New Orleans

1. Who is working on defining, measuring and/or supporting quality in this setting?
2. What are the goals of the quality improvement system that currently exists and/or is being developed?
3. Who currently defines quality for New Orleans in this setting? How do they define it?
4. How do staff and children and families learn about how quality is defined, measured and supported?
5. What tools are used to measure quality in this setting in New Orleans?
6. How effective have efforts been to improve quality in this setting in New Orleans? Why (or why not) have they been effective?
7. What skills are necessary for teachers/youth workers and managers in this setting to ensure quality? How are they developed?
8. Is there a certification or accreditation system for staff or programs/ providers/ schools?
9. Where does cultural competency fit in to our local definition, measurement and support of quality?
10. How does the current quality system account for racism?
11. What is in place to ensure current quality efforts don't have a disparate impact on providers and families with fewer resources?
12. What are the incentives for improving and achieving quality? Are they appropriate and sufficient?
13. What are the consequences or interventions for people and programs/providers who do not meet the standard of quality?
14. How is work on quality in this setting funded? Is it appropriate or sufficient?