



THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A Preliminary Review of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Leadership in Action Program



A report by the Research Center for Leadership in Action,
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service,
New York University, for the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW:

NYU WAGNER DOCUMENTATION PROJECT ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP IN ACTION PROGRAM FINAL REPORT

Since 1948, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked to improve the lives of vulnerable children, families and communities by fostering “policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet their needs.”¹ An important strategy in this work is supporting the development of leaders at the state, county, city, and community levels. One such strategy is the Leadership in Action Program (LAP), a results-based leadership development program designed to build the capacity of high- and mid-level leaders in public and community organizations to make collaborative decisions and take aligned actions that lead to measurable improvements. This documentation project explores whether the first statewide and local LAP had an impact on leaders that continued to influence their sustained efforts to ensure that all children in Maryland enter school ready to learn. Findings from the project were used to inform the development of quality improvement strategies to strengthen the implementation of the LAP leadership model.

The first LAP was initiated in December 2001 when the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Casey Foundation) enlisted the Maryland Governor’s Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families as the accountability partner² for the Maryland LAP (MLAP). MLAP’s goal was to increase the percentage of children entering school fully ready to learn as measured on the statewide Work Sampling System.³ To launch MLAP the Subcabinet selected 40 mid- to high-level managers from public and nonprofit organizations statewide who were in a position to create an impact on school readiness. During the next year, MLAP participants used the results accountability framework and other leadership competencies to contribute to the 3 percent statewide increase in the percentage of children entering school ready to learn (49 percent to 52 percent). This increase has continued for each of the following years.

Encouraged by this success, the Casey Foundation’s Leadership Development unit partnered with the Reason to Believe Enterprise in September 2003 to initiate a Baltimore City LAP (BLAP). BLAP included 50 community leaders, public officials, parents, and

early childhood care and education providers. After their first year of aligned actions through their home agencies, BLAP participants contributed to a 13 percentage point increase in the number of children in Baltimore City who entered school ready to learn. This documentation project was designed to capture the stories about what MLAP and BLAP leaders have done to contribute to children entering school ready to learn and the influence of LAP on their leadership experience. The purpose of this study and publication is to improve the quality of the implementation of LAP.

Purpose

Upon the request of the Casey Foundation, the Research Center for Leadership in Action at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University developed this documentation project to inform the quality improvement work of LAP. The purpose of the project is to gain insights into how leaders in MLAP and BLAP experienced LAP, as well as the impact it has had on what leaders have done to help children enter school ready to learn. The review of data began by eliciting leaders' stories and recollections about their LAP experience and the influence of LAP in their everyday work. Information from leaders' stories was then used to understand how the LAP architecture influenced leaders' conceptualizations of leadership. In addition, the review also explored whether or not LAP influenced leaders in their work beyond the original LAP project. Three broad questions guided the inquiry:

1. What did leaders do that contributed to children entering school ready to learn?
2. How sustainable are leadership capacity changes? Are skills and competencies learned in LAP used to address concerns in other arenas? If so, which skills, competencies, and other program elements proved useful?
3. How did LAP help or hinder leaders' abilities to "pick up" their leadership roles to get results?

Methodology

The LAP documentation project was conducted in two phases. The first phase explored the feasibility of using an interview approach to understand LAP participants' thoughts and beliefs about the impact of their LAP experiences on their leadership. The second phase built on lessons from the exploratory interviews and included an online survey. The online survey was used to (1) provide an opportunity for participants who were not interviewed to share their experiences and (2) determine the feasibility of using an online survey approach to obtain information from LAP participants. In total, 41 LAP leaders

participated in the documentation project. The interview approach proved most effective, with a noted positive correlation between the degree of a leader's engagement in LAP and the ease of enrolling his or her participation in the interview. The online survey yielded a return rate of 24 percent (11 out of 46), and while the content of the responses was similar to the thoughts of the interviewees, it did not provide the same rich descriptions as the interviews. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the leaders who participated in the documentation project. Details of the engagement process for each phase follow.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Interviewees

	AGENCY					Gender	
	N	BLAP	MLAP	Public	Nonprofit	M	F
Phase 1	10	5	5	5	5	3	7
Phase 2 Interview	20	10	10	10	10	4	16
Phase 2 Survey	11	8	3	4	7	1	10
Total	41	23	18	19	22	8	33

	Engagement			Race/Ethnicity ⁴			
	High	Med	Low	Asian	Af/Am	White	Latino
Phase 1	10	5	5	5	5	3	7
Phase 2 Interview	20	10	10	10	10	4	16
Phase 2 Survey	11	8	3	4	7	1	10
Total	41	23	18	19	22	8	33

- Phase 1: Exploratory Interviews.** The documentation team, with consultation from the LAP implementation team, developed an interview protocol and instrument for the exploratory phase of the documentation project (see *Appendix A & B*). Data were collected via one-hour telephone calls, which were audio-taped and transcribed with the consent of the interviewees. The sample included five MLAP and five BLAP leaders representing state and local government, national and local non-profit organizations, and academia. Seven females and three males took part in the interviews. The majority of participants were highly engaged in LAP. We believe the interviewees represented a racially/ethnically diverse group.

The MLAP and BLAP project managers were given the selection criteria for the sample and asked to submit names. The MLAP project manager submitted five names. The BLAP project manager submitted 42 names with positions, agency affiliations, degree of engagement, and other demographic information, which allowed the documentation team to use a more rigorous selection process for BLAP participants. The documentation team attempted to represent the diversity of the LAP population by requesting that project managers provide information regarding level of engagement and race/ethnicity, thereby creating a subjective bias to these data. This selection strategy posed several potential limitations, including lack of full objectivity and lack of full representation of the population. The exploratory interviews were completed in early September 2005.

- **Phase 2: Interviews.** The Exploratory Interview was updated for Phase 2 (see *Appendix C*). There was a change in the labeling of the rating scale used in the inquiry about competencies, though no other changes were made. Twenty leaders were interviewed in this phase. The interviews were completed by mid February 2006. Interviewees in Phase 2 represented a diverse group of MLAP and BLAP participants. The sample included 10 MLAP and 10 BLAP leaders; 16 of the 20 leaders interviewed were females, and the remaining were males. The levels of engagement were more evenly split than they had been in Phase 1: Seven were identified as high, seven were identified as medium, and five were identified as low. The engagement level of one participant was unknown.

Unlike Phase 1, it was very difficult to enlist the selected MLAP and BLAP participants to agree to participate in the telephone interviews in Phase 2. The first e-mail invitations to potential telephone participants went out December 4, 2005, and the last interview was completed February 17, 2006. On average, it took at least three e-mails and three calls to the participants to schedule and confirm their telephone interviews. It is also worth noting that four of the original potential interviewees did not participate in the telephone interviews for various reasons.⁵

- **Phase 2: Survey Methodology.** In addition to the 30 phone interviews conducted with LAP participants in the exploratory and second phase, the documentation team attempted to give voice to the remaining LAP participants through an online web survey. The Phase 2 interview instrument was used to design the online web survey with the following two modifications: A demographics section was added that included program, organization type, gender, race, level of involvement in the original LAP, and participation in sustaining program (see *Appendix D*).

One open-ended question was added regarding collaborative leadership. While this was a probe for the phone interviews, we wanted to ask about it specifically on the survey, since we knew we would not be able to speak with these respondents.

The Director of Leadership Development at the Annie E. Casey Foundation sent an e-mail to the 62 LAP participants who did not participate in the phone interview to inform them of the online survey and to let them know they would receive an e-mail from the documentation team when the survey was active. Three days following the e-mail, the documentation team sent an e-mail to the 62 LAP participants confirming that the survey was active, explaining the survey purpose, timing and end date, and providing a link to the survey (e-mails are attached). Two subsequent e-mail reminders were sent urging participants to complete the survey. Although attempts were made to contact all 62 participants, 16 e-mails were returned, suggesting that only 46 e-mail addresses were correct. From these, 24 percent of the surveys were completed and returned, representing 11 out of 46 leaders. Note that the total population included in this study was 92 participants, which was a combination of several participant lists that we received from the LAP Coordinators.

Analysis

A grounded data analysis approach was used to identify concepts, themes, and categories embedded in the narratives and responses of the interviewees. Themes that emerged in Phase 1 guided coding in Phase 2. Coders also sought to identify new or different concepts that emerged to call out additional themes, categories, and subcategories. Two members of the documentation team read and coded each transcript. The team met in person on two occasions to review thematic categories and ensure consistency between coders. The stories of individuals were then synthesized into a cohesive story about the leaders in LAP, speaking to both shared and individual perspectives. Four themes emerged from the interviews:

1. *Internalization of a Results Accountability Framework:* Leaders who took action to contribute to children entering school ready to learn internalized the results accountability framework and picked up their leadership in authentic ways within their everyday life, at work, and/or in their communities.
2. *Power of having a Laser-like Focus on a Single Result:* Collaborative relationships changed by focusing on a single result. This provided a means for letting go of individual goals and accepting a collaborative commitment to a result.
3. *Transparency of Disparity:* Disaggregating data made issues regarding race transparent; provided a context for authentic conversations about diversity, power, and disparity; but did not provide leaders with the impetus to move from talk to action.
4. *Development of Specific Competencies for Collaborative Leadership:* Competencies underpinning the LAP work had at differing levels of impact and influence on the leaders' capacities.

What Follows

This report provides insights into the thoughts that leaders have about the impact of LAP on their ability to make a measurable difference or, as LAP puts it, “turn a curve.” Each section of the report provides information about one of the broad thematic categories: Internalization of Results Accountability, Power of Laser-like Focus on a Single Result, Transparency of Disparity, and Development of Specific Competencies for Collaborative Leadership. A description of the category and support data is provided followed by a synopsis of what leaders did, lessons learned, recommendations, and how information was used for the quality improvement of LAP implementation. The report concludes with a brief summary related to sustainability.

The Benefit of Using a Formal Documentation Project for Quality Improvement

When Donna Stark, Casey’s Director of Leadership Development, talks about the conception of the Leadership in Action Program she does not speak of a writer or a theorist but of an architect and program designer. The program designer is Jolie Bain Pillsbury who developed the LAP Theory of Change by synthesizing leadership development research charted by Stark with a group of experienced leaders and the Center for Applied Research. This information was then integrated with experiences that Stark, Pillsbury, and others had working for, thinking about, and facilitating changes in communities and organizations that lead to positive results for children and families.

Pillsbury believes that a theory of change is brought to life in its implementation and the pillars of learning occur through “doing” and “reflecting” on results. For this reason the documentation of what leaders did and how they are sustaining results is important to understand. The benefit of using a formal documentation process for quality improvement is that lessons learned are based on independent and objective assessment that can be used quickly to either validate the changes that have been made along the way or demonstrate a need for redesign of implementation strategies that impact the next group of LAP leaders. In this way lessons learned from the lived experiences of LAP leaders are the cornerstone for change.

THE LEADERSHIP IN ACTION PROGRAM

Leadership is important to achieving improved results for children and families. The goal of LAP is to develop a critical mass of leaders who using collaborative leadership competencies will accelerate achievement of positive results for children and families. LAP's developers hypothesize that increased collaborative leadership among key decision-makers will help large numbers of stakeholders to take aligned actions on important child, family, and community issues and leverage resources to achieve measurable improvements in a short time period. This short-term success will provide the impetus for long-term commitment to make continued progress.

LAP begins by engaging an accountability partner. The accountability partner negotiates the result to be addressed in the program and holds program participants accountable for their progress toward the achievement of the result. During nine two-day sessions that occur over 14–15 months, this group develops or strengthens collaborative leadership skills, forms new or reinvents existing relationships, and makes collaborative decisions resulting in commitments to a series of collective actions. In their home agencies, leaders engage in a set of separate but aligned actions to accelerate progress on the identified result. This approach to leadership development creates a sense of urgency and sets in motion the personal and professional actions necessary to accelerate measurable change.

Leaders develop the following core set of results-centered, competency-based leadership skills. These include:

- Results-based accountability—the ability to use data to align partners and resources to improve results for a specific population.
- Closing the gap on racial disparities—the ability to use data to illuminate racial disparities within a target population and develop strategies and actions to address those disparities.
- Collaborative leadership—the ability to listen, ask effective questions, make proposals, use interest-based negotiation, reach consensus, and commit to specific aligned actions.

- Leading from the middle—the ability to operate within exceptionally complex systems with implied assumptions about what can and cannot be done. Leaders reexamine their authority, make decisions, and take action without waiting for external authorization.

To date, LAP leaders have contributed to Maryland's result to help children enter school ready to learn. However, the LAP Theory of Change posits that sustained, long-term change occurs only if leaders go back to their professional settings and communities and continue to take an aggressive set of separate, but aligned actions to accelerate progress on the identified result. Interviewees' conversations touched upon many aspects of these assumptions. Their insights and continued work on behalf of children and families in Maryland are testimony to their ongoing commitment to improving conditions that help young children enter school ready to learn.

WHAT DID LEADERS DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO CHILDREN ENTERING SCHOOL READY TO LEARN?

LESSON 1

Leaders internalized the results accountability framework and picked up their leadership in authentic ways.

“[Results accountability] is the lynchpin on which we hinge this whole process. Without it we are just another bunch of people meeting and talking...” Interviewee 4

“We are planning a retreat for our main home-visiting strategies, going back and looking at, is that strategy effective, whether it’s giving us the outcomes we would want... We’ve invested five or six years now in this strategy...very hard thing to do, being willing to focus on what are the results and what are the outcomes.” Interviewee 5

The foundation for the LAP architecture is the results accountability framework derived from the work of Mark Friedman. Results accountability uses a logical inquiry sequence that moves from ends (results) to means (strategies and actions). A simple set of questions guides the process: “What do we want for this population?” “How would we recognize it in measurable terms?” “Where are we in terms of this measure?” “What conditions/events have contributed to us being at this place?” “Who else is doing this/cares about this?” “What will it take to achieve this result?” Using this framework, organizations create a system of accountability that aligns their efforts, resources, and actions to a result.⁶

Findings show that results accountability was a driver for all elements of the LAP initiative, from creating a vision to building collaborative relationships to tracking and being accountable for results. There was strong agreement across participants that results accountability was a critical driver of changed leadership. The vast majority of leaders interviewed said they continue to use some aspect of the results accountability framework in their work and/or community.

The interview instrument included questions about results accountability that were framed in several different ways. Eighty-six percent (26/30) of the interviewees spoke spontaneously about results accountability or the power of focusing on results. Eighty percent (8/10) of survey and Phase 2 participants reported they frequently use results and

performance accountability to assess if they are making a difference in their current leadership role or position. Ninety percent of Phase 1 interviewees felt that results and performance accountability were “important” or “very important.” Additionally, 93 percent of survey and Phase 2 interviewees said they use data to make decisions; 100 percent of Phase 1 interviewees rated results accountability as important or very important to their work. Focusing on data is frequently used by 93 percent of survey and Phase 2 participants, and 100 percent of Phase 1 participants rated focusing on data as important to very important in their work.

What Leaders Did

Results accountability provided a foundation for leaders to act in new ways. Changes in leadership occurred because of increased knowledge and skills that enhanced the ability to work with data in a more pragmatic manner.

- ***Leaders refocused attention from looking solely at what they do to whether their work was getting the desired results.*** Using results and data in a disciplined manner helped leaders move from looking primarily at their efforts to considering more precisely if their work was achieving the desired results for the people they served. Often, work assessments had been geared to questions pertaining to how much is being done, how many services are being offered, and whether or not the standards of quality are being met. Participants did not typically ask if anyone is better off or if actions are leading to positive results. In several work environments, attending to results and working backward to examine the quality of the program and strategies created a culture change that tested longstanding assumptions. One interviewee shared, “We did a retreat a year and a half ago, and we really focused on...home visiting: ‘What is X agency doing? How can we better facilitate working together?’ But we really did not look at, ‘Is home visiting what we should be doing—is it our best strategy?’”

One data strategy that was very meaningful to leaders was posting data on the wall and using a set of questions to guide a discussion with individuals from outside agencies (e.g., education and juvenile justice). These “data walks” with other leaders provided an opportunity to share very diverse perspectives from the view of public and nonprofit sector agencies and across disciplines, creating a pivotal experience for some. Together, individuals formed shared understandings about children entering school ready to learn in Maryland and Baltimore. Focusing on results in this way created a heightened sense of commitment and urgency. The sheer numbers of children unprepared to enter school produced a sense of critical need for some: “we were facing 29 percent school readiness for our children...so, there was a sense of urgency...we didn’t have time on our side—time was against us.” For others, it was the energy created by having other people talking about the same information at the same time:

“I have new interest; I have information to go with my passion.” This sense of urgency and renewal of purpose seemed to propel leaders into action.

- ***The greatest impact of results accountability was demonstrated by leaders who took their knowledge and skills and “picked up” their leadership role within their home organizations or communities.*** More than 80 percent of individuals stated that they use results accountability in their home organizations or communities. Many of these leaders have used it as a means to work more effectively. For example, one leader’s agency is changing its documentation system, which will cause a significant shift in the workplace. Change will occur over a two- to three-year time span. Using performance accountability strategies, she will develop measures to track progress toward achievement of a final result. Another manager now uses five of the questions that are part of the performance accountability protocol to review his subordinates’ requests and guide them through a thinking process to generate low- and no-cost options. Each of these individuals demonstrated the powerful utility of results accountability outside of LAP.

Others pointed to additional examples:

“The Interagency Early Childhood Committee here in _____ County, I’ve been a part of that for many years, but I could really see them stagnating in some ways, as far as maybe working on little projects here and there, but nothing that was really galvanized around a result. And so I took what I was learning at LAP and encouraged the committee to take on a strategic action process...focused them on some of the things that we’ve been doing [in LAP and looking at the strategic action plan]. And we just had a discussion about, ‘Wow, look at all this work that’s been done. Maybe we should tailor our efforts around that’...this kind of led us to form a number of goals that we’ve slowly been working on.” Interviewee 24

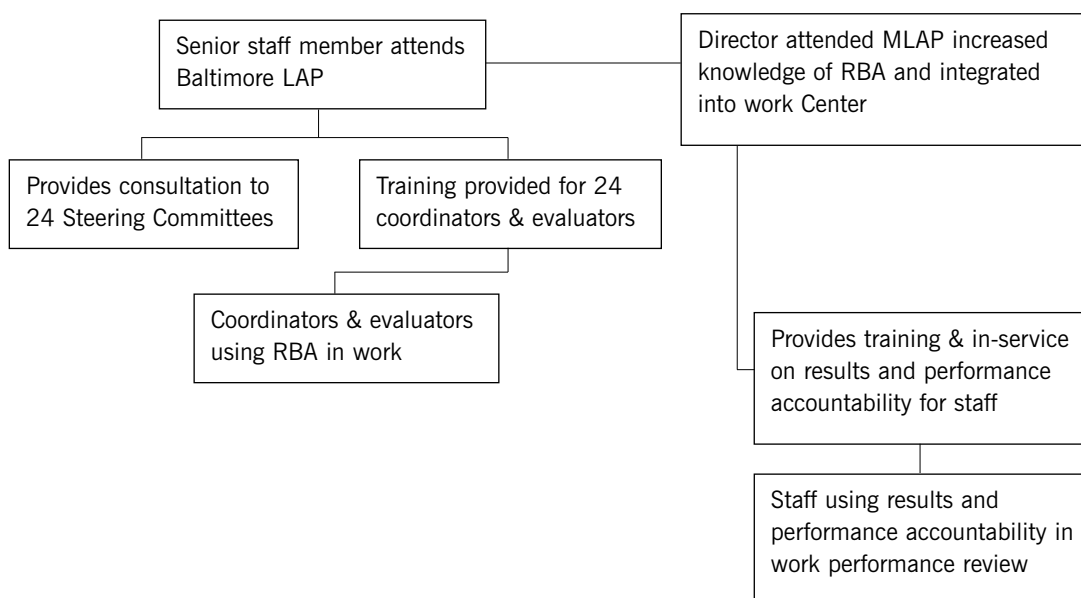
“[Our agency is] using the seven RBA steps or questions to guide a major strategic planning piece that is citywide. We modified and added different questions and restructured the questions to fit into the needs assessment work as well as the strategic planning. Those who were not familiar are getting more and more comfortable, so we should probably do some RBA training. This has accelerated our work.” Interviewee 9

“Our Partnerships help 24 community programs that work with children and families to do collaborative work. There have been a couple of occasions where I helped a steering committee look at their desired results in a new and different way...I’ve been looking at all of the yearly evaluations that have been provided and are required as part of the grant. We asked over the past two years that the evaluation should take a shift more toward the results-based accountability (RBA)

model, and they are getting there. We gave each of coordinators and their evaluators training in RBA and taught them how to look at their accountability and their data and their results in a more RBA process.... So, most of what we're getting in terms of the evaluations very clearly look at their results." Interviewee 28

The influence of integrating RBA into the work of an organization is powerful. The following diagram attempts to illustrate the spread of RBA in one organization and the resulting number of individuals who have been informed (with each of them touching a specific cohort of children and families).

Figure 1. Spread of RBA within an Organization



- ***The ability to effectively use data empowered leaders to be more assertive in picking up their roles within their home agencies and communities.*** Data give a sense of authority to take up one's role. One interviewee commented that having the data, seeing the story, and studying the result give you something to really push—not just an idea, but a collaborative idea. So the relationship between gaining new knowledge and skills and picking up one's leadership seems to be bi-directional. Equipped with knowledge about the data, leaders could provide information in a clear way to a variety of audiences. One community leader shared with her church committee: "I have developed these strategies. I am bringing to you now something that I've learned so we can be productive, as productive as the group that I'm in. They see a marked difference... Now I'm like, I want results."

What Worked?

Several interviewees described the data walk as being powerful and engaging—an early moment of revelation. Interviewees also said they used similar strategies in their home agencies, including individuals involved in LAP and those who have never been involved in LAP. One leader said she/he was considering using data charts with the staff to look at issues related to infant mortality. Interviewees said using data charts was linked to increasing the “depth of knowledge and understanding,” and this created a space to “really take time to understand what the issues are and what other folks are thinking.”

Common language was also helpful. Leaders came from different places with different skill sets. An accessible results framework leveled the playing field. Just two leaders were not able to articulate an understanding about results accountability and other key concepts related to the use of data, and both of these individuals had joined LAP in the sustaining phase.

Supporting Child Literacy at the Baltimore Department of Health

When Barbara Squires became a member of MLAP she was serving as Family Support Strategist at the Baltimore Department of Health. The Health Department along with a number of other organizations—Family League, United Way, Safe & Sound—was participating in a city initiative “Success at Six,” which was focused on school readiness. While one could say that the Department of Health had already embarked on a collaborative effort toward school readiness, Squires stated that MLAP enabled her to connect the dots regarding how health could truly contribute to school readiness. It was through the MLAP experience that she began to think deeply about the resources the Health Department might be able to influence. MLAP gave Squires a language regarding getting children ready to learn that she could connect to the mission of the Health Department. For example, when she moved within the Health Department to become the Assistant Commissioner for Maternal and Child Health, she found that she had access to approximately \$19 million. She was able to direct some Title 5 funding into the purchase of school readiness kits that could be distributed as part of the Health Department’s home visits to pregnant and new parents through the Maternal and Infant Nursing Program. The Health Department was also able to provide these kits to similar programs through the Healthy Start Program, as well as a similar community-based

program that also does home visits to pregnant and new parents. Nurses and social workers were encouraged to discuss the importance of reading and literacy to children and to help parents understand how the kits could be used. Squires was able to look at the work that the department was already performing with families and find ways to add a piece on literacy that folded into the work naturally.

The Maternal and Child Health Division also began to look at the more traditional parts of their work as a way of providing opportunities to work with families around school readiness. In many of the city's traditional clinics that serve Medicaid families, the Health Department provided funds to support the Reach Out and Read (ROR) Program. ROR is a national program in which pediatricians and other clinicians are trained in the three-part ROR model in an effort to promote pediatric literacy:

- At every well-child check-up, doctors and nurses encourage parents to read aloud to their young children, and offer age-appropriate tips and encouragement. Parents who may have difficulty reading are encouraged to invent their own stories to go with picture books and spend time naming objects with their children.*
- Providers give every child between the ages of six months and five years new, developmentally appropriate children's books to keep.*
- In literacy-rich waiting room environments, often with volunteer readers, parents and children learn about the pleasures and techniques of looking at books together.*

Originally this program was housed in Healthy Start but it is now housed in the Maternal and Child Health Division. ROR is now in its third year of budget support through the Department of Health. Having been successful with ROR in traditional clinic settings, the Department of Health is now attempting to take ROR into 15 private practices. In addition, the Baltimore Health Department is currently embarking on a program that it is calling "Born to Read." Born to Read will get obstetricians to talk to pregnant women in the third trimester about the importance of reading to children. A reading kit has been developed to give to these new moms. Squires said the important lessons for her from MLAP were understanding what it meant to prepare children to enter school ready to learn, to recognize how the Health Department could bring this message to the families that came in contact with its system, and to leverage its resources to do so.

Five to six leaders were familiar with results accountability or a similar framework. Three of these leaders expressed that the pragmatic, integrated learning approach honed their skills and deepened their understanding of the process and its utility. A leader who uses Baldrige, a continuous quality improvement model, felt there was a “synergy... putting both of those pieces together—the results accountability alongside the Baldrige processes, which requires that we are constantly checking in with our stakeholders. And [now] the information that we are soliciting from them is different.”

A few leaders attended additional trainings or workshops on results accountability. In particular, a summer offering on the topic helped leaders better understand how to assist agencies. For one leader, it was “participating in BLAP and receiving the training in RBA [results-based accountability]” that allowed her to go out and be effective.

Challenges

Leaders identified three challenges in working with data: quality, attributing results to LAP, and issues related to power.

- ***Some leaders were concerned with the quality of data.*** Leaders raised a variety of issues related to the use of data. For some, the reliability of the Work Sampling System (WSS) data was a constant focus of attention. Interviewees questioned their confidence in the data and ambiguity related to data quality. For example, some leaders believed that teachers’ ratings of children, especially as they were related to children from diverse populations, may have been skewed by their own cultural filters. At least one of the sustaining LAP projects has a committee or group focusing on identifying additional measures, though it was noted by one participant that “this work is arduous and slow.” This interviewee also noted the irony of the acronym “best available data,” or “BAD.”
- ***Some leaders were reluctant to state that they contributed to the result of children entering school ready to learn.*** None of the 30 interviewees provided a clear response to the question regarding contribution to the result. Three were able to articulate a discomfort with the question, stating they will never know exactly what any one agency or organization’s contribution was. There were also concerns about LAP accepting “credit” for turning the curve. The feeling of these three interviewees seemed to be that it is everyone doing many things together that produces positive results. Or, as one interviewee stated, perhaps it is the result of work that preceded LAP. “There was a celebration of an over 40 percent increase in children being prepared for school. But really, can we say our work, you know, impacted? I think those institutions were already doing the work. And I can appreciate BLAP putting them in the same room. But I am a real opponent of... calling something old something new.”

- **Several leaders noted the power and politics of data.** Several persons noted that the transparency created by participating in cross-sector collaborative work centering on results was potentially risky. To identify publicly what may not be working or to realize publicly that trusted, longstanding practices may not be getting the desired results as measured on the WSS could have had serious consequences. These discussions of transparency and risk prompted further stories related to individual differences in populations, program, and agency, and how those who choose what measures will be used wield intangible power. Respondents placed high value on publicly available data because transparency can provide an opportunity to engage in authentic sharing of information across all participating agencies. Transparency can also elicit diverse stories—stories that expose others to a wider interpretation of findings and contributing factors behind the data. It is the proverbial double-edge sword.
- **The decision not to pick up one's leadership leads to missed opportunities.** One interviewee provided an important example of this process. She said she felt the LAP group was “polite” and listened to her, but ultimately ignored what she thought was a very important issue—parents. She eventually decreased her active role in LAP because LAP's work plan did not represent her everyday work and agency priorities. Although she believed the result of children entering school ready to learn was very important and that her agency could be important in the work, she did not develop any strategies for her home agency (e.g., adding a question to an intake form to identify individuals caring for preschool children or providing focused instruction about early literacy or social skills for her clients or consumer groups).

Summary of What Leaders Did Inside and Outside of LAP

- Leaders used a modified version of results accountability to develop the strategic action plans for each of Baltimore's eight children and families result areas. This has accelerated the strategic planning period and pulled together potential partners. The data walk and Results-Based Facilitation⁷ are key strategies in this work.
- LAP process and results accountability informed the strategic action process of an Interagency Early Childhood Committee.
- Leaders developed and used results-based agendas to examine the effectiveness of efforts to achieve results for children and families in the workplace and community, including one charter school and two churches.
- Leaders from a statewide agency network used a modified version of results accountability to focus partnership coordinators on results. Trainings and in-services have been developed and provided to partner agency coordinators and their evaluators.

- A Baltimore consortium used results-based accountability to make progress with strategic planning and moving to action.

Recommendations

- Spend more time discussing the quality of data and specific strategies to develop an action-oriented data agenda.
- Consider specific strategies to assist new members to enter the group process. One important focus should be to help new members become well-versed in RBA.
- Directly address the issue of collaborative contributions and leading from the middle at various points in the collaborative process.

Integration of Recommendations into Quality Improvement Actions

The measure of success for LAP implementation is the development of leaders who accelerate results. Key to this success is the ability of leaders to go back to their home agencies and implement aligned actions agreed upon through collaborative decision-making. To do this, results accountability (RA) must be understood well enough for leaders to generate actions for a result that will create changes as measured by a given indicator. Actions taken are linked to shared understandings about factors contributing to the current condition and empirical and experiential knowledge about what works focusing initially on low-cost/no-cost ideas that can be implemented quickly.

The first predicted challenge for new LAPs is the ability to manage the imperfection of available data to measure the impact of change on the result and not get stuck in a holding pattern while a plethora of new data is discovered or created. The first two LAP meetings are developed to provide a context where leaders learn and use RA. Participants can then have conversations about additional information that would be helpful to them as a group and develop a data agenda if the LAP group identifies data gaps. Within the first three hours of the first meeting, participants generate two to three low-cost and innovative ideas about immediate actions that may accelerate measurable changes based on a discussion of factors contributing to the current condition and participants' knowledge and experiences of what works. The RA framework is revisited at each meeting to deepen the understanding of factors, determine if additional partners needed to move work forward, and revise, and strengthen aligned actions that leaders in their home agencies can take together.

Although the design for learning RA had the aforementioned intention, it became evident that there was a lack of consistency in leaders' ability to use the results framework. This difference in leaders' use of RA prompted changes in the approach taken to "teach" it. Changes evolved over time based on information from earlier observations, which were then validated and deepened by the documentation project.

In MLAP (the first LAP), RA was not used in a very structured way. This observation led to the incorporation of increased structure and streamlining of key RA concepts that were implemented during the launch of BLAP, but still the framework was not deeply embedded. By the time the third LAP was under way the approach to providing RA information was more straightforward, structured, and integrative. Information was used from the documentation project to further hone the approach, focusing on strengthening the ability of coaches/facilitators to facilitate participants understanding of how to use the results accountability framework rather than emphasizing didactic information. The design is more robust and the implementation of RA is done with more confidence. The documentation project provided a laser-like focus that accelerated the trajectory of improvement by illuminating and validating hypotheses about the need to change how RA was integrated into the LAP process.

LESSON 2

Leaders strengthened relationships by letting go of individual goals and adopting a collaborative commitment to a single result.

“People felt real change was possible. It wasn’t like going to a meeting as usual. The concept of accelerating the curve and thinking of losing your identity and just the way turf issues just were impossible...” Interviewee 8

“LAP was and is very time-consuming, and it is hard work. But I have never been part of a group that so quickly gelled with a common purpose. That makes it powerful and rewarding to be a part of.” (Survey respondent)

“Our private objectives were always secondary to the main agenda of LAP.” Interviewee 7

Collaborative leadership provides the means by which leaders align around results and develop a context for change. Leaders were asked about the nature of their relationships and what they did to maintain and strengthen these relationships.

Nine survey participants responded to the question about collaborative relationships, and they all expressed positive and enthusiastic feedback concerning their experiences in LAP. Of the 30 interviewees, 24 made positive statements, and six had reservations about the collaborative experience. Concerns were related to whether or not the collaborative group was open to opinions outside the general thinking. Three of these individuals with concerns felt their overall collaborative experience was positive.

What Leaders Did

- ***Shed their individual focus for a results focus.*** This was a critical rallying point for collaborative leadership. It was the starting point for misaligned agencies to begin an open conversation about their respective organizational agendas within their home agency. When this happened, it was palpably noticeable to LAP participants. Said one interviewee, “It really has been a pretty amazing process to watch people who used to compete for the same dollars use those same dollars to do a kind of statewide blanket to protect early childhood.” This letting go created an openness that allowed participants to forge new relationships and strengthen old ones. Several participants shared the observation that they had been in other committees and meetings with many of the individuals involved in their LAP teams, but that this collaborative effort was very different. They felt a sense of commitment to a result and accountability to each other. Participants said they did not consider LAP “work as usual.”

- ***Learned about the details of people's work through their LAP experiences.***

Because of the depth at which participants learned about each other's work, leaders quickly felt joined to their team members. One of the most talked about benefits was learning about the work of other agencies and "getting to know what they are doing." This was especially true because of the cross-sector makeup of the LAP team, which included representatives of public and nonprofit agencies, state-level and local people, and community groups and parents. Leaders were often surprised by the breadth of efforts occurring on behalf of children and families that were similar or complementary to their own work:

"I did not know that DHR had a project for early childhood mental health services for kids with special needs. Didn't know that the Child Care Administration also had money in a pilot to ensure that two-, three-, and four-year-old children were able to remain in child care with support because of their behavior rather than being thrown out. And we had three-year old dropouts because they had been kicked out of two or three child care places. Their parents couldn't work. They had to stay home, they lost their jobs... That kind of thing was an eyeopener for me and to have the faces of the parents and the faces of the children and the faces of the child care provider and the faces of the teacher—it really was an epiphany for me."

The benefit of cross-sector representation in LAP proved to be twofold. Larger agencies, whose work is more distant from the actual children and families they help, benefited from having providers and individuals from community-based services in the discussion to remind them for whom they are advocating. As one state-level leader said, "Nothing can really happen until it reaches the local jurisdictions." Another public agency leader stated, "It was the experience in LAP that connected people in the field to what was happening in the state. Activity on the state level and policy level are only as powerful as the people who use it. People in the field have to pick it up and find value with it." For local and community-based organizations, it was an opportunity to be heard by individuals with whom they generally do not get to meet for an extended amount of time. Sharing information yielded positive results. Consider the following two examples:

"People became a lot more interested in our work and training. For example, a home visitation program in the Governor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families saw the benefit of the assessments [we used], and as a result of a discussion within LAP decided to do some training for their staff in OUNCE."

“We don’t do much with mental health, but coming into the LAP program, we saw the need to try to communicate more...to access these services of mental health, which was almost impossible for us to do at one point... Someone from the mental health field was in the same goal group... She asked, ‘Do you access mental health services?’ And my current answer was, ‘No, we try, but fail.’ She explained some ways that could be [tried]. Then last year, there was new legislation that came through on funding to collaborate the zero-to-five programs of the MSDE with the DHMH, so it was a very, very good thing because we had already begun to talk about ways to do it. Now we’re bringing a mental health clinician into our eligibility centers. We’ll have services available. So, at one point we had just given up...and now we’re actually seeing the fruition of a collaborative relationship with the mental health community.”

- **Leveraged relationships and resources.** LAP participants shared relationships and resources. One of the successful strategies for leveraging resources was the development of a strategic plan adopted by the state and the Local Management Board (LMB)⁸ in Baltimore City. This plan did several things: (1) provided a common language, (2) created a tangible document outlining aligned efforts, and (3) developed a common understanding of school readiness in Maryland and Baltimore. This plan offered a coherent vision for grant writing and funding. For example, if funding suddenly becomes available, agencies have generally scrambled to develop a proposal by asking “people to dream up something new.” Having a plan helps to avoid this haphazard process. “When [a LAP participant agency] goes to folks, you are able to say that this is based upon 18 months of work by the group, that this is Baltimore City’s plan. Funders like to be able to respond to plans that have been put together by a wide coalition and have some sense of legitimacy as a plan larger than agency X.” In other instances, the plan served as justification or background for a new request. For example, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene applied for a training grant and used the LAP action agenda as the foundation for the grant. LAP members wrote letters of support.

Weaving LAP into the Fabric of the State Legislative Process

Rosemary Johnston, Interagency Coordinator for the Maryland State Department of Education, was an original participant of MLAP and continues in a leadership capacity to work on MLAP's five-year action plan. She believes that what MLAP offered was an action agenda, which gave agency representatives and advocates a frame of work that they could take back to their home agencies or organization. But more importantly, she believes MLAP has become part of the fabric of the state's early care and education initiatives, including the legislative process.

First and foremost, MLAP convinced the Maryland Legislature to adopt the five-year action agenda as the state's plan for school readiness. Since then MLAP has found that through its agenda it serves as an important advisor for legislative change. Participants of MLAP highlighted early on that the agencies serving early child care and early education programs were located in several different agencies—Department of Education, Department of Human Resources—which at times led to a fragmented approach to these programs. MLAP recommended to the Mandel Commission, a commission created by the governor to streamline government systems, that it would be better to place all early child care and early education programs within one agency for more coherent policies. While the recommendation was not taken up by the commission, the next year several advocacy groups that were represented in MLAP lobbied and worked with the Maryland Legislature to develop legislation that created the Division of Early Childhood Development within the Maryland State Department of Education. This new division houses all early child care and early education programs within one agency, attempting to address the fragmentation between these programs. Johnston noted that MLAP and the early care and education community view this consolidation as an important policy shift and it provides opportunities for more coherent planning for early care and education issues for Maryland's young children and their families.

Another important way that MLAP has found its way into the fabric of the state legislative process is in the important advisory role it holds. MLAP serves as a standing committee of the Governor's Children's Cabinet. The Governor's Children's Cabinet meets quarterly and is composed of the secretaries of agencies that focus on children, youth, and families. Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, chairs the Early Care and Education Committee.

Her leadership and support have guided the efforts of MLAP. MLAP reports to the cabinet regarding progress on the action agenda and what interagency assistance they could use, often around resources and funding to accomplish the agenda. One of the issues that MLAP noted to the cabinet was the fact that in the state budget process, agencies and divisions within agencies had to work within the budget envelope that they submitted to the state. This sometimes left important issues that might cross agencies or were not funded adequately by any one agency from seeking additional funding. The Children's Cabinet obtained the ability to submit budget proposals on issues important to children, youth, and families and add additional budget funds to agency budgets. For example, through this "above budget" allocation process the Maryland State Department of Education, in collaboration with its partners at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, was able to get \$1.8 million above the submitted agency budget for additional sites to implement the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Model. This model supports mental health consultants working with child care providers within centers with children who may be having behavioral problems. This has created a 97 percent maintenance rate of children in child care and has alleviated the movement of children from one child care center to another due to behavioral problems. This was an issue of importance in the MLAP action agenda and through (leveraging) the above budget process, interagency collaboration, and the support of the Children's Cabinet, MLAP was able to leverage the additional funding for this initiative.

Other resources were also leveraged during LAP. For example, during the LAP experience, agencies contributed backpacks and supplies so every child entering kindergarten would have what they needed. Agencies volunteered additional person hours to fill the backpacks. Other types of shared resources included design work, printing, publication of materials, and assistance with the coordination of events and public outreach. Agencies used their own resources and established resources through their network of support. In addition, LAP participants invited each other to sit on their boards and present at their conferences.

What Worked?

Focusing on results is essential to the development of cohesive and committed collaborative relationships. The nature of the relationships in LAP differed from other

cross-disciplinary groups the leaders had experienced. Participants found the relationships in LAP where more purposeful, intentional, and action-oriented than experienced in other collaborative efforts. The ability to act as a collaborative leader and align one's agency priorities with the core result of LAP was the first step in creating the strong ties necessary to do the broader work of LAP. It not only set the tone but took the group in "a whole different direction."

Inviting a cross-section of partners to the table and providing a means for them to be "one thumb" [a reference to proposal-based decision-making where each person shows agreement or disagreement by showing a thumb up (yes), thumb sideways (some reservations), or thumb down (not in agreement at this time)], or one voice at the table was liberating to some. It was stressful to others. Three participants shared a story involving a high-level stakeholder who wanted to control a particular deliverable. The group asserted the stakeholder's authority and invited the individual to be at the table, but they made a stand for the product belonging "to the group." Although there seemed to be inherent risks in the cross-sector structure of LAP groups, participants said they were "awed" by the process and the groups' ability to remain committed. This was particularly true for one interviewee who said, "I [commend] people who took leadership roles to move the work forward, being such a small city, we're really political in a lot we do...but people put themselves at risk...This information was going to the mayor and superintendent of schools and all of those people. I have to commend them, too, because there was no backlash—they wanted to hear the truth, our opinion. They wanted to know what could be done to make things better. That was totally different from any other committees I've been on."

Challenges

Leaders identified three challenges related to LAP's collaborative process: time, enrolling new members, and a sense that the group was not open to or accepting of divergent ideas.

- **Time and duration** were mentioned by approximately 20 percent of participants as barriers to participating in LAP. Their own jobs were sufficiently demanding, and they did not see the LAP work as a seamless extension of their work. The duration of LAP was also mentioned. One interviewee stated: "We began to realize that this was longer than just two years of work, that this was actually a buy-in. Even when we're not there working with it, someone should be there working on this."
- **Enrollment of new members.** Five individuals discussed enrollment of new members. The first concern was the difficulty of engaging new members. Another is the

difficulty of joining a team that has worked cohesively for so long. The third is the lack of a strategy to provide new members with needed competencies to join the work in an authentic way, making it difficult to connect to the work and the people. The interviews with two leaders who joined LAP in the sustaining phase confirmed these concerns. Both had a difficult time determining their roles and could not fully articulate key ideas related to results-focused work or collaborative leadership. Some leaders who joined LAP later in the process also felt they needed to be more carefully introduced to the results framework. Several interviewees explicitly complained about the sense of not fully belonging to a group that already had had very formative experiences together.

- ***Diverse opinions are not always accepted.*** Six individuals said they felt their opinions were not accepted by the group. Their experience was of not being heard, or of being heard but ignored. One of the individuals was “shocked” by the reactions to a proposal she made. She stated that the group seemed angered by her idea. On reflection, she stated that she should have been prepared for their reaction. Her suggestion served as her “litmus” test for the group’s ability to handle a conversation involving race/ethnicity beyond the usual expected boundaries. Another interviewee expressed a strong opinion regarding a data issue and use of the WSS. She felt her conversation was shut down prematurely.

Summary of Evidence of Collaboration within and outside of LAP

- Funding of literacy training for child care providers by the Children’s Literacy initiative, including family day care providers and coaches who were working with family day care providers. The training provided a collection of children’s books to approximately 100 family child care providers in Baltimore City.
- Recent funding of a dental project that includes dental screening and treatment at Baltimore City Head Start.
- Providing collaborative support to agencies applying for grants, funding, and joint grant planning.
- Testifying at legislative hearings and joint sessions about the importance of early childhood education interventions and lifting up the works of other organizations.
- Serving on the boards of child-serving organizations.
- Sharing details and strategies across organizations to leverage the work of children entering school ready to learn.
- Strategic use of the Maryland and Baltimore City Five-Year Strategic Action Plans.

- Maintaining a viable network of supportive colleagues outside of the implementing LAP team experience.
- Library hosting of a Fairy Tale Festival and Toddler Fair in Historic East Baltimore with support of other BLAP partners to create school readiness community events.
- Partnering with OCC, MHA CMCH, universities, and others for the common goal of planning a program that can create and sustain consultants for the physical and mental health of young children.
- Creating the E-CARE Fund by Frederick County to support early care providers, including training in Maryland Model for School Readiness.
- Goal #3 (Health) has become the foundation of the ECE grant.
- Incorporating early literacy strategy in programs with mothers and their babies/young children through an exciting collaboration with Enoch Pratt Free Library.
- Sharing school readiness agendas with a variety of community stakeholders, including child care providers, the faith-based community, and parents.
- Uniting of three different organizations to extend funding to assure that mental health practitioners can work with a child care resource center to provide behavioral health services.
- Harnessing resources of BLAP and MLAP to get the Department of Human Resources to continue funding.

Recommendations

- Create opportunities to assist new members to develop core competencies and become effective LAP participants.
- Develop facilitation skills of select participants to enable them to continue LAP-like work as they move into the post-implementation phase of LAP.
- Attend to divergent or “outlier” positions more carefully.

Integration of Recommendations into Quality improvement Actions

Both MLAP and BLAP participants assessed leadership competencies during the implementation phase of LAP, but there was no mechanism for tracking actions. Furthermore, the descriptions of the competences in the first renditions of the competency assessment

tool were not clearly defined across skill levels and it was not evident what it looked like to engage in leadership behaviors that demonstrated developing, approaching, or sustaining competency. By the third LAP, improvement of the leadership competency assessment tool was under way.

The documentation project informed the redesign by stressing the urgency that leaders felt about understanding, in a tangible way, their progress in attaining the competencies and seeing how the actions they took were in alignment. This urgency led to the rapid development and implementation of the new Aligned Commitments and Competency Tracking System (ACCTS). ACCTS is used to track leaders' commitment to individual action and self-assessment of core competencies. For new LAPs, each two-day session begins by addressing commitments documented in ACCTS and what it takes to be accountable for action. The tool has also been introduced in BLAP and, to a lesser degree, MLAP and is being used in a modified way.

The redesigned ACCTS visibly scaffolds learning over time and focuses on steps within each competency as building blocks to the next level of development. The environment, facilitation, and introduction of work support leaders to move from successive steps within each competency, allowing them to delve deeper into hard conversations and create meaning that moves groups forward into action. At the end of each meeting, leaders rank themselves on select competencies. There has been an attempt to computerize and digitally synthesize information about actions into performance measures to demonstrate leveraging of actions across agencies but to date this has not been successful. The work is still ongoing and is dependent on finding or developing a different analytical tool.

In the meantime, there have been opportunities for leaders to continue developing competency skills. For example, within LAP much of the work is done in small groups or "at the tables" allowing for richer discussions and providing opportunities for participants to own their work and use skills that they have seen modeled by the coaches/facilitators such as setting a context, using effective questions, and developing proposals. Additionally, participants have been invited to attend workshops on RA and Results-Based Facilitation outside of LAP. Opportunities have also been created by the leaders. MLAP and BLAP designed and collaboratively implemented a new members' orientation. BLAP also requested and received assistance to develop mini-workshops around the competencies where longtime members and new members had an opportunity to learn and use competencies in their current committee work.

LESSON 3

Leaders used disaggregated data as a context to have authentic conversations about diversity and disparity but created few concrete action plans focusing on issues of race, class, and culture.

“We spent two whole days trying to hash out some cultural and ethnic gender-related issues that had popped up in our group... We were not terribly culturally confident about each other. We as a group suggested that we have it as a topic for one of our two-day meetings. We were told to come in our jeans and our sweatshirts to grapple with this. It was heart-wrenching, it was stomach-grinding, it was headache-producing. People cried, people yelled, people walked out, people walked in. But by the end we got it, and I think that it made [for] much more mutual respect... okay, you can now talk about these things amongst yourselves, and you can talk about how they affect your communities and the people you represent.” Interviewee 4

The ability to have conversations about race and actively engage in activities that are likely to close the gap on disparity is a core competency of collaborative leadership as defined in the LAP framework. Conversations about race were often described in very passionate and heartfelt ways.

Coding the two questions about race and disparity was difficult. Phase 1 interviewees were asked a question about the importance of race-class dialogue and closing the gap on disparities. Interviewees believed race-class dialogue was important, but they did not feel that LAP did an adequate job of addressing the issues. The Phase 2 interviewee group was asked to rate whether or not they used or implemented strategies related to this issue. Here, there were mixed responses about how frequently they were used. However, the majority of interviewees again stated that LAP did not address questions about race, class, and culture in a helpful way.

What Leaders Did

Leaders were willing to engage in conversations about race, but expressed varying levels of comfort. While the majority of leaders believe they are not well equipped to address these issues, they believe they are important. There was no discussion of how or whether or not addressing racial disparities would leverage their broader work.

What Worked?

- **Disaggregating data made disparity gaps visible.** Disaggregating data was an important strategy, and it provided the context for addressing the issue of race. The vast

majority of individuals interviewed felt the issues of race, class, and culture were made transparent in a useful way. Yet less than half stated that they have used this information to inform their work on a regular basis. Being enlightened about the disparities within one's population of interest can be disheartening and emotional. Several people expressed that they knew these disparities were significant, but that it was different seeing it in the data on the walls. The conversations that occurred during the LAP experience were vividly recalled by some as uncomfortable, painful, and anxiety-provoking.

Aligning Contributions Through Prioritized Funding

Terry Staudenmaier is an original member of BLAP and is a Program Officer for Health and Human Services at The Abell Foundation in Baltimore City. For over 50 years, The Abell Foundation has played an important role in addressing the complex challenges of families caught in the cycle of urban poverty and is committed to advancing educational outcomes for the children of Maryland especially those who reside in Baltimore City. Staudenmaier found that her participation in BLAP benefited her work in several ways. Foremost is the increased knowledge that she has about school readiness. She states that her "consciousness has been raised" about the importance of children entering school ready to learn and the different things that factor into school readiness. Lessons occurred both as a participant in the leadership development implementation phase of LAP and also through her involvement in ad hoc committees that worked between the larger meetings. LAP provided Staudenmaier with a tangible model of what it looked like to take aligned actions with multisector child- and family-serving organizations such as the library, Head Start, Family Resource Center, Local Management Board, United Way, and other key partners.

After examining disaggregated data about the early childhood prior care settings and children's readiness to enter kindergarten, she recognized the differential impact that the quality of care could have on a child. This raised awareness was instrumental in her supporting grants for early childhood education programs in Baltimore City. Several of the projects she supported were directly related to her increased knowledge and awareness of the impact of early childhood education in general and the specific needs of families in Baltimore. For example, Staudenmaier supported a community-based organization's proposal to receive a capital grant of \$157,000 to establish an early

learning center in West Baltimore that would increase the capacity for the center to expand from serving 20 children to 150. Because of her increased knowledge about what works to accelerate school readiness in Baltimore City, she was able to evaluate the proposal and application more thoroughly. She recognized the exceptional quality of care being provided by using solid criteria based both on established standards and the experiences of professionals who are familiar with the needs of children and families in Baltimore City.

Staudenmaier states that it is not likely that this would have been a grant that she would have looked at and championed had it not been for her involvement in BLAP. She recognized not only the outstanding work and leadership qualities of the provider but also realized that West Baltimore was an area of high need with many young children and limited early learning resources. Adding 130 slots would be a major benefit to the community's families with young children and align with work that other members of BLAP were doing to increase the number of early childhood education slots for children.

The Abell Foundation also provided funding along with the Casey Foundation for training and materials for coaches and child care providers for a children's literacy initiative through Baltimore City's Child Care Resource Center as part of the original ELOA grant. Another benefit of BLAP is to have a more laser-like attention to how other work at The Abell Foundation ties into children entering school ready to learn. For example, a grant was made to a program providing depression screening at several locations throughout the city such as in Healthy Start programs. The work was to be done with young pregnant women. While this grant was not directly influenced by work in BLAP, Staudenmaier was able to see and convey the importance of how this work impacted children's well-being and contributed to school readiness.

However, one leader said she used information related to disparities to explore conditions in her own agency.

"I think using data more directly, more specifically and in a more focused way... integrated our work here.... Our mission is always to look at where the gaps are in children entering school ready to learn with respect to geography or cohorts of youngsters. We started looking at the phenomena of the non-English speaking population of young children. Where are they located, and why was that gap the widest of any cohort? Nobody else was looking at what would be the tipping point to change that. So as an organization with my board, we adopted looking at the

English language learner population as one of our priorities... So the data moved us into a [new] priority area."

- **Connecting race conversations to the data and real work.** Participants shared that the issue of race is most effective when it is raised within the context of real work. It is helpful to find the racial disparities in the data as noted above and then back up from it and examine the meaning for LAP work and for participants' work. It would be useful to fully explore the context in which LAP participants function. No one suggested that LAP avoid these issues of race and disparity or diminish the focus. To the contrary, leaders suggested it would have been more helpful to stick with these conversations to more fully understand the impact and to discuss strategic action plans.
- **Race dialogue had differential impact on leaders.** Twenty percent of leaders felt the race dialogues were beneficial. They found that while these dialogues were initially uncomfortable, they helped them to "see how you need to be looking at the issue—race and class and ethnic differences and similarities—in all these different issues." These individuals do not think there was a resolution, but they admit discussing race in an open format was encouraging and created a feeling of increased trust.

Challenges

- **Lack of facilitator experience or willingness to stick with the conversation.** To engage in race conversations, the coach/facilitator requires a special set of skills and a way of being. There was a feeling from several leaders that the facilitators were unwilling to have the race conversation. One interviewee stated, "It felt like the facilitators were putting us off. It wasn't done enough. It was skated over." His/her observation was that the facilitators stepped back right when it got difficult, and emotions were welling up.
- **Race dialogue is difficult.** The difficulty of the race conversation may be related to both context and content. Three individuals were very explicit about including the cultural, historical context of Maryland and, more specifically, of Baltimore as critical to this conversation. The topic of interest was the changing face of Baltimore City schools from predominantly white and middle class to the current situation—minority families living in poverty—and the resulting decline in the allocation of dollars per student. This strategy was meant to ground the discussion within the specific context of the population of interest. Another leader stated an opposing viewpoint, suggesting that race conversations are "relationship-situation dependent. On the whole it is very comfortable to talk in the sort of historical-political context about race and power, but much less comfortable to talk about individual relationships and personal action."

Not Collaboration as Usual: The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH)

Bonnie Birkel, Director, DHMH Center for Maternal and Child Health, recalls that in the beginning of the MLAP she fought tooth and nail not to be included as a participant. She did not see a role for herself or for the agency she represented. In the end she became a staunch advocate and was proactive in incorporating health-related strategies and action steps both within the LAP and in her home agency to accelerate the result that all children enter school ready to learn. Her belief in the LAP process of leadership development was so strong in fact, that she was instrumental in advocating for the development of a new LAP, Babies Born Healthy (Baby LAP), in Baltimore City, which was launched in the winter of 2006.

LAP's greatest influence in the DHMH Center for Maternal and Child Health (MCH) was the creation of a vision for early childhood. The most prominent work being done regarding early childhood health at the time of Birkel's entry into LAP was the reduction of lead poisoning. The work was not framed within one of Maryland's eight result areas for children and families but was seen as a body of work that was singularly focused on health. Birkel came to see that lead poisoning is a "bad thing" that is intrinsically linked to several early childhood results such as babies born healthy, children enter school ready to learn, children succeed in school, and children have healthy bodies and minds. The clear articulation of the interconnectedness of all aspects of children's well-being resulted in increased intentionality in developing a strong early childhood focus.

Serendipitously, the federal government identified building early childhood systems as a priority. By the time applications for grants were available, MCH had developed a vision and position that included the importance of early childhood physical and behavioral health in all aspects of child well-being. A grant application was submitted and the agency was awarded funding. The funding was used to create a staff position to lead the Early Childhood Program.

Mary LaCasse was hired as the Program Administrator for the Early Childhood Program and is currently a member of MLAP. The work done in MLAP also influenced the:

- *Development of an infrastructure within the department to explore the inter-relatedness of early childhood and birth outcomes. This has allowed the use of PRAM, a population-based study that involves sending a survey to over 2,000 women a year, to be expanded to include mental health. Leveraging work from PRAM was one way of unifying people around the table to see that childhood development is predicated by birth outcomes.*
- *Invitation from MCH to include people from Medicaid at the table. LaCasse states that people ask, “How did we get them there? We just asked. LAP makes you explore assumptions about why people/agencies are not at the table and then encourages you to ‘pick up’ your own leadership to make things happen.” Insights from representatives from Medicaid played an important role in developing strategies and ideas for the Maryland Strategic Action Plan for Early Childhood Education. The five-year action plan helped to frame the Early Childhood Comprehensive System Grant.*
- *Expansion of the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder training on the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol to include how alcohol during pregnancy influences early education and school success. For many practitioners this provided a different perspective—fetal alcohol syndrome is not just a prenatal issue but a lifelong issue. This training for early childhood professionals, school nurses, and teachers was attended by over 500 people.*

It is these types of influences that let leaders know that LAP is not collaboration as usual. It provides a vehicle for leaders to move from planning to implementation to take actions together that will make a difference.

Concern about power and authority relationships played a part in how candid individuals were willing to be in their discussions of race and class. For some, there was a sense of vulnerability inherent in dealing with an issue as potentially emotional as race. There was a fear that one could hurt another person’s feelings, alienate a colleague or agency, or say something that could be misinterpreted. Each of these concerns was magnified if anyone in the room had administrative power over another individual.

Race conversations are thought to require careful facilitation. Given people’s filters, what people hear and how they interpret what they hear in any conversation can vary broadly. The high emotional undertone of race conversations can amplify this variability. One leader shared a situation that occurred during the sustainability phase of LAP. He recalled, “I presented a summary for my small group related to an issue around RCC and

was shut down. It was construed that our discussion was on exclusion based on race, rather than on the principles we were trying to get to. I'm still thinking through how that could have been done differently. I should have worn asbestos underwear."

Summary of What Leaders Did

- Encouraging the Board of his or her home agency to explore the disparity gap of non-English speaking children. The agency has since begun to focus on the English language learner population as one of its priorities.
- Continuing to hold conversations related to race, class, and culture during the sustaining phase of LAP.
- Willingly and candidly exploring issues related to the competency of race, class, and culture during the interviews.

Recommendations

- Create a focus on race, class, and culture as a thread throughout the implementation and post-implementation phases, not as a stand-alone day.
- Use data to focus conversation on important disparities.
- Facilitate conversations about how leaders' work reinforces or addresses all three concerns of race, class, and culture.
- Create opportunities to explore how these issues affect agency and organizational customers and their well-being.
- Ensure that LAP coaches/facilitators are adequately prepared to manage RCC conversations.

Integration of Recommendations into Quality Improvement Actions

Leaders were interested in the RCC work that included disaggregation of data and conversations about impact and influence. However, they were unable to transfer lessons about RCC into actions that accelerated results. Leaders hypothesized that this lack of movement to action may be due to (1) their inability to tolerate the discomfort that occurs with the topic of race, (2) the lack of acceptance that racism—either at the level of individuals or institutional—may be one of the root causes for children not entering school ready to learn, and (3) by not being considered a possible root cause, specific approaches that

work to accelerate readiness for children of color were not extensively explored. These leadership factors were coupled with the difficulty that coaches/facilitators were having guiding the group through discomfort and conflict. Several leaders felt that the coaches/facilitators avoided deep discussions and truncated probing inquiries by leaders who tried to catalyze the work.

This information was used to redesign the RCC competency work. The first decision was to address RCC in a step-wise manner that is non-negotiable. It is assumed that each person would benefit from the understandings that grow out of this work. The first step is to reach the approaching level of Skill 1: Ability to have honest conversations about race, class, and culture effects. Using reflection, paired conversations, table discussions, and large conversations each person explores how issues related to race, class, and culture influenced their own professional and personal journey. While this approach was used in both MLAP and BLAP, it has been slowed down and more time has been allotted to it.

As a part of the continuous quality improvement process of LAP, the concept of race, class, and culture as overlapping constructs was introduced at the third LAP. The documentation project supported the need for this change. In the large group discussion, personal experiences are validated and used to demonstrate how RCC informs each other and is one of the filters that influences thoughts, perceptions, and ultimately actions. RCC is not about black and white, or rich and poor, or those people and us—it is about everyone's experience in society. Grounding lesson in personal experiences is an important concept in adult learning and the LAP Theory of Change. Conversations in new LAPs now focus on the RCC context of the workplace and professional community and how this influences what happens with the consumers or clients that organizations serve.

Because the difficulty of addressing RCC is also experienced by the implementation team—the project manager, project assistant, and the coaches/facilitators—a parallel process of learning is used. The implementation team now engages in this step-wise process during their capacity-building training. This has resulted in marked improvement of coach/facilitator skills that focus on listening for mood, tone, and insights specific to RCC.

The second step in the redesign addressed Skill 2: Takes action to address race, class, and culture disparities. The approach for this step was to more intentionally weave RCC in at each step of the results accountability conversation. As a result, RCC information and questions have been embedded at each point of inquiry in the RA process. Following are examples of what this looks like:

1. Population information is provided in charts and maps that depict the whole population of interest and disaggregate information to illuminate distribution of the population by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, access to select services, and place.

2. Indicator data are displayed as a composite and disaggregated.
3. Partner information includes name, organization, sector, population served.
4. Contributing factors conversation includes effective questions that queries what's noticed from data and what does it tell leaders about RCC.
5. Leaders use contributing factors to think about other partners needed and what works.

Again, this work began with the implementation team. The composition of the team purposely includes a high degree of diversity based on race/ethnicity, gender, MBTI preference, religion, experience in public and nonprofit sectors, and geographic and cultural background. This diversity provides a rich, authentic playing field for learning RCC competency. The work of the coaches/facilitators entails maintaining a stance that allows them to “go to the balcony” and remain objective and neutral while observing the whole and supporting the work of leaders. The result is coaches/facilitators who acknowledge the hard work of developing RCC competencies and who know there is no way out but to go through it—it must be done. Products from the redesigned RCC competencies include agenda templates for conversations; tools such as the composition analysis developed by the project manager and used constantly during the day by the coach/facilitator.

Leaders are engaged in the work through the RA process. The authenticity of sharing stories and understandings about the impact of race, class, and culture helped leaders to think about how experiences shape perceptions that influence interpretations and decisions. They have been able to connect information more readily to contributing factors. Continued assessment of leaders' use of information to develop actions must be done. These quality improvements made based on the actual experiences of leaders ensure that RCC is not a point-in-time conversation but a lived experience throughout the LAP implementation process—it is not a thing to do but a way to be.

WHAT SKILL SETS AND TOOLS DID LEADERS FIND USEFUL?

The core competencies used in LAP include a set of skills and tools. The documentation team inquired about the usefulness of these tools in the current work of LAP leaders. In Phase 1, leaders were asked to rate the importance of these skill sets. On review, the documentation team decided to refocus the question to get clarity on what leaders are doing. Therefore, the label of the rating scale was changed, and leaders in Phase 2 (interview and survey participants) were asked how frequently they used each of the listed tools.

Participants valued skills that helped to ensure decision-making and created focus. The concrete techniques embedded in LAP are powerful in supporting collaboration and become self-reinforcing motivators because LAP ultimately creates real movement. It reflects the power of seeing something accomplished, which in turn reflects positively on LAP's skills and tools. Tables 2 and 3 provide a visual presentation of LAP leaders' ratings related to skills and tools.

Table 2: Phase 1 Participants

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important/ Very Important	No Answer
Use data to make decisions	0	0	100% (10)	0
Focus on data	0	0	100% (10)	0
Working toward common result with others	0	0	100%(10)	0
Use proposals to generate consensus	0	10% (1)	90% (9)	0
ID interests and find solutions for mutual gain	0	0	100% (10)	0
Use RBA to know if making a difference	0	0	90% (9)	10% (1)
Make issues of RCC transparent	0	0	70% (7)	30% (3)
Take action to close gap on race disparity	0	0	80% (8)	20% (2)
Use MBTI to understand group dynamics	60% (6)	30% (3)	0	10% (1)

Table: 3 Phase 2 and Survey Participants

	Not used	Infrequently	Frequently	No Answer
Use data to make decisions	0	3% (1)	93% (28)	3% (1)
Focus on data	0	3% (1)	93% (28)	3% (1)
Working toward common result with others	0	6% (2)	87% (26)	6% (2)
Use proposals to generate consensus	6% (2)	27% (8)	63% (19)	3% (1)
ID interest and find solutions for mutual gain	(0)	13% (4)	77% (23)	10% (3)
Use RBA to know if making a difference	(0)	13% (4)	80% (24)	6% (2)
Make issues of RCC transparent	6% (2)	30%(10)	33% (10)	27% (8)
Take action to close gap on race disparity	3% (1)	30% (9)	43% (13)	23% (7)
Use MBTI to understand group dynamics	(13)	30% (9)	13% (4)	13% (4)

Phase 1 leaders felt all the skills and tools introduced in LAP were important or very important, except for the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI). The tools focusing on data and results accountability were highly valued and supported the findings noted from the open-ended questions. Identifying the interest of others and finding solutions for mutual gain were also rated as important, although interviewees did not elaborate or provide many concrete examples of this work. Making proposals as a means to generate consensus to move work forward was an extremely salient tool for the vast majority of leaders. During the course of the interviews, eight of the ten interviewees described how they used this tool together with the visual marker of thumbs up, down, or sideways to determine how each person in the room was weighing in on a topic or issue of interest.

Data from the rating of skills and tools further support that proposal-based decision-making is important to these leaders. The questions regarding race dialogue and closing the gap generated mixed responses and confusion. Leaders were torn between wanting to answer the general question of, “Is race dialogue and closing the gap important?” and “Was what we discussed during LAP useful in helping develop strategies to ‘turn the curve’ of children entering school ready to learn?” Their response to the first question was “yes,” but was it a strength or strong focus of LAP? The majority of respondents felt that it was not (see the race, class, and culture discussion in previous section).

Leaders who participated in the Phase 2 interview and survey frequently used each of the results and data skills and tools. While their support of proposal-based decision-making was not as strong as Phase 1 leaders, the majority of individuals from Phase 2 used it

frequently in their work. Again the race and closing the gap question proved to be difficult for individuals to answer. As in the first interviews, support for the use of MBTI was low. However, four individuals did use it frequently.

The following are additional insights based on the open-ended questions and leaders' thoughts about skills and tools:

- Much of the lessons inherent in LAP built on the previous skills and knowledge of leaders. Several individuals had experience with results accountability, data-based decision-making, and MBTI. Most felt the information learned in LAP heightened their awareness of various nuances of the tools or took them to another level. Working in collaboration with others also was seen as helpful in finding pragmatic ways to realign their work and rethink how they were using previous knowledge.
- Proposal-based decision making to build consensus continued to be used by leaders during and after the original LAP. This technique was easily understood and readily applied to work outside LAP. The concept of building consensus through the development of proposals and asking questions regarding insights kept ideas on the table without stopping the work of the group. It prevented circular talk and helped leaders hold each other and themselves accountable for thinking critically, finding solutions, and being willing to move forward on a shared agenda. When it worked, it created a tangible example of public buy-in and acknowledged the essentially political nature of collaboration.

There were also suggestions about how the tool could be refined. At times, some leaders actually felt like the work was slowed down by the process, causing a sense of frustration. These critiques were offered as ways to improve the technique, but did not deter leaders from using it in their own work. Twenty-seven out of 29 people who responded to this question said they continue to use proposal-based decision-making in their own work.

- The collaborative leadership tool used least frequently beyond the original LAP work was the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI). Twenty-five of 30 persons stated they never or infrequently used MBTI in the sustaining phase of LAP or in their own work. Those who did find utility in the model were most likely to use it for self-assessment and to reflect on their leadership style and interactions with supervisors, peers, and subordinates. In this very personal use of MBTI, these individuals found positive benefits in their relationships and quality of interactions. The use of MBTI as a tool to work with groups, however, was not embraced. Instead, it was seen as a skill used by LAP facilitators to work effectively with the LAP group. There was also a discussion about a

general dislike of MBTI typing, and a feeling that the tool tended to stereotype persons by type. Others felt they were familiar enough with MBTI, and the content covered in LAP was redundant. In addition, many of the interviewees who were familiar with MBTI did not remember their “letters” and what they meant. Several individuals suggested the possibility of doing a stratified approach and having two groups for the first MBTI conversation—one group for those unfamiliar with MBTI and another for those with previous knowledge of the tool. The lack of basic understanding, ambivalent feelings about the tool’s intent, and the non-intuitive nature of using the tool for positive gain interfered with the individuals’ ability or desire to use MBTI more extensively.

Four individuals stated that they do use MBTI in their work. For three of the individuals, the tool is used to guide interpersonal relationships and strategies within a managerial or supervisory role. Two of the four said they use it as a means to identify and strengthen group dynamics. One of the individuals has taken on more of a leadership role and is using Myers Briggs extensively within her/his workplace.

- Some of the leaders adopted facilitation skills used by the coaches/facilitators. Although the question was not directly asked, several leaders discussed using facilitation tools and strategies modeled in LAP. The tools and strategies mentioned included active listening, giving the work back to the group, co-designing meetings and agendas, proposal-based decision-making, and going to the balcony. Although these strategies were not “taught,” leaders remembered the modeling that occurred and reenacted these strategies to move their own work into action. For example, one leader used several of these skills in her work at church: “I bring this over to my church group. I look like, oh my gosh, there is a marked difference that I can step away from, and go up into the balcony and look down on the situation instead of allowing myself to continue to be in the chaos.” She went on to explain how she then shared the big picture and insights with others to move the church group forward.

Recommendations:

- Recognize the experiences and expertise that leaders bring to the table about MBTI. A specific suggestion was made to level the teachings about MBTI by having two groups—an introductory group and an advanced group.
- Recognize that proposal-based decision-making is a useful tool. However, consider revisions related to its use or identify when this approach may not be the most effective.
- Evaluate the usefulness of MBTI in this program. One possibility is to redesign the way MBTI is introduced and used. The utility of using MBTI to do collaborative work should be more transparent and named clearly as it is applicable in the context of LAP work.

- Introduce opportunities for participants to learn facilitation and self-facilitate small group conversations. This may help ensure the sustainability of LAP after the implementation phase. These skills can be used by participants outside of LAP as well.

Integration of Recommendations into Quality Improvement Actions

For the most part, leaders did not use Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) in the work they were doing to accelerate children entering school ready to learn. Prior to the documentation project, the lesson module for MBTI was being changed because of this same observation. Relevant parts of MBTI were culled and more intentionally connected to leaders' work. The documentation project helped to clarify the direction for continued redesign that included simplification, streamlining, and connecting didactic and experiential approaches.

In the reinvention of the MBTI work, the first mention of Myers Briggs is very conversational. The coach/facilitator asks the group, "has anyone ever used MBTI in your work?" Next, the coach/facilitator asks in what ways the MBTI has been useful or not. A brief explanation about MBTI and how it can be used in collaborative work is given using the volunteer's example. Participants are then invited to complete the self-scorable MBTI between meetings and send results to the project manager. This creates an entry point that is grounded in the experience of a colleague, immediately describes how it might be used in the current work, acknowledges that some people in the room already are familiar with the tool, and is less didactic.

At each of the first two to three sessions a practical application of MBTI is introduced. For example, in Session 1 MBTI is connected to the Z-problem solving model and leaders use this model to develop group norms. It is used again when discussing collaborative communication and decision-making. Leaders are asked to work in MBTI functional pairs to share information about preferences and learning styles. Resolving conflicts and negotiating authority and power are two other ways that MBTI preferences are connected to the real work of the group. It is hypothesized that stronger information-reflection-action learning paradigms will increase the likelihood that MBTI will become internally integrated.

As in earlier quality improvement work, the same work is done with the implementation team. MBTI is used extensively to understand group dynamics and processes. In general, the implementation team is well aware of the type dynamics at play in their own team as well as the larger group. In particular, the coaches/facilitators think about their interaction with the team and the differential impact they may have on the group.

HOW SUSTAINABLE ARE LEADERSHIP CAPACITY CHANGES?

The LAP experience has provided leaders with sustained and valued competencies that they now use in their everyday work on behalf of children and families. Leaders have continued to engage in work that will likely contribute to more Maryland and Baltimore children entering school ready to learn. Many of the individuals interviewed continue to be involved in LAP as it moves into the sustainability phase. Additionally, people who are involved in sustained LAP projects, as well as those who are not, are using LAP competencies in their professional and broader community work.

The sustainability of leadership capacity changes depends on several factors: If leaders see their work moving forward in an accelerated way and if they continue to “turn the curve” on child and family well-being results, they will likely be motivated to continue working in a way that provides them with results that make a difference in the lives of children and families. Leaders must also understand collaborative contributions and believe that the work they have done makes a difference. LAP leaders have a rich network of cross-sector, dependable leaders who strengthen their resolve and provide them with a sense that they can make progress. Several leaders stated that it is unlike any other group of colleagues they have ever worked with before. During successive years of engagement in LAP, the work and priorities will need to be reinvented using the RA competency. This will keep the work fresh and focused, helping to avoid slipping into the development of prosaic and rote strategies. This will create a sense of rejuvenation and renewal.

LAP’s time commitment continues to be an issue, but there were no specific proposals suggested—it seems that working collaboratively toward change requires an unavoidable commitment of time. But again, if results of the collaboration are met, that will bolster a sense of commitment. Sustainability also entails leaders picking up their leadership in their home agencies. It is perhaps this picking up of leadership that is most predictive of LAP sustainability. Those who lead from the middle—whether in a sustained LAP project, their home organizations, or in their communities—will continue to be important influencers, the people through which relationships and resources can be leveraged and aligned to “turn curves” for children and families.

Bonnie Birkel, Director of the DHMH, Center for Maternal Child Health states,

Increased collaboration occurred as people began to trust. It was not about looking at each other as competitors for resources with a fear that cooperating may mean that money will be taken from my program. It was coming to understand that no one agency could do it alone. Everybody is responsible and accountable for accelerating results. This type of thinking breaks down walls. I don't know what the dynamics are. Some might be the facilitation where it's really not allowed to go down some of these roads. Positive confrontations occur and are supported to a good end. Mostly it has to do with a change in attitude. That LAP has been able to weather three different administrations is pretty impressive. Casey should be happy with it as an approach for coalition building not just leadership development.

Footnotes

¹AEC Mission Statement.

²An existing collaborative government, civic, or community group that holds the LAP result as a high priority and can leverage resources and relationships to bring people together.

³The Work Sampling System (WSS)® is a curriculum focused performance assessment designed to provide teachers with a systematic means to document young children's skills, knowledge, behavior, and academic accomplishments. The WSS consists of three complementary elements: (1) developmental guidelines and checklists, (2) portfolio of children's work, and (3) summary reports. The WSS is used statewide in Maryland to assess the growth and progress of kindergarten students. The WSS® is a registered trademark of Pearson Learning.

⁴Information about race/ethnicity was provided by project managers for the interviewees. Therefore, caution should be used in interpreting this information. Ideally, the question of racial/ethnic identification should be assigned by the individual.

⁵Stated reasons for not participating: (1) one person said she/he was too busy to take part in the telephone interview; (2) another person stated that she/he had not been really engaged, although rated by the LAP coordinator as having medium engagement, and it was noted that he/she was moving into a new position; (3) another person had retired, and there was no current contact information; and (4) one person did not respond or reply to five e-mails and five telephone calls.

⁶Friedman, M. (2005). *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*, Canada: Trafford.

⁷Pillsbury, Jolie Bain (2005). *Results Based Facilitation Workbook*. www.sherbrookeconsulting.com

⁸In 1992, each county in Maryland was mandated to convene a Local Management Board (LMBs) to provide leadership in the coordination of a local, interagency; community-based service delivery system for children and families. The LMB influences public policy and advocates for improved services.

⁹Pillsbury, Jolie Bain (2005). *Results Facilitation Workbook*. www.sherbrookeconsulting.com

¹⁰Ibid.

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This exploratory interview protocol is directed at the interviewer. It clarifies the questions of interest for the Exploratory Interviews of the Leadership in Action Program (LAP) and provides suggestions for how to obtain this information. The protocol is divided into four sections:

- Introduction and Background
- Broad Questions of Interest
- Data Collection Strategies and Procedures
- Interview Instrument with suggested probes and listen “fors”

Introduction and Background

Founded on the hypothesis that the culture of an organization is held and changed by people who have grown-up in the organization and carry its culture, assumptions, and legends, the Casey Foundation’s Leadership in Action Program is designed to build the capacity of high and mid-level public agency leaders and their community partners. This is achieved through a program architecture that includes several critical elements. The foundation and cornerstone of the program is the results and performance accountability framework. Leadership skills and specialized competencies are developed through carefully crafted facilitation and coaching. Competencies include (1) Results and Performance Accountability, (2) Closing the Gap on Racial Disparities, (3) Collaborative Leadership, and (4) Leading from the Middle. The facilitation creates a context in which participants engage in a collaborative learning and planning process that builds relationships, leverages leadership roles, and creates joint solutions that lead to actions which accelerate the achievement of measurable improvement on a targeted result or “turning the curve” on an identified condition of well-being.

LAP has been implemented in Maryland (state [MLAP], Baltimore City [BLAP], and Southern Maryland [SOMA]) and San Antonio, TX. The documentation project will focus initially on MLAP and BLAP. The targeted result for both is “Children Enter School Ready to Learn.”

The purpose of the Exploratory Interviews for the Leadership in Action Documentation Project is to discover the stories of MLAP and BLAP participants and to gain insights and understandings about what leaders did to get results within the framework of their own experiences. In doing this, there will be an increased understanding about participants' leadership experiences and how elements of LAP may or may not have contributed to these experiences. Specifically, the exploratory interviews will:

- First, use open-ended questions to elicit stories about how LAP participants experienced their leadership role and what they did to contribute to children entering school ready to learn;
- Provide a rich description of leadership experiences by using an exploratory, qualitative approach to categorize and classify information from the open-ended questions to discover themes and patterns from the multiple stories;
- Second, obtain information using a structured, closed-ended set of questions to gather information about specific elements and components of the LAP process;
- Provide a descriptive analysis and summary of structured questions; and
- Develop a written report sharing information to inform the development of additional inquiry approaches and tools (e.g., continue interviews, survey, or focus group).

Broad Questions of Interest

The Documentation and Implementation Team engaged in in-depth conversations regarding the purpose, content, and areas of inquiry for the exploratory interview. Based on these conversations the three following areas of inquiry were delineated:

- What did leaders do that contributed to children being ready for school?
- How sustainable are leadership capacity changes? Are strategies used to address concerns in other arenas?
- How did LAP help or not help leaders pick up their leadership roles to get results?

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

Interviewee Selection Criteria The first ten interviews are being done to explore common themes and to identify strategies that would be most appropriate to obtain insights into the ability of leaders to take action that lead to results. The following list provides a set of criteria for selection of interviewees for Interviews A and B:

- Even distribution of individuals from BLAP and MLAP
- Selection of both “enthusiastic” and “less enthusiastic” leaders (do not want to skew by choosing only participants who have already articulated their positive experiences)
- Even distribution of leaders from public and nonpublic organizations/agencies
- Diverse selection of leadership roles
- Consider possible influence of race and gender and have diverse representation

Interview Strategies and Procedures

Prior to:

- The implementation team will identify 10–15 individuals from BLAP and MLAP using the previously listed set of criteria. The list of individuals should include updated contact information, short description of who the interviewee is and in which LAP program she/he participated.
- Interviewers should provide the project coordinator with their schedules for mid-July to mid-August so that 60–70 minute interviews can be scheduled. Please remember to block 2.5-hrs for each call. This will provide time to review information, set-up for the call, conduct the interview, and review and complete your notes.
- Do not schedule interviews back-to-back. Interviewers should be provided with 1 hour to update notes and prepare tapes for transcription immediately following the interview.
- Send interviewee the thank you e-mail with the interview and their appointment time.
- Send a reminder e-mail the day before the scheduled interview.
- Check equipment (tape recorder and tape).
- Review interview protocol. Recall that the protocol is addressed to the interviewer.
- Know the affiliation, title, and name of the interviewee prior to the call.

Day of:

- Review pertinent documents and the interview protocol again as needed.
- Ask permission to tape interviewee.
- Conduct interview and honor time commitment.

- Each question on the interview should be asked but probes are asked only as necessary and appropriate.

Immediately following:

- Send the follow-up thank you e-mail within 24 hours.
- Complete notes and e-mail to Documentation Team members.
- Label tape (check interviewee list for code, date, time, interviewer, and interview #) to be provided by Rodney Washington
- Within 24 hours, send tapes to Rodney Washington who will send them for transcription.
- Transcripts should be sent to the entire analysis subgroup.

Leadership in Action Program Documentation Project Interview

INTRODUCTION

Begin by thanking the participant. Provide a brief statement of purpose. Give specific information about the interview—who is conducting it, expected length, and issues regarding confidentiality and expected use of information. Allow the participant to ask any questions they might have at this time. Following is a suggested script for the introduction:

On behalf of the Casey Foundation, thank you for agreeing to be a part of this interview for the LAP Documentation Project. *Offer some brief introduction of yourself.* The purpose of the interview is to learn more about what LAP participants have done in their leadership roles to get results that are leading to children being ready for school and how, if at all, LAP contributed to leaders taking action. Interviews will be conducted by individual's working with the Leadership in Action Research Center at the Wagner School, New York University. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Information will be documented as a collection of anonymous stories with aggregated results detailing similarities and differences across stories. Occasionally, the use of direct quotes might be desired, in this case specific consent from the interviewee will be obtained. This document will be submitted to Annie E. Casey Foundation who will use it to identify themes for quality improvement of LAP. Additionally, information may be used to write an article for submission to a professional journal as a means of sharing lessons with colleagues. Do you have any questions?

COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED DURING PILOTS

Q: What role should I be thinking about in answering questions, my job or my role in LAP?

Suggested Response: You participated in LAP as a leader representing an agency, organization, or specific population. It is your experience within this role that is of interest. So, for example, if you are a representative from the Local Management Board, it is what have you done in that role since LAP that has contributed to children entering school ready to learn. The story shared may or may not be directly linked to the LAP experience.

Q: How long or involved do you want the answers to questions to be?

Suggested Response: Time has been allowed for you to share your thoughts freely and openly. It is our interest that you feel comfortable to share in the detail necessary for you to create a full understanding of your experiences.

SEE APPENDIX B FOR THE COMPLETE INTERVIEW

Interviewer's Guide

Below please find a guide for possible probes and listen fors.

POSSIBLE PROBES	LISTEN FORS
• What did you actually do?	a. Sense of urgency
• With whom did you do it?	b. November catch phrase: "needing to turn the curve in one measurement cycle"
• Was there anything in LAP that contributed or interfered with that?	c. Authority to make things happen
• Is there anything that happened in LAP that helped you to do that well or to have more confidence to move to action?	d. Using their own authority or "picking up their leadership"
• Tell me a little bit more about...	e. Use of data for decision-making
• What helped to make that happen?	f. Focus on results, tracking program performance and results
• Explain why did the curve turn? What role did you have in this?	g. Power of collaborative relationships
• Is that different?	h. Multiple mentions of new relationships
• Can you point to some experience in LAP that helped you take a different or new position or action?	i. Activities and strategies (what was done)
	j. Acceleration of positive change, turning the curve

APPENDIX B:

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview for the Leadership in Action Program (LAP) Documentation Project. The interview has been structured to elicit your story about your leadership experiences since beginning LAP and to inquire about your thoughts regarding select components of the LAP process. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

The first set of questions are open-ended and have been designed to elicit your thoughts and experiences about your actions as leaders contributing to children entering school ready to learn.

1. Since beginning LAP, what have you done to contribute to children entering school ready to learn?

- a. Is there a particular story that you can share that illustrates this?
- b. What about the leadership in Action program (LAP) helped or hindered your being able to do this?
- c. In what way did collaborative leadership strategies impact this work? Describe what you did to establish/maintain collaborative relationships and with whom you did this with?
- d. What in LAP helped to promote or hinder collaborative relationships?

2. Has this leadership experience influenced your work in areas *other than* helping children enter school ready to learn?

- a. Is there a particular story that you can share that illustrates this?
- b. In what way, if any, does this story illustrate a change in your leadership?
- c. In what way did LAP influence or hinder this?
- d. Are there particular competencies or strategies learned during the LAP experience that you continue to use?

The next set of questions is designed to gain a deeper understanding of specific LAP elements or components.

3. Rate the importance of the following strategies in terms of influencing your leadership. Please feel free to provide examples or comments about any or all of the listed strategies.

Strategy	Not important	Somewhat important	Very Important	Important	N/A	Comments
a. Using data to make decisions						
b. Focusing on results						
c. Creating a sense of working towards a common result with other leaders						
d. Using proposals to generate consensus around decisions						
e. Identifying interests and developing solutions that get mutual gains						
f. Using results and performance accountability to know what difference you made						
g. Making issues related to race, culture and power more transparent						
h. Taking actions to close the gap on racial disparities						
i. Using Myers-Briggs preference typing to understand group dynamics						

4. Please share your thoughts about the following ways that the facilitator role contributed to the work of the LAP. Indicate whether you would suggest keeping, changing or not keeping each listed strategy. Elaborate as needed.

	Keep	Change	Do not keep	Comments
Context Setting				
a. Teaching in the moment and capitalizing on actual concerns of participants**				
b. Facilitating discussions and conversations and flip-charting key points				
c. Encouraging moments of reflective practice to make notes and discuss in pairs**				
d. Providing individual coaching or feedback				
e. Conducting co-design calls				
Focusing on Results and Data				
f. Facilitating the group in doing it's "own work"				
g. Using data to do the work (posting data, data walks, turn the curve exercises)				
h. Inquiring about work or actions taken since the last convening of the whole group				
Supporting Collaborative Work				
i. Using journey maps				
j. Working in committees or small groups and then bringing the conversation to the large group for large group work**				
k. Using proposal based decision making ("thumbs up, sideways, etc.)				

5. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your leadership or your experience in LAP?

e. Were there any unexpected learnings or detours?

f. Were there any barriers or challenges?

Thank You. Your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences is appreciated.

APPENDIX C:

PHASE 2 INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview for the Leadership in Action Program (LAP) Documentation Project. The interview has been structured to elicit your thoughts and feelings about your leadership experiences since beginning LAP and to inquire about your thoughts regarding select components of the LAP process. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

The first set of questions are open-ended and have been designed to elicit your thoughts and experiences about your actions as leaders contributing to children entering school ready to learn.

- 1. Tell me a little bit about your connection to the result of children entering school ready to learn and how you came to be a part of LAP.**
- 2. Since beginning LAP, what have you done to contribute to children entering school ready to learn?**
 - a. Is there a particular example that you can share that illustrates this? What did you do for this to happen? When did this happen, e.g. during LAP or after LAP was over
 - b. How might this contribute to turning the curve for children entering school ready to learn?
 - c. Thinking about other examples, was collaborative leadership important? Describe what you did to establish/maintain collaborative relationships?
 - d. Thinking about what you have described, what about the Leadership in Action program (LAP) helped or hindered your being able to take these steps or develop this work?
- 3. Has this leadership experience influenced your work in areas other than helping children entering school ready to learn?**
 - a. Is there a particular example that you can share that illustrates this? What did you do? To what result will this work contribute? Is the work making a positive contribution to achieving the result? How do you know this?

- b. In what way, if any, does this example illustrate a change in your leadership?
- c. In what way did LAP influence or hinder this?
- d. Are there particular competencies or strategies learned during the LAP experience that you continue to use?

The next set of questions is designed to gain a deeper understanding of specific LAP elements or components.

4. The following strategies/competencies were stressed during LAP. To what degree are you using these strategies in your current leadership role or position? Also provide information about the effectiveness.

Strategy					Did LAP address this strategy in a way that was helpful to you?		Comments
	Not used	Infreq. used	Freq. used	N/A	(Y/N)		
a. Using data to make decisions							
b. Focusing on results							
c. Creating a sense of working towards a common result with other leaders							
d. Using proposals to generate consensus around decisions							
e. Identifying interests and developing solutions that get mutual gains							
f. Using results and performance accountability to know what difference you made							
g. Making issues related to race, culture and power more transparent							
h. Taking actions to close the gap on racial disparities							
i. Using Myers-Briggs preference typing to understand group dynamics							

5. Please share your thoughts about the following ways that the facilitator role contributed to the work of the LAP. Indicate whether you would suggest keeping, changing or not keeping each listed strategy. Elaborate as needed.

	Keep	Change	Do not keep	Comments
Context Setting				
a. Teaching in the moment and capitalizing on actual concerns of participants**				
b. Facilitating discussions and conversations and flip-charting key points				
c. Encouraging moments of reflective practice to make notes and discuss in pairs**				
d. Providing individual coaching or feedback				
e. Conducting co-design calls				
Focusing on Results and Data				
f. Facilitating the group in doing it's "own work"				
g. Using data to do the work (posting data, data walks, turn the curve exercises)				
h. Inquiring about work or actions taken since the last convening of the whole group				
Supporting Collaborative Work				
i. Using journey maps				
j. Working in committees or small groups and then bringing the conversation to the large group for large group work**				
k. Using proposal based decision making ("thumbs up, sideways, etc.)				

6. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your leadership or your experience in LAP?

- a. Were there any unexpected learnings or detours?
- b. Were there any barriers or challenges?

Thank You. Your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences is appreciated.

APPENDIX D:

SAMPLE OF QUOTES

Results Accountability Quotes

[Results accountability] is the lynchpin on which we hinge this whole process. Without it we are just another bunch of people meeting and talking.

We are planning a retreat for our main home visiting strategies, going back and looking at is that strategy effective, whether it's giving us the outcomes we would want... We've invested five or six years now in this strategy...very hard thing to do, being willing to focus on what are the results and what are the outcomes.

The Judy Center Partnerships help 24 community programs who work with children and families to do collaborative work. There have been a couple of occasions where I helped a steering committee look at the results that they wanted in a new and different way...I've been looking at all of the yearly evaluations that have been provided which are required as part of the grant. We asked over the past two years that the evaluation should take a shift more towards the results based accountability (RBA) model and they are getting there. We gave each of the Judy Center coordinators and their evaluators training in RBA and how to look at their accountability and their data and their results in a more RBA process...So, most of what we're getting in terms of the evaluations very clearly looks at their results.

I have developed these strategies; I am bringing to you now something that I've learned so that we can be productive, as productive as the group that I'm in. They see a marked difference...Now I'm like, I want results.

During the period of participation, I was concerned about the valance and time demands. But the lessons and opportunities, at least initially in the first year I participated, were very enlightening. For example, looking behind the data and understanding the implications and how to analyze the data was very helpful.

...was familiar with RBA. We had met with Mark Freidman before. LAP allowed us to look at them, allowed me to and therefore our agency to look at things deeper, develop my own skills. It was very valuable.

It was a combination of personal leadership, but that personal leadership was really woven into the fact that we were trying to actually specifically influence results.

Collaborative Leadership Quotes

People felt real change was possible. It wasn't like going to a meeting as usual. The concept of accelerating the curve and thinking of losing your identity and just the way turf issues just were impossible.

LAP was and is very time consuming and it is hard work. But, I have never been part of a group that so quickly gelled as a group with a common purpose. That makes it powerful and rewarding to be a part of.

I did not know that DHR had a project for early childhood mental health services for kids with special needs. Didn't know that the Childcare Administration also had money in a pilot to ensure that two, three, and four year-old children were able to remain in childcare with support because of their behavior rather than being thrown out. And we had 3 year-olds dropouts because they had been kicked out of two or three childcare places. Their parents couldn't work they had to stay home, they lost their jobs... That kind of thing was an eye-opener for me and to have faces of the parents and the faces of the children and the faces of the childcare provider and the faces of the teacher and it really was an epiphany for me.

I think that as things played out and as LAP progressed, we were less members of the committees than we became members of the LAP.

The group that we created in LAB, and I'm not going to say it was LAP was the sole cause... People were working on all kinds of things, but what the discussion in LASP and just the general understanding of the need to support the needs of young children with special needs... and having folks in the room then become part of the group that advocated was very helpful and very important. So that kind of recognition of—we began to speak a more common language.

...most of the people in the room were known to me in some way or another, but we were, we were elevating our collaboration...

It was amazing to watch these people who were sort of antagonists at different points in time... Actually become allies, to say when something would happen in one of our programs, I have money, I can support that, get me a proposal.

It wasn't just one time... Like DHMH just applied for a training grant and they used the LAP, the action agenda as the foundation for the grant... And we all wrote letters of support.

We don't do much with mental health, but coming into the LAP program we saw the need for us to try to communicate more... access these services of mental health which was almost impossible for us to do at one point... someone from the mental health field was in the same goal group... She asked "Do you access mental health services?" And my current answer was, "No, we try but fail." She explained some ways that could be... Then last year, there was new legislation that came through on funding to collaborate the zero to five programs of the MSDE with the DHMH, so it was a very, very good thing because we had already began to dialogue and talk about ways to do it. Now we're bringing a mental health clinician into our eligibility centers. We'll have services available. So, at one point we had just given up... and now we're actually seeing a fruition of a collaborative relationship with the mental health community.

Policy makers and funders could see the interconnectedness of the policy and different departmental kinds of issues and how they might have some real like implications for programs.

People have called me to be on things because they know who I am and how I work.

Race, Class Culture Quotes

We spent two whole days trying to hash out some cultural and ethnic gender-related issues that had popped up in our group... We were not terribly culturally confident about each other. We as a group suggested that we have it as a topic for one of our two day meetings. We were told come in your jeans and your sweatshirts and wear jeans to grapple with this. It was heart-rending, it was stomach-grinding, it was headache-producing, people cried, people yelled, people walked out, people walked in, but by the end we got it and I think that it made a much more mutual respect... okay, you can now talk about these things among yourselves and you can talk about them how they affect your communities and the people that you represent.

Had very serious discussions around race and diversity. I've been working on this for many, many, many years and this has been an issue always in the work that I do. Some people did not want to get into it any more. I'm always struck with how important those decisions are, how hard it is to make end roads and to deal with people who are different and to sort of be able to move along without offending people.

I think some greater understanding really would be helpful to process these and having folks, this came up a little when we looked at the changes in the Baltimore City school system, in going from basically a white majority to a black minority and from over the course of 15 years and...there are feelings and thoughts that are very meaningful to people and that other people might benefit from fully understanding.

...but when things were written up and it was time to move onto the next point or the next level, my perspective was kind of lost in that. I was given polite listening, but to a large extent, I was outnumbered. I would say there was half a dozen of us of color that felt strongly and more passionately about some issues, the urban center...

...what happened during the LAP program was pretty significant. I was kind of surprised in some ways on how I learned a lot from some of the discussions that were, could get, very personal about race. Some of them were uncomfortable, but as we all know, very often the uncomfortable discussions get you past things...

...I'm not sure that that piece really was addressed as full as it could have been. Certainly that is a huge issue that every single school district that has a heterogeneous grouping has to deal with, but I don't mean...I would say the same thing, I just don't see it being addressed in that way. I don't see a specific focus, like here in our school we have a real clear focus...

It contributed, but the follow-up wasn't, you know, it couldn't crack the surface...

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