



## Tabletop Session Summary

July 8, 2021

### Supporting Vulnerable Students Through Multiagency Coordination

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**Presenters:** Jessica Nauiokasis, [Mott Haven Academy Charter School NYC](#); Dr. Ed Manansala, [Superintendent of Schools, El Dorado County, CA](#); Jessica Weaver, [Communities In Schools of San Antonio](#)

This tabletop discussion provided strategies for working with local agencies to support students who have faced significant disruptions to their education.

### Session Highlights

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- » School can be a centralizing force for the work of improving multiagency collaboration. More effective communication and coordination between child serving agencies is more important now than ever, as the long-term outcomes of children and youth whose education has been disrupted depends on the quality of support that they receive.
- » Mott Haven Academy Charter School in New York City is the first public school dedicated to serving children in the child welfare system. It has been a model for schools across the country who are hoping to better serve vulnerable children and youth. Their work is centered around creating a positive school experience for kids who have had a lot of instability in their past (e.g., children living in foster care). They invest just as much time in the social and emotional environment as they do the academic environment.
- » Partnerships are vital to this work. It's important to make sure that agencies are not operating in silos but are coordinated in making school the most stabilizing force and the most positive experience for students.
- » Communities In Schools in San Antonio is embedded in local schools and is in the unique position to serve as a support system for students and for schools. Site coordinators with social work experience and counseling backgrounds serve as a bridge for campuses to connect to additional community resources, so that teachers can teach and be the best that they possibly can in their classrooms. To better serve students experiencing homelessness, Communities In Schools also has a site coordinator embedded in a local shelter, where they can be a connection to families and a bridge to schools.
- » In El Dorado County in California, they went on a two-year journey to create a sense of continuity, with partnerships at all levels. They wanted to put a governance structure in place there that would facilitate data sharing, collaboration, and ensure that there was a champion alongside every child that was dealing with some level of disruption.

### Shared Resources

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- » [Rigged – An interactive game](#)



## Questions and Answers on Supporting Vulnerable Students Through Multiagency Coordination

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### **How do you get the leadership in districts to start having conversations with partner agencies before children begin kindergarten?**

First, it is important to understand that each local context is unique. The conditions for collaboration and engagement need to be right. In California, the political dynamics make it difficult to wait for leadership at the state level. There has been greater opportunity at the county level.

The El Dorado County Commission for Youth and Families in partnership with Bellwether Education Partners was able to establish a framework to pull leaders together in California's First 5, which aims to support children from age zero to five. This effort included representatives from K-12 education, as well as partner agencies. Thus, when the right type of conditions are in place (including individuals who can be champions at the right levels) things start to move. Another factor was generational leadership change, which opened the door for a renewed vision for collaboration.

### **Are there any district policies that may pose as barriers to better coordination amongst agencies? Which ones have you been able to successfully navigate, and which ones stand in the way as it relates to COVID and return to school?**

It is important to acknowledge that when policies trickle down to students and families, they have a real impact on lives. When the Mott Haven Academy was established, there was an effort to address the issue of students having to change schools each time they moved. Before the Every Student Succeeds Act passed in 2015, there was no mechanism in New York (or other areas) to recognize that transportation played a big role in preserving school placement for students. At Mott Haven Academy, partner agencies and resources were pulled together to address this problem. After legislation was enacted, the issue then became determining which district is responsible for which student. This example highlights the complexity of a problem that is not always resolved through policy.

For Communities In Schools, the biggest obstacle as an outside agency is data sharing and having access to data in real time. In San Antonio, it has taken a lot of work to ensure that schools and districts are in line with data sharing and understand the importance of having access to timely data to develop meaningful interventions. In addition, the geographic landscape in San Antonio is such that there are about 17 school districts. For students who have to move and change schools frequently, having to tell their story repeatedly is not in line with trauma-informed care. To that end, Communities In Schools staff have been able to be the connection between systems and schools so that families don't have to figure it out by themselves.

During the pandemic, some of the geographic barriers were eliminated so students and families could receive food if they lived near a school regardless of whether the students attended that school. COVID allowed for flexibility that was more family-friendly and released some of the policy barriers. The pandemic caused the schools to focus more on taking care of families than restricting services to families based on where they live. As students return to schools, it will be important to look at some of that flexibility and examine which policies to keep in place.

### **What can participants in this tabletop session do tomorrow or next week to improve their work?**

One intentional practice that can be done tomorrow or next week is to map out all the community agencies that have a connection with a school and create a plan for increasing communication with them. Also, in line with communication, consider the needs of agencies and schools, and put systems in place to make sure the needs are met in service to students and families. Consider evaluation during this



time and what it will look like within your context. Finally, recognize that students are not thinking about formal structures. They just want to walk back into a community. Think about the elements that make a strong community and model them.

