

Boston

Center staff has supported Boston's leadership in the community schools movement since 1997, when the Gardner Elementary School in Allston-Brighton became one of the initial adaptation sites in the Extended-Service Schools initiative, funded by the Wallace Foundation.

Summary

As the Gardner School's work expanded to ConnectFive (a multi-site initiative), our staff continued to provide guidance, training and other assistance. We subsequently invited Boston Schools Superintendent Tom Payzant to contribute a chapter to our 2005 book entitled *Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice* and have worked collaboratively with the Boston Full-Service Schools Roundtable as it sought to coordinate all the community schools activity in the Boston area. More recently, the Boston Public Schools asked the Center to provide intensive training and consultation to staff of the BPS Department of Extended Learning Time, Afterschool and Services (DELTA), which expanded our role into building the capacity of the capacity-builders—BPS staff whose role is to assist 35 local community school and after-school sites. Center staff focused specifically on building the coaching skills of DELTA managers as they work within their portfolio of sites to develop full-service schools. And, most recently, we initiated a partnership with City Connects, the latest evolution of ConnectFive, by incorporating their methodology into several of The Children's Aid Society's New York City community schools.

Case Study on Building Capacity

Boston Public Schools DELTA

The only way for schools to improve their educational mission for children is to engage with the children in communities where they live. To do this requires a commitment from everyone in a school to the whole child, as well as recognition that the instructional program within the school must be connected to a program of health and well-being in the community and family.

Former BPS Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant, in *Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2005

Brief History

Center staff have supported Boston's leadership in the community schools movement since 1997, when the Gardner Elementary School in Allston-Brighton became one of the initial adaptation sites in the Extended-Service Schools initiative, funded by the Wallace Foundation.

As the Gardner School's work expanded to ConnectFive (a multi-site initiative), our staff continued to provide guidance, training and other assistance. We subsequently invited Boston Public Schools' then-Superintendent Thomas Payzant to contribute a chapter to our 2005 book entitled *Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice* and have worked collaboratively with the Boston Full-Service Schools Roundtable as it sought to coordinate all the community schools activity in the Boston area. While this case study focuses on a specific

contract for intensive technical assistance in 2008 and 2009, NCCS has maintained active partnerships with several aspects of Boston’s community schools work. The Children’s Aid Society recently entered into a collaboration with City Connects, the latest evolution of Connect Five, by incorporating their methodology into several of our New York City community schools.

Capacity-Building Activities

In late 2008, the Boston Public Schools asked NCCS to provide intensive training and consultation to staff of the BPS Department of Extended Learning Time, Afterschool and Services (DELTAS), which expanded our role into building the capacity of the capacity-builders—BPS staff whose role is to assist 35 local community school and after-school sites. NCCS focused specifically on building the coaching skills of DELTAS managers as they worked within their portfolio of sites to develop full-service schools. The mission of the DELTAS is to ensure that every student in the Boston Public Schools has access to quality out-of-school time activities and extended services. DELTAS helps remove barriers to learning and promotes well-rounded, successful students through collaborations with community organizations, health organizations, higher education institutions, families, and other government agencies.

Through many of its initiatives, including their Triumph Collaborative, DELTAS have created helped many of their 35 schools move toward fuller implementation of the community schools strategy. Funding sources for this work include 21st Century Community Learning Centers, United Way of Massachusetts Bay; Boston Afterschool and Beyond; and Massachusetts Department of Education’s After-School/Out-of-School Time Quality Program.

The 2008-9 contract between BPS and NCCS involved building the coaching capacity of the DELTAS team members. After an initial consultation with Department leaders, we proposed to provide a series of on-site technical assistance sessions to one pilot site around furthering the development of their full-service agenda, with the DELTAS team members serving as observers. Then a debriefing session was conducted with the DELTAS, using a “teaching rounds” approach, to answer specific questions regarding the technical assistance methodology employed by our NCCS consultant. Throughout the rounds, the pilot site team and DELTAS coach were instructed in the use of a variety of tools or activities to assist in the development of action plans that would build the full-service school. NCCS provided six monthly “teaching rounds” sessions. In addition, we organized a study visit to two of our New York City community schools for 14 key staff from the Tobin School and DELTAS office.

Results to Date

The Tobin team developed clear goals in moving their full-service schools agenda and demonstrated a clear vision and alignment with these plans. Each of their working sub-committees—which were organized around the Coalition for Community Schools six “conditions for learning”—has become more active and invested in its own responsibilities and in the transformation of the school. Strong principal leadership contributed substantially to the results to date. At the systemic level, many elements that are needed to create and support full-service schools were part of the philosophy incorporated in DELTAS work.

Lessons Learned

- *Collaboration:* The Tobin School had a list of over 50 partners but how they were accountable and aligned with the outcomes for families and children was not clearly defined. The Tobin now incorporates processes for regular meetings with all program or service providers to demonstrate alignment with the school goals and outcomes.
- *Comprehensiveness:* NCCS's technical assistance helped the Tobin team distinguish between service providers and committed partners who enter into agreements with the school about how they will integrate their work to better address the needs of students and families. The partners (hospital, mental health agency and Family Resource Center) have felt that this distinction highlights the value they add to the school and how their services are an integral part of the Tobin full-service school.
- *Coordination/Integration:* Through the capacity-building process, the DELTAS team came to understand the distinction between an after-school program coordinator and a community school director (overall site coordinator). They re-evaluated how other district positions such as the after-school program director or parent coordinators could be repositioned into that of a full-service community school coordinator. This would enhance the integration efforts and create a more coherent approach to the work.
- *Commitment:* The partners at the Tobin have become fully invested in continuing and improving their efforts toward demonstrable achievement outcomes. The DELTAS are focused on working within their own internal infrastructure to create what is needed to systemically advance the full-service school agenda within BPS. As evidence of this commitment, they applied for and received a highly competitive Federal Full-Service Community Schools grant.