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Introduction

There is no greater compliment than to have practitioners apply your ideas—especially when it’s done successfully and to good effect. This publication represents the work of people and organizations that went beyond adherence to a model. The writers—from Bridges® communities, sectors, and P-20 education—have taken ownership of the concepts found in aha! Process publications, and advanced the work with innovations they are sharing with you now. In so doing, they follow an evolving grassroots tradition that began several years ago when eight communities gathered to share best practices at the first annual Bridges conference.

In *From Vision to Action* we hope to support the growing community of learning in various sectors whose work is crucial to our efforts to address the multiple causes of poverty. The annual conferences—and now this publication—are an integral part of the infrastructure that drives this movement.

All of this is in the context of walking with people who are struggling to make ends meet and communities that want to ensure a good life and pass it on to the next generation. Each application or innovation described here adds to our knowledge base. The work deepens as relationships of mutual respect are developed, as people from different classes, sectors, and political persuasions cooperate to topple the barriers that stand in the way of people who are working toward a stable life and higher resources.

In these pages you will read about new insights and shifting paradigms as we continue to adopt a language and set of constructs that change the way individuals, institutions, and communities address poverty. Members of the review team, along with the consultants and associates at aha! Process, are inspired by the creative applications and fresh language found in this collection of papers.

You are encouraged to build your own future story as you read and reflect on these practical and concrete strategies—and join our learning community.

From Understanding to Action: Lessons Learned in South Bend

by Bonnie Bazata

TODAY, 46.2 MILLION AMERICANS live in poverty, and the number is rising. For residents of South Bend, Indiana, it is almost one in four. The St. Joseph County Bridges Out of Poverty Initiative (SJC Bridges) began in 2004 from a women's leadership effort that wanted to find a way to break the cycle of poverty. The effort grew quickly as a community collaborative led by a cross-sector steering committee and in 2008 formed as a nonprofit. South Bend was recently named one of the top 10 dying cities in America by *Newsweek* ("America's Dying Cities," 2010), and SJC Bridges believes that factors influencing this won't change significantly unless poverty is addressed as a sustainability and quality of life issue for all our residents. Nancy King, one of the SJC Bridges founders and current board chair, who is also a business

leader in the South Bend Hall of Fame, said it this way:

Our community cannot sustain itself unless we address and significantly reduce the amount of poverty that exists in our county. More importantly, as a human being, I believe that we must make it possible for individuals who live in poverty in our community to achieve self-sufficiency. The Bridges Out of Poverty (Payne, DeVol, & Dreussi-Smith, 2006) process is an effective strategy to accomplish both of these goals.

Since 2004 SJC Bridges has been using education and advocacy to bring social workers, employers, realtors, faith leaders, educators, bankers, and community

leaders together with people in poverty to take action in new ways. Founding organizations like St. Margaret's House and the YWCA engaged with Bridges® to build their organizational capacity for greater effectiveness and to bring Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World (DeVol, 2006) to their clients as a "value added" tool. They, along with 12 other partner agencies, have graduated more than 400 people from Getting Ahead™. Kathy Schneider, executive director of St. Margaret's House, says:

I am in my 21st year as executive director of an agency that serves women and children in poverty, and I find Bridges to be one of the most worthwhile things that we do for our guests. When I co-facilitate and see the positive movement forward the women make, it gives me renewed energy for everything else I have to do.

A survey of the partner agencies showed that:

Upon their clients' completion of the program, a majority of the agency contacts interviewed saw a positive impact on their clients' confidence, self-esteem, and perspective of and hope for the future ... [They] became more confident and more equipped to collaborate, communicate, and network with a wide range of individuals within their peer group, their agency, and the larger community ... [They] gained a better understanding of their role in the community and now view themselves as contributing members. (Lake, Costanzo, Flynn, & Way, 2010)

Once formed as a nonprofit, SJC Bridges continued to educate and engage new groups and sectors, many of whom became committed in new ways and have reported having transformative experiences in their understanding of poverty.

In the course of its work, SJC Bridges has evolved a list of core lessons learned and developed a set of core action steps which address needs raised by the core lessons. This article will share the lessons learned and illustrate some of the ways in which the action steps address the problems and bridge the gaps that became evident in the lesson-learning process.

Lessons Learned by SJC Bridges

1. We live segregated lives.
2. Poverty is not one monolithic experience, and people experience poverty in many complex and interlocking ways; therefore, our responses need to be varied and targeted.
3. Poverty is a trap, and the journey begins with hope and motivation.
4. It takes more than safety nets to assist people in the transition out of poverty.
5. The journey is nonlinear, and we need to build tolerance and capacity to sustain the process.
6. Doing nothing costs something.
7. Effective input and leadership from people in poverty is required for the plans to progress.
8. It will require a new vision and shared accountability within and among social services and "helping organizations."

Paying the Homeless to Stand Outside Your Business: Schenectady Bridges Project Turns Poverty Upside Down

interview with Michael Saccocio
conducted by Jesse Conrad

Introduction

THE FOLLOWING interview of Michael Saccocio, the executive director and CEO of City Mission in Schenectady, New York, was conducted because City Mission is an organization that has taken the lead in a movement to implement Bridges Out of Poverty (Payne, DeVol, & Dreussi-Smith, 2006) concepts in a variety of helping organizations in the broader Schenectady area.

City Mission has a proven track record of helping people move from poverty to sustainability. Their certified instructors combine the innovative principles of Bridges with years of experience working with people in poverty. Their leadership

development programs for people in poverty have been recognized with recent awards, including:

- Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council Executive Leadership Award—2011
- Chamber of Schenectady County Good News Award—2011
- Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation Susan Rosenthal Volunteerism Award—2010
- Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation Building Block Award—2008

Achieving Our Vision: How Hancock County Chose a Direction for Its Bridges Work

by Carol Taylor

THE INVOLVEMENT of Hancock County in northwestern Ohio with Bridges Out of Poverty began as many communities do—a training. Consultant and author Terie Dreussi-Smith, who in 1999 had co-authored *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities* with Ruby Payne and Phil DeVol, provided a two-day training session in March 2009 with more than 140 people in attendance.

After the training, those who wanted to continue to be active in the initiative were asked to sign up to attend a follow-up meeting. Thirty people indicated they were interested. The follow-up meeting resulted in the realization that there were many differing opinions and a multitude of options available. This led to more meetings. Over the course of one year, several ideas emerged that seemed important, yet

daunting, to those involved. The idea of hiring a coordinator became the focus.

Thirteen months after Dreussi-Smith's training, Hancock County officially hired me as full-time coordinator for its Bridges® Initiative. I was asked to focus in three directions:

- 1) Offer ongoing training sessions for the general community
- 2) Offer Getting Ahead™ (DeVol, 2006) classes on a regular basis
- 3) Develop a pool of “allies” to work with the graduates of Getting Ahead

With someone focused on the “programming” aspects of the initiative, the Guiding Coalition was asked to identify community issues that affected those in poverty and begin to create plans to address those is-

The Schenectady Bridges Project: Using the Bridges Model to Build a Communitywide Health Coalition

by Kellie Valenti

IN 2007 NEW YORK STATE'S hospital closure commission (the Berger Commission) mandated the merger of Schenectady's three hospitals into one. During the ensuing five years, a broad community coalition has used the "Bridges®" (Payne, DeVol, & Dreussi-Smith, 2006) lens to enhance access to healthcare services, leading to measurable improvements in community health and positioning Schenectady as a leader in healthcare innovation.

The forced consolidation of the three hospitals, which was accomplished in less than a year, left Ellis Medicine, the non-profit owner of the single remaining acute-care hospital (and, suddenly, also one of the community's largest primary-care providers) with *de facto* responsibility for the health and wellness of all the county's 150,000 people.

James W. Connolly, the new president and CEO of the newly consolidated hospital (he had interviewed for his job on the day the Berger Commission issued its report), called the recognition of that responsibility "an epiphany." As the only place that the community's substantial uninsured and underinsured population can go for care, Connolly said, "The hospital has two choices. You can wait until people get sick and come to the Emergency Department for very expensive care, or you can get out into the community and promote cost-effective wellness and primary care. Either way, you pay for it." And paying for it was a valid concern in a community where the three hospitals lost a combined \$7 million in the year preceding consolidation.

Framework 21: Educating the Whole Child

by Teresa A. Johnson, Ed.D.

Introduction

“I like a teacher who gives me something else to take home to think about besides homework.”

–Lily Tomlin as “Edith Ann”
(Quote Garden, 2012)

THIS IS MY FAVORITE QUOTE. Even though it is a quote from a fictional character, I feel it makes a powerful statement about teaching and learning, particularly in relation to high-ability and gifted learners. In the literature of many renowned educators, who have studied and worked with high-ability and gifted learners, I have found many recommendations that these learners be given some-

thing else to think about through meaningful learning experiences; training that teaches them to see the whole picture; and challenges that require deep, critical thought. Consider the following counsel from experienced educators:

- a) Benjamin Franklin once wrote that children should learn things likely to be most useful (Hayes, 2006).
- b) Tomlinson (1997) notes that high-ability and gifted learners need time for in-depth exploration, they must be cultivated to reach their highest potential, and they must be taught well and taught a curriculum that would be meaningful to their lives.
- c) Slocumb and Payne (2000) state that high-ability and gifted learners need to think at higher levels and indepen-