Implementing Systems Thinking in Early Childhood: The How's of Collaboration

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April, 2017

Preamble: The Questions

Part I

Collaboration: Panacea or Problem?

Collaboration: Panacea or Problem?

- *MYTH 1: Collaboration is THE Panacea…*
  - Can do everything
  - Can fix everything
  - It is the answer to everything that is (or ever was) wrong!!!
    - Communication: given as the reason nothing works

Collaboration:
Panacea or Problem?

- *MYTH 2: Collaboration is THE Problem…*
    - Like miscommunication, non-collaboration is the reason NOTHING works
    - Seen as a time and relationship parasite
    - Regarded as END, not MEANS

Collaboration: Panacea or Problem?

- *However we hold collaboration, two things are clear*
  - 1. It is a hot topic.
  - 2. It is hard to wrap our arms around

Part II

Collaboration: Why NOW?

Why Collaboration NOW?: Children and Their Programs

- *Increasing concerns with excellence and equity for all children, beginning in the early years*

- *Increasing expectations being placed on early childhood education as the rationale for investment*

- *Quiet secret that normative services for young children are not achieving the accomplishments of the "model" programs*

Why Collaboration NOW?: Children and Their Programs

- *On the surface, all seems great…BUT*
- *Underneath it all, nothing is working the way we want it to:*
  - Too little quality
  - Too many programs
    - Head Start Child Care Partnerships
    - New Pre-K Funds
    - IDEA
  - Too little effort to meet children's individual needs
  - Harder we try, less effective programs/services seem to be

Why Collaboration NOW?: The Social Context

- *Inadequacies of existing bureaucracies*
  - Inflexibility in the face of change and uncertainty
  - Hierarchical structures don't work in knowledge-driven, team settings
  - Market-driven competition not necessarily the key for social services

Why Collaboration NOW?: The Social Context

- *New demands of post-industrial world*
  - More technically sophisticated
  - More rapid change
  - Greater specialization
  - Greater accountability and press for outcomes

Why Collaboration NOW?:
The Social Context

- *Leads To A Press for Collaboration:*
  - Among Agencies
  - Among Institutions
  - Among Policies
  - Among People
  - Among Practices

Part III

Collaboration: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

Collaboration:
An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

The Cat with Nine Lives:
Life 1 – Being Born

- *Colonial Period (1600s – mid-1700s)*
  - Poor Law of 1601: towns and parishes provided relief when informal supports (e.g., families and friends) were unavailable or unable to respond

- *The New Republic (1776 – mid-1800s)*
  - Federalist duality led to continual debate regarding which level of government should be responsible for the poor and what kind of support it should offer

- *Civil War and Reconstruction (1861 – early 1900s)*
  - Shift in ideology led to increased sympathy and support for human services and led to the creation of several private aid charities, mutual aid societies, and settlement houses
  - Charity Organization Societies: established in 1877 to bring order to the overlapping and uncoordinated set of charities

The Cat with Nine Lives:
Life 2 – Early Years

- ***1930s – 1950s***
  - Era marked by rapid expansion of social services, notably the Social Security Act of 1935, which authorized support for:
    - Dependent children
    - The aged
    - The blind
    - Maternal and child health services
    - Child welfare services
    - Vocational rehabilitation
    - Public health services
  - 1953: Federal Security Agency became Department of Health, Education, & Welfare (HEW)

The Cat with Nine Lives:
Life 3 – Preschool

- ***1960s – 1970s***
  - Number of federal categorical grant programs more than doubled between 1962 and 1966, but the focus was on substance, not structure
    - No organizational philosophy or coordination of efforts—no master plan
  - Chaos led to creation of Community Action Agencies: non-governmental agencies charged with fostering local-level coordination of services
  - The New Federalism
    - President Nixon encouraged SI through simplification of federal grant processes and program decentralization

The Cat with Nine Lives: Life 4 – Elementary School

- *1970s – 1990s*
  - Waxing and waning of federal initiatives
  - President Reagan emphasized devolution of authority to the states and wanted to reduce human services expenditures
  - Block grants became the norm—ostensibly to foster SI, but actually created even more chaos

The Cat with Nine Lives: Life 5 – Allied Services Acts 1972, 1974, and 1975

- ***Allied Services Act of 1972***
  - Attempted to:
    - Strengthen human resources management and planning operations at the state and local levels (capacity building)
    - Integrate human services delivery to meet clients' multiple problems (institutional reform)
  - Would have allowed governors to designate a state agency to develop a statewide plan to:
    - Create statewide service areas
    - Select local areas to participate in the plan and to designate a local agency to develop the plan
    - Approve local service plans and their incorporation into a statewide plan

- *Allied Services Act of 1972 (continued)*
  - Raised concerns
    - Fear that plan concealed serious intentions to cut federal spending for human services programs
    - Questions about the planning process; who should have authority and capacity to integrate functions?
    - Lack of emphasis on professional preparation
    - Neglectful of the relationship between the private and public sectors
    - Not enough money allocated
    - Questions related to regulatory flexibility
  - ASA needed to be revamped

The Cat with Nine Lives:
Life 5 – Allied Services Acts
1972, 1974, and 1975

- *Allied Services Act of 1974 and 1975 (Round II)*
  - Three titles:
    - 1. Gives authority to Secretary of HEW to give demonstration grants to selected states for development of allied service delivery plans
    - 2. Allows 3-year implementation grants to assist in meeting initial cost of consolidating services
    - 3. Creates 5 special authorities to lend flexibility to make the ASA a valid demonstration of SI, including an evaluation component
  - Did not pass Congress; "died with a whimper"

The Cat with Nine Lives: Life 6 – Omnibus Act

- ***Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981***
  - Established 9 new or revised block grants
  - Reduced funding for the consolidated programs by 25%
  - Strengthened role of state at expense of local nonprofit agencies, school districts, and small municipalities
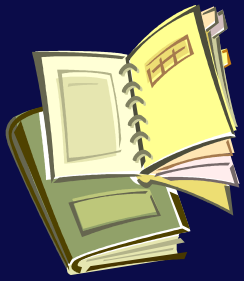
The Cat with Nine Lives: Life 7 – IDEA

- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*
  - Part C: Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (1986)
    - Assists states in operating a comprehensive, statewide program of early intervention services for children up to age 3
    - States have much discretion in developing their service coordination system
  - Section 619: Preschool Grants Program (1991)
    - Authorizes state grants to serve children with disabilities ages 3-5 (and in some cases, younger children) if the state qualifies for the Part B grants-to-states program
   - Currently, all states qualify for and receive IDEA preschool grants

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The Cat with Nine Lives: Life 8 – ECE

- *Early Childhood Legislation*
  - Head Start Collaboration Grants
  - CCDF set aside allowing funds to be used for coordination
  - Early Learning Challenge Fund
  - HS-CC Partnership Grants
  - Emergence of State Offices and Coordinating Mechanisms
    - MA, PA, GA, MD, CT

The Cat with Nine Lives:
Life 9 – Research and Demonstration

- *HEW Task Forces (1971)*
  - Task Force on Service Integration Barriers and Constraints; tried to meet "head-on the problems created within HEW's vast network of programs"

- *Service Integration Target of Opportunity (SITO) Projects (1972)*
  - Created as a result of realization that concrete strategies were needed
  - Objective: provide the broadest possible base for demonstration of various SI techniques and provide an information base for legislation
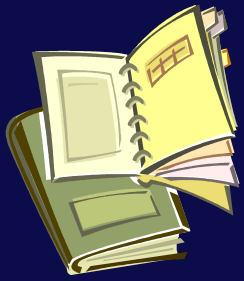
The Cat with Nine Lives:
Life 9 – Research and Demonstration

- *Partnership Grants Program (PGP) (1974)*
  - Designed to help chief executives and local general purpose governments improve their capacity to plan and manage human services programs
  - Difficult to evaluate due to the large variety of objectives and growing SI efforts beyond the PGP
- *Service Integration Pilot Projects (1984)*
  - Outcome-oriented with a focus on effective management
  - Sense of system and individual accountability

The Cat with Nine Lives: Summary

- *Era of ardent attempts to draft legislation to address the problems caused by growing social services industry*
- *Need to acknowledge and understand why these efforts failed*
- *May have failed for the very same reasons that we face today:*
  - Unresolved federalist issues
  - Concerns about power diminution
  - Lack of political and field support
  - Always associated with block grants and efforts to reduce funds (SI as the fig leaf for spending cuts)

The Cat with Nine Lives: Summary

- *This cat has a loooooooooooooooooooooong history that is characterized by:*
  - Clear recognition of the need for and lack of individual, programmatic, and policy collaboration
  - Multiple efforts and strategies to redress the problems
  - Clear energy and commitment to try to resolve the issues
- *Question is: What is Life 10?*
  - To answer, we need to define it more precisely

Part IV

Collaboration:
What is It, Really?

Why Collaboration NOW?: The Social Context

lll. Service Integration
POLICY

ll. Transitions
PROGRAMS

l. Linkages/Networks
PERSONAL
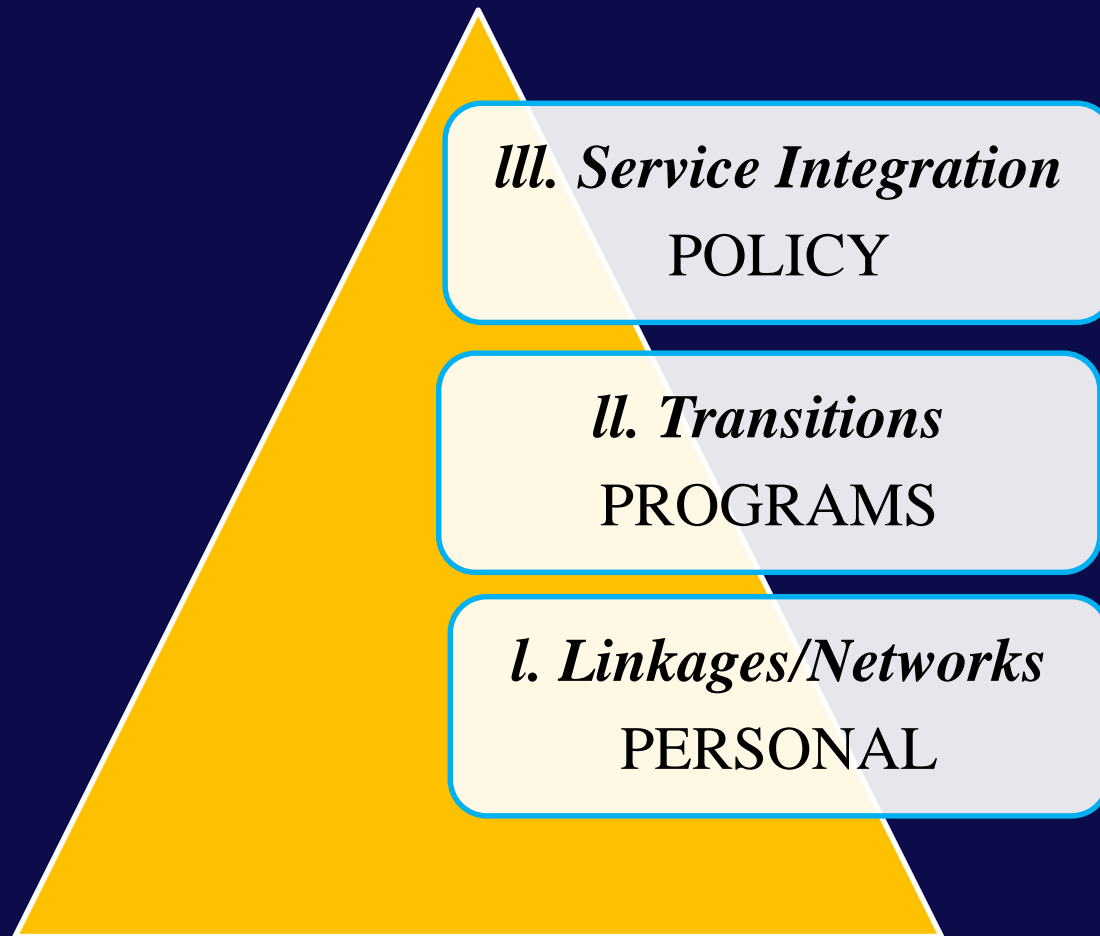
The Many Faces of Collaboration

- *Levels do not function independently*
- *Each is linked with the others, with the policy influencing the programs, and, professionally, the programs influencing the personal*
- *Can't address collaboration without looking at all three*
- *One of the problems is that we look at the personal and maybe the programmatic tiers, but not at the policy tier*

The Many Faces of Collaboration

|			
Service Integration	*POLICY*	*Collaboration*	*Goods, materials, accountabilities, responsibilities shared durably over time*
Transitions	*PROGRAMMATIC*	*Coordination*	*Events and materials/documents coordinated among disparate entities to promote continuity for children/families*
Linkages/ Networking	*PERSONAL*	*Cooperation*	*Non-institutional exchanges*

Tier I: Linkages/Networking

- *Social media*

- *Webinars*

- *Conferences*

- *Mentoring/Coaching*

- *ETC*

Tier II: Transitions

- *Continuity efforts*
- *P-3 Movement*
- *This Institute*
- *NGA/CCSSO supporting these efforts*
- *Document alignment work*
- *Kindergarten Entry Assessments*

Tier III: Service Integration

- *Service integration means many different things!!*

- *Easiest to understand using a framework based on the works of Agranoff & Pattakos (1979), which suggests four dimensions:*
  - Client-centered integration
  - Program-centered integration
  - Policy-centered integration
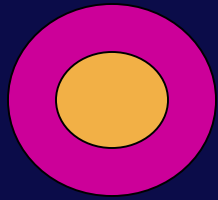 - Organizationally-centered integration
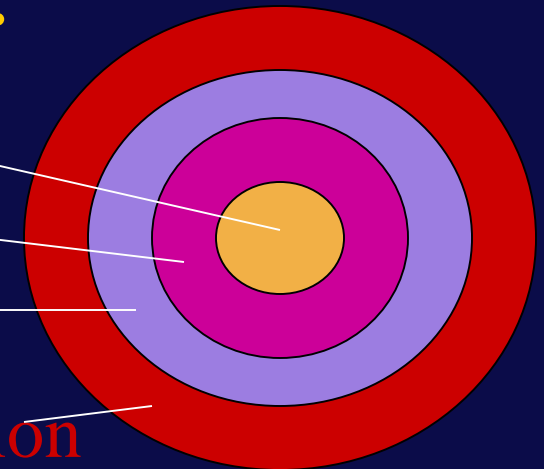
Client-centered Integration

- *Regards clients as complex individuals with multiple needs*

- *Acknowledges that client problems generally intertwined*

- *Client needs transcend any single department*
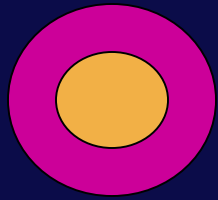
Client-centered Strategies

- *Case management: Approaches*
  - Via the individual – a generalist takes full responsibility for providing core management services from intake to termination
  - Via an interdisciplinary team – specialists work together to assess client needs and to plan a service strategy
  - Sequential approach – responsibility for creating linkages shifts as client progresses through stages of service delivery (e.g., from diagnosis to referral)
  - Coordination approach – responsibility divided according to needs of individual family members rather than by sequence
 - IEP

Program-centered Integration

- *Attempts to link discrete programs and services into a multifaceted delivery system*

- *Links autonomous agencies so that their activities can be blended in service to clients*

- *Does not typically change structure of the programs, but establishes linking mechanisms among diverse programs*
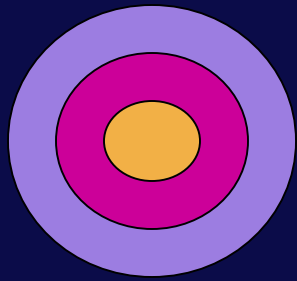
Program-centered Strategies

- *Colocation: coordinate programs by joining them physically in one all-purpose facility*

- *Information systems: create a centralized network for gathering, processing, and sharing data*
  - Client information systems
  - Organizational information systems

- *Integrated staffing: make collective decisions on staff management issues, including reassignment and sharing of staff across programs*

- *Joint planning and programming linkages*

- *Fiscal linkages: joint purchase of services; joint budgeting; joint funding*
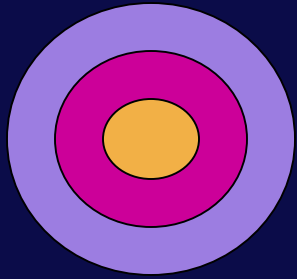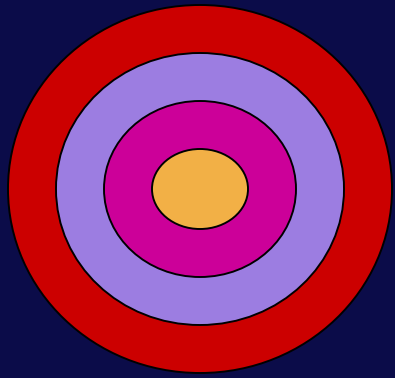
Policy-centered Integration

- *Sees that SI is too complex and too pervasive to be solved program by program*

- *Solution requires wider, multilevel perspective*

- *Policy is the best tool to instantiate a comprehensive, continuing course of action*

- *Involves conducting policy-level assessments, setting policy priorities, and monitoring the service system*
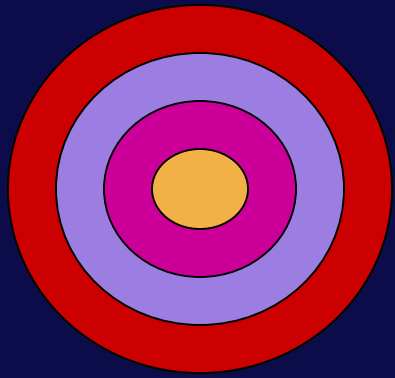
Policy-centered Strategies

- *Work to create a comprehensive, problem-oriented philosophy of policy creation*

- *Generate policy mechanisms that demand collaboration (e.g., congressional committee structure; policy impact statements)*

- *Work to generate sustained funding:*
  - Support a SI infrastructure – hard to achieve, but crucial
  - Refinancing – share of services currently paid for by state and local dollars refinanced with federal resources
  - De-categorization – allows for greater discretion in use of funds at both policy and program/provider levels

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Organizationally-centered Integration

- *Reorganization or creation of government structures to support and facilitate the other three dimensions*

- *Includes unifying linkages among formerly independent organizations and consolidating organizations*

- *Aligned more intimately with policy-centered integration than with service delivery dimensions*

Organizationally-centered Strategies

- *Reorganization of governmental structures to facilitate execution of strategies in other domains*

- *Incorporation of formerly independent agencies under a single, new organizational entity*

- *Does not automatically lead to improved coordination of service delivery; must serve as foundation for additional integrative efforts*

Definition of Service Integration

- *Four distinct areas where service integration can be focused*

- *Each worthy and important*

- *Each adds to the complexity of comprehending and implementing service integration*
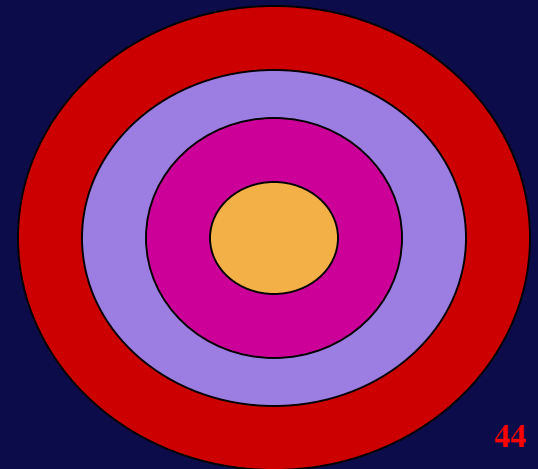
Part V

Collaboration Myths and Realities

Collaboration Myths

- *Collaboration has been less successful than anticipated because of four basic assumptions:*

  1. What's good for the agency is good for the client

  2. Collaboration is everybody's and nobody's responsibility

  3. The impact of collaboration is knowable and measurable

  4. Collaboration is an operationally conservative, strategically benign intervention that can reform service delivery and system efficiency

Collaboration Myths

1. *What's good for the agency is good for the client*

- Client ends confounded with agency ends
- Much work based on the assumption that if the agency is functioning better, the client will function better
- So, early efforts focused on developing common definitions, using standardized forms, and altering patterns of service provision, many of which were not helpful to clients
- We now understand that client functioning is a result of many variables, with organizational functioning being but one of them

Collaboration Myt6hs

2. Collaboration is everybody's and nobody's responsibility

- Revolving door approach: responsibility first in private sector, then federal government, then states, then local initiatives
  - Episodic and wavering commitment
- Limited sharing or cross-fertilization of strategy
- Deciding where to lodge leadership is hard
  - Collaboration is an overlay on top of an existing categorical system and therefore of interest to conflicting constituencies
  - Current function and federalist structure of US governmental system gives little guidance on where to lodge collaboration and what form it should take

Collaboration Myths

3. The impact of SI is knowable and measurable

- Not a wrong assumption, just naively optimistic

- Collaboration is hard to evaluate – the number and interactions of variables are huge

- Problem of attribution – hard to know which intervention or partner in the initiative is responsible for the specific outcomes

Collaboration Myths:

4. Collaboration is an operationally conservative, strategically benign intervention that can reform service delivery and system efficiency

- Historical mismatch of intent and strategy
  - Intent: US can and should do better by its young children and families
  - Strategy: magic bullet approach, jumping from one "magical solution" to the next
- Program- or strategy-driven approach to collaboration is not sufficient; the collaboration agenda must encompass a philosophically rooted approach

Collaboration Realities

- *Devolution of responsibility to states has led to a highly idiosyncratic approach to policy*
  - "Let 1,000 flowers bloom" – each state has developed a different collaborative approach

Collaboration Realities

- *Move toward scientifically rigorous research as a prerequisite for federal funding poses real challenges for collaboration:*
    - Difficult to invoke random assignment
    - Difficult to find comparable control groups
    - Difficult to measure success over the short term
    - Inadequate instrumentation
    - Difficult to discern the legitimate end of contemporary service integration

Collaboration Realities

- *Good systemic efforts underway, but often informal starts at the program level*
  - Many tend to be leader-dependent and fold when leaders leave or are transferred
  - Most are under-resourced, so very hard to be successful
  - More severely challenged because the human services sector and many families are in worse conditions

Collaboration Realities

- *Depends what kind of collaboration we are talking about*

- *Depends at what level one demands success*

- *BOTTOM LINE:*
  - It is doable, but it's tough
  - Need to moderate expectations

Part VI

Collaboration: Moving Forward

MOVING FORWARD

- *TAKE STOCK*
  - History,
  - Context,
  - Tools
- *SPREAD THE WORD*
- *THINK WIDE; WORK NARROW*
- *PLAN WELL*

History, Context, and Tools

- *Not the first generation to recognize the need for importance of collaboration; Learn from the past*

- *Examine what has worked in your own context*

- *Acknowledge that we have better tools (media, technology) to make it easier and more efficient*

Spread the Word

- *Collaborations essential to program establishment and improvement*
- *Not the icing on the cake, but the very batter of contemporary work*
- *Provision for collaboration in policy and practice*
  - Time for reflective practice
  - Time for collaborative feedback and problem-solving
  - Resources for collaborative entities

Think Wide: Work Narrow

- *Need a clear and big vision of what is to be accomplished*
  - Think systems, not programs
  - Think all children, not some children
  - Think quality and quantity
  - Think all developmental domains, not some
  - Think about linkages between pedagogical tools (standards, curriculum, IEPs, IFSPs, assessments) and actions

Think Wide: Work Narrow

- *Think wide about ECE and IDEA, not as separate worlds*
  - Conceptualize leadership/policy/advocacy together
  - IDEA has much to teach ECE about individualized educational planning, meeting individual needs, linkages with parents, attention to integration
  - ECE has much to teach IDEA about inventive governance, financing, standards
- *Need more communication vehicles!!*

Think Wide: Work Narrow

- *Work Narrow*
  - Divide and conquer
  - ECE-CWD too huge to do it all
  - Need to task analyze and task divide, with provision for frequent taking stock
  - Bite off bits within the context of a larger vision

Plan Well

- *Vision the ideal*
- *Vision for policy, practice, and research*
- *Start when children are very young*
- *Plan for the long-term*
- *Build in regular review of the plan*