

## Asset-Based Community Development – The ABCD Approach



CCSI's work as the Lead Agency for the development of a Community Schools Model for the Enrico Fermi School #17 in the JOSANA neighborhood in the City of Rochester, funded through the Farash Foundation, is using an "Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)" Approach. This approach, developed through the Asset-Based Community Development Institute of Northwestern University, represents a paradigm switch

in the way community development/rebuilding is viewed. The approach focuses on rebuilding communities from the bottom-up, recognizing a community's strengths, assets and capabilities rather than its needs, problems and deficiencies. ABCD is grounded by a set of simple principles and practices emphasizing the positives in the community.

- ABCD Principles:
  - Asset-based (built on positives, strengths, opportunities)
  - Relationship driven (centered on the people in the neighborhood working together)
  - Locally focused (place based)
- ABCD Practices:
  - Asset mapping (finding all of the good things)
  - Asset mobilizing (doing something with the good things)

Historically, in communities such as the JOSANA neighborhood, the approach to addressing the community's "problems" has been to conduct needs assessment and studies, highlighting the community's needs and deficits and creating "solutions" to fix the problems. Although community members may be involved in the process, rarely are the strengths and assets of the community factored in. The ABCD approach switches the focus – focusing on strengths and viewing neighborhood residents and stakeholders as assets; part of the solution and change agents.

ABCD has identified six (6) types of community assets, categorized as "Actors" and "Context." Actors include the talents and skills of local residents; associations and the network of relationships they represent; and institutions, agencies, and professional entities. Context includes infrastructure and physical assets (land, property, buildings, etc.); economic assets (productive work of

individuals, spending power, local economy and businesses); and cultural assets. A community building approach changes the roles and orientation of each of these actors within the community context, to roles that ultimately result in a power shift, with local residents driving the change and working with others in partnership to build upon and enhance assets to sustain a vibrant community.

CCSI's work with School 17 is in the early stages of using a modified ABCD Approach. Many of the "actors" have been identified, much of the community "context" is understood and many strong relationships exist among associations, agencies, and institutions, including School 17. In moving the Community Schools model forward, community and parent/family and youth engagement is key so we may shift the paradigm and support local residents to evolve into the role of change agents and leaders.

The "Asset Tree" pictured is one way in which parents/family members, youth and community members can begin to change their lens and identify what the good things and assets are that are around them on a daily basis helping to instill pride and empower them to build on the good.