



In response to the high interest of the community at the August 2, 2012, Community Conversation, Clarkston Development Foundation scheduled a list of dates to discuss next steps and evaluate potential projects or activities in each of the identified focus areas. On October 30, 2012, the CDF hosted the first of a series of Next Steps Sessions. The first Session focused on the Learning Community.

The evening included a sharing of ideas generated at previous meetings. This report¹ reflects the comments and opinions of the attendees as documented at the Next Steps Session: Learning Community.

Process

Over 70 people attended and divided into small groups based on their interests. Six groups met. While in small groups, participants discussed their visions and what projects they really wanted to focus on. Participants were asked to consider these primary questions:

1. What does the selected topic look like to this group?
2. What needs to be done generally to achieve that vision?
3. What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?
4. Given the actions identified, what are the specific projects this group can commit to undertaking?
5. What are the next steps to move these identified projects forward?

Participants met in small groups on the topics below. The numbers of corresponding groups were as follows:

- Expanding After School Programs (2 groups)
- Engaging DeKalb County Schools (2 groups)
- Encouraging Adult and Family Literacy (1 group)
- Enhancing Early Learning (1 group)

Themes

Over the course of the evening's conversation core themes arose. Participants were clearly interested in solutions that were inclusive in nature and worked to bring together multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural groups. Multiple groups discussed the need for strong parental involvement and cultural understanding in the Learning Community. Another common theme was the need for coordination among stakeholders and capitalizing on existing resources. The themes referenced here are not exhaustive, but are reflective of the types of discussions that occurred throughout the evening.

¹ Report prepared by Clarkston Development Foundation. An appendix is also available for download so that the reader can see every idea written on the easels by each group.

Next Steps: Projects/Actions

Out of these conversations, groups identified the following projects for further consideration and planning:

- Production of white papers concerning opportunities for engagement with DeKalb County Schools
- Creation of a list of all existing After School Programs including program descriptions, waitlists, and volunteers
- Attendance at Superintendent's Roundtable
- Attendance at math workshop for parents
- Commitment to attend parent conferences at school and hosting of follow-up conversations about what can be expected
- Development of parent/stakeholder networks to increase parent/stakeholder engagement in the local schools
- Engagement with the local library to get more early learning books for parents to use
- Collaboration with the local high school to create a multi-ethnic literacy class for adults
- Hosting of conversations concerning topics such as how children learn language

Encouraging Adult and Family Literacy

What does the encouraging adult and family literacy look like to this group?

Literacy should be defined beyond reading and writing to include an understanding of the whole system and an ability to act on information. Literacy programs must be inclusive and all voices should be heard in an inter-community conversation that is racially and culturally mixed and not refugee specific.

What needs to be done to achieve that vision?

- Collaboration of organizations with existing knowledge
- One on one meetings with senior citizens; volunteers to go to senior in home, bring materials, adopt a senior program
- Open so all groups needs are met
- Bring services to homes: 1 on 1, GED specifically
- Racially mixed small groups working on language
- Accessible classes: Marta is expensive, childcare is a challenge
- Must be understandable, basic, must not rely on understanding of U.S. culture
- Experiential learning (go take Marta together)
- Mentoring program (Youth-Adult); youth are assets, can help & mentor adults (RFS does some)

What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?

- In home efforts: culturally and racially mixed, small groups, senior specific
- Accessible classes for adults at high school (Include African Americans)
 - Not just refugee specific: mixed culturally and racially
 - Multi-level, academic, social
 - Demonstration, lecture, distinct approaches
 - Common goal focused like applying for a job

Given the actions we've identified, what are the projects this group can focus on?

- High school idea

What are the next steps to move these identified projects forward?

- Ask high school for space, they have some family outreach budget, teach teachers? Collaborate on resources, access to them & direction
- Decide the goals:
 - Not diploma
 - Mixed race and generation; target adults
 - Learning reading and writing is the point; some will want GED, some won't
 - Basic ESL for refugees
 - More advanced for mixed groups: high basic & intermediate
 - Age target 18-24 focus (Pre- Bobby King's group)

- Collaboration is important
- Reach out to other populations
- Go to Clarkston High School meeting
- Target African American community meeting
- Meet again to keep talking November 28th
- Global Village Project people as teachers?

Enhancing Early Learning

What does enhancing early learning look like to this group?

- Home visiting, basic social conversation with other kids
- Early literacy
- Health of children, prenatal education for parents
- Learning centers
 - Pleasant atmosphere
 - Complements early learning at home
 - Involves all community families; both refugee and non-refugee
 - Headstart
 - Could be a hub to let families know about community resources
 - Maintain home culture / language
- Staff development, staff that speaks home languages
- Multilingual education

What needs to be done to achieve that vision?

- Awareness of and access to PreK and other early learning resources
- More PreK / Headstart slots
- Multicultural emphasis – how children learn & awareness
- More parent education & early learning resources
- Staff development for early learning programs
- Access to library and more books (more languages)
- Good quality early learning

What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?

- “Right from the Start” (State)
 - More Pre-K slots (age 0-4)
 - More Headstart slots - petition
- Advocate for more Pre-K and Headstart
- Parents learn
 - Expand parent education in home to more community
 - How to teach their children (Parents as Teachers, Parent education)
- Early learning center attached to high school
- Increase access to library & increase books in homes (include home language)
- Staff development
 - Languages
 - Special needs (autism) / behavior
 - Screening staff

- Parent awareness of resources
 - Stuff to do with kids
 - Group to encourage parents to use library with children

Given the actions we've identified, what are the projects this group can focus on?

- Parent awareness of resources & parent education
- More Right from the Start positions

What are the next steps to move these identified projects forward?

- Meeting at TARAs with Library Director to discuss other items
- Meet with Carrie Woodstock, Roberta and Kennesaw

Expanding After School Programs – Easel 5

(Note: two groups met to discuss this topic. They are summarized separately)

What does expanding after school programs look like to this group?

- Smaller class sizes
- More tutors
- More programs at more schools and apartments
- Better communication with parents
- More outreach to parents
- More connection with school teachers
- More resources
- Close communication gap
- Increased parent involvement (including volunteering)
- More funding
- Focused curricula
- More professional development
- Outreach to retired teachers

What needs to be done to achieve that vision?

- Increase parent and community involvement
- Decrease language and cultural barriers
- Consistent student attendance
- Increase transportation
- Increase coordination between teachers and after school programs
- Increase parent workshops
- Work with families
- Increase life skills workshops
- Increase technology

What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?

- Talk with school administration to create plan to work in coordination with school teachers
- Present after school programs at faculty meetings
- Central coordination of information among all after school programs (including waiting list)
- Reach out to Colleges / Universities to get interns
- Work with high schools to get students to volunteer

Given the actions we've identified, what are the projects this group can focus on?

- Talk with school administration to create plan to work in coordination with school teachers
- Central coordination of information among all after school programs
- Reach out to Colleges / Universities to get interns

What are the next steps to move these identified projects forward?

- Create spreadsheet
 - Student openings and waitlist
 - List of each program and description
- Get Friends of Refugees list
- Develop plan to talk to Administrators
- Contact Atlanta Refugee Youth Network → Can we be a subgroup?
- Make contacts with the universities for volunteers
- Next meeting: 11/9/2012, 4-5 p.m

Expanding After School Programs – Easel 6

(Note: two groups met to discuss this topic. They are summarized separately)

What does expanding after school programs look like to this group?

- Have a clear list for parents of existing after school programs
- Have quality after school programs that include:
 - Math Tutors
 - One on one tutoring
 - Explanation of report cards
 - Enrichment activities that include arts, sports (including girl only activities), and pre-planned activities

What needs to be done to achieve that vision?

- Increase funding for after school programs
- Increase services for high school and middle school
- Have continuous after school programs
- Enrichment programs that include:
 - Getting grades up
 - Test help (CRCT etc)
 - Linked with state tests
 - 5 week days
 - Volunteer groups (college kids)
 - One on one tutoring
 - Somalis and non-Somalis

What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?

- Volunteer base
- Test-taking skills

Given the actions we've identified, what are the projects this group can focus on?

- Volunteer base
- Test-taking skills

What are the next steps to move these identified projects forward?

- Find easily accessible medium (email is hard)
- Find permanent location to host
 - Clarkston Community Center can find a location to host
- 1st Baptist Church
 - Helps with math and reading

- Angela & Hibo
- One-to-one tutoring
- K-12 one-to-one tutoring
- Establish relationships with existing programs (schools that are already doing it)
 - One place for all grade levels
- Check with Hands On Atlanta
 - Look for volunteers
 - Parent involvement
 - Parent Responsibility
- Raise awareness: Fliers / Radio Broadcast (In Somali)
- Community organizers
- Find location
- Next meeting: Friday, 11/09/2012, 3-4 p.m.

Engaging DeKalb County Schools – Easel 11

(Note: two groups met to discuss this topic. They are summarized separately)

Vision: What does engaging DeKalb county schools look like to this group?

- Address unique needs for international students
 - Transportation to schools → schools not in the community
 - Grade placement / testing → kids placed to age not level
 - Age cut-off → separate sheet for > 17 years
- Think about model to address language needs
- Technical training for 17+ year old students
- Register eligible students for school
- Increase parental engagement → need interpreters / translators
- Funding
- Physical access to schools → in community = increased engagement
- Shortage of after school programs
- Increase capacity of teachers to address needs of refugee student
- Implications for non-ESL students in same classes as students who are learning English

What needs to be done to achieve that vision?

- School-within-a-school at Freedom Middle and Clarkston High School
 - smaller (inner) school addresses specific needs of a group of students
- Supporting after school programs
 - Identify apartment complexes for programs (programs exist, but students aren't staying)
 - Coordination between school curriculum and after school programs
 - Need to find space to host increased number of students
- Create fund for interpreter (channel funds through faith-based organization)

What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?

- DOE : “white papers” (Brad Bryant, Esq)
 - Interpreter certification
 - Students needs in after school programs
 - What space is there at Clarkston High School for international students group
 - Transportation
- Resources available for restorative justice → need to mobilize DeKalb to implement
- Develop plan to mobilize stakeholders (i.e. parents, state & local officials)
- ARYN- Atlanta Refugee Youth Network monthly meeting
 - Discuss, plan, and develop top three concerns/problems/barriers and list of potential solutions
 - Engage additional community organizations

Given the actions we've identified, what are the projects this group can focus on?

- Develop outline for deliverable
- Deliverable to Brad
 - Top concerns
 - Proposed solutions
- Marshall
 - What it would take to re-energize board
- Bill and Brad
 - outline framework
 - send to group
- Populate framework and return to Brad
- Brad circulates

- Link school with local business
- Clearly understand challenges in schools (know the process and context)
- Experiment with new initiatives (in summer)
- More research
- More focus on particular circumstances in schools / with students (Clarkston focused)
- Multicultural focus including U.S. American students
- De-centralized

What actions can this group take to achieve that vision?

- Continue conversation
- Identify stakeholders
- Empower parent
- Clearly understand challenges in schools

Given the actions we've identified, what are the projects this group can focus on?

- Continue research & conversation
 - by increasing stakeholders
 - “Each one reach one”
 - Identify what other groups are doing?
 - and/or
 - * Meeting again, inviting parents, students, and teachers
 - * Smaller meetings with community leaders and representatives
 - lead to larger meetings
- Meet within next month to discuss four areas identified in “action” steps