



**PRI Steering Committee  
Tuesday, July 21, 2015  
1:00-2:30 pm, MI Works  
MEETING NOTES**

**NOTE MEETING DATE CHANGE to 3rd Tuesday of the Month**

*Bringing the power of our collective knowledge and energy together to prevent and reduce poverty by **Inspiring, Advocating, and Connecting** through convening and incubation.*

**Called to Order at 1:00 p.m.**

**Present:**

Joe Bagby, DHHS	Jim Moore, Disability Network
Amy Burk, Mancelona Communities in Schools	Christy Nelson, MiWorks, TBAISD Adult Ed
Cindy Buss, NMCAA Head Start	Laura Obliger, Traverse Area Chamber of Commerce
Brandon Everest, NMC Sociology	Cindy Ooley, DHHS
Mary Graybrook, Mancelona Communities in Schools	Drew O'Connor, NMCAA
Deb Haase, Father Fred Foundation	Sakura Raftery, Goodwill
Jennifer Hamilton, Salvation Army	Jim Rowlett
JC Jeffrey, TBAISD	Sharon Vreeland, GTCC & LCFCC
Angela Jensen, Mancelona Communities in Schools	Leah Wachlin, Launch Manistee Americorps VISTA volunteer
Kathy Kundrat, NMCAA Head Start	Steve Wade, GT Regional Community Foundation
Janie McNabb, Networks Northwest	Tom White, Networks Northwest
Mary Manner, Great Start Collaborative	

**Convening conversations – Launch Manistee, MaryAnn Behm, Coordinator:**

Among many things, PRI seeks to convene conversations to reduce and prevent poverty with a variety of willing partners. One part of the discussion is identifying and addressing gaps in “cradle to career” initiatives. How do we work collaboratively in a decentralized manner to have a positive impact?

Today we will learn about the successful Launch Manistee initiative and network to enhance the work each of our organizations does.

MaryAnn Behm is the Launch Manistee Coordinator. She has extensive education and experience in the social work and educational fields, including special education and with Child & Family Services. She has been with the project for about a year.

- Started November 2012 with a Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) project grant.
- Partners include: Community Foundation, Education, DHHS, Alliance for Economic Success
- Mission: build a culture of education in Manistee County, and increase level of population with college education.
- April 2014 – “cradle to career” initiative launched to engage from preschool through college and community economic development
- June 2014 – coordinator hired to amplify on committee work. 2-year implementation grant received from MCAN.
- Kresge Foundation, Consumers Energy, Frye Foundation, Oleson Foundation, Rotary, United Way all provided seed funding.
- County government provides the home for the position
- Leadership team sets agenda for coordinator
- 3 Action Teams: Early Childhood, Post-Secondary, Career Readiness. Members recommended by leadership team or otherwise engaged on the fly. Started meeting November 2014
- Has a dashboard of data and metrics
- Two visionary goals:
  - By 2020 all 3-4 year old Manistee County Children will have access to a range of options for quality preschool experiences regardless of ability to pay (started at 48.2%, now at 53%. Difficult to gather data; primarily using point-in-time counts)
  - By 2025, 60% of Manistee County residents age 25-64 will have a post-secondary degree or credential. (currently at about 29%, or 39<sup>th</sup> of 83 counties, which is up from ranking at outset)
- Priority areas set for action teams for 1<sup>st</sup> year ending November 2015
- Doing some mapping to evaluate who is engaged and who is missing but should be engaged.
- Working to maintain a collective impact approach and keeping everyone engaged, not relying only on the coordinators’ efforts.
- Have worked to be project-oriented rather than an abstract concept.
- Early Childhood Group:
  - One meeting per month instead of many, thanks to relationship building between Great Start, Head Start and other local groups
  - Developed a survey sent to all kindergarten students (collaboration with schools) to determine why parents send kids to preschool, and what barriers exist. 67% response rate, and report developed
  - Worked with ISD, data people, and superintendents to develop data for the entire K-12 population as to which children attended preschools and where. This can provide concrete information about why preschool can

- be important to future school success as this data is combined with ongoing student performance
- Preschool Quality: Consumers Energy grant has enabled purchase of Creative Curriculum resources and tools for all of their preschools, tuition-based or GRSP.
  - Developed 5 new projects at June 2015 meeting, including: pre-school scholarship development; how to be more functional with child development and care money from DHHS, which is decreasing; curriculum; parent education; and common language about what it means to be “kindergarten ready.”
  - Post-Secondary:
    - Worked on specific MCAN initiatives with all 6 county high schools, including college application week (96% participation, 383 college applications completed, 30% of seniors said they would be the first in their families to go to college); FAFSA Completion Event; College Goal Sunday (NMC, Baker, and West Shore colleges worked with over 40 families on FAFSA completion); Decision Day (celebrating seniors making college attendance decisions and motivating underclassmen to aspire to some form of post-secondary education);
    - Next year will hold a career expo; considering mentoring and job shadowing opportunities
    - Will have a full-time college and career advisor for two high schools from Michigan Advise program. Schools had to contribute a combined \$5,000; the rest of the position is grant-funded.
  - Career Readiness Action Team:
    - Put together information on what career education and training is currently available in Manistee County, along with employer education and incentives available, and where gaps exist.
  - Collaboration, relationship building, and “checking egos at the door” to accomplish more collectively than individually
    - How do you measure culture?
    - Good press coverage has helped to build enthusiasm for participation
    - Feels it has been important to have a dedicated staff person to keep things organized, on track, and moving forward, rather than having the coordination/backbone activities performed by someone with other primary job pressures. The coordinator does not have a vested stake in any partner agency, only in the overall collaborative mission.
    - Ownership by leadership and action teams, and active engagement rather than leaving it all to the coordinator, are important.
  - Questions:
    - Data dashboards: using data that is already collected for the most part. Early Childhood pieces have some data development, particularly for tuition-based preschool. Also need to develop kindergarten readiness data, as the county does not currently have an incoming student

assessment. Also, the state only requires data from public schools and there are several private schools from which to develop data. Dashboard lists data sources, which will remain consistent year-to-year.

- What was the starting community conversation? Someone notices the planning grant that MCAN offers, and knew that county graduation, and college attainment and persistence, rates were not great. MCAN provided training along with the initial grant. It was focused on college access and economic development at first. There grew to be a realization that focus on college has to start much earlier in a child's educational arc.
- Jackson, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids are the only other cradle-to-career initiatives in the state. Allegan and Washtenaw are thinking about starting.

#### Mancelona Communities in Schools:

- Part of ICAN – Mancelona, Bellaire, Alba, Kalkaska, and Forest Area school districts
- Part of National Drop-out Network
- Site coordinator in each school building who addresses economic and non-economic barriers for students on a school-wide and individual basis.
- Students and families are matched with services providers to alleviate barriers.
- Offers mentoring, after-school, and summer programs; intervention programs to supplement what the school system offers.

#### Community Discussion:

- DHHS will be placing staff workers in each elementary school in Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau Counties to focus initially on truancy issues. The goal is to make it easier for families to connect to needed resources through the state agency.
- What does the group see as barriers to regular pre-school or elementary school attendance, and what can be done about it?
  - Transportation is a significant barrier. Some parents have to travel long distances from home to work and/or school.
    - The Manistee bus system has been helpful in getting kids between school, childcare and home. Work is being done with the Benzie bus system. Existing policy concerns have been a barrier. Having volunteers on busses to help young people navigate safely could be helpful.
  - Family Crisis
  - Family understanding that education is important, and that parents are their children's most important teachers.
  - Family that had negative childhood school experiences
  - Family fears about their children stepping outside of their current social class or circumstance

- School policies – rather than families being scolded or penalized if students are tardy or truant, they will call the kids in as being sick. Reducing or removing penalties for tardiness could help. Benzie and Leelanau schools have done some work in this area that may be informative.
- Community leader concerns that if post-secondary attendance and graduation rates rise, those people will leave the county rather than staying to benefit it.
- Children have to want to go to school, and feel like they belong and are wanted there. They need to have some skills to be successful in the school environment.
- It's hard to identify and obtain data about home-schooled students. Checking with groups like Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts might help. These groups may also provide great mentoring opportunities, as does MSU Extension.
- How much of the coordinating role has been conducting activities and how much has been coordinating the collaborative thread? MaryAnn's experience is that it's about a 50-50 split for her. Building awareness of all the things already happening shares time with connecting people and building capacity and systems to move new initiatives forward and have them become valued and sustainable.
- Keeping momentum going and partners active and enthusiastic is key.
- How are the small communities within Manistee County being drawn into the bigger vision? How do they sense that the initiative is for more than just the city of Manistee? Launch Manistee has been careful that everything they do and plan has county-wide implementation. They get buy-in from the superintendents of all schools. Centralized events like the FAFSA Completion event are held in a "neutral" space, such as West Shore Hospital, rather than at any one school facility.
- Launch Manistee's operating budget for the past year was about \$90,000. Salary, office space, supplies, some travel, and evaluation tools, have been the bulk of the expenses.

#### Follow-Up to the Conversation?

- People at the table today need to discuss today's conversation back at their agencies and collaborations to gauge interest. We know some people who are interested in this concept couldn't attend today.
- The geographical area to initially impact would need to be discussed. This would inform who should be at the table. Who are the influential people who have to be at the leadership table (superintendents, higher education leaders, early childhood program leaders) to initiate planning.
- How do we align all the various pieces that are already out there so they are in a common conversation?

- What does this area need? How can we respond? Once we know this, then we can find appropriate sources of funding.
- Have the statistics for our local area for the items listed in the Launch Manistee flyer. This might help create a local sense of need for engagement.