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Thrive in 5 – Boston Initiative

Center for Social Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston

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Thrive in 5 – Boston Initiative

Center for Social Policy, John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies

Summary/Abstract

The Center for Social Policy (CSP) is the external evaluator of Thrive in 5 Boston.

Thrive in 5 is transforming Boston into a city that values and proactively nurtures young children's school readiness – because when our youngest children thrive, we all prosper. Thrive in 5 envisions a city where families, educators, providers, business leaders, and communities come together with the knowledge, skills, and resources to prepare children for success in school and beyond. The center is helping to identify, implement, and evaluate community interventions designed to increase Boston children's readiness for success in school at kindergarten age.

Goals and Objectives

The Center works in three major areas:

1. Design and implement evaluation of five Boston Children Thrive pilot communities;
2. Design an overall evaluation plan for the Initiative's current and planned work;
3. Coordinate evaluation of individual strategies with each other and the Initiative overall.

Thrive in 5 Goals:

- **By 2018, all of Boston's children will be ready for school at kindergarten entry.**
Today, only 54% of Boston's children are.
- **By 2014, interim goal = 75% of Boston's children entering kindergarten will be ready.**

This means shifting the paths of about 5,000 to 7,000 young children.

Boston Children Thrive : On-the-ground Pilot Communities

- Family Nurturing Center of MA (Allston/Brighton)
- Boston Community Partnerships for Children Neighborhood Cluster (East Boston)
- United South End Settlements (South End/Lower Roxbury)
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (Roxbury/North Dorchester)
- Dorchester House Multi-Service Center (Fields Corner)

Approaches and Methods

A Holistic Approach:

Thrive in 5 is leading a process to identify and implement a set of school readiness measures, from birth through kindergarten, that account for the **5 nationally recognized domains of school readiness: language development; cognition and general knowledge; approaches to learning; social and emotional development; and physical and motor development.** "School ready" is currently measured by the DIBELS, a literacy assessment.

Focusing implementation and evaluation on:

- 14 priority strategies
- 5 neighborhoods
- 2 critical aspects of school readiness: early language and literacy skills & healthy social-emotional and behavioral development, incl. self regulation

CSP's Evaluation Team is:

- Using progress indicators and context data to monitor Boston's progress toward achieving school readiness
- Focusing evaluation on impact and outcomes

Results/Impacts

- Evaluation learnings are used by community partners to inform their practice
- UMass Boston team is "thought partner", providing real time feedback for immediate use
- 5-6 UMass Boston students are involved per semester, approx 100 hours per student—conducting interviews in multiple languages
- The evaluation team taps multiple university resources by including students and faculty from four departments and the Center for Social Policy

UMass Boston Team

Team of interdisciplinary senior researchers:

- Donna Haig Friedman & Mary Coonan, CSP
- Alice Carter, Department of Psychology
- Anne Douglass, Early Education and Care in Inclusive Settings
- Oscar Gutierrez, former Associate Dean, College of Management

Resources & Funders

To learn more about Thrive in 5 Boston and read the Year 2 Report, visit www.thrivein5boston.org

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