

Cross-sector Partnership with the Education Sector: Public Libraries

Working together to create communities where it is easier for all children to live healthy lives.



Background

The Healthy Kids Community Challenge Burlington (HKCCB) worked with cross-sector partners to develop Healthy Kids Opportunity Sites to promote physical activity, healthy eating and hydration, as well as reduced screen-time. This program built on existing community programs by providing funds, resources, guides and toolkits.

The focus was to build on the assets of a community. One way they did this was by developing partnerships with the education sector. This case study focuses on the challenges, strategies and actions to inspire others to develop a partnership with public libraries. The aim is to highlight overall challenges experienced, recommended strategies and actions taken by the HKCCB that could serve as examples for others interested in working with those in the education sector, specifically in library settings.



Challenges Experienced

- **Human resource issues:** Worked with a number of staff and experienced staff turnover within the library system.



Overall Recommended Strategies from HKCCB Experiences

- **Have strong leadership and align mandates:** Develop plans based on everyone's strengths, opportunities, barriers and challenges. Engage in discussions with those working in the library system to better understand how mandates could be aligned.
- **Leverage relationships:** Utilize Neighborhood Support Workers to reach out to learn more about their organization, programs and mandates and identify 'win-win' situations. Ensure on-going communication about initiatives.
- **Be flexible and adaptable:** Consider how people and organizations can be part of the partnership. Be open to different organizations participating across a continuum (e.g., distribution sites to active decision makers).



Examples of Actions

- Engaged in an innovative project that brought together staff from the library, a conservation authority and a local public health agency to write a children's book that encourages children to drink more water.
- Libraries are publicly available spaces and as such they provide universal access to reach people with messages who may otherwise not have been engaged. Therefore, HKCCB was able to increase access to a number of people in the community and create sustainable resources for the public to access.
- Created two 'Neighborhood Support Worker' positions. These are folks who went out and met with people within organizations (at all levels; front line to management) and had conversations to learn more about the sector, the organization and to identify ways each organization could work within the HKCCB. They often had the first contact for developing the relationship and built trust by sharing information about the partnership and identifying shared goals and objectives. This also helped inform the work of 'Neighborhood Action Teams' that included people from the community to develop an action plan for the HKCCB. These were paid part-time positions (~21 hours per week per person) at a cost of approximately \$20,000 per year per position and included other duties related to project (e.g., program planning and evaluation, development of resources, coordination of over 70 organizations).



Lesson Learned

Use the strengths of the community and build on them to develop trusting relationships.



About Keeping Kids Healthy through Collective Impact

This case study is part of an environmental scan serving to inform the Keeping Kids Healthy through Collective Impact project, an initiative that aims to build cross-sector linkages between health and social sectors in order to promote health equity and better address the social determinants of health. By sharing broadly the results from this case study, it is intended that others may find examples of strategies that can be applied in a variety of local contexts similar to those that were observed during the Healthy Kids Community Challenge activities as ways to promote cross-sector partnerships.

- To learn more about Healthy Kids Community Challenge Burlington visit [City of Burlington](#)
- For other ideas to build cross-sector partnerships, visit the Ontario Public Health Association's [Keeping Kids Healthy through Collective Impact project](#)
- We want to hear from you! Visit [opha.on.ca/KeepingKidsHealthy.aspx](#) to learn how to write your own case study and submit for publication.

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