



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2011 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 11, 2011

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- ☐ Community Health and Safety
- ☒ Community Partnership
- ☐ Community Sustainability
- ☐ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program Kent School Services Network
being nominated:

Jurisdiction(s) where County of Kent, MI
program originated:

Jurisdiction 600,000 estimate
population(s):

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2010, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: September Year: 2006

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 2011. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Daryl Delabbio, Ph.D.

Title: County Jurisdiction: County of Kent, MI
 Administrator/Co
 ntroller

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Matthew VanZetten

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KENT SCHOOL SERVICES NETWORK COUNTY OF KENT, MICHIGAN

Executive Summary

Kent County, and the members of its Family and Children's Coordinating Council, believed that by realigning health and human services we could do a better job to support student achievement, and ultimately ensure that all children are healthy and learning. What resulted was the creation of the Kent School Services Network (KSSN or Network) in the 2006/07 School Year. This Network is a partnership between the County of Kent, Kent Intermediate School District (KISD), network180 (CMH Authority), Kent County Health Department, Kent County Department of Human Services (Kent DHS), 17th Circuit Court, Spectrum Healthier Communities, Arbor Circle, D.A. Blodgett for Children, Family Outreach Center, and several local school districts including Cedar Springs, Godfrey-Lee, Godwin Heights, Grand Rapids, East Kentwood, and Wyoming

The purpose of KSSN was to provide a network of responsive, effective, seamless, and integrated services through a team of professionals to provide services to students and families at neighborhood schools. Emergency financial services that were once offered only in 'centralized' offices across town have now been relocated into the community. Access to physical, mental health and prevention services that once required a 'centralized' gatekeeper have now been decentralized with non-profit agencies permitted to open cases at school sites. Transportation and childcare barriers to services have been mitigated for families. Local funding has been braided with federal resources to provide additional supports and opportunities. In short, the coordination of school district, human service, mental health, and physical health resources as

well as an openness/willingness to change service delivery models is providing students with the needed resources to reach their full potential.

Program & Demographic Description

KSSN is a community-school model. According to the Coalition for Community Schools, a community school is ‘both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends.’ (communityschools.org)

Within KSSN, core personnel and services include the following: a) a community school coordinator to integrate and recruit necessary services; b) a nurse or nurse’s aid; c) a mental health clinician; and d) afterschool supports. Currently, eight schools have access to financial assistance staff from Kent DHS to support emergency financial needs, and next year up to 13 schools will have access to this service. Further, next year each KSSN school will have access to parent-partners – a peer support specialist for families with children in the child welfare or mental health system. And, the 17th Circuit Court continues to integrate its probation officers within the KSSN model to provide continuity of services to students.

In the 2010/11 school year, KSSN serves students and families in six school districts and 18 schools. Of the 13,500 students within these schools, 84% are from families living in poverty; 77% of students are children of color with 37% Hispanic/Latino, 32% African-American, and 8% Multi-Racial. Approximately, 11% of the children have serious emotional disturbances (SED), and 11% of suspensions and expulsions are related to drug and alcohol abuse.

The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced school lunch in Grand Rapids range from 78% to 98%, and the limited-English (LEP) proficiency percentage is 16%. Within Godfrey-Lee Middle/High 78% receive free and reduced lunch and the LEP percentage is 32.6%, which is the highest in Kent County. Within the 3,500 student East Kentwood High School campus, 43% of students receive free and reduced lunch, with a LEP percentage of 8.9%. In Wyoming, the elementary school served has 81% free and reduced lunch and an LEP percentage of 12.5%. In Godwin Heights, Godwin North has a 70% free and reduced lunch population, with a LEP percentage of 9%. And in our rural school district of Cedar Springs, KSSN serves 1,125 students in grades first, sixth, seventh and eighth, with 35% of students receiving free and reduced lunch and an LEP percentage of 0.4%. Surprisingly, Cedar Springs has the highest percentage of female-headed households with children under 18 years and the highest population percentage with less than a high school education.

Results to Date

KSSN is an initiative that is universally respected and valued. Key findings from the three-year pilot evaluation released December 2009 noted the following:

- All KSSN schools exhibited improvements in their MEAP test scores (state standardized AYP test)
- Chronic absenteeism rates declined in half of the KSSN schools, and overall reduced from 25.3% to 17%.
- Extreme chronic absenteeism decreased in five of the eight KSSN schools
- All KSSN schools met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) during the 2008-2009 school year.
- A cost benefit study concluded that each current student that KSSN helps to divert from dropping out of high school generates benefits worth more than \$2,000 per year to the state and community.

KSSN is on the cutting edge of the work being done nationally to address chronic absence. In November 2009, a delegation from the KSSN Leadership Team was invited to testify on Capitol Hill on “How Community Schools Are Addressing Early Chronic Absenteeism.” KSSN staff have presented at national conferences and webinars on the impacts of chronic absence. Through the KISD, KSSN has contracted with Grand Valley State University Community Research Institute (CRI) for both a qualitative and quantitative countywide evaluation on chronic early absenteeism in all public schools in Kent County. Further, KSSN Leadership has worked closely with state and federal policy makers on advancing the community schools strategy as a results-based, systemic approach to education reform that addresses the needs of the whole child.

Additionally, teachers find the work of KSSN beneficial as well. Teacher focus groups were held as part of the pilot evaluation and found the percentage of teachers who agreed strongly that their school was an enjoyable place to teach, that the school was an enjoyable place for children to learn, and that it was a welcoming place for parents to visit continues to increase. Evaluators saw the percentage rise approximately 10% from 2008 to 2009. Positive perceptions of in-school services have increased between 2008 and 2009. And most striking was the increased percentage of teachers who cited a positive impact made by Community School Coordinators. The percentage rose from 73.7% in 2008 to 81% in 2009 and 93.3% in 2010. Teachers reported that the number of students getting dental services and eye exams had significantly increased and that more services were available for their students.

Sustainability/Replication

Since its inception, KSSN has decreased the amount of philanthropy it has received as public funds have shifted to support the work. Initially, the model was funded 100% by philanthropy. Today, philanthropy supports approximately 60% with most of that used to pay

for the community school coordinators which was the one ‘new’ piece of KSSN. The other programs/services provided at the neighborhood schools resulted in program shifts. It is important to note that as results of KSSN have been demonstrated, the leadership of public entities examines its programs and looks for opportunities to realign its flexible funding streams to grow and support the Network. Several school districts and schools within our partner districts have reached out to KSSN Leadership with the hope of becoming a KSSN school.

Regarding replication, the community school model is built upon local context and opportunities. Across the nation, no two community school models look alike. However, there are core principals that community schools are built upon. First, the needs and services must meet the needs of the community. For KSSN, that meant holding focus groups with parents, teachers, principals, non-profit leaders and school administration to determine need and feasibility. Second, because each school and school district is different, ‘everything is a negotiation.’ (Children’s Aid Society National Technical Assistance Center). Knowing what works is important, but having flexibility is essential for the education and human service communities to work effectively together. Third, because in a start-up something is bound to go wrong, a commitment to ‘Having yes in your heart’ is essential (CAS National Technical Assistance Center). When challenges arise, it is important to know that there is a commitment from leadership to make this work and find creative solutions.

Conclusion

According to the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan “For every dollar spent (on community schools), we get back five, six, seven dollars from the business community, from non-profits, from the social service agencies, from the state (and) the federal government.” This reflects the reality of KSSN and its successful community partnership developed on behalf of children in Kent County.