NNIP Camp Session #2

Thursday April 7, 2016

Poor neighborhoods and young children

Leader: Charlie Bruner

Attendance: Macune, Terpstra, Nelson, Hendey, Millea, Britton, Pritchard, Garza, Ozuna

Note taker: Pitingolo

[Begin 3:45pm]

Bruner: I’ve always liked working with NNIP. My center is mostly focused on advocating for kids. I got involved because of Making Connections. I feel like this is an opportunity to invest in low income neighborhoods by thinking about kids and families. I co-chaired a NNIP working group on young children. There was funding at that time, I wish there was more. Early on, recognizing that poor neighborhoods are neighborhoods with a lot of young kids. Just by that fact they need more play areas, gathering spaces, classes, and yet these neighborhoods have less. When kids are young they are bounded by their neighborhood and really need this. My world changed when I had a kid. There’s a new discussion on poverty and I think NNIP can do an emphasis on young children. Scholars from right and left came together with consensus. If we want to end poverty in a generation a lot has to do with making sure kids have opportunities for success. We know from research that poverty and race and place are all intertwined and not the same but powerful factors. We know kids growing up in poverty reduce prospects around economic development. Paul Ryan, as far as one of his major concerns, is addressing poverty. In many respects he says he says we need to go in and know about neighborhoods. There’s support there. I think one of the challenges is to move beyond the view that it’s a culture of poverty. One thing I didn’t get you yesterday is that we’re taking two neighborhoods in Iowa and looking at tennis courts and baseball diamonds and libraries, and basic social capital for kids. Our first run was just night and day differences.

Britton: Are the neighborhoods similar?

Bruner: In terms of population, yes, in terms of affluence, no. I think we need to look at the structural side. Robert Putnam’s book and Charles Murray says we have separation into haves and have nots. Putnam has stories as well as data. They are based on families growing up 5 miles apart being in climates leading to different outcomes and expectations. When Putnam gets to recommendations it’s a bit thin. These neighborhoods are rich in young kids but the face many challenges. I look at the years before kids start school. That’s a point where you have the information and then you can identify people in the neighborhood who can help kids. I think there’s an opportunity to take action. I think NNIP and past work for 4-5 years ago around young kids was enough to say we know what to look for.

Millea: I have a hard time with policy makers, elected officials, and creating a message about investment. Our data can really show disparities - it’s very visual. Trying to get elected officials to take action means they are faced with difficult choices. If they invest here it’s coming from somewhere else. How do you talk about where it’s coming from? Investing in young kids is investing less in older kids. It’s not expanding, it’s about reallocating. You don’t take prison money to invest in kids. How do you take the info and make the case? Yes they care but it’s a difficult choice.

Terpstra: Our org’s tagline is “ending poverty” and we’ve been around 127 years. One org can’t end poverty. A government can. You can’t separate kids wellbeing from families wellbeing. How do you get policy makers to see worker policies as kid friendly? Then how do you stop piecemeal approaches to child poverty. The politics only mitigate and doesn’t end poverty. The economic system depends on some people being poor to function.

Millea: Political will is local, state federal but where do you take the first bite?

Pritchard: What can you do that’s not government related. Local philanthropy? Awareness of what does work. Where the data comes in is what works. We don’t have a shot if we are limited to government. Even corporate philanthropy.

Britton: Foundation uses our mapping to identify a neighborhood to focus their resources and do place based initiatives. I found out one of the medical schools in Austin will be funded by that foundation to look at place based initiatives. It’s going to be like a laboratory environment.

Millea: I have stolen Charlie’s acronym PARENTS and plan to use it effectively.

Bruner: Decades ago the CDC asked Kaiser’s population about abuse, divorce, other risk factors. There were 10 adverse childhood experiences they got on people, then look at health conditions.

Britton: You really change brain structure that stays with the kid forever when they are young. Things that work for some don’t work for everyone.

Hendey: Claudia looked at whether Head Start was reducing the gap and it’s not working there.

Bruner: Head Start is really for 3-4 year old and it has good success in getting kids enrolled in healthcare, but the big danger is in the 0-2 years age.

Hendey: What can you do to help or remediate?

Britton: Certain conversations on behavioral health are what we see.

Millea: When you bring a kid in, screen the mom, and take care of the whole family.

Britton: Matt called me and thinks he has the data, so we have a scope toward maternal depression. We hope to do it in a major clinic in Austin. We have to have from pregnancy. Even better pre-pregnancy but we need to look at the spectrum.

Bruner: It’s not always safe to have your kids in the park, and you’re struggling to put food on the table. If you’re worried about losing your job you don’t have time to invest in your kids. In that situation your resiliency is pushed down. Whether it’s clinical depression or something else, the rates of depression in those situations are a lot higher.

Britton: That’s why it’s critical to look at more than one stage.

Pritchard: To go back to the aces. It doesn’t relate to children but they’re using it in prisons and jails and pre-trial for trauma informed care.

Millea: Spike was talking about trauma informed care in the schools as probably a better response to in school suspension. That’s a hard sell for a teacher who is responsible for 30 kids and there are some disrupters. UCLA work is targeted for educational environments.

I have a question, how do we sequence housing, health and equity. What comes first? How do you take the first bite? Do we focus on housing as a determinant and health is an outcome? I’m thinking about housing sustainability and housing quality. Green and healthy housing initiative is new in Austin and there is a standardized tool to collect information. To have Austin buying into this tool.

Hendey: It includes other things?

Millea: Yes, green and healthy housing initiative. It’s active in different cities in different sites.

Hendey: We have a lot of people going into homes, but they only check for code violations, or vouchers, but no one does everything.

Pritchard: The face of eviction is women and children and for me to lock them out.

Bruner: If we had easy answers we would be doing them. If you talk to health people, emphasize health. Housing people talk about housing.

Hendey: When you’re not in the health space, there’s different language than if you’re in the housing space. Need to help the people talk to each other and make sure it’s clear that everyone has the same goal.

Bruner: At some level people recognize the housing, safety, support is happening but they don’t know what to do about that. There can be an assumption that the housing community knows about housing and if that’s the only problem we’d be in OK shape.

Millea: From the medical side we have to re-write clinical practices and working at the top of their licenses. Or do you figure out a way to use waiting room to gather information effectively?

Bruner: They have to look at how to staff for that. The health practitioner may be a first responder but once you get into need for hard services that’s not their need for expertise.

Millea: In Boston they can write prescriptions for food.

Britton: There’s a TED talk about upstream that’s good. Ricci Monchotta. See if you can find it.

Bruner: I think NNIP having to give kind of a picture and put a face on what people really want from kids and what barriers they face, people can more or less take for granted is a real role to play.

Millea: Seema said that when you watch all these people leave the neighborhood, the home equity takes a dive, how do you get people to want to buy homes? Inner city Baltimore has different problems than Austin where there is too much growth and people are displaced. The 45 minute commute is because people are being displaced to the periphery where there isn’t transportation or anything.

Britton: Baltimore and Austin are opposites.

Terpstra: Thinking of housing, to some degree we miss the issue of utter lack of affordable housing. Housing quality exists because there isn’t affordable housing.

Hendey: Maybe not Baltimore.

Terpstra: The metrics keep going up and up.

MIllea: If we have minimum wage to $15 per hour, what effect does that have on ability to afford housing.

Terpstra: Depends where. We learned in TX it’s against the constitution to require developers to set aside for affordable housing.

Britton: I don’t think that’s true.

Millea: They’re doing it in Austin, maybe not effectively.

Terpstra: Stuff like that is big and high level. We are just going to be tail chasing.

Hendey: Developers will build where they can make money. Even affordable housing developers don’t think holistically. I thought that was a powerful statement.

Millea: Community schools movement is part of that as well - creating a voice for local neighborhood and developing a sense of empowerment in the neighborhoods. Learning to speak to those who make the decisions.

Hendey: Some of our affordable housing problem is simply supply. There’s just not enough. Portland is going to add 100k people in 10 years? Where do they live?

Britton: I have heard Portland and Austin are going to do this.

Bruner: I am a fan of community schools and the school where my kids went was open on evenings and weekends. There was a middle school crisis where kids wanted to wear inappropriate shirts and they were barred and parents objected. The notion of community schools is important but you can take those things for granted because schools are better resourced and families are better resourced.

Millea: Historically the expectation is that PTAs fund cool fun stuff and high proportions of kids are being bussed in from other neighborhoods. So it’s not a title 1 school but lacks additional parenting resources. Those kids are in a bigger disadvantage than kids in title 1.

Hendey: School choice is a big issue so doing things in community framework is a struggle.

Millea: One of our mapping projects helped Austin SD figure that out. They brought in programming that was fun and the kids who needed it weren’t seeing it. We had a map of where kids lived and the jaw dropped when people saw it. That map helped realization that we need programs but not on campus, at the places where kids live. Those kids needed the bus service and couldn’t stay. So they re-allocated the resources back to the neighborhoods.

Pritchard: New choice grant in Milwaukee - we have no neighborhood schools. We have a IDS but not the Milwaukee school system. Even when we get it will only be 55% of kids because there are so many charter schools.

Hendey: We looked at choice neighborhoods and kids went to school all over the place.

Terpstra: We make all these workarounds to educate kids rather than fix the schools. Finally in Chicago there is a program to fix schools.

Hendey: Neighborhoods have no say in charter school location and they move over time. Some want to don’t want a charter school in the neighborhoods.

Macune: Rice works with one neighborhood and 1800 kids school be in the HS but 1000 of them go to other schools in the district. If all the kids stayed in the neighborhood HS it would be a top performing school.

Bruner: Seniors won and kids lost. If you look at alternative measures of poverty like EITC that in fact we still made big gains for seniors and kids are still most likely to be poor. There is some decline in child poverty. We just haven’t kept pace with shifts demographically. Schools are important but half the challenge is already apparent in kindergarten. We don’t want to dictate what to tell parents to do.

Terpstra: A moment of hope for me is the opportunity for private philanthropy. We want to transform what we’re doing and be an incubator for solutions to poverty. Let’s just give people a minimum income and see what happens. Innovation has to happen on the ground. Maybe gov will follow.

Pritchard: I have faith in place based. In my years it’s one of the most promising. It allows people to cross all the silos.

Hendey: You can’t just do place because it’s a mobile population. Even in a poor neighborhood, it’s a different set of people.

Millea: In Austin if the neighborhood is improving that might be bad for a lot of people. If metrics ‘improve’ it might just be because people are different.

Hendey: Sometimes it’s good if they leave the neighborhood. That’s not a bad outcome but it means they are replaced by someone else.

Bruner: It’s a good individual outcome. The individual solution of leaving a neighborhood isn’t always a collective solution.

Britton: With place based it’s what it is, not what it isn’t. It’s not just trying to fix one thing that won’t make any difference.

Bruner: Well thank you.

[Ends at 4:44]