

Learning Think Tank: Meeting 1

Represented Partners & Their Current Initiative Report-Outs

Cardinal innovations: Peer support specialists – provide training to organizations like CMS, Dept. of Social Services, etc. Trainings have to do with behavioral health i.e. bullying. Want to enhance and strengthen the educational platform.

Carolina Voices: Has existed in Charlotte for about 60 years. Strategic areas of focus: music education and community engagement. Hoping to fill gaps in the community with education relating to the arts. Have programs such as summer camps. Have ensembles that range in genre of music and musical ability. There will be a performance to build awareness around homelessness. Build awareness for and give a voice to the working homeless population. It will be called Voiceless. Looking for partners and organizations to collaborate with.

Central Piedmont Community College: Many educational initiatives. One of the most important is workforce development. Many companies protesting about skills gap with employees. Concerned with how to get employees ready for the workforce. Working closely with Charlotte Works and CMS to get young students who don't want to go to college to come to CPCC to get skills for the workforce. Working with CMS to create awareness at a younger age and to get them educated and interested. Want to get children interested in schools at a younger age to decrease absenteeism and decrease disengagement.

Charlotte Area Health Education Center: geriatric education grant to educate providers on how to take better care of the geriatric community. Other initiatives include:

- Transgender symposium for health care providers
- Childhood obesity summit. Mental health first aid
- 8-80 cities by speaker Gil Penalosa – how to make communities walkable/accessible for people of all ages.
- Health Career Club – give students from different backgrounds an opportunity to shadow health care providers

Citizen Schools: National nonprofit – expands learning day for underserved populations (middle schoolers). Apprenticeship: brings in businesses and universities, to lead apprenticeships that guide students through various experiences. Provide enrichment opportunities for middle school students and give them exposure.

Generation Nation: Work with groups like citizen schools. Provide resources for teachers, work with both CMS and non-CMS schools. Have resources for teachers to teach students about local government and make it interesting for them. Partner with people around the community to give students an opportunity to get plugged into what they are learning. For example, mock voting for a mayor. Have volunteers teach students about various issues that may pertain to them like curfew. Teach them to be good active citizens. Interested in collaborations and partnerships.

Green Teacher Network: Mission – advance academic performance and health through school gardening. Trying to reconnect students with food ecosystem. Engage students in outdoor learning. Hands on learning – school garden to cafeteria program – grow leafy greens and have that supply cafeteria. Partners with agriculture, food organizations. Work with 26 partner organizations but are always looking for more.

Keep Charlotte Beautiful: Have programs like adopt city streets. America recycles day, which is in partnership with Keep Mecklenburg Beautiful and Wipe out Waste. Want to collaborate to teach people about litter prevention. Want to get it to be part of a curriculum in schools or get the word out about the importance of litter prevention.

Mecklenburg County DSS:

- Workforce development – temporary aid for obtaining employment.
- For customers receiving cash assistance, DSS provides a service that helps them find employment.
- Independent living program: partnership with youth and family services – work with people in foster care to expose them to resources in Charlotte.
- Work permits: offer permits to children after they turn 18 so they can begin working.
- Partner with CMS –a school liaison that works with foster care children by monitoring attendance and performance. As part of receiving cash assistance, these students need to maintain attendance at schools.
- Triple P – parenting class. Addresses mild to moderate behaviors of children. Practitioners to provide training to parents.
- Housing program – for families coming from youth and family services identified as about to be homeless – help them maintain their housing and education.
- Also work with geriatric population – want to learn more about services and collaboration for that population. Resources that they have in the past aren't the resources for the future. Want to educate seniors about what they need to do to take care of themselves.

NC State Cooperative Extension: 4-H – work with young people. Provide opportunities to learn about opportunities in the community. Learn life skills. Will work with children in the community or schools. Teach food science – How to grow and preserve food for future use. Horticulture: help homeowners to maintain gardens, homes, landscapes. Helps with maintaining certification for landscapers. Work with after school care providers (child care centers) with maintaining their certification.

United Way: Organization is invested in income and health. Helping to collaboratively improve graduation rates in CMS schools. Support economically underdeveloped students. Current initiative: School chronic absenteeism. Looking for incentives or collaborations with organizations related to absenteeism.

Child Care Resources: Improve skills and knowledge of early child care educators (birth to 5 years old). Expand early learning opportunities by working with many organizations. Early literacy

initiative to introduce books into the homes of children. Work with DSS and Meck County with a Childcare subsidy program – help families access child care resources so they can work. New initiative to head start program for children from birth to 3 – 300 children involved.

Charlotte Works: Role is to make sure employees or people looking for jobs have knowledge of the workforce. There is a skills and interest gap. Aim to help develop career pathways. Give employees on ramps and off ramps for jobs, give people a way to navigate options - what do they need to do to be successful. Educate kids and parents about where the jobs are. Partner with CMS for internships – kids don't know what work looks like. Getting employers to the table to offer opportunities.

Junior Achievement: 3 pillars. Financial literacy, work-readiness and entrepreneurship. Have lots of volunteers – businesses and parents to educate students about the pillars. Try to teach kids soft skills. Want to partner with more organizations.

Levine Museum of the New South: build community by understanding of how the past relates to the present. History programs. Community conversations that involve decision makers and community members. There will be an exhibit showcasing the Latino community.

Clean air Carolina: environmental education for students and adults. One of the causes of absenteeism is asthma. Program – help community understand the air that we are breathing. Working with UNCC – keeping watch on air. Particle falls – waterfall that will help visualize particulate matter. Help educate students and adults.

Gaps & Root Cause Discussion

What gaps exist?

- Knowledge about what exists – not all the resource directories are up to date
- Lots of focus on certain areas of curriculum for a designated purpose (i.e. STEM) – well-intentioned but creates gaps
- Community based education – access to education is difficult for some people due to things like affordability and transportation
- Too many services that people don't know where to go for the service they need.
- Not sensitive to the intimidation factor – people are scared to come to uptown or travel in certain areas of charlotte, which are where many of the resources are located. I.e. some people have never been to Uptown.
- Stereotypes that exist within certain communities that prevent access to other groups.

Why do these gaps exist?

- Lack of communication or awareness of what organizations have to offer.
- People see themselves not being able to take advantage of the resources because they don't know
- Organizations cannot train people and hope that they get a job. Need to establish a connection with employers so that when you graduate, you are sure you can get a job
- Customer buy-in: are opportunities designed for people, and are they engaged in the design? Do they see it as a gateway into a better investment for themselves?

- Transportation and access – are they easily accessible? And are they available during times when it can be accessed (people who work during the day or hold multiple jobs)?
- Access to child care – when you're a working parent but no one to take care of your children, it's hard to take advantage of the opportunities
- Intimidating when you don't see people in similar situations in the room
- Privilege distorts perspectives when structuring programs for people without privilege.
- Meeting the client where they are – going to them rather than having them come to you
- Funding

Ideas for New Collaborative Initiatives

Initiative: Collective Effectiveness Study to identify who is addressing issues, where, and with whom

***Initiative:** Central Communication Resource to serve as a searchable database of all the resources/partners for organizations and those they service

Initiative: Higher Education Awareness Program

Potential Partners: Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services and Circle de Luz

Initiative: Skills-Gap Closing Intervention

Initiative: Non-Traditional Industry Think Tank

Initiative: Best Practice Research on Out of School Time

Initiative: Community Resource Center

Initiative: Mobile Marketing (marketing of resources in non-traditional spaces in the County, such as barbershops, grocery stores, faith-based organizations, recreation complexes, etc.)

Initiative: Accelerated Transportation Plans (to increase access to resources and opportunities)

Initiative: Awareness Campaign for Current Education Programs

Initiative: Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations

Ideas for Expanding Current Initiatives

Current Initiative: K-12 Civic Literacy Curriculum and Youth Leadership

Current Initiative Owner: Generation Nation

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion opportunity with Levine Museum of the New South and the Green Teacher Network

Current Initiative: Independent Living Program

Current Initiative Owner: Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion opportunity with Levine Museum of the New South and Carolina Voices

Current Initiative: Out of School Program

Current Initiative Owner: Citizen Schools

Collaboration Opportunity: Field trip and program opportunities with Levine Museum of the New South

Current Initiative: Student Exposure to Community Opportunities

Current Initiative Owner: Circle de Luz

Collaboration Opportunity: Program opportunities with Levine Museum of the New South (NUEVOlution!)

Current Initiative: Education Access

Current Initiative Owner: Circle de Luz

Collaboration Opportunity: Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services

Current Initiative: Health Career Education – Reaching Out to Excellent Students (H.E.R.O.E.S.)

Current Initiative Owner: Charlotte Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion with Central Piedmont Community College

Current Initiative: Music Education Program

Current Initiative Owner: Carolina Voices

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion with Cardinal Innovations

Current Initiative: Geriatric Education Program

Current Initiative Owner: Cardinal Innovations

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion with Charlotte Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

Current Initiative: Graduation/School Attendance Program

Current Initiative Owner: United Way

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion with Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, focusing on attendance for students in foster care

Current Initiative: Workforce Development Program

Current Initiative Owner: Central Piedmont Community College

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion with the United Way

Current Initiative: Workforce Training Program

Current Initiative Owner: Charlotte Works

Collaboration Opportunity: Expansion with Junior Achievement