

COMMUNITY CAFÉS:

Building Parent Leadership & Strengthening New
York State Families and Communities



2016

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Historical Background

The New York State Parenting Education Partnership and the Council on Children and Families work with community organizations and families across the state to promote the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework. One strategy, started in 2012, was to support communities to learn and implement the Community Café (CC) approach. The CC approach is a research-based best practice of generating conversations that matter using the Protective Factors Framework to cultivate parent partnerships. Community Cafés are culturally relevant, neighborhood-based dialogues that are designed and hosted by family members, along with the support of at least one community-based organizational partner. Conversations are intentionally designed to build relationships amongst the participants, parents, and practitioners alike.

There are three levers of change needed to fully imbed the Protective Factors Framework: staff training, program and policy change, and partnering with parents (www.cssp.org). With this in mind, the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) provided mini-grants to thirteen organizations to implement the CC approach¹. While this particular project ended in 2013, some communities sustained Cafés over the next four years in various locations across New York State and spread CCs to more locations. Although the implementation of the CC approach differed from community to community, there were four common objectives:

1. Build parent capacity to help families thrive
2. Build community-based organizations' capacity to support parent partners in hosting Community Cafés
3. Identify and strengthen community supports that engage and protect families
4. Build community capacity to create action plans that enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of families

In the first year of implementation, communities reported:

- Parent voice influenced state-level early childhood and family support initiatives
- Organizations learned an approach for creating parent-led social supports
- More parents volunteered
- Parents felt valued, supported, and found common ground with other parents and staff
- Parents reported having more confidence, links to resources, and feeling more hopeful
- Programs reported an increase in community relationships as well as parent participation in existing programs

Over the next four years, at least five out of the original thirteen locations continued to host Community Cafés on their own. In Tompkins County, the Cornell Cooperative Extension spread

¹ *"This project was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant #H25MC12970 (\$150,000). This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government."*

Cafés to several more communities. In addition, two parents who were hosting Cafés in Cayuga County formed a Community Café Leadership Team (CCLT) to promote the statewide use and integrity of the CC approach. Working in partnership with NYSPEP, this team met regularly to plan training opportunities and provide on-going technical assistance for sites hosting Cafés.

In the gathering of information for this report, parents from the CCLT made many phone calls and emails to find where Cafés were still being hosted and who was hosting them. They eventually gathered information from thirteen Café sites; five were interviewed and seven submitted information through an electronic survey. This report focuses on their lessons learned as a leadership team and what communities reported learning in regards to partnering with families.

Why Partnerships with Parents Matters to Strengthening Families

From Kara Georgi, founding parent member of the Community Café Leadership Team:

Community is a word I thought I knew until I got going with the CC approach. Last school year I teamed with other parents to host CCs at my son's school in partnership with the principal. We have learned relationships and personal connections play the largest role in boosting our Café attendance and in making the Cafés a place where we can grow together to strengthen families. We also learned that conversations were more powerful if diverse perspectives were involved in picking the topics. The CC approach helped us shift from, "What's wrong and how do we fix it?" to asking, "What is working well and how do we build on it?" Watching families go through this process and come to a new place is an honor and so inspiring. Another positive result of our Café success is that the school principal promoted this approach at meetings he attended and as a result the school district has integrated the Community Café approach into their new parent engagement plan.

That I could have an influence on the school district was a huge awakening. I was strengthened from the conversations, and most importantly, the relationships. My children also have been involved in the Cafés, and even at a young age, the experience is teaching them... to use their voice for good, the importance of caring for and serving others, and how everyone brings a piece to the big puzzle that makes up our community. In addition, the relationships I formed as a local and state parent partner led to more opportunities to contribute to state and national efforts to strengthen families. These were opportunities for inner discovery and to use that discovery to serve others.

There was a trust and at the same time a big unknown of how would this work and what would it look like. Conversations allowed organic emergence as parents could take on tasks and roles as they were able and willing. At the same time we knew we were supported and could call or email if questions or problems came up.

In 2013, two Council staff and another parent and I explored the idea of forming a Community Café Leadership Team. It would provide an opportunity to partner at the state level to spread the CC practice. As a parent who stepped up at the beginning of this state level partnership I was

uncertain about my role, what I could offer at a state level and how could it help my community. We developed strong relationships, Council partners pointed out my strengths and we exchanged thoughts and ideas...

Looking back now I can say the work has not only shaped my work in my own community but the parent I am today. I have learned the power of having and finding your voice and the gift it is to help others do that as well. There is something really special about watching someone share their gifts, strengths, and voice and how it can align with the work of strengthening families.

The Community Café Leadership Team's First Year

The role of the Community Café Leadership Team (CCLT) is to provide training and facilitate a learning community with people interested in Community Cafés. In 2014-2015 this team provided:

- Two workshops
- Four presentations to formal service organizations
- Two on-site trainings
- Two webinar trainings
- Six bi-monthly conference calls

"Bi monthly calls were like friends re-uniting. It was great to hear someone talk and be able to connect a face with someone we met during the training."

Kara Georgi
CCLT Member

The CCLT created a map of known Café sites. (See Appendix B for map of known Community Café sites.) The bi-monthly call contact list grew from 30 to over 100 names in the past year, with about thirteen participants attending regularly. Ten of the regular participants were staff or service providers from various communities.



Kara Georgi & Katie MacIntyre, Community Café Leadership Team

started.

Participants said that the calls were valuable because they could learn from what others were doing and receive support, information, and suggestions. Receiving tips for engaging parents, adapting the CC approach into existing programs, and ways to sustain Cafés were some of the more common topics of discussion. Communities expressed a lot of interest in finding ways to receive more on-site training. Conference calls were a helpful resource for people who had already received training, but ineffective in helping new hosts get

In 2015, in response to several communities expressing interest in more training, the CCLT attempted to provide training via video conferencing. A survey of the participants revealed that, although they appreciated the content and the skill of the presenters, this type of training is best conducted in person. Participants mentioned technical difficulties and training location as barriers to fully engaging in the training. In addition, since there was less opportunity for the trainers to make a personal connection with participants, they were less likely to stay in touch after the training. (See Appendix C for a summary of the trainings conducted last year along with the survey results.) Another benefit to having an on-site training is that trainers would have an opportunity to be in the community and engage with community members who lived there; this would have been especially helpful when trainers would be asked for community-specific advice. One trainer felt she could offer better suggestions having more familiarity with the community. See Appendix C for a summary evaluation of the trainings provided.

The CCLT conducted interviews with five sites in the spring of 2016 (see Appendix D for interview questions.) CCLT members issued an invitation for hosting teams to be interviewed by phone and five communities responded. Four of the five communities interviewed had significant uptake and sustainability. There were three common factors in their success:

1. There was someone on the hosting team who advocated for the importance of community involvement
2. Each team had a partner organization that was committed to using the Community Café approach as a strategy to grow partnerships with parents to strengthen families
3. Parents had a lead role in facilitating, planning, inviting, and recruiting other parents to help

"A phone call with a staff person started with a dull tone. Like she was expecting to be asked some typical interview questions to see how well she had performed. We started talking about why we host Cafés and how much impact these conversations had for families... The call shifted to excitement and it was like talking to an old friend. She wanted more of the Café work to happen and didn't know how to make the steps happen with the resources she had available.

We spent time celebrating her successes and although she was disappointed in her lack of capacity it was a joyful call knowing she had made a difference in her community. Families had become more connected with one another and took on small leadership roles.

Just sending an email to stay in touch with Café sites is not enough. I get so much more by carving up the time to reminisce, acknowledge their challenges and share ideas from other sites. We need to find the capacity to sustain our relationships and have these conversations. It keeps us inspired to keep trying to make a difference in our community and support each other. I hung up feeling like we were going to be back in touch."

Kara Georgi
CCLT Member

Café hosts also said that families noticed positive changes and that they thought it was a key reason people continue to volunteer or attend. One site had a local team that helped to provide training and technical assistance to start more Café sites. A desire for more training was mentioned in the interviews. Several Café sites stopped hosting Cafés when parent partners

moved or staff changes happened. Each team mentioned the challenges of maintaining a team of parent facilitators. All sites related to their conversations to the Protective Factors Framework. One site talked about reframing the protective factors to “everyday language.” Although too few sites were interviewed to arrive at a definite conclusion, a key component to sustainability according to the sites interviewed was maintaining the community’s capacity for trained parent hosts.

In Their Words: Stories from the Community

Spotlight: Auburn Elementary School

We started out with a very traditional family engagement strategy prior to starting Cafés; staff provided the topics and gave out information. In our Cafés, it’s reciprocal, parents have a voice, the principal has a supportive role, and was asked by the parent host not wear his nametag and tie. We make sure everyone’s voice is heard. I learned there is a balance between asking parents for their advice and working side by side with them and valuing their time. Our time with them is very valuable and we communicate differently. Parents with special needs had a place to share what they wanted staff to know about them and get to know them. Fifty percent of each Café is staff and people are able to converse in a way that they ordinarily wouldn’t. Conversations glean aspirations for the future and improve parent/staff relationships because we create a shared vision without outside influence. It’s a two-way conversation, (verses report cards and parent conferences.) Families can talk to teachers and the community about what our goals are. A school

“We were able to reinforce ways for parents to be involved in non-traditional ways. Cafés have opened different doors of communication - open door to share ideas; staff gets to share their constraints; it’s a safe place to come because we care about the kids that come to our school.”

Elementary School Principal

board representative attended and was open to sharing ideas in a new way then shared the Community Café idea with the whole district. District level staff and the superintendent came. CC is spreading to other schools because staff from other schools came. This is a new way of thinking as a parent that parents can have a voice that matters. Typically the principal hears when there’s a problem, now I hear from them when they have an idea, I have this idea, and they are the ones asking, “What do you think?” This is a different way to have reciprocal communication with families and lends to our goal of parent engagement.

There is new parent leadership – a Continuous Improvement Team – made up of students and their parents. We work on inclusive education and parents are working on upgrading the playground, special needs, holiday committees; parents have a different role. Previously they were hesitant to share with staff their thoughts and parents who weren’t typically involved are contributing. At PTA meetings, Community Cafés help to decide school activities. In addition, staff is willing to come without being paid and they are interested. Staff are thinking of how to engage in other ways to maximize what they are already doing for students. We want to expand this to teach this to students as a leadership project. They would learn how to facilitate a conversation

and how to answer thoughtfully and even go out to host a Community Café. We are also thinking of how to use technology and exploring the idea of live webcam feed where people could text in thoughts.

Attendance is credited mostly to word of mouth due to several successful Cafés. I'd like a room full of people and am still okay with whatever number shows up. We want community people to attend and, in particular, hiring bodies. What type of skills do they need our students to have so they can hire our students? Students know how to advocate for themselves and cope with failure. I'd also like to talk about how it's okay to bring home a bad grade and this is how you can support your child; how to enhance their strengths. We also want a playground that's more inclusive and an outdoor classroom. We are going to use Cafés for that. Kara's willing to do the training. Staff stop me and say, "I want to be part of that."

In the past, things with PTA had been tense, and now Mr. M is out there greeting us. This is a very different tone from when I first came here. People are embraced and celebrated, encouraged to talk. It's exciting, can get hectic, and it's all good at the end of the day.

We'd like to learn more about how to reach a broader audience and what have teams done to increase participation. I try to be patient but I want good things to happen fast. We are thinking of how they can tap into getting kids involved in recruiting. We weren't responsible for recommending Community Cafés to the district, but the district has a parent engagement theme and CC is in the district plan. That's evidence of transfer!

Spotlight: Community Center in Auburn

Parents provided feedback on the conversation questions. It was difficult to get the parents out but the few that we did get to attend loved that we had a place that parents could come and talk about different topics. After every Café we would do a survey to see what we could improve on. We offered a Café the last Thursday of every month. We didn't get a big response; maybe two or three families would show sometimes we would have no one show. After every Café we would do a survey to see what we could improve on.

In our conversations, a lot of parents were focused on their children's behavior in school and at home. So there were many conversations with parents giving ideas and tips. It was interesting to see all the parents in that environment, helping and giving each other tips, etc. I've learned a lot and we are coming up with some more ways to draw parents in. We are actually getting parents more involved with their kids in our programming.

Spotlight: Housing Complex in Yonkers

We've been hosting CCs since September 2015. There is much violence in our community. Some restaurants won't deliver here. The kids are not equally positioned for success. Our first Café was

held on a Tuesday in the middle of the afternoon. Seventeen people attended and there was momentum and excitement. Since the initial Café, about five to seven families [have] attended. We recently changed the time to accommodate families. Families are invited using flyers, knocking on doors, and making phone calls.

Cafés increased access to services and awareness of other resources in the communities. Relationships formed and the warm welcome built trust between family members and staff. This made it easier for them to access needed services. People are less isolated. One parent lived in the complex for fifteen years and wasn't connected. She stepped up to distribute flyers. It also provided role models for youth. Another parent volunteered to start a book club for kids.

People don't want to be walked on. When you show them you care and treat them with respect, you build trust. There are greater results when people are connected and relationships are built. We also learned that we need to slow down and be more intentional and think it through. The practice of crafting questions helped to focus on how I wanted this work to evolve. There is accountability and a focus on possibilities versus problems. The other important lesson was that it doesn't matter the number of attendees; those that are present are valuable. There are others supporting our work. Community partners donate water and food, Target donated gift cards, a local barber shop donated free haircuts, and local markets donate vegetables.

It's good to rephrase the Protective Factors (Key Elements of Well Being.) For example, "Social Connections," is called "Social and Spiritual Well Being," and "Concrete Support in Times of Need," is "Financial and Environmental Wellness." We have a vegetable table at events and Cafés. We are looking at starting a Family Night for all to do things together, such as play games and converse. We are also looking at starting a Youth Night that will address issues youth are facing. My focus and intention is to give something of value to youth that demonstrates how much we care for them.

"Cafés enhanced access to services, increased awareness of other resources in the communities. Relationships formed and the warm welcome built trust between family members and staff."

Yonkers Housing Complex
Café Host

Spotlight: Cayuga Family Support Center

We first started it as a truly parent endeavor. Resources were very organic and shared by the parents and it was our job to give good follow up to services that were needed, (activities in the community, community activity guide.) Nurse Family Partnership – started in the parks and now in the library. We didn't have any parents at the training so needed to think about how to engage with parents differently. We started with the 0-3 Guide that lays out the first 12 Cafés. Parents are enjoying each other's company and receiving positive attention from others. Parents feel very isolated so when a family was in crisis, the host helped. One mom who came had a child with disability so the Café was a respite.

Another time, a family had split and mom was trying to find money for food and basic needs with a medical crisis. Because Cafés were comfortable, mom shared she was in crisis and didn't know what to do. The host told her she didn't know how to help but knew people who did and she introduced her to a family support worker. The mom still stays in touch with the Café host and talks about how much the Cafés helped her find somebody she could call or someone she could get a name from. When she called the resource, they already knew her story and that helped. She also shared how having open dialogue with providers who shared the same concerns was helpful.

For the host, part of it is personal as far as wanting to help other parents. Everybody has gone through struggles and somebody has helped; it's about being able to give back. I am able to comfortably share resources. Being a part of ABC [Cayuga], I am a part of a larger system and have an idea of who parents can talk to. I value being connected to others and able to help them. I experienced being involved with Success by 6, and know how important those relationships are. If you are a service provider, this Café is part of your work plan and your goal. So it's not one more thing you are adding to your plate and it's going to make your work easier in the long run. You are helping yourself when parents can connect. Any service provider of services who are working with young children should do this because it is so important.

The Café was a good follow up to Born Learning Academies; six weeks was good but parents wanted to meet more. We did a survey of 500 people in the community and parent isolation was the key issue that needed to be addressed. This was the reason they started hosting Cafés and the conversations reaffirmed issue of isolation. As a result, parents wanted other activities so they looked for a play space so parents could have an opportunity to connect with their kids and run Cafés on a more regular basis.

Our biggest challenge has been getting people to commit to coming and getting them to show up. Once they come they really do like it. Also, being able to run them consistently and running them a few times before you give up on the location. It's best to start with where staff already has a connection with parents. Staff needs more training, more practice at hosting. Hosts need to be relaxed and comfortable and that might be a bit of a barrier. Parents need to understand what you can get from the Café and that they are the expert and don't need an outsider providing guidance. We also cut back the host's role to reduce the stress and do things like everyone bringing a little snack to share and that be their lunch. It's important to break the Café up into the small jobs and giving people smaller pieces to do. A group of six to eight parents are on the team.

I do believe that it puts everybody on the same playing field and it gives a good opportunity to genuinely communicate on a personal level. It's really a group of people who want to get together and have a conversation about children. My kids aren't small anymore but can still sit at the table and learn something. I think this is a piece providers really enjoy as well.

Parents are starting to recognize that there are a lot of people in the community that are out there working with families with young children. They are surprised that there are so many people who care about their young children. We are not resources we are people and come tell us what you need so we can make it work better for you. It does take time but we're starting to see some

communication happening. We are seeing relationships blossom. It's hard for people to take the initiative. It's a very valuable tool for communities and I really do believe the Cafés are a great way to build leadership and partnership.

Spotlight: Freeville Café in Spanish

When cafes were introduced, it helped people learn what could be possible if they worked together. People are approaching me with excitement. They are planning another Café with a cookout so they can share a meal together. People are open to it now. It started out slow but is picking up. A group effort got M. involved with the community and now the community is interested. The planning group is M. and his fiancé and four other parents. M. attended the training and took the lead hosting and has reached out to other fathers to join as well. One of the agency partners realized she and M. live in the same community.

People are getting to know each other and [are] actually talking. I am part of [the Cornell] Cooperative Extension (CCE) and Emerging Leaders training in Tompkins County together with another parent. With the Café work, people are now talking together to see how they can improve the community. In Brooktondale, the series of Cafés led to a playgroup, music sessions, community parties, and parent night-outs. One of the parent leaders became active in the CCE and organized family fun events in Ithaca for families with their kids. There is lots of information sharing.

People in the community are coming out to talk about how to improve the community. It is a mobile home park with 60 trailers. We have done so many Cafés – they have happened in clusters with different groups of parent leaders. More recently, we did a series of Cafés in 3 rural communities with parents of kids with mental health challenges. Community to community, we moved through with themes like isolation of families with social emotional challenges, etc. Parents connected with each other. One need that came up in Dryden is about the need for drop-in community space. Now parents and community folks from the school board and the rec center are talking together to move the community space project forward. That group is meeting every month. There was some challenge with the landlord in the beginning but this has helped to improve the relationship and communication with the landlord. Trust has developed on both sides – the families and the landlord. He is supporting the Cafés now and [is] really open to what the Cafés are doing. Now that M. can tell the men about what they are doing, they are seeing action steps coming about and things happening, not just talk and forget. M. appreciated having A and E's support because their presence shows some other support from partners that want to help the work the committee is doing. The Freeville Congers Park Grant is working on a mini-grant and a Seed to Table program with the library is in process. The formal application has not yet been finalized yet. The Town of Dryden is working on a mini-grant surrounding container gardening. There is a lot of interest from various communities to learn about container gardening.

A question that came up for us was if there was a small turnout, was a Café not as successful? We have learned that the Café can be powerful and action can result with a few people, too. That said,

the more hands involved in planning the Café, the more people that tend to show up. I have gotten to meet a lot of people and it is helpful for the kids. The input is positive and now we are making it happen!

One of the first Cafés in Ithaca was downtown and (a parent) was doing childcare at that Café. No childcare was needed, so she stepped in and joined the Café as a leader. She loved it and ran with it. Same thing happened in Congers, and now she is a leader in Freeville. The more people from the community involved in the Café helps – not just the agency folks, but people to represent the people of that specific community. Developing parent leaders in communities with recognized and known challenges takes time to develop, like so many things in Human Service work. The time needed to develop it needs to be valued and funded. They could work full time on parent leadership if the interest and funding were available; potential movement can be made. We are adding a young person to the committee so we can get their perspective. The committee has all ages represented to diversify the perspectives.

Collaboration with other groups in the community, like Head Start, make our Café better and stronger. We are family-driven – this is our foundation – and that is really important. Finding parent leaders is a little bit of luck and chance, and nurturing parent leaders is an increasing challenge. There are cells of parent leaders who come and go. They may be really involved and then fall off. How to sustain parent engagement is a question we look at. Life changes in our parents' lives affect the parent leadership.

From Café Participant to National Council Member

Katie MacIntyre, Founding Parent Member, Community Café Leadership Team:

The work continues as the Council on Children and Families and NYSPEP have committed to supporting the Cafés in partnership with parents and we will continue to learn from these conversations and grow. I came to learn of the protective factors, their framework, and of the Community Café approach in 2012. I was at a place in my life with my young son and spouse where we needed to have a community to surround us. As part of my core of cores, I knew that the best way for me to feel the support of the community I needed, was to be a part of building it. At that time I learned of training on Community Cafés in Rochester with the New York State Office of Children & Family Services, led by a parent-leader consultant from the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds.

As soon as I entered the room, I knew I belonged and that started what has been more than 4 years of meeting people across the state. I learned of the Café model in that initial training and took what I learned back to my hometown of Auburn and implemented it. We began to have Cafés under the name Auburn Community Café that were community-wide discussions. I was blessed to be one of the founding parents of that initiative and I

am proud that I met Kara Georgi through that work. We held Cafés for several years. Over the years the Café work in Auburn has changed from big community-wide conversation to smaller group and organizational conversations. I love that the model is flexible and beneficial in all types of groups wanting to grow meaningful conversations.

One of the most gratifying parts of being a Community Café Leadership Team member for New York State is that we are able to create tools to help others doing Community Café work across the state... Anyone who has a question, a comment, or just wants to hear what others are doing across the state can call in [to our bimonthly calls]. It is a platform to share best practices, troubleshoot, and exchange ideas in real time. Every time I finish a call I feel so inspired by the good work people are doing across the state to help strengthen families and make life better for the children in our communities. My commitment to building community that strengthens families stays strong thanks to partnerships built with school, community, the Office of Children and Families, and the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds.

Looking Forward

The Community Café Leadership Team is looking for a way to track the number of Café sites in New York State, how they are being implemented, and their impact. So far, the CCLT has relied on phone calls to Café hosts or potential hosts. Since there are only two parents on the leadership team, they currently lack the capacity to do as much post-training follow up as they would like to, or gather information about Café sites on a more systematic basis. More resources are needed to support the expansion of the CCLT to ensure that there is integrity to the approach as Cafés spread to other locations, and in particular, that Community Cafés remain a parent-driven strategy. Time for parents on the team to make one on one phone calls to sites to check in, provide tailored support, and gather community stories are important to maintaining a learning network. In addition to the sites they interviewed, there are currently three additional counties requesting an on-site training.

The CCLT has developed a member job description in the hopes of inviting more parents to join the team. They are also looking at developing closer collaborations with New York State Parenting Education Partnership's members and others. It is clear from the people and communities contributing to this report that there is benefit on a personal, family and community level to building partnerships with parents to strengthen families. Having more on-going technical assistance and training accessible to communities as well as adding more parents to the leadership team to build its capacity would also be ideal and would require resources.

For More on Community Café Activity in New York State:

<http://nyspep.org/projects/community-cafes/>

Baseline interviews prior to implementation of the project:

<http://nyspep.org/files/3013/9688/1108/CafeSummary2012.pdf>

Mid-term interviews:

<http://nyspep.org/files/6613/9688/0977/CafeReportNYSPEPrev130520.pdf>

Summary Report after the first year of implementation:

<http://nyspep.org/files/5213/9939/6143/CafeReport20140416.pdf>

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

How does a Community Café differ from a typical community gathering?

Three components of Community Cafés make this a unique and powerful approach.

1. Every conversation stays true to the World Café principles of hosting.
2. These conversations are related to the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.
3. Finally, multiple Community Café conversations are linked to one another using the Appreciative Inquiry process.

Why is Appreciative Inquiry so important to the approach?

Appreciative Inquiry asks what resources individuals and groups already have and how to build on them. Unlike traditional approaches that focus on finding the problem and fixing it, Appreciative Inquiry focuses on new possibilities and what needs to be learned. In Community Cafés, Appreciative Inquiry guides a series of conversations where powerful questions allow the group to “Dream, Design, Deliver, and Discover” what more is possible in regards to strengthening families. The kinds of questions asked determine what will be found.

- In the Dream phase, Cafés focus on what might be or the desired change: Positive and powerful visions empower people to take action.
- In the Design phase, Cafés inventory relationships and notice what has worked well in the past; more people may need to be involved to help create change.
- In the Discover phase, Cafés might explore what participants still want to learn.
- In the Delivery phase, Cafés might ask how each person can contribute and what participants must do together.

The complete Appreciative Inquiry process requires several connected conversations among participants who are building relationships with each other.

How can Community Cafés promote the Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework?

Three levers of change are needed to fully implement the Protective Factors Framework: staff training, program and policy changes, and partnerships with parents. Parents, practitioners, and community members dialogue about what they can do together to ensure all children in their community have an opportunity for optimal child development.

“When I started this work I was familiar with the protective factors and thought it makes sense. Since then I have become a certified trainer in the Protective Factor Framework and have internalized and personalized them to the point of seeing them in my everyday moments and they help me in my own personal family. “

Kara Georgi,
CCLT Parent

How does this approach build partnerships with families?

The Community Café approach is a parent-led strategy. Families are strengthened when communities support the building of social capital. Reciprocity (opportunities for families to contribute to their community) is essential to a supportive and healthy community. Remember the days when people shared their extra harvests with one another? Community Cafés gather group wisdom (often coined “Café Harvest”) and share what they are learning with community partners.

Who is a typical Community Café host?

Typical Café hosts are at least two family members who live in the community. They may be parent leaders who are currently participating or have participated in an agency program. Many hosts are caregivers of children who attend a school or an early childhood program. These family members partner with a community member such as a school staff person to host.

Who are typical organizational partners?

Organizational partners are typically not for profit agents, and often (but not always) provide the space where Cafés are hosted. Community organizations might frequently help with the cost of food, childcare, and supply costs, as well as provide a stipend for parents who volunteer to host Cafés. Examples of organizational partners include: family resource centers, community cooperatives, educational settings, places of worship, early childhood centers, family support centers, health agencies, local businesses, and a myriad of community entities interested in promoting optimal child development.

What kind of funding is needed?

Monetary funding sources can be used to support mileage, childcare, meals, and a gratitude stipend to parents for the training, planning, and hosting time. This support ensures all participants can attend without concern that their participation is taking precious resources from their family. Many communities have relied on resources within their neighborhood to support these considerations and there is always a way to host a Café by building on the resources in the neighborhood.

How are family hosts recruited?

There have been a few Café hosts who attended a Café then began hosting Cafés on their own. Most Café hosts have been invited to attend Community Café training by a service provider or someone from the community. Usually it is a family member that has volunteered for something else or whom they met during a program activity. Sometimes Café hosts themselves invite a friend or someone they know to get involved.

Who shall I ask to help me host?

An ideal host is someone who lives in the neighborhood or is a program participant, and be representative of the people you'd like to your Cafés. This person does not need a lot of experience in public speaking. Another ideal person to have on the planning team is someone who has a social network and knows other parents in the neighborhood or other people who do. It is also helpful to think about who the natural parent leaders are in the neighborhood. Natural Parent Leaders are the parents who are often recognizable by their level of participation and knowledge of staff and other parents. They show up at activities and are often seen, for instance, talking in the parking lot with others. Teachers and front line staff often have the best idea of who the natural parent leaders at their school or program are, and feel comfortable tapping them on the shoulder for community involvement or volunteer activities.

How do I get parents to come or get them more involved?

Relying on natural community leaders from each site helps to ensure that all Cafés are hosted with sensitivity to local culture, norms, needs, and the best time to host a gathering. They typically have a network of local contacts and are frequently asked to help begin this process because they possess the local knowledge needed to help create a compelling invitation that will appeal to the constituency in the area.

How do people fund this?

The state Children's Trust or Prevention Fund funds Community Cafés in some states. Other funding for Cafés ranges from grants to funds raised through silent auctions and bake sales, dependent on the needs and resources of the community. The technical assistance involved includes coaching to convene and sustain a Community Café Leadership Team of parent hosts as they develop the networks and skills needed to achieve their community goals.

Has this been tried in diverse communities?

Community Cafés are as diverse as the communities they are hosted in. Hosts are coached to integrate culturally relevant music, art, and poetry to ensure cultural relevancy and sensitivity. Moreover, Cafés use powerful questions that focus on co-creating new culture together as a group and honoring and making more distinctive our own family culture. Our training is offered in Spanish and in English, as is our orientation kit.

What are some common results Cafés generate?

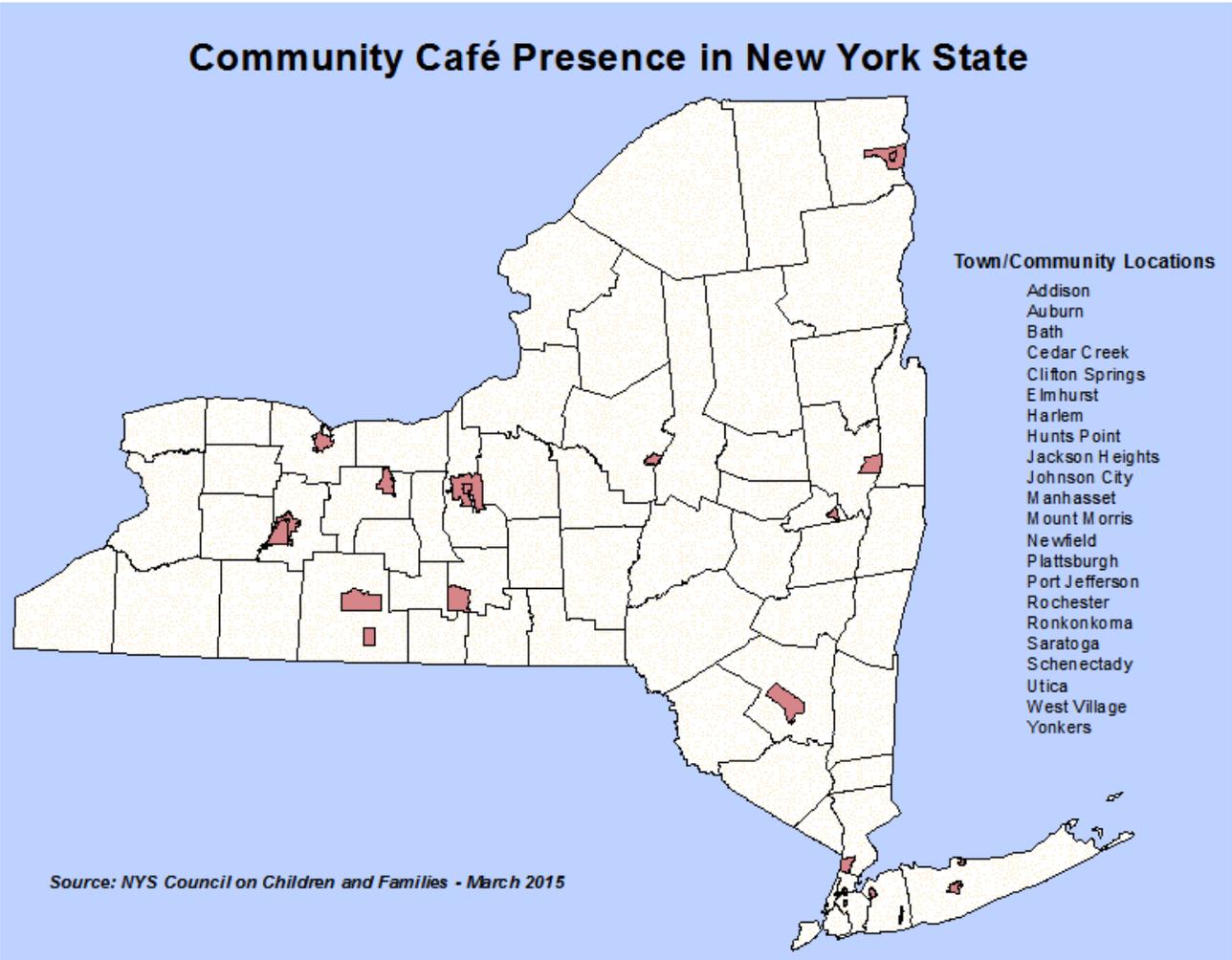
Parents gain awareness and understanding of Strengthening Families™ Five Protective Factors, and have increased access to resources that ensure these Five Protective Factors in their communities. Parents become more involved in their communities and feel confident assuming

leadership roles. Community members mentor each other to form webs of support for every family. The strengthened community works together for common goals and with heightened sensitivity to each other's culture and needs. Organizations that seek ways to partner with communities are able to find venues for communication and to enhance these partnerships as they're forming. Communities become healthier for all members as these partnerships gather strength and ensure that each community member has the option of taking an active role in the systems that affect their lives.

How do I learn how to do a Café? Who typically participates in this?

A Community Café Leadership Team host will convene the necessary pre-training phone conferences to help you have clarity about how to best integrate this approach, based on your particular strengths. These calls also help the trainers to learn the landscape of your community and design a training that is tailored to your needs. After the training, our team usually continues to provide coaching to individual sites upon request and can also do follow-up clinics on Café design and evaluation tools. Parents, community members, any interested hosts, and systems administrators usually attend the training together.

Appendix B: Map of Known Community Café Sites



Appendix C: Summary of Trainings and Survey Results

Training Name / Location	Date	# of Attendees
Prevent Child Abuse New York Conference	4/14/2015	26 attendees
Yonkers Webinar	4/24/2015	51 attendees
Spring Valley Webinar	4/24/2015	32 attendees
NYSPEP Member Meeting	5/21/2015	
Auburn	9/15/2015	18 attendees
Yonkers	9/16/2015	14 attendees

An evaluation survey was used for the video conferencing training in Spring Valley and Yonkers to evaluate the effectiveness of this type of delivery. Fifty-two participants rated the overall quality of the presentation highly, 3.4 out of 4.0, despite the multiple comments regarding the poor quality of the audio, visual, video conferencing presentation, and size of the room.

How participants self-identified their role at the training	Spring Valley	Yonkers
Parent or Grandparent	10	6
Community Resident	9	9
Community Leader	8	10
Service Provider	8	15

The training provided them with new information	Spring Valley	Yonkers
Community Café Process	4.8	4.2
Building Parent/Community Partnerships	4.6	4.1
Protective Factors Framework	4.5	4.2
Working with diverse audiences to strengthen families	4.5	4.1
Overall average	4.6	4.1

Average ratings on a scale of 1 (Nothing new) to 5 (A great deal of new information)

How relevant was the information they received at the training to their work or community?	Spring Valley (out of 4)	Yonkers
Reframing/Learning the SF Protective Factors Framework	3.6	3.5
Developing Parent/Community Partnerships	3.8	3.5
Having the Community Café Experience	3.7	3.5
Hearing Tips for Doing a Café	3.8	3.5
Overall average	3.7	3.5

Average ratings on a scale of 1 (not relevant at all) to 4 (very relevant)

As you prepare to leave, what are your next steps going to be? (Sample of the many responses)

- Thinking about what I've learned and how I can use it to affect change in my community
- Getting together with a group to further discuss the possibilities of starting the Café
- Knowing more about our community needs and resources that are available
- I'd like to become a leader
- To have our first brainstorm meeting with community resident leaders and parents
- Talk to other parents to promote Café experiences
- Network with my particular groups
- Go back to my community to do the work. I am very excited to get started!
- Look into forming a Café in my city and church
- To remain engaged in this process to host a Community Café
- Add this to my work
- Make a meeting to organize sports for children
- Work with the community leaders who volunteered today
- To help the community by partnering and planning resources for the homeless as well as our students and grandchildren

Appendix D: Community Café Survey Questions

Sample questions for attendees of orientations and support calls (Electronic Survey Questions)

1. How did you hear about the Community Café Model?
2. Are you currently implementing Cafés in your community?
 - a. If no, please explain and then go to question #10
 - b. If yes, please answer question #3-#9
3. Approximately how many Cafés were conducted in your community? In what counties?
4. Did hosting Cafés enhance services already being provided for families?
5. How do you think parents benefited from attending Cafés? Provide examples, if possible.
6. What new parent leadership emerged as a result of Café activities? (Such as parents accessing services, volunteering)
7. What new staff leadership emerged as a result of Café activities? (Such as agency staff building stronger relationships with parents, changing service delivery)
8. What action steps, if any, came about as a result of hosting Cafés?
9. What can you tell us about how partnerships with parents are developing? Have you noticed any new leadership?
10. What challenges have you found in your community and how could Cafés impact those challenges?
11. What supports did you have for Cafés? (For instance: supports from other organizations, support from the community, etc.)
12. How might the statewide Community Café team support you?
13. What have you learned from the Café conversations?
14. Are there others supporting your Café work?
15. Is there anything else you want to share with the Café community?

Phone Interview Questions for Seven Funded Projects in 2012

1. In what ways, if any, did hosting Cafés enhance services already being provided for families? (For instance, parents learned about services available to them; staff/parent relationships improved; staff learned more about what parents needed)
2. How did families benefit from attending Cafés? How do you know?
3. What new parent leadership emerged as a result of Café activities? (Such as parents accessing services, volunteering) What new staff leadership emerged as a result of Café activities? (Such as agency staff building stronger relationships with parents, changing service delivery)
4. What action steps, if any, came about as a result of hosting Cafés?
5. What challenges were revealed by Café conversations? How did Cafés impact those challenges?
6. What support could you imagine getting from our new leadership team?
7. What have you learned from the Café conversations?
8. What are you learning from planning the Cafés?
9. What can you tell us about how partnerships with parents are developing?
10. Are there others supporting your Café work? (For instance: supports from other organizations, support from the community, etc.)
11. Is there anything else you want to share with the Café community?