Reframing School Dropout
As A Public Health Concern:
SBHCs at the Intersection of Health &
Education

2009 NASBHC Convention
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Presenter Disclosures
Nancy W. Carpenter

(1) The following personal financial relationships with
commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed
during the past 12 months:
“No relationships to disclose”

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Can someone help me with these, I’m late for math class?

Objectives
By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Understand and recognize the processes of engaging multiple sectors in discussions around school dropout
- Identify pathways that can lead to new strategic partnerships
Work Plan Strategy

• Engage the public health community in viewing educational achievement goals through a public health lens and take action.

• Broaden recognition among leaders in policy, education, business, advocacy, the media and other concerned sectors about the contribution that SBHCs and other school health services offer in addressing the educational achievement gap.

The Health-Academic Outcomes Connection

Health Risk Behaviors
- Substance use
- Mental health
- Poor diet
- Intentional injuries
- Physical illness
- Self-esteem
- Sexual behaviors

Graduation
- GPA
- Standardized test scores

Educational Outcomes
- Attendance
- Dropout Rates
- Behavioral Problems

SBHCs

How education improves health

More education contributes to:
- Higher incomes (and the purchase of better food and housing, more health care, etc.)
- More skills, knowledge and resources to protect health
- More social support and stronger social networks
- Lower rates of unhealthy behavior

* J.W. Richardson, PhD

How better health contributes to school achievement

Healthy children and young people:
- Attend school more
- Pay attention to what goes on in classroom
- See, hear and understand the teacher
- Focus more on education as a goal

* J.W. Richardson, PhD
Freudenberg’s Seminal Article

PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE
PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND POLICY
VOLUME 4: NO. 4
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SPECIAL TOPIC
Reframing School Dropout as a Public Health Issue

Nicholas Freudenberg, DrPH, Jessica Ruglis

School failure is a public health concern

“ If medical researchers were to discover an elixir that could increase life expectancy, reduce the burden of illness, delay the consequences of aging, decrease risky health behavior and shrink disparities in health, we would celebrate such a remarkable discovery. Robust epidemiological evidence suggests that education is such an elixir.”

An Overview of Causes of School Dropout by Level

**Individual**
Sense of alienation, learning or behavioral problems, disconnectedness, grade retention, absenteeism, social isolation, rebelliousness, pregnancy, substance use

**Community/Jurisdiction**
Segregated housing, high levels of crime, values on education, level of funding for schools, proportion immigrants, proportion voters who are parents

**Family**
Low parental education, poor parenting, family mental health or substance use problems, low family support for school success

**School and School System**
School climate (e.g., bullying, homophobia, racism, etc.), school size, class size, retention policies, distribution of resources, priority of drop out, policies on special education, disciplinary policies

* Freudenberg

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Could we have a more “Perfect Storm”?
Backdrop Factors

- Governor created the Governor’s Readiness Council
- Education Reform was being discussed, again
- Legislation to establish a Dropout and Recovery Commission filed
- Establishment of the interagency cabinet (Health & Education)

Policy Targets from MCSBHC Work Plan

To build the case for School-Based Health Centers in promoting resiliency as a contributing factor to enhancing learning readiness and preventing school dropout.
Board of Directors Embraces the Issue

- Understood the connection
- Recognized it as the pathway for the Coalition to be a thought leader
- Made the connection between racial and ethnic health disparities and achievement gap
- Obtain sponsorship to cover forum costs

What Happened Next?

Planning Committee of the Board formed
- Funder
- Board Members
- SBHC Personnel
- SBHC Sponsor Agency Personnel
- Statewide Education Expert
- Education Policy Consultant
- Evaluation Consultant
What should the outcome of the convening be?

• High level policy makers & stakeholders present
• Introduce the concept of school dropout as a public health concern and an epidemic
• Participants commit to additional action
• Buy-in from high level thought leaders and policy makers
• Engage participants in new dialogue about role of health and school dropout

Invitation

March 27, 2008
Representative’s Office
215 State House
Boston, MA 02134

Dear Representative,

The number of school dropouts has reached epidemic proportions in Massachusetts as well as in the rest of the country. Recently, the Center for Disease Control published a report stating that school dropouts, many of whom have poor health, represent mid-level deaths and are a public health crisis. The report recommends that we work together to improve the school dropout rate and promote a healthier lifestyle.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has endorsed this report and is inviting all representatives to attend a workshop on May 9th, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the Department of Public Health, Room 101. The workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss how we can improve the school dropout rate and promote a healthier lifestyle.

We are excited to have you attend the workshop and look forward to working with you to improve the school dropout rate.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]
[Position]

[Signature]

[Name]
[Position]
Who attended?

- Legislators
- State Agency Leaders
- Advocates
- Business
- Board Members
- SBHC leaders
- Funders
- Representatives from the largest/most powerful health organizations
- Education Leaders
- School Nurses
- SBHC Sponsor agency
- Potential Funders

What did it look like?
Days Agenda

Reframing School Drop Out as an Education and Public Health Problem
A forum to discuss partnerships and create synergy in addressing the school dropout problem.

Thursday, May 5, 2008
8:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Neston Room
One Avenue de Lafayette
Boston, MA 02111

Convened by the Massachusetts Coalition of School-Based Health Centers
Moderator: Paul Gregory, President and CEO, The Boston Foundation
Join us now to discuss the school dropout crisis and identify ways that health, education and policy leaders can work together to improve graduation rates in Massachusetts.

Goals:
1. Recognize that the basic of racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes and school dropout rates exist, and facilitate discourse on diverse efforts to address these issues.
2. Determine how the public health and health sector can contribute to key-existing educational, health, political, philanthropic and community partnerships that are needed to address the school dropout crisis.
3. Identify partnerships for the education and public health sectors to collaborate in reducing school dropout and improving health disparities.

Details Matter

- Location of event
- Feel of the Convening Space
- Biographical Sketches of each speaker and participant in packets
- Assigned seating with table tents
- Packets at each seat
- Delicious food
- Good Acoustics & attention to hearing every voice
Outcomes

- Public Health Commissioner included as a member of the dropout commission
- High level policy makers and thought leaders attended
- Coalition recognized as a though leader and convener
- Invited to join Youth Transitions Task Force & participate in other education focused activities

Additional Outcomes

- New and Strategic Relationships
  - Boston Private Industry Council
    - Lead player in school dropout prevention
    - Savvy with setting the agenda
    - Driving the work
    - Established and Convene Youth Transitions Task Force
  - Created Think Ahead, a video to put a voice and a face to the issue with youth
Lessons Learned

• Move out of comfort zone

• Diverse voices are important

• Important to document/capture the days discourse and use the information to create another step in the public awareness campaign

• We are good at convening

• Forum creates momentum and momentum precedes action

• Track invitees
So now what?

- We didn’t have a document of the days events
- We convened individuals from silos
- We introduced the topic, realized how entrenched the silos are in the landscape
- We began to immerse ourselves in the education realm
- Attended relevant conferences
- Met with Secretary of Education
- Listened for the role that the health sector could play

What did we learn about the role of health in reducing school dropout?

- No mention of underlying physical, emotional and social challenges students were facing, especially related to poverty, on drop-out.
  - How are these issues being factored into dropout reduction strategies?
  - What role is the health sector being asked to play?
- Decided to convene a 2nd forum
Dropping out of school is not an impulsive isolated action impacting youth alone. Instead, dropping out is a culmination of long-term disengagement that profoundly affects families, communities, and the nation.

(Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007)
Grass-roots focus

• The first forum focused on convening high level policy makers and leaders from diverse sectors

• For the 2nd forum we reached out more broadly, seeking to engage those with a commitment to reduce school dropout and who recognized the health sector as having a role

What are roles for health professionals in improving school completion rates?

• Educate public and policy makers on education and health virtuous circle
• Develop and advocate for policies and programs that reduce health-related school drop out
• Participate in multi-issue coalitions to improve public schools
• Create an evidence base that can guide policy

What else?

* Freudenberg
Which Came First?

Leverage Knowledge
Leverage Relationships
Leverage Commitment
Convene grassroots individuals from a large variety of diverse disciplines

Desired Outcomes for Forum #2
Details Matter

- Location of event & reduced parking fee
- Size of the Convening Space
- Roundtables to facilitate dialogue
- Biographical sketches of speakers
- Packets at each seat
- Good Acoustics & attention to hearing every voice
- Engaged in a personal dialogue with each participant
- Detailed Participants Form

Planning Forum #2

- Extensive dialogue with the education policy consultant
- Wanted people with the knowledge, passion and interest in collaborative approaches to be featured
- Engaged each presenter individually
- Structured the day to capture the multiple perspectives in the short amount of time afforded
Agenda

Welcome
- Nancy Carpenter, Executive Director, MA Coalition of School-Based Health Centers

Commission on School Dropout Prevention and Recovery:
- Sallie Sullivan, Executive Director, Boston Private Industry Council
- Michelle Chren, Commissioner, MA Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education

What We Know For Sure: A Rationale For Collaboration
- Jessica Richardson, PhD, Associate Professor, Division of Public Health Policy and Practice, University of Virginia, President, Tappan Consulting Group, LLC & W.K. Kellogg Foundation Education Policy Consultant

Dropout Danger Zone: A Clinician’s Perspective
- Loretta Yoder, MA, Clinical Director, Housatonic Community Health Center

Panel 1: Helping Transnational Children Succeed
- Thomas B. Kaganov, PhD, Superintendent of Schools, Canton School District
- Pamela Rowe, Lead School Nurse, Fitchburg Public Schools
- Susan Cost, Director, Training and Learning Policy Initiative, Mass Advocates for Children
- Allison Kilroy, Nurse Practitioner, and Site Manager, English High School-Based Health Center, Lynn Community Health Center

Panel 2: In the Danger Zone: Lessons Learned
- Tony Moore and Megan Harding, Counselors, Dean Tech High School, School-Based Health Center, River Valley Counseling
- Sarah Mandell, Student, Dean Tech High School, Holyoke
- Emmanuel Allen, Dropout Recovery Team, Boston Private Industry Council
- Tamra Watson, Coordinator, School to Career Pipeline Program, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice, Harvard Law School

Round Table Discussion
Closing Statements
- Jessica Richardson, PhD, Associate Professor, Division of Public Health Policy and Practice, University of Virginia, President, Tappan Consulting Group, LLC & W.K. Kellogg Foundation Education Policy Consultant

Next Steps & Concluding Adjourned
- Nancy Carpenter, Executive Director, MA Coalition of School-Based Health Centers

What did it look like?
Keynotes
Panel I

Trauma Sensitive Schools
Panel II

170 Participants
Participant Form

Who attended?

Forum participants represented diverse sectors:
- 20% from education
- 34% from health
- 18% from government
- 4% from multidisciplinary roles
- 24% “other”
Roundtable Discussion Questions:

• Think of one best practice that you think makes a difference. Try to describe the elements that make it work.

• What do you think the solutions are for moving forward from today’s convening?

• What recommendations do you have for the Dropout Commission and the Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet?

Lessons Learned

• Move out of comfort zone, but tapped into individuals heartfelt passion

• Capturing the detailed discussion takes time and talent

• We continue to be good at convening on a shoestring budget

• On the grassroots levels there are diverse stakeholders ripe for engagement

• Forum creates momentum and momentum precedes action
New Opportunities

Drop Out Commission Public Hearing Draws SBHC Testimony

Sarah Rulnick (Central)
Mary Fago (Western)
Linda O’Neil (Western)
Patti Mertes (Western)
Megan Harding (Western)
Nancy Carpenter

April Public Hearings: Dropout Commission in background
Renee Aird, Commissioner of DPH designee on the Commission
Redirecting the School to Prison Pipeline
Charles Hamilton Huston Institute, Harvard Law School

- Examines various routes students take that result in contact with the juvenile justice system
- Identifies points at which to intervene prevent or recover students on the undesirable path to incarceration
  - Informed the structure of meeting dialogue for future convenings
  - Connected with Holyoke in tracking/data collection on the pipeline

Boston Adaption of the Harlem Children’s Zone Project
James Jennings
Department of Urban Planning, Tufts University
Schott Foundation

• Invitation to a Policy Seminar: Connect the Dot Training for Organizers – State Budget and Tax Policies on Education

• Invited to attend Group Meeting with Secretary of Education Paul Reville to engage in dialogue about public education during these daunting times

• Invited to attend a Stand for Children Forum

MA Association of School Committees

• Attended joint conference of MA Association of School Committee / MA Association of School Superintendents (Fall 2008)

• Coalition will be coordinating 4 sessions focused on health for the Fall 2009 Joint Conference
Proceedings Generated from Forum #2

A Briefing for the Proceeding Report Release

School Dropout as a Public Health Concern

Forum Report
Avoiding the Dropout Danger Zone:
Creating a Collaborative Action Zone

Proceedings from the February 25, 2009 Forum
Boston, Massachusetts
Briefing

- Timing Important – Annual State Budget in Process
- Location
- Strategic Legislative Partner
- Strategically Selected Speakers
- Wide electronic distribution of invitation
- Individual invitation dropped off to each legislator

Briefing – Keynote Speaker

Just What the Doctor Ordered: A High School Diploma

Lauren Smith, MD, MPH
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

May 21, 2009
Presentation at MA Coalition of School-Based Health Centers Briefing
Briefing

Representative Liz Malia
MA State Representative

Neil Sullivan
Boston Private Industry Council

Susan Cole
Mass Advocates for Children

Gail Gall
MGH Institute for Health Professions

Briefing

Maureen Scott - Boston Public Health Commission,
Nurse Practitioner, Burke High School, School-Based
Health Center
Multiple Pathways…

…. A Local View

Dean Technical High SBHC
Role & Purpose of SBHC

• As a SBHC, we have the **responsibility** and the **access** to help make school a more safe, relevant and engaging environment for the school community that we serve.

• Our charge is to respond to issues of **health** and **wellness** at Dean on individual, school-wide and community levels.

Continuum of SBHC tasks Necessary to Prevent Dropout
Collaborative Efforts with School

- Focus on: School Climate
- Safe Schools Ambassadors
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Wellness Project

Dean Tech’s Safe School Ambassadors
Building school climate from the inside out
And how SBHCs can intervene...

1. Life events
   1. Psychotherapy, primary care and mental health support; referral to community service-providers
   2. Mental health support and psycho-education to families and schools about undiagnosed causes of “school refusal”
   3. School-wide climate work; mediation services; anti-violence programming; collaboration with school resource officers, VP’s and Juvenile Court.
   4. IEP advocacy and support; referral to community service providers, upward bound and tutoring programs.

2. Fadeouts
3. Push outs

4. Failure to Succeed

A community group formed with the goal of improving the city has decided to focus its efforts on raising the graduation rate to 100 percent of all students...

“...We decided the graduation rate affects everyone and the future of the city,” she said.

Better-educated students means a stronger work force for businesses, fewer people needing social services, improved real estate values and more people able to open small businesses, Casey said. “People are going to move here because there is a healthy school system,” Gilburg said.
Take Away Messages

- Everyone has a stake in helping students graduate
- You have to earn a seat at the table
- There are many places on the pathway to dropout to intervene
- Must work outside your comfort zone
- Don’t expect consensus on health’s role in preventing dropout

Reciprocal

Education  Health
School-Based Health Center Resources

MA Coalition of School-Based Health Centers  
www.mcsbhc.org

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care:  
www.nasbhc.org

Center for Health and Health Care in Schools:  
www.healthinschools.org

Center for School Based Health, Bureau for  
Primary Health Care, HRSA:  
www.bphc.hrsa.gov

Questions?

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School-Based Health Centers:
At the Intersection of Health & Education

Selected References


Disparities in Academic Achievement and Health: The Intersection of Child Education and Health Policy
Kerri Townsend and Justice Davidson
Pediatrics 2006;118;2076-2080
DOI 10.1542/peds.2006-0739

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the World Wide Web at:
http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/118/9/2076