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LaSalle School

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The Plan

Attached to this issue of the Change in Mind Digest is a depiction of the theory of change for the Brain Science Awareness Project. It outlines the context from which our plan was derived, the aims of the project, the strategies we plan to use, and the short and long term outcomes we hope to achieve. In this issue, we are focusing on the strategies we plan to use to improve brain science awareness, improve practice, and impact policy.

Strategies

Continued Participation in NYRJJ Taskforce

LaSalle is an active participant in the Capital Region Youth Justice Team, which is dedicated to bringing together partners to discuss ways to improve services and outcomes for youth involved in the local and state juvenile justice system. It involves broad community involvement, including the Division of Criminal Justice Services, and seeks to strengthen communication between state policy makers and local stakeholders in order to give a local voice in the state's juvenile justice reform efforts.

LaSalle Training Program

Our theory of change will result in a variety of educational opportunities and training so that the skills of practitioners are improved and parents/caregivers have increased access to instruction and training that enhance the likelihood of their child's positive brain development. These trainings will take three main forms: parent training, training for community partners, and Brain Science 101 Briefings.

ACEs Symposia

Another component of our work plan will be the expansion of the annual Capital District ACEs Symposium. We have received very useful feedback from our past symposia and plan to integrate that into our future offerings. We feel confident that we can generate more sponsorship and interest, and we anticipate a greatly expanded role for members of our state's legislature and leaders in our state regulatory agencies.

HEARTS Reinvigoration

LSS also plans to work to infuse structure into the HEARTS initiative to accelerate its impact. HEARTS is a network of about twenty human serving agencies in our region that has ACE Response at its core. We will institute a quarterly HEARTS newsletter that will share knowledge and lead to new member agencies.

Publications and Conference Presentations

The Brain Science Awareness Project aims to improve practice through the publication of research articles that would reach academic audiences and allow for the dissemination of our findings about ACEs and brain science. The commitment from the University at Albany will be a key resource in that aspect. Our relationships with other institutions of higher learning will also provide us with opportunities to give, for example, guest lectures which will both share knowledge and have the potential improve practice as future practitioners.

LSS is also committed to proposing conference presentations and panels to further share knowledge. LSS has a long standing history of presenting at a number of conferences, and we intend to present at a minimum of four each year.

2 Year Communication Plan

A key aspect for all of this work is the ability to effectively communicate what we are doing with others. As a result we will be developing a 2 year communications plan that will outline who we plan to talk to and how over the next two years. Our work plan will improve practice through a campaign to include the ACE questionnaire as part of routine practice for all service providers, including primary care physicians and pediatricians, as is happening in areas around the country.



Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is an approach geared at causing changes in individuals and social systems. It aims to create positive change in the followers in hopes that they will in turn become leaders. The approach focuses on four leadership approaches:

- Grow leadership by tapping a virtuous cycle of raised aspirations and increasing commitment
- Focus on 'hot spots' of productive innovation
- Combine performance and capability-building along a '45 degree' journey
- Shape an expanding community of shared purpose

While all of these are important for the Brain Science Awareness Project, the fourth approach is key for improving practice and impacting policy. In order to shape this community of shared purpose, transformational

leaders must develop a meaningful, shared purpose, obtain commitments to perform and learn, maintain a 'bifocal' drive toward short-term and long-term goals, create a community out of the diverse groups that may be interested in the impacts of brain science, and develop a shared language and levels of trust.



The "Virtuous Cycle"

LaSalle hopes to act as a transformational leader in the area of Brain Science within the Capital District and throughout the state. We have already made strides in this arena

Affecting Policy

One of the proposed longer term outcomes of LSS's Brain Science Awareness Project is affecting policies so that they are more trauma informed. This is certainly a daunting task, but presenters at the second convening provided us with a road map to aid in our journey toward affecting change like what has occurred in Alberta.

One of the key recommendations is to connect with policy champions sooner rather than

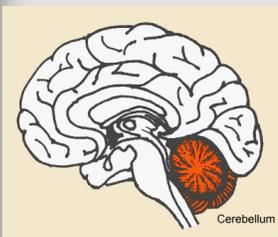
later, as they can help develop the message in a way that will get other legislators' attention and will allow the champion to prep the environment for advocacy. Much focus was placed on the importance of discourse and the importance of messaging and the articulation of a "core story" that people at all levels can tell to get the message across. We must be deliberate and intentional about the changes we want to see and how it affects outcomes. An-

other important aspect of the message is the return on investment. In a time when funding is scarce, being able to help policymakers understand the long term financial impact of unaddressed ACEs and childhood trauma can only help in the budgetary process, which can often be a roadblock to sustained change.

With all the emphasis on message, it is advantageous that messaging is the focus of the next two convenings

Brain Science Brief– The Cerebellum

- Second to last part of the brain to develop, 14-18yo
- Contains over 50% of the neurons in the brain
- Development encouraged by daily, vigorous exercise
- Organizes and refines action and muscle coordination
- Organizes thoughts, emotion, in concert with frontal lobe
- Is involved in certain cognitive functions, including language
- Triggers frontal lobe development!!



"Little Brain"

Healthy Child Development and Family Functioning
Local System Policy Changes
Regional, State, and National Policy Changes

Longer-term Outcomes

Internal:
-Understanding of trauma informed care
-Common language for all staff
-Opportunity to put training into practice
-Managerial debrief of challenging situations

External:
-Increased Awareness and Understanding of ACES
-Increased use of ACE Screening
-Engagement of contributors to policy, legislative testimony, participation in hearings
-Engagement of local media

Short-term Outcomes

LaSalle Training Program
-Internal
-External

Conference presentations and publications

ACE Symposia

Continued participation in NYRJJ Taskforce

HEARTS Reinvigoration

2 Year Communication Plan

Strategies



LaSalle School
Brain Science Awareness Project
Theory of Change

Share Knowledge
Improve Practice
Impact Policy

Aims

Context:
Internally, LaSalle School has engaged in significant organizational and culture changes as a result of the emerging information about the effects of trauma on the brain. We have embedded neurobiology and toxic stress training into our training for all workers. This training resulted in cultural and language shifts at the agency, providing a common, unifying way of seeing the students in our care.
Externally, LaSalle has participated in the acceleration of brain science awareness both locally and throughout the Northeast. LSS has hosted two symposia focused on ACEs and trauma informed care as it relates to policy and practice to audiences that included local policy makers and representatives of child welfare agencies. Staff members at LSS have developed a reputation for providing quality training, and have been invited to train other child welfare agencies, members of the juvenile justice system as well as a number of national and international conferences.