

California Healthy Start

Seed Funding to Build Partnerships for Student Success

Executive Summary

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This report highlights the promise of utilizing schools as access points for a range of critical services for children and their families in California’s low-income communities. It showcases six (former) California Healthy Start grant recipients that have successfully built robust partnerships among the school district, local government and community-based agencies. These success stories suggest that providing seed funding for planning and coordination of learning-support services is a worthwhile investment in communities—one that contributes to sustained partnerships, programs and services, and ultimately better outcomes for children and families.

California Healthy Start: History and Intent

The Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act (SB 620) was passed in 1991. SB 620 provided one-time seed funding to local education agencies (LEAs) to help children and their families gain access to a comprehensive array of learning supports provided through a combination of community-school partnerships and school-linked services. After the three-year funding period, LEAs were accountable for sustaining partnerships, programs and services on their own. Between 1992 and 2006, the California Department of Education (CDE) awarded a total of 823 Healthy Start planning grants, 651 operational grants, and 19 combined grants—serving over 1,500 school sites and more than 1 million students.¹

The Efficacy of California Healthy Start: Expansion Beyond Initial Healthy Start Sites and Funding Leveraged Through Partnerships

A number of local partnerships initiated by a Healthy Start grant(s) continue to provide the students and families they serve with resources that advance the academic achievement of traditionally under-served populations. Many of the former grantees have expanded their reach beyond the number of originally funded sites, in some cases developing district-wide systems and strategies.

These programs are characterized by well-established cross-agency partnerships and their ongoing ability to utilize the combined resources of families, communities, counties, cities, nonprofit organizations, businesses, school and districts. Each of the six communities showcased in this report were able to first leverage Healthy Start dollars to establish the collaboratives and to then go on to leverage additional resources (both monetary and in-kind) to further develop and expand the services students and families need to be successful.

The table below shows the extent to which the six communities included in this report have sustained or expanded beyond their original Healthy Start grants, as well as the degree to which they are currently able to leverage resources (both monetary and in-kind).

¹ CDE Healthy Start Fact Sheet, 2009

Leveraging Healthy Start Seed Funding				
Name of Partnership	Local Education Agency (LEA)	1st Year Healthy Start Grant Awarded (total years in operation)	# School Sites in LEA that Received Healthy Start Grant Funding (# school sites served by partnership in 2010)	Leveraging Ratio
Community Agencies for Caring Connections	Bellflower USD	1992 (19 yrs)	5 (15)	1:16
Youth and Family Resource Centers	Sacramento City USD	1992 (19 yrs)	14 (19)	1:6
Lake County Healthy Start	Lake County Office of Education	1994 (17 yrs)	9 (20)	1:3
Redwood City Community Schools	Redwood City SD	1995 (16 yrs)	4 (12)	1:17
Family Solutions Collaborative / Montclair Community Collaborative	Ontario-Montclair SD and City of Montclair	1997 (14 yrs)	12 (32)	1:3
Julian Pathways Center for Family, Schools and Community	Julian USD	1999 (12 yrs)	1 (2)	1:9

Notes:
The first column identifies the Healthy Start grant recipients being showcased, and the second column identifies the LEA (school district) served by that partnership.

Column 3 of the matrix indicates the first year the LEA was awarded a Healthy Start grant, followed by the approximate number of years the partnership has been in existence (in parentheses).

The first number in Column 4 shows the total number of school sites within the LEA that were awarded a Healthy Start grant and the second (in parentheses) indicates the total number of school sites currently involved in the partnership, i.e., the expansion of the effort beyond the original Healthy Start grant(s). For instance, between 1992 and 2011, Bellflower Unified School District drew upon Healthy Start seed funding to provide learning support services at five of its school sites. Today, the partnership, Community Agencies for Caring Connections, provides learning supports to 15 of the district's school sites.

The final column is based on information provided by the partnerships and provides a ratio that shows the estimated value of leveraged services. See Appendices A and B for more detailed information about how the ratios of education funding to other sources were calculated.

There is variation across the collaboratives, but available information clearly suggests that these six communities have been successful in leveraging the original Healthy Start seed money to sustain or increase the range of learning supports available to children and families within their communities.

The scale of resources leveraged to provide a range of support services is remarkable. As shown in the table above, communities are leveraging anywhere from \$3 to as much as \$17 in support services for every 'education' dollar invested.

Improving Educational Outcomes

The six communities track and report a range of outcomes, including: improved attendance and decreases in referrals for behavioral challenges to improved test scores. For example, Ontario-Montclair School District's overall Academic Performance Indicator (API) increased from 559 in 2001 to 740 in 2010. In Redwood City, Taft Community School (an elementary school) achieved a growth in API from 444 in 2000 to 784 in 2009, and was one of only nine schools to exit program-improvement status across the state.

Recommendations

Based on the successes highlighted in this report, the authors make the following recommendations regarding state-level support for future efforts to build interagency partnerships on the local level.

Grant Program Providing Seed Funding

Given the results achieved by the communities highlighted in this report, reauthorizing funding for a Healthy Start-like grant program should be undertaken as soon as the state budget allows. Some fairly minor changes to the original Healthy Start guidelines to strengthen the programs' catalyzing effects should be made, such as limiting grant funding use to planning and coordination activities versus direct service delivery; requiring greater commitment on the district level to expanding partnership strategies beyond individual or single sites; encouraging greater involvement on the part of county health and human service agencies; and requiring more intentional integration of plans for providing learning support services into the educational systems at the school site and district level. In addition, guidelines for tracking outcomes that allow comparison across communities, as well as better longitudinal tracking on a statewide level, are also recommended.

Children's Cabinet/Council—Improved Interagency Partnering at the State Level

Successful Healthy Start efforts made genuine partnerships with county health and human services agencies—tapping into critical sources of service funding and expertise. Better coordination at the state level between agencies and across program and service areas could help efforts to break down funding and program silos at the local level. A Children's Cabinet or interagency council should be charged with this work.

California Department of Education: Guidance Around Best Practices

Successful Healthy Start grantees report that the technical assistance they received, especially around the stages of the planning process, was invaluable in building the sustained systems change to support their interagency partnerships. To the extent possible, the California Department of Education should provide information regarding best practices and successful examples for any school district attempting to build interagency partnerships to provide learning support services—with or without a grant program.

Conclusion

Evidence from almost 20 years of awarding Healthy Start grants in California's schools as a strategy for seed funding local interagency partnership building suggests that California's neediest students have benefited through increased student learning and improvement in other developmental trajectories. While the collection of longitudinal grantee data—a design well beyond the scope of this report—would be necessary in order to draw more definitive conclusions, the authors' interviews of sustained Healthy Start grantees do strongly suggest a positive interaction between leveraging Healthy Start seed funding and increasing student outcomes. Similar approaches to interagency partnerships that utilize schools as core institutions of local communities should be adopted to align critical resources for supporting student success and community well-being.