

“How Can You Not Want a Path to the Future?”

Safe Routes to School in North Carolina

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Today

- What's AHA – policy and systems change
- “Let's talk about me”
- Elected officials are people too
- Timing
- Problem-solving
- Relationships
- Unsolicited advice
- How to connect

Advocates for Health in Action (AHA)

Mission & Vision, History

- Mission

- AHA improves the health and well-being of Wake County residents by facilitating and supporting community initiatives.

We accomplish this by convening partners that change policies, systems and environments focused on well-being, healthy eating and physical activity.

- Vision

- Happy, Healthy Wake

- Founders 10 years ago and ongoing funders:

- BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation
- John Rex Endowment
- Wake County
- WakeMed

And now, YMCA of the Triangle



What does policy and systems change look like?

- **Farm to Child Care:**
 - AHA, Wake County SmartStart, Wake County Cooperative Extension
 - 3 years, 4300 children, 4.5 servings/week local food
 - 80% increase in local produce, 54% increase in fresh
- **Complete Streets/Safe Routes to School**
- **Sports Snack Game Plan**
 - 50,000+ kids/year, messaging to parents from coaches
 - “Healthy snacks are fruit and water”
 - Voluntary, no enforcement



Let's Talk About Me

- Grew up in rural MN
- Let's change the world – protest & politics
- Campaign staffer, aide to a state senator, county commissioner, & managed county level campaigns
- Co-founded Active Living Ramsey Communities
- Policy work: local and state issues. Like.....
 - public works, transportation, libraries, parks, social services
 - early childhood education, child protection, juvenile justice, criminal justice & CJ information system. All-day kindergarten, racial profiling, pesticide right-to-know, “sunshine kills germs.”
- Minnesota is really cold. Hello, Raleigh!



Elected Officials are People Too

- Passion for service. Especially at the local level.
- Major area of expertise – but not all areas!
- Who likes to be yelled at?
- Logistics – not desire

Timing

- Competing priorities
 - Shared agreement with desired outcomes
 - Capacity overload...
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- So what does this look like?

Our Work In Wake County

- Pilots + Policy Change
- 5 pilot schools
- Pilots chosen based on injury rates, # of kids in walking radius, blend of types of school & geography
- System-wide school policy change
- Individual policy and practice change at pilot school sites

So Back to Timing...

- Shared desire
- Enthusiastic school board/town council level
- Staff leadership
- And... competing priorities
- “We’re already doing this.”
- “There’s not funding.”
- It’s “their” responsibility
- What are “you” doing, advocates?!

Problem Solving

- Complete Streets isn't "new" any more
- Planners are experts, and they're leading
- Overtasked staff, overtasked system challenges for elected officials.
- Putting out fires.
- Challenges are money, and the time to solve problems.

So What Works When It's Slow?

- Relationships: be an ally, not a threat
- Styles of lobbying/educating
- Safety
- High emotion leads to protectiveness
- Threats to ability to serve
- Give thanks
- Express public appreciation... “Thank you for X, it is wonderful, you are doing such important work, thank you for serving, and I do hope Y may be possible in the future, thank you for all you are doing.

You're Laying the Groundwork

- And in the meantime...
- Keep problem solving
- Learn different people's observations
- Ask what they can do... and what the barriers are to what they want to do
- Ask what they think OTHERS can do
- Development requirements
- Story telling

You're Laying the Groundwork

- Keep the faith
- What do we focus on? Fear vs. what's possible
- We're all acting out of caring

Thank you!

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