



CAN Community Council Meeting Notes, 08/21/2017

Community Council Members in Attendance: Sandra Castillo, Hunter Ellinger, Aimee Finney, Nancy Gilliam, Monica Guzmán, Kent Herring, Aletha Huston, Ara Merjanian, Beverly Reeves, Caroline Reynolds, Gloria Souhami, Michael Willard (A Quorum of the Community Council's 26 members was not present)

Guests in attendance: Katie Casstevens, Nora Comstock, Dena Donaldson, Donna Hagey, Mary Faria

CAN Staff: Raul Alvarez, Mary Dodd, Carlos Soto

Call to order & announcements: Chair Ara Merjanian called the meeting to order at 6:13 p.m. and those present introduced themselves. Sandra Castillo announced the Austin Energy Family Resource Fair, scheduled for September 30, 2017.

Citizens Communication: Mary Faria, Board Chair of the Mayor's Health and Fitness Council, announced that the Council currently recognizes businesses and schools that promote health and wellness. The Mayor's Council will soon introduce a new program that will recognize healthy neighborhoods and award grants for neighborhood programs. She said the Council would appreciate help in understanding how to define what a "neighborhood" is for the program. People with suggestions should contact Mary Faria at mfaria1976@hotmail.com.

Approval of Minutes: Due to lack of quorum, action on the previous month's minutes could not be taken.

Chair's Report: Ara Merjanian reminded members that the deadline for application to join the Community Council is September 15th. He encouraged members to share the application link <http://canatx.org/community-council/application/> within their networks and with people who may be interested in applying. Merjanian invited those interested in serving on the New Membership Nominations Committee to let him know. Merjanian also mentioned that a committee has been formed to discuss next steps in terms of expanding the work done on Person Centered care in order to facilitate implementation of these concepts at all levels in our community.

Upcoming meeting topics: September: issues centered on the impact of the criminal justice system on youth; October: engagement of youth in the community and in the political process; November meeting: work on the final report, election of new members and a new Vice Chair. No meeting is scheduled for December, though the Community council will share its final report with the CAN Board of Directors at their December 8th board meeting. Community Council members are invited to attend that meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. in the boards and Commissions Room of Austin City Hall. He shared a working draft of the final report, which will include Council Members' key observations and recommendations. He asked members to let him know if they would like to volunteer to work with him on the final report. Beverly Reeves has volunteered. Help from more people members is needed.

Executive Director's Report: Alvarez said the last two editions of the new CAN Equity Blog were focused on the new Travis County "Focus on Poverty" report. He invited members to visit canatx.org and "Subscribe" to receive the Blog and also monthly editions of CANews. The CAN Summer Book Study is wrapping up this week, however, there is discussion of making it more ongoing throughout the year. Discussion guides for this year's book study on Richard Florida's book "A New Urban Crisis" are available on the Equity Blog. Dates are being set for Deliberative Dialogues on Safety and Justice, and how to build trust between law enforcement and the community. The dialogues will follow a model used by the National Issues Forum developed from the Kettering Foundation's participatory dialogue model. Two sessions have been scheduled (September 26 at University Presbyterian Church, and October 20 at St. Edwards University), and a third is being planned. Please contact CAN if you are interested in training to be a facilitator for the dialogues. The CAN Retreat is also coming up, where we plan to look at different

aspects of our work. Community Council members are welcome to attend. Join us if you are interested in helping set CAN's agenda for next year. Alvarez also discussed the Language Access Work Group Report and Recommendations that will be shared with partners and the community. Contact CAN for a copy if you would like to provide feedback. Concluding his report, Alvarez mentioned that Assistant Director Mary Dodd will be leaving CAN as she has accepted another position with Integral Care.

We achieve our full potential: How do we use our schools as a venue for building a community where children and their families can be engaged and thrive?

Katie Casstevens, AISD Community Schools Coordinator, provided a background to the Community Schools model, which is a proven school improvement framework that joins neighborhood schools with a coordinated set of community partners to ensure all children and their families have what they need to succeed. Next, Casstevens shared [a video that explains the role of Community Schools](#) in combating some of the most pernicious barriers that keep children from achieving their full potential. Community Schools respond to local needs by tailoring each project to the local challenges facing each community. Casstevens then discussed community school elements already present in schools & the community. In AISD, there is an initiative to shift 12 schools to a Community Schools model.

Donna Hagey, The Austin Project, introduced herself and said The Austin Project and Austin Voices for Children and Youth have each been providing community schools programs and supports through Family Resource Centers at different schools. Community Schools are committed to address the systemic issues that impact the academic and learning potentials of students. One way Community Schools achieve this goal is by following a Multi-Generational approach to combat barriers to education. They connect families with housing, employment & finance, healthcare, education, and social connections at every stage of the educational system, from early childhood centers through post-secondary education. This approach leads to more efficient coordination of resources and services resulting in a far-reaching positive impact in the local community. Family Resource Centers have been able to case manage 850 families per year. A Community School creates space for social service delivery, coordinating closely with school districts to align systems. The Austin Project's database now aligns with AISD database so both sides know when the other is working with the same client and can see each other's progress. Each school also has a Community Schools Alliance meeting where community members come together to share resources, dialogue, and coordinate to address issues in terms of 4 key areas: Family & Communal Engagement, Student Academics & Supports, Health & Wellness, and School Services & Adult Education. Hagey discussed achievements in the areas of parent engagement, school safety, student-teacher relationships, attendance, school climate, academic performance, and community engagement.

Raul Alvarez, Greater Austin Community Schools Coalition, discussed the end goals of successful students, stable families, and strong schools, and how Family Resource Centers support these through service coordination. Needs are determined through direct community engagement. The GACSC is helping the community determine the systems it needs to create so that families can connect with services available to them. Committees have been formed to focus on early childhood, out of school time & expanded learning, family stability, health & wellness, workforce development & career opportunities, and student-centered learning. The goal of the coalition is to build systems for coordination that can more effectively tackle these issues.

Dena Donaldson, Texas American Federation of Teachers, Texas Community Schools Coalition Organizer, helps to develop and facilitate the Texas Community Schools Coalition. Donaldson cited national initiatives that are resulting in an increase in momentum for Community Schools. Donaldson discussed the reality that for the first time in over 50 years, the majority of public school students in the USA are considered "low income", and shared a map that shows Texas as possibly having over 60% of its students qualify as "low-income." State coalitions are key in order to garner support and structure at the

State level, to have a voice in policy and funding considerations for community schools, and to develop strong networks among leaders that decide policy. Texas is one of 6 states that have emerging networks, while 15 states have fully-formed Community Schools Coalitions. Stakeholders in State Coalitions come from a variety of backgrounds and include legislators, school board members, healthcare providers, corporations, the Mexican Consulate, and a number of other organizations. Donaldson also discussed how the Texas Community Schools Coalition realizes its vision through 4 key areas of focus: stakeholder engagement, policy and advocacy, communications, and professional learning and peer networks.

Observations or Recommendations to share with policy makers on CAN Board of Directors:

- Engaging with families to encourage participation in programs/initiatives (2-Gen approach), building partnerships with public and/or private entities for support and funding, and connecting with officials of all levels, are key components for the success of this type of initiative.
- The Community Schools Model helps put more resources and services into schools to ensure they serve their communities as a whole. Expansion of the Community Schools concept should be used as a context to increase community governmental support for all the participating agencies.
- Habitable housing is a pillar of stable family life. The Mayor, & City Manager, need to create a special advocate for assuming compliance of all rental units with minimal habitability of Certificate of Occupancy.
- The successes seen in Baltimore, Cincinnati, and other major US cities should indicate to State leaders that Community Schools are a smart investment. The success seen at Webb Middle & Reagan High should encourage local leaders to make more money available to support Community Schools. More funds need to be available at the local level, changes to state law would ease AISD's burden.
- Opportunities to coordinate efforts exist, many segments of social services and health education services have been bringing resources together to meet family needs. Increased coordination can amplify effectiveness. Example: all schools could benefit from a food pantry.
- Community building is the most important way to connect resources and people. Community Schools encourage community building on a level necessary to bring people together. Children in need will fail without support resources, resulting in a long term negative impact on the community.
- Parents & children need coordinated services to help their families stabilize, be financially viable, and have their basic needs met so that their children can achieve their full potential.

Adjournment: Ara Merjanian thanked the presenters. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.