

UWCNM Education Forum Meeting September 9, 2011

Strategic Conversations Summary

First Conversation: The BBER Report has suggested seven areas “designed to alleviate barriers specific to central New Mexico to enable the implementations of commonly accepted best practices.” What did you think about the recommendations from BBER Report? Strengths and Limitations? Consequences?

What is your initial reaction to the recommendations from the BBER report?

- Things we already knew, but good to see
- Broad-based and comprehensive, but not focused—overly general, no direction on how to begin
- It is a good start, involved with community schools.
- Responsibility back on community
- Looking at issues from Latino angle
- Nothing surprising, it makes sense
- Most excited about shared knowledge and shared resources – diagram presented
- Interested in ramifications for community – young people and workforce
- Wants to look at how to look at efforts done in all areas and take learning and gaps, don't have to start at beginning
- Blessing to sit here and see support systems for after school programs is addressed – need to understand problems first
- Collaboration – more of us working together we can conquer the barriers
- What is CNM's role in community – wants to bring together others
- Job growth can't happen without education focus
- Likes that collaboration is listed as priority
- Excited APS is represented.
- Initial negative reaction... deficit orientation to families – saying families are not valued
- Cross-sector partnership is something always left out... parents employment has an impact on the outcomes... this is the hardest thing to do.
- Where is the youth involvement?
- Love the establishment of early childhood preparedness
- Bringing parents in as partners is directly connected to professional development of staff... needs to be a change of beliefs.
- This is good because right now, we are not connecting enough.
- Volunteerism/service learning/community is reliant on parental support
- Working with businesses to allow time off for parents to engage with their children
- Family resource recommendation – not just a gathering place/ought to be resource center.
- Are these new recommendations?
- There is a lot to do!
- Needs more strategizing before implementing.

Is there anything missing you would include?

- Need to focus on things like family resource centers, having a common model of how to set goals based on other successful models
- Focus on family and school/organizational partnerships
- School/community partnership
- Children and families are addressed but what about teachers?
- Lack of family support in community – need to emphasize this in recommendations
- Leadership – how will community identify and support leadership to get this done, accountability, quality, metrics, measures

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- Needs for collaborative governance, umbrella vision, all bring resources, each targets a specific piece
- Must resource the training and collaborative component
- Huge resistance to collaboration
- Online technology as a resource for Family Resource recommendation – provide students and family with computer access (laptops). This is accessible here... not so much in rural areas.
- Programs are typically run for 4 years to college... Typically, focus in on early readiness... if there is something we can include that supports college prep earlier on.
- More ongoing preparedness... especially for college/beyond HS = ready for life.
- Professional development of school staff
- Let's answer "what is education for?"
- Define some good best practices or models for cross sector partnerships. Needs to overlap with the common goal.
- Broad based screening – initial reaction is one of caution... sees a need for setting up a culture of children that need special services. Same caution for case management.
- Doesn't address the family issues. (Cultural shifts)
- How do we help immigrants?
- How do we address all families in the community?
- How do we educate immigrant families?
- School to career focus vs. school to work.

What are the strengths of the recommendations?

- Collaborative process is good
- Early childhood programs
- Community-based service learning programs for middle and high school students, shows students relevance of their education
- Comprehensive review
- Simple, straight forward – actions are doable
- Set a positive tone
- P-20 pipeline
- if recommendation (D) can be done it will be the strongest piece of puzzle (middle school recommendation)

What are the limitations of the recommendations?

- Overly simplistic, as far as collaborative process, needs to focus on how implement a collaborative process
- Difficult to implement collaborative work
- How do you reach families that are in need when they don't necessarily feel comfortable reaching out for help?
- What is a family resource center?
- Some families and parents are resistant to things like service learning
- Lots of engagement is just happening at the school. Perhaps this needs to branch out to other public spaces.
- In the illustration, the children and families are outside the circle.

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What do you believe will be the consequences if the United Way adopts one or more of these recommendations?

- Would make far better use of resources that are available, would be used more effectively and efficiently
- Would make it easier for agencies to get funds and focus more on their programs and goals
- Would provide a forum for the collaborative cross-sector
- Adopt one or more then people would see UWCNM as leaders and others will follow
- Resource allocation towards addressing gaps
- It may make the report seem more responsive.

Second Conversation: The BBER Report has suggested a collective impact approach. Why is a collective approach to solving problems so difficult? What have been the barriers to collective approaches in the past? What are the hopes and fears when partnering? What are the consequences?

Why is a collective approach to solving problems so difficult?

- Organizations are defensive about what they will lose in a collaborative process
- There has not been a structure or a plan for collaboration in the past
- People don't want to share
- If funders don't restructure how they approach funding, it won't work – funders are supporting collaborative efforts – funder pipelines need to change
- Need to form a relationship first – small steps, people hold on to their mission/area tightly and don't trust to let some of it go
- Need to have shared vision at organizational level--with families, funders, service providers
- Many issues at play –competition for limited resources, funders don't fund collaboration – it is complicated, funders are looking for how their funds can have biggest impact
- Collaborations can be strengthened if funders look for and demand a clear directive how program solutions work with others
- It rarely gets funded
- We don't have a paradigm for it--going there, but not shifted
- Folks are “stuck in their own agenda”.
- Lots of parties have opposing financial stakes
- Can't have without collective “vision”... need to “get it first”.
- Include the children in the collaboration
- Everyone has their own turf, their own agenda. “I'll have to give something up.”
- Funders have strings attached to their money.
- The corporate world doesn't understand how hard people in education are working.

What have been the barriers to collective approaches in the past?

- Organizations are resistant
- Fear of losing funds or support
- There needs to be a common goal or plan
- APS: fears giving up the huge amount of power that they have to the community
- Resistance to change in such a large school district

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- Need to recognize the communities within the community
- Fear – have to build relationships and trust – takes time
- Power dynamics are huge – who is running the collaborative effort? Are the skills there for running a collaboration, facilitation and process skills, very tricky
- Service delivery models have been developed separately from each other
- Every organization designs its own metrics of success
- If UWCNM can have an influence on how funders view things – how would collaborations work—so that collaborations can get funded
- Forum for rolling out research for collaboration
- UWCNM propose metrics of success, instead of leaving to organizations
- Funding again!!
- Everyone only cares about their own issue in the end. Or, at least in a “different way”.
- Reluctant to sharing information – we need training and education on collaboration skills.
- The threat of loss ruins collaboration. UWCNM can play a key role.
- In competing for grants we become adversaries with our colleagues.
- Lack of trust.
- A mindset of scarcity rather than abundance.

What are your hopes?

- APS will stop being an “octopus,” and allow funds, programs, to be run by community organizations
- Community organizations can help students and families so that teachers can teach and not raise children
- If the district allows the community to be a part of the process of teaching/raising children then more children will be affected
- The private sector will play a larger role in advocating for employees (parents) to take part in the education process of their children
- Focus on a few things and do those things really well
- Organizations can figure out what others organizations that are similar are doing and how they are measuring success, so we can find ways to work together
- Funders can fund collaborations and force the issue of collaboration between agencies, meaningful collaborations, not just in talk.
- Hope that there is a way to underwrite the cost of collaborative work. The fear is that this will not happen.
- Hope is that training will be consistent and effective.
- Volunteer element is key--hope that sustainability will elicit volunteer support.
- Hope that the “parties” are as collaborative as the strategists – hope that it doesn’t become someone’s political campaign. A platform with nothing under the platform.
- Hope – that we can accomplish at the local level... translating to the state level (since we are State driven)... this is much more effective.
- Hope – business leadership is an active role. Fear that they won’t. We need to bring those “key” folks to the table.
- That we can build relationships through these meetings.
- It will bring a paradigm shift in our thinking.
- That trust will be returned to schools. If you trust, you will invest.

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What are your fears?

- The programs will not make an impact because there are too many things that are trying to happen at once
- Conversations will stop if there is not an obvious impact immediately
- There might be more of an expectation for the schools to “raise children”
- Incompetence
- Letting go of control
- Cultural competency not there – specifically understanding families, how do we work together so it is representative of our community
- Fear – we’ll all hit default mode.
- Fear – whatever good work is done here will get lost in Legislation
- That nothing really happens.
- People who are thinking in this new way are thought of as being a threat.

What are the consequences of a collective impact approach to your organization? To our community?

- Meaningful conversations and collaboration will positively impact children and families
- Communities will be able to support the children and families
- Totally positive
- Everyone will have to give up a little bit and have to put in a little work in order to make it work
- Community has to recognize that these conversations and collaborations are taking place
- Every organization will have to know when they need to draw the line in terms of unrealistic expectations of the district or organization and let other community organizations take over
- More meaningful change if it went well
- If we don’t handle it properly it could lead to mediocrity, lowest common denominator
- Funders coming together for shared goals – could lead to more available funds for projects
- Make the collaborative effort visible – make what working visible
- Is it possible to have a shared vision? Except on global broad brush basis
- We can have shared vision with multiple perspectives
- Working with government is complex – subject to politics (fed mentoring funds eliminated without understanding impact, just a budget decision)
- Accountability is a huge challenge – early education (public vs private school accountability)
- For UWCNM... it would be interesting if there was a request for at least a % to offer an incentive for collaboration when deciding how funding.
- To our community... this can be a huge success. We get rid of the division and the “competition”.
- Get the folks who are going into secondary education (the college kiddos) involved early will be good.
- Collective impact will help align the overall goal. It’s working in some places on a smaller level now... CNM example.
- Targeting an early child readiness (0 to 3) can have a tremendous impact.
- Very positive for the public schools.
- As a teacher it changes the responsibilities.
- It energizes the educators.

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Final Conversation: How can the collective relationships among influential organizations support the recommendations in the BBER report? What would be the best role for the United Way in this effort? Consequences?

How can the collective relationships among influential organizations support students and educators?

- There would be actual changes that occur in a timely and efficient fashion instead of the way things get stuck in the legislative process
- There would be one voice for funding
- More students and families would be reached because there would be a more efficient process for allocating funds
- Compromise and agreement would be achievable because there would be leadership and structure vs. legislative process
- Build resources to promote education outcomes in a way that isn't about funding, companies can bring something to the table that others don't – expertise varies
- Get professors involved in the conversation – so they can get aligned with community priorities
- If organizations had a common analysis about root causes of inequities
- Redefine power from a noun to a verb – comes from working collectively
- Embrace spirit of democracy, don't be afraid of the other (parents, community organizers, etc.)
- More community meetings, involvement with parents, employers, schools to discuss the education issues within the community – unite
- Teach others to learn about culture of community
- Early childhood faculty should be at the table
- Collective will and advocacy – important to conceptualize how to bring people together, collective consciousness, obligation to be mutually responsive – work together, collective action
- Influential organizations may have to give up power to allow the empowerment of others
- Those who felt disempowered need to have access to power
- Collective relationships could change the narrative, great if community decided we are mad as hell and won't take it anymore. Universal education for everyone
- We've allowed ourselves to downgrade our expectations about what education can do
- There's something to this concept with aligning the influential organizations that helps “connect” the community. This will really help and students will do better.
- Too many organizations are “octopus.” Focusing on the “expertise” of each makes it all more effective.
- People want to invest, but don't know where to invest. Collective relationships strengthen and support what that is.
- If role models are actually changing the diagram, then folks will follow. The “influence” will filter down.
- Define “what is the collective relationship” and what is the purpose... or, what is the focus. With collective relationships, we can fine tune it and all work on something “sound.”
- If we can “draw the line” – and answer “if it's not your profession, don't do it.” The collective collaboration needs to be certain specialties to get the best grouping of relationships.
- It will work if it's system wide... Or, if schools are the center of our community.
- Cradle to Career continuum – the hardest thing is that we force kids and families into checks and milestones.
- Determine who the best resource in the community is.

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- There will be better access to specific programs for families and students.
- Without parental involvement these programs will go nowhere.
- Do we even have collective relations, appropriate for our state, with the diverse groups we serve?
- Are the schools doing too many roles (i.e. having to raise the students)?
- It will take everyone being on the same page.
- We cannot over promise and under deliver.
- Identify the problems and find organizations (corporations, faith-based) who can fill specific needs with volunteers.

What would be the best role for the United Way in a collective impact relationship?

- Develop high impact strategies
- Bring together the government, organizational, and private sector to support education
- Act as a convener of broad groups without having a specific vested interest, act as an objective, neutral party
- Could use statistical and scientific data to help affect the most vulnerable and needed areas
- Makes programs accountable and “transparent”
- Acts as a leader in focusing on most needed and important issues
- Convener and conversation facilitator
- UWCNM brings people together in way others can’t – community-driven organization
- Scaffolding (early childhood concept) – experience between novice and expert. Facilitator, encourage engagement and empowerment
- A mouthpiece or voice for education
- Groups that are organic and pressure others for change can get marginalized. Need a public champion to support others.
- Challenge with collaboration between sectors – financial resources limit participation
- Strategic approach to funding cross sector collaborations
- Funding cross sector support, build collaboration and provide financial resources for all to participate
- Value successes and contributions of schools and nonprofits that are effectively serving the underserved, look at these models and encourage replication of successes, build upon successes
- Parent involvement – some parents have a negative experience with school administrators, UWCNM can be positive and supportive, nonthreatening to parents
- UWCNM is great at being the 3rd Party investor. Its agenda can play both sides.
- UWCNM can be the conduit... initiator of the conversation
- RE: Community Fund... we can enforce the partnership since we are giving funding. It can be part of the funding requirement.
- UWCNM can put stricter guidelines for funding the organizations regarding their collaborative efforts.
- UWCNM can follow the process better than just one entity.
- UWCNM needs to support relationships moving in the same direction – support the “vision.”
- Streamlining help from specific agencies.
- Frame the problem for funders to be able to understand. Structure the funding so it is realistic to the program. Who is the entity leading all this?
- They can provide a comprehensive map of every agency in the community and how they can help with educational problems.
- UWCNM can provide the process to be followed.

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What are the consequences for your organization? Our community?

- Needs are being met of every party; children, families, funders, schools
- More access to programs and resources for children and families, agencies, and school districts
- Higher education students will be more prepared for college and the workforce
- Will funders be content in giving without ulterior motives?
- Faculty and teachers will be able to be more effective and make more impact in their classroom
- For Public Schools... they have very specific guidelines to follow... so, consequence is that we have to remember this piece of it.