

A Guide for the Development of School-based Mental Health Partnerships



Developed from the experiences of the Intensive Support Program.

A collaboration of the Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education and the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center through the Effective Practices in Collaborative School-Based Mental Health Services Grant from the New York State Education Department.



With Thanks...

Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education and the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the staff of the Intensive Support Program. Without the understanding and insight of this group of dedicated professionals, this manual could not have been written.

We also thank the New York State Education Department for the funding provided through the Effective Practices on Collaborative School-Based Mental Health Services.

And, thanks to the many talented and creative students whose artwork graces the pages of this manual.

Photo above from left: Andrew Malekoff, *Associate Director of North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center*, Mehri Fryzel, *Assistant Director, Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education*, Marion Levine, *Executive Director/CEO, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center*, Russell Riggio, *Executive Director, Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education*.

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We gratefully acknowledge our New York State legislators who have been most supportive in the ongoing development of the Intensive Support Program. They are Assemblymen: Thomas P. DiNapoli, member of Committee on Education; Steven Sanders, Chair of the Committee on Education; Peter M. Rivera, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health; and past Chairs of the Committee on Mental Health James Brennan and Martin Luster.

Introduction

This manual provides information on a school-based mental health collaborative that represents a unique partnership between a public school and a private, voluntary, nonprofit organization. The collaborative, known as the Intensive Support Program (ISP), was developed by the Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education and the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center (NSC & FGC). Both organizations operate on Long Island in New York State. This manual includes background information on both partners and a brief history of the mental health collaborative. It covers many important aspects of the mental health collaborative that can be replicated or adapted by other programs.

This manual was developed to assist providers who are now offering or who are considering offering mental health services in a school setting. The staff of both mental health agencies and educational institutions can benefit from an understanding of the experience of the Nassau BOCES/NSC & FGC Intensive Support Program. To develop this manual, the program staff—both mental health and educational professionals from the collaborative—created an outline of topics based on their experience in the program.

Working from the topic outline, small groups of staff members developed information that can be considered vital to the operation of a successful collaborative. Each small group included both the mental health and educational agency professionals. The manual was then developed from their work. Before the final version of the manual was printed, the material was reviewed by program administrators and program staff. It is hoped that all those who will use this manual will find the information helpful in the development and provision of mental health services in the educational setting.

The development of this manual was part of the technical assistance activities conducted by the Nassau BOCES/North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center partnership through the Effective Practices in Collaborative School Based Mental Health Services Grant from the New York State Education Department. The grant was awarded to the collaborative in 1999 and included funds for technical assistance and program enhancement activities.



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PROGRAM BACKGROUND INFORMATION



THE SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

The Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education and the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center (NSC&FGC) provide a school-based mental health collaborative for students from 56 school districts located in Nassau County, Long Island, New York. The following background will help those using this manual to understand the collaborative.

Program Mission

The mission of the Intensive Support Program is to: educate children and youth, ages 5 to 21, with serious emotional disturbances in the least restrictive environment; improve their social, emotional and academic development; and reduce costs by preventing long-term residential placements.

In the Beginning

Mental health services at Nassau BOCES began in 1990 when the Department of Special Education developed a mental health collaborative program with the Sagamore Children's Hospital (located in Suffolk County, Long Island) through the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH). The program was provided for students at the Nassau BOCES Center for Community Adjustment (CCA), a special education high school program. This program had a limited allocation from OMH and as a result, it reached capacity shortly after it was opened.

Growth

The need for mental health services on the high school level led to the creation of the Intensive Support Program. In 1996 Nassau BOCES joined with the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center to form a partnership that developed this school-based mental health partnership on the high school level. From eight students in 1996, the high school program has now grown to 48 students. Expansion to elementary school and middle school followed. The total number of students in the Intensive Support Program is currently 132.

Expansion to the Middle School

When the Directors of Special Education in the 56 local school districts of Nassau County were approached with the idea of expanding the mental health program on the high school level, they recognized the need for mental health programming in the middle school. In 1997, after additional planning with the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, the Intensive Support Program opened in the Eagle Avenue Middle School, a Nassau BOCES special education program for students, ages 10 to 15.

The mental health program at the Middle School was filled to capacity within months of its opening. Since its first year the number of students in the program has steadily

The need for mental health services on the high school level led to the creation of the Intensive Support Program.

The BOCES/NSG&FGC collaborative brings together educational and clinical staffs who both work as members of the educational staff.

increased. As of the 2002-2003 school year, there were 60 students in the middle school program.

The Nassau BOCES/NSC&FGC collaborative brings together educational and clinical staffs who both work as members of the educational program staff.

Services for Elementary Students

The continuing need for a school-based mental health program for younger students led to the opening of an Intensive Support Program at the Nassau BOCES Elementary Program, a special education program that serves students ages 5 to 10. There are now 24 students in the Intensive Support Program at the Elementary Program.

For clarification purposes, the school based mental health collaborative provided by Nassau BOCES and NSC&FGC in BOCES special education programs is known as the Intensive Support Program (ISP) at the elementary school, middle school and high school programs.

Staff

The Nassau BOCES/NSC&FGC Intensive Support Program brings together educational and clinical staffs who work as members of the program staff within the educational setting. Interdisciplinary teams consisting of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, vocational rehabilitation counselors and special educators provide services for students. All team members are uniquely equipped to meet the needs of students served by the ISP. The overall goal of all personnel is to maximize the potential of the students they educate and serve.

The Collaborative Program

The ISP is a strengths-based program designed to optimize and encourage each student’s unique talents, academic abilities, social skills and emotional development. Since the collaborative is a school-based mental health program, treatment services are offered within the student’s academic program. All students who currently receive services from the ISP are in center-based special education placements on an elementary, middle school or high school level.

The program is structured to promote a student’s commitment to learning by helping him/her become actively engaged in the learning process. The program promotes positive values, such as caring about others and taking personal responsibility for one’s actions, and social competencies, including problem solving, decision making, and resisting negative peer pressure. The program encourages the student to discover his/her positive identity by building self-esteem and developing a sense of purpose in life.

In order to support building these internal assets, staff are actively engaged in working within the child’s environment to

The Intensive Support Program is a strengths-based program designed to optimize and encourage each student’s unique talents, academic abilities, social skills and emotional development.



As with all students in special education, the educational program of each student receiving intensive support services is based on his/her Individualized Education Plan's (IEP's) goals and objectives.

support the development of positive family communication, a caring school climate, safety at home and in school, clear rules and consequences for behavior and constructive use of time in school and at home.

Students

The students served by the ISP face a range of challenges. Many have histories of psychiatric hospitalization. Others may be at risk for future hospitalization or institutionalization. They also have significant strengths that are not always recognized.

Services of the Intensive Support Program

Program services address the emotional and behavioral issues that interfere with students' achievement of educational goals. The NSC&FGC clinical staff, including licensed clinical social workers, psychiatrists and vocational rehabilitation counselors, work with the Nassau BOCES educational staff, including administrators, psychologists, teachers and teachers aides, to deliver services through a team approach.

- **Individual Education Program**

As with all students in special education, the educational program of each student receiving intensive support services is based on his/her Individualized Education Plan's (IEP's) goals and objectives. The IEP designates the Intensive Support Program as the least restrictive placement for the student. It determines the strategies required to provide an educational program for the student. All students receive an age-appropriate academic program in keeping with New York State Learning Standards. Remediation and extra support are provided when required by an individual student.

- **12-Month Programming**

For those students whose IEP indicates the need for services on a 12-month basis, an extended year summer program is provided. Students attending this extended program continue to receive academic and mental health support.

- **Planned Meetings**

Planned meetings include the individual, group, and family meetings, and psychiatric intervention when necessary. Other meetings include classroom milieu and crisis intervention. NSC&FGC offices are used for after-hours family visits.

Case management services that include information and referral, general program advocacy, mediation among systems, and advocating for the students' needs in partnership with parents are also provided. The ISP services include overall coordination of services and medication management. The services of vocational rehabilitation counselors and job coaches are provided on the high school level to prepare students for the transition from school to work and or continuing education.

To support students and families, backup services are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week through the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center.

Parents/ Family

In the ISP's team approach, the student and his/her family are considered important members of the team. The program staff and the parents/families work together as a team to enable students to achieve successful program outcomes. Extended family members and siblings are also viewed by staff and parents as extremely important to the program.

Families can seek the assistance of the clinical staff when they are negotiating any of the multiple systems in which they may be involved, including the courts, Department of Social Services, Probation, etc. The program also provides a support group for parents, a parent educational series and a parent advisory group.

Goals and Results

In addition to the program's primary goal of producing successful outcomes for all the students who attend the program, the ISP seeks to decrease the number of out-of-home placements. School-based mental health programs realize a cost benefit through the savings related to reduction of number of youngsters with serious emotional disturbances requiring costly institutional placements. Goals also include enhancing continuity of care and strengthening family competencies.

The successful collaboration of an educational organization, a mental health agency, students and parents, created by the ISP, has produced an alternative to residential placement for elementary, middle school and high school students with serious emotional disturbance who live in Nassau County.

Extended family members and siblings are viewed by staff and parents as extremely important to the program.



THE PROGRAM PARTNERS



To build a successful working partnership, it is important that staff members from each agency know the background and mission of the other agency. To understand the partnership that is discussed in this manual, some background on each partner is provided.

The Nassau BOCES/NSC&FGC Partnership

When Nassau BOCES explored the possibility of creating a school-based mental health collaborative with NSC&FGC, both agencies were aware that they were breaking new ground in programming for students with disabilities. With the two prospective partners coming from different disciplines, a plan had to be devised for the development of a cohesive program. The administration and staff first had to develop a working partnership that would encourage the staff, parents and students to consider the program on each age level as one entity.

THE PARTNERSHIP

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North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center

The North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center (NSC&FGC), founded in 1953 is located in Nassau County, Long Island, New York. The Center provides an extensive and comprehensive range of mental health services for children (birth to 24) and their families, regardless of income.

NSC&FGC is licensed and supported by the Nassau County Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities; the New York State Office of Mental Health; the Nassau County Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction; and the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. NSC&FGC is considered the leading children's mental health center on Long Island.

NSC&FGC provides a wide range of medically supervised mental health services that ensure stabilization; improve functioning in the family, school and community; and promote social, educational and vocational development. These services include:

- assessment, evaluation and treatment planning
- individual, group and family psychotherapy
- medication therapy
- crisis intervention services
- case management
- clinical support services
- discharge planning

NSC&FGC is also a major training and consultation agency for professionals serving youth and their families. It is a source of programs that educate parents on normal development and crisis issues.

Nassau BOCES Department of Special Education

Nassau BOCES, founded in 1968, is part of the statewide network of intermediate agencies in New York State. As regional boards of cooperative education, the BOCES were created to provide services for the local school districts located within their jurisdiction. The services developed by the BOCES are those that an individual district could not economically provide on its own. Nassau BOCES is committed to providing for the 56 school districts of Nassau County the best possible education for children and adult learners. Currently, it offers more than 100 programs with a wide variety of educational, technological and business services.

Through the Department of Special Education, Nassau BOCES provides a comprehensive spectrum of programs for students, ages 3 to 21, who are moderately to severely disabled. These services are provided in a variety of settings, including center-based and district-based schools and community settings.



SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION



DEFINING TERMS

Special Education includes specially designed individualized or group instruction, or special services or programs, provided at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities

Since the Intensive Support Program is a mental health collaborative within special education programs, it was important for staff to understand terms used in the special education system. The educational and mental health staff became familiar with the following information so that they could speak the language needed for the educational program provided.

Special Education

Special Education includes specially designed individualized or group instruction, or special services or programs, provided at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Special education services are mandated by federal law. The Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), passed in 1975, was landmark legislation that mandated a free and appropriate public education for all students with disabilities. This law was amended in 1991 and the name of the law was changed to Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

The Alphabet Soup of Special Education: CSE, IEP, IDEA, and...

The individual needs of a student are determined by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) upon consideration of the present levels of performance and expected learning outcomes for the student. Such individual need determinations provide the basis for written annual goals, direction for the provision of appropriate educational programs and services, and development of an individualized education program for the student. The areas to be considered include:

- academic or educational achievement and learning characteristics
- social development
- physical development
- management.

Terms Used in Connection with IDEA

Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)

FAPE is mandated for all students with disabilities. This means that school districts must provide an appropriate program for every student with a disability at no cost to parents.

Access to General Curriculum

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs that result from the students' disability. Access of the student to the general curriculum is ensured so that he or she can meet the educational standards that apply to all students.

Least Restrictive Environment

Least Restrictive Environment means that the placement of students with disabilities in special classes or separate schools occurs only where the nature or severity of the disability is such that, even with supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved in the regular education environment. The placement of an individual student with a disability in the least restrictive environment shall provide for the education of the student to the maximum extent appropriate with other students who do not have disabilities.

Committee on Special Education

The Committee on Special Education (CSE) is a multi-disciplinary team established by specific provisions outlined by Section 4402 of the Education Law. The committee is responsible for determining the eligibility of students for services under IDEA and for working with parents and school staff to develop and implement the student's IEP.

Individualized Education Program

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with education law, that includes specific components to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability. If a student has been determined to be eligible for special education services, the CSE must consider the following:

- the results of the initial or most recent evaluation
- the student's strengths
- the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child
- as appropriate, the results of the student's performance on any general state or district-wide assessment programs.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

Functional Behavioral Assessment means the process of determining why a student engages in behaviors that impede learning and how the student's behavior relates to the environment. The FBA includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- the identification of the problem behavior
- the definition of the behavior in concrete terms
- the identification of the contextual factors that contribute to the behavior (including cognitive and affective factors)
- the formulation of a hypothesis regarding the general conditions under which behavior usually occurs and problematic consequences that serve to maintain it.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with education law, which includes specific components to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability.



Functional Behavioral Assessment means the process of determining why a student engages in behaviors that impede learning and how the student's behavior relates to the environment.

Emotional Disturbance

In New York State, the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (Parts 200 and 201 relating to the education of students with disabilities) identify "emotional disturbance" as meaning a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and, to a marked degree, that adversely affect a student's educational performance:

- an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors
- an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
- inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)

A new amendment in the reauthorized IDEA '97, a BIP can be generally defined as a written, specific, purposeful and organized plan that describes positive behavioral interventions and other strategies that will be implemented to address goals for a student's social, emotional and behavioral development within the context of the IEP process. In addition, for students whose behavior prompts disciplinary action by the school, the behavioral intervention plan addresses the behavior(s) of concern that led to conducting a functional behavioral assessment.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION



THE TEAM CONCEPT

A team purpose provides the working group with a sense of direction or mission that guides its meetings and helps it work together.

At the core of a school-based mental health collaborative is the team concept. Mental health and educational staff must learn to work together as a team to meet the needs of students. To achieve an integration of mental health and educational services, all staff involved with the students must successfully function as a team. The following information explores the team concept.

Team Approach

The team approach is central to the services provided at each age level. The composition, structure, and activities of core teams in each program may vary slightly, but the importance of promoting healthy communication across systems and disciplines remains the same. A committed and unified leadership "at the top" of each partner organization is a must. Through good communication, problem solving and conflict resolution, top administration provides a good model for the collaborative. Healthy interaction among the administrators filters down to the staff and, ultimately, the students and parents.

The Core Team

The core team consists of members from many different disciplines who share the common goal of providing a comprehensive and effective academic program for students. The consistency and stability of the team is an important factor in the success of the program. The team meets at least bi-weekly at a regularly scheduled time for approximately one hour.

Team Purpose

Each team must decide on its purpose. A team purpose provides the working group with a sense of direction or mission that guides its meetings and helps it work together. A clear purpose is important to keep the team on track, and to act as a compass if it gets sidetracked. For example, in the middle school, the purposes that the team arrived at are the following:

- Achieve and maintain open communication among all program staff.
This purpose includes modeling healthy communication for ISP students, preventing the team from developing dysfunctional communication patterns, such as griping or scapegoating, and demonstrating that differences can be addressed in a productive way.
- Enhance team problem-solving related to students and their environments.
This purpose includes identifying problems, exploring them in some depth, considering alternative solutions and obstacles, deciding on solutions, implementing decisions and evaluating results.

- Increase staff sensitivity to the meaning of transitions for ISP students and develop program features to address students' needs and increase predictability. This purpose includes considering the impact of transitions on students with serious emotional disturbances. The transitions include those that occur at the beginning and end of each day, when moving from activity to activity during the day, and those before and after holiday and summer breaks. Staff develop procedures, practices and program elements to ease transitions and build a more predictable environment.
- Build and maintain healthy working alliances with parents of ISP students, caregivers and relevant others. This goal helps guide the team's work and gives team members a clear sense of purpose.

Team purpose can always be modified as the work of the team proceeds and new needs emerge and are articulated.

Team Members

Members of each program's core team may include the principal, assistant principal, classroom teachers, psychologists and social workers. Other professionals, including vocational counselors, speech teachers, or others who work with students in the program, may be asked to join a team meeting when there are issues that need their expertise.

Supervisory staff with knowledge and skill in team building and group work are ideal for providing leadership for the team meetings. Leaders with this knowledge understand the dual need of any team to both complete a job consistent with the team's purpose and pay attention to how the team is working together.

Structure of Team Meetings

Ideally, the core teams meet at least once a week at a regularly scheduled time for approximately one hour. Arranging a consistent time and place for the meetings can prove to be a challenge. When the program and building leadership are committed to the team approach, solutions can be found. In one school, staff were so committed to building a solid team that they voluntarily incorporated part of their lunch hour into the team meetings. This added a social dimension to the meeting that did not compromise the work of the team.

Through the process of sharing concerns, exchanging information and ideas, and solving problems, team members can stay energized and connected to one another, the students and the mission of the program.

Members of each program's core team may include the principal, assistant principal, classroom teachers, psychologists and social workers.

Through the process of sharing concerns, exchanging information and ideas, and solving problems, team members can stay energized and connected to one another, the students, families and the mission of the program.

Since there is a tendency to center discussion on problems, it is important for the team to spend some time on "success stories."



Agenda

An agenda is prepared for each team meeting. Team members are encouraged to provide items in advance of the meeting. These are collected by the team leader.

An agenda provides a focus for all team members and enables the team to prioritize items and determine how much time to spend on each item. Preplanning includes gathering sufficient information on agenda items to keep team members informed of program issues and concerns regarding how students are functioning.

Building a Culture of Mutual Aid Through Teamwork

Team meetings are a source of mutual aid for school personnel. Working with students with serious emotional disturbances can be draining and isolating, leading to staff burnout. Team meetings go a long way to building a culture of mutual aid in which team members regard themselves as "being in the same boat."

Team Discussions

Following are illustrations of the content that the core team might address during the course of a meeting.

Program Issues

Issues, such as the mechanics of developing a school-based mental health program, are an important part of the initial discussions of a team. Team members become familiar with all aspects of the program including information on students, roles of each of the educational and mental health staff, classroom set-up and structure, all services offered by the program. Additions and changes in the program, if there are any, can also be discussed. This type of discussion keeps everyone "in the loop."

Student Issues

In discussing student issues, the focus of the discussion is on both the successes and the problems of individual students. Since there is a tendency to center discussion on problems, it is important for the team to spend some time on "success stories."

Validating students' strengths helps the team to remain upbeat and optimistic. Discussing success is a way to validate all the efforts of each team member and the team as a whole. Accenting the strengths and talents of students strengthens of the positive approach that is used throughout the ISP program.

Looking at the Larger Context

When students are struggling with behavioral, academic, or family issues discussion does not focus just on the problem. The team assesses the strengths

of the systems that impact on the child's life and how they may be accessed in order to better understand and resolve the problem. Often a recommendation is made to invite parents and relevant others to a meeting to join in problem-solving.

The team may devise a strategy that includes implementing a plan of action to target behavior or academic problems. The team will discuss and develop a behavioral intervention plan, if appropriate, or schedule a meeting with a parent to enlist participation in the plan. Subsequent team meetings become forums for reviewing and evaluating interventions.

Classroom Issues

Some of the classroom issues discussed at team meetings include classroom composition and its effect on the success of the students in the class. The impact of transitions is a major area of discussion.

For example, a new student in a class may produce tensions that have to be discussed. Sometimes a new student in a class may contribute positively to the climate in the classroom. The team will explore why this happened and how similar classes can benefit from what the team learned. Similarly, when a student leaves the class or the program, team meetings can be used to develop solutions for any problems that may result.

Initial placement of new students within a classroom is another issue discussed. Classroom setup and structure, as well as changes or additions to the classroom to make it a successful learning environment, are often part of the discussions at team meetings. Welcoming new students to a class and saying goodbye to students who are leaving are important transitions that impact on the class as a whole. Program personnel are encouraged to develop rituals for these transitions that are practical and emotionally based.

Departing rituals that offer an ample opportunity to say goodbye enable students to separate in a healthy manner. Incorporating such processes into the school culture helps the school community better prepare for dealing with more tragic situations, such as the death of a student or parent.

Other Issues

Issues discussed at team meetings may include reviewing and making recommendations to modify program procedures. Medication changes are discussed. Changes in family life and how family life impacts students' school functioning is an important area of discussion. A related area is how to improve parents' interaction or involvement with school personnel. As a result of the latter, a parent advisory/support group was created.

**The team process
as used in the
Intensive Support
Program gives all
members of the team
an opportunity to
voice their opinions
and ideas.**



Resolving Issues

In the interaction between team members, one of the most important considerations is how to resolve issues that may involve differences in approach or solutions to problems. The team process as used in the ISP gives all members of the team an opportunity to voice their opinions and ideas. The team promotes mutual respect so that difference is an accepted part of reaching a solution.

Other Teams and Task Forces

In addition to the program team, there may be a need to convene other types of teams. Ad hoc committees or task forces are created throughout the school year to address specific problems that need deliberation and planning. For example, if procedures break down or become obsolete, a task force can explore issues in depth and make recommendations to the core team and or program administration. Another example is when there is cause to celebrate. Volunteer task forces can contribute to the spirit and morale in the school community by planning celebrations that mark special occasions or successes.

As the Intensive Support Program was planned, administrators from both Nassau BOCES and NSC&FGC were aware of a lack of models of school-based mental health to use to guide in their work. A strengths-based approach was adopted to guide the program's development.

A STRENGTHS-BASED PROGRAM

The Strengths-Based Approach

A strengths-based framework provides a foundation for the Intensive Support Program. This framework grounds the program in the belief that every individual and family has its strengths. Students with a serious emotional disturbance may be challenging to those who live and work with them. They also present opportunities for growth when viewed as whole persons with something to offer. The vision in ISP is always how to discover and tap in to the upper limits of students' capacity to grow.

All the activities of the school-based mental health collaborative are designed to optimize and encourage students' talents, academic abilities, social skills and emotional development. The program is designed for new success rather than repeating failures. The strengths-based approach builds students' self-image, self-esteem, and respect for others.

School-Connectedness

A recent national study of 90,000 seventh to twelfth graders across the United States, conducted by the University of Minnesota Center for Adolescent Health and Development, found that school-connectedness is a critical variable for students' success in school. Those who feel connected are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. The study concluded that recognizing and building on the strengths of children and youth is essential to maximizing school-connectedness.

The strengths-based approach, as applied in the Intensive Support Program, include the following principles:

- focusing on building assets and strengths
- developing programs that are developmentally sensitive
- promoting optimal development in all children and youth
- addressing multiple dimensions of children and young people's lives
- viewing parenthood as a developmental process
- designing programs to meet child and parent needs
- supporting parents' leadership in nurturing and advocating for their child
- connecting all relevant others (inside and outside school) with child and family.

Dimensions of a Strengths-Based Approach

Despite psychiatric diagnosis and significant levels of risk among the ISP students, there are notable strengths that are considered in the ongoing clinical work and program development. Some of these strengths are measurable or easily observed. They include the following:

All the activities of the school-based mental health collaborative are designed to optimize and encourage students' talents, academic abilities, social skills and emotional development.



Historically, for many of the students who attend the ISP program, exercising strengths and building assets has taken a back seat to addressing deficits and "putting out fires" (crisis intervention).

- superior intellectual functioning
- athletic ability, such as sports and dance
- artistic abilities, such as painting or sculpture
- musical talent
- literary talent, such as poetry or prose.

Other areas of strength are more subtle, gradually coming into focus as more is learned about students through participation in individual, family or group settings. These areas include compassion, acceptance, altruism, leadership and integrity.

Historically, for many of the students who attend the ISP program, exercising strengths and building assets has taken a back seat to addressing deficits and "putting out fires" (crisis intervention). As a result, these students have been understimulated, not encouraged and, too often, unappreciated for what they have to offer. Recognizing and embracing what one has to offer is the beginning of empowerment.

Promoting Students' Assets

The Intensive Support Program is structured to help promote assets in the following areas:

- commitment to learning, including helping the student become actively engaged in learning
- positive values, such as caring about others, taking personal responsibility for one's actions
- social competencies, including problem-solving, decision-making, and resisting negative peer pressure
- positive identity, such as building self-esteem and developing a sense of purpose in one's life.

In order to support building these internal assets, staff are actively engaged in working within the student's environment to support the development of the following:

- positive family communication
- a caring school climate
- safety at home and in school
- clear rules and consequences for behavior, and constructive use of time in school and at home.

Understanding the context of a student's life has a positive influence on the therapeutic and educational process.

Extending the Strengths-Based Approach Beyond the School Walls

The strengths-based orientation extends beyond the school setting into the community of social services, the courts and local businesses. The following are examples of activities that have been used to promote the assets of ISP students during the past seven years:

- **ARTSTOCK**

ISP's artist-in-residence and her student "curators" have drawn upon the artistic talents of their classmates to promote and organize an annual art gallery that showcases students' talents in painting, sculpture, ceramics, poetry, music and dance.

- **Self-Expression through Movement, Dance, Yoga**

This activity is another opportunity for students to link the communication of their interior life with body movements.

- **Relaxation Exercise Groups**

These groups help students learn to draw upon their own inner resources to achieve a more peaceful state. These activities have been particularly significant post 9/11.

- **Real Life Group**

This group offers elementary school students an opportunity to improve their understanding and mastery of everyday challenges through visits to the supermarket, post office and railroad station.

- **Career Readiness Project**

This project was developed by the Youth Employment staff in collaboration with their counterparts from Nassau BOCES. The purpose of the project was to familiarize students with the job interview process by allowing them to have simulated interviews with members of the business community.

- **Culinary Groups**

The Vocational Program developed a series of Culinary Groups to support the vocational development of the students. The experiences provided team building skills and vocational assessment opportunities for the Youth Employment Specialists. Students were involved in preparing, packaging, cleaning up and sales.

- **Prescription Assistance Program**

This program, developed at the high school, is sponsored by several pharmaceutical companies that offer a variety of psychotropic medications to eligible students free of charge. The project helps medication compliance become a reality for ISP students whose families may not have insurance coverage or the financial resources to cover their children's prescriptions.

- **Responding to 9/11**

In the aftermath of 9/11, many activities were undertaken to help students cope and to provide healing in the school community. In the elementary school these activities included creating a 9/11 quilt that was composed of "squares" developed by individual students.

Understanding the context of a student's reality improves an understanding of the individual, the family and the community.

The Vocational Program developed a series of Culinary Groups to support the vocational development of the students.

The Poetry Club as a group work service for a classroom-group in a special education school setting presents a school-based mental health collaborative with a unique set of challenges.



- **Parent Support Groups**

Parents participate in the planning and implementation of services. They meet regularly and are active participants in the work of their children. Parent groups are offered to provide parents with an opportunity to learn about their children within a normal developmental framework, better understand the impact of mental illness, and increase effectiveness in communicating with and advocating for their children.

Parent groups allow for mutual aid, receiving and giving peer support and preventing isolation. A monthly Parenting Education Series is offered to provide parents with information on a variety of issues ranging from the normative parenting issues of adolescence to specific issues, including medication management and dealing with a student's disability.

- **Poetry Club**

The Elementary Program's Poetry Club provides enriched opportunities in the classroom for self-expression. (See the following illustration.)

The following three illustrations provide insight into the activities of a strengths-based program.

Illustration I: Working with Groups
Forming a Poetry Group to Build Strengths

The Poetry Club is a classroom-based activity that blends academic with social emotional goals. An illustration of the formation and development of a Poetry Club at the ISP Elementary Program is presented in-depth to provide a detailed description of school-based mental health collaboration at its best.

A Poetry Club was devised to build spirit, tap students' creativity, provide an alternative and fun means of expression, and cultivate an appreciation for poetry that could extend beyond the life of the group itself. The Poetry Club as a group work service for a classroom group in a special education school setting presents a school-based mental health collaborative with a unique set of challenges.

When a group work service, such as the Poetry Club, is developed by the mental health partner staff, there is a need to contract with classroom teachers, integrate group purpose with academic and behavioral goals, and support the prosocial values promoted daily in the classroom.

The Poetry Club was offered for an ISP classroom composition of six students, one teacher and one aide (6-1-1 classes). At the time the club was formed there were three students in each of two classes. One group was older and the other one younger. Sometimes additional aides are assigned to individual students whose behavior demands extra support and supervision.

In a pre-group planning meeting the teachers expressed ambivalence about whether the group would work. Would it disrupt the daily routine? Would it interfere with the academic goals they felt great pressure to achieve? Did the younger students have the intellectual capacity to deal with "poetry?" These were all good questions. The social worker knew that he needed the teachers as allies and partners in order to make a Poetry Club work.

The social worker asked teachers to think about the concept of "poetry in motion" and explained that all poetry didn't have to be regimented pencil-to-paper work. Together they could help the students discover means for finding poetic expression verbally, musically, and physically as well. For example, one of the group activities would involve photography, each member taking turns to arrange the group into his or her unique poetic tableau to be preserved photographically.

The social worker presented the idea of mutual aid as a core principle. Older students could help the younger ones and younger ones could encourage the efforts of the older ones. The staff could easily relate to the prosocial value of promoting mutual aid.

The social worker asked the teachers to provide a list of academic goals for each student so that academic needs could be included in determining a mission for the group and in formulating a group purpose. It was important that the teachers perceive the group not as a burden, but rather as a means of providing assistance for them in accomplishing their aims.

The teachers provided a list of academic goals representing the grade level of students in their classes. A sample of the stated goals were: Students will learn to comprehend a story; students will learn to listen to and enjoy stories; students will recall important facts and ideas, students will learn to read orally with phrasing and expression, pacing and volume; and students will express individual opinions about readings, to name just a few.

It is crucial to work collaboratively with teachers and respect the goals they wish to accomplish and standards they aim to maintain, if one expects to be a welcomed guest in their classrooms. When reviewed with the teachers, it became clear that academic goals were compatible with defining a group purpose and group goals. The purpose and goals of the Poetry Club were conceived as follows:

The Poetry Club is a weekly group that is about learning to work together, share, have fun, and build confidence through the self-expression of poetry. The goals of the Poetry Club are related to academic goals including following directions, participating in discussions, and reading aloud fluently and accurately. The Poetry Club members will learn to help one another, applaud one another, and appreciate one another.

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It is crucial to work collaboratively with teachers and respect the goals they wish to accomplish and standards they aim to maintain, if one expects to be a welcomed guest in their classrooms.

Demonstrating the value of a group program to school personnel and parents is a form of advocacy, a powerful statement of the value of a group.

The Poetry Club met once a week over ten weeks for about 40 minutes each session. The students listened to, read, recited and wrote poetry in a variety of fun and stimulating ways.

Everyone was pleasantly surprised the first time a teacher presented a poem written by a member outside of the group. Poems-on-your-own was a practice that continued throughout the group, emphasizing that the group was alive and had taken root, outside of the group meeting itself.

Remember, in evaluating groups, how members generalize behaviors outside of the group is an important variable in measuring success. Readings of the poems-on-your-own were invited into the group. This provided positive reinforcement for the performing poet and motivation for other members to practice the art of poetry outside of the club.

The ending of the Poetry Club was bittersweet, with the group members enjoying readings from a journal chronicling their good work. The younger boys, in particular, loved gift-wrapping extra journals that they would bring home to their families. Free access to scissors and scotch tape was heaven for the five, six and seven-year olds. The boys openly wished that Poetry Club could continue and questioned why it had to end. Transition....separation...loss...not easy subjects for this group.

Welcoming Parents and Relevant Others to Celebrate their Children

Several weeks after the group ended, the boys made a wonderful presentation. They invited the principal, assistant principals, psychologist and parents to hear their poems. Each was presented with a gift-wrapped Poetry Club Journal. Demonstrating the value of a group program to school personnel and parents is a form of advocacy, a powerful statement of the value of a group.

School-based mental health program partners often wonder how to get a group off the ground. There is nothing like offering a pilot group and then demonstrating its effectiveness for those whose decision-making power can make or break a group program. In this illustration the strengths-based approach proved a success. The Poetry Club was successful because it was developmentally sensitive, built on the students' strengths, relied on a mental health-education alliance, and welcomed parents to celebrate their children.

Illustration II: Working with an Individual Student Promoting Vocational Development to Build Strengths

The following illustration provides insight into the impact of the strengths-based approach on an individual student. This high school student participated in the full range of ISP services and has successfully returned to her local school district.

Carla is a 16-year old Hispanic female student suffering from major depression. As an ISP student Carla first participated in the vocational services program in March 2000. She attended weekly career counseling meetings, individually and in group, where she focused on long-term goals in the business field.

In June 2000 Carla requested assistance in obtaining competitive employment. Immediately, a position was secured at a local restaurant where college reimbursement is available for seasoned employees. She did not require job coaching services.

Carla's job supervisor continues to report great satisfaction with her performance and work values. She is reliable and personable. Her fluency in Spanish is an asset that has made her invaluable to her employer because the business is located in an ethnically diverse community.

By January 2001 Carla returned to her local district high school. She has continued to work at her job and receives bimonthly telephone support from her vocational counselor. This support has enabled her to make a good transition. She has also made a good transition to NSC&FGC's outpatient mental health program where she receives uninterrupted and ongoing mental health services.

Carla has been promoted to crew trainer, and she received a pay increase. Her employer informed Carla that she is the youngest person ever to be promoted in such a short period of time. Carla's hard work, family support, professional attitude, work ethic and willingness to accept support from outside resources has enabled her to thrive.

Carla's job supervisor continues to report great satisfaction with her performance and work values.

Illustration III: Celebrating with Family and Community *Using Creative Arts to Build Strengths*

One of the most positive aspects of the ISP school-based mental collaborative over the past three years was the development of the Artist-in-Residence Program. This program is another example of implementing a strengths-based approach. It originated as a program enhancement activity that has now become part of the culture of the program.

An artist works with students to develop artwork in different media, including ceramics. These works are then exhibited at an annual student-run gallery known as ART-STOCK. The show is open to the students, staff, parents and the public. In five years the show has expanded and now includes the work of high school, middle school, and elementary school students. Works presented at the show include paintings, drawings, sculpture, poetry, music and dance. For families of ISP students, ARTSTOCK is a joyous celebration showcasing their children's talents and efforts.



SOCIAL SKILLS AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

One of the most important issues that students in a school-based mental health collaborative face is building positive social skills. To those who work in the Intensive Support Program it is increasingly clear that brief, isolated teaching sessions do not help students develop long-term gains in social and emotional management skills. To achieve these goals, in-depth teaching with reinforcement and skill-building is an integral part of ISP classroom group work. To understand how this is accomplished, information on building social skills is included below.

Praise and related feedback on how well the role-playing of the skill matching the model is given to the student.

The Teacher's Role in Promoting Social Skills

Special Education teachers create lessons focusing on specific areas that encourage the development of social skills. Teachers in the ISP program find interesting ways to discuss subjects such as the following to build students' social skills:

- how to start conversations
- conversational manners
- how to make introductions
- how to offer help; how to ask for help
- how to make/respond to compliments
- discussion about whether arguments can be good
- talking things out with a third person
- talking about how the other person's actions make you feel
- resolving conflicts—sharing negative feelings and opinions.

Skillstreaming

- **Modeling**

To teach prosocial competencies a plan called Skillstreaming is used in the classroom with a group of students. The students are shown several examples of the expert use of behavior. This is known as modeling. Once the behavior is modeled, students are given several guided opportunities to practice and rehearse these competent interpersonal behaviors. This is known as "role-playing."

- **Feedback**

Praise and related feedback on how well the role playing of the skill matches the model is given to the student. This is known as "performance feedback."

- **Transfer Training**

The student is also encouraged to engage in a series of activities designed to increase the chance that skills learned during the classroom group will be available for use when needed in the school, home and community. This is known as "transfer training" or "generalizing." Additional areas that can be targeted through skillstreaming include the following:

- dealing with embarrassment
- dealing with being left out
- arranging problems by importance
- rewarding yourself
- making a decision.

Behavioral Management

Instead of using a patchwork of individual behavior management plans, the Nassau BOCES special education programs are moving toward a school-wide behavior system for each program. This system defines school rules and expectations, provides training about the rules and offers feedback through rewards and corrections. With administrative support, the team monitors the system and, if the practices aren't working, the team changes or abandons them for new ones.

School-Wide Behavior Systems

School-wide behavior systems used accomplish the following:

- Define expectations but are careful not to overwhelm students with too many expectations (i.e., be safe, be respectful, follow directions of school adults).
- Teach students, from the start of the year, about the program and continue instruction throughout the year.
- Provide instruction in self-control and social skill strategies for all students.
- Set up a reward system that uses creative and individualized rewards.
- Give immediate feedback on behavior and create limits that make challenging behavior unproductive for students.
- Recognize that some students have chronic, challenging behavior.
- Restructure problem settings (playground, cafeteria, unsupervised bathrooms).
- Involve all school employees.
- Monitor improvement.

School-Wide Behavior Improvement Program

In each of the collaborative's settings, a school-wide behavior intervention program reflects the ages of the students and, therefore, different approaches are used.

Daily Point System

Younger students participate in a daily point system. They earn a specified number of points in a school day. The reward for points earned is special activities individualized for each student according to his/her preference. The goals of this program are also individualized for each student and may be changed when the desired goal is reached.

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In each of the collaborative's settings, a school-wide behavior improvement program reflects the ages of the students and therefore, different approaches are used.

Reach for the Stars

Additional techniques used with younger students include a level system known as Reach for the Stars. Students begin at the entry level and work their way up on different levels by earning a specific number of points for a predetermined number of days to move up from one level to another. Different privileges are earned on each level. A token economy program in which students earn tokens that they then turn into play money to purchase snacks and other items is also used with younger students. Tokens are used to reward positive behavior and to motivate students academically and behaviorally.

Power of Choice

For older students, a school-wide behavior intervention program is based on developing each student's Power of Choice. Points and levels achieved through points are earned for both academic performance and positive behavior. The accumulation of points earns trips, prizes, special activities and responsibilities.

Classroom Management

One of the most important aspects of the ISP program is classroom management. The program team develops appropriate classroom management practices matching the needs of the students. Some of the techniques used include the following:

- providing advanced organizers/pre-corrections
- keeping students engaged
- creating a positive focus
- consistently enforcing school/class rules
- error correction strategies using a "businesslike" manner
- teaching and planning for smooth transitions.

Positive Behavior Supports

Students with severe problem behaviors require sustained, high-intensity, individualized and positive behavioral interventions and supports. "Positive behavior supports" refers to the application of positive behavioral intervention and systems to achieve socially important behavior changes. Teaching social expectations is critical to helping ISP students.

Positive behavioral supports include a three-step approach:

- **Teach**—The behavioral goal is provided for the student.
 - Tell/Explain—The goal is made clear through illustration and explanation.
 - Show/Model—The goal is modeled for the student by the teacher or other students.
 - Practice**—Students have the opportunity to practice the appropriate behavior.
- **Monitor** —The teacher remains aware of the behavior in the student's performance of daily activities.

Active Supervision

- **Acknowledge**—The teacher continually praises the appropriate use of the behavior.

Positively Reinforce

BIPs (Behavioral Intervention Plans)

All of the information on behavior guidelines included in this section must be considered in conjunction with the student's Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). As previously mentioned, a BIP is a written, specific, purposeful and organized plan that describes positive behavioral interventions and other strategies that will be implemented to address goals for a student's social, emotional and behavioral development. Teachers and therapists coordinate their use of behavioral techniques and systems with the individual student's BIP.

It is important to integrate any system used in a specific classroom within the school-wide behavioral system.



PARENTS AS PARTNERS

In the Nassau BOCES/NSC&FGC collaborative, parents are partners throughout the education of the students – their sons and daughters. Parent participation must be an integral part of the program design and implementation. The following information provides insight into the processes used by the ISP collaborative to engage parents as true partners in the program.

Good lines of communication between staff and parents are the key to developing a working partnership.

Partnership with Parents

The ISP program, a family-centered collaborative, has adopted a strengths-based approach. This approach includes respecting and supporting parents and increasing parent involvement.

When a student is referred to ISP at any age level, parents are asked to make a commitment to participate in the mental health services and the educational program so that the best possible opportunities for success can be available to their sons or daughters. The goal is to achieve a working partnership between staff and parents. Parents are seen as part of the helping system.

Parents and the Program

Parents participate in the planning and implementation of services in the ISP program. They meet regularly and are active participants in the work with their children. Parents learn about their children in the context of a normal developmental framework. They grow to have a better understanding of the impact of emotional disturbance, and they increase their effectiveness in communicating with, and advocating for, their children.

Parent-Staff Interaction

Maintaining good lines of communication between staff and parents is the key to developing a working partnership. Just as mutual respect is important to developing the collaborative program's core team, parents and staff understand that they must develop mutual respect for one another and work together in a cooperative effort to achieve a successful program for students.

In ISP, social workers, teachers, psychiatrists and pupil personnel work on an ongoing basis with parents. Members of the staff regularly communicate with one another about their work with students so that they can offer parents a comprehensive view when they meet with them on an individual basis.

The Teacher's Role

Teachers in all three ISP settings maintain an ongoing dialogue with parents to keep them informed of the student's academic and behavioral progress. Communication may take place through logs that are used to develop a regular means of providing information for parents. Parents receive written

information several times each week on their son/daughter's achievements, problem areas, or special issues that are affecting the student.

Teachers phone parents as needed and arrange for conferences where achievement and other issues can be discussed. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in overseeing students' completion of homework. Parents are asked to sign school behavior sheets so they have an awareness of the student's day-by-day behavior.

Some classroom teachers use behavioral target sheets and other working documents to provide parents with continual information on their son/daughter's academic and behavioral progress. Classroom teachers and social workers meet briefly throughout each day to exchange necessary information that can impact a student's school and family life so that the teacher is always informed about special circumstances that can influence a student's performance.

At all three program settings, parents are encouraged to become part of the school's PTA, demonstrating to students the parents' support for their education.

The Social Worker's Role

Social workers employed by NSC&FGC are members of the collaborative program staff in all three settings where the program is provided. They maintain ongoing contact with parents to provide general information, discuss program issues that may arise during the year, and provide support for families. Social workers also discuss individual students with their parents.

Social workers provide family therapy for students and their parents on a regular basis. Social workers form parenting groups for the parents/caregivers of students.

The parenting groups offer psycho-education (information about such subjects as medication or parenting skills) and support. Social workers also are in regular phone contact with parents to provide information on students' achievements and difficulties. They collaborate with families and the program staff in developing home behavior plans for students.

The Psychiatrist's Role

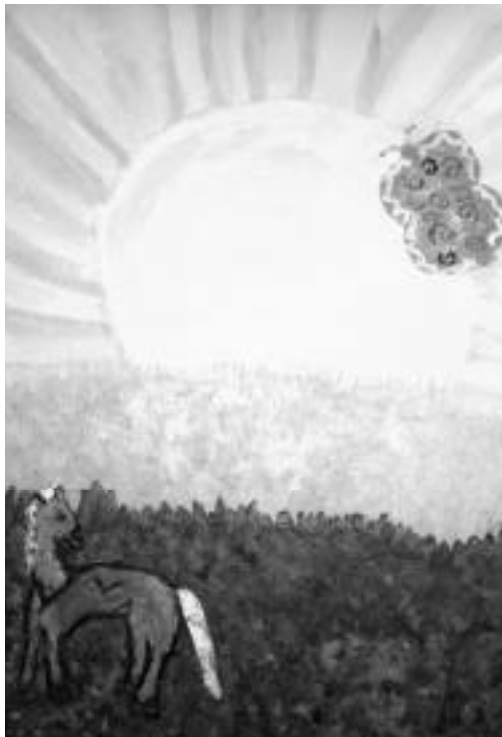
Psychiatrists from North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center are an integral part of the program. They work closely with parents in helping them to better understand medications and their side effects.

ISP psychiatrists are also instrumental in helping to make assessments if a student has destabilized and needs hospitalization. In such situations careful coordinating with the student, parents, school personnel, police departments (when appropriate), and hospital is needed. Program psychiatrists can help to facilitate a hospital placement without escalating the crisis that precipitated the need.

Some classroom teachers use behavioral target sheets and other working documents to provide parents with continual information on their son/daughter's academic and behavioral progress.

Social workers are also in regular phone contact with parents to provide information on students' achievements and difficulties.

Parents provide mutual aid for one another and engage in a valuable exchange of resources.



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's Role

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work closely with parents to gain an understanding about the aspirations they have for their high school-aged children, and to facilitate appropriate employment placements for them. Vocational partnering with parents of children with serious emotional disturbances is delicate work. Translating to parents (and the youth themselves) how their children's limitations are manifested and how their strengths are expressed is a vital role of vocational rehabilitation counselors in the ISP program.

Parent Meetings

Meetings between ISP staff and parents ensure a consistency between the Intensive Support Program and the home environment. The frequent interaction of staff, including the classroom teacher and social workers (and vocational counselors in the high school), provides them with additional information about school progress and school environment.

Parent groups offer an orientation to the program, information about problems and their origin, recognition of effects on caregivers, and psycho-educational material that will assist parents in supporting their children. Parents also learn about complementary services that may be available for their son/daughter.

Supporting One Another

Parent groups help parents reduce isolation, cope with stress and find resources. These groups can also offer parents an opportunity to find avenues that will allow them to influence the mental health and educational systems, policies and regulations that impact on their children's education and emotional health.

Parents provide mutual aid for one another and engage in a valuable exchange of resources. Parent advocates from NSC&FGC are available to assist parents who need additional support in accessing resources, for example.

Parent Workshops

A parenting workshop is offered on a monthly basis in the evening to all program parents. The meetings rotate to each of the three ISP school settings to give parents more comfort in coming to the school that their child attends. Examples of topics covered in the parent workshops include the following:

- Psychiatric and Medication Management Issues
- The Impact of Trauma on Behavior and Emotions
- Anger and Aggression
- Children with Special Needs
- Transitional Services and Vocational Training
- Parent Support
- Wellness, Nutrition, and Relaxation Strategies.

All workshops are presented by professionals with special knowledge in each subject area who can respond effectively to parents' questions and concerns. Program social workers are also available at the meetings to offer additional assistance and support. Parents are surveyed throughout the process to ensure that the information provided is relevant to them and their children's needs.

Enriching the Program

The close relationship that the school-based intensive support collaborative has established with parents of the students who attend the program has demonstrated that students have a better response to the program when their parents/family are actively involved. Issues that may arise during the school year are settled on a more immediate basis when the family is actively involved. This keeps less serious issues from becoming more serious ones.

Benefits of Working Relationships with Parents

Developing a good working relationship with parents is a key protective factor that can mitigate against high levels of risk. Partnership with parents also serves to reinforce and support the development of assets in their children. Students experience greater success because their parents/family understand and participate in the achievement of the academic and therapeutic goals of the program.

A good partnership with parents demonstrates healthy communication for the student, confirming that adults can get along and work together for their interest. Good working partnerships serve as a counterforce and as an important means to prevent relationships that can be characterized by unhealthy communication.

Healthy communication by all adults in the school community and parents is a must for school-based mental health programs. These adults cannot afford to replicate dysfunctional patterns of communication that too many ISP students have experienced throughout their short lives. This approach to communication requires a commitment from all who are involved on the team, including top administrative staff.

When Parents Do Not Comply With Program Requirements

Throughout the time that the school-based mental health collaborative has been offered by Nassau BOCES and NSC&FGC, there have been parents who did not participate in the parent activities of the program as required in the acceptance agreement for their son/daughter. Students are generally not motivated to succeed when their parents are not participating. Lack of parent participation can impact the self-esteem of the student.

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For students whose parents do not participate as required, the collaborative program continues to offer support for the student within the educational setting as the problem of lack of participation is being addressed.

Medication and health issues continue to be closely monitored by ISP staff in this interim and the resources of the student's local school district are engaged to address the lack of parent participation.

Parent's Role in Program Evaluation

Consumer satisfaction surveys are completed by parents. The survey enables parents to give voice to their experiences and opinions about the program. These surveys are analyzed to evaluate the program and modify it as needed. Parents are encouraged to voice their satisfaction with the aspects of the program that they find most helpful to them and to their sons/daughters. Parents are also encouraged to suggest ways the programs could be improved.

The Special Role of Siblings

In ISP the special role of siblings in the family of children with special needs is recognized. Siblings' participation in family meetings and special events can help to validate their feelings, teach them about their siblings' unique needs, provide them valuable perspectives to aid them in coping, and enable them to express concerns and joys.

Celebrating Your Child

ISP provides multiple opportunities for parents and family members to celebrate their children and support their strengths and assets. Concerts, plays, art shows and other special events offer opportunities for parents to celebrate what their children have to offer.

Sad events also provide this opportunity. In the ISP high school, after the death of a student who had had a chronic medical condition, the students planned a memorial and invited their deceased classmate's family. They sang, planted a tree and dedicated a bench in his memory. The memorial was a moving event that allowed all students involved to express their humanity and provide the grieving parents and siblings with a lasting memory of the kind of school community to which their son and brother had belonged.

CONCLUSION

This manual provides those who aspire to develop school-based mental health programs with a general framework for a successful partnership. The developers of the manual hope that readers will understand from the material included that establishing and maintaining a good partnership is the key to success.

Although this manual could not include every detail and anecdote in the history of the ISP, the staff tried to offer some of the more salient themes with appropriate illustrations. For an understanding of the program, it was important that the manual summarize the origins of the program, provide profiles of the partner organizations and include a description of important IDEA terms.

The core of the manual provides detailed information on four key features of the ISP's development that were indispensable in building a successful program. These program features include: team building, the strengths-based approach, social skills development and parents as partners in the program.

ISP is a work in progress. Meeting funding, programmatic, and staffing challenges requires ongoing attention. Building this program has required of all staff members and administrators some of the qualities that are encouraged in the students: patience, perseverance, tolerance for ambiguity, and acceptance of difference.

Creating a learning environment that not only accepts but also values difference is one of the most important lessons learned through the experience of ISP. In such an environment people are encouraged to openly deal with conflict and resolve problems.

Any two systems or agencies, in this case education and mental health (Nassau BOCES and North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center), have their own set of policies, regulations and procedures. Different systems have different cultures with different values, norms of behavior, roles for their members and rules of interaction.

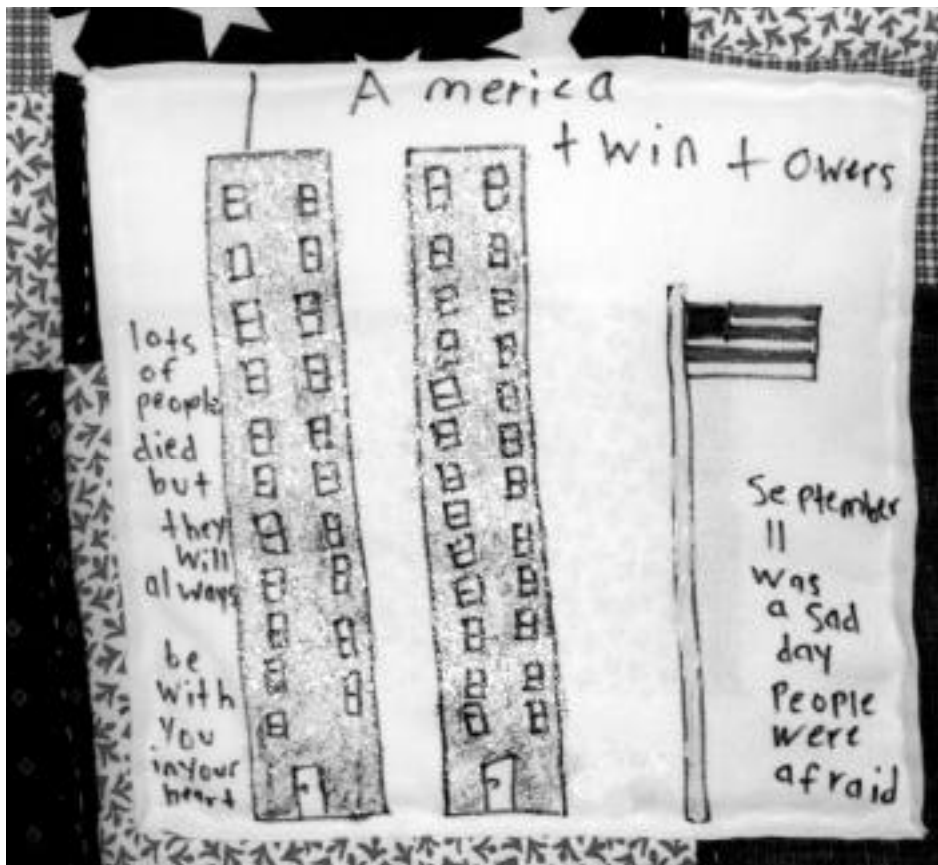
It is the ability of partners to negotiate these differences that makes the difference in the success or failure of a school-based mental health partnership. No measure of educational excellence or diagnostic acumen can compensate for a partnership that has not matured to a good working relationship through mutual respect and cooperation.

A strong partnership is especially critical when working with students with histories of serious emotional disturbance. For many of these students, ISP is the last chance to stay at home and in the community. Dealing with these students can evoke strong feelings in the educational and mental health staff.

Sometimes the power of the emotions the students generate can lead to a division among the staff. The ISP's strong team approach, anchored in a group structure, enables the program to prevent this division and to create a working unity for staff, parents and students.

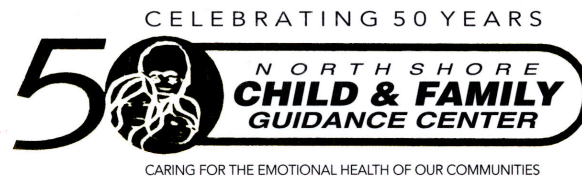
Most staff in the ISP will say that it is a privilege to work in the program. They will also acknowledge that working in ISP is one of the hardest jobs that they have had in their professional careers.

This manual is dedicated to the staff of the ISP and to all who will make up the staff of future educational and mental health partnerships.





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