

CREATE-ing Pathways to Child Wellbeing in Disadvantaged Communities, 2012-2021

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The Need for Collective Impact

Prevention science is built on the foundations of carefully designed and rigorously evaluated evidence--- based programs (EBPs), many of which yield large benefits for disadvantaged children that persist from early childhood into the adolescent years. Despite this, *few EBPs have been implemented by the social and education sectors on a large scale, especially in disadvantaged localities.*

A big problem is that most EBPs are not *system-ready*, but nor are most organizations *evidence-ready*. However, an even bigger problem that the social and education sectors face in tackling concentrated disadvantage is that they remain largely locked into a model of **isolated impact**, focused on the independent activities of individual organizations. What is needed for complex adaptive problems like youth crime, child maltreatment or educational disengagement is what Kania and Kramer in the Winter 2011 issue of *the Stanford Social Innovation Review* call **collective impact** initiatives:

... long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communications, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization. (p. 36)

Achieving Collective Impact: Community Action Based on Six Key Principles

We have drawn on 10 years work in the Pathways to Prevention Project in a disadvantaged region of Brisbane, Australia, to develop the CREATE model: *a set of principles and an action methodology underpinned by good governance and community empowerment.*

CREATE is a framework that builds capacity for collective impact in communities by enhancing the ability of child-serving organisations to operate as part of an integrated system of care for children and families:

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| C | Collaborative | Development is multifaceted, demanding that system silos be transcended through a comprehensive and integrated approach based on good governance |
| R | Relationship-driven | Program delivery requires community engagement and trust built on connections between organizations and relationships between people |
| E | Early in pathway | Primary prevention is achieved by getting in early before problems emerge or become entrenched, with targeted programs embedded in a universal framework |
| A | Accountable | There is a clear focus on measurable outcomes and shared responsibility for clearly articulated goals |
| T | Training-focused | The workforce is empowered through continuous skills development (training, coaching, mentoring) and by strengthening families' efficacy to achieve their own goals for children |
| E | Evidence-based | Programs, practices and services are appropriate for context but have clear evidence for effectiveness and are able to be implemented with fidelity |

Community Coalitions

Through CREATE, communities are supported to come together as a *local coalition of child serving organizations, parents, and concerned residents* who examine and respond to the needs of their local community. Local coalitions must in turn be strongly linked to *collaborations between senior staff at the state or national level across all the organizations serving in local areas*, such as education departments, departments of communities, and major non-government agencies.

The aims of local coalitions are to implement the CREATE principles by:

- (a) *taking collective action* to influence a small number of risk and protective factors identified as priority goals on the basis of data on the needs and wellbeing of local children;
- (b) *continuously reviewing their functioning and membership* to ensure they are effectively addressing their priority goals in an economically efficient way.

The Prevention Translation and Support System

The Prevention Translation and Support System (PTSS) is *a set of structured processes and resources* that equip community coalitions to achieve their aims. The PTSS blends face-to-face guidance, mentoring and coaching provided by a **Collective Impact Facilitator (CIF)**, with a comprehensive range of **interactive on-line resources and training**. A CIF, like a Sherpa, guides the local coalition as they move beyond the status quo toward *the scientific practice of collective impact*, and complement the resources available via Child Family Community Australia (e.g., The Expert Panel). The electronic tools and resources include:

- A validated *measure of child wellbeing-Rumble's Quest*, a 30-minute video game for 5-12 year-old children;
- *The Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM)* on-line, called *Parent's Voice*;
- A comprehensive on-line tool for measuring, reporting, and acting on the quality of functioning of CfC community partnerships (the *Coalition Wellbeing Survey*);
- Informative *videos*; and an extensive array of tools and resources to guide the coalitions through the **CREATE Change Engine** sequence: *Coming Together; Deciding Together; Planning Together; Doing Together; and Reviewing Together* (see Figure below).



The PTSS is thus an interactive system that blends human and technical resources, making possible the rigorous implementation of the CREATE principles. It promotes capacity to work within a collective framework across the education and community sectors at multiple organizational levels, including community members, frontline workers, school personnel, and senior managers.

Components of the PTSS are designed to *develop emergent practice* guided by the CREATE Change Engine Cycle.

Structured around a learning cycle, the Change Engine assists local coalitions to refine and enhance practice according to the needs of the community they serve. This includes applying prevention science methods such as *using data on local children's needs and wellbeing to identify as shared goals three to five priority risk and protective factors*, and then *assessing existing resources and programs in the community that could be modified to address these priority risk and protective factors*. In this way community coalitions can begin the process of moving from isolated impact to the scientific practice of collective impact.

For further information about the project: <http://www.creatingpathways.org.au/>