

Data Driven Results in Louisville

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March 30, 2006

The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Clubs of Louisville, Kentucky (SABGCL) have been utilizing KidTrax, a membership management tracking software from nFocus Software, in conjunction with CARS ¹, a tool provided by the University of Kentucky, to connect to the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Student Information System. The driving factor behind the purchase of KidTrax and the creation of this integrated solution was the result of a community-wide effort known as Every 1 Reads. The goal of Every 1 Reads is to have every child in JCPS reading at grade level by 2008. To effectively accomplish the goal of Every 1 Reads, there had to be an easily accessible method for community-based organizations (CBOs) to combine student data with the program usage data of the youth they serve. Utilizing key student data and program attendance data allowed KidTrax to measure specific outcomes for the students. For the first time, scientific inquiry into the needs of the children, families, and communities was allowed. KidTrax has helped us to demonstrate improved member service, provide more leveraged funding, expand service reach, reduce cost and staff time, and integrate the use of technology across the organization.

Process Overview

The process begins with a member's parent or guardian completing a permission form authorizing SABGCL to access their child's academic records from JCPS. The child's student number is imported from the JCPS and stored in the KidTrax database. The student number becomes the key to accessing academic data at an individual student and/or group level. The member then receives an ID card with a bar code that is used to scan in and out of the club using nFocus Software's scanning software, Trax Attendance Manager (TAM). Attendance data is uploaded from TAM to the KidTrax database. Data is automatically sent from the KidTrax database to JCPS. KidTrax users have access to hundreds of reports available from any location with Internet access. SABGCL is now able to look at outcomes by running reports for attendance, grades, suspensions, test scores, free & reduced lunches, demographics, or ZIP codes. SABGCL recently used this system to identify males between ages 11 and 14 and had father at home to recruit for a program - a task that would have been an impossibility in the past.

¹ Connectivity Analysis Research Systems - JCPS recently started using a system called CASCADE to connect to the Student Information System

Overcoming the Funding Challenge

There has been a strong push for accountability of funding in community-based programs. As the concept of outcome measurement advances in the community, many want to see a more scientific approach to data collection and analysis. Utilizing KidTrax has allowed SABGCL to make the case for increased funding from federal, state, local, and private dollars. Automating the process of data collection has shown some phenomenal outcomes. For example, SABGCL saw a reduction of members exhibiting suspension behaviors reduced from 14% to 3% from 2003 to 2005. Because of this improvement, SABGCL is interested in becoming Supplemental Educational Service providers for the State of Kentucky. If approved, SABGCL would receive \$1,601 per student tutored from a Title I School - a needed boost for a struggling budget. SABGCL ran a report in KidTrax to identify which of our club members attended a Title I school and discovered that 650 members attended Title 1 schools. SABGCL applied for and was approved as a Supplemental Educational Service provider because of the KidTrax report.

Increased use of technology has allowed SABGCL to drill down on unexcused absences among club members. As members are identified who have unexcused absences, SABGCL can then talk to members and their parents or guardians to establish or modify programs and goals to better support their academic achievement. One program SABGCL has implemented is Project Learn Educational Enhancement Strategies (PLEES). SABGCL has received over \$300,000 from funders for PLEES, including: Congresswoman Anne Northup - \$198,000, Juvenile Justice Prevention - \$57,000; Office of Youth Development (OYD) - \$25,000, and the Louisville Community Foundation - \$20,000.

Integrating the Technology

SABGCL surveyed its staff in December 2004 and discovered that only 35% of employees felt they were computer literate. Also, 71% did not feel competent to send e-mail, download files, and edit/save documents. SABGCL saw this as a significant hurdle in utilizing technology to track its members. In response, JCPS provided Adult Continuing Education classes to SABGCL staff and other CBOs. SABGCL has since changed job descriptions for new hires to include the need for basic computer literacy and technology skills. The increase in the staff's technology literacy level has created confidence to send and receive reports via e-mail. Through a National UPS partnership grant, SABGCL is increased the number of computers in its technology labs and improved the lab infrastructure. These powerful results have helped convince funders in Louisville and Jefferson County to set funding standards that include mandating CBOs to utilize KidTrax with a portion of their funded dollars. This is validation of the value that KidTrax provides.

The Learning Curve

Part-time staff was assigned to complete data entry when SABGCL first incorporated KidTrax. These part-time workers were successful working in youth development, but little or no computer skills. SABGCL has since increased the commitment to this project by hiring administrative staff that has the requisite computer skills to use this technology. Experience has taught that the reports are only as good as the data comprising the reports. Data quality has been improved because SABGCL has established processes that are aligned with state core content standards.

SABGCL has also taken the lead in asset development. Asset development measures youth on risk factors and protective factors that they are subject to. An inventory of assets is essentially listed for each youth. Youth who have a higher number of and quality of assets have proven to progress to adulthood with fewer high-risk behaviors such as pregnancy, alcohol abuse, and tobacco use.

Outcome measurement surveys in KidTrax are completed by JCPS students. SABGCL assigns surveys to members to complete at home or in a computer lab. The results are available immediately after each survey is completed. Previously, it took months to administer and score a survey. Using KidTrax to administer surveys has also increased survey accuracy as the process is automated. The previous outcomes measurement process consisted of staff gathering data by physically going to the schools, copying report cards, and interviewing parents. This time consuming and resource intensive process has been eliminated by using KidTrax.

Results

The most valuable impact of the KidTrax solution may be the specific, tailored program improvements SABGCL has implemented at each of the sites. Reports showing the busiest hours of the day, identifying the specific youth attending at these times, and targeting commonalities give SABGCL valuable information. For example, it was discovered that several parents and guardians of members at the Newburg location worked for General Electric. SABGCL has forged a partnership with General Electric to help with funding. These are just the first steps in using the KidTrax solution to improve member outcomes. By getting more organizations involved in the KidTrax solution, youth services and lives will be greatly improved.