

Influence of leadership on the systematic identification of child food insecurity in schools



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Overview



- Grant through United Way of the Midlands and in partnership with a local Food Provider
- 2 Elementary Schools and 1 Middle School
- Food Provider recruited churches who would volunteer to organize and distribute the backpacks to their designated school
- Why use a school setting to tackle the issue of food insecurity?
- Beyond Food Insecurity –interest in overall school functioning and how information is disseminated through schools
- Using food insecurity as an easy indicator for other issues

Overview



Facilitate school development of processes and practices for identifying and responding to problems associated with children's experiences of food insecurity

- Screening all children for food security through use of six questionnaire items
- In-depth assessment when a child affirms items indicating experiences of food insecurity
 - - MSW students collaborating with school staff
- Linking children and families to appropriate resources
 - - Backpack program (25 backpacks per school)
 - - Assistance accessing existing food resources
 - - Referrals to deal with complex family issues and challenges
 - - Child/Family Support

CFSA



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| 1. We can't get the food we want because there is not enough money. | Many times | 1 or 2 times | Never |
| 2. I feel hungry, because there is not enough food to eat. | Many times | 1 or 2 times | Never |
| 3. I get really tired, because there is not enough food to eat. | Many times | 1 or 2 times | Never |
| 4. I worry about how hard it is for my parents to get enough food for us. | Many times | 1 or 2 times | Never |
| 5. I worry about not having enough to eat. | Many times | 1 or 2 times | Never |
| 6. I try not to eat a lot so that our food will last. | Many times | 1 or 2 times | Never |

Pilot – Spring 2012



- Tides Foundation Summer Intervention
- Team discussions held about responsibility to address hunger when identified
- Food Provider's decision to address hunger by providing food when identified
- Meetings with key actors from each school to learn about baseline practices, institutional resources, and attitudes/beliefs
- Informative meetings with teachers

Tides Foundation Summer Intervention



- Tested the assessments in the classes (passive consent forms were used)
- Assessment data and dialog with school staff used to prioritize children and families at risk for hunger
- Prioritized children and families contacted (contacted if child affirmed >3 items)
- Summer program included box of food picked up by parents of child bi-weekly at designated church

Fall 2012



- Refined assessment based on information from the pilot
- Identified children who need additional follow up, connect them to resources
- Placed MSW students in each school under the supervision of the guidance counselor to help with this process
- Took notes of the process at each school
- Held focus group held at Middle School 1 regarding means of distribution

Key Actors



Elem. 1

- Principal
- Guidance counselor
- Janitor

Elm. 2

- Guidance counselor
- Principal has very little interest in program

Middle 1

- Principal
- Initial meetings were held with multiple staff members including nurse, guidance counselor, teachers – however, since then all communication has been through the principal

Baseline practices and attitudes

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| Elem. 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communication is school wide – principal is comfortable interacting with students/issues regularly. Staff seems to be comfortable with notifying others in the school- Showcased prior food assistance programs, “translating” services to parents- Means of communication clear- Aware that some children need more assistance than they already have |
| Elem. 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communication is closed up to the guidance counselor, the principal is not involved unless needed- Biases towards certain parents and families- Teachers are responsible for reporting to the guidance counselor- Guidance counselor is very involved and feels as though she can handle most issues |
| Middle 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Principal is very involved with all aspects of the student’s well being- Guidance counselor is very “by the book” – uses CPS on a regular basis to ask for direction- When principal is not present or in a more relaxed setting, the staff was very open and discussed how they help their children individually and their thoughts about need |

Implementation Preferences



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| Elem. 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pilot was given during end of year assessments during “computer lab” class by the same instructor over 2 days- Fall 2012 assessment given over 1 day by the guidance counselor and MSW during “homeroom” class. Directions were read aloud, children filled out their own assessments, and clarification for the younger students was given as needed |
| Elem. 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pilot was given by homeroom teachers over 1 day- Fall 2012 assessment will be given during “guidance” period during the school day by the guidance counselor and MSW |
| Middle 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pilot was given throughout 1 day solely by the principal who read the instructions, clarified questions, and monitored students- Fall 2012 assessment will be given in homeroom, monitored by the homeroom teachers, the principal, the guidance counselor, and MSW- Focus group |

Feelings Among Staff



Elem. 1

- A big “family” between all staff members
- Communication is easy between teachers and the guidance counselor
- Principal is connected to his staff

Elem. 2

- Principal is not interested in being part of the FFT
- Staff did not seem particularly enthusiastic either way, seemed indifferent during the meetings we held to inform them of the project
- The guidance is very knowledgeable of her students and enthusiastic

Middle 1

- Staff seems to see their positions to be subordinate to the principal
- The guidance counselor does not seem to feel comfortable or in “the loop” with the project because most communication is done through the principal
- When asked casually, the teachers are very excited and enthusiastic about FFT, they know their students

Challenges & Consequences



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| Elem. 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Little challenges with communication and information dissemination- Concern for the Hispanic community |
| Elem. 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The guidance counselor is the key actor at this school, she can be biased in her opinions. This may limit children who advised for help – her perceptions may influence the process/need to families- Little teacher buy-in |
| Middle 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The principal is the key actor – influences the overall “community” feel of the school (impacts staff, personnel in school, process in school)- Information is not passed along easily- Behaviors may change due to his presence |

Implications for Program Integration and Implementation



Looking for themes throughout the program to guide future implementation:

- School leadership shapes the context in which innovation is implemented
- Collaborative leadership promotes buy-in and ownership from all actors
- Top-down leadership promotes buy-in but limits ownership
- Disinterested leadership allows individual actors/beliefs and attitudes to determine practices