The Breakthrough Network Model

Building Skills
And
Growing Networks
Do you ever…

• Feel like no one else understands the kids you serve?
• Think about what happens to the children when you move on?
• Feel like others minimize a child’s gain that you know is huge?
• Wish all volunteers were as committed as you?
• Wonder how you will keep it up long-term?
#1 - The Paid Staff Model

- Org. hires staff to work with kids directly
- Staff have skills and love kids
- Some Limits:
  - Number of kids is tied to staff $
  - Hard lonely work leads to high turnover
  - High turnover disturbs kids, they begin “insulation”
Thoughts…

- Cash < Need
- We must find a way to get broader impact with minimal dollars.
- How did we improve?
#2 Mentoring Programs

- Began to leverage staff $ to recruit volunteers to work directly with young people.
- Began to see positive impact in school, respect, college, violence rates (Edna McConnell Clark Foundation)
- Began to use volunteers to tutor.
- Tried to get long-term relationships.
What are we learning?

• Volunteers have a high turnover rate too.
• Volunteers often start with less skill.
• Impact grows with longevity of relationship
• Relationship Length is nearly impossible to predict across the board.
• Youth need more than 1 healthy adult
• Need > supply of mentors
Continuing to Learn…

• Several good ideas and organizations.
• Here’s what we’re working on at Breakthrough.
• A model that utilizes learning from:
  – The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
  – Peter Scales (Search Institute)
  – Richard Price (Carnegie Corporation)
The Breakthrough Network Model

• video
Pillars of the Network Model

- Commitment to run skill building programs
- Match the volunteer strengths with needed programs.
- Commit to ongoing training of volunteers
- Create Community among the adults
- Link the student to several caring adults
Formula for success

building skills
+
healthy adult network
=
access to opportunity
Shifts in Mindset

- Staff – not only “program owners” but also “builders of community”.
- Volunteers – begin thinking of themselves as “doorways”, not only toolboxes
- Students – not just “homework completers” but also “network builders”
- Funders – not only niche focused but also “whole person” thinking.
Building Healthy Relationship Networks while Growing Skills

- Program Pyramids:
  - Focus on activities
  - Build skills
  - Provide survival needs
  - Increase confidence

- Relationship Networks:
  - Focus on people
  - Build community
  - Provide hope
  - Increase opportunity

At Breakthrough, Skill Building Programs and Healthy Relationship Networks work together to overcome poverty, addiction and isolation.
Providing a Home for the Homeless

and…

Offering Life-Transforming Skills!

Men’s and Women’s Services Program Pyramid

Access to Life-Transforming Skills

Spiritual Development

Overnight Shelter

Street Outreach

Breakthrough Urban Ministries
Benefits

- Greater long-term relational stability for students
- Staff last longer
- Increase number of advocates for cause
- Wider range of expertise
- Allows relationships to grow naturally
Challenges

- It demands trust and “volunteer insiders”
- Create roles that are small enough for busy people yet big enough for an impact.
- It demands programs that meet the “felt need” and utilize volunteer skills
- Recruitment issue is reduced but not eliminated
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