



2017 Nelson Chair Roundtable
 on Networking
 Community-Based Programs:
Shared Leadership, Shared Outcomes

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Glossary of Terms

Active consent – In an active consent procedure, the introductory letter explains the nature of the study and provides a method to document permission.

Backbone organization – A defining feature of the Collective Impact approach is the role of a backbone organization – a separate organization dedicated to coordinating the various dimensions and collaborators involved in the initiative.

Collective impact – The commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration.

Cradle-to-career continuum – Cradle-to-career programs seek to provide children living in poverty with a high-quality birth-to-employment education through a continuum of services that include health, social, and economic supports in addition to school. School-family-community partnerships and data-tracking of student progress are central to the cradle-to-career model, which asks not just educators but all community service providers to take responsibility for student outcomes.

Fishbowl – A fishbowl conversation is a form of dialogue that can be used when discussing topics within large groups. Participants form two circles – one smaller in the center and one larger surrounding, so that the smaller circle can have a discussion while the larger circle can listen in and contribute. The advantage of a fishbowl is that it allows the entire group to participate in a conversation.

Partnership – Community health issues are best addressed by developing and sustaining partnerships between community organizations, academic institutions, and government. A community partner may be, but is not limited to, the following: local, state, national, international,

public, community-based, private, and academic organization. Partnerships will promote student engagement, workforce development, continuing education, community service, and collaborative community-based research.

Passive consent – A passive consent procedure typically involves distributing a letter to the children’s parents or guardians explaining the nature of the study and providing a method to retract permission.

Pipeline – An education pipeline views student progress as a continuum leading from high school into postsecondary education and through to the completion of a college degree and attainment of a livable wage job.

Social Network Theory – Social Network Theory is the study of how people, organizations, or groups interact with others inside their network.

Stakeholders – In education, the term stakeholder typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials, such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives.

Think tank – An institute, corporation, or group organized to study a particular subject (such as a policy issue or a scientific problem) and provide information, ideas, and advice.

Introduction

The tenth Nelson Chair Roundtable on Networking Community-Based Programs was held March 22nd and 23rd, 2017 at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. The sessions were moderated by Dr. Anderson J. Franklin, Director of the Roundtable and Honorable David S. Nelson Professor of Psychology & Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, and Sheena Collier, former Boston Promise Initiative Director at the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative located in Roxbury, Massachusetts.



Roundtable attendees included 70 participants from 40 partner organizations in the Boston-area, as well as past Roundtable participants from The Esimaje Foundation, an NGO located in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and the [Overtown Children & Youth Coalition](#) located in Overtown, Miami. It was the third Roundtable in partnership with the [Boston Promise Initiative](#) (BPI)—one of twelve federally-funded [Promise Neighborhoods](#). The [Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative](#) (DSNI) acts as the lead agency for BPI and has existed for over 30 years as a resident-led, non-profit group.

The Nelson Chair Roundtable, first held in 2008, began as a “[think tank](#)” meeting designed to bring community-based programs together for networking ideas, resources, and shared concerns. The vision was to develop a supportive network that fosters program-to-program mentoring and to strengthen ties between community-based programs in a coalition that enhances their capacity to effectively address the multitude of challenges facing the populations in their neighborhoods. Therefore, the goal of each Roundtable meeting is to promote community partnership discussions in order to:

1. Reduce organizations working in isolation
2. Revisit missions to align with coalition building
3. Increase capacity for evaluation and monitoring impact

4. Build upon organizational strengths
5. Promote strategies for sustainability

During the 3-year partnership with BPI the Nelson Chair Roundtable has provided a forum for BPI/DSNI partners to gain a deeper understanding of the Promise Neighborhood mission and to learn how BPI initiatives in which they participate contribute to a greater [collective impact](#) strategy. Starting in 2015, participants heard updates on the Promise Neighborhood program from the U.S. Department of Education, and attended a panel highlighting challenges faced by Boston-area organizations to improve outcomes on the [cradle-to-career continuum](#).

In 2016 the Roundtable theme, “Demonstrating Collective Impact”, focused on the five key elements of collective impact: 1) common agenda, 2) shared measurement systems, 3) mutually reinforcing activities, 4) continuous communication, and 5) support from a [backbone organization](#). Participants learned about four BPI program partnerships through presentations and structured discussions. Currently in their final year of federal funding, BPI serves approximately 2,500 children under the age of five, 4,500 K-12th graders, and 3,500 young adults ages 18-24 years, all who live in the targeted neighborhood considered the [Dudley Village Campus](#) (DVC—areas surrounding The Dudley Triangle in Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston) and either attend programs or attend DVC schools. BPI works through a network of 48 partner organizations and 13 sub-grantee programs.

Over the first two years of the partnership, a number of challenges to implementing the Promise Neighborhood mission were recognized. While some of these represented barriers specific to the context in which Boston Public Schools (BPS) and partner agencies are working, all share common factors impacting the work of community development and enrichment efforts nationally and globally. These include:

- Population versus program impact
- Creating opportunities for children within and beyond the DVC catchment area
- Shared leadership: DSNI staff capacity to manage multiple groupings of partners and community members
- Branding: creating a strengths-based image and implementing programs through community-based partners that are trusted by community members
- Influx of data: limited ability to share information with partners and community members in usable formats and in real time

The 2017 Roundtable theme, “Shared Leadership, Shared Outcomes”, represented the fourth year of a collective impact strategy to reinforce and strengthen bonds of organizations involved in an initiative to share leadership responsibilities and leverage partnerships in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes with the common end goal of supporting children and families in the community. The mission of the 2017 Roundtable was to assemble BPI partners working on three separate community initiatives to

The Five Elements of Collective Impact

Common Agenda - the need for all participating community organizations to have a common vision or understanding of the problems, as well as actions that will lead to solutions

Shared Measurement Systems - ongoing collection and sharing of data among community organizations, allowing for continued transparency

Mutually Reinforcing Activities - frequent collaboration between organizations to achieve a common goal

Continuous Communication - open communication used across organizations

Support from Backbone Organization - using a specific agency to coordinate activities within the community by the collective initiative (such as the role that DSNI plays in facilitating BPI efforts with Boston Public Schools and their community partners).

discuss successes, challenges, and strategies related to the shared leadership approach. Each group, dubbed “Mini-Roundtables,” consisted of BPI partners from the DVC. They were composed of community and youth [stakeholders](#), representatives from BPS, and members of the Boston College Roundtable network.

Mini-Roundtables were organized around three main focal points to guide this year’s discussions:

1. ***Principals as School and Community Leaders:*** Focusing on potential within principals’ dual roles as school administrators and community leaders with the intent of connecting schools to community organizations to increase local resources.
2. ***Mutual Data Sharing Agreements:*** Exploring how school district and community-based organizations can partner to utilize school and agency data to determine collective impact.
3. ***Building Pathways for Young People:*** Integrating youth voice and participation to define effective and meaningful strategies to support youth development beyond primary school years.

This year’s Roundtable also included two plenary sessions which presented concrete strategies, models and tools for inter-disciplinary and inter-organizational collaboration:

1. ***Networking Partnerships for Educational and Community Change:*** An exploration of how Social Network Analysis tools can be used to enhance collective impact strategies.
2. ***Using Data to Inform Policy Development and Sustainability:*** An illustration of how community-based organizations can use data for policy development and sustainability efforts using two Boston-based case studies.

The mission of this year’s meeting was to consider how BPI initiatives can continue without federal funding and move away from a reliance on a backbone organization to a shared leadership approach. The 2017 Roundtable presented an opportunity for school and community leaders representing agencies in Boston, across the nation, and around the world to discuss best practices, identify challenges and opportunities at multiple levels of operation, and envision next steps for taking action through the identification of resources and skillsets across organizations. Participants were asked to contribute their perspectives, experiences, and questions with the goal of fostering critical discussion and developing recommendations for supporting ongoing BPI developments and creating transferrable action plans for continuing this work in Boston and beyond.



Mini-Roundtables

Principals as School and Community Leaders

School principals play a key role in promoting learning and bolstering community support for the success of students. As leaders of learning and representatives of the missions of their schools, they

hold a dual role within their districts as school and community leaders. Principals play a key role in shaping a vision of personal and academic success for students, creating a climate that fosters safety and cooperation in education, cultivating leadership in others, supporting advancement and best practices in instruction, and managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Wallace Foundation, 2000).

This mini-roundtable was facilitated by Katrina Brink, School and Community Specialist at DSNI, alongside BPS principals Donette Wilson-Wood of Haynes Early Education Center, Khita Pottinger of Martin Luther King Jr. School, Megan Webb of Orchard Gardens, Lisa Gilbert-Smith of Dearborn STEM Academy, and Dr. Lindsa McIntyre of Jeremiah E. Burke High School. Participants of this group were school and community leaders working and organizing around issues of policy development, housing, family engagement, student support, and more. Over two days, participants were brought together to discuss the challenges facing students, families, school leaders, and decision-makers in their communities; to construct a framework for meaningful and sustainable partnerships; and to catalyze deeper dialogue about concrete and collaborative action steps for systemic change.

The *Principal Community of Practice* is a shared leadership strategy spearheaded by DSNI to support principals' collaborative efforts in advancing equity and achievement for students and their families. With DSNI as a facilitator, principals convene monthly to talk about their practice, relevant policy issues, and how to leverage key resources to meet shared goals. Starting in 2010 as a response to the need for greater communication and collaboration between school leaders and decision makers, this arrangement has gone through many iterations over the course of seven years. Presently, the Principal Community of Practice is composed of principals of the DVC schools that meet monthly as a group and engage key stakeholders and decision-makers in discussion of the issues that are most important to the success of children and families in the DVC area communities.

What were the targeted learning outcomes for participants in this mini-roundtable?

Participants and presenters co-constructed an agenda based on shared learning and skill-building goals, which included:

- Understand the dual role of principals as school and community leaders
- Identify resources that exist, as well as those that are needed, across schools
- Exploring resource-sharing and maximizing strategies
- Discuss the positions of, and relationships between, stakeholders – parents, families, schools, organizations, communities, government agencies
- Discuss DSNI goals and missions and their impact on community members
- Explore capacity-building strategies to mitigate shared concerns
- Identify and expand the list of individuals and agencies who share interest and responsibility in children's wellbeing
- Explore different avenues for duplicating DSNI initiatives in other parts of the state and country
- Identify what makes a sustainable partnership

Using the **Principal Community of Practice** as a framework for organizing at multiple levels to advocate on behalf of shared challenges of equity, participants learned about how DVC principals joined together to identify and address key issues facing their schools and collectively pursue structural changes. A [fishbowl](#) discussion was facilitated wherein the principals from the Community of Practice shared their experiences, focusing on the challenges they faced when

working independently to find solutions for their schools and the motivation to build a coalition of principals to collaborate on solutions for shared concerns within their schools. Participants heard from DVC principals about how connecting with fellow principals has improved their work and helped to sustain the impact of their dual roles as leaders within schools and the community. An overarching goal of this group was to discuss the impact of DVC schools getting connected, how this might inform future resource allocation, and what next steps for this group might be.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRINCIPALS GROUP INITIATIVES

From 2014 to 2017, the Principals in this working group identified two primary concerns facing their students – transportation equity and enrollment.

Transportation equity: Conceptualizing DVC students’ learning environment as being spread out throughout the city of Boston rather than contained within the smaller radius of students’ neighborhoods, principals within this community recognized that lack of access to MBTA transit passes and bus vouchers was limiting students’ exposure to important resources. These include enrichment programs outside of their neighborhoods, exposure to new career industries and employment opportunities across the city, and means of transportation to parks and recreational spaces that were impacted by lower rates of poverty and violence than some students’ neighborhoods, which are among the highest in the city. Because children are assigned to schools on a “home-based” system, most children attend schools close to their homes and are therefore ineligible for bus vouchers that require living 2+ miles away from school; these children are therefore locked into neighborhoods limiting opportunities and creating a larger access and opportunity gap. Principals in the Community of Practice recognized that their students were all impacted by this issue and have been organizing to mandate district-wide funding for transportation, recognizing that their impact and advocacy efforts are much more successful when supported collectively.

Enrollment: A recurring issue for DVC schools was the fact that budgeting allowances, which are based on projections of enrollment of students per school, were consistently predicting a much lower enrollment rate than the schools were experiencing, in part due to late or intermittent enrollment for some students throughout the year. This was resulting in overcrowded and under-resourced classrooms. With the support of DSNI, the Principals group was able to bring this systemic issue which was inadvertently driving inequity to the attention of Boston Public School stakeholders. Because principals recognized the impact of inaccurate enrollment projection was a shared challenge, they were able to mobilize for structural change – currently, budgeting for programs at the DVC schools accounts more accurately for fluctuations in enrollment throughout the year which has helped sustain more manageable class and program sizes, resulting in higher quality services for students.

What are the challenges involved in implementing a formal collaborative tool such as the Community of Practice? Principals discussed the challenges that came with implementing a collaborative working group. Participants asked questions about principals’ process and concerns, contributing perspectives from their own work within school systems. As a result, six key challenges were established for further consideration:

- **Sustainability:** In order to sustain a relationship or the positive impact of any given change that can be made within a community, one must consider the central issues of time and funding.

- **Replication:** How can we create guidelines for other communities to replicate the work of DSNI and to promote the development of working groups and collaborative initiatives across and between states? Which aspects of this model are flexible to be tailored to the specific needs of other communities and which can be identified as firm best practices?
- **Partnership with districts:** What kinds of support and resources do principals ultimately need from their districts?
- **Transformation:** How can collaborations become more effective, building deeper levels of trust and accountability between community partners, funders, and families? It is important to have a future vision, asking “What is the next step for this type of work?”

What are the key strategies, approaches, and considerations involved in creating and maintaining collaborative partnerships among school and community leaders? Participants of the roundtable brainstormed key strategies, factors, and elements for replication of the Principal Community of Practice model and to guide future developments of this group:

- **Needs Assessment Strategies:** In order to join and leverage the various perspectives, resources, and skillsets that are shared within any given community, formal and informal strategies for assessing the needs of students and their families are necessary. Participants of this roundtable consistently acknowledged that while processes for assessing community needs are time-consuming, they are of utmost importance and should be prioritized.



- **Alignment from multiple systems and stakeholders:** Every community has multiple stakeholders, such as principals, students and their families, district leaders, policymakers, and funders. It is crucial to understand the goals of every stakeholder, how they relate to one another, and how to support their alignment in order to positively impact students.
- **Networking:** Creating opportunities to forge and nurture connections between stakeholders is of utmost importance to discover underutilized, along with new and innovative, strategies and resources.
- **Commitment:** Commitment is a central ingredient to sustaining important relationships and enabling collaborative efforts. Staying involved and active in social and organizational networks gives life to these strategies.
- **Dual Role of Principals:** More emphasis is needed on the role that principals play in communities. Community engagement and ongoing communication between principals and other community members promotes trust, fosters broader involvement on all sides, and enables greater insight to how families and schools are experiencing challenges and which resources can be leveraged toward solutions.
- **Branding:** Principals reflected on the fact that this working group would benefit from a clear mission statement that is translatable in-and-outside of the school context. By communicating the needs and goals that principals have on behalf of their schools clearly, the group can more effectively bring other stakeholders on board.
- **Distributive Leadership:** There are diverse talents, skills, and perspectives within schools and communities, which can be utilized more inclusively; leveraging these skills is a central task for gaining momentum and having collective impact.

Mutual Data Sharing Agreements



Individuals, agencies, and organizations involved in public health research and social change efforts have access to various and often distinct forms of data. While data collection, evaluation, and exchange presents opportunities for generating new knowledge and bolstering collective impact efforts, it raises a host of social, ethical, and administrative challenges. Effective data exchange can increase the efficacy of programming and expand opportunities for funding. However, too few guidelines have been established regarding the formal mechanisms for data sharing, including what to include in data sharing agreements, and how to engage in conversations regarding data use and re-use (Jarquin, 2012).

This mini-roundtable was facilitated by Andrew Seeder, DSNI Data Systems Manager, and Akshata Kadagathur, Evaluation Associate from the Offices of Data and Accountability/School and Community Partnerships for Boston Public Schools (BPS). Participants were introduced to the steps involved in planning for data exchange as well as the accountability processes involved in effective data sharing through a guided review of a Mutual Data Sharing Agreement (MDSA) between DSNI and BPS.

Who can benefit from a deeper understanding of MDSAs? Participants of this group were leaders and learners working in education advocacy and reform as well as family support programs nationally and around the globe. They shared a range of interests and learning goals:

- To learn what has changed in data sharing and evaluation work
- To explore strategies for demonstrating with data the impact of programming
- To develop approaches for formalizing data collection, analysis, and sharing
- To understand, interpret and represent qualitative data more effectively
- To use data to tell a rich, compelling story of the work that is being done in communities and between organizations
- To explore how the conversation around data ownership and sharing is negotiated with various stakeholders – students, schools, funders, organizations
- To build and strengthen partnerships for the purpose of using data effectively

How can MDSAs support community/academic partners in planning, enacting, and demonstrating collective impact strategies? The discussions that ensued were grounded in an in-depth exploration of a MDSA between DSNI and BPS that was written up in support of ensuring data-driven, high quality and student-focused outcomes for the Boston Promise Initiative. The purposes of the agreement are to:

- Establish a mutual data sharing agreement for DSNI and BPS with the specific purpose of streamlining data sharing between case managers and school administrators for [No Child Goes Homeless](#) (an initiative spearheaded by DSNI and Project Hope to support families facing homelessness), and to set up an evaluation framework for a cohort of Promise students.
- Enhance the ability of both partners to improve targeted program enrollment and academic achievement for DVC students by allowing access to individual student records consistent with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

Download the Mutual Data Sharing Agreement between BPS and DSNI

- Establish terms and conditions for the sharing and protection of student Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and other program data between the partners (this type of data sharing is necessary for DSNI, BPS, and their community partners to identify which programs may help each child succeed, to assist program staff and volunteers in their roles with each child and family, to monitor and track student progress over time, to assist program effectiveness, to complete reporting requirements and program evaluation and research.
- Identify roles and responsibilities of BPS and DSNI as they pertain to data sharing
- Establish data analysis and reporting mechanisms that will allow DSNI and BPS to report on progress toward shared goals and to demonstrate the efficacy of collective impact.
- Allow DSNI community partners (other than BPS) to join this partnership and data sharing by agreeing to the conditions and terms laid out in the original agreement



What are the conditions that need to be in place to create a mutual agreement for sharing and using data effectively? Participants walked through each step of the MDSA document, focusing on the way that language within the document reflected the respective goals and challenges. It is important to note that negotiations between DSNI and BPS took a very long time (18 months), with some road blocks including disagreements over the logic model and two project plans, both of which were reviewed by mini-roundtable participants. The group identified key factors that are

integral to collecting, sharing, and using data in a way that is mutually beneficial to all members of a partnership:

- **Coalitions of Need:** In order for data to be most helpful to research, program development, and policy efforts, it must be useful at these multiple levels. Participants of this roundtable discussed the importance of identifying coalitions of need made up of various organizations/agencies working toward particular goals and using distinct aspects of a dataset; by sharing data, members within a coalition can use the data to progress key aspects of a larger shared goal. In the case of the data sharing agreement between BPS and DSNI, student-level data can drive improvement and accuracy in the work done by schools, community-based organizations, government agencies, funders, and policy-makers.
- **Shared Technical Standards:** There is a variety of ability as well as access to technological advancement across/within any coalition of need. The affordability and relevance of data collection, analysis, management, evaluation, and sharing methods greatly impacts the extent to which data can benefit those that are trying to use it for their work. Roundtable participants brainstormed the range of ways that technology and data interface with the work being done toward education equity and advancement and explored ways that smaller organizations can gain access to technical support in pursuit of using data effectively. Some solutions included surveying the technical skills that already exist among members of community based organizations, identifying public learning spaces and resources for technological skill-building services, and creating partnerships between larger organizations with the resources to bolster technical skills and smaller organizations that can benefit from the technical support of larger partners.
- **Active versus Passive Consent:** Organizations need data about their program participants to demonstrate effectiveness, improve programming, and sustain funding sources. Organizations that work with students in schools need access to individual student data in

aggregate form, which is protected. The important distinction between active and passive consent procedures is that [active consent](#) requires a parent or guardian to signify in writing their permission for a child to participate in the study, while [passive consent](#) assumes that a parent or guardian has consented unless some action is taken. Roundtable participants discussed the fact that the type of consent required for data collection depends on the nature of the relationship between the organization and school, noting that smaller organizations tend to have stricter requirements for obtaining active consent than larger organizations, which can establish protocols to permit larger data collection efforts that are permitted through passive consent procedures. The value of partnership between larger and smaller organizations was underscored in this conversation, as participants explored whether larger organizations can share permission for passive consent procedures with partnering organizations to ameliorate the need for more challenging, time and resource consuming, processes of obtaining active consent.

Resources: If you are a civic and/or community leader wishing to use shared data to improve academic and life outcomes for students while protecting student privacy, see [this toolkit](#) from the U.S. Department of Education.

To learn about guidelines and best practices for data sharing agreements in community-academic partnerships, see [this resource](#) created by the Community Health Data and Monitoring Committee of the Colorado Clinical and translational Sciences Institute's Community Engagement Core.

Building Pathways for Young People

Too many postsecondary students drop out or graduate from college in debt and struggling to find good jobs. Incorporating the experiences, needs, and goals of young people is vital to the success of advocacy efforts and programs designed to create opportunity for youth. Schools, community-based organizations, work investment boards, and other stakeholders can collaborate to implement consistent, data-driven processes for exploring career pathways that are relevant and attainable for young people living in a variety of socioeconomic contexts. Ensuring that youth voice and participation are part of collaborative and planning efforts between schools, postsecondary programs, and industry employers can lead to partnerships that provide localized, sustainable access to in-demand, and livable wage jobs for youth.



This mini-roundtable was facilitated by Carrington Moore, who previously served as the High School to Career Manager for DSNI as well as the liaison and facilitator for the partnership between the [Youth Voice Project](#) (YVP), [Jobs for the Future](#), and DSNI; four Peer Leaders from the YVP: Shayla Fonfield, Amanda Shabowich, Shannon Simpson, and Katryana Tovar; and three community partners engaged with the YVP: Kristin McSwain, Executive Director of [Boston Opportunity Agenda](#), Erve Niclas, Youth Council of [Boston Youth Service Network](#), and Rob Surrat, Postsecondary Employer Account Manager of Boston [Private Industry Council](#).

What were the learning goals for this mini-roundtable group? Facilitators of this mini-roundtable offered the following goals, which were met through a panel discussion, case presentations, a structured brainstorming activity, and group discussion:

- Identify how youth distinguish strong postsecondary programs that lead to in-demand, livable wage jobs in their region
- Learn how to infuse youth voice into building viable career pathways for students
- Identify how postsecondary/career counselors, parents, and caring adults can provide more informed career guidance to youth
- Discuss ways that schools, community-based organizations, workforce investment boards, and other stakeholders can collaborate to effectively implement a consistent, data-driven career pathways exploration process

Participants of this group were students, educators, career counselors, and community organizers; they offered the following additional goals:

- Learn how to improve post-secondary work options and career opportunities for youth
- Identify key leadership strategies and skills to help in career development
- Gather ideas and insights to make youth development programs more beneficial
- Improve youth programming at DSNI
- Engage professionals and experts outside of the education realm in supporting innovative and relevant youth programming

Youth Voice Project Presentation: Peer Leaders kicked off this roundtable session with a presentation of the [Youth Voice Project](#). Participants learned about the mission and goals of YVP as well as its role in establishing viable pathways for youth success. Presenters discussed the implementation of YVP as a means of expanding pathways for Boston's youth through key partnerships, including [The Connection Center](#), [Best Bet](#), [Success Boston](#), and [Single Stop USA](#). The group identified three key barriers to success for the project, which were housing instability, financial literacy, and clarity around pathway options.

The [Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative](#) is made up of 80 different partners, including local community-based organizations, Boston Public Schools, philanthropists, city and state agencies, and postsecondary institutions. **Opportunity youth** are 16-24 year olds who are either underemployed or at-risk of drop out, or both. Boston OYC supports opportunity youths through training, education, and career opportunities all of which rest upon the foundation of prioritizing youth voice and strong [community partnerships](#). Boston OYC is working to create a collectively-shared data system to close loop holes where youth become disconnected and to help track their success.

The **Youth Voice Project** consists of a diverse group of youth leaders who focus on assisting students, specifically **opportunity youth**, through advocacy, partnerships, and promotion of resources. As a team, these Peer Leaders provide research and outreach strategies to find data that may help OYC engage youth in Boston. Leaders stay involved through youth-led events, outreach, focus groups, and organizing events to speak on issues impacting youth in the community.

The YVP is guided by five key values:

- No decisions about youth without youth
- Build genuine relationships
- Ask, respond, and act
- Informal and formal opportunities for leadership
- Balanced treatment, input, and validation

Group Activity – Pathways to Success: To model the process by which programs and partnerships have been developed by DSNI as well as explore barriers and solutions for creating opportunities

for youth, roundtable participants completed a group activity in which they broke out into three groups: Persistence through High School, Persistence through College/Postsecondary Credential, and Persistence through Career. They were instructed to brainstorm a pathway for youth that leads to success in each specific realm of development. During the activity, participants were asked to collectively identify current solutions and barriers that exist for students within their respective [pipeline](#) and identify existing or ideal interventions/solutions to remedy the barriers that were identified.

Participants identified the following barriers that may keep young people from progressing through pathways:

- Access to health care
- Mental health challenges
- Time management
- Financial aid and literacy
- Limited funding and resources
- Access to secure housing
- Access to transportation
- Food insecurity
- Availability of jobs and training



Participants discussed the following existing or potential solutions to barriers that were named:

- It is important to start supporting and encouraging young people’s development and success early on (the point of intervention for college or career readiness begins in early childhood education).
- Students must be exposed to professionals in the world with whom they can identify, successful adults that young people see as a reflection or representation of themselves (on the basis of identity, community of origin, as two examples).
- A linear, structured learning trajectory is not suited for all types of learning. Support for students must be varied in the ways it can be delivered to ensure that the most students are able to be reached and stay engaged.
- Young people often do not intentionally learn skills of well-being and financial literacy; these must be taught through a diverse system of supports. This includes college preparation courses, time management skills, credit-bearing courses, navigating internship application processes, and stress management skills.
- Instability is a big reason for drop-out – how can schools provide more stability for students and their families.
- Career advisement and mentorship are integral to young people accessing opportunities for exploration of new personal and professional environments.

Panel Discussion: A panel discussion was held to offer an opportunity for participants to ask questions about the importance of youth voice in programming designed to support opportunities for youth development and success. Panelists spoke about victories, barriers, strategies, and best practices in engaging youth and community/industry stakeholders around creating pathways for success:



- Include youth committees or high school to career working groups as formal structures to aid in decision-making processes.
- As in DSNI, treat youth leadership the same as resident leadership within DSNI in terms of valuing and pursuing youth contributions and goals and balancing guidance with fostering agency and creativity.
- Develop strategies around how to engage potential partners, especially those that don't work directly with youth. One example of this is to align your work with brokering relationships: if our agency makes sure that young people are competent in the areas relevant to your business, can your business ensure spots for these young people to occupy in a training and/or employment role? Another consideration is to engage large-scale employers along with local merchants to broaden the scope of partnership and opportunity.
- Consider what funding sources prioritize and how this aligns with what youth voice prioritizes. Building social capital with new potential partners is a means of tapping into new resources with the goal of exploring and sustaining funding sources.
- Incorporate youth voice into institutional decision making as a means of staying relevant and true to the mission of youth development.

Download the YVP handout on incorporating youth voice into institutional decision-making

Plenary Sessions

The Nelson Chair Roundtable seeks to build upon the rich knowledge and capacities of organizations by promoting the sharing of inter-organizational and inter-disciplinary information, best practices in leadership, and organizational effectiveness. This year's plenary sessions were informed by themes of previous roundtables, which were expanded upon to provide tools for future success. Participants learned from leading scholars, educators and practitioners who are working with diverse forms of data toward educational progress, community transformation, and policy development efforts.

Networking Partnerships for Educational & Community Change: Social Network Analysis



Kyle Fagan and Amanda Weber, doctoral students at the Lynch School of Education, Boston College, gave a presentation emphasizing the importance of utilizing existing networks to achieve collective impact results. The main challenge that was addressed by this presentation was how individuals and organizations working on complex issues of social change can collaborate, rather than working in isolation, with the goal of improving interventions and outcomes. Despite the value of collaboration being one that resounds across organizations in their efforts to maximize

capacity to solve problems, there continue to be challenges in understanding what the process of collaboration looks like, particularly in terms of breaking down agency "silos" and developing an infrastructure of systems and resources. The goal of this presentation was to increase audience understanding about the collaborative process in an effort to better support partnership efforts of organizations engaged in social change on various levels.

The presentation began with an overview of networks and collaborative relationships grounded in [Social Network Theory](#). Following this, a strategy called Social Network Analysis was presented

and explored through the lens of the partnerships that have been created within the Boston Promise Initiative. Social Network Analysis is a research methodology that focuses on relationships between actors, or partners in collaboration. It is a tool that can be used for systematically assessing the nature of partnerships and intervening at critical points to sustain and improve collaboration. This strategy can enhance a community's capacity to:

- Combine diverse knowledge and skills for effective solutions to complex problems
- Influence decision makers and opinion leaders
- Be responsive to community needs
- Coordinate collective tasks and services efficiently



The presenters walked the audience through a Social Network Analysis activity looking at the inter-organizational relationships that exist within the Boston Promise Initiative, identifying key factors that support the development and maintenance of these relationships, such as authenticity, transparency, and trust. After exploring Social Network Analysis as a formal process, the presenters introduced

[Download the Social Network Theory Presentation](#)

the [Social Network Toolkit](#), which they created as a concrete resource to help individuals and organizations maintain and expand their networks by addressing challenges of shared leadership, capacity building, implementation of strategic planning, shared outcomes, staff development, and sustainability.

Using Data to Inform Policy Development & Sustainability

This plenary session sought to illustrate how the wealth of institutional data can be identified and used for evaluation as well as for policy development and sustainability. Rebekah Levine Coley, Professor of Counseling, Developmental, & Educational Psychology at the Lynch School of Education began by laying the groundwork for data collection and use by organizations. Next, Laura O'Dwyer, Associate Professor in the Department of Measurement, Evaluation, Statistics & Assessment at the Lynch School of Education, presented on [City Connects](#) as a case study for using data to influence policy development. Finally, Kristin Haas, Data & Policy Coordinator at [Project Hope](#), shared how Project Hope used data for tracking evictions and changing city policy.



Why should organizations collect and use data?

- Self-monitoring and quality improvement
- Access to funding and support
- Advocacy and policy development efforts

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An exploration of where and how to access data followed, emphasizing three key points grounded in a logic model:

- How to exploit current systems to build data
- How to build new data systems

- How to access other extant data sources such as administrative records, federal surveys, and national statistics

The presentation also included a review of data quality and research designs and their respective strengths and challenges:

- Descriptive data – seeks to describe a sample systematically
- Prospective/comparative data – tracking progress and comparing between time points
- Rigorous quasi-experimental data – creating a comparison group in a meaningful way
- Randomized control trials – assigning groups at random; most rigorous in drawing causal conclusions

Finally, the overview concluded with an exploration of sources for accessing support and collaborative efforts, including universities, consulting firms, government agencies, and community organizations.

Case Study: Project Hope

[Project Hope](#) is a multi-service agency at the forefront of efforts in Boston to move families up and out of poverty. It provides low-income women with children access to education, jobs, housing, and emergency services; fosters their personal transformation; and works for broader systemic change. Integral to the work of Project Hope is understanding the causes of, and potential solutions to, family homelessness. As a smaller organization, this agency benefitted from partnering with Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development to access and analyze Boston Housing Court eviction data over several years. Doing so enabled Project Hope to identify factors that were directly impacting families' experiences of housing instability and contributing to rates of homelessness in Boston. Findings from this data directly informed the development of key partnerships and creation of city-wide coalitions to help address evictions of low-income families. Further, the findings informed advocacy efforts that have since resulted in policy developments to help protect families at risk of homelessness and engage government agencies in tackling systemic issues promoting (or preventing?) homelessness in a meaningful way. Data evaluation of the program's impact shows an 8-15% decrease in evictions of low-income families over three years, proving that large datasets can contain opportunities for important policy change and that partnerships are critical for large-scale data analysis.

[Download the Project Hope presentation](#)

Case Study: City Connects

[City Connects](#) is an organization that grew out of a partnership between Boston College Lynch School of Education, a BPS elementary school, and several community agencies whose aim was to explore the ways that out-of-school factors impacted students' success and thriving in school. In an iterative process, City Connects convened school principals, teachers, other school and district staff, representatives of community agencies, and families to develop a system that re-organized their efforts into a successful system for student support that addresses a range of contextual and developmental domains. By collecting data in a student support information system, City Connects was able to record, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions for the goal of improving student outcomes. Now a scalable implementation, City Connects offers services along three tiers – prevention and enrichment, early intervention, and intensive intervention. By collecting data on reviews, services, partnerships, and program fidelity, City Connects is able to give immediate feedback to those involved in implementing the interventions; manage quality control by tracking adherence, deviations, and variations from its original model; and report on areas of implementation focus, progress, and opportunity for improvement to district leaders. The data collected by City Connects informs district-wide decisions on school resources and programming, helping to support students in all of the areas that are most important to their long-term success.

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