

January Peer Networking Meeting Minutes
January 19, 2010 – Empowering Staff to be Leaders

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **The Achieving Independence Center** has a mentoring program that is always looking for volunteer mentors to work a few hours a month with Foster Care youth. Contact center staff if interested.
- **ARC of Philadelphia** is looking for individuals to speak at monthly brunch meetings, held on the first Wednesday of every month. On the 2nd Wednesday of every month a training is held, related to the topic of individuals with disabilities. Special Education Trainings are available. The ARC is also working on a project; helping families who don't speak English navigate the special education system. If anyone works with families who don't speak English and have kids that are in the special education system, please contact the ARC. Contact: Katharina Mach. Email: kmach@arcpddc.org. Website: www.arcpddc.org.
- **Theatre for Transformation** is presenting "Show Me the Franklins! Remembering the Ancestors, Slavery, and Benjamin Franklin," a play about slavery and Benjamin Franklin. Appropriate for ages 8 and up. The performance will be on Wednesday, March 24, 2010 at the Arch Street Meeting House from 1 – 2 PM (includes talk-back after show. Tickets are \$20 or \$15 for groups of 20 or more. Contact Amanda Kemp at Amanda@dramandakemp.com. Website: www.dramandakemp.com
- **OIC of America's** Strengthening Communities Fund is looking for qualified non-profit organizations in specific areas of Philadelphia to provide one-to-one technical assistance to build internal and external capacity. Funding will also be provided to qualifying organizations for capacity-building activities. For more information, contact Jennifer Brower at jbrower@oicofamerica
- **Healing** is an agency that is designed to service the community with programs that will prevent various types of dangerous or fatal incidents that occur with our youth and young adults. This is provided through presentations, workshops, conflict resolution trainings, and life skills through drama classes. For more information contact Gregory S. Morga, Sr. at elder@godshouse-bamn.org. Website: www.godshouse-bamn.org
- **The OSTRC's** Winter-Spring Training Directory is available on the website:

PANEL PRESENTATION

Tamika Chester, MS – Program Development Coordinator, Educational Information & Resource Center **tdavis@eirc.org**

Tamika coordinates and manages EIRC's New Jersey After 3 and Abbott funded programs. Tamika received her Master of Science in Organizational Management and Leadership from Springfield College and her BA in Sociology from Rowan University. She is an experienced professional trainer, specializing in positive youth development, organizational management and leadership, and parental/family engagement.

- Tamika has a handout – if anyone wants it please follow up with her to get it via email

- The EIRC coordinates after school programs in schools, and a preschool program in schools for students of all ages in Camden
- Each program serves 90-200 students per site
- Tamika's philosophy in working with staff is a motivational management strategy – staff members are team members. She manages from a team perspective, in which she is a team captain and everyone brings something to the table
- Tamika's team approach starts from the very beginning with hiring process and planning process. Knowing the type of person she is and her management skills, she knows the type of person she works best with.
- During the interview process, she goes into details about the job description – so the applicant knows what type of person they are looking for, and if the position will be a good fit for them and they will be a good fit for the organization.
- Tamika brings her team members into interviews, and also makes clear the mission, vision, and culture of organization – the new team member must be good fit for everyone.
- Tamika's teaching philosophy begins with the knowledge that staff members come with a set of skills, and she looks for potential areas of growth.
- As a teacher, she is always looking for how she can better her staff. She knows their skills, strengths, and challenge areas, and is always looking for information and opportunities for information sharing, depending on staff needs.
- Everyone learns in different ways – some people like to read, some people need information in a staff meeting format
- Staff meetings are held once a month – this is set in stone
- Tamika encourages her staff to get out of the office – go to trainings, network, etc.
- Delegation is important– Tamika delegates to employees what she feels matches their skill sets, there is no work dumping
- Encourage independent thinking – for supervisors it is hard, we think we know everything and the best way to do things all the time, but it is important to try
- Tamika is constantly asking for input from staff in planning processes
- Staff members are allowed to come to her with problems, but they must come with thought out potential solutions. Tamika often asks if she can throw problems to the team for their input and moral support.
- Building a team is important, you support each other
- Listen to what your staff are saying to you. Listen open mindedly. You may not like what you hear, but you can always learn. Accept responsibility for your role in problems – work collectively to fix them.
- Set the example – your attitude reflects your leadership. Tamika models behavior that she wants from her staff, she is the example. There is nothing she asks staff to do that she hasn't done and wouldn't do.
- Share the spotlight – she can't do it all by herself – the staff is who makes it happen. Take care of the people who are going to take care of you - make sure staff knows this as well
- Tamika's tagline is: we have fun, but we get the job done!

Anne Marie Dunne – After School Program Coordinator, Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation

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Anne Marie recently completed a one year research inquiry program with a group of Out-of-School Time practitioners facilitated by the Philadelphia Writing Project. During this

time she researched the Department of Parks and Recreation's professional development program and the concept of staff training other staff.

- Anne Marie oversees all of the Recreation Department's Afterschool programs. This really entails professional development and organization of the program. She oversees 117 employees, most of whom are part time, seasonal employees.
- Anne Marie plans and sets up trainings for employee professional development.
- Anyone if given essential tools and support to do their jobs will be able to do them
- Many of her employees were stay at home moms, now they are mostly college students. She sees their care and compassion for children as essential to do their jobs.
- The only education requirement for these positions is a high school diploma or a GED. Professional Development Trainings are necessary as well.
- Staff members' Initial support base is their Recreation leader, who works in close proximity to program directors
- Trainings tell staff who their support is and what they need to do
- Listen to staff and see what they need help and support with – this year they asked for homework help training
- Other training topics have included interaction with parents, basics of observing children, and standards for afterschool care.
- Quality comes from staff professional development – staff work to improve their own problems, and know what is going on.
- Anne Marie encourages staff to attend as many trainings as possible, and utilize learned information and skills in their programs.
- Staff realize their importance to their programs – Anne Marie hopes to instill this in all of their staff. It is important to support them to feel confident in what they are doing – assure them of their importance.
- Staff are the ones that are going to help the staff – what they need to do is connect with each other
- Anne Marie plans trainings so staff can interact and network with each other, and inspire one another talking about their shared experiences working at sites

Jacqueline Genovesi, M.L.A. – Senior Director of Education, Academy of Natural Sciences

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Jacquie is Senior Director of Education at the Academy of Natural Sciences, and has been with the Academy for around 19 years. She has a BS in biology from Rider University, an M.L.A. in Environmental Education from the University of Pennsylvania and she is working on my doctoral dissertation in Educational Leadership at Drexel University, expected graduation date June, 2010. Jacquie is also a wife and mother of three young children (3, 7, & 10 years old) so empowering her staff is very important for her to be able to get everything done!

- To begin, Jacquie asked for a show of hands of how many people in the room supervise staff. Quite a few people raised their hands.
- Jacquie supervises 5 staff members who are also managers that supervise other staff. In addition, she supervises the Academy's volunteers.
- She found out early, if she didn't empower her staff she would go crazy
- Jacquie started at the Academy working with the living exhibits. When taking care of live animals, you get phone calls all the time. She didn't want staff to call unless

something was dead. She then changed her policy to calling only when something was dying and the staff member needed her support.

- Jacquie's philosophy with staff – she gives them tools to help them do the jobs that they have
- She hires competent people, gives them tools they need then if they need support they can come to her
- Communication is important – she holds staff meetings two times a month for all managers, and has one-on-one meetings with staff once a month.
- Nothing trumps the staff meetings. However, when something comes up that necessitates cancelling a meeting, it is important to communicate with staff, let them know they are important, but there have been unavoidable circumstances.
- The more you communicate with staff, the more it empowers them to be able to make decisions
- Let them know which way the organization is going, so if they have ideas in the right direction they can run with them
- How do we give them the tools to succeed? It is really individual to the staff person – here is the job you are asking them to do, what is the skill set they need to do it? How do you facilitate this?
- Realize that their current job/organization may not be their end job
- When hiring people, let them know that it is okay for them to not see this job as the end goal. While they are there, help them grow their skills, and while they are there they will do a better job. They will be able to use these skills on the outside as well, for their next job.
- Boss is a 4 letter word, Jacquie does not like it. We are a team, can't do anything without the team.
- Jacquie lets her staff take the limelight – let staff take credit for things that they have done, their ideas.
- She gave her staff a survey – what are the top things she does to empower them, and what do managers do that doesn't help. The top things she found are communication and giving staff projects
- Let go of micromanagement – give staff tools and support and let them go. Staff feel empowered and satisfied with their jobs.
- Have confidence in your staff to give away power – there isn't just one way to do things, as long as we end up at the same end result.
- Staff members evaluate her every year, as a team, so nobody feels uncomfortable. She gets one report from all staff, with positives and negative - it tells how she can empower and support them more. Do it in a way that is not threatening.
- Staff can be afraid to tell you what you really think – give them a way to do this
- Talk to your staff and allow your staff a way to talk to you

Q & A

Q: Really great presentation, as a supervisor it is good to hear that here are similarities. With the budget crisis in Philadelphia and other locations, you have to empower with less and less money. Budgets are remaining the same, living expenses and needs are going up – how do you keep groups empowered when the money isn't there to pay them and services need to expand? Also how do you deal with employees that you inherit? Empowering with the new system that they have to incorporate with?

Tamika Chester (TC): Budget question – her budget was cut in third last year with the same amount of kids. There had to be pay cuts and no raises for staff, but how to

communicate this? Leadership took pay cuts so that they didn't have to lose staff and volunteered furlough days to make up the difference in the budget. Tamika also agreed to not take a raise if her staff didn't.

How to motivate staff in times when it's not for the money? Most people weren't there for the money anyways – she offered them training to grow their own professional selves so that when they leave they will be better off for the work world.

Jacquie Genovesi (JG): Also had to institute pay cuts.

How to make the job a place where staff members want to come to? Being flexible with staff – parents with children, etc. There are other ways giving staff benefits look for these.

TC: The dollar store is a great place. Little things that you can do to give to your staff make a big difference. The worst thing you can do right now is to make staff feel like they are not important - make them feel valued.

Tamika inherited staff when she started – it is difficult. There were cultural differences with her coming on board, and the age thing – they perceived that she was young and inexperienced. You can't control what people think, say, or do, but she can control how she responds to it. It was hard to be attacked constantly, but how she responded to them mattered. She planned everything she was going to say to them and the staff took cues from her. She tried to be honest, compassionate, courteous, and respectful – assimilate everyone. Let the documentation reflect the outcome.

Q: How do you protect your staff from people above you who don't seem to have any compassion or sense of fairness? Expectations for staff keep raising, benefits and hours for employees keep dropping.

JG: Make the assumption that your staff and everything that they do and you do is for the good of the organization. Show the upper echelon why it is necessary and what it does for the organization as a whole. As long as you stick to your core values and the values of the organization, everything will be alright. Protect your staff at all costs, even at your expense – your head on the chopping block. Never throw staff under the bus, always have their backs. This makes you look better as a department. Supporting your staff, big picture wise, you can never lose.

TC: I am going to go down with my ship – need staff to be confident that she has their best interest so they can build their own confidence in what they are doing. As long as we are doing what is right for the organization it will all work out.

Anne Marie Dunne (AMD): Anne Marie runs interference for staff – trying to keep them calm in the face of upheaval. She encourages them to continue doing what they were doing – work on staff's behalf each and every day. Tell staff to do the best that they can – everything will get done and we will help you the rest of the way.

Original Questioner: make sure not to make false promises – staff underneath him want him to tell them that it is alright – he won't do it if it isn't true.

TC: In times of crisis, she sat her staff down and told them what they are good at – where they can go, important in this time when funding is tenuous – what other skills and talents can you utilize.

Q: Can you tell a little more about team evaluation process? Is it the same evaluation that everyone else gets?

JG: Yes and no – she has goals that she set for herself. She hands these over as well as a self evaluation process that she does. They look through these and evaluate as if they were her boss.

Q: Is it on paper or do you have a discussion about it?

JG: On paper, then she usually discusses it with them, and her plans to fix what is wrong.

Q: What do you do in the case of an employee having more than one supervisor? I am a supervisor for only one part of staff's jobs, and don't have a lot of say over what happens to staff, etc.

TC: Can you meet with other half of supervisors?

Original Questioner: No, we all have meetings together, we just changed formats and not everybody is into it – needs a way to empower them to do half of their job and empower herself to get through it.

JG: Has had staff in the past with two managers – it is her experience that it never works – employees inevitably play mom and dad. Don't do this, if you don't really have a choice - figure out a way of empowering them so that they see that what you are telling them and giving them is going to help them with their jobs, make them easier, help them grow, etc.