

Authentic Community Engagement

Presenter: Hanna Nichols, Big Picture Impact, LLC

Hanna Nichols, Big Picture Impact, LLC

- Expert facilitator, purposeful storyteller, and community engagement catalyst
- Creating containers for community empowerment and people to feel they belong
- Born and raised in Colorado and love nothing better than spending time outdoors with her spouse, daughter, and two dogs



For Today

- Key ingredients for authentic community engagement
 - Efforts rooted in explicit shared values and purpose
 - Leading from strengths and assets
 - Integrating Continuous Learning
 - Going far with Storytelling

Community Engagement Rooted in Shared Values and Purpose

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Every time people are gathered together,
the hegemony of dominant culture is
playing out unless there is an intention to
do/be otherwise.

-adrienne maree brown

— ” —

You are showing your purpose and values whether you define them or not

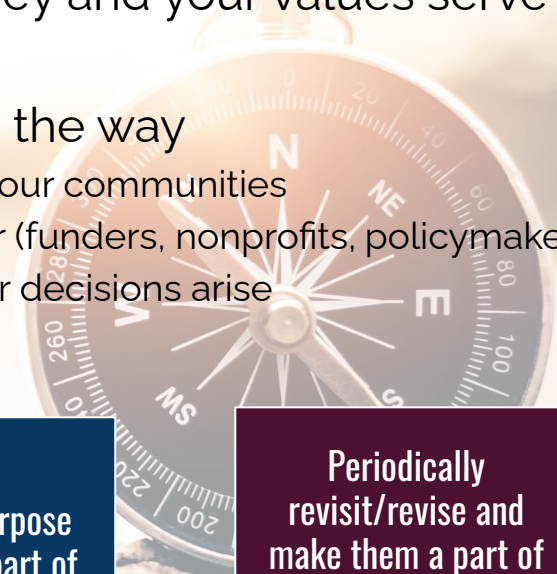
- Your purpose tells you why you are on the journey and your values serve as your compass
- If these aren't explicit, implicit assumptions lead the way
 - “Defaulting” to ways of being that no longer serve us or our communities
 - Doing what works for those with decision making power (funders, nonprofits, policymakers)
 - Constant feeling of “stuckness” when tough situations or decisions arise

Take time to clearly define purpose and values/guiding principles

Create space for community to inform, shape, guide these values and principles

Make your purpose and values a part of every gathering

Periodically revisit/revise and make them a part of continuous learning and evaluation



Example: Preschool Policy Advisory Group Braintrust

Purpose: Inform and design community engagement opportunities as we continue to elevate the undervoiced of those closest to the issue of preschool expansion, especially caregivers of young children, early childhood professionals, and individuals from diverse communities.

Guiding Principles:

- Reimagine early childhood systems to center **equity, inclusion, and belonging** in preschool expansion
- Lead from an **asset-based** and **people-first** space
- Celebrate and lift up progress along the way
- Center stories of parents, providers, and individuals from diverse communities, especially those historically excluded from policy conversations
- Analyze systems and explore **family- and community-centered** possibilities to make systems work better
- Highlight unintended consequences of policies and actions

Created democratically with group over two meetings

We start every meeting by walking through them

We use them as a guide to plan events, reach our goals

The group digs into concepts more deeply along the way

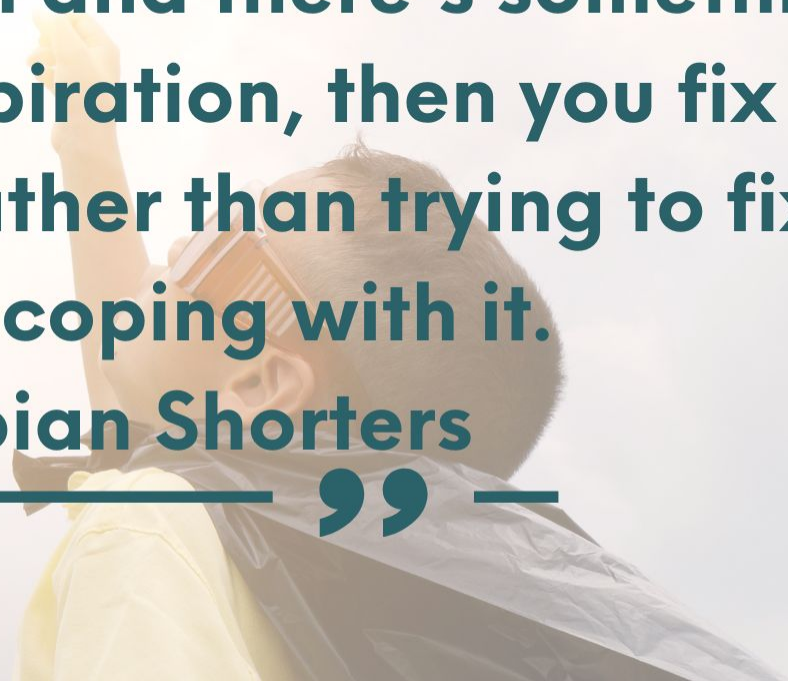
Leading from Strengths and Assets

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When you properly frame that this person has an aspiration and there's something blocking that aspiration, then you fix the larger problem, rather than trying to fix the person coping with it.

-Trabian Shorters

— ” —



Asset and Strengths Based Community Engagement

Key Mindset shifts:

- Starting from a place of celebrating a community or individual's strengths and aspirations
- Trust people in communities know what is best for them
- "Savior" mentality doesn't win
- Call out systems, call in individuals


Leads to:

- Moving from rugged individualism → thriving as a community
- Opens the door for systemic solutions that work for everyone
- More potential for sustainable impact

Resources: Asset Based Framing & ABCD

- Trabian Shorters @ BMe: <https://bmecommunity.org/asset-framing/>
 - Offers equity trainings rooted in asset-based framing with orgs and communities
 - 2016 podcast episode can shed more light:
https://ssir.org/podcasts/entry/opportunities_for_a_fresh_start_on_race
- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)
 - Rooted out of institute in Chicago, IL
 - Starts with asset-mapping, capacity building at community level, mapping gifts and strengths
 - Ideal at neighborhood, municipality level
 - ABCD Institute: <https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/Pages/default.aspx>

The
**BUILD
HEALTH**
Challenge

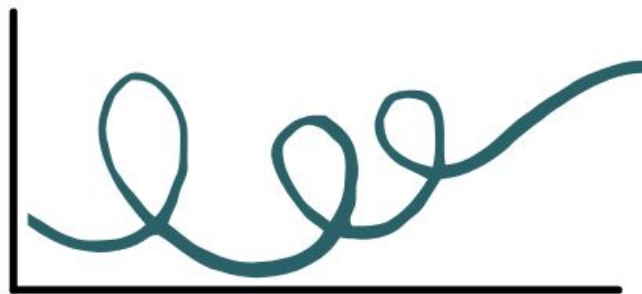
A portrait of Benzel Jimmerson, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a colorful patterned bow tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera.

BENZEL JIMMERSON
EASTSIDE UNIFIED

Continuous Learning

Continuous Learning in Authentic Community Engagement

- Reframe how we look at evaluation
 - From formulaic to iterative and non-linear
 - From the conclusion of a project to ongoing practice
 - From what your funder needs to what your community needs
- Measure your outcomes at an end user level, but don't forget process measures (i.e. how are you adhering to your purpose and values?)
 - Helpful resources: Colorado Office of Health Equity "Sweet" Tools to Advance Health Equity: <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/suite-of-tools>



Purposeful Storytelling

Our Stories Can Transform People and Systems

- Stories as bridges
 - Rethink your icebreakers: How can our icebreaker questions be places for deeper connection?
- Stories as flashlights
 - Illuminate inequities
 - Elevate unintended consequences
- Stories as lighthouses
 - Show solutions that work
 - Illustrate what it looks like when something works well for people



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