Success Through Collaboration

Bloomfield Public Schools
Bloomfield College
Bloomfield Dept. of Recreation
What obstacles were Bloomfield Schools Facing?

- The need for an inclusive summer camp experience for the students needing the experience.
- The need to create inclusive opportunities for our alternative education High School students
- The need to create a PreK center for 8 classes in 3 buildings
- Was it possible to share the resources within the Department of Recreation
- Was it possible to utilize any of the resources at Bloomfield College
Looking at the Bloomfield Community

• All 3 entities, Bloomfield Public Schools, Bloomfield College and Department of Recreation were working and providing services to the students and community in isolation.

• Each entity was not fully aware of the others comprehensive services

• There was an assumption there were too many obstacles to allow the sharing of services.
Impetus to collaborate with Dept. of Recreation

- The Director of Special Services was looking to create an inclusive camp opportunity for students in the Autism spectrum who required social skills training.
- This lead to the discovery that the Department of Recreation already had numerous programs for special needs students. The Director of Special Services was working in district for 6 months not knowing what was offered through the Dept. of Recreation, no signs of any programs in the office.
Department of Recreation Programs

- CARE Station (Karate, PT/OT, Music Therapy
- Horizons
- Friday Night Canteen
- Station II
- ROID Grant – Recreational Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities
- Golf Outing
Camp Friendship Begins

• District needed a camp experience to teach and practice social skills to special needs students. The students needed to be with their age appropriate peers.

• Dept. of Recreation already has a summer program that has been highly successful for years.

• Director of Recreation and Director of Special Services worked together to meet the needs of the students while helping the camp remain within their budget.
Shared Responsibilities Camp Friendship

District
• Paid for training by the Clay Aiken’s Foundation “Let’s All Play”
• District had nurses working so the nurses covered Rec. camp
• District provided paraprofessionals to work with students
• OT/PT would help support curriculum
• Transportation

Dept. Recreation
• Provided the space for training and provided lunch
• Did not charge District weekly camp fee for each student
• Ensured all counselors were aware of each student’s individual needs
• Ensured curriculum would be introduced during camp
• Social Skills & recreation
Dept. Recreation Support
Beyond Camp Friendship

• Works with district to include IEP students in their afterschool program
  District and Dept. Recreation share expense of any 1:1 support needed
• Provides space or Liberty Academy to have PE
• Provides internship opportunities for Liberty Academy students
Getting the Word Out

• Department of Recreation now presents their programs to the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)
• Department of Recreation has updated their website for easier access to these programs. They have a link to the SEPAC site.
• SEPAC now has a link to the Department of Recreation programs.
• District Special Education site now has links to Department of Recreation.
• “Special Edition” – Quarterly Newsletter
Local Business Support

- Our students in high school go out into the community for “Real Life Work Experiences”.
- Bloomfield has a host of businesses who “employ” our students to learn work skills required to be employable after high school should they not go onto higher education.
- Our SLE “Structured Learning Environment” teacher and staff working with students to find their interests and then literally pound the pavement seeking work sites for the students
Bloomfield College

- Bloomfield College has been in Bloomfield over 143 years. Aside from the students who took Psychology class there wasn’t much collaboration.
- Bloomfield Schools needed a place for their Alternative High School, a location where the students could see their potential and their future while providing more inclusive opportunities.
- Bloomfield Schools were concerned PreK classes were spread over 3 elementary buildings. PreK staff had difficulty collaborating: therapists traveled to buildings losing time to service students.
How did we go from minimal involvement with Bloomfield College to 2 programs?

• Need for our Alternative Program to move was heard by Board member Shane Berger (former President)

• Shane Berger approached Dr. Marion Terenzio, then VP for Academic Affairs at Bloomfield College and their idea was brought to Superintendent Sal Goncalves and Director Special Services Linda Colucci.

• The vision of having the alternative program on the college campus required many discussions and the needs of both entities.

• A central PreK Center now could be an option.
Liberty Academy Begins

• Name “Liberty Academy” was chosen for its history. One of Bloomfield School district’s oldest elementary buildings (Liberty Street School) became part of Bloomfield College. The building was destroyed by a fire. It made perfect sense to bring back the name of a building both entities had shared.

• Logistics were planned and many stakeholder meeting took place. Agreements had to be reached in regarding size, access to campus, students’ needs, constraints, all potential obstacles addresses etc.
What is Liberty Academy

This alternative education program offers a non-traditional, yet effective learning environment that provides flexible educational objectives closely related to the learning styles and the individual needs of students. This learning opportunity is designed to meet the specific needs, interests and aspirations of at-risk youth who may be disaffected with the traditional academic environment.

Liberty Academy students match the essence of the Bloomfield College mission, and we both saw many mutual benefits to such a collaboration.
Shared Vision of Liberty Academy

- Bloomfield College
- Classroom space
- Access to Student Center
- Access to Library
- Access to Cafeteria
- Bloomfield College Professor/Liberty Teacher collaboration
- Opportunities for Education majors

- Bloomfield Public Schools
- Required space
- Wanted to reach more students
- Wanted students to see college opportunities and potential
- Work with professors to improve student achievement
- Model high school program on a college campus
How did we get a PreK Center?

• The goal was to house the alternative program on the college campus.
• What do we do with an empty building that originally was a K-3 building and all one level? The district then asked the college to help us create a PreK Center. Board member Dan Anderson had long asked if we could implement Reggio Emilia, a child centered approach to learning in our PreK classrooms. The College offered Drs. Nora Krieger and Mary Porcelli as consultants.
• Reggio Emilia philosophy of child centered education could be implemented.
• 8 PreK classes that were spread in 3 district buildings could be consolidated
• Speech, OT and PT therapists would no longer lose time traveling to 3 buildings
• Teachers now could collaborate and have a shared vision
• More classrooms created for inclusion opportunities.
Shared Vision

- Bloomfield College
  - Prof. Development for PreK teachers and paraprofessionals
  - Provide materials to support Reggio Emilia approach
  - Support from Cargil Foundation Grant
  - Premier Reggio Emilia Public School setting
- Bloomfield Schools
  - PreK Setting for Reggio implementation
  - Student teaching opportunities for Bloomfield College Education majors
  - Teacher/professor collaboration
  - Model inclusive PreK utilizing the Reggio Emilia approach
What is the Shared Future?

- Bloomfield Department of Recreation –
  - Create a space for our 18-21 years old students.
  - No Homework Night
- Bloomfield College –
  - Program expansion
  - Full implementation of Reggio Emilia
- Bloomfield Schools –
  - Ensure all students PreK -21 have the educational opportunities to optimize their talents and future successes with the collaboration of Dept. of Recreation and Bloomfield College.