Evaluating Systems Change Using the Most Significant Change Method

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EVALUATORS
MAY 9, 2019

Miles McNall
Trevor Strzyzakowski
Danielle Haggerty
Two key components:

- **Youth Mental Health First Aid** training
- Connecting children, youth, and families to appropriate mental health services through the schools and communities (systems change)
Project AWARE
Advancing Wellness And Resiliency in Education

SAMHSA

Michigan Department of Education

ISD₁
Project Manager₁

Community Management Team₁

ISD₂

ISD₃
Why We Chose Most Significant Change

- Casts a wider net than predetermined measures
- Captures both expected and unexpected outcomes
- Retrospective method for gathering outcomes through storytelling

Step 2.
Define Domains of Systems Change

- Needed a framework to capture broad systems changes
- Framework informed by Coffman and Foster-Fishman
- Defined *systems change indicators* with stakeholders
  - 7 domains of systems change
  - 44 indicators of systems change
Systems Change Framework

Components

Connections

Context

Mindsets

Regulations

Power

Infrastructure

Student Outcomes
Step 4. Prepare for Data Collection

- Most Significant Change events were scheduled at each ISD
- Project managers selected stakeholders to participate
  - Core groups who attended Community Management Team meetings
- Participants included representatives from:
  - ISDs
  - Schools
  - Community agencies
Step 4.
Develop Five Focus Questions

Questions sent two weeks prior to each event:

1. What significant change has there been in your districts/ISD/communities as a result of Project AWARE?
2. Why is this change significant?
3. How do you know this change has occurred?
4. How did Project AWARE contribute to this change?
5. What else has happened as a result of this change?
Step 4.
Hold Event to Collect Significant Change Stories

- 8:00-8:30 am: Pre-meeting coffee and find your table
- 8:30-8:45 am: Introduction to program
- **8:45-9:15 am**: Individual writing time
- 9:15-9:45 am: Group time to share and select
- 9:45-10:00 am: Break
- 10:00-11:00 am: Presentation by each group
- 11:00-11:30 am: Whole group discussion and wrap up
Step 5.
Select Most Significant Stories

- **8:00-8:30 am** Pre-meeting coffee and find your table
- **8:30-8:45 am** Introduction to program
- **8:45-9:15 am** Individual writing time
- **9:15-9:45 am** Group time to share and select
- **9:45-10:00 am** Break
- **10:00-11:00 am** Presentation by each group
- **11:00-11:30 am** Whole group discussion and wrap up
Step 6.
Share Most Significant Change Stories

- 8:00-8:30 am  Pre-meeting coffee and find your table
- 8:30-8:45 am  Introduction to program
- 8:45-9:15 am  Individual writing time
- 9:15-9:45 am  Group time to share and select
- 9:45-10:00 am  Break
- **10:00-11:00 am**  Presentation by each group
- 11:00-11:30 am  Whole group discussion and wrap up
Step 7.
Quantify Stories: Content Coding

- Transcribed and quality checked
- Imported to Dedoose
- Thematic analysis using a consensus approach
  - Two coders independently read and applied codes
  - Discussed disagreements, revised iteratively
  - Lead evaluator settled discrepancies
## Results: Indications of Systems Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Total applications</th>
<th>Applications per story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Components</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindsets</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Components
Presence and Characteristics of Programs and Supports

Components (170 applications)

- Improved access (51%)
- Improved responses (34%)
- Interventions (19%)
- Referrals (16%)

“Students and families have access to services, and someone who can help them navigate an often times confusing system.”

Community Agency on Improved Access
Step 8. Verify Results

- Compared results with predicted results
  - Systems change indicators
  - Theory of Change
- Checked for consistency across multiple data sources
- Member checking
  - Project managers
  - Local representatives
Coupled with our systems change framework, the Most Significant Change method was an effective and manageable approach to capture both expected and unexpected changes in youth mental health systems.
Miles McNall, Ph. D.
Director of the Community Evaluation and Research Collaborative (CERC)
Assistant Professor, MSU Program Evaluation
Adjunct Professor, MSU Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Email: mcnall@msu.edu